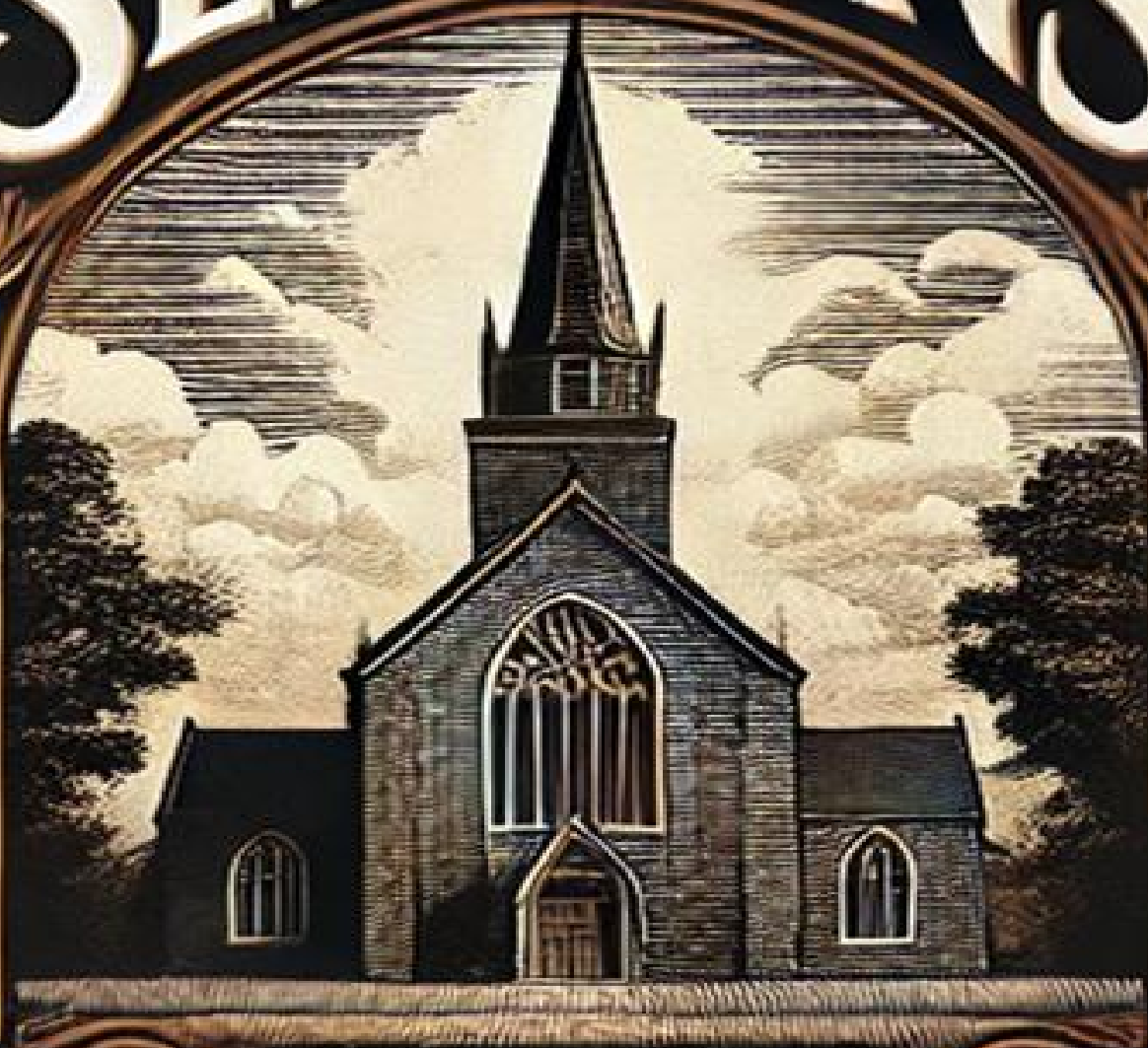


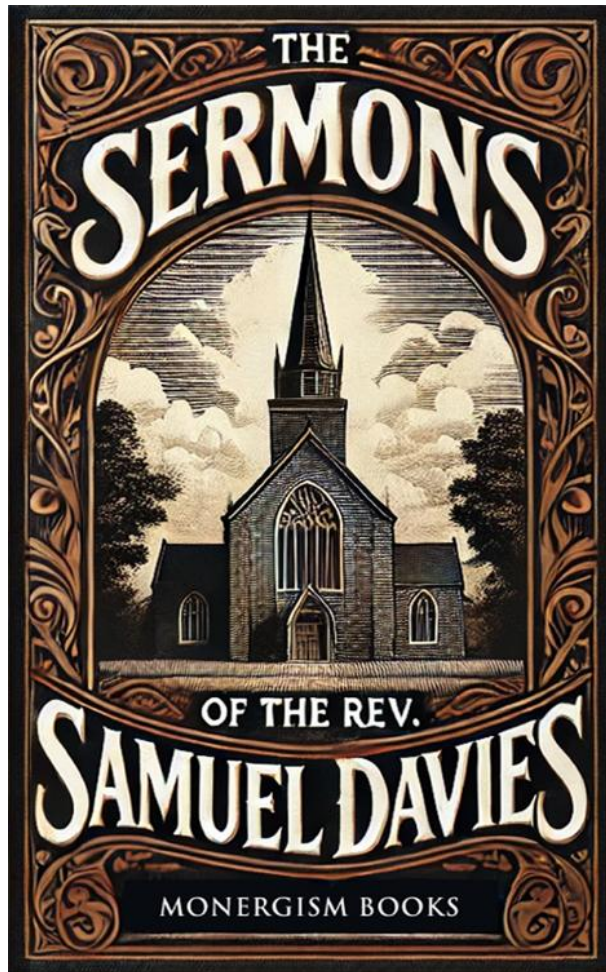
THE  
SERMONS



OF THE REV.

SAMUEL DAVIES

MONERGISM BOOKS



*The Sermons of the Rev.  
Samuel Davies*

*With Miscellaneous Poems, Chiefly on  
Divine Subjects.*

*Samuel Davies*

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Editor's Note – Though it is rare for errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My sincere apologies in advance where such errors occur. As the Puritan Edward Leigh once said "If thou findest faults and Errata in the book, let love cover them, for to err (as the Satirist saith) is the sad privilege of mortality, and he (of all men) erreth most, who challengeth a privilege from error."



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*PART. I. THE SERMONS OF  
THE REV. SAMUEL  
DAVIES.*

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# *SERM. I. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.*

**L**uke 16:27-31: *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

What Micah said superstitiously, when he was robbed of his idols, Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more? (Judg. 18:24) may be truly spoken with regard to the religion of Jesus. If that be taken from us, what have we more? If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? Ps. 11:3. The generality of you owe all your hopes of a glorious immortality to this heaven-born religion, and you make it the rule of your faith and practice; confident that in so doing you please God.

But what if after all you should be mistaken? What if the religion of Jesus should be an imposture?—I know you are struck with horror at the thought, and perhaps, alarmed at my making so shocking a supposition. But this suspicion, horrid as it is, has probably been suggested to you at times by infernal agency; this suspicion may at times have arisen in your minds in their wanton and licentious excursions, or from the false alarms of a melancholy and timorous imagination: and if this suspicion has never been raised in you by the sophistical conversation of loose wits and affected rationalists, it has been owing to your happy retirement from the polite world, where infidelity makes extensive conquests, under the specious name of Deism. Since therefore you are subject to an assault from such a suspicion, when you may not be armed ready to repel it, let me this day start it from its ambush, that I may try the force of a few arguments upon it, and furnish you with weapons to conquer it.

Let me also tell you, that that faith in the Christian religion which proceeds from insufficient or bad principles, is but little better than infidelity. If you believe the Christian religion to be divine, because you hardly care whether it be true or false, being utterly unconcerned about religion in any shape, and therefore never examining the matter; if you believe it true, because you have been educated in it; because your parents or ministers have told you so; or because it is the religion of your country; if these are the only grounds of your faith, it is not such a faith as constitutes you true Christians; for upon the very same grounds you would have been Mahometans in Turkey, disciples of Confucius in China, or worshippers of the Devil among the Indians, if it had been your unhappy lot to be born in those countries; for a Mahometan, or a Chinese, or an Indian, can assign these grounds for his faith. Surely, I need not tell you, that the grounds of a

mistaken belief in an imposture, are not a sufficient foundation for a saving faith in divine revelation. I am afraid there are many such implicit believers among us, who are in the right only by chance: and these lie a prey to every temptation, and may be turned out of the way of truth by every wind of doctrine. It is therefore necessary to teach them the grounds of the Christian religion, both to prevent their seduction, and to give them a rational and well-grounded faith, instead of that which is only blind and accidental.

Nay, such of us as have the clearest conviction of this important truth, have need to have it inculcated upon us, that we may be more and more impressed with it; for the influence of Christianity upon our hearts and lives will be proportioned to the realizing, affecting persuasion of its truth and certainty in our understandings.

If I can prove that Christianity answers all the ends of a religion from God; if I can prove that it is attended with sufficient attestation; if I can prove that no sufficient objections can be offered against it; and that men have no reason at all to desire another; but that if this proves ineffectual for their reformation and salvation, there is no ground to hope that any other would prove successful; I say, if I can prove these things, then the point in debate is carried, and we must all embrace the religion of Jesus as certainly true. These things are asserted or implied in my text, with respect to the Scriptures then extant, Moses and the prophets.

My text is a parabolical dialogue between Abraham and one of his wretched posterity, once rioting in the luxuries of high life, but now tormented in infernal flames.

We read of his brethren in his father's house. Among these probably his estate was divided upon his decease; from whence we may infer that he had no children: for had he had any, it would have been more natural to



represent him as solicitous for their reformation by a messenger from the dead, than for that of his brothers. He seems, therefore, like some of our unhappy modern rakes, just to have come to his estate, and to have abandoned himself to such a course of debaucheries as soon shattered his constitution, and brought him down to the grave, and alas! To hell, in the bloom of life, when they were far from his thoughts. May this be a warning to all of his age and circumstances!

Whether, from some remaining affection to his brethren, or (which is more likely) from a fear that they who had shared with him in sin would increase his torment, should they descend to him in the infernal prison, he is solicitous that Lazarus might be sent as an apostle from the dead to warn them. His petition is to this purpose: “Since no request in my own favor can be granted; since I cannot obtain the poor favor of a drop of water to cool my flaming tongue, let me at least make one request in behalf of those that are as yet in the land of hope, and not beyond the reach of mercy. In my father’s house I have five brethren, gay, thoughtless, young creatures, who are now rioting in those riches I was forced to leave; who interred my moldering corpse in state, little apprehensive of the doom of my immortal part; who are now treading the same enchanting paths of pleasure I walked in: and will, unless reclaimed, soon descend, like me, thoughtless and unprepared, into these doleful regions: I therefore pray, that thou wouldest send Lazarus to alarm them in their wild career, with an account of my dreadful doom, and inform them of the reality and importance of everlasting happiness and misery, that they may reform, and so avoid this place of torment, whence I can never escape.”

Abraham’s answer may be thus paraphrased: “If thy brothers perish, it will not be for want of means; they enjoy the sacred Scriptures of the Old

Testament, written by Moses and the prophets; and these are sufficient to inform them of the necessary truths to regulate their practice, and particularly to warn them of everlasting punishment! Let them therefore hear and regard, study and obey, those writings: for they need no further means for their salvation.”

To this the wretched creature replies, “Nay, father Abraham, these means will not avail; I enjoyed them all; and yet here I am, a lost soul; and I am afraid they will have as little effect upon them as they had upon me. These means are common and familiar, and therefore disregarded. But if one arose from the dead, if an apostle from the invisible world was sent to them, to declare as an eye-witness the great things he has seen, surely they would repent. The novelty and terror of the apparition would alarm them. Their senses would be struck with so unusual a messenger, and they would be convinced of the reality of eternal things; therefore I must renew my request; send Lazarus to them in all the pomp of heavenly splendor; Lazarus whom they once knew in so abject a condition, and whom they will therefore the more regard, when they see him appear in all his present glory.”

Thus the miserable creature pleads, (and it is natural for us to wish for other means, when those we have enjoyed are ineffectual, though it should be through our own neglect;) but, alas! He pleads in vain.

Abraham continues inexorable, and gives a very good reason for his denial: “If they pay no regard to the writings of Moses and the prophets, the standing revelation God has left in his church, it would be to no purpose to give them another: they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead; the same disposition that renders them deaf to such messengers as Moses and the prophets, would also render them impersuadable by a

messenger from the dead. Such a one might strike them with a panic, but it would soon be over, and then they would return to their usual round of pleasures; they would presently think the apparition was but the creature of their own imagination, or some unaccountable illusion of their senses. If one arose from the dead, he could but declare the same things substantially with Moses and the prophets; and he could not speak with greater authority, or give better credentials than they; and therefore they who are not benefited by these standing means must be given up as desperate; and God, for very good reasons, will not multiply new revelations to them.”

This answer of Abraham was exemplified when another Lazarus was raised from the dead in the very sight of the Jews, and Christ burst the bands of death, and gave them incontestable evidences of his resurrection; and yet after all they were not persuaded, but persisted in invincible infidelity.

This parable was spoken before any part of the New Testament was written, and added to the sacred canon; and if it might be then asserted, that the standing revelation of God’s will was sufficient, and that it was needless to demand farther, then much more may it be asserted now, when the canon of the Scriptures is completed, and we have received so much additional light from the New Testament. We have not only Moses and the prophets, but we have also Christ, who is a messenger from the dead, and his apostles; and therefore, surely, “if we do not hear them, neither will we be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” The Gospel is the last effort of the grace of God with a guilty world; and if this has no effect upon us, our disease is incurable that refuses to be healed.

I cannot insist upon all the important truths contained in this copious text, but only design,

I. To show the sufficiency of the standing revelation of God's will in the Scriptures, to bring men to repentance; and,

II. To expose the vanity and unreasonableness of the objections against this revelation, and of demanding another.

I. I am to show the sufficiency of the standing revelation in the Scriptures to bring men to repentance.

If the Scriptures give us sufficient instructions in matters of faith, and sufficient directions in matters of practice, if they are attended with sufficient evidences for our faith, and produce sufficient excitements to influence our practice, then they contain a sufficient revelation; for it is for these purposes we need a revelation, and a revelation that answers these purposes has the directest tendency to make us truly religious, and bring us to a happy immortality. But that the revelation in the Scriptures, (particularly in the New Testament, which I shall more immediately consider as being the immediate foundation of Christianity) is sufficient for all these purposes, will be evident from an induction of particulars.

1. The Scriptures give us sufficient instructions what we should believe, or are a sufficient rule of faith.

Religion cannot subsist without right notions of God and divine things; and entire ignorance or mistakes in its fundamental articles must be destructive of its nature; and therefore a divine revelation must be a collection of rays of light, a system of divine knowledge; and such we find the Christian revelation to be, as contained in the sacred writings.

In the Scriptures we find the faint discoveries of natural reason illustrated, its uncertain conjectures determined, and its mistakes corrected; so that Christianity includes natural religion in the greatest perfection. But it does not rest here; it brings to light things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

neither have entered into the heart of man, 1 Cor. 2:9—things, which our feeble reason could never have discovered without the help of a supernatural revelation; and which yet are of the utmost importance for us to know.

In the Scriptures we have the clearest and most majestic account of the nature and perfections of the Deity, and of his being the Creator, Ruler, and Benefactor of the universe; to whom therefore all reasonable beings are under infinite obligations.

In the Scriptures we have an account of the present state of human nature, as degenerate, and a more rational and easy account of its apostacy, than could ever be given by the light of nature.

In the Scriptures too (which wound but to cure) we have the welcome account of a method of recovery from the ruins of our apostacy, through the mediation of the Son of God; there we have the assurance, which we could find nowhere else, that God is reconcilable, and willing to pardon penitents upon the account of the obedience and sufferings of Christ. There all our anxious inquiries, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings? &c., Micah 6:6,7, are satisfactorily answered; and there the agonizing conscience can obtain relief, which might have sought it in vain among all the other religions in the world.

In the Scriptures also, eternity and the invisible worlds are laid open to our view; and “life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel;” about which the heathen sages, after all their inquiries, labored under uneasy suspicions. There we are assured of the state of future rewards and punishments, according to our conduct in this state of probation; and the nature, perfection, and duration of the happiness and misery, are described

with as much accuracy as are necessary to engage us to seek the one and shun the other.

I particularize these doctrines of Christianity as a specimen, or as so many general heads, to which many others may be reduced; not intending a complete enumeration, which would lead me far beyond the bounds of one sermon; and for which my whole life is not sufficient. I therefore proceed to add,

2. The Holy Scriptures give us complete directions in matters of practice, or a sufficient rule of life.

A divine revelation must not be calculated merely to amuse us, and gratify our curiosity with sublime and refined notions and speculations, but adapted to direct and regulate our practice, and render us better as well as wiser.

Accordingly, the sacred writings give us a complete system of practical religion and morality. There, not only all the duties of natural religion are inculcated, but several important duties, as love to our enemies, humility, &c., are clearly discovered, which the feeble light of reason in the heathen moralists did either not perceive at all, or but very faintly. In short, there we are informed of our duties towards God, towards our neighbors, and towards ourselves. The Scriptures are full of particular injunctions and directions to particular duties, lest we should not be sagacious enough to infer them from general rules; and sometimes all these duties are summed up in some short maxim, or general rule; which we may easily remember, and always carry about with us. Such a noble summary is that which Christ has given us of the whole moral law; “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, &c., and thy neighbor as thyself.” Or that all-comprehending rule of our conduct towards one another, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye the same unto them.”

What recommends these doctrinal instructions and practical directions is, that they are plain and obvious to common sense. It is as much the concern of the illiterate and vulgar to be religious, as of the few endowed with an exalted and philosophic genius; and consequently, whatever difficulties may be in a revelation to exercise the latter, yet all necessary matters of faith and practice must be delivered in a plain manner, level to the capacities of the former; otherwise it would be no revelation at all to them who stand in most need of it. Accordingly the religion of Jesus, though it has mysteries equal and infinitely superior to the largest capacity, yet in its necessary articles is intelligible to all ranks who apply themselves with proper diligence to the perusal of them; and I dare affirm, that a man of common sense, with the assistance of the sacred Scriptures, can form a better system of religion and morality than the wisest philosopher, with all his abilities and learning, can form without this help. This I dare affirm, because it has been put to trial, and attested by matter of fact; for whoever is acquainted with the writings of the ancient heathen philosophers, cannot but be convinced, that amidst all their learning and study, amidst all their shining thoughts and refined speculations, they had not such just notions of God and his perfections, of the most acceptable way of worshipping him, of the duties of morality, and of a future state, as any common Christian among us has learned from the Scriptures, without any uncommon natural parts, without extensive learning, and without such painful study and close application as the heathen moralists were forced to use to make their less perfect discoveries. In this sense the least in the kingdom of heaven, i.e., any common Christian, is greater than all the Socrateses, the Platos, the Ciceros, and the Senecas of antiquity; as one that is of a weak sight can see more clearly by the help of day-light, than the clearest eye can without it.



And by whom was this vast treasure of knowledge laid up to enrich the world? By whom were these matchless writings composed, which furnish us with a system of religion and morality so much more plain, so much more perfect, than all the famous sages of antiquity could frame? Why, to our astonishment, they were composed by a company of fishermen, or persons not much superior; by persons generally without any liberal education; persons who had not devoted their lives to intellectual improvement; persons of no extraordinary natural parts, and who had not travelled, like the ancient philosophers, to gather up fragments of knowledge in different countries, but who lived in Judea, a country where learning was but little cultivated, in comparison of Greece and Rome. These were the most accomplished teachers of mankind that ever appeared in the world. And can this be accounted for, without acknowledging their inspiration from heaven? If human reason could have made such discoveries, surely it would have made them by those in whom it was improved to the greatest perfection, and not by a company of ignorant mechanics.

The persons themselves declare that they had not made these discoveries, but were taught them immediately from heaven, (which indeed we must have believed, though they had not told us so.) Now we must believe their declaration, and own them inspired, or fall into this absurdity. That a company of illiterate, wicked, and daring impostors, who were hardy enough to pretend themselves commissioned and inspired from God, have furnished us with an incomparably more excellent system of religion and virtue, than could be furnished by all the wisest and best of the sons of men beside; and he that can believe this may believe anything; and should never

more pretend that he cannot believe the Christian religion upon the account of the difficulties that attend it.

I have touched but superficially upon the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice; for to dwell long upon this, would be to fight without an antagonist. Our infidels reject the Christian religion, because they suppose it requires them to believe and practice too much, rather than too little. Hence they are for lopping off a great part of its doctrines and precepts, as superfluities, or incumbrances, and forming a meagre skeleton of natural religion. Their intellectual pride will not stoop to believe doctrines which they cannot comprehend; and they cannot bear such narrow bounds as the precepts of Christianity fix for them in their pursuits of pleasure, and therefore they would break these bands asunder. That which they affect most to complain of, is the want of evidence to convince them of the truth of this ungrateful religion; it will therefore be necessary to prove more largely, that,

3. The Scriptures are attended with sufficient evidences of their truth and divinity.

It is certain that as God can accept no other worship than rational from reasonable creatures, he cannot require us to believe a revelation to be divine without sufficient reason; and therefore, when he gives us a revelation, he will attest it with such evidences as will be a sufficient foundation of our belief.

Accordingly the Scriptures are attested with all the evidences intrinsic and extrinsic, which we can reasonably desire, and with all the evidences the nature of the thing will admit.

As for intrinsic evidences, many might be mentioned; but I must at present confine myself in proper limits. I shall resume the one I have

already hinted at, namely, that the religion of the Bible has the directest tendency to promote true piety and solid virtue in the world; it is such a religion as becomes a God to reveal; such a religion as we might expect from him, in case he instituted any; a religion intended and adapted to regulate self-love, and to diffuse the love of God and man through the world, the only generous principles and vigorous springs of a suitable conduct towards God, towards one another, and towards ourselves; a religion productive of every humane, social, and divine virtue, and directly calculated to banish all sin out of the world; to transform impiety into devotion; injustice and oppression into equity and universal benevolence; and sensuality into sobriety: a religion infinitely preferable to any that has been contrived by the wisest and best of mortals. And whence do you think could this god-like religion proceed? Does not its nature prove its origin divine? Does it not evidently bear the lineaments of its heavenly Parent? Can you once imagine that such a pure, such a holy, such a perfect system, could be the contrivance of wicked, infernal spirits, of selfish, artful priests, or politicians, or of a parcel of daring impostors, or wild enthusiasts? Could these contrive a religion so contrary to their inclination, so destructive of their interest, and so directly conducing to promote the cause they abhor? If you can believe this, you may also believe that light is the product of darkness, virtue of vice, good of evil, &c. If such beings as these had contrived a religion, it would have borne the same appearance in the Bible as it does in Italy or Spain, where it is degenerated into a mere trade for the benefit of tyrannical and voracious priests; or it would have been such a religion as that of Mahomet, allowing its subjects to propagate it with the sword, that they might enrich themselves with the plunder of conquered nations; and indulging them in the gratification of their lusts, particularly in

polygamy, or the unbounded enjoyment of women. This religion, I fear, would suit the taste of our licentious freethinkers much better than the holy religion of Jesus. Or if we should suppose Christianity to be the contrivance of visionary enthusiasts, then it would not be that rational system which it is, but a huddle of fanatical reveries and ridiculous whims. If, then, it could not be the contrivance of such authors as these, to whom shall we ascribe it? It must have had some author; for it could not come into being without a cause, no more than the system of the universe. Will you then ascribe it to good men? But these men were either inspired from heaven, or they were not; if they were not, then they could not be good men, but most audacious liars; for they plainly declared, they were divinely inspired, and stood in it to the last; which no good man would do if such a declaration was false. If they were inspired from heaven, then the point is gained; then Christianity is a religion from God; for to receive a religion from persons divinely inspired, and to receive it from God, is the same thing.

Another intrinsic evidence is that of prophecy.

Those future events which are contingent, or which shall be accomplished by causes that do not now exist or appear, cannot be certainly foreknown or foretold by man, as we find by our own experience. Such objects fall within the compass of Omniscience only; and therefore when short-sighted mortals are enabled to predict such events many years, and even ages before they happen, it is a certain evidence that they are let into the secrets of heaven, and that God communicates to them a knowledge which cannot be acquired by the most sagacious human mind; and this is an evidence that the persons thus divinely taught are the messengers of God, to declare his will to the world.

Now there are numberless instances of such prophecies in the sacred writings. Thus a prophet foretold the destruction of Jeroboam's altar by the good Josiah, many ages before, 1 Kings 13:2. Cyrus was foretold by name as the restorer of the Jews from Babylon, to rebuild their temple and city, about a hundred years before he was born, Isaiah 45:1, &c. Several of the prophets foretold the destruction of various kingdoms in a very punctual manner, as of Jerusalem, Babylon, Egypt, Ninevah, &c., which prediction was exactly fulfilled. But the most remarkable prophecies of the Old Testament are those relating to the Messiah; which are so numerous and full, that they might serve for materials for his history; they fix the time of his coming, viz., while the scepter continued in Judah, Gen. 49:10, while the second temple was yet standing, Hag. 2:7, Mal. 3:1, and towards the close of Daniel's seventy weeks of years, i.e. four hundred and ninety years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem, Dan. 9:24, &c. These prophecies also describe the lineage of the Messiah, the manner of his conception, his life and miracles, his death, and the various circumstances of it; his resurrection, ascension, and advancement to universal empire, and the spread of the gospel through the world. In the New Testament also we meet with sundry remarkable prophecies. There Christ foretells his own death, and the manner of it, and his triumphant resurrection; there, with surprising accuracy, he predicts the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. We find various prophecies also in the apostolic epistles, particularly that of St. Paul, Rom. 11., concerning the conversion of the Jews; which, though it be not yet accomplished, yet we see a remarkable providence making way for it, in keeping the Jews, who are scattered over all the earth, distinct from all other nations for about one thousand seven hundred years, though they are hated of all nations, and consequently under the strongest temptation to

coalesce with, and lose themselves among them; and though all other nations have in a much shorter time mixed in such a manner, that none of them can now trace their own original; e.g., who can now distinguish the posterity of the ancient Romans from the Goths and Vandals, and others that broke in upon their empire and settled among them; or of the ancient Angli from the Danes, &c., that mingled with them?

These and many other plain predictions are interspersed through the Scriptures, and prove their original to be from the Father of lights, who alone knows all his works from the beginning, and who declares such distant contingent futurities from ancient times. Isaiah 45:21.

I might, as another intrinsic evidence of the truth of Christianity, mention its glorious energy on the minds of men, in convincing them of sin, easing their consciences, inspiring them with unspeakable joy, subduing their lusts, and transforming them into its own likeness; which is attested by the daily experience of every true Christian. Every one that believeth hath this witness in himself: and this is an evidence level to the meanest capacity, which may be soon lost in the course of sublime reasoning. But as the deists declare, alas! With too much truth, that the gospel hath no such power upon them, it is not to my purpose to insist upon it.

I therefore proceed to mention some of the extrinsic evidences of the religion of Jesus, particularly the miracles with which it was confirmed, and its early propagation through the world.

Miracles of this case are events above or contrary to the established law of nature, done with a professed design to attest a revelation; and as they are obvious and striking to the senses of the most ignorant and unthinking, they are the most popular and convictive evidences, adapted to the generality of

mankind, who are incapable of a long train of argumentation, or of perceiving the origin of a religion from its nature and tendency.

Now the religion of Jesus is abundantly attested with this kind of evidence. The history of the life of Jesus and his apostles is one continued series of miracles. Sight was restored to the blind, the deaf were enabled to hear, the lame to walk, the maimed furnished with new-created limbs, the sick healed, the rage of winds and seas controlled, yea, the dead were raised; and all this with an air of sovereignty, such as became a God; the apostles were also endowed with miraculous powers, enabled to speak with tongues, and to communicate the Holy Spirit to others. These miracles were done not in a corner, but in the most public places, before numerous spectators, friends and foes: and the persons that wrought them appealed to them as the evidences of their divine mission: and the account of them is conveyed down to us by the best medium, written tradition, in a history that bears all the evidences of credibility, of which any composition of that kind is capable.

Another extrinsic evidence of the truth of Christianity is its extensive propagation through the world in the most unpromising circumstances.

The only religion, besides the Christian, which has had any very considerable spread in the world, is that of Mahomet; but we may easily account for this, without supposing it divine, from its nature, as indulging the lusts of men; and especially from the manner of its propagation, not by the force of evidence, but by the force of arms. But the circumstances of the propagation of Christianity were quite otherwise, whether we consider its contrariety to the corruptions, prejudices, and interests of men; the easiness of detecting it, had it been false; the violent opposition it met with from all



the powers of the earth; the instruments of its propagation; or the measures they took for that purpose.

Christianity is directly contrary to the corruptions, prejudices, and interests of mankind. It grants no indulgence to the corrupt propensities of a degenerate world; but requires that universal holiness of heart and life which, as we find by daily observation, is so ungrateful to them, and which is the principal reason that the religion of Jesus meets with so much contempt and opposition in every age.

When Christianity was first propagated, all nations had been educated in some other religion; the Jews were attached to Moses, and the Gentiles to their various systems of heathenism, and were all of them very zealous for their own religion; but Christianity proposed a new scheme, and could not take place without antiquating or exploding all other religions; and therefore it was contrary to the inveterate prejudices of all mankind, and could never have been so generally received, if it had not brought with it the most evident credentials; especially considering that some of its doctrines were such as seemed to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; particularly that one of obscure birth and low life, who was publicly executed as a slave and malefactor, should be worshipped and honored as God, upon pain of everlasting damnation; and that there should be a resurrection of the dead: the last of which was an object of ridicule to all the wits and philosophers of the heathen world. Again, as some religion or other was established in all nations, there were many, like Demetrius and his craftsmen, whose temporal livings and interest depended upon the continuance of their religion; and if that was changed, they fell into poverty and disgrace. There was a powerful party in every nation, and they would exert themselves to prevent the spread of an innovation so dangerous to

their interest, which we find by all histories of those times they actually did:—and yet the despised religion of Jesus triumphed over all their opposition, and maintained its credit in spite of all their endeavors to detect it as an imposture; and this proves it was not an imposture; for,

In the next place, it was easy to have detected Christianity as an imposture, nay, it was impossible it should not have been detected, if it had been such; for the great facts upon which the evidence of it rested, were said to be obvious and public, done before thousands and in all countries; for wherever the apostles travelled they carried their miraculous powers along with them. Thousands must know whether Christ had fed many thousands with provisions only sufficient for a few; whether Lazarus was raised from the dead before the admiring multitude; whether the apostles spoke with tongues to those various nations among whom they endeavored to propagate their religion, (as indeed they must have done, otherwise they would not have been understood.) These things, and many others, upon which the evidence of Christianity depends, were public in their own nature; and therefore, if they had not been matters of fact, the cheat must have been unavoidably detected, especially when so many were concerned to detect it.

Farther: Christianity met with the most strenuous opposition from all the powers of the earth. The Jewish rulers and most of the populace were implacable enemies; and as they lived on the spot where its miraculous attestations were said to be given, it was in their power to crush it in its birth, and never have suffered it to spread farther, had it not been attended with invincible evidence. All the power of the Roman empire was also exerted for its extirpation; and its propagators and disciples could expect no profit or pleasure by it, but were assured, from the posture of affairs, from

daily experience, and from the predictions of their Master, that they should meet with shame, persecution, and death itself, in its most tremendous shapes; and in the next world they could expect nothing, even according to their own doctrine, but everlasting damnation, if they were willful impostors; and yet, in spite of all these discouragements, they courageously persisted in their testimony to the last, though they might have secured their lives, and helped their fortune (as Judas did) by retracting it; nay, their testimony prevailed, in defiance of all opposition; multitudes in all nations then known embraced the faith; though they expected tortures and death for it; and in a few centuries, the vast and mighty Roman empire submitted to the religion of a crucified Jesus. And who were those mighty heroes that thus triumphed over the world? Why, to our surprise,

The instruments of the propagation of Christianity were a company of poor mechanics, publicans, tent-makers, and fishermen, from the despised nation of the Jews. And by what strange powers or arts did they make these extensive conquests?

The measures they took were a plain declaration of their religion; and they wrought miracles for its confirmation. They did not use the power of the sword, nor secular terrors, or bribery; they were without learning, without the arts of reasoning and persuasion; and without all the usual artifices of seducers to gain credit to their imposture.

Here I cannot but take particular notice of that matchless simplicity that appears in the history of Christ and his apostles. The evangelists write in that artless, calm, and unguarded manner, which is natural to persons confident of the undeniable truth of what they assert; they do not write with that scrupulous caution which would argue any fear that they might be confuted. They simply relate the naked facts, and leave them to stand upon

their own evidence. They relate the most amazing, the most moving things, with the most cool serenity, without any passionate exclamations and warm reflections. For example, they relate the most astonishing miracles, as the resurrection of Lazarus, in the most simple, and, as it were, careless manner, without breaking out and celebrating the divine power of Christ. In the same manner they relate the most tragical circumstances of his condemnation and death, calmly mentioning matter of fact, without any invectives against the Jews, without any high eulogies upon Christ's innocence, without any rapturous celebrations of his grace in suffering all these things for sinners, and without any tender lamentations over their deceased Master. It is impossible for a heart so deeply impressed with such things, as theirs undoubtedly were, to retain this dispassionate serenity, unless laid under supernatural restraints; and there appears very good reasons for this restraint upon them, viz., that the gospel history might carry intrinsic evidences of its simplicity and artless impartiality; and that it might appear adapted to convince the judgments of men, and not merely to raise their passions. In this respect, the gospel-history is distinguished from all histories in the world: and can we think so plain, so undisguised, so artless a composure, the contrivance of designing impostors? Would not a consciousness that they might be detected keep them more upon their guard, and make them more ready to anticipate and confine objections, and take every artifice to recommend their cause, and prepossess the reader in its favor?

It only remains under this head, that I should,

4. Show that the religion of Jesus proposes sufficient excitements to influence our faith and practice.

To enforce a system of doctrines and precepts, two things are especially necessary; that they should be made duty by competent authority, and matters of interest by a sanction of rewards and punishments. To which I may add, that the excitements are still stronger, when we are laid under the gentle obligations of gratitude. In all these respects the Christian religion has the most powerful enforcements.

The authority upon which we are required to receive the doctrines, and observe the precepts of Christianity, is no less than the authority of God, the supreme Lawgiver and infallible Teacher; whose wisdom to prescribe, and right to command, are indisputable; and we may safely submit our understandings to his instructions, however mysterious, and our wills to his injunctions, however difficult they may seem to us. This gives the religion of Jesus a binding authority upon the consciences of men; which is absolutely necessary to bring piety and virtue into practice in the world; for if men are left at liberty, they will follow their own inclinations, however wicked and pernicious. And in this respect, Christianity bears a glorious preference to all the systems of morality composed by the heathen philosophers; for though there were many good things in them, yet who gave authority to Socrates, Plato, or Seneca, to assume the province of lawgivers, and dictators to mankind, and prescribe to their consciences? All they could do was to teach, to advise, to persuade, to reason; but mankind were at liberty, after all, whether to take their advice or not. And this shows the necessity of supernatural revelation not merely to make known things beyond human apprehension, but to enforce with proper authority such duties as might be discovered by man; since without it they would not have the binding force of a law.

As to the sanction of rewards and punishments in Christianity, they are such as became a God to annex to his majestic law, such as are agreeable to creatures formed for immortality, and such as would have the most effectual tendency to encourage obedience, and prevent sin; they are no less than the most perfect happiness and misery, which human nature is capable of, and that through an endless duration. If these are not sufficient to allure rational creatures to obedience, then no considerations that can be proposed can have any effect. These tend to alarm our hopes and our fears, the most vigorous springs of human activity: and if these have no effect upon us, nothing that God can reveal, or our minds conceive, will have any effect. God, by adding the greatest sanctions possible to his law, has taken the best possible precautions to prevent disobedience; and since even these do not restrain men from it, we are sure that less would not suffice.

If men will go on in sin, though they believe the punishment due to it will be eternal, then much more would they persist in it, if it were not eternal; or, if they say they will indulge themselves in sin, because they believe it not eternal, then this proves from their own mouth, that it should be eternal in order to restrain them. The prevalence of sin in the world tends to render it miserable; and therefore, to prevent it, as well as to display God's eternal regard to moral goodness, it is fit that he should annex the highest degree of punishment to disobedience in every individual; for the indulgence of sin in one individual would be a temptation to the whole rational creation; and, on the other hand, the threatening's of everlasting punishment to all sinners indefinitely, is necessary to deter the whole rational world, and every particular person from disobedience. Thus in civil government, it is necessary that robbery should be threatened indefinitely with death, because though one robber may take from a man but what he can very well spare;

yet, if every man might rob and plunder his neighbor, the consequence would be universal robbery and confusion. It is therefore necessary that the greatest punishment should be threatened to disobedience, both to prevent it, and to testify the divine displeasure against it; which is the primary design of the threatening; and since the penalty was annexed with this view, it follows, that it was primarily enacted with a view to the happiness of mankind, by preventing what would naturally make them miserable, and but secondarily with a view to be executed; for it is to be executed only upon condition of disobedience; which disobedience it was intended to prevent, and consequently it was not immediately intended to be executed, or enacted for the sake of the execution, as though God took a malignant pleasure in the misery of his creatures. But when the penalty has failed of its primary end, restraining from sin, then it is fit it should answer its secondary end, and be executed upon the offender, to keep the rest of reasonable creatures in their obedience, to illustrate the veracity and holiness of the lawgiver, and prevent his government from falling into contempt. There are the same reasons that threatening's should be executed when denounced, as for their being denounced at first; for threatening's never executed, are the same with no threatening's at all.

Let me add, that the gospel lays us under the strongest obligations from gratitude. It not only clearly informs us of our obligations to God, as the author of our being, and all our temporal blessings, which natural religion more faintly discovers, but superadds those more endearing ones derived from the scheme of man's redemption through the death of the eternal Son of God. Though the blessings of creation and providence are great in themselves, they are swallowed up, as it were, and lost in the love of God; which is commended to us by this matchless circumstance, "that while we

were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” and while under the constraints of this love, we cannot but devote ourselves entirely to God, 2 Cor. 5:14,15.

Thus I have hinted at a few things among the many that might be mentioned to prove the divinity of the religion of Jesus, and its sufficiency to bring men to repentance and salvation. And if it be so, why should it be rejected, or another sought? This reminds me that I promised,

II. To expose the vanity and unreasonableness of the objection against the Christian religion, or of demanding another, &c.

What can our ingenious infidels offer against what has been said? It must be something very weighty indeed to preponderate all this evidence. A laugh, or a sneer, a pert witticism, declaiming against priestcraft and the prejudices of education, artful evasions, and shallow sophisms, the usual arguments of our pretended free-thinkers, these will not suffice to banter us out of our joyful confidence of the divinity of the religion of Jesus; and I may add, these will not suffice to indemnify them. Nothing will be sufficient for this but demonstration: it lies upon them to prove the Christian religion to be certainly false: otherwise, unless they are hardened to a prodigy, they must be racked with anxious fears lest they should find it true to their cost; and lest that dismal threatening should stand firm against them: “He that believeth not, shall be damned.” What mighty objections, then, have they to offer? Will they say that the Christian religion contains mysterious doctrines, which they cannot comprehend, which seem to them unaccountable? As that of the trinity, the incarnation, and satisfaction of Christ, &c. But will they advance their understanding to be the universal standard of truth? Will they pretend to comprehend the infinite God, in their finite minds? Then let them go, and measure the heavens with a span, and comprehend the ocean in the hollow of their hand. Will they pretend to



understand the divine nature, when they cannot understand their own? When they cannot account for or explain the union betwixt their own souls and bodies? Will they reject mysteries in Christianity, when they must own them in everything else? Let them first solve all the phenomena in nature; let them give us a rational theory of the infinite divisibility of a piece of finite matter; let them account for the seemingly magical operation of the loadstone; the circulation of the blood upwards as well as downwards, contrary to all the laws of motion; let them inform us of the causes of the cohesion of the particles of matter; let them tell us, how spirits can receive ideas from material organs; how they hear and see, &c.: let them give us intelligible theories of these things, and then they may, with something of a better grace, set up for critics upon God and his ways; but, while they are mysteries to themselves, while every particle of matter baffles their understandings, it is the most impious intellectual pride to reject Christianity upon the account of its mysteries, and set up themselves as the supreme judges of truth.

Or will they object that there are a great many difficult and strange passages in Scripture, the meaning and propriety of which they do not see? And are there not many strange things in the book of nature, and the administration of Providence, the design and use of which they cannot see, many things that to them seem wrong and ill-contrived? Yet they own the world was created by God, and that his providence rules it: and why will they not allow that the Scriptures may be from God, notwithstanding these difficulties and seeming incongruities? When a learned man can easily raise his discourse above the capacity of common people, will they not condescend to grant that an infinite God can easily overshoot their little souls? Indeed a revelation which we could fully comprehend, would not

appear the production of an infinite mind; it would bear no resemblance to its heavenly Father; and therefore we should have reason to suspect it spurious. It is necessary we should meet with difficulties in the Scriptures to mortify our pride. But farther, will they make no allowance for the different customs and practices of different ages? It is certain, that may be proper and graceful in one age which would be ridiculous and absurd in another; and since the Scriptures were written so many years ago, we may safely make this allowance for them, which will remove many seeming absurdities. There should also allowance be made for the Scriptures being rendered literally out of dead, difficult languages; for we know that many expressions may be beautiful and significant in one language, which would be ridiculous and nonsensical if literally translated into another. Were Homer or Virgil thus translated into English, without regard to the idiom of the language, instead of admiring their beauties, we should be apt to think (as Cowley expresses it) “that one madman had translated another madman.”

Will they object the wicked lives of its professors against the holiness and good tendency of Christianity itself? But is it Christianity, as practiced in the world, or Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles, and continued in the Bible, that I am proving to be divine? You know it is the latter, and consequently the poor appearance it makes in the former sense, is no argument against its purity and divinity in this. Again, are the bad lives of professors taught and enjoined by genuine Christianity, and agreeable to it? No; they are quite contrary to it, and subversive of it; and it is so far from encouraging such professors, that it pronounces them miserable hypocrites; and their doom will be more severe than that of heathens. Again, are there not hypocritical professors of morality and natural religion, as well as of revealed? Are there not many who cry up morality and religion

of nature, and yet boldly violate its plainest precepts? If therefore this be a sufficient objection against Christianity, it must be so too against all religion. Further: do men grow better by renouncing the religion of Jesus? Observation assures us quite the contrary. Finally, are there not some of the professors of Christianity who live habitually according to it? Who give us the best patterns of piety and virtue that ever were exhibited to the world? This is sufficient to vindicate the religion they profess, and it is highly injurious to involve such promiscuously in the odium and contempt due to barefaced hypocrites. How would this reasoning please the Deists themselves in parallel cases? “Some that have no regard to Christianity have been murderers, thieves, &c., therefore all that disregard it are such.” Or “some that pretended to be honest, have been found villains; therefore all that pretend to it are such; or therefore honesty is no virtue.”

Or will they change the note, and instead of pleading that Christianity leads to licentiousness, object that it bears too hard upon the pleasures of mankind, and lays them under too severe restraints? Or that its penalties are excessive and cruel? But does it rob mankind of any pleasures worthy the rational nature, worthy the pursuit of creatures formed for immortality, and consistent with the good of the whole? It restrains them indeed; but it is only as a physician restrains his patient from poison or any improper regimen; it restrains men from living like beasts; it restrains them from those pleasures which will ruin their souls and bodies in the event; it restrains them from gratifying a private passion at the expense of the public; in short, it restrains them from making themselves and others miserable. Hard restraint indeed! And the Deists, to be sure, are generous patrons of human liberty, who would free us from such grievances as these! However, this objection lets us into the secret, and informs us of the reason why our

pretended free-thinkers are such enemies to Christianity; it is because it checks their lusts, and will not permit them to act, as well as think freely, i.e., as they please. If they would content themselves with manly and rational pleasures, they would not count the restraints of Christianity intolerable; nay, they would find in it a set of peculiarly noble and refined pleasures, which they might seek in vain elsewhere; for it is so far from being an enemy to the happiness of man, that it was designed to promote it; and then we make ourselves miserable when we reject it, or it becomes our interest that it should be false. As to the penalty of everlasting punishment annexed to sin, which is but a temporal evil, I would ask them whether they are competent judges in a matter in which they are parties? Are they capable to determine what degree of punishment should be inflicted upon disobedience to the infinite Majesty of heaven, when they are not only shortsighted creatures, but also concerned in the affair, and their judgments may be perverted by self-interest? Whether it is most fit that the Judge of all the earth should determine this point, or a company of malefactors, as they are? Is it allowed to criminals in civil courts to determine their own doom, or pronounce their own sentence? If it were, few of them would be punished at all, and government would fall into contempt. Again, let me remind them, that the penalty was annexed to prevent disobedience, and so to render the execution needless; and consequently it was primarily intended for their good. Why then will they frustrate this design, and, when they have rendered the execution necessary, complain of its severity? If they think the penalty so terrible, let them watch against sin, let them accept the salvation the gospel offers, and so avoid it instead of quarreling with its severity, and yet rushing upon it. Or, if they say they will persist in sin because they do not believe the punishment is eternal; this gives me room to

appeal to themselves whether a less penalty than everlasting misery would be sufficient to restrain them from sin; and whether God would have taken all proper precautions to prevent sin, if he had annexed a less punishment to his law, since by their own confession, nothing less could deter them from it. I shall only add. that as the human soul must always exist, and as by indilgence in sin in the present state it contracts such habits as render it incapable of happiness in the holy enjoyment of the heavenly world, it must by a natural necessity be forever miserable, though God should not exert any positive act for its punishment. And if the Deists say, that punishment for some time would reclaim offenders from sin and bring them to repentance, the difficulty is not removed, unless they can prove that misery will bring men to love that God who inflicts it, which they can never do; and it is evident, that that repentance which proceeds merely from self-love, without any regard to God at all, can never be pleasing to him, nor prepare them for happiness in the enjoyment of him. Punishment would produce a repentance like that of a sick-bed, forced, servile, and transitory.

Will they object, that miracles are not a sufficient evidence of the truth and divinity of a revelation, because infernal spirits may also work miracles, as in the case of the magicians of Egypt, to confirm an imposture? But it is known that our free-thinkers explode and laugh at the existence and power of evil spirits in other cases, and therefore must not be allowed to admit them here to serve a turn. However, we grant there are infernal spirits, and that they can perform many things above human power, which may appear to us miraculous, and yet the evidence in favor of Christianity taken from miracles, stands unshaken: for, (1.) Can we suppose that these malignant and wicked spirits, whose business it is to reduce men to sin and ruin, would be willing to exert their power to work miracles to confirm so

holy a religion; a religion so contrary to their design, and so subversive of their kingdom and interest? This would be wretched policy indeed. Or if we should suppose them willing, yet (2.) Can we think that God, who has them all at his control, would suffer them to counterfeit the great seal of heaven, and annex it to an imposture? That is, to work such miracles as could not be distinguished from those wrought by him to attest an imposture? Would he permit them to impose upon mankind in a manner that could not be detected? This would be to deliver the world to their management, and suffer them to lead them blindfold to hell in unavoidable delusion: for miracles are such dazzling and pompous evidences, that the general run of mankind could not resist them, even though they were wrought to attest a religion that might be demonstrated, by a long train of sublime reasoning, to be false. God may indeed suffer the devil to mimic the miracles wrought by his immediate hand, as in the case of Jannes and Jambres; but then, as in that case too, he will take care to excel them, and give some distinguishing marks of his almighty agency, which all mankind may easily discriminate from the utmost exertion of infernal power. But though Satan should be willing, and God should permit him to work miracles, yet, (3.) Can we suppose that all the united powers of hell are able to work such astonishing miracles as were wrought for the confirmation of the Christian religion? Can we suppose that they can control the laws of nature at pleasure, and that with an air of sovereignty, and professing themselves the lords of the universe, as we know Christ did? If we can believe this, then we deny them, and may as well ascribe the creation and preservation of the world to them. If they could exert a creating power to form new limbs for the maimed, or to multiply five loaves and two fishes into a sufficient quantity of food for five thousand, and leave a greater quantity of fragments when that were

done than the whole provision at first, then they might create the world, and support all the creatures in it. If they could animate the dead and remand the separate soul back to its former habitation, and reunite it with the body, then I see not why they might not have given us life at first. But to suppose this, would be to dethrone the King of heaven, and renounce his providence entirely. We therefore rest assured that the miracles related in the Scriptures were wrought by the finger of God.

But our free-thinkers will urge, how do we, at this distance, know that such miracles were actually wrought? They are only related in Scripture history; but to prove the truth of Scripture from arguments that suppose the Scripture true, is a ridiculous method of reasoning, and only a begging of the question. But, (1.) the reality of those miracles was granted by the enemies of Christianity in their writings against it; and they had no answer to make, but this sorry one, that they were wrought by the power of magic. They never durst deny that they were wrought; for they knew all the world could prove it. Indeed, an honorable testimony concerning them could not be expected from infidels; for it would be utterly inconsistent that they should own these miracles sufficient attestations of Christianity, and yet continue infidels. And this may answer an unreasonable demand of the Deists, that we should produce some honorable testimony concerning these attestations from Jews and Heathens, as well as from Christians, who were parties. We should have much more reason to suspect the testimony of the former as not convictive, when it did not convince the persons themselves. But,

(2.) As these miracles were of so public a nature, and as so many were concerned to detect them, that they would unavoidably have been detected when related in words, if they had not been done; so, for the same reasons,

they could not but have been detected when related in writing; and this we know they never were. If these miracles had not been matters of undoubted fact, they could not have been inserted at first in the gospel history; for then, many thousands, in various countries were alive to confute them; and they could not have been introduced into it afterwards, for all the world would see that it was then too late, and that if there had been such things they should have heard of them before: for they were much more necessary for the propagation of Christianity than for its support when received.

But it may be objected, How can we at this distance know that these histories are genuine? May they not have been corrupted, and many additions made to them by designing men in ages since? And why is it not also asked, How do we know that there were such men as Alexander, Julius Caesar or King William the Third? How do we know but their histories are all romance and fable? How do we know that there were any generations of mankind before ourselves? How do we know but all the acts of Parliament of former reigns are corrupted and we are ruled by impositions? In short, how can we know anything, but what we have seen with our eyes? We may as well make difficulties of all these things, and so destroy all human testimony, as scruple the genuineness of the sacred writings; for never were any writings conveyed down with so good evidence of their being genuine and uncorrupted as these. Upon their first publication they were put into all hands, they were scattered into all nations, translated into various languages, and all perused them; either to be taught by them, or to cavil at them. And ever since, they have been quoted by thousands of authors, appealed to by all parties of Christians, as the supreme judge of controversies; and not only the enemies of Christianity have carefully watched them to detect any alterations which pious fraud might attempt to



make, but one sect of Christians has kept a watchful eye over the other, lest they should alter anything in favor of their own cause. And it is matter of astonishment as well as conviction, that all the various copies and translations of the Scriptures in different nations and libraries are substantially the same, and differ only in matters of small moment; so that from the worst copy of translation in the world, one might easily learn the substance of Christianity.

Or will our infidels insist to be eye-witnesses of these facts? Must one arise from the dead, or new miracles be wrought to convince them by ocular demonstration? This is a most unreasonable demand, for (1.) The continuance of miracles in every age would be attended with numerous inconveniences. For example, Multitudes must be born blind, deaf, or dumb; multitudes must be afflicted with incurable diseases, and possessed by evil spirits; multitudes must be disturbed in the sleep of death; and all the laws of nature must be made precarious and fickle, in order to leave room for miraculous operations; and all this to humor a company of obstinate infidels, who would not believe upon less striking though entirely sufficient evidence. (2.) The continuance of miracles from age to age would destroy their very nature, to which it is essential, that they be rare and extraordinary; for what is ordinary and frequent, we are apt to ascribe to the established laws of nature, however wonderful it be in itself. For example, if we saw dead bodies rise from their graves, as often as we see vegetables spring from seed rotten in the earth, we should be no more surprised at the one phenomenon than we are at the other, and our virtuosi would be equally busy to assign some natural cause for both.

And had we never seen the sun rise until this morning, we should justly have accounted it as great a miracle as any recorded in the Scriptures; but

because it is common, we neglect it as a thing of course. Indeed, it is not anything in the event itself, or in the degree of power necessary for its accomplishment, that renders it miraculous, but its being uncommon, and out of the ordinary course of things; for example, the generation of the human body is not in itself less astonishing, nor does it require less power than its resurrection: the revolution of the sun in its regular course is as wonderful, and as much requires a divine power, as its standing still in the days of Joshua. But we acknowledge a miracle in the one case, but not in the other, because the one is extraordinary, while the other frequently occurs. Hence it follows, that the frequent repetition of miracles, as often as men are pleased to plead the want of evidence to excuse their infidelity, would destroy their very nature: and consequently, to demand their continuance is to demand an impossibility. But (3.) Suppose that men should be indulged in this request, it would not probably bring them to believe. If they are unbelievers now, it is not for want of evidence, but through willful blindness and obstinacy; and as they that will shut their eyes can see no more in meridian light than in the twilight, so they that reject a sufficiency of evidence would also resist a superfluity of it. Thus the Jews, who were eye-witnesses of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, continued invincible infidels still. They had always some trifling cavil ready to object against the brightest evidence. And thus our modern infidels would no doubt evade the force of the most miraculous attestation by some wretched hypothesis or other; they would look upon miracles either as magical productions, or illusions of their senses; or rather, as natural and necessary events, which they would indeed have some reason to conclude, if they were frequently performed before their eyes. Some have pretended to doubt of the existence and perfections of God, notwithstanding the

evidences thereof upon this magnificent structure of the universe; and must God be always creating new worlds before these obstinate creatures for their conviction? Such persons have as much reason to demand it in this case, as our Deists have to insist for new miracles in the other. I might add, that such glaring evidence, as, like the light of the sun, would force itself irresistibly upon the minds of the most reluctant, would not leave room for us to show our regard to God in believing, for we should then believe from extrinsic necessity, and not from choice. It is therefore most correspondent to our present state of probation, that there should be something in the evidence of a divine revelation to try us; something that might fully convince the teachable and yet not remove all umbrages for caviling from the obstinate.

Thus I have answered as many objections as the bounds of a sermon would admit; and I think they are the principal ones which lie against my subject in the view I have considered it. And as I have not designedly selected the weakest, in order to an easy triumph, you may look upon the answers that have been given as a ground of rational presumption, that all other objections may be answered with equal ease. Indeed, if they could not, it would not invalidate the positive arguments in favor of Christianity; for when we have sufficient positive evidence for a thing, we do not reject it because it is attended with some difficulties which we cannot solve.

My time will allow me to make but two or three short reflections upon the whole.

1. If the religion of Jesus be attested with such full evidence, and be sufficient to conduct men to everlasting felicity, then how helpless are they that have enjoyed it all their life without profit: who either reject it as false, or have not felt its power to reform their hearts and lives? It is the last

remedy provided for a guilty world; and if this fails, their disease is incurable, and they are not to expect better means.

2. If the religion of Jesus be true, then woe unto the wicked of all sorts: woe to infidels, both practical and speculative, for all the curses of it are in full force against them, and I need not tell you how dreadful they are.

3. If the religion of Jesus be true, then I congratulate such of you, whose hearts and lives are habitually conformed to it, and who have ventured your everlasting all upon it. You build upon a sure foundation, and your hope shall never make you ashamed.

Finally, Let us all strive to become rational and practical believers of this heaven-born religion. Let our understandings be more rationally and thoroughly convinced of its truth; and our hearts and lives be more and more conformed to its purity; and ere long we shall receive those glorious rewards it insures to all its sincere disciples; which may God grant to us all for Jesus' sake; AMEN!

# *SERM. II. THE METHOD OF SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.*

**J**ohn 3:16.— *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

I have been solicitously thinking in what way my life, redeemed from the grave, may be of most service to my dear people. And I would collect all the feeble remains of my strength into one vigorous effort this day, to promote this benevolent end. If I knew what subject has the most direct tendency to save your souls, that is the subject to which my heart would cling with peculiar endearment, and which I would make the matter of the present discourse.

And when I consider I am speaking to an assembly of sinners, guilty, depraved, helpless creatures, and that, if ever you be saved, it will be only through Jesus Christ, in that way which the gospel reveals; when I consider that your everlasting life and happiness turn upon this hinge, namely, the reception you give to this Savior, and this way of salvation; I say, when I consider these things, I can think of no subject I can more properly choose

than to recommend the Lord Jesus to your acceptance, and to explain and inculcate the method of salvation through his mediation; or, in other words, to preach the pure gospel to you; for the gospel, in the most proper sense, is nothing else but a revelation of a way of salvation for sinners of Adam's race.

My text furnishes me with proper materials for my purpose. Let heaven and earth hear it with wonder, joy, and raptures of praise! God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever, or that every one that believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This is a part of the most important evening conversation that ever was held; I mean, that between Christ and Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. Our Lord first instructs him in the doctrine of regeneration, that grand constituent of a Christian, and pre-requisite to our admission in the kingdom of heaven; and then he proceeds to inform him of the gospel-method of salvation, which contains these two grand articles, the death of Christ, as the great foundation of blessedness; and faith in him, as the great qualification upon the part of the sinner. He presents this important doctrine to us in various forms, with a very significant repetition. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that is, hung on high on a cross, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Then follows my text, which expresses the same doctrine with great force: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, gave him up to death, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He goes on to mention a wonder. This earth is a rebellious province of Jehovah's dominions, and therefore if his Son should ever visit it, one would think it would be as an angry judge, or as the executioner of his Father's vengeance. But, O

astonishing! God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Hence the terms of life and death are thus fixed. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Sure the heavenly rivers of pleasure flow in these verses. Never, methinks, was there so much gospel expressed in so few words. Here, take the gospel in miniature, and bind it to your hearts forever. These verses alone, methinks, are a sufficient remedy for a dying world.

The truths I would infer from the text for present improvement are these: that without Christ you are all in a perishing condition; that through Jesus Christ a way is opened for your salvation; that the grand pre-requisite to your being saved in this way, is faith in Jesus Christ; that every one, without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to comply with this prerequisite, shall certainly be saved; and that the constitution of this method of salvation, or the mission of Christ into our world, as the Savior of sinners, is a most striking and astonishing instance and display of the love of God.

I. My text implies, that without Christ you are all in a perishing condition. This holds true of you in particular, because it holds true of the world universally; for the world was undoubtedly in a perishing condition without Christ, and none but he could relieve it, otherwise God would never have given his only begotten Son to save it. God is not ostentatious or prodigal of his gifts, especially of so inestimable a gift as his Son, whom he loves infinitely more than the whole creation. So great, so dear a person would not have been sent upon a mission which could have been discharged by any other being. Thousands of rams must bleed in sacrifice, or ten

thousands of rivers of oil must flow; our first-born must die for our transgressions, and the fruit of our body for the sin of our souls; or Gabriel, or some of the upper ranks of angels, must leave their thrones, and hang upon a cross, if such methods of salvation had been sufficient. All this would have been nothing in comparison of the only begotten Son of God leaving his native heaven, and all its glories, assuming our degraded nature, spending thirty-three long and tedious years in poverty, disgrace, and persecution, dying as a malefactor and a slave in the midst of ignominy and torture, and lying a mangled breathless corpse in the grave. We may be sure there was the highest degree of necessity for it, otherwise God would not have given up his dear Son to such a horrid scene of sufferings.

This, then, was the true state of the world, and consequently yours without Christ; it was hopeless and desperate in every view. In that situation there would not have been so much goodness in the world as to try the efficacy of sacrifices, prayers, tears, reformation, and repentance, or they would have been tried in vain. It would have been inconsistent with the honor of the divine perfections and government, to admit sacrifices, prayers, tears, repentance, and reformation, as a sufficient atonement.

What a melancholy view of the world have we now before us! We know the state of mankind only under the gracious government of a Mediator; and we but seldom realize what our miserable condition would have been, had this gracious administration never been set up. But exclude a Savior in your thoughts for a moment, and then take a view of the world—helpless! Hopeless!—under the righteous displeasure of God; and despairing of relief!—the very suburbs of hell! The range of malignant devils! The region of guilt, misery, and despair!—the mouth of the infernal pit!—the gate of hell!— This would have been the condition of our world had it not been for



that Jesus who redeemed it; and yet in this very world he is neglected and despised.

But you will ask me, “How it comes that the world was in such an undone, helpless, hopeless condition without Christ; or what are the reasons of all this?”

The true account of this will appear from these two considerations, that all mankind are sinners; and that no other method but the mediation of Christ could render the salvation of sinners consistent with the honor of the divine perfections and government, with the public good, and even with the nature of things.

All mankind are sinners. This is too evident to need proof. They are sinners, rebels against the greatest and best of beings, against their Maker, their liberal Benefactor, and their rightful Sovereign, to whom they are under stronger and more endearing obligations than they can be under to any creature, or even to the entire system of creatures; sinners, rebels in every part of our guilty globe; none righteous, no, not one; all sinners, without exception: sinners from age to age for thousands of years: thousands, millions, innumerable multitudes of sinners. What an obnoxious race is this! There appears no difficulty in the way of justice to punish such creatures. But what seeming insuperable difficulties appear in the way of their salvation! Let me mention a few of them to recommend that blessed Savior who has removed them all.

If such sinners be saved, how shall the holiness and justice of God be displayed? How shall he give an honorable view of himself to all worlds as a being of perfect purity, and an enemy to all moral evil?

If such sinners be saved, how shall the honor of the divine government and law be secured? How will the dignity of the law appear, if a race of

rebels may trifle with it with impunity? What a sorry law must that be that has no sanctions, or whose sanctions may be dispensed with at pleasure? What a contemptible government, that may be insulted and rejected, and the offender admitted into favor without exemplary punishment? No government can subsist upon such principles of excessive indulgence.

How can such sinners be saved, and yet the good of the public secured, which is always the end of every wise and good ruler? By the public good I do not mean the happiness of mankind alone, but I mean the happiness of all worlds of reasonable creatures collectively, in comparison of which the happiness of mankind alone may be only a private interest, which should always give way to the public good. Now sin has a direct tendency, not only according to law, but according to the nature of things, to scatter misery and ruin wherever its infection reaches. Therefore the public good cannot properly be consulted without giving a loud and effectual warning against all sin, and dealing with offenders in such a manner as to deter others from offending. But how can this be done? How can the sinner be saved, and yet the evil of sin displayed, and all other beings be deterred from it forever? How can sin be discouraged by pardoning it? Its evil displayed by letting the criminal escape punishment? These are such difficulties, that nothing but divine wisdom could ever surmount them.

These difficulties lie in the way of a mere pardon, and exemption from punishment: but salvation includes more than this. When sinners are saved, they are not only pardoned, but received into high favor, made the children, the friends, the courtiers of the King of heaven. They are not only delivered from punishment, but also advanced to a state of perfect positive happiness, and nothing short of this can render such creatures as we happy. Now, in this view, the difficulties rise still higher, and it is the more worthy of

observation, as this is not generally the case in human governments; and as men are apt to form their notions of the divine government by human, they are less sensible of these difficulties. But this is indeed the true state of the case here; how can the sinner be not only delivered from punishment, but also advanced to a state of perfect happiness? Not only escape the displeasure of his offended Sovereign, but be received into full favor, and advanced to the highest honor and dignity; how can this be done without casting a cloud over the purity and justice of the Lord of all; without sinking his law and government into contempt; without diminishing the evil of sin, and emboldening others to venture upon it, and so at once injuring the character of the supreme Ruler, and the public good? How can sinners, I say, be saved without the salvation being attended with these bad consequences?

And here you must remember, that these consequences must be provided against. To save men at random, without considering the consequences, to distribute happiness to private persons with an undistinguishing hand, this would be at once inconsistent with the character of the supreme Magistrate of the universe, and with the public good. Private persons are at liberty to forgive private offences; nay, it is their duty to forgive; and they can hardly offend by way of excess in the generous virtues of mercy and compassion. But the case is otherwise with a magistrate; he is obliged to consult the dignity of his government and the interest of the public; and he may easily carry his lenity to a very dangerous extreme, and by his tenderness to criminals do an extensive injury to the state. This is particularly the case with regard to the great God, the universal supreme Magistrate of all worlds. And this ought to be seriously considered by those men of loose principles among us, who look upon God only under the fond character of a

father, or a being of infinite mercy; and thence conclude, they have little to fear from him for all their audacious iniquities. There is no absolute necessity that sinners should be saved: justice may be suffered to take place upon them. But there is the most absolute necessity that the Ruler of the world should both be, and appear to be holy and just. There is the most absolute necessity that he should support the dignity of his government, and guard it from contempt, that he should strike all worlds with a proper horror of sin, and represent it in its genuine infernal colors, and so consult the good of the whole, rather than a part. There is, I say, the highest and most absolute necessity for these things; and they cannot be dispensed with as matters of arbitrary pleasure. And unless these ends can be answered in the salvation of men, they cannot be saved at all. No, they must all perish, rather than God should act out of character, as the supreme Magistrate of the universe, or bestow private favors to criminals, to the detriment of the public.

And in this lay the difficulty. Call a council of all the sages and wise men of the world, and they can never get over this difficulty, without borrowing assistance from the gospel. Nay, this, no doubt, puzzled all the angelic intelligences, who pry so deep into the mysteries of heaven, before the gospel was fully revealed.—Methinks the angels, when they saw the fall of man, gave him up as desperate. “Alas! (they cried) the poor creature is gone! He and all his numerous race are lost forever.” This, they knew, had been the doom of their fellow-angels that sinned: and could they hope better for man? Then they had not seen any of the wonders of pardoning love and mercy, and could they have once thought that the glorious person, who filled the middle throne, and was their Creator and Lord, would ever become a man, and die, like a criminal, to redeem an inferior rank of

creatures 'I No, this thought they would probably have shuddered at as blasphemy.

And must we then give up ourselves and all our race as lost beyond recovery? There are huge and seemingly insuperable difficulties in the way; and we have seen that neither men nor angels can prescribe any relief. But, sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel, Isaiah 44:23. Which leads me to add,

II. My text implies, that through Jesus Christ a way is opened for your salvation. He, and he only was found equal to the undertaking; and before him all these mountains became a plain; all these difficulties vanish; and now God can be just, can secure the dignity of his character, as the Ruler of the world, and answer all the ends of government, and yet justify and save the sinner that believeth in Jesus.

This is plainly implied in this glorious epitome of the gospel: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Without this gift all was lost: but now, whosoever believeth in him may be saved; saved in a most honorable way. This will appear more particularly, if we consider the tendency the mediation of Christ had to remove the difficulties mentioned. But I would premise two general remarks.

The first is, That God being considered in this affair in his public character, as Supreme Magistrate, or Governor of the world, all the punishment which he is concerned to see inflicted upon sin is only such as answers the ends of government. Private revenge must vent itself on the very person of the offender, or be disappointed. But to a ruler, as such, it

may in some cases be indifferent, whether the punishment be sustained by the very person that offended, or by a substitute suffering in his stead. It may also be indifferent whether the very same punishment, as to kind and degree, threatened in the law, be inflicted, or a punishment equivalent to it. If the honor of the ruler and his government be maintained, if all disobedience be properly discountenanced; if, in short, all the ends of government can be answered, such things as these are indifferences. Consequently, if these ends should be answered by Christ's suffering in the stead of sinners, there would be no objection against it. This remark introduces another, namely, (2.) That Jesus Christ was such a person that his suffering as the substitute or surety of sinners, answered all the ends of government which could be answered by the execution of the punishment upon the sinners themselves. To impose suffering upon the innocent, when unwilling, is unjust; but Jesus was willing to undertake the dreadful task. And besides, he was a person (*sui juris*) at his own disposal, his own property, and therefore he had a right to dispose of his life as he pleased; and there was a merit in his consenting to that which he was not obliged to previous to his consent. He was also a person of infinite dignity, and infinitely beloved by his Father; and these considerations rendered the merit of his sufferings for a short time, and another kind of punishment than that of hell, equal, more than equal to the everlasting sufferings of sinners themselves. Jesus Christ was also above law; that is, not obliged to be subject to that law which he had made for his creatures, and consequently his obedience to the law, not being necessary for himself, might be imputed to others: whereas creatures are incapable of works of supererogation, or of doing more than they are bound to do, being obliged to obey their divine law-giver for themselves to the utmost extent of their abilities, and

consequently their obedience, however perfect, can be sufficient only for themselves, but cannot be imputed to others. Thus it appears, in general, that the ends of government are as effectually answered by the sufferings of Christ in the room of sinners, as they could be by the everlasting punishment of the sinners themselves; nay, we shall presently find they are answered in a more striking and illustrious manner. To mention particulars:

Was it necessary that the holiness and justice of God should be displayed in the salvation of sinners? See how bright they shine in a suffering Savior! Now it appears that such is the holiness and justice of God, that he will not let even his own Son escape unpunished, when he stands in the law-place of sinners, though guilty only by the slight stain (may I so speak) of imputation. Could the execution of everlasting punishment upon the hateful criminals themselves ever give so bright a display of these attributes? It were impossible. Again,

Was it a difficulty to save sinners, and yet maintain the rights of the divine government, and the honor of the law? See how this difficulty is removed by the obedience and death of Christ! Now it appears, that the rights of the divine government are so sacred and inviolable, that they must be maintained, though the darling Son of God should fall a sacrifice to justice; and that not one offence against this government can be pardoned, without his making a full atonement. Now it appears, that the Supreme Ruler is not to be trifled with, but that his injured honor must be repaired, though at the expense of his Son's blood and life. Now, the precept of the law is perfectly obeyed in every part, and a full equivalent to its penalty endured, by a person of infinite dignity; and it is only upon this footing, that is, of complete satisfaction to all the demands of the law, that any of the rebellious sons of men can be restored into favor. This is a satisfaction

which Christ alone could give: to sinners it is utterly impossible, either by doing or suffering. They cannot do all the things that are written in the law; nor can they endure its penalty, without being forever miserable: and therefore the law has received a more complete satisfaction in Christ than it would ever receive from the offenders themselves. Further,

Was it a difficulty how sinners might be saved, and yet the evil of sin be displayed in all its horrors? Go to the cross of Christ; there, ye fools, that make a mock of sin, there learn its malignity, and its hatefulness to the great God. There you may see it is so great an evil, that when it is but imputed to the man, that is God's fellow, as the surety of sinners, it cannot escape punishment. No, when that dreadful stain lay upon him, immediately the commission was given to divine justice, Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd. Zech, 13:7.—When Christ stood in the room of sinners, even the Father spared not his own Son, but gave him up to death. That the criminals themselves, who are an inferior race of creatures, should not escape would not be strange: but what an enormous evil must that be, which cannot be connived at even in the favorite of heaven, the only begotten Son of God! Surely nothing besides could give so striking a display of its malignity!

Was it a difficulty how to reconcile the salvation of sinners, and the public good? That is, how to forgive sins, and yet give an effectual warning against it? How to receive the sinner into favor, and advance him to the highest honor and happiness, and in the meantime deter all other beings from offending? All this is provided for in the sufferings of Christ as a surety. Let all worlds look to his cross, and receive the warning which his wounds, and groans, and blood, and dying agonies proclaim aloud; and sure they can



never dare to offend after the example of man. Now they may see that the only instance of pardon to be found in the universe was brought about by such means as are not likely to be repeated; by the incarnation and death of the Lord of glory. And can they flatter themselves that he will leave his throne and hang upon a cross, as often as any of his creatures wantonly dare to offend him? No; such a miracle as this, the utmost effort of divine grace, is not often to be renewed; and therefore, if they dare to sin, it is at their peril. They have no reason to flatter themselves they shall be favored like fallen man; but rather to expect they shall share in the doom of the fallen angels.

Or if they should think sin may escape with but a slight punishment, here they may be convinced of the contrary. If the Darling of heaven, the Lord of glory, though personally innocent, suffers so much when sin is but imputed to him, what shall the sinners themselves feel, who can claim no favor upon the footing of their own importance, or personal innocence? If these things be done “in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

Thus, my brethren, you may see how a way is opened through Jesus Christ for our salvation. All the ends of government may be answered, and yet you pardoned, and made happy. Those attributes of the divine nature, such as mercy and justice, which seemed to clash, are now reconciled; now they mingle their beams, and both shine with a brighter glory in the salvation of sinners, than either of them could apart. And must you not acknowledge this divine God-like scheme? Can you look round you over the works of the creation, and see the divine wisdom in every object, and can you not perceive the divine agency in this still more glorious work of redemption? Redemption, which gives a full view of the Deity, not as the sun in eclipse, half dark, half bright, but as,

*A God all o'er consummate, absolute,  
Full orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete.—Young.*

And shall not men and angels join in wonder and praise at the survey of this amazing scheme? Angels are rapt in wonder and praise, and will be so to all eternity. See! How they pry into this mystery! Hark! How they sing! “Glory to God in the highest” and celebrate the Lamb that was slain! And shall not men, who are personally interested in the affair, join with them? Oh! Are there none to join with them in this assembly? Surely, none can refuse!

Now, since all obstructions are removed on God’s part, that lay in the way of our salvation, why should we not all be saved together? What is there to hinder our crowding into heaven promiscuously? Or what is there requisite on our part, in order to make us partakers of this salvation? Here it is proper to pass on to the next truth inferred from the text, namely:

III. That the grand pre-requisite to your being saved in this way, is faith in Jesus Christ. Though the obstructions on God’s part are removed by the death of Christ, yet there is one remaining in the sinner, which cannot be removed without his consent; and which, while it remains, renders his salvation impossible in the nature of things; that is, the depravity and corruption of his nature. Till this is cured, he cannot relish those fruitions and employments in which the happiness of heaven consists, and consequently he cannot be happy there. Therefore there is a necessity, in the very nature of things, that he should be made holy, in order to be saved; nay, his salvation itself consists in holiness. Now, faith is the root of all holiness in a sinner. Without a firm realizing belief of the great truths of the gospel, it is impossible a sinner should be sanctified by their influence: and without a particular faith in Jesus Christ he cannot derive from him those

sanctifying influences by which alone he can be made holy, and which are conveyed through Jesus Christ, and through him alone.

Further: It would be highly incongruous, and indeed impossible, to save a sinner against his will, or in a way he dislikes. Now faith, as you shall see presently, principally consists in a hearty consent to and approbation of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, the only way in which a sinner can be saved consistently with the divine honor: so that the constitution of the gospel is not only just, but as merciful as it can be, when it ordains that only he that believeth shall be saved; but that he that believeth not, shall be damned.

Again: We cannot be saved through Jesus Christ, till his righteousness be so far made ours as that it will answer the demands of the laws for us, and procure the favor of God to us; but his righteousness cannot be thus imputed to us, or accounted ours in law, till we are so united to him as to be one in law, or one legal person with him. Now faith is the bond of union; faith is that which interests us in Christ; and therefore without faith we cannot receive any benefit from his righteousness.

Here then a most interesting inquiry presents itself: “What is it to believe in Jesus Christ? Or what is that faith which is the grand pre-requisite to salvation?” If you are capable of attention to the most interesting affair in all the world, attend to this with the utmost seriousness and solemnity.

Faith in Christ includes something speculative in it; that is, it includes a speculative rational belief, upon the testimony of God, that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of men. But yet it is not entirely a speculation, like the faith of multitudes among us: it is a more practical, experimental thing; and that you may understand its nature, you must take notice of the following particulars.

(1.) Faith pre-supposes a deep sense of our undone, helpless condition. I told you before, this is the condition of the world without Christ; and you must be sensible at heart that this is your condition in particular, before you can believe in him as your Savior. He came to be a Savior in a desperate case, when no relief could possibly be had from any other quarter, and you cannot receive him under that character till you feel yourselves in such a case; therefore, in order to your believing, all your pleas and excuses for your sins must be silenced, all your high conceit of your own goodness must be mortified, all your dependence upon your own righteousness, upon the merit of your prayers, your repentance, and good works, must be cast down, and you must feel that indeed you lie at mercy, that God may justly reject you forever, and that all you can do can bring him under no obligation to save you. These things you must be deeply sensible of, otherwise you can never receive the Lord Jesus Christ in that view in which he is proposed to you, namely, as a Savior in a desperate case.

I wish and pray you may this day see yourselves in this true, though mortifying light. It is the want of this sense of things that keeps such crowds of persons unbelievers among us. It is the want of this that causes the Lord Jesus to be so little esteemed, so little sought for, so little desired among us. In short, it is the want of this that is the great occasion of so many perishing from under the gospel, and, as it were, from between the hands of a Savior. It is this, alas! That causes them to perish, like the impenitent thief on the cross, with a Savior by their side. O that you once rightly knew yourselves, you would then soon know Jesus Christ, and receive salvation from his hand.

(2.) Faith implies the enlightening of the understanding to discover the suitableness of Jesus Christ as a Savior, and the excellency of the way of

salvation through him. While the sinner lies undone and helpless in himself, and looking about in vain for some relief, it pleases a gracious God to shine into his heart, and enables him to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now this once neglected Savior appears not only absolutely necessary, but also all-glorious and lovely, and the sinner's heart is rapt away, and forever captivated with his beauty: now the neglected gospel appears in a new light, as different from all his former apprehensions as if it were quite another thing. I have not time at present to enlarge upon this discovery of Christ and the gospel which faith includes; and indeed should I dwell upon it ever so long, I could not convey just ideas of it to such of you as have never had the happy experience of it. In short, the Lord Jesus, and the way of salvation through him, appear perfectly suitable, all-sufficient, and all-glorious: and in consequence of this,

(3.) The sinner is enabled to embrace this Savior with all his heart, and to give a voluntary, cheerful consent to this glorious scheme of salvation. Now all his former unwillingness and reluctance are subdued, and his heart no more draws back from the terms of the gospel, but he complies with them, and that not merely out of constraint and necessity, but out of free choice, and with the greatest pleasure and delight. How does his heart now cling to the blessed Jesus with the most affectionate endearment! How is he lost in wonder, joy, and gratitude, at the survey of the divine perfections, as displayed in this method of redemption! How does he rejoice in it, as not only bringing happiness to him, but glory to God; as making his salvation not only consistent with, but a bright illustration of, the divine perfections, and the dignity of his government! While he had no other but the low and selfish principles of corrupt nature, he had no concern about the honor of God; if he might be but saved, it was all he was solicitous about: but now he

has a noble, generous heart; now he is concerned that God should be honored in his salvation, and this method of salvation is recommended and endeared to him by the thought that it secures to God the supremacy, and makes his salvation subservient to the divine glory.

(4.) Faith in Jesus Christ implies a humble trust or dependence upon him alone for the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and every blessing. As I told you before, the sinner's self-confidence is mortified; he gives up all hopes of acceptance upon the footing of his own righteousness; he is filled with self-despair, and yet he does not despair absolutely; he does not give up himself as lost, but has cheerful hopes of becoming a child of God, and being forever happy, guilty and unworthy as he is; and what are these hopes founded upon? Why, upon the mere free grace and mercy of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. On this he ventures a guilty, unworthy, helpless soul, and finds it a firm, immovable foundation, while every other ground of dependence proves but a quicksand. There are many that flatter themselves they put their trust in God; but their trust wants sundry qualifications essential to a true faith. It is not the trust of a humble helpless soul that draws all its encouragement from the mere mercy of God, and the free indefinite offer of the gospel; but it is the presumptuous trust of a proud self-confident sinner, who draws his encouragement in part at least from his imaginary goodness and importance. It is not a trust in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, as the only medium through which it can be honorably conveyed; but either in the absolute mercy of God, without a proper reference to a Mediator, or in his mercy, as in some measure deserved or moved by something in the sinner. Examine whether your trust in God will stand this test.

I have now given you a brief answer to that grand question, What is it to believe in Jesus Christ? And I hope you understand it, though I have not enlarged so much upon it as I willingly would. I shall only add, that this faith may also be known by its inseparable effects; which are such as follow. Faith purifies the heart, and is a lively principle of inward holiness. Faith is always productive of good works, and leads us to universal obedience: faith overcomes the world and all its temptations: faith realizes eternal things, and brings them near; and hence it is defined by the apostle, The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11:1. Here I have a very important question to propose to you: Who among you can say, “Well, notwithstanding all my imperfections, and all my doubts and fears, I cannot but humbly hope, after the best examination I can make, that such a faith has been produced in this heart of mine?” And can you say so indeed? Then I bring you glad tidings of great joy; you shall be saved: yes, saved you shall be, in spite of earth and hell; saved, however great your past sins have been. Which thought introduces the glorious truth that comes next in order, namely:—

IV. My text implies, that every one, without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, shall certainly be saved.

The number or aggravations of sins do not alter the case; and the reason is, the sinner is not received into favor, in whole or in part, upon the account of anything personal, but solely and entirely upon the account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Now, this righteousness is perfectly equal to all the demands of the law; and therefore, when this righteousness is made over to the sinner as his by imputation, the law has no more demands upon him for great sins than for small, for many than for few; because all

demands are fully satisfied by the obedience of Jesus Christ to the law. You see that sinners of all characters who believe in him are put upon an equality in this respect: they are all admitted upon one common footing, the righteousness of Christ; and that is as sufficient for one as another.

This encouraging truth has the most abundant support from the Holy Scriptures. Observe the agreeable indefinite whosoever so often repeated. "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Whosoever he be, however vile, however guilty, however unworthy, if he does but believe, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life. What an agreeable assurance is this from the lips of him who has the final states of men at his disposal! The same blessed lips have also declared, Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37. And Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17. He has given you more than bare words to establish you in the belief of this truth; upon this principle he has acted, choosing some of the most abandoned sinners to make them examples, not of his justice, as we might expect, but of his mercy, for the encouragement of others. In the days of his flesh he was reproached by his enemies for his friendship to publicans and sinners; but sure it is, instead of reproaching, we must love him on this account. When he rose from the dead, he did not rise with angry resentment against his murderers; no, but he singles them out from a world of sinners, to make them the first offers of pardon through the blood which they had just shed. He orders that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke 24:47. At Jerusalem, where he had been crucified a few days before, there he orders the first publication of pardon and life to be made. You may see what monsters of sin he chose to make the monuments of his grace in Corinth. Neither fornicators, nor



idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. What a dismal catalogue is this! It is no wonder such a crew should not inherit the kingdom of heaven; they are fit only for the infernal prison; and yet astonishing I it follows, such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor. 6:9-11. What sinner after this can despair of mercy upon his believing in Jesus! St. Paul was another instance of the same kind: "This," says he, "is a faithful saying," a saying that may be depended on as true, "and worthy of all acceptance," from a guilty world, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting. 1 Tim. 1:15,16. A sinner of less size would not have answered this end so well; but if Saul the persecutor obtains mercy upon his believing, who can despair?

You see upon the whole, my brethren, you are not excluded from Christ and life by the greatness of your sins; but if you perish it must be from another cause: it must be on account of your willful unbelief in not accepting of Jesus Christ as your Savior. If you reject him, then indeed you must perish, however small your sins have been; for it is only his death that can make atonement for the slightest guilt; and if you have no interest in that, the guilt of the smallest sin will sink you into ruin.

Here is a door wide enough for you all, if you will but enter in by faith. Come, then, enter in, you that have hitherto claimed a horrid precedence in sin, that have been ringleaders in vice, come now take the lead, and show

others the way to Jesus Christ; harlots, publicans, thieves, and murderers, if such be among you, there is salvation even for you, if you will but believe. Oh! How astonishing is the love of God discovered in this way: a consideration which introduces the last inference from my text, namely,

V. That the constitution of this method of salvation, or the mission of a Savior into our world, is a most striking and astonishing display of the love of God:—God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, &c.

View the scheme all through, and you will discover love, infinite love, in every part of it. Consider the great God as self-happy and independent upon all his creatures, and what but love, self-moved love, could excite him to make such provision for an inferior part of them! Consider the world sunk in sin, not only without merit, but most deserving of everlasting punishment, and what but love could move him to have mercy upon such a world? Consider the Savior provided, not an angel, not the highest creature, but his Son, his only begotten Son; and what but love could move him to appoint such a Savior? Consider the manner in which he was sent, as a gift, a free unmerited gift; “God gave his only begotten Son:” And what but infinite love could give such an unspeakable gift? Consider the blessings conferred through this Savior, deliverance from perdition and the enjoyment of everlasting life, and what but the love of God could confer such blessings? Consider the condition upon which these blessings are offered, faith, that humble, self-emptying grace, so suitable to the circumstances of a poor sinner, that brings nothing, but receives all, and what but divine love could make such a gracious appointment? It is of faith, that it might be by grace. Rom. 4:16. Consider the indefinite extent or the universality of the offer, which takes in sinners of the vilest character, and excepts against none: Whosoever believeth shall not perish, &c. Oh what love is this! But I

must leave it as the theme of your meditations, not only in the house of your pilgrimage, but through all eternity: eternity will be short enough to pry into this mystery, and it will employ the understandings of men and angels through the revolutions of eternal ages.

And now, my brethren, to draw towards a conclusion, I would hold a treaty with you this day about the reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. I have this day set life and death before you: I have opened to you the method of salvation through Jesus Christ: the only method in which you can be saved; the only method that could afford a gleam of hope to such a sinner as I in my late approach to the eternal world. And now I would bring the matter home, and propose it to you all to consent to be saved in this method, or, in other words, to believe in the only begotten Son of God; this proposal I seriously make to you: and let heaven and earth, and your own consciences, witness that it is made to you: I also insist for a determinate answer this day; the matter will not admit of a delay, and the duty is so plain, that there is no need of time to deliberate. A Roman ambassador, treating about peace with the ambassador of a neighboring state, if I remember rightly, and finding him desirous to gain time by shuffling and tedious negotiations, drew a circle about him, and said, "I demand an answer before you go out of this circle." Such a circle let the walls of this house, or the extent of my voice, be to you: before you leave this house, or go out of hearing, I insist on a full, decisive answer of this proposal, Whether you will believe in Jesus Christ this day, or not?

But before I proceed any farther, I would remove one stumbling-block out of your way. You are apt to object, "You teach us that faith is the gift of God, and that we cannot believe of ourselves; why then do you exhort us to

it? Or how can we be concerned to endeavor that which it is impossible for us to do?”

In answer to this I grant the premises are true; and God forbid I should so much as intimate that faith is the spontaneous growth of corrupt nature, or that you can come to Christ without the Father’s drawing you: but the conclusions you draw from these premises are very erroneous. I exhort and persuade you to believe in Jesus Christ, because it is while such means are used with sinners, and by the use of them, that it pleases God to enable them to comply, or to work faith in them. I would therefore use those means which God is pleased to bless for this end. I exhort you to believe in order to set you upon the trial; for it is putting it to trial, and that only, which can fully convince you of your own inability to believe; and till you are convinced of this, you can never expect strength from God. I exhort you to believe, because, sinful and enfeebled as you are, you are capable of using various preparatives to faith. You may attend upon prayer, hearing, and all the outward means of grace with natural seriousness; you may endeavor to get acquainted with your own helpless condition, and, as it were, put yourselves in the way of divine mercy; and though all these means cannot of themselves produce faith in you, yet it is only in the use of these means you are to expect divine grace to work it in you: never was it yet produced in one soul, while lying supine, lazy, and inactive.

I hope you now see good reasons why I should exhort you to believe, and also perceive my design in it; I therefore renew the proposal to you, that you should this day, as guilty, unworthy, self-despairing sinners, accept of the only begotten Son of God as your Savior, and fall in with the gospel-method of salvation; and I once more demand your answer. I would by no means, if possible, leave the pulpit this day till I have effectually

recommended the blessed Jesus, my Lord and Master, to your acceptance. I am strongly bound by the vows and resolutions of a sick bed to recommend him to you; and now I would endeavor to perform my vows. I would have us all this day, before we part, consent to God's covenant, that we may go away justified to our houses.

To this I persuade and exhort you, in the name and by the authority of the great God, by the death of Jesus Christ for sinners, by your own most urgent and absolute necessity, by the immense blessings proposed in the gospel, and by the heavy curse denounced against unbelievers.

All the blessings of the gospel, pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, eternal life, and whatever you can want, shall become yours this day, if you but believe in the Son of God; then let desolation overrun our land, let public and private calamities crowd upon you, and make you so many Jobs for poverty and affliction, still your main interest is secure; the storms and waves of trouble can only bear you to heaven, and hasten your passage to the harbor of eternal rest. Let devils accuse you before God, let conscience indict you and bring you in guilty, let the fiery law make its demands upon you, you have a righteousness in Jesus Christ that is sufficient to answer all demands, and having received it by faith, you may plead it as your own in law. Happy souls! Rejoice in hope of the glory of God, for your hope will never make you ashamed!

But I expect, as usual, some of you will refuse to comply with this proposal. This, alas! Has been the usual fate of the blessed gospel in all ages and in all countries; as some have received it, so some have rejected it. That old complaint of Isaiah has been justly repeated thousands of times; Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Isa. 53:1. And is there no reason to pour it out from a broken heart over some of

you, my dear people? Are you all this day determined to believe? If so, I pronounce you blessed in the name of the Lord; but if not, I must denounce your doom.

Be it known to you then from the living God, that if you thus continue in unbelief, you shut the door of mercy against yourselves, and exclude yourselves from eternal life. Whatever splendid appearances of virtue, whatever amiable qualities, whatever seeming good works you have, the express sentence of the gospel lies in full force against you, He that believeth not shall be damned. Mark 16:16. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him. John 3:36. This is your doom repeatedly pronounced by him whom you must own to be the best friend of human nature; and if he condemn, who can justify you?

Be it also known to you, that you will not only perish, but you will perish with peculiar aggravations; you will fall with no common ruin; you will envy the lot of heathens who perished without the law; for oh! You incur the peculiarly enormous guilt of rejecting the gospel, and putting contempt upon the Son of God. This is a horrid exploit of wickedness, and this God resents above all the other crimes of which human nature is capable. Hence Christ is come for judgment as well as for mercy into this world, and he is set for the fall as well as the rising again of many in Israel. You now enjoy the light of the gospel, which has conducted many through this dark world to eternal day; but remember also, this is the condemnation; that is, it is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light. On this principle Jesus pronounced the doom of Chorazin and Bethsaida more intolerable than that

of Sodom and Gomorrah. Matt. 11:21,22. And would it not be hard to find a place in Virginia where the doom of unbelievers is likely to be so terrible as among us?

And now does not all this move you? Are you not alarmed at the thought of perishing; of perishing by the hand of a Savior rejected and despised; perishing under the stain of his profaned blood; perishing not only under the curse of the law, but under that of the gospel, which is vastly heavier? Oh! Are you hardy enough to venture upon such a doom? This doom is unavoidable if you refuse to comply with the proposal now made to you.

I must now conclude the treaty; but for my own acquittance, I must take witness that I have endeavored to discharge my commission, whatever reception you give it. I call heaven and earth, and your own consciences to witness, that life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, have been offered to you on this day; and if you reject it, remember it; remember it whenever you see this place; remember it whenever you see my face, or one another; remember it, that you may witness for me at the supreme tribunal, that I am clear of your blood. Alas! You will remember it among a thousand painful reflections millions of ages hence, when the remembrance of it will rend your hearts like a vulture. Many sermons forgotten upon earth are remembered in hell, and haunt the guilty mind forever. Oh that you would believe, and so prevent this dreadful effect from the present sermon!

# *SERM. III. SINNERS ENTREATED TO BE RECONCILED TO GOD.*

**2** Cor. 5:20.— *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

To preside in the solemnities of public worship, to direct your thoughts, and choose for you the subjects of your meditation on those sacred hours which you spend in the house of God, and upon the right improvement of which your everlasting happiness so much depends, this is a province of the most tremendous importance that can be devolved upon a mortal; and every man of the sacred character who knows what he is about, must tremble at the thought, and be often anxiously perplexed what subject he shall choose, what he shall say upon it, and in what manner he shall deliver his message. His success in a great measure depends upon his choice, for though the blessed Spirit is the proper agent, and though the best means, without his efficacious concurrence, are altogether fruitless, yet he is wont to bless those means that are best adapted to do good; and after a long course of languid and fruitless efforts, which seem to have been unusually disowned



by my divine Master, what text shall I choose out of the inexhaustible treasure of God's word? In what new method shall I speak upon it? What new untried experiments shall I make? Blessed Jesus! My heavenly Master! Direct thy poor perplexed servant who is at a loss, and knows not what to do; direct him that has tried, and tried again, all the expedients he could think of, but almost in vain, and now scarcely knows what it is to hope for success! Divine direction, my brethren, has been sought; and may I hope it is that which has turned my mind to address you this day on the important subject of your reconciliation to God, and to become a humble imitator of the great St. Paul, whose affecting words I have read to you. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The introduction to this passage you find in the foregoing verses, God hath given to us (the apostles) the ministry of reconciliation; the sum and substance of which is, namely, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." As if he had said, "The great Sovereign of the universe, though highly provoked, and justly displeased with our rebellious world, has been so gracious as to contrive a plan of reconciliation whereby they may not only escape the punishment they deserve, but also be restored to the favor of God, and all the privileges of his favorite subjects." This plan was laid in Christ; that is, it was he who was appointed, and undertook to remove all obstacles out of the way of their reconciliation, so that it might be consistent with the honor and dignity of God and his government. This he performed by a life of perfect obedience, and an atoning death, instead of rebellious man. Though "he knew no sin" of his own: yet "he was made sin," that is, a sin-offering, or a sinner by imputation "for us," that we might "be made the

righteousness of God in him.” Thus all hindrances are removed on God’s part. The plan of a treaty of reconciliation is formed, approved and ratified in the court of heaven; but then it must be published, all the terms made known, and the consent of the rebels solicited and gained. It is not enough that all impediments to peace are removed on God’s part; they must also be removed on the part of man; the reconciliation must be mutual; both the parties must agree. Hence arises the necessity of the ministry of reconciliation which was committed to the apostles, those prime ministers of the kingdom of Christ, and in a lower sphere to the ordinary ministers of the gospel in every age. The great business of their office is to publish the treaty of peace; that is, the articles of reconciliation, and to use every motive to gain the consent of mankind to these articles. It is this office St. Paul is discharging, when he says, We are ambassadors for Christy as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God.

We are ambassadors for Christ. The proper notion of an ambassador, is that of a person sent by a king to transact affairs in his name, and according to his instructions, with foreign states, or part of his subjects, to whom he does not think proper to go himself and treat with them in his own person. Thus a peace is generally concluded between contending nations, not by their kings in person, but by their plenipotentiaries, acting in their name, and by their authority; and, while they keep to their instructions, their negotiations and agreements are as valid and authentic as if they were carried on and concluded by their masters in person. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is not personally present in our world to manage the treaty of peace himself, but he has appointed first his apostles, and then the ministers of the gospel through every age, to carry it on in his name. This is their proper

character; they are ambassadors for Christ, his plenipotentiaries, furnished with a commission and instructions to make overtures of reconciliation to a rebel world, and treat with them to gain their consent.

Indeed, aspiring ecclesiastics have assumed high sounding titles merely to produce extravagant honors to themselves. They have called themselves the ambassadors of Christ, messengers from God, the plenipotentiaries and viceroys of heaven, and I know not what, not with a design to do honor to their Master, but to keep the world in a superstitious awe of themselves. This priestly pride and insolence I utterly abhor; and yet I humbly adventure to assume the title of an ambassador of the great King of heaven, and require you to regard me in this high character: but then you must know, that while I am making this claim, I own myself obliged inviolably to adhere to the instructions of my divine Master contained in the Bible. I have no power over your faith, no power to dictate or prescribe; but my work is only just to publish the articles of peace as my Master has established and revealed them in his word, without the least addition, diminution, or alteration. I pretend to no higher power than this, and this power I must claim, unless I would renounce my office; for who can consistently profess himself a minister of Christ, without asserting his right and power to publish what his Lord has taught, and communicate his royal instructions?

Therefore without usurping an equality with St. Paul, or his fellow apostles, I must tell you in his language, I appear among you this day as the ambassador of the most high God; I am discharging an embassy for Christ; and I tell you this with no other design than to procure your most serious regard to what I say. If you consider it only as my declaration, whatever regard you pay to it, the end of my ministry will not be answered upon you. The end of my office is not to make myself the object of your love and

veneration, but to reconcile you to God; but you cannot be reconciled to God while you consider the proposal as made to you only by your fellow mortal. You must regard it as made to you by the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Mediator between God and man. I not only allow, but even invite and charge you to inquire and judge whether what I say be agreeable to my divine instructions, which are as open to your inspection as mine, and to regard it no farther than it is so: but if I follow these instructions, and propose the treaty of peace to you just as it is concluded in heaven, then I charge you to regard it as proposed by the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, though through my unworthy lips. Consider yourselves this day as the hearers not of a preacher formed out of the clay like yourselves, but of the Lord Jesus Christ. Suppose him here in person treating with you about your reconciliation to God, and what regard you would pay to a proposal made by him in person, with all his divine royalties about him, that you should now show to the treaty I am to negotiate with you in his name and stead.

The next sentence in my text binds you still more strongly to this; as though God did beseech you by us. As if he had said, “God the Father also concurs in this treaty of peace, as well as Christ the great Peace-maker; and as we discharge an embassy for Christ, so we do also for God; and you are to regard our beseeching and exhorting, as though the great God did in person beseech and exhort you by us.” What astonishing condescension is here intimated! Not that the ministers of Christ should beseech you; this would be no mighty condescension: but that the supreme Jehovah should beseech you; that he should not only command you with a stern air of authority as your Sovereign, but as a friend, nay, as a petitioner, should affectionately beseech you, you despicable, guilty worms, obnoxious

rebels! How astonishing, how God-like, how unprecedented and inimitable is this condescension! Let heaven and earth admire and adore! It is by us, indeed, by us your poor fellow mortals, that he beseeches: but oh! Let not this tempt you to disregard him or his entreaty; though he employs such mean ambassadors, yet consider his dignity who sends us, and then you cannot disregard his message even from our mouth.

The apostle, having thus prepared the way, proceeds to the actual exercise of his office as an ambassador for Christ: We pray you, says he, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. As if he had said, "If Christ were now present in person among you, this is what he would propose to you, and urge upon you, that you would be reconciled to God: but him the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution of all things; but he has left us his poor servants to officiate in his place as well as we can, and we would prosecute the same design, we would urge upon you what he would urge, were he to speak; therefore we pray you, in his stead, be ye reconciled to God: we earnestly pray you to be reconciled; that is the utmost which such feeble worms as we can do; we can only pray and beg, but your compliance is not within the command of our power; the compliance belongs to you; and remember, if you refuse, you must take it upon yourselves, and answer the consequence."

Having thus explained the text, I proceed in my poor manner to exemplify it by negotiating the treaty with you for your reconciliation to God; and you see my business lies directly with such of you as are yet enemies to God: you are the only persons that stand in need of reconciliation. As for such of you (and I doubt not but there are such among you) whose innate enmity has been subdued, and who are become the friends and subjects of the King of heaven after your guilty revolt, I must desire you, as it were, to stand by

yourselves for the present hour, and help me by your ,prayers, while I am speaking to your poor brethren, who still continue in that state of hostility and rebellion against God, in which you once were, and the miseries of which you well know, and still lament and deplore.

But by this proposal I am afraid I have deprived myself of hearers on this subject; for have you not already placed yourselves among the lovers of God, who consequently do not need to be reconciled to him? Is not every one of you ready to say to me, “If your business only lies with the enemies of God, you have no concern with me in this discourse; for, God forbid that I should be an enemy to him. I have indeed been guilty of a great many sins, but I had no bad design in them, and never had the least enmity against my Maker; so far from it that I shudder at the very thought!” This is the first obstacle that I meet with in discharging my embassy; the embassy itself is looked upon as needless by the persons concerned, like an attempt to reconcile those that are good friends already. This obstacle must be removed before we can proceed any farther.

I am far from charging any of you with so horrid a crime as enmity and rebellion against God, who can produce satisfactory evidences to your own conscience that you are his friends. I only desire that you would not flatter yourselves, nor draw a rash and groundless conclusion in an affair of such infinite moment, but that you would put the matter to a fair trial, according to evidence, and then let your conscience pass an impartial sentence as your judge, under the supreme Judge of the world.

You plead “not guilty” to the charge, and allege that you have always loved God; but if this be the case, whence is it that you have afforded him so few of your affectionate and warm thoughts? Do not your tenderest thoughts dwell upon the objects of your love? But has not your mind been

shy of him who gave you your power of thinking? Have you not lived stupidly thoughtless of him for days and weeks together? Nay, have not serious thoughts of him been unwelcome, and made you uneasy? And have you not turned every way to avoid them? Have you not often prayed to him, and concurred in other acts of religious worship, and yet had but very few or no devout thoughts of him, even at the very time? And is that mind well affected towards him that is so averse to him, and turns every way to shun a glance of him? Alas! Is this your friendship for the God that made you, whose you are, and whom you ought to serve!

Would you not have indulged the fool's wish, that there were no God, had not the horror and impossibility of the thing restrained you? But, notwithstanding this restraint, has not this blasphemy shed its malignant poison at times in your hearts? If there was no God, then you would sin without control, and without dread of punishment; and how sweet was this! Then you would have nothing to do with that melancholy thing, religion; and what an agreeable exemption would this be? But is this your love for him, to wish the Parent of all beings out of being? Alas! Can the rankest enmity rise higher?

Again, if you are reconciled to God, whence is it that you are secretly, or perhaps openly, disaffected to his image, I mean the purity and strictness of his law, and the lineaments of holiness that appear upon the unfashionable religious few? If you loved God, you would of course love everything that bears any resemblance to him. But are you not conscious that it is otherwise with you; that you murmur and cavil at the restraints of God's law, and would much rather abjure it, be free from it, and live as you list? Are you not conscious that nothing exposes a man more to your secret disgust and contempt, and perhaps to your public mockery and ridicule, than a strict and

holy walk, and a conscientious observance of the duties of devotion? And if you catch your neighbor in any of these offences, do not your hearts rise against him? And what is this but the effect of your enmity against God? Do you thus disgust a man for wearing the genuine image and resemblance of your friend? No; the effect of love is quite the reverse.

Again, If you do but reflect upon the daily sensations of your own minds, must you not be conscious that you love other persons and things more than God? That you love pleasure, honor, riches, your relations and friends, more than the glorious and ever blessed God? Look into your own hearts, and you will find it so; you will find that this, and that, and a thousand things in this world, engross more of your thoughts, your cares, desires, joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears, than God, or any of his concerns. Now it is essential to the love of God that it be supreme. You do not love him truly at all, in the least degree, if you do not love him above all; above all persons and things in the whole universe. He is a jealous God, and will not suffer a rival. A lower degree of love for supreme excellence is an affront and indignity. Is it not therefore evident, even to your own conviction, that you do not love God at all? And what is this but to be his enemy? To be indifferent towards him, as though he were an insignificant being, neither good nor evil, a mere cipher; to feel neither love nor hatred towards him, but to neglect him, as if you had no concern with him one way or other; what a horrible disposition is this towards him, who is supremely and infinitely glorious and amiable, your Creator, your Sovereign, and Benefactor; who therefore deserves and demands your highest love; or, in the words of his own law, that you should love him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and. with all your strength. Mark 12:30. From what can such indifferency towards him proceed but from disaffection



and enmity? It is in this way that the enmity of men towards God most generally discovers itself. They feel, perhaps, no positive workings of hatred towards him, unless when their innate corruption, like an exasperated serpent, is irritated by conviction from his law; but they feel an apathy, a listlessness, an indifferency towards him; and because they feel no more, they flatter themselves they are far from hating him; especially as they may have very honorable speculative thoughts of him floating on the surface of their minds. But alas! This very thing, this indifferency, or listless neutrality, is the very core of their enmity; and if they are thus indifferent to him now, while enjoying so many blessings from his hand, and while he delays their punishment, how will their enmity swell and rise to all the rage of a devil against him, when he puts forth his vindictive hand and touches them, and so gives occasion to it to discover its venom? My soul shudders to think what horrid insurrections and direct rebellion this temper will produce when once irritated, and all restraints are taken off; which will be the doom of sinners in the eternal world; and then they will have no more of the love of God in them than the most malignant devil in hell! If, therefore, you generally feel such an indifferency towards God, be assured you are not reconciled to him, but are his enemies in your hearts.

Again, All moral evil, or sin, is contrary to God; it is the only thing upon earth, or in hell, that is most opposite to his holy nature; and the object of his implacable and eternal indignation. He is of purer eyes than to behold it or endure it. It is his hatred to sin that has turned his heart against any of his creatures, and is the cause of all the vengeance that he has inflicted upon the guilty inhabitants of our world, or the spirits of hell. There is no object in the whole compass of the universe so odious to you as every sin is to a pure and all-holy God: now it is impossible you should at once love two things

so opposite, so eternally irreconcilable. As much love as you have for any unlawful pleasure, just so much enmity there is in your hearts towards God. Hence, says St. Paul, you were enemies in your mind, by wicked works. Col. 1:21. Intimating that the love and practice of our wicked works is a plain evidence of inward enmity of mind towards God. The works of the flesh are sinful: hence, says the same apostle, the carnal mind, or the minding of the flesh, φρονημα της σαρκος, Rom. 8:7, is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so then they that are in the flesh, or under the power of a carnal mind, cannot please God. Rom. 8:8. Because, whatever seeming acts of obedience they perform, and whatever appearances of friendship they put on, they are at heart enemies to God, and therefore cannot please him, who searches their heart, and sees the secret principle of their actions. Hence also St. James tells us, that whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God, because the friendship of the world is enmity against God. James 4:4. For the world inflames the lusts of men, and occasions much sin; and if we love the tempter, we love the sin to which it would allure us; and if we love the sin, we are the enemies of God; and therefore the friendship of the world is enmity against God. This then is an established maxim, without straining the matter too far, that as far as you love any sin, so far are you enemies to God. The love, as well as the service of such opposite masters, is utterly inconsistent. Now, do not your own consciences witness against you, that you have indulged, and still do habitually indulge the love of some sin or other? Whether it be covetousness or sensual pleasure, or ambition, or some angry passion, or whatever sin it be, as far as you love it, so far you are enemies to God: and if you take a view of your temper and practice, must you not unavoidably be convicted of this dreadful guilt? Horrible as the

crime is, is it not an undeniable matter of fact, that you do really love some sin, and consequently hate the infinitely amiable and ever blessed God? And therefore you are the persons I have to deal with, as needing reconciliation with God.

Farther, take a view of your general manner of serving God in the duties of religion: your manner of praying, meditation, hearing the word of God, and other acts of devotion, and then inquire, Do you perform this service as the willing servants of a master you love? Do you not enter upon such service with reluctance or listlessness, and perform it with languor and indifferency as a business to which you have no heart? But is this your manner of performing a labor of love to a friend? Will your own reason suffer you to think you would be so luke-warm and heartless in the worship of God if you sincerely loved him? No; love is an active principle, a vigorous spring of action; and if this were the principle of your religious services, you would infuse more spirit and life into them, you would exert all your powers, and be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rom. 12:11.

But when you have performed offices of devotion with some degree of earnestness, which no doubt you have sometimes done, what was the principle or spring of your exertion? Was it the love of God? Or was it purely the low principle of self-love? Why did you pray with such eager importunity, and attend upon the other means of grace with so much seriousness, but because you apprehended your dear selves were in danger, and you were not willing to be miserable forever? This servile, mercenary kind of religious earnestness will not prove that you love God, but only that you love yourselves; and this you may do, and yet have no more true goodness, or genuine love to God than an infernal spirit; for there is not a spirit in hell but what loves himself. Indeed, selflove is so far from being an

evidence of the love of God, that the extravagant excess of it is the source of that wickedness that abounds among men and devils. I do not mean by this utterly to exclude self-love out of genuine religion; it must have its place in the most excellent and best beings, but then it must be kept in a proper subordination, and not advance the creature above the Creator, and dethrone the supreme King of the universe. His love must be uppermost in the heart, and when that has the highest place, the indulgence of self-love in pursuing our own happiness is lawful, and an important duty. Now, do you not find from this view of the case, that you are not reconciled to God, even in your most devout and zealous hours, much less in the languid, inactive tenor of your lives? If so, place yourselves among those that I have to do with to-day; that is, the enemies of God.

So also, when you perform good offices to mankind; when you are harmless, obliging neighbors; when you are charitable to the poor, or strictly just in trade; is the love of God, and a regard to his authority, the reason and principle of your actions? That is, do you do these things because God commands them, and because you delight to do what he commands? Or rather, do you not do them merely because it is your nature to perform humane and honorable actions in such instances; or because you may acquire honor, or some selfish advantage by them? Alas! That God should be neglected, forgotten, and left out of the question, as of no importance even in those actions that are materially good! That even what he commands should be done, not because he commands it, but for some other sordid, selfish reason! Oh! If you did really love God, would you thus disregard him, and do nothing for his sake, not only when you are doing what he forbids, but even when you are performing what he has made your duty! Would he be such a cipher, a mere nothing in your practical esteem, if

your hearts were reconciled to him as your God? No; such of you must look upon yourselves as the very persons whom I am to pray, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

I might thus, from obvious facts, lay before you many more evidences of your disaffection to the great God; but I must leave some room for the other part of my address to you, in which I am to persuade you to accept of the proposal of reconciliation; and therefore I shall add only one more test of your pretended friendship, a test which is established by the great Founder of our religion, as infallibly decisive in this case; and that is, obedience, or the keeping of the commandments of God. This, I say, is established in the strongest terms by Jesus Christ himself, as a decisive test of love, If you love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. John 15:14. If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings. John 14:23,24. This is the love of God, says St. John, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John 5:3. That is, they are not grievous when love is the principle of obedience. The service of love is always willing and pleasing. Now, my brethren bring your hearts and lives to this standard, and let conscience declare, Are there not some demands and restraints of the divine law so disagreeable to you, that you labor to keep yourselves ignorant of them, and turn every way to avoid the painful light of conviction? Are there not several duties which you know in your consciences to be such, which you do not so much as honestly endeavor to perform, but knowingly and willfully neglect? And are there not some favorite sins which your consciences tell you God has forbidden, which yet are so pleasing to you, that you knowingly and allowedly indulge and practice them? If this be your case, you need not pretend to plead anything

in your own defense, or hesitate any longer; the case is plain, you are, beyond all doubt, enemies to God; you are undeniably convicted of it this day by irresistible evidence. You perhaps glory in the profession of Christians, but you are, notwithstanding, enemies to God. You attend on public worship, you pray, you read, you communicate, you are perhaps a zealous churchman or dissenter, but you are enemies of God. You have perhaps had many fits of religious affection, and serious concern about your everlasting happiness, but notwithstanding you are enemies of God. You may have reformed in many things, but you are still enemies of God. Men may esteem you Christians, but the God of heaven accounts you his enemies. In vain do you insist upon it, that you have never hated your Maker all your life, but even tremble at the thought, for undeniable facts are against you; and the reason why you have not seen your enmity was, because you were blind, and judged upon wrong principles; but if you this day feel the force of conviction from the law, and have your eyes opened, you will see and be shocked at your horrid enmity against God, before yonder sun sets.

And now, when I have singled out from the rest those I am now to beseech to reconciliation with God, have I not got the majority of you to treat with? Where are the sincere lovers of God? Alas! How few are they! And how imperfect even in their love, so that they hardly dare call themselves lovers of God, but tremble lest they should still belong to the wretched crowd that are still unreconciled to him!

Ye rebels against the King of heaven! Ye enemies against my Lord and Master Jesus Christ! (I cannot flatter you with a softer name) hear me; attend to the proposal I make to you, not in my own name, but in the name and stead of your rightful Sovereign; and that is, that you will this day be

reconciled to God. “I pray you in his stead (that is all I can do) be ye reconciled to God.” That you may know what I mean, I will more particularly explain this overture to you.

If you would be reconciled to God you must be deeply sensible of the guilt, the wickedness, the baseness, the inexpressible malignity of your enmity and rebellion against him. You must return to your rightful Sovereign as convicted, self-condemned, penitent, broken-hearted rebels, confounded and ashamed of your conduct, loathing yourselves because you have loathed the supreme Excellence, mourning over your unnatural disaffection, your base ingratitude, your horrid rebellion against so good a King, And what do you say to this article of the treaty of peace? Is it a hard thing for such causeless enemies to fall upon the knee, and to mourn and weep as prostrate penitents at the feet of their injured Maker? Is it a hard thing for one that has all his life been guilty of the blackest crimes upon earth, or even in hell, I mean enmity against God, to confess “I have sinned,” and to feel his own confession? To feel it, I say; for if he does not feel it, his confession is but an empty compliment, that increases his guilt.

Again, if you would be reconciled to God, you must heartily consent to be reconciled to him in Christ; that is, you must come in upon the footing of that act of grace which is published in the gospel through Christ, and expecting no favor at all upon the footing of your own goodness. The merit of what you call your good actions, of your repentance, your prayers, your acts of charity and justice must all pass for nothing in this respect: you must depend only and entirely upon the merit of Christ’s obedience and sufferings as the ground of your acceptance with God; and hope for forgiveness and favor from his mere mercy bestowed upon you, only for the sake of Christ, or on account of what he has done and suffered in the stead

of sinners. The context informs you, that it is only in Christ that God is reconciling the world to himself; and consequently it is only in Christ that the world must accept of reconciliation and pardon. It does not consist with the dignity and perfections of the King of heaven to receive rebels into favor upon any other footing. I would have you consent to every article of the overture as I go along; and therefore here again I make a pause to ask you, what do you think of this article? Are you willing to comply with it, willing to come into favor with God, as convicted self-condemned rebels, upon an act of grace procured by the righteousness of Christ alone? Is it a mortification to creatures that never have done one action truly good in all their lives, because they have never loved God in one moment of their lives; creatures that have always, even in what they accounted their best dispositions, and best actions, been hateful to God, because even in their best dispositions, and best actions they were utterly destitute of his love? Is it a mortification to such creatures to renounce all their own merit, and consent to be saved only through grace, on account of the righteousness of another, even of Jesus Christ the great Peacemaker? Can it be a mortification to you to renounce what you have not, and to own yourselves guilty, and utterly unworthy, when you are really such? Oh! May I not expect your compliance with this term of reconciliation?

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you must engage yourselves in his service for the future, and devote yourselves to do his will. His law must be the rule of your temper and practice: whatever he commands you must honestly endeavor to perform, without exception of any one duty as disagreeable and laborious; and whatever he forbids, you must for that reason, abstain from, however pleasing, advantageous, or fashionable. You must no longer look upon yourself as your own, but as bought with a price,



and therefore bound to glorify God with your souls and your bodies, which are his. And can you make any difficulty of complying with this term; of obeying Him, whom the happy angels in heaven obey; of observing that law which always unites your duty and your happiness, and forbids nothing but what is itself injurious to you in the nature of things; of doing the will of the wisest and best of beings rather than your own, who are ignorant and depraved creatures? Oh! Can you make any difficulty of this? If not, you will return home this day reconciled to God; a happiness you have never yet enjoyed for one moment.

Finally, if you would be reconciled to God, you must break off all friendship with his enemies; your friendship with the world, I mean your attachment to its wicked fashions and customs, and your fondness for its rebellious inhabitants, who continue enemies to God; your love of guilty pleasures, and every form of sin, however pleasing or gainful you might imagine it to be; your old habits and practices, while enemies to God; all these you must break off for ever; for your friendship with these is utterly inconsistent with the love of God. As long as you are resolved to love the world, to keep up your society with your old companions in sin, to retain your old pleasures and evil practices; as long, I say, as you are resolved upon this course, farewell all hope of your reconciliation to God: it is absolutely impossible. And do any of you hesitate at this article? Is sin so noble a thing in itself, and so happy in its consequences, as that you should be so loth to part with it? Is it so sweet a thing to you to sin against God, that you know not how to forbear? Alas! Will you rather be an implacable enemy to the God that made you, than break your league with his enemies and your own! Do you love your sins so well, and are you so obliged to them, that you will lay down your life, your eternal life, for their sakes.

I might multiply particulars, but these are the principal articles of that treaty of peace, I am negotiating with you; and a consent to these includes a compliance with all the rest. And are you determined to comply? Does the heaven-born purpose now rise in your minds, “I am determined I will be an enemy of God no longer; but this very day I will be reconciled to God upon his own terms!” Is this your fixed purpose? Or is there any occasion to pray and persuade you?

I well know, and it is fit you should know, that you are not able of yourselves to consent to these terms, but that it is the work of the power of God alone to reconcile you to himself; and that all my persuasions and entreaties will never make you either able or willing. You will then ask me, perhaps, “Why do I propose the terms to you, or use any persuasives or entreaties with you?” I answer, because you never will be sensible of your inability till you make an honest trial, and because you never will look and pray for the aid of the blessed Spirit till you are deeply sensible of your own insufficiency; and further, because, if the blessed Spirit should ever effectually work upon you, it will be by enlightening your understandings to see the reasonableness of the terms, and the force of the persuasives; and in this way, agreeably to your reasonable natures, sweetly constraining your obstinate wills to yield yourselves to God; therefore the terms must be proposed to you, and persuasives used, if I would be subservient to this divine agent, and furnish him with materials with which to work; and I have some little hope that he will, as it were, catch my feeble words from my lips before they vanish into air, and bear them home to your hearts with a power which you will not be able to resist. Finally, a conviction of the true state of your case may constrain you from self-love and the low principles of nature to use the means of reconciliation with zeal and earnestness; this you are

capable of, even with the mere strength of degenerate nature; and it is only in this way of earnest endeavors that you have any encouragement to hope for divine aid; therefore, notwithstanding your utter impotence, I must pray, entreat, and persuade you to be reconciled to God.

I pray you, in the name of the great God your heavenly Father, and of Jesus Christ your Redeemer. If God should once more renew the thunder and lightning, and darkness and tempest of Sinai, and speak to you as he once did to the trembling Israelites; or if he should appear to you in all the amiable and alluring glories of a sin-pardoning reconcilable God, and pray you to be reconciled to him, would you not then regard the proposal? Or if Jesus, who once prayed for you from the cross, should now pray to you from his throne in heaven, and beg you with his own gracious voice to be reconciled, oh! Could you disregard the entreaty? Surely no. Now the overture of peace is as really made to you by the blessed God and his Son Jesus Christ, as if it were expressly proposed to you by an immediate voice from heaven. For I beseech you, as though God did beseech you by me, and it is in Christ's stead, that I pray you be reconciled to God. Therefore, however lightly you may make of a mere proposal of mine, can you disregard an overture from the God that made you, and the Savior that bought you with his blood! In which I am but the faint echo of their voice from heaven.

In the name of God I pray you; the name of the greatest and best of beings; that name which angels love and adore, and which strikes terror through the hardest devil in the infernal regions; the name of your Father; the immediate Father of your spirits, and the Author of your mortal frames; the name of your Preserver and Benefactor, in whom you live, and move, and have your being; and who gives you life, and breath, and all things; the

name of your rightful Sovereign and Lawgiver, who has a right to demand your love and obedience; the name of your supreme Judge, who will ascend the tribunal, and acquit or condemn you, as he finds you friends or foes; the name of that God, rich in goodness, who has replenished heaven with an infinite plenitude of happiness in which he will allow you to share after all your hostility and rebellion, if you consent to overtures of reconciliation; in the name of that God of terrible majesty and justice, who has prepared the dungeon of hell as a prison for his enemies, where he holds in chains the mighty powers of darkness, and thousands of your own race, who persisted in that enmity to him of which you are now guilty, and with whom you must have your everlasting portion, if, like them, you continue hardened and incorrigible in your rebellion; in the name of that compassionate God, who sent his dear Son (oh the transporting thought!) to satisfy divine justice for you by his death, and the precepts of the law by his life, and thus to remove all obstructions out of the way of your reconciliation on the part of God; in this great, this endearing and tremendous name, I pray you be reconciled to God. I pray you for his sake; and has his name no weight with you? Will you do nothing for his sake? What, not so reasonable and advantageous a thing as dropping your unnatural rebellion, and being reconciled to him? Is your contempt of God risen to that pitch that you will not do the most reasonable and profitable thing in the world, if he entreat you to do it? Be astonished, O ye heavens! At this.

I pray you both in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, the true friend of publicans and sinners, in his name and for his sake, who assumed your degraded nature, that he might dignify and save it; who lived a life of labor, poverty, and persecution on earth, that you might enjoy a life of everlasting happiness and glory in heaven; who died upon a torturing cross,

that you might sit upon heavenly thrones; who was imprisoned in the gloomy grave, that you might enjoy a glorious resurrection; who fell a victim to divine justice, that you might be set free from its dreadful arrest; who felt trouble and agony of soul, that you might enjoy the smiles, the pleasures of divine love; who, in short, has discovered more ardent and extensive love for you than all the friends in the world can do: in his name, and for his sake, I pray you to be reconciled to God. And is his dear name a trifle in your esteem? Will you not do anything so reasonable and so necessary, and conducive to your happiness for his sake; for his sake who has done and suffered so much for you? Alas! Has the name of Jesus no more influence among the creatures he bought with his blood? It is hard, indeed, if I beg in vain, when I beg for the sake of Christ, the Friend, the Savior of perishing souls.

But if you have no regard for him, you certainly have for yourselves; therefore, for your own sakes, for the sake of your precious immortal souls, for the sake of your own everlasting happiness, I pray you to be reconciled to God. If you refuse, you degrade the honor of your nature, and commence incarnate devils. For what is the grand constituent of a devil, but enmity against God? You become the refuse of the creation, fit for no apartment of the universe but the prison of hell. While you are unreconciled to God you can do nothing at all to please him. He that searches the heart knows that even your good actions do not proceed from love to him and therefore he abhors them. Ten thousand prayers and acts of devotion and morality, as you have no principles of real holiness, are so many provocations to a righteous God. While you refuse to be reconciled, you are accessory to, and patronize all the rebellion of men and devils; for if you have a right to continue in your rebellion, why may not others? Why may

not every man upon earth? Why may not every miserable ghost in the infernal regions? And are you for raising a universal mutiny and rebellion against the throne of the Most High! Oh the inexpressible horror of the thought! If you refuse to be reconciled, you will soon weary out the mercy and patience of God towards you, and he will come forth against you in all the terrors of an almighty enemy. He will give death a commission to seize you, and drag you to his flaming tribunal. He will break off the treaty, and never make you one offer of reconciliation more: he will strip you of all the enjoyments he was pleased to lend you, while you were under & reprieve, and the treaty was not come to a final issue; and will leave you nothing but bare being, and an extensive capacity of misery, which will be filled up to the uttermost from the vials of his indignation. He will treat you as his implacable enemy, and you shall be to him as Amalek, Exod. 17:16, with whom he will make war for ever and ever. He will reprove you, and set your sins in order before you, and tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver. He will meet you as a lion, “and as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of your hearts.” Hos. 13:8. He hath for a long time held his peace, and endured your rebellion; but ere long he will go forth as a mighty man: he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. Ah! He will ease him of his adversaries, and avenge him of his enemies. He will give orders to the executioners of his justice: Those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me. Luke 19:27. And now, if you will not submit to peace, prepare to meet your God, oh sinners! Gird up your loins like men; put on all the terror of your rage, and go forth to meet your almighty adversary, who will soon meet you in the field, and try your strength. Call the legions of hell to your aid, and

strengthen the confederacy with all your fellow-sinners upon earth; put briers and thorns around you to enclose from his reach. Prepare the dry stubble to oppose devouring flame. Associate yourselves, but ye shall be broken in pieces: gird yourselves; but alas! Ye shall be broken to pieces.

But oh! I must drop this ironical challenge, and seriously pray you to make peace with him whom you cannot resist: then all your past rebellion will be forgiven; you shall be the favorites of your sovereign, and happy for ever; and earth and heaven will rejoice at the conclusion of this blessed peace; and my now sad heart will share in the joy. Therefore, for your own sakes I pray you to be reconciled to God.

# *SERM. IV. THE NATURE AND UNIVERSALITY OF SPIRITUAL DEATH.*

**E**phes. 2:1 and 5.— *Who were dead in trespasses and sins.—Even when we were dead in sins.*

There is a kind of death which we all expect to feel, that carries terror in the very sound, and all its circumstances are shocking to nature. The ghastly countenance, the convulsive agonies, the expiring groan, the coffin, the grave, the devouring worm, the stupor, the insensibility, the universal inactivity, these strike a damp to the spirit, and we turn pale at the thought. With such objects as these in view, courage fails, levity looks serious, presumption is dashed, the cheerful passions sink, and all is solemn, all is melancholy. The most stupid and hardy sinner cannot but be moved to see these things exemplified in others; and when he cannot avoid the prospect, he is shocked to think that he himself must feel them.

But there is another kind of death little regarded in deed, little feared, little lamented, which is infinitely more terrible—the death, not of the body, but of the soul; a death which does not stupefy the limbs, but the faculties of the mind; a death which does not separate the soul and body, and consign the



latter to the grave, but that separates the soul from God, excludes it from all the joys of his presence, and delivers it over to everlasting misery; a tremendous death indeed! “A death unto death.” The expression of St. Paul is prodigiously strong and striking: Θανάτος εις θάνατον. Death unto death, death after death, in all dreadful succession, and the last more terrible than the first, 2 Cor. 2:16, and this is the death meant in my text, dead in trespasses and sins.

To explain the context and show you the connection I shall make two short remarks.

The one is, That the apostle had observed in the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the foregoing chapter that the same almighty power of God, which raised Christ from the dead, is exerted to enable a sinner to believe.— We believe, says he, according to the working or energy Ενέργειαν of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. The one, as well as the other, is an exploit of omnipotence. The exceeding greatness of his mighty power is exerted towards us that believe, as well as it was upon the dead body of Christ to restore it to life, after it had been torn and mangled upon the cross, and lain three days and three nights in the grave. What strong language is this! What a forcible illustration! Methinks this passage alone is sufficient to confound all the vanity and self-sufficiency of mortals, and entirely destroy the proud fiction of a self-sprung faith produced by the efforts of degenerate nature. In my text the apostle assigns the reason of this. The same exertion of the same power is necessary in the one case and the other; because, as the body of Christ was dead, and had no principle of life in it, so says he, ye were dead in trespasses and sins; and therefore could no more quicken yourselves than a dead body can restore itself to life. But God, verse 4th, who is rich in

mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us; that God, who raised the entombed Redeemer to life again, that same almighty God, by a like exertion of the same power, hath quickened us, verse 5th, even when we were dead in sins; dead, senseless, inactive, and incapable of animating ourselves. Let any man carefully read these verses, and consider their most natural meaning, and I cannot but think common sense will direct him thus to understand them. The Scriptures were written with a design to be understood; and therefore that sense which is most natural to a plain unprejudiced understanding is most likely to be true.

The other remark is, That the apostle having pronounced the Ephesians dead in sin, while unconverted, in the first verse, passes the same sentence upon himself and the whole body of the Jews, notwithstanding their high privileges, in the fifth verse. The sense and connection may be discovered in the following paraphrase: “You Ephesians were very lately heathens, and, while you were in that state, you were spiritually dead, and all your actions were dead works. In time past ye walked in trespasses and sins, nor were you singular in your course; though it be infinitely pernicious, yet it is the common course of this world, and it is also agreeable to the temper and instigation of that gloomy prince, who has a peculiar power in the region of the air; that malignant spirit who works with dreadful efficacy in the numerous children of disobedience; but this was not the case of you heathens alone: we also who are Jews, notwithstanding our many religious advantages, and even I myself, notwithstanding my high privileges and unblemishable life as a Pharisee, we also, I say, had our conversation in times past among the children of disobedience; we all, as well as they, walked in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires and inclinations (θελήματα) of our sensual flesh, and of our depraved minds; for these were

tainted with spiritual wickedness, independent upon our animal passions and appetites; and we are all, even by nature, children of wrath even as others; in this respect we Jews were just like the rest of mankind, corrupt from our very birth, transgressors from the womb, and liable to the wrath of God. Our external relation and privileges as the peculiar people of God, distinguished with a religion from heaven, make no distinction between us and others in this matter. As we are all children of disobedience by our lives, so we are all, without exception, children of wrath by nature; but when we were all dead in sins, when Jews and Gentiles were equally dead to God, then, even then, God who is rich in mercy, had pity upon us; he quickened us;” “he inspired us with a new and spiritual life by his own almighty power, which raised the dead body of Christ from the grave.” He quickened us together with Christ: “We received our life by virtue of our union with him as our vital head, who was raised to an immortal life, that he might quicken dead souls by those influences of his spirit which he purchased by his death; and therefore by grace are ye saved.” It is the purest, richest, freest grace, that such dead souls as we were made alive to God, and not suffered to remain dead forever.

This is the obvious meaning and connection of these verses; and we now proceed to consider the text, dead in trespasses and sins; you dead, we dead, Jews and Gentiles all dead together in trespasses and, sins. A dismal, mortifying character! “This one place,” says Beza, “like a thunder-bolt, dashes all mankind down to the dust, great and proud as they are; for it pronounces their nature not only hurt but dead by sin, and therefore liable to wrath.”

Death is a state of insensibility and inactivity, and a dead man is incapable of restoring himself to therefore the condition of an unconverted sinner

must have some resemblance to such a state, in order to support the bold metaphor here used by the apostle. To understand it aright we must take care, on the one hand, that we do not explain it away in flattery to ourselves, or in compliment to the pride of human nature; and, on the other hand, that we do not carry the similitude too far, so as to lead into absurdities, and contradict matter of fact.

The metaphor must be understood with several limitations or exceptions; for it is certain there is a wide difference between the spiritual death of the soul, and the natural death of the body, particularly in this respect, that death puts an entire end to all the powers, actions, and sensations of our animal nature universally, with regard to all objects of every kind: but a soul dead in sin is one partially dead; that is, it is dead only with regard to a certain kind of sensations and exercises, but in the meantime it may be all life and activity about other things. It is alive, sensible, and vigorous about earthly objects and pursuits; these raise its passions and engage its thoughts. It has also a dreadful power and faculty of sinning, this is not its life but its disease, its death, like the tendency of a dead body to corruption. It can likewise exercise its intellectual powers, and make considerable improvements in science. A sinner dead in trespasses and sins may be a living treasury of knowledge, a universal scholar, a profound philosopher, and even a great divine, as far as mere speculative knowledge can render him such; nay, he is capable of many sensations and impressions from religious objects, and of performing all the external duties of religion. He is able to read, to hear, to pray, to meditate upon divine things; nay, he may be an instructor of others, and preach perhaps with extensive popularity; he may have a form of godliness, and obtain a name to live among men; he is in some measure able, and it is his duty to attend upon the means God has

instituted for quickening him with spiritual life, and God deals with him as with a rational creature, by laws, sanctions, promises, exhortations, and invitations: these concessions I make not only to give you the sense of the text, but also to prevent the abuse of the doctrine, and anticipate some objections against it, as though it were an encouragement to continue idle, and use no means to obtain spiritual life: or as though it rendered all the means of grace needless and absurd, like arguments to the dead, to restore themselves to life. But, notwithstanding all these concessions, it is a melancholy truth that an unregenerate sinner is dead. Though he can commit sin with greediness, though he is capable of animal actions and secular pursuits, nay, though he can employ his mind even about intellectual and spiritual things, and is capable of performing the external duties of religion, yet there is something in religion with regard to which he is entirely dead: there is a kind of spiritual life of which he is entirely destitute: he is habitually insensible with regard to things divine and eternal: he has no activity, no vigor in the pure, spiritual and vital exercises of religion: he has no prevailing bent of mind towards them: he has not those views and apprehensions of things which a soul spiritually alive would necessarily receive and entertain: he is destitute of those sacred affections, that joy, that love, that desire, that hope, that fear, that sorrow, which are, as it were, the innate passions of the new man. In short, he is so inactive, so listless, so insensible in these respects, that death, which puts an end to all action and sensation, is a proper emblem of his state; and this is the meaning of the apostle in my text. He is also utterly unable to quicken himself. He may indeed use means in some sort; but to implant a vital principle in his soul, but to give himself vivid sensations of divine things, and make himself alive towards God, this is entirely beyond his utmost

ability; this is as peculiarly the work of almighty power as the resurrection of a dead body from the grave. As to this death it is brought upon him by, and consists in, trespasses and sins. The innate depravity and corruption of the heart, and the habits of sin contracted and confirmed by repeated indulgences of inbred corruption, these are the poisonous, deadly things that have slain the soul; these have entirely indisposed and disabled it for living religion. Trespasses and sins are the grave, the corrupt effluvia, the malignant damps, the rottenness of a dead soul: it lies dead, senseless, inactive, buried in trespasses and sins. Trespasses and sins render it ghastly, odious, abominable, a noisome putrefaction before a holy God, like a rotten carcass, or a mere mass of corruption; the vilest lusts, like worms, riot upon and devour it, but it feels them not, nor can it lift a hand to drive the venom off. Such mortifying ideas as these may be contained in the striking metaphor, dead in trespasses and sins; and I hope you now understand its general meaning.

If you would know what has turned my thoughts to this subject, I will candidly tell you, though with a sorrowful heart. I am sure, if any objects within the compass of human knowledge have a tendency to make the deepest impressions upon our minds, they are those things which Christianity teaches us concerning God, concerning ourselves, and a future state; and if there be any exercises which should call forth all the life and powers of our souls into action, they are those of a religious nature: but alas! I often find a strange, astonishing stupor and listlessness about these things. In this I am not singular; the best among us complain of the same thing; the most lively Christians feel this unaccountable languor and insensibility; and the generality are evidently destitute of all habitual concern about them: they are all alive in the pursuit of pleasure, riches, or

honors; their thoughts are easily engaged, and their affections raised by such things as these: but the concerns of religion, which above all other things are adapted to make impressions upon them, and stir up all the life within them, seem to have little or no effect. When I have made this observation with respect to others, and felt the melancholy confirmation of it in my own breast, I have really been struck with amazement, and ready to cry out, “Lord, what is this that has befallen me, and the rest of my fellow-mortals? What can be the cause of such conduct in rational nature, to be active and eager about trifles, and stupid and careless about matters of infinite importance? Oh, whence is this strange infatuation?” Thus I have been shocked at this astonishing fact, and I could account for it in no other way but by reflecting that we have all been dead in trespasses and sins. In such a solemn hour the apostle’s expression does not seem at all too strong. I have no scruple at all to pronounce, not only from the authority of an apostle, but from the evidence of the thing, that I, and all around me, yea, and all the sons of men, have been dead; in the spiritual sense, utterly dead. Multitudes among us, yea, the generality are dead still; hence the stillness about religion among us; hence the stupor, the carelessness about eternal things, the thoughtless neglect of God, the insensibility under his providential dispensations, the impenitence, the presumption that so much prevail. God has indeed, out of the great love wherewith he loved us, quickened some of us, even when we were dead in sins; and we have a little life, some vital sensations and impressions at times, but oh! How little, how superficial, how much of a deadly stupor yet remains! How little life in prayer, in hearing, or in the nearest approach to the living God! The reflection is shocking, but alas! It is too true; consult your own hearts and you will find it even so. Animal life seems to be a gradual thing; it

gradually grows in an infant, it is perfect in mature age, and in old age it gradually decays till all is gone; but how small is the degree of life when the foetus is just animated, or the infant born into the world! But little superior to that of a plant or an oyster. What faint sensations, what obscure and languid perceptions, what feeble motions! Such are the children of grace in the present state. Spiritual life is gradual; it is infused in regeneration; but oh! How far from perfection while on this side heaven! Alas! The best of us are like the poor traveler that fell among thieves, and was left half dead; however, it is an unspeakable mercy to have the least principle of spiritual life; and we should prize it more than crowns and empires.

If you would know my design in choosing this subject, it is partly for the conviction of sinners, that they may be alarmed with their deplorable condition, which is the first step towards their being quickened; partly to rouse the children of grace to seek more life from their vital head; and partly to display the rich grace of God in quickening such dead sinners, and bestowing upon them a spiritual and immortal life; and surely nothing can inflame our gratitude and raise our wonder more than the consideration that we were dead in trespasses and sins! If I may but answer these ends, it will be an unspeakable blessing to us all. And oh, that divine grace may honor this humble attempt of a poor creature, at best but half alive, with success! I hope, my brethren, you will hear seriously for it is really a most serious subject.

You have seen that the metaphorical expression in my text is intended to represent the stupidity, inactivity, and impotence of unregenerate sinners about divine things. This truth I might confirm by argument and Scripture authority; but I think it may be a better method for popular conviction to prove and illustrate it from plain instances of the temper and conduct of



sinner about the concerns of religion, as this may force the conviction upon them from undoubted matters of fact and their own experience.

This, therefore, is the method I intend to pursue; and my time will allow me to particularize only the following instances.

I. Consider the excellency of the divine Being, the sum total, the great original of all perfections. How infinitely worthy is he of the adoration of all his creatures! How deserving of their most intense thoughts and most ardent affections! If majesty and glory can strike us with awe and veneration, does not Jehovah demand them, who is clothed with majesty and glory as with a garment, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers, as nothing, as less than nothing, and vanity? If wisdom excites our pleasing wonder, here is an unfathomable depth. Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! If goodness, grace, and mercy attract our love and gratitude, here these amiable perfections shine in their most alluring glories. If justice strikes a damp to the guilty, here is justice in all its tremendous majesty. If veracity, if candor, if any, or all of the moral virtues engage our esteem, here they all center in their highest perfection. If the presence of a king strikes a reverence; if the eye of his judge awes the criminal, and restrains him from offending, certainly we should fear before the Lord all the day, for we are surrounded with his omnipresence, and he is the inspector and judge of all our thoughts and actions. If riches excite desire, here are unsearchable riches: if happiness has charms that draw all the world after it, here is an unbounded ocean of happiness; here is the only complete portion for an immortal mind. Men are affected with these things in one another, though found in a very imperfect degree. Power awes and commands; virtue and goodness please; beauty charms; justice strikes with solemnity and terror; a bright genius is

admired; a benevolent, merciful temper is loved: thus men are affected with created excellences. Whence is it, then, they are so stupidly unaffected with the supreme excellences of Jehovah?

Here, my brethren, turn your eyes inward upon yourselves, and inquire, are not several of you conscious that, though you have passions for such objects as these, and you are easily moved by them, yet, with regard to the perfections of the supreme and best of beings, your hearts are habitually senseless and unaffected? It is not an easy thing to make impressions upon you by them; and what increases the wonder, and aggravates your guilt, is, that you are thus senseless and unaffected, when you believe and profess that these perfections are really in God, and that in the highest degree possible. In other cases you can love what appears amiable, you revere what is great and majestic, you eagerly desire and pursue what is valuable and tends to your happiness; and all this you do freely, spontaneously, vigorously, by the innate inclination and tendency of your nature, without reluctance, without compulsion, nay, without persuasion; but as to God and all his perfections, you are strangely insensible, backward, and averse. Where is there one being that has any confessed excellency in the compass of human knowledge, that does not engage more of the thoughts and affections of mankind than the glorious and ever blessed God? The sun, moon, and stars have had more worshippers than the uncreated fountain of light from which they derive their luster. Kings and ministers of state have more punctual homage and more frequent applications made to them than the King of kings and Lord of lords. Created enjoyments are more eagerly pursued than the supreme good. Search all the world over, and you will find but very little motions of heart towards God; little love, little desire, little searching after him. You will often, indeed, see him honored with the

compliment of a bended knee, and a few heartless words, under the name of a prayer; but where is the heart, or where are the thoughts, where the affections? These run wild through the world, and are scattered among a thousand other objects. The heart has no prevailing tendency toward God, the thoughts are shy of him, the affections have no innate propensity to him. In short, in this respect, the whole man is out of order: here he does not at all act like himself; here are no affectionate thoughts, no delightful meditations, no ardent desires, no eager pursuits and vigorous endeavors; but all is listless, stupid, indisposed, inactive, and averse: and what is the matter?—"Lord! What is this that has seized the souls of thine own offspring, that they are thus utterly disordered towards thee?" The reason is, they are dead, dead in trespasses and sins. It is impossible a living soul should be so stupid and unaffected with such an object; it must be a dead soul that has no feeling. Yes, sinners, this is the melancholy reason why you are so thoughtless, so unconcerned, so senseless about the God that made you: you are dead. And what is the reason that you, who have been begotten again to a spiritual life, and who are united to Christ as your vital head, what is the reason that you so often feel such languishments; that the pulse of spiritual life beats so faint and irregular, and that its motions are so feeble and slow? All this you feel and lament, but how comes it to pass? What can be the cause that you, who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, and are sensible that he is all-glorious and lovely, and your only happiness—Oh! What can be the cause, that you, of all men in the world, should be so little engaged to him? Alas! The cause is, you have been dead, and the deadly stupor has not yet left you: you have (blessed be the quickening Spirit of Christ!) you have received a little life; but, alas I it is a feeble spark; it finds the principles of death still strong in your constitution; these

it must struggle with, and by them it is often borne down, suppressed, and just expiring. Walk humbly, then, and remember your shame, that you were once dead, and children of wrath, even as others. The carelessness and indisposition of the soul towards the supreme excellence will appear yet more evident and astonishing, if we consider,

II. The august and endearing relations the great and blessed God sustains to us, and the many ways he has taken to make dutiful and grateful impressions upon our hearts. What tender endearments are there contained in the relation of a Father! This he bears to us: he made us, and not we ourselves. Our bodies, indeed, are produced in a succession from Adam by generation, but who was it that began the series? It was the Almighty, who formed the first man of the dust: it was he who first put the succession of causes in motion; and, therefore, he is the grand original cause, and the whole chain depends upon him. Who was it that first established the laws of generation, and still continues them in force? It is the all-creating parent of nature: and without him men would have been no more able to produce one another than stones or clods of earth. As to our souls, the principal part of our persons, God is their immediate author, without the least concurrence of secondary causes. Hence he is called the Father of your spirits in a peculiar sense, Heb. 12:9; and he assumes the endearing name of “the God of the spirits of all flesh.” Numb. 16:22. Now the name of a father is wont to carry some endearment and authority. Children, especially in their young and helpless years, are fond of their father; their little hearts beat with a thousand grateful passions towards him; they love to be dandled on his knees, and fondled in his arms; and they fly to him upon every appearance of danger: but if God be a father, where is his honor? Here, alas! The filial passions are senseless and immoveable. It is but a little time since we came

from his creating hand, and yet we have forgotten him. It seems unnatural for his own offspring to inquire, “Where is God my Maker?” They show no fondness for him, no affectionate veneration, and no humble confidence; their hearts are dead towards him, as though there were no such being, or no such near relation subsisting between them. In childhood, a rattle or a straw, or any trifle, is more thought of than their heavenly Father: in riper years, their vain pleasures and secular pursuits command more of their affections than their divine original and only happiness.

Compare your natural temper towards your heavenly Father, and towards your earthly parents, and how wide is the difference! Nature works strong in your hearts towards them, but towards him all the filial passions are dull and dead; and why? Alas! The reason is, you are dead in trespasses and sins. But this relation of a Father is not the only relation our God sustains to you; he is your supreme King, to whom you owe allegiance; your Lawgiver, whose will is the rule of your conduct; and your Judge, who will call you to an account, and reward or punish you according to your works; but how unnatural is it to men to revere the most high God under these august characters! Where is there a king upon earth, however weak or tyrannical, but is more regarded by his subjects than the King of heaven by the generality of men? Were ever such excellent laws contemned and violated? Did ever criminals treat their judge with so much neglect and contempt? And are these souls alive to God who thus treat him? No. Alas! “they are dead in trespasses and sins;” however lively they are towards other things, yet in this respect they are seized with a deadly stupor. God is also our Guardian and Deliverer; and from how many dangers has he preserved us! From how many calamities has he delivered us! Dangers, distresses and deaths crowd upon us, and surround us in every age and every place: the air,

the earth, the sea, and every element, are pregnant with numberless principles of pain and death ready to seize and destroy us: sickness and death swarm around us: nay, they lie in ambush in our own constitution, and are perpetually undermining our lives, and yet our divine Guardian preserves us for months and years unhurt, untouched; or if he suffers the calamity to fall, or death to threaten, he flies to. our deliverance; and how many salvations of this kind has he wrought for us; salvations from accidents, from sicknesses, from pain, from sorrows, from death; salvations from dangers seen and unseen; salvations in infancy, in youth, and in maturer years! These things we cannot deny without the most stupid ignorance, and an atheistical disbelief of divine Providence. Now, such repeated, such long-continued, such unmerited favors as these would not pass for nothing between man and man. We have hearts to feel such obligations; nay, the ten thousandth, the millionth part of such gracious care and goodness would be gratefully received, and thankfully acknowledged. Indeed it is impossible we should receive even this small, this very small proportion of favors from men in comparison of what we receive from God; and even when they are the instruments of our deliverance, he is the original Author. But after all, is there a natural aptitude in the hearts of men to think of their gracious Guardian and Savior? Does the principle of gratitude naturally lead them to love him, and to make thankful acknowledgments to him? Alas! No. They may indeed feel some transient, superficial workings of gratitude when under the fresh sense of some remarkable deliverance; but these impressions soon wear off, and they become as thoughtless and stupid as ever. But let a man, like yourselves, save you from some great distress, you will always gratefully remember him, think of him often with pleasure, and take all opportunities of

returning his kindness, especially if your deliverer was much your superior, and independent upon you; if you had forfeited his favor, provoked him, and incurred his displeasure: great favors from such a one would make impressions upon the most obdurate heart.

But though God be infinitely superior to us, and it is nothing to him what becomes of us, though we have rebelled against him, and deserve his vengeance, yet ten thousand deliverances from his hands have little or no effect upon the hearts of men: all these cannot bring them to think of him, or love him as much as they do a friend, or a common benefactor of their own species; and does such stupid ingratitude discover any spiritual life in them? No: they are dead in this respect, though they are all alive to those passions that terminate upon created objects. Further, God is the Benefactor of mankind, not only in delivering them from dangers and calamities, but in bestowing unnumbered positive blessings upon them. Here I cannot pretend to be particular, for the list of blessings is endless; and it will be the happy employment of an eternity to recollect and enumerate them. What an extensive and well-furnished world has our God formed for our accommodation! For us he has enriched the sun with light and heat, and the earth with fruitfulness. The numerous inhabitants of every element, the plants, minerals, and beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, are all rendering their service to man; some afford him food, and others work for him: the wind and seas, fire and water, stones and trees, all conspire to be useful to him. Our divine Benefactor crowns us with the blessings of liberty, of society, of friendship, and the most endearing relations: he preserves our health, gives us “rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness.” In short, he gives us life, and breath, and all things; every day, every hour, every moment hits

arrived to us richly freighted with blessings; blessings have resided with us at home, and attended us abroad; blessings presented themselves ready for our enjoyment as soon as we entered into the world; then God provided hands to receive us, knees to support us, breasts to suckle us, and parents to guard and cherish us; blessings have grown up with us, and given such constant attendance, that they are become familiar to us, and are the inseparable companions of our lives. It is no new or useful thing to us to see an illustrious sun rising to give us the day, to enjoy repose in the night, to rise refreshed and vigorous in the morning, to see our tables spread with plenty, the trees covered with fruit, the fields with grain and various forms of animals growing up for our support or service. These are such familiar blessings to us, that they too often seem things of course, or necessary appendages of our being. What a crowd of blessings have crowned the present morning! You and yours are alive and well, you have not come hither ghastly and pining with hunger, or agonizing with pain. How many refreshing draughts of air have you drawn this morning! How many sprightly and regular pulses have beat through your frame! How many easy motions have you performed with hands, feet, eyes, tongues, and other members of your body! And are not all these favors from God? Yes, undoubtedly; and thus has he gone on blessing you all your days, without any interruption at all in many of these particulars of kindness, and with but very little in the rest. Sinful and miserable as this world is, it is a treasury rich in blessings, a storehouse full of provisions, a dwelling well-furnished for the accommodation of mortals, and all by the care, and at the expense of that gracious God who first made and still preserves it what it is. “Lord, whence is it then that the inhabitants forget and neglect thee, as though they were not at all obliged to thee? Oh! Whence is it that they love thy gifts,



and yet disregard the Giver? That they think less of thee than an earthly father or friend, or a human benefactor; that there should be so little gratitude towards thee, that of all benefactors thou shouldst be the least acknowledged; that the benefactors of nations, and even of private persons, in instances unworthy to be mentioned with those of thy goodness, should be celebrated, and even adored, while thou art neglected, thine agency overlooked, and thy goodness forgotten? Oh! Whence is this strange phenomenon, this unaccountable, unprecedented stupidity and ingratitude in reasonable creatures? Surely, if they had any life, any sensation in this respect, they would not be capable of such a conduct; but they are dead, dead to all the generous sensations of gratitude to God; and as a dead corpse feels no gratitude to those that perform the last friendly office and cover it with earth, so a dead soul stands unmoved under all the profusion of blessings which heaven pours upon it.”

The blessings I have mentioned, which are confined to the present state, are great, and deserve our wonder and thanksgiving; especially, considering that they are bestowed upon a race of rebellious, ungrateful creatures, who deserve the severest vengeance; but there is a set of blessings yet unmentioned, of infinitely greater importance, in which all others are swallowed up, by the glory of which they are obscured, like the stars of night by the rising sun. To some of our race God has given crowns and kingdoms. For Israel Jehovah wrought the most astonishing miracles; seas and rivers opened to make way for them; rocks burst into springs of water to quench their thirst; the clouds poured down manna, and fed them with bread from heaven; their God delivered Daniel from the jaws of hungry lions, and his three companions from the burning fiery furnace. He has restored health to the sick, sight to the blind, and life to the dead. These

blessings and deliverances have something majestic and striking in them: and had we been the subjects of them, we could not but have regarded them as great and singular; but what are these in comparison of God's gift of his Son, and the blessings he has purchased! His Son, who is of greater value, and dearer to him than ten thousand worlds; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; him has he given for us, given up to three-and-thirty years of the most mortifying abasement, and an incessant conflict with the severest trials; given up to death, and all the ignominy and agonies of crucifixion. Thus has God loved our world! And never was there such a display of love in heaven or on earth. You can no more find love equal to this among creatures, than you can find among them the infinite power that formed the universe out of nothing.

This will stand upon record to all eternity, as the unprecedented, unparalleled, inimitable love of God. And it appears the more illustrious when we consider that this unspeakable gift was given to sinners, to rebels, to enemies, that were so far from deserving it, that, on the other hand, it is a miracle of mercy that they are not all groaning forever under the tremendous weight of his justice. Oh! That I could say something becoming this love; something that might do honor to it! But, alas! The language of mortals was formed for lower subjects. This love passes all description and all knowledge. Consider also what rich blessings Christ has purchased for us; purchased not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood; the price recommends and endears the blessings, though they are so great in themselves, as to need no such recommendation! What can be greater or more suitable blessings to persons in our circumstances, than pardon for the guilty, redemption for slaves, righteousness and justification for the condemned, sanctification for the

unholy, rest for the weary, comfort for mourners, the favor of God for rebels and exiles, strength for the impotent, protection for the helpless, everlasting happiness for the heirs of hell, and, to sum up all, grace and glory, and every good thing, and all the unsearchable riches of Christ for the wretched and miserable, the poor, the blind, and naked! These are blessings indeed, and, in comparison of them, all the riches of the world are impoverished, and vanish to nothing; and all these blessings are published, offered freely, indefinitely offered to you, to me, to the greatest sinner on earth, in the gospel; and we are allowed— allowed, did I say? We are invited with the utmost importunity, entreated with the most compassionate tenderness and condescension, and commanded by the highest authority, upon pain of eternal damnation, to accept the blessings presented to us! And what reception does all this love meet with in our world? I tremble to think of it.

It is plain, these things are proposed to a world dead in sin; for they are all still, all unmoved, all senseless under such a revelation of infinite grace; mankind know not what it is to be moved, melted, transported with the love of a crucified Savior, till divine grace visits their hearts, and forms them into new creatures; they feel no longer solicitude, nay, not so much as willingness to receive these blessings, till they become willing by almighty power: and judge ye, my brethren, whether they are not dead souls that are proof even against the love of God in Christ, that are not moved and melted by the agonies of his cross, that are careless about such inestimable blessings as these? Has that soul any spiritual life in it, that can sit senseless under the cross of Jesus, that can forget him, neglect him, dishonor him, after all his love and all his sufferings: that feels a prevailing indifference and languor towards him; that loves him less than an earthly friend, and seeks him with less eagerness than gold and silver? Is not every generous

passion, every principle of gratitude quite extinct in such a spirit? It may be alive to other objects, but towards this it is dead, and alas! Is not this the common case? Oh look round the world, and what do you see but a general neglect of the blessed Jesus, and all the blessings of his gospel? How cold, how untoward, how reluctant, how averse are the hearts of men towards him! How hard to persuade them to think of him and love him! Try to persuade men to give over their sins which grieve him, dishonor him, and were the cause of his death; try to engage them to devote themselves entirely to him, and live to his glory, alas! You try in vain; their hearts still continue cold and hard as a stone; try to persuade them to murder or robbery, and you are more likely to prevail. Suffer me, in my astonishment, to repeat this most melancholy truth again; the generality of mankind are habitually careless about the blessed Jesus; they will not seek him, nor give their hearts and affections, though they must perish forever by their neglect of him! Astonishing, and most lamentable, that ever such perverseness and stupidity should seize the soul of man! Methinks I could here take up a lamentation over human nature, and fall on my knees with this prayer for my fellow men, "Father of spirits, and Lord of life, quicken, oh quicken these dead souls!" Oh, Sirs, while we see death all around us, and feel it benumbing our own souls, who can help the most bitter wailing and lamentation? Who can restrain himself from crying to the great Author of life for a happy resurrection? While the valley of dry bones lies before me, while the carnage, the charnel-house of immortal souls strikes my sight all around me far and wide, how can I forbear crying, Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live! But to turn from this digression, into which I was unavoidably hurried by the horror of the subject, I would observe farther, that kind usage and pleasing

treatment may not always be best for such creatures as we are: fatherly severities and chastisements, though not agreeable to us, yet may be necessary and conducive to our greatest good. Accordingly, God has tried the force of chastisements to make impressions on our hearts: these indeed have been but few in comparison of his more agreeable dispensations; yet recollect whether you have not frequently felt his rod. Have you not languished under sickness and pain, and been brought within a near view of the king of terrors? Have you not suffered the bereavement of friends and relations, and met with losses, adversity, and disappointments? Others have felt still greater calamities in a closer succession, and with fewer mercies intermixed. These things, one would think, would immediately bring men to regard the hand that smites them, and make them sensible of their undutiful conduct, which has procured the correction; these are like the application of fire to one in a lethargy, to awaken him to life; but alas! Under all these afflictions the stupor and insensibility still remain. Sinners groan by reason of oppression, but it is not natural for them to inquire, Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night? It is not natural for them to repent of their undutiful conduct and amend; or if they are awakened to some little sense, while the painful rod of the Almighty is yet upon them, as soon as it is removed they become as hardened and senseless as ever. And is not a state of death a very proper representation of such sullen, incorrigible stupidity? Living souls have very tender sensations; one touch of their heavenly Father's hand makes deep impressions upon them; they tremble at his frown, they fall and weep at his feet, they confess their offences, and mourn over them; they fly to the arms of mercy to escape the impending blow; and thus would all do were they not quite destitute of spiritual life.

I have materials sufficient for a discourse of some hours; but at present I must abruptly drop the subject: however, I cannot dismiss you without making a few reflections. And,

1. What a strange, affecting view does this subject give us of this assembly! I doubt not but I may accommodate the text to some of you with this agreeable addition, “You hath he quickened, though you were once dead in trespasses and sins.” Though the vital pulse beats faint and irregular, and your spiritual life is but very low, yet, blessed be God, you are not entirely dead: you have some living sensations, some lively and vigorous exercises in religion. On the other hand, I doubt not but some of you not only were, but still are, dead in trespasses and sins. It is not to be expected in our world, at least not before the millennium, that we shall see such a mixed company together, and all living souls. Here then is the difference between you; some of you are spiritually alive, and some of you are spiritually dead; here the living and the dead are blended together in the same assembly, on the same seat, and united in the nearest relations: here sits a dead soul, there another, and there another, and a few living souls scattered here and there among them; here is a dead parent and a living child, or a dead child and a living parent; here life and death (oh, shocking!) are united in the bonds of conjugal love, and dwell under the same roof: here is a dead servant and a living master: and there a dead master (oh, terrible!) commands a living servant. Should I trace the distinction beyond this assembly into the world, we shall find a family here and there that have a little life; perhaps one, perhaps two, discover some vital symptoms; but oh, what crowds of dead families! All dead together, and no endeavors used to bring one another to life; a death-like silence about eternal things; a deadly stupor and insensibility reign among them; they breathe out no

desires and prayers after God, nor does the vital pulse of love beat in their hearts towards him; but, on the contrary, their souls are putrefying in sin, which is very emphatically called corruption by the sacred writers; they are overrun and devoured by their lusts, and worms insult and destroy the dead body. Call to them, they will not awake; thunder the terrors of the Lord in their ears, they will not hear; offer them all the blessings of the gospel, they will not stretch out the hand of faith to receive them; lay the word of God, the bread of life, before them, they have no appetite for it. In short, the plain symptoms of death are upon them: the animal is alive, but alas! The spirit is dead towards God. And what an affecting, melancholy view does this give of this assembly, and of the world in general! Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Weep not for the afflicted, weep not over ghastly corpses dissolving into their original dust, but oh! Weep for dead souls. Should God now strike all those persons dead in this assembly, whose souls are dead in trespasses and sins, should he lay them all in pale corpses before us, like Ananias and Sapphira at the apostles' feet, what numbers of you would never return from this house more, and what lamentations would there be among the surviving few! One would lose a husband or a wife, another a son or a daughter, another a father or a mother; alas! Would not some whole families be swept off together, all blended in one promiscuous death? Such a sight as this would strike terror into the hardest heart among you. But what is this to a company of rational spirits slain and dead in trespasses and sins? How deplorable and inexpressibly melancholy a sight this! Therefore,

2. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. This call is directed to you, dead sinners; which is a sufficient

warrant for me to exhort and persuade you. The principle of reason is still alive in you; you are also sensible of your own interest, and feel the workings of self-love. It is God alone that can quicken you, but he effects this by a power that does not exclude, but attends rational instructions and persuasions to your understanding. Therefore, though I am sure you will continue dead still if left to yourselves, yet with some trembling hopes that his power may accompany my feeble words, and impregnate them with life, I call upon, I entreat, I charge you sinners to rouse yourselves out of your dead sleep, and seek to obtain spiritual life! Now, while my voice sounds in your ears, now, this moment, waft up this prayer, “Lord, pity a dead soul, a soul that has been dead for ten, twenty, thirty, forty years or more, and lain corrupting in sin, and say unto me, Live: from this moment let me live unto thee.” Let this prayer be still upon your hearts: keep your souls always in a supplicating posture, and who knows but that he, who raised Lazarus from the grave, may give you a spiritual resurrection to a more important life? But if you willfully continue your security, expect in a little time to suffer the second death; the mortification will become incurable; and then, though you will be still dead to God, yet you will be “tremblingly alive all over” to the sensation of pain and torture. Oh that I could gain but this one request of you, which your own interest so strongly enforces! But alas! It has been so often refused, that to expect to prevail is to hope against hope.

3. Let the children of God be sensible of their happiness in being made spiritually alive. Life is a principle, a capacity necessary for enjoyments of any kind. Without animal life you would be as incapable of animal pleasures as a stone or a clod; and without spiritual life you can no more enjoy the happiness of heaven than a beast or a devil. This therefore is a preparative, a previous qualification, and a sure pledge and earnest of



everlasting life. How highly then are you distinguished, and what cause have you for gratitude and praise!

4. Let us all be sensible of this important truth, that it is entirely by grace we are saved. This is the inference the apostle expressly makes from this doctrine; and he is so full of it, that he throws it into a parenthesis, (verse the 5th,) though it breaks the connection of his discourse; and as soon as he has room he resumes it again, (verse 8th,) and repeats it over and over, in various forms, in the compass of a few verses. By grace ye are saved. By grace are you saved through faith. It is the gift of God; —not of yourselves —not of works, (verse 9th.) This, you see, is an inference that seemed of great importance to the apostle; and what can more naturally follow from the premises? If we were once dead in sin, certainly it is owing to the freest grace that we have been quickened; therefore, when we survey the change, let us cry, “Grace, grace unto it!”

# *SERM. V. THE NATURE AND PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.*

**E**phes. 2:4,5.— *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.*

It is not my usual method to weary your attention by a long confinement to one subject; and our religion furnishes us with such a boundless variety of important topics, that a minister who makes them his study will find no temptation to cloy you with repetitions, but rather finds it difficult to speak so concisely on one subject, as to leave room for others of equal importance; however, the subject of my last discourse was so copious and interesting, that I cannot dismiss it without a supplement. I there showed you some of the symptoms of spiritual death; but I would not leave you dead as I found you; and therefore I intend now to consider the counterpart of that subject, and show you the nature and symptoms of spiritual life.

I doubt not but a number of you have been made alive to God by his quickening spirit; but many, I fear, still continue dead in trespasses and sins; and, while such are around me, I cannot help imagining my situation

something like that of the prophet Ezekiel (chap. 37.) in the midst of the valley full of dry bones, spread far and wide around him; and should I be asked, Can these dry bones, can these dead souls live? I must answer with him,—Oh, Lord God, thou knowest. Lord, I see no symptoms of life in them, no tendency towards it. I know nothing is impossible to thee; I firmly believe thou canst inspire them with life, dry and dead as they are; and what thy designs are towards them, whether thou intendest to exert thy all-quickenning power upon them, thou only knowest, and I would not presume to determine; but this I know, that, if they are left to themselves, they will continue dead to all eternity; for, oh Lord, the experiment has been repeatedly tried; thy servant has over and over made those quickening applications to them, which thy word, that sacred dispensary, prescribes; but all in vain: they still continue dead towards thee, and lie putrefying more and more in trespasses and sins; however, at thy command, I would attempt the most unpromising undertaking; I would proclaim even unto dry bones and dead souls, Oh ye dry bones, oh ye dead souls, hear the word of the Lord! Ezek. 37:4. I would also cry aloud for the animating breath of the Holy Spirit, Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live, ver. 9.

Ye dead sinners, I would make one attempt more in the name of the Lord to bring you to life; and if I have the least hope of success, it is entirely owing to the encouraging peradventure that the quickening spirit of Christ may work upon your hearts while I am addressing myself to your ears. And, oh sirs, let us all keep our souls in a praying posture, throughout this discourse. If one of you should fall into a swoon or an apoplexy, how would all about you bestir themselves to bring you to life again! And alas! Shall dead souls lie so thick among us, in every assembly, in every family; and

shall no means be used for their recovery? Did Martha and Mary apply to Jesus with all the arts of importunity in behalf of their sick and deceased brother, and are there not some of you that have dead relations, dear friends and neighbors, I mean dead in the worst sense, “dead in trespasses and sins?” and will you not apply to Jesus, the Lord of life, and follow him with your importunate cries, till he come and call them to life? Now let parents turn intercessors for their children, children for their parents, friend for friend, neighbor for neighbor, yea, enemy for enemy. Oh! Should we all take this method, we might soon expect to see the valley of dry bones full of living souls, an exceeding great army. Ezek. 37:10.

In praying for this great and glorious event, you do not pray for an impossibility. Thousands as dead as they, have obtained a joyful resurrection by the power of God. Here in my text you have an instance of a promiscuous crowd of Jews and Gentiles that had lain dead in sin together, and even St. Paul among them, who were recovered to life, and are now enjoying an immortal life in the heavenly regions; and, blessed be God, this spiritual life is not entirely extinct among us. Among the multitudes of dead souls that we everywhere meet with, we find here and there a soul that has very different symptoms: once indeed it was like the rest; but now, while they are quite senseless of divine things, and have no vital aspirations after God, this soul cannot be content with the richest affluence of created enjoyment; it pants and breathes after God; it feeds upon his word, it feels an almighty energy in eternal things, and receives vital sensations from them. It discovers life and vigor in devotion, and serves the living God with pleasure, though it is also subject to fits of languishment, and at times seems just expiring, and to lose all sensation. And whence is this vast difference? Why is this soul so different from what it once was, and what

thousands around still are? Why can it not, like them, and like itself formerly, lie dead and senseless in sin, without any vital impressions or experiences from God or divine things? The reason is, the happy reason, my brethren, is, this is a living soul: “God, out of the great love wherewith he loved it, hath quickened it together with Christ,” and hence it is alive to him.

My present design is to explain the nature and properties of this divine life, and to show you the manner in which it is usually begun in the soul: I shall open with the consideration of the last particular.

Here you must observe, that, though spiritual life is instantaneously infused, yet God prepares the soul for its reception by a course of previous operations. He spent six days in the creation of the world, though he might have spoken it into being in an instant. Thus he usually creates the soul anew after a gradual process of preparatory actions. In forming the first man, he first created chaos out of nothing, then he digested it into earth; on the sixth day he formed and organized the earth into a body, with all its endless variety of members, juices, muscles, fibers, veins, and arteries; and then, after this process, he inspired it with a living soul; and what was but a lump of clay, sprung up a perfect man. Thus also the foetus in the womb is for some months in formation before the soul, or the principle of life, is infused. In like manner the Almighty proceeds in quickening us with spiritual life; we all pass through a course of preparation, though some through a longer, and some shorter. And as one reason why the great Creator took up so much time in the creation of the world, probably was, that he might allow the angels time for leisurely surveys of the astonishing process, so he may advance thus gradually in the new creation, that we may observe the various steps of the operation, and make proper reflections

upon it in future life. My present design is to trace these steps to their grand result, that you may know whether ever divine grace has carried you through this gracious process.

And that you may not fall into needless perplexities, it may be necessary for me to premise farther, that there is a great variety in these preparatory operations, and in the degrees of spiritual life. Indeed the difference is only circumstantial, for the work is substantially the same, and spiritual life is substantially the same in all; but then, in such circumstances as the length of time, the particular external means, the degree of previous terror, and of subsequent joy and vitality, &c., God exercises a sovereign freedom, and shows that he has a variety of ways by which to accomplish his end; and it is no matter how we obtain it, if we have but spiritual life. I shall therefore endeavor to confine myself to the substance of this work, without its peculiarities, in different subjects; and, when I cannot avoid descending to particulars, I shall endeavor so to diversify them, as that they may be easily adapted to the various cases of different Christians. To draw their common lineaments, whereby they may be distinguished from all others, is sufficient to my present purpose: whereas, to draw the particular lineaments, or peculiar features, whereby they may be distinguished from one another, is a very difficult task, and cannot be of any great service to what I have now in design.

I have only one thing more to premise, and that is, that the way by which divine grace prepares a sinner for spiritual life, is by working upon all the principles of the rational life, and exciting him to exert them to the utmost to obtain it. Here it is proper for you to recollect what I observed in my last discourse, that even a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, is alive and capable of action in other respects: he can not only perform the actions and

feel the sensations of animal life, but he can also exercise his intellectual powers about intellectual objects, and even about divine things: he is capable of thinking of these, and of receiving some impressions from them: he is also capable of attending upon the ordinances of the gospel, and performing the external duties of religion. These things a sinner may do, and yet be dead in sin. Indeed he will not exercise his natural powers about these things while left to himself: he has the power, but then he has no disposition to employ it: he is indeed capable of meditating upon spiritual things, but what does this avail when he will not turn his mind to such objects? Or if he does, he considers them as mere speculations, and not as the most interesting and important realities. How few, or how superficial and unaffecting are a sinner's thoughts of them! Heaven and hell are objects that may strike the passions, and raise the joys and fears of a natural man, but in general he is little or nothing impressed with them. He is capable of prayer, hearing, and using the means of grace; but I believe, if you make observations upon the conduct of mankind, that you will find they are but seldom employed in these duties, or that they perform them in such a careless manner, that that they have no tendency to answer the end of their institution. In short, the more I know of mankind, I have the lower opinion of what they will do in religion when left to themselves. They have a natural power, and we have seen all possible means used with them to excite them to put it forth; but alas! All is in vain, and nothing will be done to purpose till God stir them up to exert their natural abilities; and this he performs as a preparative for spiritual life. He brings the sinner to exert all his active powers in seeking this divine principle: nature does her utmost, and all outward means are tried before a supernatural principle is implanted.

The evangelist John has given us the history of the resurrection of the dead body of Lazarus after it had been four days in the grave; and I would now give you the history of a more glorious resurrection, the resurrection of a soul that had lain dead for months and years, yet is at last quickened by the same almighty power with a divine and immortal life.

Should I exemplify it by a particular instance, I might fix upon this or that person in this assembly, and remind you, and inform others, of the process of this work in your souls. And oh! How happy are such of you, that you may be produced as instances in this case!

You lay for ten, twenty, thirty years, or more, dead in trespasses and sins; you did not breathe and pant like a living soul after God and holiness; you had little more sense of the burden of sin than a corpse of the pressure of a mountain; you had no appetite for the living bread that came down from heaven; the vital pulse of sacred passions did not beat in your hearts towards God and divine things, but you lay putrefying in sin; filthy lusts preyed upon you like worms on the bodies of the dead; you spread the contagion of sin around you by your conversation and example, like the stench and corrupt effluvia of a rotten carcass; you were odious and abominable to God, fit to be shut up in the infernal pit, out of his sight: and you were objects of horror and lamentation to all that knew and daily considered your case, your deplorable case. During this time many quickening applications were made to you; you had friends that used all means to bring you to life again; but alas! All in vain; conscience proved your friend, and pierced and chafed you, to bring you to some feeling, but you remained still senseless, or the symptoms of life soon vanished. God did not cast you away as irrecoverably dead, but stirred and agitated you within, and struggled long with the principles of death to subdue them: and



if it was your happy lot to live under a faithful ministry, the living oracles that contain the seeds of the divine life were applied to you with care and solicitude. The terrors of the Lord were thundered in your ears to awaken you. The experiment of a Savior's dying love, and the rich grace of the gospel, were repeatedly tried upon you: now you were carried within hearing of the heavenly music, and within sight of the glories of Paradise, to try if these would charm you; now you were, as it were, held over the flames of hell, that they might by their pungent pains scorch and startle you into life. Providence also concurred with these applications, and tried to recover you by mercies and judgments, sickness and health, losses and possessions, disappointments and successes, threatening's and deliverances. If it was your unhappy lot to lie among dead souls like yourself, you had indeed but little pity from them, nay, they and Satan were plying you with their opiates and poison to confirm the deadly sleep. And oh! How astonishing is it that you should be quickened in a charnel-house, in the mansions of the dead, with dead souls lying all around you! But if it was your happiness to be in the society of the living, they pitied you, they stirred and agitated you with their warnings and persuasions, they, like Martha and Mary in behalf of their deceased brother, went to Jesus with their cries and importunities, "Lord, my child, my parent, my servant, my neighbor is dead, oh come and restore him to life! Lord, if thou hadst been here, he would not have died; but even now I know it is not too late for thee to raise him." Thus, when one is dead in our heavenly Father's family, the whole house should be alarmed, and all the domestics be busy in trying to bring him to life again. But, oh! Reflect with shame and sorrow how long all these quickening applications were in vain; you still lay in a dead sleep, or, if at times you seemed to move, and gave us hopes you were coming to life

again, you soon relapsed, and grew as senseless as ever. And alas! Are there not some of you in this condition to this very moment? Oh deplorable sight! May the hour come, and oh that this may be the hour, in which such dead souls shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live. John 5:25.

But as to such of you in whom I would exemplify this history of a spiritual resurrection, when your case was thus deplorable, and seemingly helpless, the happy hour, the time of love came, when you must live. When all these applications had been unsuccessful, the all-quickenings Spirit of God had determined to exert more of his energy, and work more effectually upon you. Perhaps a verse in your Bible, a sentence in a sermon, an alarming Providence, the conversation of a pious friend, or something that unexpectedly occurred to your own thoughts, first struck your minds with unusual force; you found you could not harden yourselves against it as you were wont to do; it was attended with a power you never before had felt, and which you could not resist; this made you thoughtful and pensive, and turned your minds to objects that you were wont to neglect; this made you stand and pause, and think of the state of your neglected souls; you began to fear matters were wrong with you; “What will become of me, when I leave this world? Where shall I reside forever? Am I prepared for the eternal world? How have I spent my life?” These, and the like inquiries, put you to a stand, and you could not pass over them so superficially as you were wont to do; your sins now appeared to you in a new light; you were shocked and surprised at their malignant nature, their number, their aggravations, and their dreadful consequences. The great God, whom you were wont to neglect, appeared to you as a Being that demanded your regard; you saw he was indeed a venerable, awful, majestic Being, with whom you had the most important concern: in short, you saw that such a life as you had led

would never bring you to heaven: you saw you must make religion more your business than you had ever done, and hereupon you altered your former course: you broke off from several of your vices, you deserted your extravagant company, and you began to frequent the throne of grace, to study religion, and to attend upon its institutions: and this you did with some degree of earnestness and solicitude.

When you were thus reformed, you began to flatter yourself that you had escaped out of your dangerous condition, and secured the divine favor: now you began to view yourselves with secret self-applause as true Christians; but all this time the reformation was only outward, and there was no new principle of a divine supernatural life implanted in your hearts: you had not the generous passions and sensations of living souls towards God, but acted entirely from natural, selfish principles: you had no clear heart-affecting views of the intrinsic evil, and odious nature of sin, considered in itself, nor of the entire universal corruption of your nature, and the necessity not only of adorning your outer man by an external reformation, but of an inward change of heart by the almighty power of God: you were not deeply sensible of the extent and spirituality of the divine law, nor of the infinite purity and inexorable justice of the Deity: you had no love for religion and virtue for their own sakes, but only on account of their happy consequences. Indeed your love of novelty and a regard to your own happiness might so work upon you, for a time, that you might have very raised and delightful passions in religious duties; but all your religion at that time was a mere system of selfishness, and you had no generous disinterested delight in holiness for its own excellency, nor did you heartily relish the strictness of pure, living religion: you were also under the government of a self-righteous spirit: your own good works were the ground of your hopes, and

you had no relish for the mortifying doctrine of salvation through the mere mercy of God and the righteousness of Jesus Christ: though your education taught you to acknowledge Christ as the only Savior, and ascribe all your hopes to his death, yet in reality he was of very little importance in your religion; he had but little place in your heart and affections, even when you urged his name as your only plea at the throne of grace: in short you had not the spirit of the gospel, nor any spiritual life within you. And this is all the religion with which multitudes are contented: with this they obtain a name that they live; but in the sight of God, and in reality, they are dead; and had you been suffered to rest here, according to your own desire, you would have been dead still.

But God, who is rich (oh how inconceivably rich!) in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved you, resolved to carry on his works in you; and therefore, while you were flattering yourselves, and elated with a proud conceit of a happy change in your condition, he surprised you with a very different view of your case; he opened your eyes farther, and then you saw, you felt those things of which, till then, you had but little sense or apprehension; such as the corruption of your hearts, the awful strictness of the divine law, your utter inability to yield perfect obedience, and the necessity of an inward change of the inclinations and relishes of your soul. These, and a great many other things of a like nature, broke in upon your minds with striking evidence and a kind of almighty energy; and now you saw you were still “dead in sin,” weak, in disposed, averse towards spiritual things, and “dead in law,” condemned to everlasting death and misery by its righteous sentence: now you set about the duties of religion with more earnestness than ever; now you prayed, you heard, and used the other means of grace as for your life, for you saw that your eternal life was

indeed at stake; and now, when you put the matter to a thorough trial, you were more sensible than ever of your own weakness, and the difficulties in your way. “Oh! Who would have thought my heart had been so depraved that it should thus fly off from God, and struggle, and reluctate against returning to him?” Such was then your language. Alas! You found yourselves quite helpless, and all your efforts feeble and ineffectual: then you perceived yourselves really dead in sin, and that you must continue so to all eternity, unless quickened by a power infinitely superior to your own; not that you lay slothful and inactive at this time; no, never did you exert yourselves so vigorously in all your life, never did you besiege the throne of grace with such earnest importunity, never did you hear and read with such eager attention, or make such a vigorous resistance against sin and temptation: all your natural powers were exerted to the highest pitch, for now you saw your case required it: but you found all your most vigorous endeavors insufficient, and you were sensible that, without the assistance of a superior power, the work of religion could never be effected.

Now you were reduced very low indeed. While you imagined you could render yourselves safe by a reformation in your own power, you were not much alarmed at your condition, though you saw it bad. But oh! To feel yourselves dead in sin, and that you cannot help yourselves: to see yourselves in a state of condemnation, liable to execution every moment, and yet to find all your own endeavors utterly insufficient to relieve you; to be obliged, after all you had done, to lie at mercy, and confess that you were as deserving of everlasting punishment as ever the most notorious criminal was of the stroke of public justice; this was a state of extreme dejection, terror, and anxiety indeed. The proud, self-confident creature was never

thoroughly mortified and humbled till now, when he is slain by the law, and entirely cut off from all hopes from himself.

And now, finding you could not save yourselves, you began to cast about you, and look out for another to save you: now you were more sensible than ever of the absolute need of Jesus; and you cried and reached after him, and stirred up yourselves to take hold of him. The gospel brought the free offer of him to your ears, and you would fain have accepted of him; but here new difficulties arose. Alas! You did not think yourselves good enough to accept of him, and hence you took a great deal of fruitless pains to make yourselves better: you also found your hearts strangely averse to the gospel-method of salvation, and, though a sense of your necessity made you try to work up yourselves to an approbation of it, yet you could not affectionately acquiesce in it, and cordially relish it.

And now, how melancholy was your situation! You were “shut up unto the faith;” Gal. 3:23; there was no other possible way of escape, and yet, alas! You could not take this way: now you were ready to cry, “I am cut off my strength and my hope are perished from the Lord;” but, blessed be God, he did not leave you in this condition. Man’s extremity of distress is God’s opportunity for relief and salvation; and so you found it.

Now the process of preparatory operations is just come to a result. Now it is time for God to work, for nature has done her utmost, and has been found utterly insufficient; now it is proper a divine, supernatural principle should be infused, for all the principles of nature have failed, and the proud sinner is obliged to own it, and stand still, and see the salvation of God. In this situation you wanted nothing but such a divine principle to make you living Christians indeed. These preparatives were like the taking away the stone from the sepulcher of Lazarus, which was a prelude of that almighty voice

which called him from the dead. Now you appear to me like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision in one stage of the operation. After there had been a noise, and a shaking among them, and the bones had come together, bone to his bone; I beheld, says he, and lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them; Ezek. 37:8; this was all that was wanting to making them living men. In like manner you, at this time, had the external appearance of Christians, but you had no divine supernatural life in you; you were but the fair carcasses of Christians; your religion had a body completely formed, but it had no soul in it; and had the holy Spirit now given over his work, you would have continued dead still.

But now the important crisis is come, when he who stood over the grave of Lazarus, and pronounced the life-restoring mandate, Lazarus, come forth! When he who breathed into Adam the breath of life, and made him a living soul; I say, now the crisis is come, when he will implant the principles of life in your souls; suddenly you feel the amazing change, and find you are acting from principles entirely new to you; for now your hearts that were wont to reluctate, and start back from God, rise to him with the strongest aspirations: now the way of salvation through Christ, which you could never relish before, appears all amiable and glorious, and captivates your whole souls. Holiness has lovely and powerful charms, which captivate you to the most willing obedience, notwithstanding your former disgust to it; and though once you were enamored with sin, and disliked it only because you could not indulge it with impunity, it now appears to you a mere mass of corruption and deformity, an abominable thing, which you hate above all other things on earth or in hell. At this juncture you were animated with a new life in every faculty of your souls, and hereupon you

felt the instincts, the appetites, the sympathies and antipathies of a new life, a divine life, justly styled by the apostle the life of God; the life of God in the soul of man. The pulse of sacred passions began to beat towards spiritual objects; the vital warmth of love spread itself through your whole frame; you breathed out your desires and prayers before God; like a new-born infant you began to cry after him, and at times you have learned to lisp his name with filial endearment, and cry Abba Father; you hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and as every kind of life must have its proper nourishment, so your spiritual life fed upon Christ, the living bread, and the sincere milk of his word. You also felt a new set of sensations; divine things now made deep and tender impressions upon you; the great realities of religion and eternity now affected you in a manner unknown before; you likewise found your souls actuated with life and vigor in the service of God, and in the duties you owed to mankind. This strange alteration no doubt filled you with surprise and amazement, something like that of Adam when he found himself start into life out of his eternal non-existence. With these new sensations everything appeared to you in a quite different light, and you could not but wonder that you had never perceived them in that manner before.

Thus, my dear brethren, when you were even dead in sin, God quickened you together with Christ. It is true, the principle of life might be very weak at first, like the life of a new-born infant, or a foetus just animated in the womb; nay, it may be but very weak still, and at times may languish, and seem just expiring in the agonies of death; but, blessed be the quickening Spirit of Christ, since the happy hour of your resurrection you have never been, and you never will be to all eternity, what you once were, “dead in trespasses and sins.” Should I give you your own history since that time, it



would be to this purpose, and you will discern many symptoms of life in it. You have often known what sickness of soul is, as well as of body, and sometimes it has risen to such a height as to endanger your spiritual life. The seeds of sin, that still lurk in your constitution, like the principles of death, or a deadly poison circulating through your veins, have often struggled for the mastery, and cast you into languishing or violent disorders: then was the divine life oppressed, and you could not freely draw the breath of prayer and pious desires; you lost the appetite for the word of God, and what you received did not digest well and turn to kindly nourishment; the pulse of sacred passions beat faint and irregular, the vital heat decayed, and you felt a death-like cold creeping upon you and benumbing you. Sometimes you have been afflicted, perhaps, with convulsions of violent and outrageous passions, with the dropsy of insatiable desires after things below, with the lethargy of carnal security, or the fever of lust: at other times you have felt an universal disorder through your whole frame, and you hardly knew what ailed you, only you were sure your souls were not well; but perhaps your most common disorder that seizes you is a kind of consumption, a lowness of spirits, a languor and weakness, the want of appetite for your spiritual food, or perhaps a nausea and disgust towards it; you also live in a country very unwholesome to living souls; you dwell among the dead, and catch contagion from the conversation of those around you, and this heightens the disorder: and further, that old serpent the devil labors to infect you with his deadly poison, and increase the peccant humors by his temptations: at such times you can hardly feel any workings of spiritual life in you, and you fear you are entirely dead; but examine strictly, and you will discover some vital symptoms even in this bad habit of soul; for does not your new nature exert itself to work off the disorder? Are not

your spirits in a ferment, and do you not feel yourselves in exquisite pain, or at least greatly uneasy? Give all the world to a sick man, and he despises it all: "Oh, give me my health," says he, "or you give me nothing." So it is with you; nothing can content you while your souls are thus out of order. Do you not long for their recovery, that you may go about your business again; I mean that you may engage in the service of God with all the vigor of health? And do you not apply to Christ as your only physician in this condition? And oh! What a healing balm is his blood! What a reviving cordial is his love! And how kindly does his Spirit purge off the corrupt humors, and subdue the principles of sin and death! Has not experience taught you the meaning of the apostle, when he says, Christ is our life: and I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. 2:20. Do you not perceive that Christ is your vital head, and that you revive or languish just as he communicates or withholds his influence? And have you not been taught in the same way what is the meaning of that expression so often repeated, The just shall live by faith? Hab. 2:4. Do you not find that faith is, as it were, the grand artery by which you derive life from Christ, and by which it is circulated through your whole frame; and that when faith languishes, then you weaken, pine away, and perhaps fall into a swoon, as though you were quite dead? Are you not careful of the health of your souls? You endeavor to keep them warm with the love of God; you shun those sickly regions as far as you can, where the example and conversation of the wicked spread their deadly infection, and you love to dwell among living souls, and breathe in their wholesome air. Upon the whole, it is evident, notwithstanding your frequent indispositions, you have some life within you; life takes occasion to show itself even from your disorders. It is a plain symptom of it, that you have something within you, that makes such a vigorous resistance against

the principles of sin and death, and throws your whole frame into a ferment, till it has wrought off the distemper. In short, you have the sensations, the sympathies and antipathies, the pleasures and pains of living souls.

And is it so indeed? Then from this moment begin to rejoice and bless the Lord, who raised you to spiritual life. Oh, let the hearts he has quickened beat with his love; let the lips he has opened, when quivering in death, speak his praise, and devote that life to him which he has given you, and which he still supports!

Consider what a divine and noble kind of life he has given you. It is a capacity and aptitude for the most exalted and divine services and enjoyments. Now you have a relish for the Supreme Good as your happiness, the only proper food for your immortal souls, and he will not suffer you to hunger and thirst in vain, but will satisfy the appetites he has implanted in your nature. You have some spirit and life in his service, and are not like the dead souls around you, that are all alive toward other objects, but absolutely dead towards him: you have also noble and exalted sensations; you are capable of a set of pleasures of a more refined and sublime nature than what are relished by groveling sinners. From your inmost souls you detest and nauseate whatever is mean, base, and abominable, and you can feast on what is pure, amiable, excellent, and worthy of your love. Your vitiated taste for trash and poison is cured, and you feed upon heavenly bread, upon food agreeable to the constitution of your spiritual nature; and hence you may infer your meetness for the heavenly world, that region of perfect vitality. You have a disposition for its enjoyments and services, and this is the grand preparative God will not encumber the heaven of his glory with dead souls, nor infect the pure salubrious air of paradise with the poison of their corruption: but the

everlasting doors are always open for living souls, and not one of them shall ever be excluded; nay, the life of heaven is already within you; the life that reigns with immortal health and vigor above, is the very same with that which works in your breasts; only there it is arrived to maturity and perfection, and here it is in its rudiments and weakness. Your animal life, which was hardly perceivable in the womb, was the very same with that which now possesses you, only now it is come to perfection. Thus you are now angels in embryo, the foetus (might I be allowed the expression) of glorified immortals; and when you are born out of the womb of time into the eternal world, this feeble spark of spiritual life will kindle and blaze, and render you as active and vigorous as “the rapt seraph that adores and burns.” Then you will fear no more weakness, no more languor’s, no more qualms of indisposition; the poison of temptation, and the contagion of bad example cannot reach you there; and the inward seeds of sickness and death will be purged entirely out of your soul: you will be got quite out of the sickly country, and breathe a pure reviving air, the natural element of your souls. There you will find the fountain, yea, whole rivers of the waters of life, of which you will drink in large draughts for ever and ever, and which will inspire you with immortal life and vigor. Oh, how happy are you in this single gift of spiritual life! This is a life that cannot perish, even in the ruins of the world. What though you must ere long yield your mortal bodies and animal life to death and rottenness? Your most important life is immortal, and subject to no such dissolution; and therefore be courageous in the name of the Lord, and bid defiance to all the calamities of life, and all the terrors of death; for your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Col. 3:3,4.

I would willingly go on in this strain, and leave the pulpit with a relish of these delightful truths upon my spirit; but, alas! I must turn my address to another set of persons in this assembly; but “where is the Lord God of Elijah,” who restored the Shunamite’s son to life by means of that prophet? I am going to call to the dead, and I know they will not hear, unless he attend my feeble voice with his almighty power. I would pray over you like Elijah over the dead child, Oh Lord my God, I pray thee, let this sinner’s life come into him again. 1 Kings 17:21. Are not the living and the dead promiscuously blended in this assembly? Here is a dead soul, there another, and there another all over the house; and here and there a few living souls thinly scattered among them. Have you ever been carried through such a preparatory process as I have described? Or if you are uncertain about this, as some may be who are animated with spiritual life, inquire, have you the feelings, the appetites and aversions, the pleasing and the painful sensations of living souls? Methinks conscience breaks its silence in some of you, whether you will or not, and cries, “Oh no; there is not a spark of life in this breast.”

Well, my poor deceased friends, (for so I may call you,) I hope you will seriously attend to what I am going seriously to say to you. I have no bad design upon you, but only to restore you to life. And though your case is really discouraging, yet I hope it is not quite desperate. The principles of nature, reason, self-love, joy, and fear, are still alive in you, and you are capable of some application to divine things. And, as I told you, it is upon the principles of nature that God is wont to work, to prepare the soul for the infusion of a supernatural life. And these I would now work upon, in hopes you are not proof against considerations of the greatest weight and energy; I earnestly beg you would lay to heart such things as these.

Can you content yourselves with an animal life, the life of beasts, with that superfluity, reason, just to render you a more ingenious and self-tormenting kind of brutes; more artful in gratifying your sordid appetites, and yet still uneasy for want of an unknown something; a care that the brutal world, being destitute of reason, are unmolested with? Oh! Have you no ambition to be animated with a divine immortal life, the life of God?

Can you be contented with a mere temporal life, when your souls must exist forever? That infinite world beyond the grave is replenished with nothing but the terrors of death to you, if you are destitute of spiritual life. And oh! Can you bear the thought of residing among its grim and ghastly terrors forever?

Are you contented to be cut off from God, as a mortified member from the body, and to be banished forever from all the joys of his presence? You cannot be admitted to heaven without spiritual life. Hell is the sepulcher for dead souls, and thither you must be sent, if you still continue dead. And does not this thought affect you?

Consider, also, now is the only time in which you can be restored to life. And oh! Will you let it pass by without improvement?

Shall all the means that have been used for your revival be in vain? Or the strivings of the Spirit, the alarms of your own consciences, the blessings and chastisements of Providence, the persuasions, tears, and lamentations of your living friends; Oh! Shall all these be in vain? Can you bear the thought? Surely, no. Therefore, oh heave and struggle to burst the chains of death! Cry mightily to God to quicken you. Use all the means of vivification, and avoid every deadly and contagious thing.

I know not, my brethren, how this thought will affect us at parting to-day, that we have left behind us many a dead soul. But suppose we should leave

as many bodies here behind us as there are dead souls among us; suppose every sinner destitute of spiritual life should now be struck dead before us, oh how would this floor be overlaid with dead corpses! How few of us would escape! What bitter lamentations and tears would be among us! One would lose a husband or a wife, another a friend or a neighbor. And have we hearts to mourn, and tears to shed over such an event as this, and have we no compassion for dead souls? Is there none to mourn over them? Sinners, if you will still continue dead, there are some here to-day who part with you with this wish, Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! And oh that our mourning's may reach the Lord of life, and that you might be quickened from your death in trespasses and sins! Amen and amen.

# *SERM. VI. POOR AND CONTRITE SPIRITS THE OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE FAVOUR.*

**I**saiah 66:2.— *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

As we consist of animal bodies as well as immortal souls, and are endowed with corporeal senses as well as rational powers, God, who has wisely adapted our religion to our make, requires bodily as well as spiritual worship; and commands us not only to exercise the inward powers of our minds in proper acts of devotion, but also to express our inward devotion by suitable external actions, and to attend upon him in the sensible outward ordinances which he has appointed. Thus it is under the gospel; but it was more remarkably so under the law, which, compared with the pure and spiritual worship of the gospel, was a system of carnal ordinances, and required a great deal of external pomp and grandeur, and bodily services. Thus a costly and magnificent structure was erected, by divine direction, in the wilderness, called the tabernacle, because built in the form of a tent, and movable from place to place; and afterwards a most stately temple was built



by Solomon, with immense cost, where the divine worship should be statedly celebrated, and where all the males of Israel should solemnly meet for that purpose three times in a year.

These externals were not intended to exclude the internal worship of the Spirit, but to express and assist it. And these ceremonials were not to be put into the place of morals, but observed as helps to the practice of them, and to prefigure the great Messiah: even under the Mosaic dispensation, God had the greatest regard to holiness of heart and a good life; and the strictest observer of ceremonies could not be accepted without them.

But it is natural to degenerate mankind to invert the order of things, to place a part, the easiest and meanest part of religion, for the whole of it, to rest in the externals of religion as sufficient, without regarding the heart, and to depend upon pharisaical strictness in ceremonial observances, as an excuse or atonement for neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

This was the unhappy error of the Jews in Isaiah's time; and this the Lord would correct in the first verses of this chapter.

The Jews gloried in their having the house of God among them, and were ever trusting in vain words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. Jer. 7:4. They filled his altars with costly sacrifices; and in these they trusted to make atonement for sin, and secure the divine favor.

As to their sacrifices God lets them know, that while they had no regard to their morals, but chose their own ways, and their souls delighted in their abominations, while they presented them in a formal manner without the fire of divine love, their sacrifices were so far from procuring his acceptance, that they were odious to him. He abhors their most expensive

offerings as abominable and profane. He that killeth an ox for sacrifice is as far from being accepted as if he unjustly slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck, &c. Isaiah 66:3.

To remove this superstitious confidence in the temple, the Lord informs them that he had no need of it; that, large and magnificent as it was, it was not fit to contain him; and that, in consecrating it to him, they should not proudly think that they had given him anything to which he had no prior right. “Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, where I reign conspicuous in the visible majesty and grandeur of a God; and though the earth is not adorned with such illustrious displays of my immediate presence, though it does not shine in all the glory of my royal palace on high, yet it is a little province in my immense empire, and subject to my authority; it is my footstool. If, then, heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; if the whole creation is my kingdom, where is the house that ye build unto me? Where is your temple which appears so stately in your eyes? It is vanished, it is sunk into nothing. Is it able to contain that infinite Being to whom the whole earth is but a humble footstool, and the vast heaven but a throne? Can you vainly imagine that my presence can be confined to you in the narrow bounds of a temple, when the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain me? Where is the place of my rest? Can you provide a place for my repose, as though I were weary? Or can my presence be restrained to one place, incapable of acting beyond the prescribed limits? No; infinite space only can equal my being and perfections; infinite space only is a sufficient sphere for my operations.”

“Can you imagine you can bribe my favor, and give me something I had no right to before, by all the stately buildings you can rear to my name? Is not universal nature mine? For all these things hath mine hand made out of

nothing, and all these things have been or still subsist by the support of my all-preserving hand, and what right can be more valid and inalienable than that founded upon creation? Your silver and gold are mine and mine the cattle upon a thousand hills: and therefore of mine own do you give me, saith the Lord.”

These are such majestic strains of language as are worthy a God. Thus it becomes him to advance himself above the whole creation, and to assert his absolute property in, and independency upon, the universe.

Had he only turned to us the bright side of his throne, that dazzles us with insufferable splendor; had he only displayed his majesty unallayed with grace and condescension in such language as this, it would have overwhelmed us, and cast us into the most abject despondency, as the outcasts of his providence, beneath his notice. We might fear he would overlook us with majestic disdain, or careless neglect, like the little things that are called great by mortals, or as the busy emmets of our species are apt to do. In the hurry of business they are liable to neglect, and in the power of pride and grandeur to overlook or disdain their dependents. We should be ready, in hopeless anxiety, to say, “Is all this earth which to us appears so vast, and which is parceled into a thousand mighty kingdoms, as we call them, is it all but the humble foot-stool of God? Hardly worthy to bear his feet? What then am I? An atom of an atom-world, a trifling individual of a trifling race. Can I expect he will take any notice of such an insignificant thing as I? The vast affairs of heaven and earth lie upon his head, and he is employed in the concerns of the wide universe, and can he find leisure to concern himself with me, and my little interests? Will a king, deliberating upon the concerns of nations, interest himself in favor of the worm that crawls at his footstool? If the magnificent temple of Solomon was unworthy

of the divine inhabitant, will he admit me into his presence, and give me audience? How can I expect it? It seems daring and presumptuous to hope for such condescension. And shall I then despair of the gracious regard of my Maker.”

No, desponding creature! Mean and unworthy as thou art, hear the voice of divine condescension, as well as of majesty: To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. Though God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, though he pours contempt upon princes, and scorns them in all their haughty glory and affected majesty, yet there are persons whom his gracious eye will regard. The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and dwelleth in the high and holy place, he will look down through all the shining ranks of angels upon—whom? Not on the proud, the haughty and presumptuous, but upon him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word. To this man will he look from the throne of his majesty, however low, however mean he may be. This man is an object that can, as it were, attract his eyes from all the glories of the heavenly world, so as to regard a humble, self-abasing worm. This man can never be lost or overlooked among the multitudes of creatures, but the eyes of the Lord will discover him in the greatest crowd, his eyes will graciously fix upon this man, this particular man, though there were but one such in the compass of the creation, or though he were banished into the remotest corner of the universe, like a diamond in a heap of rubbish, or at the bottom of the ocean.

Do you hear this, you that are poor and contrite in spirit, and that tremble at his word? Ye that, above all others, are most apt to fear you shall be disregarded by him, because you, of all others, are most deeply sensible how unworthy you are of his gracious notice: God, the great, the glorious,

the terrible God, looks down upon you with eyes of love, and by so much the more affectionately, by how much the lower you are in your own esteem. Does not your heart spring within you at the sound? Are you not lost in pleasing wonder and gratitude, and crying out, “Can it be? Can it be? Is it indeed possible? Is it true?” Yes, you have his own word for it, and do you not think it too good news to be true, but believe, and rejoice, and give glory to his name; and fear not what men or devils can do unto you.

This, my brethren, is a matter of universal concern. It is the interest of each of us to know whether we are thus graciously regarded by that God on whom our very being and all our happiness entirely depend. And how shall we know this? In no other way than by discovering whether we have the characters of that happy man to whom he condescends to look. These are not pompous and high characters, they are not formed by earthly riches, learning, glory, and power: But to this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. Let us inquire into the import of each of the characters.

I. It is the poor man to whom the Majesty of heaven condescends to look.

This does not principally refer to those that are poor in this world; for, though it be very common that “the poor of this world are chosen to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom;” James 2:5; yet this is not a universal rule; for many, alas! That are poor in this world are not rich towards God, nor rich in good works, and therefore shall famish through eternity in remediless want and wretchedness. But the poor here signifies such as Christ characterizes more fully by the poor in spirit; Matt. 5:3. And this character implies the following ingredients:

1. The poor man, to whom Jehovah looks, is deeply sensible of his own insufficiency, and that nothing but the enjoyment of God can make him

happy.

The poor man feels that he is not formed self-sufficient, but a dependent upon God. He is sensible of the weakness and poverty of his nature, and that he was not endowed with a sufficient stock of riches in his creation to support him through the endless duration for which he was formed, or even for a single day. The feeble vine does not more closely adhere to the elm than he does to his God. He is not more sensible of the insufficiency of his body to subsist without air, or the productions of the earth, than of that of his soul without his God, and the enjoyment of his love. In short, he is reduced into his proper place in the system of the universe, low and mean in comparison with superior beings of the angelic order, and especially in comparison with the great Parent and support of nature. He feels himself to be, what he really is, a poor, impotent, dependent creature, that can neither live, nor move, nor exist without God. He is sensible that his sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. 3:5, “and that all the springs of his happiness are in him.”

This sense of his dependence upon God is attended with a sense of the inability of all earthly enjoyments to make him happy, and fill the vast capacities of his soul, which were formed for the enjoyment of an infinite good. He has a relish for the blessings of this life, but it is attended with a sense of their insufficiency, and does not exclude a stronger relish for the superior pleasures of religion. He is not a precise hermit, or a sour ascetic, on the one hand; and, on the other, he is not a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God,

If he enjoys no great share of the comforts of this life, he does not labor, nor so much as wish for them as his supreme happiness: he is well assured they can never answer this end in their greatest affluence. It is for God, it is for the living God, that his soul most eagerly thirsts. In the greatest

extremity he is sensible that the enjoyment of his love is more necessary to his felicity than the possession of earthly blessings; nay, he is sensible that if he is miserable in the absence of these, the principal cause is the absence of his God. Oh! If he were blest with the perfect enjoyment of God, he could say, with Habakkuk, Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; though universal famine should strip me of all my earthly blessings, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, as my complete happiness; I will joy in the God of my salvation. Hab. 3:17,18.

If he enjoys an affluence of earthly blessings, he still retains a sense of his need of the enjoyment of God. To be discontented and dissatisfied is the common fate of the rich as well as the poor; they are still craving, craving an unknown something to complete their bliss. The soul, being formed for the fruition of the Supreme Good, secretly languishes and pines away in the midst of other enjoyments, without knowing its cure. It is the enjoyment of God only that can satisfy its unbounded desires; but, alas! It has no relish for him, no thirst after him; it is still crying, "More, more of the delights of the world;" like a man in a burning fever, that calls for cold water, that will but inflame his disease, and occasion a more painful return of thirst. But the poor in spirit know where their cure lies. They do not ask with uncertainty, Who will show us any sort of good? But their petitions center in this as the grand constituent of their happiness, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; and this puts more gladness into their hearts than the abundance of corn and wine; Psalm 4:6,7. This was the language of the Psalmist, There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion

forever; Psalm 73:25,26. And as this disposition extends to all earthly things, so it does to all created enjoyments whatsoever, even to those of the heavenly world; the poor man is sensible that he could not be happy even there without the enjoyment of God. His language is, Whom have I in heaven but thee? It is beholding thy face in righteousness, and awaking in thy likeness, that alone can satisfy me; Psalm 17:15.

2. This spiritual poverty implies deep humility and self-abasement.

The poor man on whom the God of heaven condescends to look is mean in his own apprehensions; he accounts himself not a being of mighty importance. He has no high esteem of his own good qualities, but is little in his own eyes. He is not apt to give himself the preference to others, but is ready to give way to them as his superiors. He has a generous sagacity to behold their good qualities, and commendable blindness towards their imperfections: but he is not quick to discern his own excellencies, nor sparing to his own frailties.

Instead of being dazzled with the splendor of his own endowments or acquisitions, he is apt to overlook them with a noble neglect, and is sensible of the weakness and defects of his nature.

And as to his gracious qualities, they appear small, exceeding small to him: when he considers how much they fall short of what they should be, they as it were vanish and shrink into nothing. How cold does his love appear to him in its greatest fervor! How feeble his faith in its greatest confidence! How superficial his repentance in its greatest depth! How proud his lowest humility! And as for the good actions he has performed, alas! How few, how poorly done, how short of his duty do they appear! After he has done all, he counts himself an unprofitable servant. After he has done all, he is more apt to adopt the language of the publican than the



pharisee, God be merciful to me a sinner. In his highest attainments he is not apt to admire himself; so far is he from it, that it is much more natural to him to fall into the opposite extreme, and to account himself the least, yea, less than the least of all other saints upon the face of the earth: and if he contends for any preference, it is for the lowest place in the list of Christians. This disposition was remarkably exemplified in St. Paul, who probably had made greater advancements in holiness than any other saint that was ever received to heaven from this guilty world.

He that is poor in spirit has also a humbling sense of his own sinfulness. His memory is quick to recollect his past sins, and he is very sharp-sighted to discover the remaining corruptions of his heart, and the imperfections of his best duties. He is not ingenious to excuse them, but views them impartially in all their deformity and aggravations. He sincerely doubts whether there be a saint upon earth so exceeding corrupt; and, though he may be convinced that the Lord has begun a work of grace in him, and consequently, that he is in a better state than such as are under the prevailing dominion of sin, yet he really questions whether there be such a depraved creature in the world as he sees he has been. He is apt to count himself the chief of sinners, and more indebted to free grace than any of the sons of men. He is intimately acquainted with himself; but he sees only the outside of others, and hence he concludes himself so much worse than others; hence he loathes himself in his own sight for all his abominations. Ezek. 36:31. Self-abasement is pleasing to him; his humility is not forced; he does not think it a great thing for him to sink thus low. He plainly sees himself to be a mean, sinful, exceeding sinful creature, and therefore is sure that it is no condescension, but the most reasonable thing in the world, for him to think meanly of himself, and to humble and abase himself. It is

unnatural for one that esteems himself a being of great importance to stoop; but it is easy, and appears no self-denial for a poor mean creature to do so, who looks upon himself, and feels himself, to be such.

Finally, the poor man is deeply sensible of his own unworthiness. He sees that in himself he deserves no favor from God for all the good he has ever done, but that he may after all justly reject him. He makes no proud boasts of his good heart, or good life, but falls in the dust before God, and casts all his dependence upon his free grace:— which leads me to observe,

3. That he who is poor in spirit is sensible of his need of the influences of divine grace to sanctify him, and enrich him with the graces of the Spirit.

He is sensible of the want of holiness; this necessarily flows from his sense of his corruption, and the imperfection of all his graces. Holiness is the one thing needful with him, which he desires and longs for above all others; and he is deeply sensible that he cannot work it in his own heart by his own strength; he feels that without Christ he can do nothing, and that it is God who must work in him both to will and to do. Hence like a poor man that cannot subsist upon his stock, he depends entirely upon the grace of God to work all his works in him, and to enable him to work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

4. He is deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ for his justification.

He does not think himself rich in good works to bribe his judge, and procure acquittance, but, like a poor criminal that, having nothing to purchase a pardon, nothing to plead in his own defense, casts himself upon the mercy of the court, he places his whole dependence upon the free grace of God through Jesus Christ. He pleads his righteousness only, and trusts in

it alone. The rich scorn to be obliged; but the poor, that cannot subsist of themselves, will cheerfully receive it.

5. And lastly, the man that is poor in spirit is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace.

He lives upon charity; he lives upon the bounties of heaven; and, as these are not to be obtained without begging, he is frequently lifting up his cries to the Father of all his mercies for them. He attends upon the ordinances of God, as Bartimeus by the way-side, to ask the charity of passengers. Prayer is the natural language of spiritual poverty: The poor, saith Solomon, useth entreaties, Prov. 18:23; whereas they that are rich in their own conceit can live without prayer, or content themselves with the formal, careless performance of it.

This is the habitual character of that poor man to whom the Majesty of heaven vouchsafes the looks of his love. At times indeed he has but little sense of these things; but then he is uneasy, and he labors to re-obtain it, and sometimes is actually blessed with it.

And is there no such poor man or woman in this assembly? I hope there is. Where are ye, poor creatures? Stand forth, and receive the blessings of your Redeemer, Blessed are the poor in spirit, &c. He who has his throne in the height of heaven, and to whom this vast earth is but a footstool, looks upon you with eyes of love.

This spiritual poverty is greater riches than the treasures of the universe. Be not ashamed, therefore, to own yourselves poor men, if such you are. May God thus impoverish us all; may he strip us of all our imaginary grandeur and riches, and reduce us to poor beggars at his door!

But it is time to consider the other character of the happy man upon whom the Lord of heaven will graciously look; and that is,

II. Contrition of spirit. To this man will I look that is of a contrite spirit.

The word contrite signifies one that is beaten or bruised with hard blows, or a heavy burden. And it belongs to the mourning penitent whose heart is broken and wounded for sin. Sin is an intolerable burden that crushes and bruises him, and he feels himself pained and sore under it. His stony heart, which could not be impressed, but rather repelled the blow, is taken away; and now he has a heart of flesh, easily bruised and wounded. His heart is not always hard and senseless, light and trifling; but it has tender sensations; he is easily susceptible of sorrow for sin, is humbled under a sense of his imperfections, and is really pained and distressed because he can serve his God no better, but daily sins against him. This character may also agree to the poor anxious soul that is broken with cruel fears of its state. The stout-hearted can venture their eternal all upon uncertainty; and indulge pleasing hopes without anxiously examining their foundation; but he that is of a contrite spirit is tenderly sensible of the importance of the matter, and cannot be easy without some good evidence of safety. Such shocking suppositions as these frequently startle him, and pierce his very heart; "What if I should be deceived at last? What if after all I should be banished from that God in whom lies all my happiness?" &c. These are suppositions full of insupportable terror, when they appear but barely possible; and much more when there seems to be reason for them. Such a habitual pious jealousy as this, is a good symptom; and to your pleasing surprise, ye doubtful Christians, I may tell you that that Majesty, who you are afraid disregards you, looks down upon you with pity. Therefore lift up your eyes to him in wonder and joyful confidence. You are not such neglected things as you think. The Majesty of heaven thinks it not beneath him to look down through all the glorious orders of angels, and through

interposing worlds, down, down even upon you in the depth of your self-  
abhorrence. Let us,

III. Consider the remaining character of the happy man to whom the Lord  
will look; Him that trembleth at my word.

This character implies a tender sense of the great things of the word, and a  
heart easily impressed with them as the most important realities. This was  
remarkably exemplified in tender-hearted Josiah. 2 Chron. 34:19,20,21,27.  
To one that trembles at the divine word, the threatening's of it do not appear  
vain terrors, nor great swelling words of vanity, but the most tremendous  
realities. Such a one cannot bear up under them, but would tremble, and  
fall, and die away, if not relieved by some happy promise of deliverance. He  
that trembles at the word of God is not a stupid hearer or reader of it. It  
reaches and pierces his heart as a sharp two-edged sword; it carries power  
along with it, and he feels that it is the word of God, and not of men, even  
when it is spoken by feeble mortals. Thus he not only trembles at the terror,  
but at the authority of the word;—which leads me to observe farther, that he  
trembles with filial veneration of the majesty of God speaking in his word.  
He considers it as his voice who spake all things into being, and whose  
glory is such that a deep solemnity must seize those that are admitted to  
hear him speak.

How opposite is this to the temper of multitudes who regard the word of  
God no more than (with horror I express it) the word of a child or a fool.  
They will have their own way, let him say what he will. They persist in sin,  
in defiance of his threatening's. They sit as careless and stupid under his  
word, as though it were some old, dull, trifling story. It seldom makes any  
impressions upon their stony hearts. These are the brave, undaunted men of  
the world, who harden themselves against the fear of futurity. But, unhappy

creatures! The God of heaven disdains to give them a gracious look, while he fixes his eyes upon the man that “is contrite, and that trembles at his word.”

And where is that happy man? Where in this assembly, where is the contrite spirit? Where the man that trembleth at the word? You are all ready to catch at the character, but be not presumptuous on the one hand, nor excessively timorous on the other. Inquire whether this be your prevailing character. If so, then claim it, and rejoice in it, though you have it not in perfection. But if you have it not prevailingly, do not seize it as your own. Though you have been at times distressed with a sense of sin and danger, and the word strikes a terror to your hearts, yet, unless you are habitually of a tender and a contrite spirit, you are not to claim the character.

But let such of you as are poor and contrite in spirit, and that tremble at the word of the Lord, enter deeply into the meaning of this expression, that the Lord looks to you. He does not look on you as a careless spectator, not concerning himself with you, or caring what will become of you, but he looks upon you as a father, a friend, a benefactor: his looks are efficacious for your good.

He looks upon you with acceptance. He is pleased with the sight. He loves to see you laboring towards him. He looks upon you as the objects of his everlasting love, and purchased by the blood of his Son, and he is well pleased with you for his righteousness' sake. Hence his looking upon him that is poor, &c., is opposed to his hating the wicked and their sacrifices, ver. 3. And is he whom you have so grievously offended, he whose wrath you fear above all other things, is he indeed reconciled to you, and does he delight in you? What cause of joy, and praise, and wonder is here!

Again, he looks to you so as to take particular notice of you. He sees all the workings of your hearts towards him. He sees and pities you in your honest, though feeble conflicts with indwelling sin. He observes all your faithful though weak endeavors to serve him. His eyes pierce your very hearts, and the least motion there cannot escape his notice. This indeed might make you tremble, if he looked upon you with the eyes of a judge, for oh, how many abominations must he see in you! But be of good cheer, he looks upon you with the eyes of a friend, and with that love which covers a multitude of sins. He looks upon you with the eyes of compassion in all your calamities. He looks upon you to see that you be not overborne and crushed. David, who passed through as many hardships and afflictions as any of you, could say from happy experience, The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. Psal. 34:15.

Finally, he looks to you so as to look after you, as we do after the sick and weak. He looks to you so as to provide for you: and he will give you grace and glory, and no good thing will be withheld from you. Psal. 84:11.

And are you not safe and happy under the inspection of a father and a friend? Let a little humble courage then animate you amid your many dejections, and confide in that care of which you feel yourself to be so unworthy.

Here it may not be amiss to observe, what must give you no small pleasure, that those very persons who, according to the estimate of men, are the most likely to be overlooked, are those whom God graciously regards. The persons themselves are apt to cry, "Happy I, could I believe that the God of heaven thus graciously regards me; but, alas! I feel myself a poor unworthy creature; I am a trembling, broken-hearted thing, beneath the notice of so great a Majesty." And art thou so indeed? Then I may convert

thy objection into an encouragement. Thou art the very person upon whom God looks. His eyes are running to and fro through the earth in quest of such as thou art; and he will find thee out among the innumerable multitude of mankind. Wert thou surrounded with crowds of kings and nobles, his eyes would pass by them all to fix upon thee. What a glorious artifice, if I may so speak, is this, to catch at and convert the person's discouragement as a ground of courage! To make that the character of the favorites of heaven, which they themselves look upon as marks of his neglect of them! "Alas!" says the poor man, "if I was the object of divine notice, he would not suffer me to continue thus poor and brokenhearted." But you may reason directly the reverse; he makes you thus poor in spirit, sensible of your sinfulness and imperfections, because that he graciously regards you. He will not suffer you to be puffed up with your imaginary goodness, like the rest of the world, because he loves you more than he loves them.

However unaccountable this procedure seems, there is very good reason for it. The poor are the only persons that would relish the enjoyment of God, and prize his love; they alone are capable of the happiness of heaven, which consists in the perfection of holiness.

To conclude, let us view the perfection and condescension of God as illustrated by this subject. Consider, ye poor in spirit, who he is that stoops to look upon such little things as you. It is he whose throne is in the highest heaven, surrounded with myriads of angels and archangels; it is he whose footstool is the earth, who supports every creature upon it; it is he who is exalted above the blessings and praise of all the celestial armies, and who cannot without condescension behold the things that are done in heaven: it is he that looks down upon such poor worms as you. And what a stoop is this!



It is he that looks upon you in particular, who looks after all the worlds he has made. He manages all the affairs of the universe; he takes care of every individual in his vast family; he provides for all his creatures, and yet he is at leisure to regard you. He takes as particular notice of you as if you were his only creatures. What perfection is this! What an infinite grasp of thought! What unbounded power! And what condescension too! Do but consider what a small figure you make in the universe of beings. You are not so much in comparison with the infinite multitude of creatures in the compass of nature, as a grain of sand to all the sands upon the sea shore, or as a mote to the vast globe of earth. And yet he, that has the care of the whole universe, takes particular notice of you—you who are but trifles compared with your fellow creatures; and who, if you were annihilated, would hardly leave a blank in the creation. Consider this, and wonder at the condescension of God; consider this, and acknowledge your own meanness; you are but nothing, not only compared with God, but you are as nothing in the system of creation.

I shall add but this one natural reflection: If it be so great a happiness to have the great God for our patron, then what is it to be out of his favor? To be disregarded by him? Methinks an universal tremor may seize this assembly at the very supposition. And is there a creature in the universe in this wretched condition? Methinks all the creation besides must pity him. Where is the wretched being to be found? Must we descend to hell to find him; No, alas! There are many such on this earth! Nay, I must come nearer you still, there are many such probably in this assembly: all among you are such who are not poor and contrite in spirit, and do not tremble at the word of the Lord. And art thou not one of the miserable number, oh man? What! Disregarded by the God that made thee! Not favored with one look of love

by the author of all happiness! He looks on thee indeed, but it is with eyes of indignation, marking thee out for vengeance; and canst thou be easy in such a case? Wilt thou not labor to impoverish thyself, and have thy heart broken, that thou mayest become the object of his gracious regard?

# *SERM. VII. THE NATURE AND DANGER OF MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST AND SALVATION.*

**M**<sup>att. 22:5.</sup>— *But they made light of it.*

There is not one of us in this assembly that has heard anything, but what has heard of Christ and salvation: there is not one of us but has had the rich blessings of the gospel freely and repeatedly offered to us: there is not one of us but stands in the most absolute need of these blessings, and must perish forever without them; I wish I could add, there is not one of us but has cheerfully accepted them according to the offer of the gospel. But, alas! Such an assembly is not to be expected on earth! Multitudes will make light of Christ and the invitations of the gospel, as the Jews did.

This parable represents the great God under the majestic idea of a king.

He is represented as making a marriage feast for his Son; that is, God in the gospel offers his Son Jesus Christ as a Savior to the guilty sons of men, and, upon their acceptance of him, the most intimate and endearing union,

and the tenderest mutual affection takes place between Christ and them; which may properly be represented by the marriage relation. And God has provided for them a rich variety of blessings, pardon, holiness, and everlasting felicity, which may be signified by a royal nuptial feast, verse 2.

These blessings were first offered to the Jews, who were bidden to the wedding by Moses and the prophets, whose great business it was to prepare them to receive the Messiah, verse 3.

The servants that were sent to call them, that were thus bidden, were the apostles and seventy disciples, whom Christ sent out to preach that the gospel kingdom was just at hand, verse 3.

When the Jews rejected this call, he sent forth other servants, namely, the apostles, after his ascension, who were to be more urgent in their invitations, and to tell them that, in consequence of Christ's death, all things were now ready, verse 4.

It is seldom that invitations to a royal feast are rejected; but alas! The Jews rejected the invitation of the gospel, and would not accept of its important blessings. They made light of Christ and his blessings: they were careless to them, and turned their attention to other things.

These things were not peculiar to the Jews, but belong to us sinners of the Gentiles in these ends of the earth. Christ is still proposed to us; to the same blessings we are invited; and I have the honor, my dear brethren, of appearing among you as a servant of the heavenly King, sent out to urge you to embrace the offer.

I doubt not but sundry of you have complied; and you are enriched and made for ever.

But alas! Must I not entertain a godly jealousy over some of you? Have you not made light of Christ and salvation, to which you have been invited

for so many years successively?

Your case is really lamentable, as I hope you will see before I have done; and I most sincerely compassionate you from my heart. I now rise up in this solemn place with the design to address you with the most awful seriousness, and the most compassionate concern: and did you know how much your happiness may depend upon it, and how anxious I am lest I should fail in the attempt, I am sure you could not but pray for me, and pity me. If ever you regarded a man in the most serious temper and address, I beg you would now regard what I am going to say to you.

You cannot receive any benefit from this, or indeed any other subject, till you apply it to yourselves. And therefore, in order to reform you of the sin of making light of Christ and the gospel, I must first inquire who are guilty of it. For this purpose let us consider,

What is it to make light of Christ and the invitations of the gospel?

I can think of no plainer way to discover this, than to inquire how we treat those things that we highly esteem; and also by way of contrast, how we treat those things which we make light of; and hence we may discover whether Christ and the gospel may be ranked among the things we esteem, or those we disregard.

I. Men are apt to remember and affectionately think of the things that they highly esteem; but as for those which they disregard, they can easily forget them, and live from day to day without a single thought about them.

Now do you often affectionately remember the Lord Jesus Christ, and do your thoughts affectionately go after him? Do they pay him early visits in the morning? Do they make frequent excursions to him through the day? And do you lie down with him in your hearts at night? Is not the contrary evident as to many of you? Can you not live from day to day thoughtless of

Jesus, and your everlasting salvation? Recollect now, how many affectionate thoughts have you had of these things through the week past, or in this sacred morning. And can you indeed highly esteem those things which you hardly ever think of? Follow your own hearts, sirs, observe which way they most naturally and freely run, and then judge whether you make light of the gospel or not. Alas! We cannot persuade men to one hour's serious consideration what they should do for an interest in Christ; we cannot persuade them so much as to afford him only their thoughts, which are such cheap things; and yet they will not be convinced that they make light of Christ. And here lies the infatuation of sin; it blinds and befools men, so that they do not know what they think of, what they love, or what they intend, much less do they know the habitual bent of their souls. They often imagine themselves free from those sins to which they are most enslaved, and particularly they think themselves innocent of the crime of making light of the gospel, when this is the very crime that is likely to destroy them forever.

II. The things that men value, if of such a nature as to admit of publication, will be the frequent subjects of their discourse: the thoughts will command the tongue, and furnish materials for conversation. But those things that they forget and disregard they will not talk of.

Do not they therefore make light of Christ and salvation, who have no delight in conversing about them, and hardly ever mention the name of Christ but in a trifling or profane manner? They do not like the company where divine things are discoursed of, but think it precise and troublesome. They had much rather be entertained with humorous tales and idle stories, or talk about the affairs of the world. They are of the world, says St. John, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 1 John 4:5.

They are in their element in such conversation. Or others may talk about religion; but it is only about the circumstances of it, as, “How such a man preached; it was a very good or a bad sermon,” &c., but they care not to enter into the spirit and substance of divine things! And if they speak of Christ and experimental religion, it is in a heartless and insipid manner. And do not such make light of the gospel? And is not this the character of many of you?

III. Men make light of those things, if they are of a practical nature, which they only talk about, but do not reduce into practice.

Christianity was intended not to furnish matter for empty talkers, but to govern the heart and practice. But are there not some that only employ their tongues about it, especially when their spirits are raised with liquor, and then a torrent of noisy religion breaks from them. Watch their lives, and you will see little appearance of Christianity there. And do not these evidently make light of Christ, who make him the theme of their drunken conversation, or who seem to think that God sent his Son from heaven just to set the world a talking about him? There is nothing in nature that seems to me more abominable than this.

IV. We take the utmost pains and labor to secure the things we value, and cannot be easy while our property in them is uncertain; but those things that we think lightly of we care but little whether they be ours or not.

Therefore, have not such of you made light of Christ and salvation, who have lived twenty or thirty years uncertain whether you have interest in him, and yet have been easy and contented, and take no method to be resolved? Are all that hear me this day determined in this important question, “What shall become of me when I die?” Are you all certain upon good grounds, and after a thorough trial, that you shall be saved? Oh that

you were! But, alas! You are not. And do you think you would bear this uncertainty about it, if you did not make light of salvation? No; you would carefully examine yourselves; you would diligently pursue the Scriptures to find out the marks of those that shall be saved; you would anxiously consult those that could direct you, and particularly pious ministers, who would think it the greatest favor you could do them to devolve such an office upon them. But now ministers may sit in their studies for a whole year, and not ten persons perhaps in five hundred agreeably intrude upon them on this important business.

Oh, sirs, if the gospel should pierce your hearts indeed, you would but cry out with the convicted Jews, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Acts 2:37. Paul, when awakened, cries out, in a trembling consternation, Lord! What wilt thou have me to do? But when shall we hear such questions now-a-days?

V. The things that men highly esteem, deeply and tenderly affect them, and excite some motions in their hearts: but what they make light of, makes no impression upon them.

And if you did not make light of the gospel, what workings would there be in your hearts about it? What solemn, tender, and vigorous passion would it raise in you to hear such things about the world to come! What fear and astonishment would seize you at the consideration of your misery; what transports of joy and gratitude would you feel at the glad tidings of salvation by the blood of Christ! What strong efficacious purposes would be raised in you at the discovery of your duty! Oh what hearers should we have, were it not for this one sin, the making light of the gospel! Whereas now we are in danger of wearying them, or preaching them asleep with our most solemn discourses about this momentous affair? We talk to them of



Christ and salvation till they grow quite tired of this dull old tale, and this foolishness of preaching. Alas! Little would one think from the air of carelessness, levity, and inattention that appears among them, that they were hearing such weighty truths, or have any concern in them.

VI. Our estimate of things may be discovered by the diligence and earnestness of our endeavors about them. Those things which we highly value, we think no pains too great to obtain; but what we think lightly of we use no endeavors about, or we use them in a languid, careless manner.

And do not they make light of Christ and salvation, who do not exert themselves in earnest to obtain them, and think a great deal of every little thing they do in religion? They are still ready to cry out, “What need of so much pains? We hope to be saved without so much trouble.” And, though these may not be so honest as to speak it out, it is plain from their temper and practice, they grudge all the service they do for Christ as done to a master they do not love. They love and esteem the world, and therefore for the world they will labor and toil all day, and seem never to think they can do too much; but for the God that made them, for the Lord that bought them, and for their everlasting salvation, they seem afraid of taking too much pains. Let us preach to them as long as we will, we cannot bring them in earnest to desire and pursue after holiness. Follow them to their houses, and you will hardly ever find them reading a chapter in their Bibles, or calling upon God with their families, so much as once a day. Follow them into their retirements, and you will hear no penitent confessions of sin, no earnest cries for mercy. They will not allow to God that one day in seven which he has appropriated to his own immediate service, but they will steal and prostitute some even of those sacred hours for idleness, for worldly conversation, or business.

And many of them are so malignant in wickedness, that they will reproach and ridicule others that are not so made as themselves in these respects. And is not Christ worth seeking? Is not eternal salvation worth so much trouble? Does not that man make light of these things that thinks his ease or carnal pleasure of greater importance? Let common sense judge.

VII. That which we highly value we think we cannot buy too dear; and we are ready to part with everything that comes in competition with it. The merchant that found one pearl of great price, sold all that he had to purchase it, Matt. 13:46, but those things that we make light of, we will not part with things of value for them.

Now, when Christ and the blessings of the gospel come in competition with the world and sinful pleasures, you may know which you most highly esteem, by considering which you are most ready to part with. You are called to part with everything that is inconsistent with an interest in Christ, and yet many of you will not do it. You are called but to give God his own, to resign all to his will, to let go all those profits and pleasures which you must either part with, or part with Christ, and yet your hearts cling to these things; you grasp them eagerly, and nothing can tear them from you. You must have your pleasures, you must keep your credit in the world, you must look to your estates, whatever becomes of Christ and salvation; as if you could live and die better without Christ than without these things; or as if Christ could not make you happy without them. And does not this bring the matter to an issue, and plainly show that you make light of Christ in comparison with these things? Christ himself has assured you, over and over, that unless you are willing to part with all for his sake, you cannot be his disciples; and yet, while you have the quite contrary disposition, you

will pretend to be his disciples; as if you knew better what it is that constituted his disciples than he.

VIII. Those things which we highly value, we shall be for helping our friends to obtain.

Do not those, then, make light of Christ, who do not take half so much pains to help their children to an interest in him, as to set them up in credit in the world, and leave them large fortunes? They supply the outward wants of their families, but they take little or no care about their everlasting salvation. Alas! Sirs, the neglected, ignorant, and vicious children and servants of such of you can witness against you, that you make very light of Christ and salvation, and their immortal souls.

IX. That which men highly esteem they will so diligently pursue, that you may see their regard for it in their endeavors after it, if it be a matter within their reach.

You may therefore see that many make light of the gospel by the little knowledge they have of it, after all the means of instruction with which they have been favored. Alas! Where is their improvement in holiness! How little do they know of their own hearts, of God and Christ, and the world to come, and what they must do to be saved! Ask them about these things, and you will find them stupidly ignorant; and yet they have so much conceited knowledge that they will not acknowledge it; or if they do, they have no better excuse than to say they are no scholars, or they have a poor memory; as if it required extensive learning, or a great genius to know the things that are necessary to salvation. Oh! If they had not made light of these things; if they had bestowed but half the pains upon them which they have taken to understand matters of trade and worldly business, they would not be so grossly ignorant as they are! When men can learn the hardest trade in a few

years, when men of bright parts, and perhaps considerable learning, after living so many years, are still mere novices in matters of religion, and do not so much as know the terms of life according to the gospel, is it not plain that they care but little about these things, and that they make light of the Son of God, and all his inestimable, immortal blessings?

Thus I have offered you sufficient matter of conviction in this affair. And what is the result? Does not conscience smite some of you by this time, and say, “I am the man that have made light of Christ and his gospel?” If not, upon what evidence are you acquitted? Some of you, I doubt not, can say, in the integrity of your hearts, “Alas! I am too careless about this important affair, but God knows I am often deeply concerned about it; God knows that if ever I was in earnest about anything in all my life, it has been about my everlasting state; and there is nothing in all the world that habitually lies so near my heart.” But are there not some of you whom conscience does not accuse of this crime of too much carelessness about the gospel, not because you are innocent, but because you make so very light of it, that you will make no thorough search into it? And does not this alone prove you guilty? I beseech such to consider the folly of your conduct. Do you then think to excuse your crime, by being careless whether you are guilty of it or not? Can you avoid the precipice by shutting your eyes? If you discover your sin now, it may be of unspeakable service, but if you now shut your eyes you must see it hereafter, when it will be too late; when your conviction will be your punishment. I beseech you also to consider the dreadful evil of your conduct in making light of a Savior. And here I shall offer such arguments to expose its aggravations as I am sure cannot fail to convince and astonish you, if you act like men of reason and understanding.

I. Consider you make light of him who did not make light of you, when you deserved his final neglect of you. You were worthy of nothing but contempt and abhorrence from him. As a man you are but a worm to God, and as a sinner you are viler than a toad or a serpent. Yet Christ was so far from making light of you that he left his native heaven, became a man of sorrows, and died in the most exquisite agonies, that a way might be opened for the salvation of your miserable soul: and can you make light of him after all his regard to you? What miracles of love and mercy has he shown towards you! And can you neglect him after all? Angels, who are less concerned in these things than we, cannot but pry into them with delightful wonder, 1 Peter 1:12, and shall sinners who have the most intimate personal concern in them, make light of them? This is a crime more than devilish; for the devils never had a Savior offered to them, and consequently never could despise him. And can you live in a carelessness of Christ all your days, and yet feel no remorse?

II. Consider you make light of matters of the greatest excellency and importance in all the world. Oh, sirs, you know not what it is that you slight; had you known these things you would not have ventured to make light of them for ten thousand worlds. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is, that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. John 4:13. Had the Jews known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory: 1 Cor. 2:8. So, had you known what Jesus is, you would not have made light of him; he would have been to you the most important being in the universe. Oh! Had you been but one day in heaven, and seen and felt the happiness there! Or had you been but one hour under the agonies of hell, you could never more have trifled with salvation.

Here I find my thoughts run so naturally into the same channel with those of the excellent Mr. Baxter, about a hundred years ago, that you will allow me to give a long quotation from him, that you may see in what light this great and good man viewed the neglected things which the gospel brings to your ears. His words are these; and I am sure to me they have been very weighty:—

“Oh, sirs, they are no trifles or jesting matters that the gospel speaks of. I must needs profess to you, that when I have the most serious thoughts of these things, I am ready to wonder that such amazing matters do not overwhelm the souls of men: that the greatness of the subject doth not so overmatch our understandings and affections, as even to drive men beside themselves, but that God hath always somewhat allayed it by distance; much more do I wonder that men should be so blockish as to make light of such things. Oh, Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are! Would they then hear us as they do? Would they read and think of these things as they do? I profess I have been ready to wonder when I have heard such weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation, and much more do I wonder how they can rest, till they have gone to their ministers and learned what they shall do to be saved, that this great business should be put out of doubt. Oh, that heaven and hell should work no more upon men! Oh, that eternity should work no more! Oh, how can you forbear when you are alone to think with yourselves what it is to be everlastingly in joy or torment. I wonder that such thoughts do not break your sleep, and that they do not crowd into your minds when you are about your labor! I wonder how you can almost do anything else! How can you have any quietness in your minds? How can you eat or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting

consolations? Is that a man, or a corpse, that is not affected with matters of this moment? That can be readier to sleep than to tremble, when he hears how he must stand at the bar of God? Is that a man, or a clod of clay, that can rise up and lie down without being deeply affected with his everlasting state? That can follow his worldly business, and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation, and that when he knows it is so hard at hand? Truly, sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the best saints upon earth, that they are no better, and do no more in so weighty a case. I wonder at those whom the world accounts more holy than needs, and scorns for making too much ado, that they can put off Christ and their souls with so little; that they do not pour out their souls in every prayer; that they are not more taken up with God; that their thoughts are not more serious in preparation for their last account. I wonder that they are not a thousand times more strict in their lives, and more laborious and unwearied for the crown than they are. And for myself, (says that zealous, flaming, and indefatigable preacher,) as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life, so the Lord knows I am ashamed of every sermon that I preach: when I think what I am, and who sent me, and how much the salvation and damnation of men is concerned in it, I am ready to tremble, lest God should judge me as a sligher of his truth and the souls of men, and lest, in my best sermon, I should be guilty of their blood. Methinks we should not speak a word to men in matters of such consequence without tears, or the greatest earnestness that possibly we can. Were we not too much guilty of the sin which we reprove, it would be so. Whether we are alone or in company, methinks our end, and such an end, should still be in our mind, and as before our eyes; and we should sooner forget anything, or set light by anything, or by all things, than by this.”

And now, my brethren, if such a man as this viewed these things in this light, oh what shall we, we languishing, careless creatures, what shall we think of ourselves? Into what a dead sleep are we fallen! Oh let the most active and zealous among us awake, and be a thousand times more earnest; and ye frozen-hearted, careless sinners, for God's sake awake, and exert yourselves to good purpose in the pursuit of salvation, or you are lost to all eternity.

III. Consider whose salvation it is you make light of. It is your own. And do you not care what becomes of your own selves? Is it nothing to you whether you are saved or damned forever? Is the natural principle of self-love extinct in you? Have you no concern for your own preservation? Are you commenced your own enemies? If you slight Christ and love sin, you virtually love death, Prov. 8:36. You may as well say, "I will live and yet neither eat nor drink," as say, "I will go to heaven, and yet make light of Christ." And you may as well say this in words as by your practice.

IV. Consider, your sin is aggravated by professing to believe that gospel which you make light of. For a professed infidel that does not believe the Scripture revelation concerning Christ and a future state of rewards and punishments, for such a one to be careless about these things would not be so strange; but for you that make these things your creed, and a part of your religion, for you that call yourselves Christians, and have been baptized into this faith; for you, I say, to make light of them, how astonishing! How utterly inexcusable! What! Believe that you shall live forever in the most perfect happiness or exquisite misery, and yet take no more pains to obtain the one, and escape the other? What! Believe that the great and dreadful God will shortly be your judge, and yet make no more preparation for it? Either say plainly, "I am no Christian, I do not believe these things;" or else



let your hearts be affected with your belief, and let it influence and govern your lives.

V. Consider what those things are which engross your affections, and which tempt you to neglect Christ and your salvation. Have you found out a better friend, or a more substantial and lasting happiness than his salvation? Oh! What trifles and vanities, what dreams and shadows are men pursuing, while they neglect the important realities of the eternal world! If crowns and kingdoms, if all the riches, glories, and pleasures of the world were ensured to you as a reward for making light of Christ, you would even then make the most foolish bargain possible; for what are these in the scale to eternal joy or eternal tempest? And what is a man profited, if he shall gain even the whole world, and lose his own soul? Matt. 16:26. But you cannot hope for the ten thousandth part; and will you cast away your souls for this? You that think it such a great thing to live in riches, pleasures, and honors, consider, is it such a mighty happiness to die rich? To die after a life of pleasure and honor? Will it be such a great happiness to give an account for the life of a rich sensualist, rather than of a poor mortified creature? Will Dives then be so much happier than Lazarus? Alas! What does the richest, the highest, the most voluptuous sinner, what does he do, but lay-up treasures of wrath against the day of wrath? Oh how will the unhappy creatures torture themselves for ever with the most cutting reflections for selling their Savior and their souls for such trifles! Let your sins and earthly enjoyments save you then, if they can; let them then do that for you which Christ would have done for you if you had chosen him. Then go and cry to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you in the day of your tribulation.

VI. Your making light of Christ and salvation is a certain evidence that you have no interest in them.— Christ will not throw himself and his blessings away upon those who do not value them. “Those that honor him he will honor; but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed,” 1 Sam. 2:30. There is a day coming, when you will feel you cannot do without him; when you will feel yourselves perishing for want of a Savior; and then you may go and look for a Savior where you will; then may you shift for yourselves as you can; he will have nothing to do with you; the Savior of sinners will cast you off forever. I tell you, sirs, whatever estimate you form of all these things, God thinks very highly of the blood of his Son, and the blessings of his purchase; and if ever you obtain them, he will have you think highly of them too. If you continue to make light of them, all the world cannot save you. And can you find fault with God for denying you that which was so little in your account?

VII. And lastly, the time is hastening when you will not think so slightly of Christ and salvation. Oh, sirs, when God shall commission death to tear your guilty souls out of your bodies, when devils shall drag you away to the place of torment, when you find yourselves condemned to everlasting fire by that Savior whom you now neglect, what would you then give for a Savior? When divine justice brings in its heavy charges against you, and you have nothing to answer, how will you then cry, “Oh if I had chosen Jesus for my Savior, he would have answered all!” When you see that the world has deserted you, that your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are over forever, would you not then give ten thousand worlds for Christ? And will you not now think him worthy of your esteem and earnest pursuit? Why will ye judge of things

now quite the reverse of what you will do then when you will be more capable of judging rightly?

And now, dear immortal souls! I have discovered the nature and danger of this common but unsuspected and unlamented sin, making light of Christ. I have delivered my message, and now I must leave it with you, imploring the blessing of God upon it. I cannot follow you home to your houses to see what effect it has upon you, or to make application of it to each of you in particular; but oh, may your consciences undertake this office! Whenever you spend another prayerless, thoughtless day, whenever you give yourselves up to sinful pleasures, or an over-eager pursuit of the world, may your conscience become your preacher, and sting you with this exhortation: “Alas! Is this the effect of all I have heard? Do I still make light of Christ and the concerns of religion? Oh what will be the end of such conduct!”

I cannot but fear, after all, that some of you, as usual, will continue careless and impenitent. Well, when you are suffering the punishment of this sin in hell, remember that you were warned, and acquit me from being accessory to your ruin. And when we all appear before the supreme Judge, and I am called to give an account of my ministry: when I am asked, “Did you warn these creatures of their danger? Did you lay before them their guilt in making light of these things?” you will allow me to answer, “Yes, Lord, I warned them in the best manner I could, but they would not believe me; they would not regard what I said, though enforced by the authority of thy awful name, and confirmed by thine own word.” Oh sirs, must I give in this accusation against any of you? No, rather have mercy on yourselves, and have mercy upon me, that I may give an account of you with joy, and not with grief.

# *SERM. VIII. THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST TO WEAK BELIEVERS.*

**M**<sup>att. 12:20.</sup>— *A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.*

The Lord Jesus possesses all those virtues in the highest perfection, which render him infinitely amiable, and qualify him for the administration of a just and gracious government over the world. The virtues of mortals, when carried to a high degree, very often run into those vices which have a kind of affinity to them. “Right, too rigid, hardens into wrong.” Strict justice steels itself into excessive severity; and the man is lost in the judge. Goodness and mercy sometimes degenerate into softness and an irrational compassion inconsistent with government. But in Jesus Christ these seemingly opposite virtues center and harmonize in the highest perfection, without running into extremes. Hence he is at once characterized as a Lamb, and as the Lion of the tribe of Judah: a lamb for gentleness towards humble penitents, and a lion to tear his enemies in pieces. Christ is said to judge and make war, Rev. 19:11; and yet he is called The Prince of Peace; Isa. 9:6. He will at length show himself terrible to the workers of iniquity;

and the terrors of the Lord are a very proper topic whence to persuade men; but now he is patient towards all men, and he is all love and tenderness towards the meanest penitent. The meekness and gentleness of Christ is to be the pleasing entertainment of this day; and I enter upon it with a particular view to those mourning, desponding souls among us, whose weakness renders them in great need of strong consolation. To such, in particular, I address the words of my text, A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.

This is a part of the Redeemer's character, as delineated near three thousand years ago, by the evangelical prophet Isaiah; Isa. 42:1-4; and it is expressly applied to him by St. Mathew: Behold, says the Father, my servant whom I have chosen for the important undertaking of saving the guilty sons of men; "my Beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased;" my very soul is well pleased with his faithful discharge of the important office he has undertaken. I will put my spirit upon him; that is, I will completely furnish him by the gifts of my spirit for his high character; and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles; to the poor benighted Gentiles he shall show the light of salvation, by revealing the gospel to them; which, in the style of the Old Testament, may be called his judgments. Or, he will show and execute the judgment of this world by casting out its infernal prince, who had so long exercised an extensive cruel tyranny over it. He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets; that is, though he enters the world as a mighty prince and conqueror, to establish a kingdom of righteousness, and overthrow the kingdom of darkness, yet he will not introduce it with the noisy terrors and thunders of war, but shall show himself mild and gentle as the prince of peace. Or the connection may lead us to understand these words in a different sense, namely, He shall do

nothing with clamorous ostentation, nor proclaim his wonderful works, when it shall answer no valuable end. Accordingly the verse of our text stands thus connected: Great multitudes followed him; and he healed them all, and charged, them that they should not make him known. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,— He shall not cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets; that is, he shall not publish his miracles with noisy triumphs in the streets and other public places. And when it is said, He shall not strive, it may refer to his inoffensive passive behavior towards his enemies that were plotting his death. For thus we may connect this quotation from Isaiah with the preceding history in the chapter of our text: Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, instead of praying to his Father for a guard of angels, or employing his own miraculous power to destroy them, he withdrew himself from thence; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying,—He shall not strive.

The general meaning of my text seems to be contained in this observation: “That the Lord Jesus has the tenderest and most compassionate regard to the feeblest penitents, however oppressed and desponding; and that he will approve and cherish the least spark of true love towards himself.”

A bruised reed seems naturally to represent a soul at once feeble in itself, and crushed with a burden; a soul both weak and oppressed. The reed is a slender, frail vegetable in itself, and therefore a very proper image to represent a soul that is feeble and weak. A bruised reed is still more frail, hangs its head, and is unable to stand without some prop. And what can be a more lively emblem of a poor soul, not only weak in itself, but bowed down and broken under a load of sin and sorrow, that droops and sinks, and is

unable to stand without divine support? Strength may bear up under a burden, or struggle with it, till it has thrown it off; but oppressed weakness, frailty under a burden, what can be more pitiable? And yet this is the case of many a poor penitent. He is weak in himself, and in the meantime crushed under a heavy weight of guilt and distress.

And what would become of such a frail oppressed creature, if, instead of raising him up and supporting him, Jesus should tread and crush him under the foot of his indignation? But though a reed, especially a bruised reed, is an insignificant thing, of little or no use, yet “a bruised reed he will not break,” but he raises it up with a gentle hand, and enables it to stand, though weak in itself, and easily crushed in ruin.

Perhaps the imagery, when drawn at length, may be this: “The Lord Jesus is an Almighty Conqueror, marches in state through our world; and here and there a bruised reed lies in his way. But instead of disregarding it, or trampling it under foot, he takes care not to break it: he raises up the drooping straw, trifling as it is and supports it with his gentle hand.” Thus, poor brokenhearted penitents, thus he takes care of you, and supports you, worthless and trifling as you are. Though you seem to lie in the way of his justice, and it might tread you with its heavy foot, yet he not only does not crush you, but takes you up, and inspires you with strength to bear your burden and flourish again.

Or perhaps the imagery may be derived from the practice of the ancient shepherds, who were wont to amuse themselves with the music of a pipe of reed or straw; and when it was bruised they broke it, or threw it away as useless. But the bruised reed shall not be broken by this divine Shepherd of souls. The music of broken sighs and groans is indeed all that the broken reed can afford him: the notes are but low, melancholy, and jarring: and yet

he will not break the instrument, but he will repair and tune it, till it is fit to join in the concert of angels on high; and even now its humble strains are pleasing to his ears. Surely every broken heart among us must revive, while contemplating this tender and moving imagery.

The other emblem is equally significant and affecting. The smoking flax shall he not quench. It seems to be an allusion to the wick of a candle or lamp, the flame of which is put out, but it still smokes, and retains a little fire which may be again blown into a flame, or rekindled by the application of more fire. Many such dying snuffs or smoking wicks are to be found in the candlesticks of the churches, and in the lamps of the sanctuary. The flame of divine love is just expiring, it is sunk into the socket of a corrupt heart, and produces no clear, steady blaze, but only a smoke that is disagreeable, although it shows that a spark of the sacred fire yet remains; or it produces a faint quivering flame that dies away, then catches and revives, and seems unwilling to be quenched entirely. The devil and the world raise many storms of temptation to blow it out; and a corrupt heart, like a fountain, pours out water to quench it. But even this smoking flax, this dying snuff, Jesus will not quench, but he blows it up into a flame, and pours in the oil of his grace to recruit and nourish it. He walks among the golden candlesticks, and trims the lamps of his sanctuary. Where he finds empty vessels without oil or a spark of heavenly fire, like those of the foolish virgins, he breaks the vessels, or throws them out of his house. But where he finds the least spark of true grace, where he discovers but the glimpse of sincere love to him, where he sees the principle of true piety, which, though just expiring, yet renders the heart susceptible of divine love, as a candle just put out is easily rekindled, there he will strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die: he will blow up the dying snuff to



a lively flame, and cause it to shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Where there is the least principle of true holiness he will cherish it. He will furnish the expiring lamp with fresh supplies of the oil of grace, and of heavenly fire; and all the storms that beat upon it shall not be able to put it out, because sheltered by his hand.

I hope, my dear brethren, some of you begin already to feel the pleasing energy of this text. Are you not ready to say, “Blessed Jesus! Is this thy true character? Then thou art just such a Savior as I want, and I most willingly give up myself to thee.” You are sensible you are at best but a bruised reed, a feeble, shattered, useless thing: an untunable, broken pipe of straw, that can make no proper music for the entertainment of your divine Shepherd. Your heart is at best but smoking flax, where the love of God often appears like a dying snuff; or an expiring flame that quivers and catches, and hovers over the lamp, just ready to go out. Such some of you probably feel yourselves to be. Well, and what think ye of Christ? “He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;” and therefore, may not even your guilty eyes look to this gentle Savior with encouraging hope? May you not say to him, with the sweet singer of Israel, in his last moment, He is all my salvation, and all my desire? 2 Sam. 23:5.

In prosecuting this subject I intend to illustrate the character of a weak believer, as represented in my text, and then to illustrate the care and compassion of Jesus Christ even for such a poor weakling.

I. I am to illustrate the character of a weak believer, as represented in my text, by “a bruised reed, and smoking flax.”

The metaphor of a bruised reed, as I observed, seems most naturally to convey the idea of a state of weakness and oppression. And, therefore, in illustrating it I am naturally led to describe the various weaknesses which a

believer sometimes painfully feels, and to point out the heavy burdens which he sometimes groans under; I say sometimes, for at other times even the weak believer finds himself strong, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. The joy of the Lord is his strength: and he “can do all things through Christ strengthening him.” Even the oppressed believer at times feels himself delivered from his burden, and he can lift up his drooping head, and walk upright. But, alas! The burden returns, and crushes him again. And under some burden or other many honest-hearted believers groan out the most part of their lives.

Let us now see what are those weaknesses which a believer feels and laments. He finds himself weak in knowledge; a simple child in the knowledge of God and divine things. He is weak in love; the sacred flame does not rise with a perpetual fervor, and diffuse itself through all his devotions, but at times it languishes and dies away into a smoking snuff. He is weak in faith; he cannot keep a strong hold of the Almighty, cannot suspend his all upon his promises with cheerful confidence, nor build a firm, immovable fabric of hope upon the rock Jesus Christ. He is weak in hope; his hope is dashed with rising billows of fears and jealousies, and sometimes just overset. He is weak in joy; he cannot extract the sweets of Christianity, nor taste the comforts of his religion. He is weak in zeal for God and the interests of his kingdom; he would wish himself always a flaming seraph, always glowing with zeal, always unwearied in serving his God, and promoting the designs of redeeming love in the world; but, alas! At times his zeal, with his love, languishes and dies away into a smoking snuff. He is weak in repentance; troubled with that plague of plagues, a hard heart. He is weak in the conflict with indwelling sin, that is perpetually

making insurrections within him. He is weak in resisting temptations; which crowd upon him from without, and are often likely to overwhelm him. He is weak in courage to encounter the king of terrors, and venture through the valley of the shadow of death. He is weak in prayer, in importunity, in filial boldness, in approaching the mercy seat. He is weak in abilities to endeavor the conversion of sinners and save souls from death. In short, he is weak in everything in which he should be strong. He has indeed, like the church of Philadelphia, a little strength, Rev. 3:8, and at times he feels it; but oh! It seems to him much too little for the work he has to do. These weaknesses or defects the believer feels, painfully and tenderly feels, and bitterly laments. A sense of them keeps him upon his guard against temptations: he is not venturesome in rushing into the combat. He would not parley with temptation, but would keep out of its way; nor would he run the risk of a defeat by an ostentatious experiment of his strength. This sense of weakness also keeps him dependent upon divine strength. He clings to that support given to St. Paul in an hour of hard conflict, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness; and when a sense of his weakness has this happy effect upon him, then with St. Paul he has reason to say, When I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor. 12:9,10.

I say the believer feels and laments these weaknesses; and this is the grand distinction in this case between him and the rest of the world. They are the weak too, much weaker than he; nay, they have, properly, no spiritual strength at all; but, alas I they do not feel their weakness, but the poor vain creatures boast of their strength, and think they can do great things when they are disposed for them. Or if their repeated falls and defeats by temptation extort them to a confession of their weakness, they plead it rather as an excuse, than lament it as at once a crime and a calamity.

But the poor believer tries no such artifice to extenuate his guilt. He is sensible that even his weakness itself has guilt in it, and therefore he laments it with ingenuous sorrow among his other sins.

Now, have I not delineated the very character of some of you; such weaklings, such frail reeds you feel yourselves to be? Well, hear this kind assurance, “Jesus will not break such a feeble reed, but he will support and strengthen it.”

But you perhaps not only feel you are weak, but you are oppressed with some heavy burden or other. You are not only a reed for weakness, but you are a bruised reed, trodden under foot, crushed under a load. Even this is no unusual or discouraging case; for,

The weak believer often feels himself crushed under some heavy burden. The frail reed is often bruised; bruised under a due sense of guilt. Guilt lies heavy at times upon his conscience, and he cannot throw it off. Bruised with a sense of remaining sin, which he finds still strong within him, and which at times prevails, and treads him under foot. Bruised under a burden of wants, the want of tenderness of heart, of ardent love to God and mankind, the want of heavenly-mindedness and victory over the world; the want of conduct and resolution to direct his behavior in a passage so intricate and difficult, and the want of nearer intercourse with the Father and his Spirit: in short, a’ thousand pressing wants crush and bruise him. He also feels his share of the calamities of life in common with other men. But these burdens I shall take no farther notice of, because they are not peculiar to him as a believer, nor do they lie heaviest upon his heart. He could easily bear up under the calamities of life if his spiritual wants were supplied, and the burden of guilt and sin were removed. Under these last he groans and sinks. Indeed these burdens lie with all their full weight upon the world

around him; but they are dead in trespasses and sins, and feel them not: they do not groan under them, nor labor for deliverance from them. They lie contented under them, with more stupidity than beasts of burden, till they sink under the intolerable load into the depth of misery. But the poor believer is not so stupid, and his tender heart feels the burden and groans under it. We that are in this tabernacle, says St. Paul, do groan, being burdened. 2 Cor. 5:4. The believer understands feelingly that pathetic exclamation, O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom. 7:24. He cannot be easy till his conscience is appeased by a well-attested pardon through the blood of Christ; and the sins he feels working within him are a real burden and uneasiness to him, though they should never break out into action, and publicly dishonor his holy profession.

And is not this the very character of some poor oppressed creatures among you? I hope it is. You may look upon your case to be very discouraging, but Jesus looks upon it in a more favorable light; he looks upon you as proper objects of his compassionate care. Bruised as you are, he will bind up, and support you.

II. But I proceed to take a view of the character of a weak Christian, as represented in the other metaphor in my text, namely, smoking flax. The idea most naturally conveyed by this metaphor is, that of grace true and sincere, but languishing and just expiring, like a candle just blown out, which still smokes and retains a feeble spark of fire. It signifies a susceptibility of a farther grace, or a readiness to catch that sacred fire, as a candle just put out is easily re-kindled. This metaphor therefore leads me to describe the reality of religion in a low degree, or to delineate the true Christian in his most languishing hours. And in so doing I shall mention

those dispositions and exercises which the weakest Christian feels, even in these melancholy seasons; for even in these he widely differs still from the most polished hypocrite in his highest improvements. On this subject let me solicit your most serious attention; for, if you have the least spark of real religion within you, you are now likely to discover it, as I am not going to rise to the high attainments of Christians of the first rank, but to stoop to the character of the meanest. Now the peculiar dispositions and exercises of heart which such in some measure feel, you may discover from the following short history of their case.

The weak Christian in such languishing hours does indeed sometimes fall into such a state of carelessness and insensibility, that he has very few and but superficial exercises of mind about divine things. But generally he feels an uneasiness, an emptiness, an anxiety within, under which he droops and pines away, and all the world cannot heal the disease! He has chosen the blessed God as his supreme happiness; and, when he cannot derive happiness from that source, all the sweets of created enjoyments become insipid to him, and cannot fill up the prodigious void which the absence of the Supreme Good leaves in his craving soul. Sometimes his anxiety is indistinct and confused, and he hardly knows what ails him; but at other times he feels it is for God, the living God, that his soul pants. The evaporations of this smoking flax naturally ascend towards heaven. He knows that he never can be happy till he can enjoy the communications of divine love. Let him turn which way he will, he can find no solid ease, no rest, till he comes to this center again.

Even at such times he cannot be thoroughly reconciled to his sins. He may be parleying with some of them in an unguarded hour, and seem to be negotiating a peace; but the truce is soon ended, and they are at variance

again. The enmity of a renewed heart soon rises against this old enemy. And there is this circumstance remarkable in the believer's hatred and opposition to sin, that they do not proceed principally, much less entirely, from a fear of punishment, but from a generous sense to its intrinsic baseness and ingratitude, and its contrariety to the holy nature of God. This is the ground of his hatred to sin, and sorrow for it; and this shows that there is at least a spark of true grace in his heart, and that he does not act altogether from the low, interested, and mercenary principles of nature.

At such times he is very jealous of the sincerity of his religion, afraid that all his past experiences were delusive, and afraid that, if he should die in his present state, he would be forever miserable. A very anxious state is this!

The stupid world can lie secure while this grand concern lies in the most dreadful suspense. But the tenderhearted believer is not capable of such fool-hardiness: he shudders at the thought of everlasting separation from that God and Savior whom he loves. He loves him, and therefore the fear of separation from him, fills him with all the anxiety of bereaved love. This to him is the most painful ingredient of the punishment of hell. Hell would be a sevenfold hell to a lover of God, because it is a state of banishment from him whom he loves. He could forever languish and pine away under the consuming distresses of widowed love, which those that love him cannot feel. And has God kindled the sacred flame in his heart in order to render him capable of the more exquisite pain? Will he exclude from his presence the poor creature that clings to him, and languishes for him? No, the flax that does but smoke with his love was never intended to be fuel for hell; but he will blow it up into a flame, and nourish it till it mingles with the seraphic ardors in the region of perfect love.

The weak believer seems sometimes driven by the tempest of lusts and temptation from off the rock of Jesus Christ. But he makes towards it on the stormy billows, and labors to lay hold upon it, and recover his station there; for he is sensible there is no other foundation of safety; but that without Christ he must perish forever. It is the habitual disposition of the believer's soul to depend upon Jesus Christ alone. He retains a kind of direction or tendency towards him, like the needle touched with the load-stone towards the pole; and, if his heart is turned from its course, it trembles and quivers till it gains its favorite point again, and fixes there. Sometimes, indeed, a consciousness of guilt renders him shy of his God and Savior; and after such base ingratitude he is ashamed to go to him: but at length necessity as well as inclination constrains him, and he is obliged to cry out, Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. John 6:68. "In thee alone I find rest to my soul; and therefore to thee I must fly, though I am ashamed and confounded to appear in thy presence."

In short, the weakest Christian upon earth sensibly feels that his comfort rises and falls, as he lives nearer to or farther from his God. The love of God has such a habitual predominancy even in his heart, that nothing in the world, nor even all the world together, can fill up his place. No, when he is gone, heaven and earth cannot replenish the mighty void. Even the weakest Christian upon earth longs to be delivered from sin, from all sin, without exception: and a body of death hanging about him is the burden of his life. Even the poor jealous languishing Christian has his hope, all the little hope that he has, built upon Jesus Christ. Even this smoking flax sends up some exhalations of love towards heaven. Even the poor creature that often fears he is altogether a slave to sin, honestly, though feebly, labors to be holy, to be holy as an angel, yea, to be holy as God is holy. He has a heart that feels



the attractive charms of holiness, and he is so captivated by it, that sin can never recover its former place in his heart: no, the tyrant is forever dethroned, and the believer would rather die than yield himself a tame slave to the usurped tyranny again.

Thus I have delineated to you, in the plainest manner I could, the character of a weak Christian. Some of you, I am afraid, cannot lay claim even to this low character. If so, you may be sure you are not true Christians, even of the lowest rank. You may be sure you have not the least spark of true religion in your hearts, but are utterly destitute of it.

But some of you, I hope, can say, “Well, after all my doubts and fears, if this be the character of a true, though weak Christian, then I may humbly hope that I am one. I am indeed confirmed in it, that I am less than the least of all other saints upon the face of the earth, but yet I see that I am a saint; for thus has my heart been exercised, even in my dark and languishing hours. This secret uneasiness and pining anxiety, this thirst for God, for the living God, this tendency of soul towards Jesus Christ, this implacable enmity to sin, this panting and struggling after holiness: these things have I often felt.” And have you indeed? Then away with your doubts and jealousies; away with your fears and despondencies! There is at least an immortal spark kindled in your hearts, which the united power of men and devils, of sin and temptation, shall never be able to quench. No, it shall yet rise into a flame, and burn with seraphic ardors forever.

For your farther encouragement, I proceed,

II. To illustrate the care and compassion of Jesus Christ for such poor weaklings as you.

This may appear a needless task to some: for who is there that does not believe it? But to such would I say, it is no easy thing to establish a

trembling soul in the full belief of this truth. It is easy for one that does not see his danger, and does not feel his extreme need of salvation, and the difficulty of the work, to believe that Christ is willing and able to save him. But oh! To a poor soul, deeply sensible of its condition, this is no easy matter. Besides, the heart may need be more deeply affected with this truth, though the understanding should need no farther arguments of the speculative kind for its conviction; and to impress this truth is my present design.

For this purpose I need but read and paraphrase to you a few of the many kind declarations and assurances which Jesus has given us in his word, and relate the happy experiences of some of his saints there recorded, who found him true and faithful to his word.

The Lord Jesus Christ seems to have a peculiar tenderness for the poor, the mourners, the broken-hearted; and these are peculiarly the objects of his mediatorial office. The Lord hath anointed me, says he, to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me all the way from my native heaven down to earth, upon this compassionate errand, to bind up the broken-hearted, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Isa. 61:1-3. Thus saith the Lord, in strains of majesty that become him, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me I and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made, saith the Lord. Had he spoken uniformly in this majestic language to us guilty worms, the declaration might have overwhelmed us with awe, but could not have inspired us with hope. But he advances himself thus high, on purpose to let us see how low he can stoop. Hear the encouraging sequel of this his majestic speech: To

this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Let heaven and earth wonder that he will look down through all the shining ranks of angels, and look by princes and nobles to fix his eye upon this man, this poor man, this contrite, brokenhearted, trembling creature. Isa. 66:1,2. He loves to dwell upon this subject, and therefore you hear it again in the same prophecy: “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,”—what does he say? I dwell in the high and holy place. Isa. 57:15. This is said in character. This is a dwelling in some measure worthy the inhabitant. But oh! Will he stoop to dwell in a lower mansion, or pitch his tent among mortals? Yes, he dwells not only in his high and holy place, but also, with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. He charges Peter to feed his lambs as well as his sheep; that is, to take the tenderest care even of the weakest in his flock. John 21:15. And he severely rebukes the shepherds of Israel, Because, says he, ye have not strengthened the diseased, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken. Ezek. 34:4. But what an amiable reverse is the character of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! Behold, says Isaiah, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. How justly may we tremble at this proclamation of the approaching God! For who can stand when he appeareth? But how agreeably are our fears disappointed in what follows! If he comes to take vengeance on his enemies, he also comes to show mercy to the meanest of his people. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young: Isa. 40:10,11, that is, he shall exercise the tenderest and

most compassionate care towards the meanest and weakest of his flock. He hath looked down, says the Psalmist, from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; not to view the grandeur and pride of courts and kings, nor the heroic exploits of conquerors, but to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come. Psalm 102:17-20. It was written for your encouragement, my brethren. Above three thousand years ago, this encouraging passage was entered into the sacred records for the support of poor desponding souls in Virginia, in the ends of the earth. Oh, what an early provident care does God show for his people! There are none of the seven churches of Asia so highly commended by Christ as that of Philadelphia; and yet in commending her, all he can say is, "Thou hast a little strength." I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength. Rev. 3:8. Oh, how acceptable is a little strength to Jesus Christ, and how ready is he to improve it! He giveth power to the faint, says Isaiah, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Isa. 40:29. Hear farther what words of grace and truth flowed from the lips of Jesus. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: for I am meek and lowly in heart, Matt. 11:28,29. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. John 7:37. Let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17. Oh, what strong consolation is here! What exceeding great and precious promises are these! I might easily add to the catalogue, but these may suffice.

Let us now see how his people in every age have ever found these promises made good. Here David may be consulted *instar omnium*, and he will tell you, pointing to himself, This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. Psalm 34:6. St. Paul, in the midst of affliction, calls God the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation. 2 Cor. 1:3,4. God, says he that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us. 2 Cor. 7:6. What a sweetly emphatic declaration is this! “God, the comforter of the humble, comforted us.” He is not only the Lord of hosts, the King of kings, the Creator of the world, but among his more august characters he assumes this title, the Comforter of “the humble.” Such St. Paul found him in an hour of temptation, when he had this supporting answer to his repeated prayer for deliverance, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Cor. 12:9.

Since this was the case, since his weakness was more than supplied by the strength of Christ, and was a foil to set it off, St. Paul seems quite regardless what infirmities he labored under. Nay, most gladly, says he, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities—for when I am weak, then am I strong. He could take no pleasure in feeling himself weak: but the mortification was made up by the pleasure he found in leaning upon this almighty support. His wounds were painful to him: but, oh! The pleasure he found in feeling the divine physician dressing his wounds, in some measure swallowed up the pain. It was probably experience, as well as inspiration, that dictated to the apostle that amiable character of Christ, that he is a “merciful and faithful High Priest, who, being himself tempted, knows how to succor them that are tempted.” Heb. 2:17,18. And “we have not a high

priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Heb 4:15.

But why need I multiply arguments? Go to his cross, and there learn his love and compassion, from his groans and wounds, and blood, and death. Would he hang there in such agony for sinners if he were not willing to save them, and cherish every good principle in them? There you may have much the same evidence of his compassion as Thomas had of his resurrection; you may look into his hands, and see the print of the nails; and into his side, and see the scar of the spear; which loudly proclaims his readiness to pity and help you.

And now, poor, trembling, doubting souls, what hinders but you should raise up your drooping head, and take courage? May you not venture your souls into such compassionate and faithful hands? Why should the bruised reed shrink from him, when he comes not to tread it down, but raise it up?

As I am really solicitous that impenitent hearts among us should be pierced with the medicinal anguish and sorrow of conviction and repentance, and the most friendly heart cannot form a kinder wish for them, so I am truly solicitous that every honest soul, in which there is the least spark of true piety, should enjoy the pleasure of it. It is indeed to be lamented that they who have a title to so much happiness should enjoy so little of it; it is very incongruous that they should go bowing the head in their way towards heaven, as if they were hastening to the place of execution, and that they should serve so good a Master with such heavy hearts. Oh lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees! “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.” “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” Trust in your all-sufficient Redeemer; trust in him though he should slay you.

And do not indulge causeless doubts and fears concerning your sincerity. When they arise in your minds, examine them, and search whether there be any sufficient reason for them; and if you discover there is not, then reject them and set them at defiance, and entertain your hopes in spite of them, and say with the Psalmist, “Why art thou cast down, oh my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” Psalm 42:11.

# *SERM. IX. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRESENT HOLINESS AND FUTURE FELICITY.*

**H**eb. 12:14.— *Follow holiness; without which no man shall see the Lord.*

As the human soul was originally designed for the enjoyment of no less a portion than the ever-blessed God, it was formed with a strong innate tendency towards happiness. It has not only an eager fondness for existence, but for some good to render its existence happy. And the privation of being itself is not more terrible than the privation of all its blessings. It is true, in the present degeneracy of human nature, this vehement desire is miserably perverted and misplaced; man seeks his supreme happiness in sinful, or at best in created enjoyments, forgetful of the uncreated fountain of bliss; but yet still he seeks happiness: still this innate impetus is predominant, and though he mistakes the means, yet he still retains a general aim at the end. Hence he ransacks this lower world in quest of felicity; climbs in search of it the slippery ascent of honor; hunts for it in the treasures of gold and silver; or plunges for it in the foul streams of sensual pleasures. But since



all the sordid satisfaction resulting from these things is not adequate to the unbounded cravings of the mind, and since the satisfaction is transitory and perishing, or we may be wrenched from it by the inexorable hand of death, the mind breaks through the limits of the present enjoyments, and even of the lower creation, and ranges through the unknown scenes of futurity in quest of some untried good. Hope makes excursions into the dark duration between the present now and the grave, and forms to itself pleasing images of approaching blessings, which often vanish in the embrace, like delusive phantoms. Nay, it launches into the vast unknown world that lies beyond the grave, and roves through the regions of immensity after some complete felicity to supply the defects of sublunary enjoyments. Hence, though men, till their spirits are refined by regenerating grace, have no relish for celestial joys, but pant for the poor pleasures of time and sense, yet as they cannot avoid the unwelcome consciousness that death will ere long rend them from these sordid and momentary enjoyments, are constrained to indulge the hope of bliss in a future state: and they promise themselves happiness in another world when they can no longer enjoy any in this. And as reason and revelation unitedly assure them that this felicity cannot consist in sensual indulgences, they generally expect it will be of a more refined and spiritual nature, and flow more immediately from the great Father of spirits.

He must indeed be miserable that abandons all hope of this blessedness. The Christian religion affords him no other prospect but that of eternal, intolerable misery in the regions of darkness and despair; and if he flies to infidelity as a refuge, it can afford him no comfort but the shocking prospect of annihilation.

Now, if men were pressed into heaven by an unavoidable fatality, if happiness was promiscuously promised to them all without distinction of

characters, then they might indulge a blind unexamined hope, and never perplex themselves with anxious inquiries about it. And he might justly be deemed a malignant disturber of the repose of mankind, that would attempt to shock their hope, and frighten them with causeless scruples.

But if the light of nature intimates, and the voice of Scripture proclaims aloud, that this eternal felicity is reserved only for persons of particular characters, and that multitudes, multitudes who entertained pleasing hopes of it, are confounded with an eternal disappointment, and shall suffer an endless duration in the most terrible miseries, we ought each of us to take the alarm, and examine the grounds of our hope, that, if they appear sufficient, we may allow ourselves a rational satisfaction in them; and if they are found delusive, we may abandon them, and seek for a hope which will bear the test now while it may be obtained. And however disagreeable the task be to give our fellow-creatures even profitable uneasiness, yet he must appear to the impartial a friend to the best interests of mankind, who points out the evidences and foundation of a rational and Scriptural hope, and exposes the various mistakes to which we are subject in so important a case.

And if, when we look around us, we find persons full of the hopes of heaven, who can give no Scriptural evidences of them to themselves or others; if we find many indulging this pleasing delusion, whose practices are mentioned by God himself as the certain marks of perishing sinners; and if persons are so tenacious of these hopes, that they will retain them to their everlasting ruin, unless the most convictive methods are taken to undeceive them; then it is high time for those to whom the care of souls (a weightier charge than that of kingdoms) is entrusted, to use the greatest plainness for this purpose.

This is my chief design at present, and to this my text naturally leads me. It contains these doctrines:

First, That without holiness here, it is impossible for us to enjoy heavenly happiness in the future world. To see the Lord, is here put for enjoying him; see Rom. 8:24. And the metaphor signifies the happiness of the future state in general; and more particularly intimates that the knowledge of God will be a special ingredient therein. See a parallel expression in Matt. 5:8.

Secondly, that this consideration should induce us to use the most earnest endeavors to obtain the heavenly happiness. Pursue holiness, because without it no man can see the Lord.

Hence I am naturally led,

I. To explain the nature of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

II. To show what endeavors should be used to obtain it. And,

III. To urge you to use them by the consideration of the absolute necessity of holiness.

I. I am to explain the nature of holiness. And I shall give you a brief definition of it, and then mention some of those dispositions and practices which naturally flow from it.

The most intelligible description of holiness, as it is inherent in us, may be this: "It is a conformity in heart and practice to the revealed will of God." As the Supreme Being is the standard of all perfection, his holiness in particular is the standard of ours. Then we are holy when his image is stamped upon our hearts and reflected in our lives; so the apostle defines it, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4:24. Whom he did predestinate to be conformed, to the image of his Son. Rom. 8:29. Hence holiness may be defined, "A

conformity to God in his moral perfections.” But as we cannot have a distinct knowledge of these perfections but as they are manifested by the revealed will of God, I choose to define holiness, as above, “A conformity to his revealed will.” Now his revealed will comprises both the law and the gospel; the law informs us of the duty which we as creatures owe to God as a being of supreme excellency, as our Creator and Benefactor, and to men as our fellow-creatures; and the gospel informs us of the duty which as sinners we owe to God as reconcilable through a Mediator. Our obedience to the former implies the whole of morality, and to the latter the whole of evangelical graces, as faith in a Mediator, repentance, &c.

From this definition of holiness it appears, on the one hand, that it is absolutely necessary, to see the Lord; for unless our dispositions are conformed to him, we cannot be happy in the enjoyment of him; and on the other hand, that they who are made thus holy, are prepared for the vision and fruition of his face, as they can relish the divine pleasure.

But as a concise definition of holiness may give an auditory but very imperfect ideas of it, I shall expatiate upon the dispositions and practices in which it consists, or which naturally result from it; and they are such as follow:

1. A delight in God for his holiness. Self-love may prompt us to love him for his goodness to us; and so, many unregenerate men may have a selfish love to God on this account. But to love God because he is infinitely holy, because he bears an infinite detestation to all sin, and will not indulge his creatures in the neglect of the least instance of holiness, but commands them to be holy as he is holy, this is a disposition connatural to a renewed soul only, and argues a conformity to his image. Every nature is most agreeable to itself, and a holy nature is most agreeable to a holy nature.

Here I would make a remark, which may God deeply impress on your hearts, and which for that purpose I shall subjoin to each particular, that holiness in fallen man is supernatural; I mean we are not born with it, we give no discoveries of it, till we have experienced a great change. Thus we find it in the present case; we have no natural love to God because of his infinite purity and hatred to all sin; nay, we would love him more did he give us greater indulgences; and I am afraid the love of some persons is founded upon a mistake; they love him because they imagine he does not hate sin, nor them for it, so much as he really does; because they do not expect he is so inexorably just in his dealings with the sinner. It is no wonder they love such a soft, easy, passive being as this imaginary deity; but did they see the luster of that holiness of God which dazzles the celestial armies; did they but know the terrors of his justice, and his implacable indignation against sin, their innate enmity would show its poison, and their hearts would rise against God in all those horrible blasphemies with which awakened sinners are so frequently shocked. Such love as this is so far from being acceptable, that it is the greatest affront to the Supreme Being; as, if a profligate loved you on the mistaken supposition that you were such a libertine as himself, it would rather inflame your indignation than procure your respect.

But to a regenerate mind how strong, how transporting are the charms of holiness! Such a mind joins the anthem of seraphs with the divinest complacency, Rev. 4:8, and anticipates the song of glorified saints, Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name I for thou only art holy. Rev. 15:4. The perfections of God lose their luster, or sink into objects of terror or contempt, if this glorious attribute be abstracted. Without holiness power becomes tyranny, omniscience craft, justice revenge and cruelty, and

even the amiable attribute of goodness loses its charms, and degenerates into a blind promiscuous prodigality, or foolish undiscerning fondness: but when these perfections are clothed in the beauties of holiness, how Godlike, how majestic, how lovely and attractive do they appear! And with what complacence does a mind fashioned after the divine image acquiesce in them. It may appear amiable even to an unholy sinner that the exertions of almighty power should be regulated by the most consummate wisdom; that justice should not without distinction punish the guilty and the innocent: but a holy soul only can rejoice that divine goodness will not communicate happiness to the disgrace of holiness; and that, rather than it should overflow in a blind promiscuous manner, the whole human race should be miserable. A selfish sinner has nothing in view but his own happiness; and if this be obtained, he has no anxiety about the illustration of the divine purity; but it recommends happiness itself to a sanctified soul, that it cannot be communicated in a way inconsistent with the beauties of holiness.

2. Holiness consists in a hearty complacence in the law of God, because of its purity. The law is the transcript of the moral perfections of God; and if we love the original, we shall love the copy. Accordingly it is natural to a renewed mind to love the divine law, because it is perfectly holy, because it makes no allowance for the least sin, and requires every duty that it becomes us to perform towards God. Psalm 119:140, and 19:7-10, Romans 7:12, compared with 22.

But is this our natural disposition? Is this the disposition of the generality? Do they not, on the contrary, secretly find fault with the law, because it is so strict? And their common objection against that holiness of life which it enjoins is, that they cannot bear to be so precise.

Hence they are always for abating the rigor of the law, for bringing it down to some imaginary standard of their own, to their present ability, to sins of practice without regard to the sinful dispositions of the heart; or to the prevailing dispositions of the heart without regard to the first workings of concupiscence, those embryos of iniquity; and if they love the law at all, as they profess to do, it is upon the supposition that it is not so strict as it really is, but grants them greater indulgences. Rom. 7:7.

Hence it appears that, if we are made holy at all, it must be by a supernatural change; and when that is effected, what a strange and happy alteration does the sinner perceive! With what pleasure does he resign himself a willing subject to that law to which he was once so averse! And when he fails, (as alas! He does in many things,) how is he humbled! He does not lay the fault upon the law as requiring impossibilities, but lays the whole fault upon himself as a corrupt sinner.

3. Holiness consists in a hearty complacence in the gospel method of salvation, because it tends to illustrate the moral perfections of the Deity, and to discover the beauties of holiness.

The gospel informs us of two grand pre-requisites to the salvation of the fallen sons of men, namely, the satisfaction of divine justice by the obedience and passion of Christ, that God might be reconciled to them consistently with his perfections; and the sanctification of sinners by the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, that they might be capable of enjoying God, and that he might maintain intimate communion with them without any stain to his holiness. These two grand articles contain the substance of the gospel; and our acquiescence in them is the substance of that evangelical obedience which it requires of us, and which is essential to holiness in a fallen creature.

Now, it is evident, that without either of these the moral perfections of the Deity, particularly his holiness, could not be illustrated, or even secured in the salvation of a sinner. Had he received an apostate race into favor, who had conspired in the most unnatural rebellion against him, without any satisfaction, his holiness would have been eclipsed; it would not have appeared that he had so invincible an abhorrence of sin, so zealous a regard for the vindication of his own holy law; or to his veracity, which had threatened condign punishment to offenders. But by the satisfaction of Christ, his holiness is illustrated in the most conspicuous manner: now it appears, that God would upon no terms save a sinner but that of adequate satisfaction, and that no other was sufficient but the suffering of his co-equal Son, otherwise he would not have appointed him to sustain the character of a Mediator; and now it appears that his hatred of sin is such that he would not let it pass unpunished even in his own Son, when only imputed to him. In like manner, if sinners, while unholy, were admitted into communion with God in heaven, it would obscure the glory of his holiness, and it would not then appear that such was the purity of his nature that he could have no fellowship with sin. But now it is evident, that even the blood of Immanuel cannot purchase heaven to be enjoyed by a sinner while unholy, but that every one that arrives at heaven must first be sanctified. An unholy sinner can no more be saved, while such, by the gospel than by the law; but here lies the difference, that the gospel makes provision for his sanctification, which is gradually carried on here, and perfected at death, before his admission into the heavenly glory.

Now it is the genius of true holiness to acquiesce in both these articles. A sanctified soul places all its dependence on the righteousness of Christ for acceptance.



It would be disagreeable to it to have the least concurrence in its own justification. It is not only willing, but delights to renounce all its own righteousness, and to glory in Christ alone. Phil. 3:3. Free grace to such souls is a charming theme, and salvation is more acceptable, because conveyed in this way. It would render heaven itself disagreeable, and wither all its joys, were they brought thither in a way that degrades or does not illustrate the glory of God's holiness; but oh how agreeable the thought, that he that glorieth must glory in the Lord, and that the pride of all flesh shall be abased!

So a holy person rejoiceth that the way of holiness is the appointed way to heaven. He is not forced to be holy merely by the servile consideration that he must be so or perish, and so unwillingly submits to the necessity which he cannot avoid, when in the meantime, were it put to his choice, he would choose to reserve some sins, and neglect some painful duties. So far from this, that he delights in the gospel-constitution, because it requires universal holiness, and heaven would be less agreeable, were he to carry even the least sin there. He thinks it no hardship that he must deny himself in his sinful pleasures, and habituate himself to so much strictness in religion; no, but he blesses the Lord for obliging him to it, and where he fails he charges himself with it, and is self-abased upon the account.

This is solid rational religion, fit to be depended upon, in opposition to the antinomian licentiousness, the freaks of enthusiasm, and the irrational flights of passion and imagination on the one hand; and in opposition to formality, mere morality, and the self-sprung religion of nature on the other. And is it not evident we are destitute of this by nature? Men naturally are averse to this gospel method of salvation; they will not submit to the righteousness of God, but fix their dependence, in part at least, upon their

own merit. Their proud hearts cannot bear the thought that all their performances must go for just nothing in their justification. They are also averse to the way of holiness; hence they will either abandon the expectation of heaven, and since they cannot obtain it in their sinful ways, desperately conclude to go on in sin, come what will; or, with all the little sophistry they are capable of, they will endeavor to widen the way to heaven, and persuade themselves they shall attain it, notwithstanding their continuance in some known iniquity, and though their hearts have never been thoroughly sanctified. Alas! How evident is this all around us! How many either give up their hopes of heaven rather than part with sin, or vainly hold them, while their dispositions and practices prove them groundless! And must not such degenerate creatures be renewed ere they can be holy, or see the Lord?

4. Holiness consists in a habitual delight in all the duties of holiness towards God and man, and an earnest desire for communion with God in them. This is the natural result of all the foregoing particulars. If we love God for his holiness, we shall delight in that service in which our conformity to him consists; if we love his law, we shall delight in that obedience which it enjoins; and if we take complacence in the evangelical method of salvation, we shall take delight in that holiness, without which we cannot enjoy it. The service of God is the element, the pleasure of a holy soul; while others delight in the riches, the honors, or the pleasures of this world, the holy soul desires one thing of the Lord, that it may behold his beauty while inquiring in his temple. Psalm 27:4. Such a person delights in retired converse with heaven, in meditation and prayer. Psalm 139:17, and 63:5,6, and 73:28. He also takes pleasure in justice, benevolence, and

charity towards men, Psalm 112:5,9, and in the strictest temperance and sobriety. 1 Cor. 9:27.

Moreover, the mere formality of performing religious duties does not satisfy the true saint, unless he enjoys a divine friendship therein, receives communications of grace from heaven, and finds his graces quickened. Psalm 42:1,2.

This consideration also shows us that holiness in us must be supernatural; for do we naturally thus delight in the service of God? Or do you all now thus delight in it? Is it not rather a weariness to you, and do you not find more pleasures in other things? Surely you must be changed, or you can have no relish for the enjoyments of heavenly happiness.

5. To constitute us saints indeed there must be universal holiness in practice. This naturally follows from the last, for as the body obeys the stronger volitions of the will, so when the heart is prevailingly disposed to the service of God, the man will habitually practice it. This is generally mentioned in Scripture as the grand characteristic of real religion, without which all our pretensions are vain. 1 John 3:2-10, and 5:3; John 15:15. True Christians are far from being perfect in practice, yet they are prevailingly holy in all manner of conversation; they do not live habitually in any one known sin, or willfully neglect any one known duty. Psalm 119:6.

Without this practical holiness no man shall see the Lord; and if so, how great a change must be wrought on most before they can see him, for how few are thus adorned with a life of universal holiness! Many profess the name of Christ, but how few of them depart from iniquity? But to what purpose do they call him Master and Lord, while they do not the things which he commands them?

Thus I have, as plainly as I could, described the nature and properties of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; and they who are possessed of it may lift up their heads with joy, assured that God has begun a good work in them, and that he will carry it on; and on the other hand, they that are destitute of it may be assured, that unless they are made new creatures they cannot see the Lord. I come,

II. To show you the endeavors we should use to obtain this holiness. And they are such as these:

1. Endeavour to know whether you are holy or not by close examination. It is hard indeed for some to know positively that they are holy, as they are perplexed with the appearances of realities, and the fears of counterfeits; but it is then easy for many to conclude negatively that they are not holy as they have not the likeness of it! To determine this point is of great use to our successful seeking after holiness. That an unregenerate sinner should attend on the means of grace with other aims than one that has reason to believe himself sanctified, is evident. The anxieties, sorrows, desires, and endeavors of the one should run in a very different channel from those of the other. The one should look upon himself as a guilty, condemned sinner; the other should allow himself the pleasures of a justified state; the one should pursue after the implantation; the other after the increase of holiness: the one should indulge in a seasonable concern about his lost condition; the other repose a humble confidence in God as reconciled to him; the one should look upon the threatening's of God as his doom; the other embrace the promises as his portion. Hence it follows, that while we are mistaken about our state, we cannot use endeavors after holiness in a proper manner. We act like a physician that applies medicines at random, without knowing the disease. It is a certain conclusion that the most generous charity, under

scriptural limitations, cannot avoid, that multitudes are destitute of holiness; and ought not we to inquire with proper anxiety whether we belong to that number? Let us be impartial, and proceed according to evidence. If we find those marks of holiness in heart and life which have been mentioned, let not an excessive scrupulosity frighten us from drawing the happy conclusion: and, if we find them not, let us exercise so much wholesome severity against ourselves, as honestly to conclude we are unholy sinners, and must be renewed before we can see the Lord. The conclusion, no doubt, will give you a painful anxiety: but if you was my dearest friend, I could not form a kinder wish for you than that you might be incessantly distressed with it till you are born again. This conclusion will not be always avoidable; the light of eternity will force you upon it; and whether is it better to give way to it now, when it may be to your advantage, or be forced to admit it then, when it will be only a torment?

2. Awake, arise, and betake yourselves in earnest to all the means of grace. Your life, your eternal life is concerned, and therefore it calls for all the ardor and earnestness you are capable of exerting. Accustom yourselves to meditation, converse with yourselves in retirement, and live no longer strangers at home. Read the word of God and other good books, with diligence, attention and self-application. Attend on the public administrations of the gospel, not as a trifler, but as one that sees his eternal all concerned. Shun the tents of sin, the rendezvous of sinners, and associate with those that have experienced the change you want, and can give you proper directions. Prostrate yourself before the God of heaven, confess your sin, implore his mercy, cry to him night and day, and give him no rest, till the importunity prevail, and you take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

But, after all, acknowledge that it is God that must work in you both to will and to do, and that when you have done all these things you are but unprofitable servants. I do not prescribe these directions as though these means could effect holiness in you; no, they can no more do it than a pen can write without a hand. It is the holy Spirit's province alone to sanctify a degenerate sinner, but he is wont to do it while we are waiting upon him in the use of these means, though our best endeavors give us no title to his grace; but he may justly leave us after all in that state of condemnation and corruption into which we have voluntarily brought ourselves. I go on,

III. And lastly, to urge you to the use of these means, from the consideration mentioned in the text, the absolute necessity of holiness to the enjoyment of heavenly happiness.

Here I would show that holiness is absolutely necessary, and that the consideration of its necessity may strongly enforce the pursuit of it.

The necessity of holiness appears from the unchangeable appointment of heaven, and the nature of things.

1. The unchangeable appointment of God excludes all the unholy from the kingdom of heaven; see 2 Cor. 9:6; Rev. 21:27; Psalm 5:4,5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15. It is most astonishing that many who profess to believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, will yet indulge vain hopes of heaven in opposition to the plainest declarations of eternal truth. But though there were no positive constitution excluding the unholy from heaven, yet,

2. The very nature of things excludes sinners from heaven; that is, it is impossible, in the nature of things, that while they are unholy, they could receive happiness from the employments and entertainments of the heavenly world. If these consisted in the affluence of those things which sinners delight in here; if its enjoyments were earthly riches, pleasures, and

honors; if its employments were the amusements of the present life, then they might be happy there, as far as their sordid natures are capable of happiness. But these trifles have no place in heaven. The felicity of that state consists in the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; hence it is described by seeing the Lord, Matt. 5:8, and as a state of knowledge, 1 Cor. 13:10-12, in the satisfaction resulting thence. Ps. 17:15, and a complacency in God as a portion, Ps. 73:25,26, and is perpetual serving and praising the Lord; and hence adoration is generally mentioned as the employ of all the hosts of heaven. These are the entertainments of heaven, and they that cannot find supreme happiness in these, cannot find it in heaven. But it is evident these things could afford no satisfaction to an unholy person. He would pine away at the heavenly feast, for want of appetite for the entertainment; a holy God would be an object of horror rather than delight to him, and his service would be a weariness, as it is now. Hence it appears, that if we do not place our supreme delight in these things here, we cannot be happy hereafter; for there will be no change of dispositions in a future state, but only the perfection of those predominant in us here, whether good or evil. Either heaven must be changed, or the sinner, before he can be happy there. Hence also it appears, that God's excluding such from heaven is no more an act of cruelty than our not admitting a sick man to a feast, who has no relish for the entertainments; or not bringing a blind man into the light of the sun, or to view a beautiful prospect.

We see then that holiness is absolutely necessary; and what a great inducement should this consideration be to pursue it; if we do not see the Lord, we shall never see good. We are cut off at death from all earthly enjoyments, and can no longer make experiments to satisfy our unbounded

desires with them; and we have no God to supply their room. We are banished from all the joys of heaven, and how vast, how inconceivably vast is the loss! We are doomed to the regions of darkness forever, to bear the vengeance of eternal fire, to feel the lashes of a guilty conscience, and to spend an eternity in a horrid intimacy with infernal ghosts; and will we not then rather follow holiness, than incur so dreadful a doom? By the terrors of the Lord, then, be persuaded to break off your sins by righteousness, and follow holiness; without which no man shall see the Lord.



# *SERM. X. THE MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM AND GLORIES OF JESUS CHRIST.*

**J**ohn 18:37.— *Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.*

Kings and kingdoms are the most majestic sounds in the language of mortals, and have filled the world with noise, confusions, and blood, since mankind first left the state of nature, and formed themselves into societies. The disputes of kingdoms for superiority have set the world in arms from age to age, and destroyed or enslaved a considerable part of the human race; and the contest is not yet decided. Our country has been a region of peace and tranquility for a long time, but it has not been because the lust of power and riches is extinct in the world, but because we had no near neighbors whose interest might clash with ours, or who were able to disturb us. The absence of an enemy was our sole defense. But now, when the colonies of the sundry European nations on this continent begin to enlarge, and

approach towards each other, the scene is changed; now encroachments, depredations, barbarities, and all the terrors of war begin to surround and alarm us. Now our country is invaded and ravaged, and bleeds in a thousand veins. We have already, so early in the year, received alarm upon alarm: and we may expect the alarms to grow louder and louder as the season advances.

These commotions and perturbations have had one good effect upon me, and that is, they have carried away my thoughts of late into a serene and peaceful region, a region beyond the reach of confusion and violence; I mean the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. And thither, my brethren, I would also transport your minds this day, as the best refuge from this boisterous world, and the most agreeable mansion for the lovers of peace and tranquility. I find it advantageous both to you and myself, to entertain you with those subjects that have made the deepest impression upon my own mind: and this is the reason why I choose the present subject. In my text you hear one entering a claim to a kingdom, whom you would conclude, if you regarded only his outward appearance, to be the meanest and vilest of mankind. To hear a powerful prince, at the head of a victorious army, attended with all the royalties of his character, to hear such a one claim the kingdom he had acquired by force of arms, would not be strange. But here the despised Nazarene, rejected by his nation, forsaken by his followers, accused as the worst of criminals, standing defenseless at Pilate's bar, just about to be condemned and hung on a cross, like a malefactor and a slave; here he speaks in a royal style, even to his judge, I am a King: for this purpose was I born, and for this cause came I into the world. Strange language indeed to proceed from his lips in these circumstances! But the truth is, a great, a divine personage is concealed under this disguise; and his

kingdom is of such a nature, that his abasement and crucifixion were so far from being a hinderance to it, that they were the only way to acquire it. These sufferings were meritorious; and by these he purchased his subjects, and a right to rule them.

The occasion of these words was this: the unbelieving Jews were determined to put Jesus to death as an impostor. The true reason of their opposition to him was, that he had severely exposed their hypocrisy, claimed the character of the Messiah, without answering their expectations as a temporal prince and mighty conqueror; and introduced a new religion, which superseded the law of Moses, in which they had been educated. But this reason they knew would have but little weight with Pilate the Roman governor, who was a heathen, and had no regard to their religion. They therefore bring a charge of another kind, which they knew would touch the governor very sensibly, and that was, that Christ had set himself up as the King of the Jews; which was treason against Caesar the Roman emperor, under whose yoke they then were. This was all pretense and artifice. They would now seem to be very loyal to the emperor, and unable to bear with any claims inconsistent with his authority; whereas, in truth, they were impatient of a foreign government, and were watching for any opportunity to shake it off. And had Christ been really guilty of the charge they alleged against him, he would have been the more acceptable to them. Had he set himself up as a king of the Jews, in opposition to Caesar, and employed his miraculous powers to make good his claim, the whole nation would have welcomed him as their deliverer, and flocked round his standard. But Jesus came not to work a deliverance of this kind, nor to erect such a kingdom as they desired, and therefore they rejected him as an impostor. This charge, however, they bring against him, in order to carry their point with the

heathen governor. They knew he was zealous for the honor and interest of Caesar his master; and Tiberius, the then Roman emperor, was so jealous a prince, and kept so many spies over his governors in all the provinces, that they were obliged to be very circumspect, and show the strictest regard for his rights, in order to escape degradation, or a severer punishment. It was this that determined Pilate, in the struggle with his conscience, to condemn the innocent Jesus. He was afraid the Jews would inform against him, as dismissing one that set up as the rival of Caesar; and the consequence of this he well knew. The Jews were sensible of this, and therefore they insist upon this charge, and at length plainly tell him, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend. Pilate, therefore, who cared but little what innovations Christ should introduce into the Jewish religion, thought proper to inquire into this matter, and asks him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" dost thou, indeed, claim such a character, which may interfere with Caesar's government? Jesus replies, My kingdom is not of this world; as much as to say, "I do not deny that I claim a kingdom, but it is of such a nature, that it need give no alarm to the kings of the earth. Their kingdoms are of this world, but mine is spiritual and divine, and therefore cannot interfere with theirs. If my kingdom were of this world, like theirs, I would take the same methods with them to obtain and secure it; my servants would fight for me, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now, you see, I use no such means for my defense, or to raise me to my kingdom: and therefore you may be assured my kingdom is not from hence, and can give the Roman emperor no umbrage for suspicion or uneasiness." Pilate answers to this purpose: Thou dost, however, speak of a kingdom; and art thou a king then? Dost thou in any sense claim that character? The poor prisoner boldly replies, Thou sayest that I am a king; that is, "Thou hast struck upon the

truth: I am indeed a king, in a certain sense, and nothing shall constrain me to renounce the title. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; particularly to this truth, which now looks so unlikely, namely, that I am really a king. I was born to a kingdom and a crown, and came into the world to take possession of my right.” This is that good confession which St. Paul tells us, 1 Tim. 6:13, our Lord witnessed before Pontius Pilate. Neither the hopes of deliverance, nor the terrors of death, could cause him to retract it, or renounce his claim.

In prosecuting this subject I intend only to inquire into the nature and properties of the kingdom of Christ. And in order to render my discourse the more familiar, and to adapt it to the present state of our country, I shall consider this kingdom in contrast with the kingdoms of the earth, with which we are better acquainted.

The Scriptures represent the Lord Jesus under a great variety of characters, which, though insufficient fully to represent him, yet, in conjunction, assist us to form such exalted ideas of this great personage as mortals can reach. He is a Surety, that undertook and paid the dreadful debt of obedience and suffering, which sinners owed to the divine justice and law: He is a Priest, a great High Priest, that once offered himself as a sacrifice for sin; and now dwells in his native heaven, at his Father’s right hand, as the Advocate and Intercessor of his people: He is a Prophet, who teaches his church, in all ages, by his word and spirit: He is the supreme and universal Judge, to whom men and angels are accountable; and his name is Jesus, a Savior, because he saves his people from their sins. Under these august and endearing characters he is often represented. But there is one character under which he is uniformly represented, both in the Old and New Testament, and that is, that of a King, a great King, invested with universal

authority. And upon his appearance in the flesh, all nature, and especially the gospel church, is represented as placed under him, as his kingdom. Under this idea the Jews were taught by their prophets to look for him; and it was their understanding these predictions of some illustrious king that should rise from the house of David, in a literal and carnal sense, that occasioned their unhappy prejudices concerning the Messiah as a secular prince and conqueror. Under this idea the Lord Jesus represented himself while upon earth, and under this idea he was published to the world by his apostles. The greatest kings of the Jewish nation, particularly David and Solomon, were types of him: and many things are primarily applied to them, which have their complete and final accomplishment in him alone. It is to him ultimately we are to apply the second psalm: "I have set my King," says Jehovah, "upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession:" Psalm 2:6,8. If we read the seventy-second Psalm we shall easily perceive that one greater than Solomon is there. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. His name shall continue forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed: Psalm 82:7,11,17.

The hundred and tenth Psalm is throughout a celebration of the kingly and priestly office of Christ united. The Lord, says David, said unto my Lord, unto that divine person who is my Lord, and will also be my son, Sit thou at my right hand, in the highest honor and authority, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, and submit to thee in crowds as

numerous as the drops of the morning dew. Ps. 110:1-3. The evangelical prophet Isaiah is often transported with the foresight of this illustrious King, and the glorious kingdom of his grace:—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called—the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." Isa. 9:6,7. This is he who is described as another David in Ezekiel's prophecy, "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen. And I will make them one nation—and one king shall be king to them all, even David my servant shall be king over them." Ezek. 37:21,22,24. This is the kingdom represented to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, as "a stone cut out without hands, which became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." And Daniel, in expounding the dream, having described the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and Roman empires, subjoins, "In the days of these kings," that is, of the Roman emperors, "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not," like the former, "be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan. 2:34,35,44. There is no character which our Lord so often assumed in the days of his flesh as that of the Son of man; and he no doubt alludes to a majestic vision in Daniel, the only place where this character is given him in the Old Testament: "I saw in the night visions," says Daniel, "and behold one like the Son of man came to the Ancient of days, and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his

kingdom that which shall not be destroyed,” Dan. 7:13,14, like the tottering kingdoms of the earth, which are perpetually rising and falling. This is the king that Zechariah refers to when, in prospect of his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, he calls the inhabitants to give a proper reception to so great a Prince. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee,” &c. Zech. 9:9. Thus the prophets conspire to ascribe royal titles and a glorious kingdom to the Messiah. And these early and plain notices of him raised a general expectation of him under this royal character. It was from these prophecies concerning him as a king, that the Jews took occasion, as I observed, to look for the Messiah as a temporal prince; and it was a long time before the apostles themselves were delivered from these carnal prejudices. They were solicitous about posts of honor in that temporal kingdom which they expected he would set up: and even after his resurrection, they cannot forbear asking him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6, that is, “Wilt thou now restore the Jews to their former liberty and independency, and deliver them from their present subjection to the Romans?” It was under this view that Herod was alarmed at his birth, and shed the blood of so many innocents, that he might not escape. He was afraid of him as the heir of David’s family and crown, who might dispossess him of the government; nay, he was expected by other nations under the character of a mighty king; and they no doubt learned this notion of him from the Jewish prophecies, as well as their conversation with that people. Hence the Magi, or eastern wise men, when they came to pay homage to him upon his birth, inquired after him in this language,—“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Matt. 2:2. And what is still more remarkable, we are told by two heathen historians, that about the time



of his appearance a general expectation of him under this character prevailed through the world. “Many,” says Tacitus, “had a persuasion that it was contained in the ancient writings of the priests, that at that very time the east should prevail, and that some descendant from Judah should obtain the universal government.” Suetonius speaks to the same purpose: “An old and constant opinion,” says he, “commonly prevailed through all the east, that it was in the fates, that some should rise out of Judea, who should obtain the government of the world.” This royal character Christ himself assumed, even when he conversed among mortals in the humble form of a servant. “The Father,” says he, “hath given me power over all flesh.” John 17:2. Yea, “all power in heaven and earth is given to me,” Matt, 28:18. The gospel church which he erected is most commonly called the kingdom of heaven or of God, in the evangelists: when he was about to introduce it, this was the proclamation: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Under this character also his servants and disciples celebrated and preached him. Gabriel led the song in foretelling his birth to his mother. “He shall be great, and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:32,33. St. Peter boldly tells the murderers of Christ, “God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,” Acts 2:36; “and exalted him, with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior.” Acts 5:31. And St. Paul repeatedly represents him as advanced “far above principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to his church.” Eph. 1:21,22; Phil. 2:9-11. Yea, to him all the hosts of heaven, and even the whole creation in

concert, ascribe “power and strength, and honor, and glory,” Rev. 5:12. Pilate the heathen was overruled to give a kind of accidental testimony to this truth, and to publish it to different nations, by the inscription upon the cross in the three languages then most in use, the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews;” and all the remonstrances of the Jews could not prevail upon him to alter it. Finally, it is he that wears “on his vesture, and on his thigh, this name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords,” Rev. 19:16; and as his name is, so is he.

Thus you see, my brethren, by these instances, selected out of many, that the kingly character and dominion of our Lord Jesus runs through the whole Bible. That of a king is his favorite character, in which he glories, and which is the most expressive of his office. And this consideration alone may convince you that this character is of the greatest importance, and worthy of your most attentive regard.

It is the mediatorial kingdom of Christ that is here intended, not that which as God he exercises over all the works of his hand; it is that kingdom which is an empire of grace, and administration of mercy over our guilty world. It is the dispensation intended for the salvation of fallen sinners of our race by the gospel; and on this account the gospel is often called the kingdom of heaven; because its happy consequences are not confined to this earth, but appear in heaven in the highest perfection, and last through all eternity. Hence, not only the Church of Christ on earth, and the dispensation of the gospel, but all the saints in heaven, and that more finished economy under which they are placed, are all included in the kingdom of Christ. Here his kingdom is in its infancy, but in heaven is arrived to perfection; but it is substantially the same. Though the immediate design of this kingdom is the salvation of believers of the guilty race of man, and such are its subjects in

a peculiar sense; yet it extends to all worlds, to heaven, and earth, and hell. The whole universe is put under a mediatorial head; but then, as the apostle observes, “he is made head over all things to his church,” Eph. 1:22; that is, for the benefit and salvation of his Church. As Mediator he is carrying on a glorious scheme for the recovery of man, and all parts of the universe are interested or concern themselves in this grand event; and therefore they are all subjected to him, that he may so manage them as to promote this end, and baffle and overwhelm all opposition. The elect angels rejoice in so benevolent a design for peopling their mansions, left vacant by the fall of so many of their fellow-angels, with colonies transplanted from our world, from a race of creatures that they had given for lost. And therefore Christ as a Mediator, is made the head of all the heavenly armies, and he employs them as “his ministering spirits, to minister to them that are heirs of salvation.” Heb. 1:14. These glorious creatures are always on the wing, ready to discharge his orders in any part of his vast empire, and delight to be employed in the services of his mediatorial kingdom. This is also an event in which the fallen angels deeply interest themselves; they have united all their force and art for near six thousand years to disturb and subvert his kingdom, and blast the designs of redeeming love; they therefore are all subjected to the control of Christ, and he shortens and lengthens their chains as he pleases, and they cannot go a hair’s breadth beyond his permission. The Scriptures represent our world in its state of guilt and misery as the kingdom of Satan; sinners, while slaves to sin, are his subjects; and every act of disobedience against God is an act of homage to this infernal prince. Hence Satan is called the God of this world, 2 Cor. 4:4; the prince of this world, John 12:31; the power of darkness, Luke 22:53; the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the

children of disobedience. Eph. 2:3. And sinners are said to be taken captive by him at his will. 2 Tim. 2:26. Hence also the ministers of Christ, who are employed to recover sinners to a state of holiness and happiness, are represented as soldiers armed for war; not indeed with carnal weapons, but with those which are spiritual, plain truth arguments, and miracles; and “these are made mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Cor. 10:3,4, 5. And Christians in general are represented as “wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Eph. 6:12. Hence also in particular it is, that the death of Christ is represented not as a defeat, but as an illustrious conquest gained over the powers of hell; because, by this means, a way was opened for the deliverance of sinners from under their power, and restoring them unto liberty and the favor of God. By that strange, contemptible weapon, the cross, and by the glorious resurrection of Jesus, he “spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.” Col. 2:15. “Through death,” says the apostle, “he destroyed him that had the power of death; that is, the devil.” Heb. 2:14. Had not Christ by his death offered a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, they would have continued for ever under the tyranny of Satan; but he has purchased liberty, life, and salvation for them; and thus he hath destroyed the kingdom of darkness, and translated multitudes from it into his own gracious and glorious kingdom.

Hence, upon the right of redemption, his mediatorial authority extends to the infernal regions, and he controls and restrains those malignant, mighty,

and turbulent potentates, according to his pleasure. Farther, the inanimate world is connected with our Lord's design to save sinners, and therefore is subjected to him as Mediator. He causes the sun to rise, the rain to fall, and the earth to yield her increase, to furnish provision for the subjects of his grace, and to raise, support, and accommodate heirs for his heavenly kingdom. As for the sons of men, who are more immediately concerned in this kingdom, and for whose sake it was erected, they are all its subjects; but then they are of different sorts, according to their characters. Multitudes are rebels against his government; that is, they do not voluntarily submit to his authority, nor choose they to do his service: they will not obey his laws. But they are his subjects notwithstanding; that is, he rules and manages them as he pleases, whether they will or not. This power is necessary to carry on successfully his gracious design towards his people; for unless he had the management of his enemies, they might baffle his undertakings, and successfully counteract the purposes of his love. The kings of the earth, as well as vulgar rebels of a private character, have often set themselves against his kingdom, and sometimes they have flattered themselves they had entirely demolished it. But Jesus reigns absolute and supreme over the kings of the earth, and overrules and controls them as he thinks proper; and he disposes all the revolutions, the rises and falls of kingdoms and empires, so as to be subservient to the great designs of his mediation; and their united policies and powers cannot frustrate the work which he has undertaken. But besides these rebellious, involuntary subjects, he has (blessed be his name!) gained the consent of thousands, and they have become his willing subjects by their own choice. They regard his authority, they love his government, they make it their study to please him, and to do his will. Over these he exercises a government of special grace here, and he

will make them the happy subjects of the kingdom of his glory hereafter. And it is his government over these that I intend more particularly to consider. Once more, the kingdom of Jesus is not confined to this world, but all the millions of mankind in the invisible world are under his dominion, and will continue so to everlasting ages. He is the Lord of the dead and of the living, Rom. 14:9, and has the keys of Hades, the vast invisible world, (including heaven as well as hell) and of death. Rev. 1:18. It is he that turns the key, and opens the door of death for mortals to pass from world to world; it is he that opens the gates of heaven, and welcomes and admits the nations that keep the commandments of God; and it is he that opens the prison of hell, and locks it fast upon the prisoners of divine justice. He will forever exercise authority over the vast regions of the unseen world, and the unnumbered multitudes of spirits with which they are peopled. You hence see, my brethren, the universal extent of the Redeemer's kingdom; and in this respect how much does it differ from all the kingdoms of the earth? The kingdoms of Great Britain, France, China, Persia, are but little spots of the globe. Our world has indeed been oppressed in former times with what mortals call universal monarchies; such were the Babylonian, the Persian the Grecian, and especially the Roman. But in truth, these were so far from being strictly universal, that a considerable part of the habitable earth was not so much as known to them. But this is an empire strictly universal. It extends over land and sea; it reaches beyond the planetary worlds, and all the luminaries of heaven; nay, beyond the throne of the most exalted archangels, and downward to the lowest abyss of hell. A universal empire in the hands of a mortal is a huge, unwieldy thing; a heap of confusion; a burthen to mankind; and it has always rushed headlong from its glory, and fallen to pieces by its own weight. But Jesus is equal to the immense

province of an empire strictly universal; his hand is able to hold the reins; and it is the blessing of our world to be under his administration. He will turn what appears to us scenes of confusion into perfect order, and convince all worlds that he has not taken one wrong step in the whole plan of his infinite government.

The kingdoms of the world have their laws and ordinances, and so has the kingdom of Christ. Look into your Bibles, and there you will find the laws of his kingdom from its first foundation immediately after the fall of man. The laws of human government are often defective or unrighteous; but these are perfect, holy, just, and good. Human laws are enforced with sanctions: but the rewards and punishments can only affect our mortal bodies, and cannot reach beyond the present life: but the sanctions of these divine laws are eternal, and there shall never be an end to their execution. Everlasting happiness and everlasting misery, of the most exquisite kind and the highest degree, are the rewards and punishments which the immortal King distributes among his immortal subjects; and they become his character, and are adapted to their nature.

Human laws extend only to outward actions, but these laws reach the heart, and the principle of action within. Not a secret thought, not a motion of the soul, is exempted from them. If the subjects of earthly kings observe a decorum in their outward conduct, and give no visible evidence of disloyalty, they are treated as good subjects, though they should be enemies in their hearts. "But Jesus is the Lord of souls;" he makes his subjects bow their hearts as well as the knee to him. He sweetly commands their thoughts and affections as well as their external practice, and makes himself inwardly beloved as well as outwardly obeyed. His subjects are such on whom he may depend: they are all ready to lay down their lives for him. Love,

cordial, unfeigned, ardent love, is the principle of all their obedience: and hence it is, that his commandments are not grievous, but delightful to them.

Other kings have their ministers and officers of state. In like manner Jesus employs the armies of heaven as ministering spirits in his mediatorial kingdom: besides these he has ministers, of a humbler form, who negotiate more immediately in his name with mankind. These are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, to beseech men, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. These are appointed to preach his word, to administer his ordinances, and to manage the affairs of his kingdom. This view gives a peculiar dignity and importance to this office. These should be adorned, not like the ministers of earthly courts, with the trappings of gold and silver, but with the beauties of holiness, the ornament of a meek and quiet, zealous and faithful spirit, and a life becoming the gospel of Christ.

Other kings have their soldiers: so all the legions of the elect angels, the armies of heaven, are the soldiers of Jesus Christ, and under his command. This he asserted when he was in such defenseless circumstances, that he seemed to be abandoned by heaven and earth. "I could pray to my father," says he, "and he would send me more than twelve legions of angels." Matt. 26:53. I cannot forbear reading to you one of the most majestic descriptions of this all-conquering hero and his army, which the language of mortality is capable of. Rev. 19:11-16. "I saw heaven open, says St. John, "and behold a white horse," an emblem of victory and triumph, "and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True." How different a character from that of mortal conquerors I "And in righteousness he doth judge and make war." War is generally a scene of injustice and lawless violence; and those plagues of mankind, we call heroes and warriors, use their arms to gratify their own avarice or ambition, and make encroachments upon others. Jesus, the prince



of peace, makes war too, but it is in righteousness: it is in the cause of righteousness he takes up arms. The divine description proceeds: "His eyes were as a flame of fire; and on his head were many crowns," emblems of his manifold authority over the various kingdoms of the world, and the various regions of the universe. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," in the blood of his enemies; "and his name was called, The Word of God;" and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean the whitest innocence and purity, and the beauties of holiness are, as it were, the uniform, the regimentals of these celestial armies. "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." In what manner the war is carried on between the armies of heaven and the powers of hell, we know not: but that there is really something of this kind we may infer from Rev. 12:7,9. "There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan."

Thus you see all the hosts of heaven are volunteers under the Captain of our salvation. Nay, he marshals the stars, and calls them by their names. The stars in their courses, says the sublime Deborah, fought against Sisera, the enemy of God's people. Judges 5:20. Every part of the creation serves under him, and he can commission a gnat, or a fly, or the meanest insect, to be the executioner of his enemies. Fire and water, hurricanes and earthquakes; earthquakes, which have so lately shattered so great a part of

our globe, now tottering with age, and ready to fall to pieces, and bury the inhabitants in its ruins; all these fight under him, and conspire to avenge his quarrel with the guilty sons of men. The subjects of his grace in particular are all so many soldiers; their life is a constant warfare; and they are incessantly engaged in hard conflict with temptations from without, and the insurrection of sin from within. Sometimes, alas! They fall; but their General lifts them up again, and inspires them with strength to renew the fight. They fight most successfully upon their knees. This is the most advantageous posture for the soldiers of Jesus Christ; for prayer brings down recruits from heaven in the hour of difficulty. They are indeed but poor weaklings and invalids; and yet they overcome, through the blood of the Lamb; and he makes them conquerors, yea more than conquerors. It is the military character of Christians that gives the apostle occasion to address them in the military style, like a general at the head of his army. Eph. 6:10-18. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication." The ministers of the gospel in particular, and especially the apostles, are soldiers, or officers, in this spiritual army. Hence St. Paul speaks of his office in the military style; I have, says he, fought a good fight. 2 Tim, 4:7. We war, says he, though it be not after the flesh. The humble doctrines of the cross are our weapons, and these are mighty through God, to demolish the strongholds of

the prince of darkness, and to bring every thought into a joyful captivity to the obedience of faith. 2 Cor. 10:3-5. Fight the good fight, says he to Timothy. 1 Tim. 6:12. And again, thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim, 2:3. The great design of the gospel ministry is to rescue enslaved souls from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and to recover them into a state of liberty and loyalty to Jesus Christ; or, in the words of the apostle, “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Acts 26:18. Mortals indeed, are very unequal for the conflict; but their success more conspicuously shows that the excellency of the power is of God; and many have they subdued, through his strength, to the obedience of faith, and made the willing captives of the cross of our divine Immanuel. Other kingdoms are often founded in blood, and many lives are lost on both sides in acquiring them. The kingdom of Christ, too, was founded in blood, but it was the blood of his own heart; life was lost in the conflict; but it was his own; his own life lost, to purchase life for his people. Others have waded to empire through the blood of mankind, and even of their own subjects, but Christ shed only his own blood to spare that of his soldiers. The general devotes his life as a sacrifice to save his army. The Fabii and Decii of Rome, who devoted themselves for their country, were but faint shadows of this divine bravery. Oh! The generous patriotism, the ardent love of the Captain of our salvation! How amiable does his character appear, in contrast with that of the kings of the earth! They often sacrifice the lives of their subjects, while they keep themselves out of danger, or perhaps are rioting at ease in the pleasures and luxuries of a court; but Jesus engaged in the conflict with death and hell alone. He stood a single champion in a field of blood. He conquered for his people by falling himself; he subdued his and their enemies by resigning himself to

their power. Worthy is such a general to be Commander-in-Chief of the hosts of God, and to lead the armies of heaven and earth! Indeed much blood has been shed in carrying on this kingdom. The earth has been soaked with the blood of the saints; and millions have resisted even unto blood, striving against sin, and nobly laid down their lives for the sake of Christ and a good conscience. Rome has been remarkably the seat of persecution; both formerly under the heathen emperors, and in later times, under a succession of Popes, still more bloody and tyrannical. There were no less than ten general persecutions under the heathen Emperors, through the vast Roman empire, in a little more than two hundred years, which followed one another in a close succession; in which innumerable multitudes of Christians lost their lives by an endless variety of tortures. And since the church of Rome has usurped her authority, the blood of the saints has hardly ever ceased running in some country or other; though, blessed be God, many kingdoms shook off the yoke at the ever-memorable period of the Reformation, above two hundred years ago: which has greatly weakened that persecuting power. This is that mystical Babylon which was represented to St. John as “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” Rev. 17:6. In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. Chap. 18:24. And these scenes of blood are still perpetrated in France, that plague of Europe, that has of late stretched her murderous arm across the wide ocean, to disturb us in these regions of peace. There the Protestants are still plundered, chained to the galleys, broken alive on the torturing wheel, denied the poor favor of abandoning their country and their all, and flying naked to beg their bread in other nations. Thus the harmless subjects of the Prince of Peace have ever been slaughtered from age to age, and yet they

are represented as triumphant conquerors. Hear a poor persecuted Paul on this head: "In tribulation, in distress, in persecution, in nakedness, in peril and sword, we are conquerors, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Rom. 8:36,37. "Thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 2 Cor. 2:14. "Whatsoever is born of God," says the evangelist, "overcometh the world." 1 John 5:4. Whence came that glorious army which we so often see in the Revelation? We are told "they came out of great tribulation." Chap. 7:14. "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Chap. 12:11. They that suffered tortures and death under the beast, are said to have gotten the victory over him. Chap. 15:2. Victory and triumph sound strange when thus ascribed;—but the gospel helps us to understand this mystery. By these sufferings they obtained the illustrious crown of martyrdom, and peculiar degrees of glory and happiness through an endless duration. Their death was but a short transition from the lowest and more remote regions of their Redeemer's Kingdom into his immediate presence and glorious court in heaven. A temporal death is rewarded with an immortal life: and "their light afflictions which were but for a moment, wrought out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4:17. Even in the agonies of torture, their souls were often filled with such delightful sensations of the love of God, as swallowed up the sensations of bodily pain; and a bed of flames was sweeter to them than a bed of roses. Their souls were beyond the reach of all the instruments of torment; and as to their bodies, they shall yet have a glorious resurrection to a blessed immortality. And now, I leave you to judge, whether they or their enemies got the victory in this conflict; and which had most cause to triumph. Like their Master, they rose by falling; they triumphed over their

enemies by submitting, like lambs, to their power. If the soldiers of other generals die in the field, it is not in the power of their commanders to reward them. But the soldiers of Jesus Christ, by dying, are, as it were, carried in triumph from the field of blood into the presence of the Master, to receive his approbation, and a glorious crown. Death puts them into a capacity of receiving and enjoying greater rewards than they are capable of in the present state. And thus it appears, that his soldiers always win the day; or, as the apostle expresses it, he causes them always to triumph; and not one of them has ever been or ever shall be defeated, however weak and helpless in himself, and however terrible the power of his enemies. And oh! When all these warriors meet at length from every corner of the earth, and, as it were, pass in review before their General in the fields of heaven, with their robes washed in his blood, with palms of victory in their hands, and crowns of glory on their heads, all dressed in uniform with garments of salvation, what a glorious army will they make! And how will they cause heaven to ring with shouts of joy and triumph!

The founders of earthly kingdoms are famous for their heroic actions. They have braved the dangers of sea and land, routed powerful armies, and subjected nations to their will. They have shed rivers of blood, laid cities in ruins, and countries in desolation. These are the exploits which have rendered the Alexanders, the Caesars, and other conquerors of this world, famous through all nations and ages. Jesus had his exploits too; but they were all of the gracious and beneficent kind. His conquests were so many deliverances, and his victories salvations. He subdued in order to set free; and made captives to deliver them from slavery. He conquered the legions of hell, that seemed let loose at that time, that he might have opportunity of displaying his power over them, and that mankind might be sensible how

much they needed a deliverer from their tyranny. He triumphed over the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, by a quotation from his own word. He rescued wretched creatures from his power by an almighty command. He conquered the most inveterate and stubborn diseases, and restored health and vigor with a word of his mouth. He vanquished stubborn souls with the power of his love, and made them his willing people. He triumphed over death, the king of terrors, and delivered Lazarus from the prison of the grave, as an earnest and first-fruit of a general resurrection. Nay, by his own inherent powers he broke the bonds of death, and forced his way to his native heaven. He destroyed him that had the power of death, i.e., the devil, by his own death, and laid the foundation in his own blood for destroying his usurped kingdom, and forming a glorious kingdom of willing subjects redeemed from his tyranny.

The death of some great conquerors, particularly Julius Caesar, is said to have been prognosticated or attended with prodigies: but none equal to those which solemnized the death of Jesus. The earth trembled, the rocks were burst to pieces, the vail of the temple was rent, the heavens were clothed in mourning, and the dead started into life: and no wonder, when the Lord of nature was expiring upon a cross. He subdued and calmed the stormy wind, and the boisterous waves of the sea. In short, he showed an absolute sovereignty over universal nature, and managed the most unruly elements with a single word. Other conquerors have gone from country to country, carrying desolation along with them; Jesus went about doing good. His miraculous powers were but powers of miraculous mercy and beneficence. He could easily have advanced himself to a temporal kingdom, and routed all the forces of the earth; but he had no ambition of this kind. He that raised Lazarus from the grave could easily restore his soldiers to

vigor and life, after they had been wounded or killed. He that fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, could have supported his army with plenty of provision in the greatest scarcity. He that walked upon the boisterous ocean and enabled Peter to do the same, could easily have transported his forces from country to country, without the conveyance of ships. Nay, he was capable by his own single power to have gained universal conquest. What could all the armies of the earth have done against Him, who struck an armed company down to the earth with only a word of his mouth? But these were not the victories he affected; Victories of grace, deliverances for the oppressed, salvation for the lost; these were his heroic actions. He glories in his being mighty to save. Isa. 63:1. When his warm disciples made a motion that he should employ his miraculous powers to punish the Samaritans who ungratefully refused him entertainment, he rebuked them, and answered like the Prince of Peace, The son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save. Luke 9:56. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10. Oh how amiable a character this! How much more lovely the Savior of sinners, the Deliverer of souls, than the enslavers and destroyers of mankind; which is the general character of the renowned heroes of our world. Who has ever performed such truly heroic and brave actions as this almighty conqueror! He has pardoned the most aggravated crimes, in a consistency with the honors of the divine government: he has delivered an innumerable multitude of immortal souls from the tyranny of sin and the powers of hell, set the prisoners free, and brought them into the liberty of the Son of God; he has peopled heaven with redeemed slaves, and advanced them to royal dignity. "All his subjects are kings." Rev. 1:6. "To him that overcometh," says he, "will I grant to set with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my



Father in his throne,” Rev. 3:21. They shall be adorned with royal robes and crowns of unfading glory. They are advanced to empire over their lusts and passions, and all their enemies. Whoever gave such encouragement to his soldiers as this, If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him? 2 Tim. 2:12. What mortal general could bestow immortality and perfect happiness upon his favorites? But these boundless blessings Jesus has to bestow. In human governments merit is often neglected, and those who serve their country best, are often rewarded with degradation. But none have ever served the King of kings in vain. The least good action, even the giving a cup of water to one of his necessitous saints, shall not pass unrewarded in his government.

Other kings have their arms, their swords, their cannon, and other instruments of destruction; and with these they acquire and defend their dominions. Jesus, our king, has his arms too; but oh! Of how different a kind! The force of evidence and conviction in his doctrine, attested with miracles, the energy of his dying love, the gentle, and yet efficacious influence of his holy Spirit; these are the weapons with which he conquered the world. His gospel is the great magazine from whence his apostles, the first founders of his kingdom, drew their arms; and with these they subdued the nations to the obedience of faith. “The gospel,” says St. Paul, “is the power of God unto salvation.” Rom. 1:16. The humble doctrines of the cross became almighty, and, bore down all before them, and after a time subdued the vast Roman empire which had subdued the world. The holy Spirit gave edge and force to these weapons; and, blessed be God, though they are quite impotent without his assistance, yet when he concurs they are still successful. Many stubborn sinners have been unable to resist the preaching of Christ crucified: they have found him indeed the power of

God. And is it not astonishing, that any one should be able to stand it out against his dying love, and continue the enemy of his cross? “I,” says he, “if I be lifted up from the earth,” i.e., if I be suspended on the cross, “will draw all men unto me.” John 12:32. You see he expected his cross would be an irresistible weapon. And oh! Blessed Jesus, who can see thee expiring there in agonies of torture and love; who can see thy blood gushing in streams from every vein; who can hear thee there, and not melt into submission at thy feet! Is there one heart in this assembly proof against the energy of this bleeding, agonizing, dying love? Methinks such a sight must kindle a correspondent affection in your hearts towards him, and it is an exploit of wickedness, it is the last desperate effort of an impenetrable heart, to be able to resist.

Other conquerors march at the head of their troops, with all the ensigns of power and grandeur, and their forces numerous, inured to war, and well-armed; and from such appearances and preparations, who is there but what expects victory? But see the despised Nazarene, without riches, without arms, without forces, conflicting with the united powers of earth and hell; or see a company of poor fishermen and a tent-maker, with no other powers but those of doing good, with no other arms but those of reason, and the strange, unpopular doctrines of a crucified Christ! See the professed followers of a Master that was hung like a malefactor and a slave, see these men marching out to encounter the powers of darkness, the whole strength of the Roman empire, the lusts, prejudices, and interests of all nations, and travelling from country to country, without guards, without friends, exposed to insult and contempt, to the rage of persecution, to all manner of torture and tormented deaths which earth or hell could invent: see this little army marching into the wide world, in these circumstances, and can you expect

they will have any success? Does this appear a promising expedition? No: human reason would forebode they will soon be cut in pieces, and the Christian cause buried with them. But these unpromising champions, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, conquered the world, and spread the religion of the crucified Jesus among all nations. It is true they lost their lives in the cause, like brave soldiers; but the cause did not die with them. Their blood proved the seed of the church. Their cause is immortal and invincible. Let devils in hell, let Heathens, Jews, and Mahometans, let Atheists, Freethinkers, Papists, and persecutors of every character do their worst; still this cause will live in spite of them. All the enemies of Christ will be obliged to confess at last, with Julian the apostate Roman emperor, who exerted all his art to abolish Christianity; but when mortally wounded in battle, outrageously sprinkled his blood towards heaven, and cried out, Vicisti, O Galilee! “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!” Yes, my brethren, Jesus, the Prophet of Galilee, will push his conquest from country to country, until all nations submit to him. And, blessed be his name, his victorious arm has reached to us in these ends of the earth: here he has subdued some obstinate rebels, and made their reluctant souls willingly bow in affectionate homage to him. And may I not produce some of you as the trophies of his victory? Has he not rooted out the enmity of your carnal minds, and sweetly constrained you to the most affectionate obedience? Thus, blessed Jesus! Thus go on conquering and to conquer. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty! And in thy glory and majesty ride prosperously through our land, and make this country a dutiful province of the dominion of thy grace. My brethren, should we all become his willing subjects, he would no longer suffer the perfidious slaves of France, and their savage allies, to chastise and punish us for our rebellion against him;

but peace should again run down like a river, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

The kingdoms of the world have their rise, their progress, perfection, declension, and ruin. And in these things, the kingdom of Christ bears some resemblance to them, excepting that it shall never have an end.

Its rise was small at first, and it has passed through many revolutions in various ages. It was first founded in the family of Adam, but in about 1,600 years, the space between the creation and the flood, it was almost demolished by the wickedness of the world; and at length confined to the little family of Noah. After the flood, the world soon fell into idolatry, but, that this kingdom of Christ might not be destroyed quite, it was erected in the family of Abraham; and among the Jews it continued until the coming of Christ in the flesh. This was indeed but the infancy of his kingdom, and indeed is seldom called by that name. It is the gospel constitution that is represented as the kingdom of Christ, in a special sense.

This was but very small and unpromising at first. When its founder was dying upon Calvary, and all his followers had forsaken him and fled, who would have thought it would ever have come to anything, ever have recovered? But it revived with him; and when he furnished his apostles with gifts and graces for their mission, and sent them forth to increase his kingdom, it made its progress through the world with amazing rapidity, notwithstanding it met with very early and powerful opposition. The Jews set themselves against it, and raised persecutions against its ministers, wherever they went. And presently the tyrant Nero employed all the power of the Roman empire to crush them. Peter, Paul, and thousands of the Christians fell a prey to his rage, like sheep for the slaughter. This

persecution was continued under his successors with but little interruption, for about two hundred years.

But under all these pressures, the church bore up her head; yea, the more she was trodden, the more she spread and flourished; and at length she was delivered from oppression by Constantine the Great, about the year 420. But now she had a more dangerous enemy to encounter, I mean prosperity; and this did her much more injury than all the persecutions of her enemies. Now the kingdom of Christ began to be corrupted with heresies; the ministry of the gospel, formerly the most dangerous post in the world, now became a place of honor and profit, and men began to thrust themselves into it from principles of avarice and ambition; superstition and corruption of morals increased; and at length the Bishop of Rome set up for universal head of the church in the year 606; and gradually the whole monstrous system of popery was formed and established, and continued in force for near a thousand years. The kingdom of Christ was now at a low ebb; and tyranny and superstition reigned under that name over the greatest part of the Christian world. Nevertheless, our Lord still had his witnesses. The Waldenses and Albigenses, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Wickliffe in England, opposed the torrent of corruption; until at length, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, and several others, were made the honored instruments of introducing the Reformation from popery; when sundry whole kingdoms, which had given their power to the beast, and particularly our mother-country, shook off the papal authority, and admitted the pure light of the gospel. Since that time the kingdom of Christ has struggled hard, and it has lost ground in several countries; particularly in France, Poland, Bohemia, &c., where there once were many Protestant churches; but they are now in ruins. And, alas! Those countries that still retain the reformed religion, have

too generally reduced it into a mere formality: and it has but little influence upon the hearts and lives even of its professors. Thus we find the case remarkable among us. This gracious kingdom makes but little way in Virginia. The calamities of war and famine cannot, alas! Draw subjects to it; but we seem generally determined to perish in our rebellion rather than submit. Thus it has been in this country from its first settlement; and how long it will continue in this situation is unknown to mortals: however, this we may know, it will not be so always. We have the strongest assurances that Jesus will yet take to him his strong power, and reign in a more extensive and illustrious manner than he has ever yet done; and that the kingdoms of the earth shall yet become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. There are various parts of the heathen world where the gospel has never yet been; and the Jews have never yet been converted as a nation; but both the calling of the Jews and the fulness of the Gentiles, you will find plainly foretold in the 11th chapter of the Romans; and it is, no doubt, to render the accomplishment of this event the more conspicuous, that the Jews, who are dispersed all over the world, have, by a strange, unprecedented, and singular providence, been kept a distinct people to this day, for 1,700 years; though all other nations have been so mixed and blended together, who were not half so much dispersed into different countries, that their distinct original cannot be traced. Posterity shall see this glorious event in some happy future period. How far it is from us I will not determine; though, upon some grounds, I apprehend it is not very remote. I shall live and die in the unshaken belief that our guilty world shall yet see glorious days. Yes, my brethren, this despised gospel, that has so little effect in our age and country, shall yet shine like lightning, or like the sun, through all the dark regions of the earth. It shall triumph over Heathenism,

Mahometanism, Judaism, Popery, and all those dangerous errors that have infected the Christian church. This gospel, poor negroes, shall yet reach your countrymen, whom you left behind you in Africa, in darkness and the shadow of death, and bless your eyes with the light of salvation: and the Indian savages, that are now ravaging our country, shall yet be transformed into lambs and doves by the gospel of peace. The scheme of Providence is not yet completed, and much remains to be accomplished of what God has spoken by his prophets, to ripen the world for the universal judgment; but when all these things are finished, then proclamation shall be made throughout all nature, “That time shall be no more:” then the Supreme Judge, the same Jesus that ascended the cross, will ascend the throne, and review the affairs of time: then will he put an end to the present course of nature, and the present form of administration. Then shall heaven and hell be filled with their respective inhabitants: then will time close, and eternity run on in one uniform tenor, without end. But the kingdom of Christ, though altered in its situation and form of government, will not then come to a conclusion. His kingdom is strictly the kingdom of heaven; and at the end of this world, his subjects will only be removed from these lower regions into a more glorious country, where they and their King shall live together for ever in the most endearing intimacy; where the noise and commotions of this restless world, the revolutions and perturbations of kingdoms, the terrors of war and persecution, shall no more reach them; but all will be perfect peace, love, and happiness, through immeasurable duration. This is the last and most illustrious state of the kingdom of Christ, now so small and weak in appearance: this is the final grand result of his administration: and it will appear to admiring worlds wisely planned, gloriously executed, and perfectly finished.

What conqueror ever erected such a kingdom? What subjects so completely, so lastingly happy, as those of the blessed Jesus?



# *SERM. XI. THINGS UNSEEN TO BE PREFERRED TO THINGS SEEN.*

**2** Cor. 4:18.— *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Among all the causes of the stupid unconcernedness of sinners about religion, and the feeble endeavors of saints to improve in it, there is none more common or more effectual, than their not forming a due estimate of the things of time, in comparison of those of eternity. Our present affairs engross all our thoughts, and exhaust all our activity, though they are but transitory trifles; while the awful realities of the future world are hid from our eyes by the veil of flesh and the clouds of ignorance. Did these break in upon our minds in all their almighty evidence and tremendous importance, they would annihilate the most majestic vanities of the present state, obscure the glare of earthly glory, render all its pleasures insipid, and give us a noble sensibility under all its sorrows. A realizing view of these would shock the libertine in his thoughtless career, tear off the hypocrite's mask,

and inflame the devotion of the languishing saints. The concern of mankind would then be how they might make a safe exit out of this world, and not how they may live happy in it. Present pleasure and pain would be swallowed up in the prospect of everlasting happiness or misery hereafter.

Eternity, awful eternity, would then be our serious contemplation. The pleasures of sin would strike us with horror, if they issue in eternal pain, and our present afflictions, however tedious and severe, would appear but light and momentary, if they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

These were the views the apostle had of things, and these their effects upon him. He informs us in this chapter of his unwearied zeal to propagate the gospel amidst all the hardships and dangers that attend the painful discharge of his ministry. Though he bore about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, though he was always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, yet he fainted not; and this was the prospect that animated him, that his "light affliction, which was but for a moment, would work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." When we view his sufferings absolutely, without any reference to eternity, they were very heavy and of many years' continuance; and when he represents them in this view, how moving is the relation! See 2 Cor. 11:23-29. But when he views them in the light of eternity, and compared with their glorious issues, they sink into nothing; then scourging, stoning, imprisonment, and all the various deaths to which he was daily exposed, are but light, trifling afflictions, hardly worth naming; then a series of uninterrupted sufferings for many years are but afflictions that endure for a moment. And when he views a glorious futurity, human language cannot express the ideas he has of the happiness reserved for him; it is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" a

noble sentiment! And expressed in the sublimest manner the language of mortals can admit of.

It is glory, in opposition to affliction; a weight of glory, in opposition to light affliction; a massy, oppressive blessedness, which it requires all the powers of the soul, in their full exertion, to support: and in opposition to affliction for a moment, it is eternal glory: to finish all, it is a far more exceeding glory. What greater idea can be grasped by the human mind, or expressed in the feeble language of mortality! Nothing but feeling that weight of glory could enlarge his conception: and nothing but the dialect of heaven could better express it. No wonder that, with this view of things, “he should reckon that the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.” Rom. 8:18.

The apostle observes, that he formed this estimate of things, while he looked not at the “things which are seen, but at those which are not seen.” By the things that are seen, are meant the present life, and all the things of time; all the pleasures and pains, all the labors, pursuits, and amusements of the present state. By the things that are not seen, are intended all the invisible realities of the eternal world; all the beings, the enjoyments and sufferings that lie beyond the reach of human sight; as the great Father of spirits, the joys of paradise, and the punishment of hell. We look on these invisible things, and not on those that are seen. This seems like a contradiction; but is it easily solved by understanding this act, described by looking, to be the act not of the bodily eye, but of faith and enlightened reason. Faith is defined by this apostle to be “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Heb. 11:1. And it is the apostle’s chief design in that chapter, to give instances of the surprising efficacy of such a

realizing belief of eternal, invisible things; see particularly ver. 10,13,14,16,25,26,27.

Hence to look not at visible, but at invisible things, signifies that the apostle made the latter the chief objects of his contemplations, that he was governed in the whole of his conduct by the impression of eternal things, and not by the present; that he formed his maxims and schemes from a comprehensive survey of futurities, and not from a partial view of things present; and, in short, that he had acted as an expectant of eternity, and not as an everlasting inhabitant of this wretched world. This he elsewhere expresses in equivalent terms, “We walk by faith, and not by sight.” 2 Cor. 5:7.

Further, he assigns a reason why he had a greater regard to invisible things than visible in the regulating of his conduct; “for the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen,” says he, “are eternal.” An important reason indeed! Eternity annexed to a trifle would advance it into infinite importance, but when it is the attribute of the most perfect happiness, or of the most exquisite misery, then it transcends all comparison: then all temporal happiness and misery, however great and long-continued, shrink into nothing, are drowned and lost, like the small drop of a bucket in the boundless ocean.

My present design, and the contents of the text, prescribe to me the following method:

I. I shall give you a comparative view of visible and invisible things, that you may see the trifling nature of the one, and the importance of the other. This I choose to do under one head, because by placing these two classes of things in an immediate opposition, we may the

1 more easily compare them, and see their infinite disparity.

And,

II. I shall show you the great and happy influence a suitable impression of the superior importance of invisible to visible things would have upon us.

I. I shall give you a comparative view of visible and invisible things; and we may compare visible and invisible things, as to their intrinsic value, and as to their duration.

1. As to their intrinsic value, and in this respect the disparity is inconceivable.

This I shall illustrate in the two comprehensive instances of pleasure and pain. To shun the one, and obtain the other, is the natural effort of the human mind. This is its aim in all its endeavors and pursuits. The innate desire of happiness and aversion to misery are the two great springs of all human activity: and, were these springs relaxed or broken, all business would cease, all activity would stagnate, and universal torpor would seize the world. And these principles are co-existent with the soul itself, and will continue in full vigor in a future state. Nay, as the soul will then be matured, and all its powers arrived to their complete perfection, this eagerness after happiness, and aversion to misery, will be also more quick and vigorous. The soul in its present state of infancy, like a young child, or a man enfeebled and stupefied by sickness, is incapable of very deep sensations of pleasure and pain; and hence an excess of joy, as well as sorrow, has sometimes dissolved its feeble union with the body. On this account we are incapable of such degrees of happiness or misery from the things of this world as beings of more lively sensations might receive from them; and much more are we incapable of the happiness or misery of the future world, until we have put on immortality. We cannot see God and live. Should the glory of heaven blaze upon us in all its insuperable splendor, it would

overwhelm our feeble nature; we could not support such a weight of glory. And one twinge of the agonies of hell would dislodge the soul from its earthly mansion: one pang would convulse and stupefy it, were not its powers strengthened by the separation from the body. But in the future world all the powers of the soul will be mature and strong, and the body will be clothed with immortality; the union between them after the resurrection will be inseparable, and able to support the most oppressive weight of glory, or the most intolerable load of torment. Hence it follows that pleasure and pain include all that we can desire or fear in the present or future world; and therefore a comparative view of present and future pleasure and pain is sufficient to enable us to form a due estimate of visible and invisible things. By present pleasure I mean all the happiness we can receive from present things, as from riches, honors, sensual gratifications, learning, and intellectual improvements, and all the amusements and exercises of this life. And by future pleasure, or the pleasure which results from invisible things, I mean all the fruitions and enjoyments in which heavenly happiness consists. By present pain, I intend all the uneasiness which we can receive from the things of the present life; as poverty, losses, disappointments, bereavements, sickness, and bodily pains. And by future pain, I mean all the punishments of hell; as banishment from God, and a privation of all created blessings, the agonizing reflections of a guilty conscience, the horrid company and exprobrations of infernal ghosts, and the torture of infernal flames.

Now let us put these in the balance, and the one will sink into nothing, and the other rise into infinite importance.

Temporal things are of a contracted nature, and not adequate to the capacities of the human soul; but eternal things are great, and capable of

communicating all the happiness and misery which it can receive. The soul in its present state is not capable of such degrees of happiness and misery as it will be in the future, when it dwells among invisible realities. All that pleasure and pain which we receive from things that are seen, are intermingled with some ingredients of a contrary nature; but those proceeding from things that are not seen, are pure and unmingled.

1. Visible things are not equal to the capacities of the human soul. This little spark of being, the soul, which lies obscured in this prison of flesh, gives frequent discoveries of surprising powers; its desires in particular, have a kind of infinity. But all temporary objects are mean and contracted; they cannot afford it a happiness equal to its capacity, nor render it as miserable as its capacity of suffering will bear. Hence, in the greatest affluence of temporal enjoyments, in the midst of honors, pleasures, riches, friends, &c., it still feels a painful void within, and finds an unknown something wanting to complete its happiness. Kings have been unhappy upon their thrones, and all their grandeur has been but majestic misery. So Solomon found it, who had opportunity and curiosity to make the experiment; and this is his verdict upon all earthly enjoyments, after the most impartial trial: "Vanity of vanities," saith the Preacher, "vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of spirit." On the other hand, the soul may possess some degree of happiness, under all the miseries it is capable of suffering from external and temporal things. Guilt indeed denies it this support; but if there be no intestine broils, no anguish resulting from its own reflections, not all the visible things can render it perfectly miserable; its capacity of suffering is not put to its utmost stretch. This has been attested by the experience of multitudes who have suffered for righteousness' sake. But oh, when we take a survey of invisible things, we find them all great

and majestic, not only equal but infinitely superior to the most enlarged powers of the human and even of the angelic nature. In the eternal world the great Invisible dwells, and there he acts with his own immediate hand. It is he that immediately communicates happiness through the heavenly regions; and it is his immediate breath that, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the flames of hell; whereas, in the present world, he rarely communicates happiness, and inflicts punishment, but by the instrumentality of creatures; and it is impossible the extremes of either should be communicated through this channel. This the infinite God alone can do, and, though in the future world he will use his creatures to heighten the happiness or misery of each other, yet he will have a more immediate agency in them himself. He will communicate happiness immediately from himself, the infinite fountain of it, into the vessels of mercy; and he will immediately show his wrath, and make his power known upon the vessels of wrath. I may add, that those creatures, angels and devils, which will be the instruments of happiness or misery to the human soul in the invisible world, are incomparably more powerful than any in this, and consequently capable of contributing more to our pleasure or pain. And let me also observe, that all the objects about which our faculties will be employed then, will be great and majestic; whereas, at present, we grovel among little sordid things. The objects of our contemplation will then be either the unveiled glories of the divine nature, and the naked wonders of creation, providence, and redemption; or the terrors of divine justice, the dreadful nature and aggravations of our sin, the horrors of everlasting punishment, &c. And since this is the case, how little should we regard the things that are seen, in comparison of them that are not seen? But though visible things were adequate to our present capacities, yet they are not to be compared with the things that are not seen; because,



2. The soul is at present in a state of infancy, and incapable of such degrees of pleasure or pain as it can bear in the future world. The enjoyments of this life are like the playthings of children; and none but childish souls would trifle with them, or fret and vex themselves or one another about them; but the invisible realities before us are manly and great, and such as an adult soul ought to concern itself with. The soul in another world can no more be happy or miserable from such toys, than men can be happy or wretched in the possession or loss of the baubles of children; it will then demand great things to give it pleasure or pain. The apostle illustrates this matter in this manner: 1 Cor. 13:9,10,11. How foolish is it then to be chiefly governed by these puerilities, while we neglect the manly concern of eternity, that can make our souls perfectly happy or miserable, when their powers are come to perfection!

3. And lastly, All the happiness and misery of the present state, resulting from things that are seen, are intermingled with contrary ingredients. We are never so happy in this world as to have no uneasiness; in the greatest affluence we languish for want of some absent good, or grieve under some incumbent evil. On the other hand, we are never so miserable as to have no ingredient of happiness. When we labor under a thousand calamities, we may still see ourselves surrounded with, perhaps, an equal number of blessings. And where is there a wretch so miserable as to endure simple, unmingled misery, without one comfortable ingredient? But in the invisible world there is an eternal separation made between good and evil, pleasure and pain; and they shall never mingle more. In heaven, the rivers of pleasure flow untroubled with a drop of sorrow; in hell, there is not a drop of water to mitigate the fury of the flame. And who then would not prefer the things that are not seen to those that are seen? Especially if we consider,

4. The infinite disparity between them as to duration. This is the difference particularly intended in the text; the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal.

The transitoriness of visible things implies, both that the things themselves are perishable, and they may soon leave us; and that our residence among them is temporary, and we must soon leave them.

And the eternity of invisible things implies quite the contrary, that the things themselves are of endless duration; and that we shall always exist to receive happiness or misery from them.

Before we illustrate these instances of disparity, let us take a view of time and eternity in themselves, and as compared to one another.

Time is the duration of creatures in the present state. It commenced at the creation, and near six thousand years of it are since elapsed; and how much of it yet remains we know not. But this we know, that the duration of the world itself is as nothing in comparison of eternity. But what is our duration compared with the duration even of this world? It is but a span, a hair's-breadth; sixty, seventy, or eighty years, is generally the highest standard of human life, and it is by far the smallest number of mankind that arrives to these periods. The most of them die like a flower blasted in the morning, or at noon; and we have more reason to expect it will be our fate than to hope the contrary. Now the span of time we enjoy in life is all our time; we have no more property in the rest of it than in the years before the flood. All beside is eternity. "Eternity!" We are alarmed at the sound! Lost in the prospect! Eternity with respect to God, is a duration without beginning as well as without end. Eternity, as it is the attribute of human nature, is a duration that had a beginning but shall never have an end. This is inalienably entailed upon us poor, dying worms: and let us survey our

inheritance. Eternity! It is a duration that excludes all number and computation; days, and months, and years, yea, and ages, are lost in it, like drops in the ocean. Millions of millions of years, as many years as there are sands on the sea-shore, or particles of dust in the globe of the earth, and these multiplied to the highest reach of number, all these are nothing to eternity. They do not bear the least imaginable proportion to it; for these will come to an end, as certain as day; but eternity will never, never come to an end. It is a line without end; it is an ocean without a shore. Alas! What shall I say of it! It is an infinite, unknown something, that neither human thought can grasp, nor human language describe.

Now place time in comparison with eternity, and what is it? It shrinks into nothing, and less than nothing. What then is that little span of time in which we have any property? Alas! It is too diminutive a point to be conceived. Indeed, properly speaking, we can call no part of time our own but the present moment, this fleeting now: future time is uncertain, and we may never enjoy it; the breath we now respire may be our last; and as to our past time, it is gone, and will never be ours again. Our past days are dead and buried, though perhaps guilt, their ghost, may haunt us still. And what is a moment to eternity? The disparity is too great to admit of comparison.

Let me now resume the former particulars, implied in the transitoriness of visible and the eternity of invisible things.

Visible things are perishable and may soon leave us. When we think they are ours, they often fly from our embrace. Riches may vanish into smoke and ashes by an accidental fire. We may be thrown down from the pinnacle of honor, and sink the lower into disgrace. Sensual pleasures often end in satiety and disgust, or in sickness and death. Our friends are torn from our bleeding hearts by the inexorable hand of death. Our liberty and property

may be wrested from us by the hand of tyranny, oppression, or fraud. In a word, what do we enjoy but we may lose? On the other hand, our miseries here are temporary; the heart receives many a wound, but it heals again. Poverty may end in riches; a clouded character may clear up, and from disgrace we may rise to honor; we may recover from sickness; and if we lose one comfort, we may obtain another. But in eternity everything is everlasting and unchangeable. Happiness and misery are both of them without end; and the subjects of both well know that this is the case. It is this perpetuity that finishes the happiness of the inhabitants of heaven; the least suspicion of an end would intermingle itself with all their enjoyments, and embitter them: and the greater the happiness, the greater the anxiety at the expectation of losing it. But oh, how transporting for the saints on high to look forward through the succession of eternal ages, with an assurance that they shall be happy through them all, and that they shall feel no change but from glory to glory! On the other hand, this is the bitterest ingredient in the cup of divine displeasure in the future state, that the misery is eternal. Oh, with what horror does that despairing cry, Forever, forever, forever! Echo through the vaults of hell? Eternity is such an important attribute, that it gives infinite weight to things that would be insignificant, were they temporary. A small degree of happiness, if it be eternal, exceeds the greatest degree that is transitory; and a small degree of misery that is everlasting, is of greater importance than the greatest degree that soon comes to an end. Would you rather endure the most painful tortures that nature can bear for a moment, than an eternal toothache or headache? Again, should we consider all the ingredients and causes of future happiness and misery, we should find them all everlasting. The blessed God is an inexhaustible, perennial fountain of bliss; his image can never be erased from the hearts of glorified

spirits; the great contemplation will always be obvious to them; and they will always exist as the partakers and promoters of mutual bliss. On the other hand, in hell the worm of conscience dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; divine justice is immortal; malignant spirits will always exist as mutual tormentors, and their wicked habits will never be extirpated.

And now, need I offer anything farther to convince you of the superior importance of invisible and eternal to visible and temporary things? Can a rational creature be at a loss to choose in so plain a case? Can you need any arguments to convince you that an eternity of the most perfect happiness is rather to be chosen than a few years of sordid, unsatisfying delight? Or that the former should not be forfeited for the sake of the latter? Have you any remaining scruples, whether the little anxieties and mortifications of a pious life are more intolerable than everlasting punishment? Oh! It is a plain case: what then mean an infatuated world, who lay out all their concern on temporal things, and neglect the important affairs of eternity? Let us illustrate this matter by supposition. Suppose a bird were to pick up and carry away a grain of sand or dust from the globe of this earth once in a thousand years, till it should be at length wholly carried away; the duration which this would take up appears a kind of eternity to us. Now suppose it were put to our choice, either to be happy during this time, and miserable ever after, or to be miserable during this time, and happy ever after, which would you choose? Why, though this duration seems endless, yet he would be a fool that would not make the latter choice; for, oh, oh! Behind this vast duration, there lies an eternity, which exceeds it infinitely more than this duration exceeds a moment. But we have no such seemingly puzzling choice as this; the matter with us stands thus—Will you choose the little sordid pleasures of sin that may perhaps not last an hour, at most, not many

years, rather than everlasting pleasure of the sublimest kind? Will you rather endure intolerable torment forever, than painfully endeavor to be holy? What does your conduct, my brethren, answer to these questions? If your tongues reply, they will perhaps for your credit give a right answer; but what say your prevailing disposition and common practice? Are you not more thoughtful for time than eternity? More concerned about visible vanities than invisible realities? If so, you make a fool's choice indeed.

But let it be further considered, that the transitoriness of visible things may imply that we must ere long be removed from them. Though they were immortal it would be nothing to us, since we are not so in our present state. Within a few years at most, we shall be beyond the reach of all happiness and misery from temporal things.

But when we pass out of this transitory state, we enter upon an everlasting state. Our souls will always exist, exist in a state of unchangeable, boundless happiness or misery. It is but a little while since we came into being out of a state of eternal non-existence; but we shall never relapse into that state again. These little sparks of being shall never be extinguished! They will survive the ruins of the world, and kindle into immortality. When millions of millions of ages are past, we shall still be in existence: and oh! In what unknown region? In that of endless bliss or of interminable misery? Be this the most anxious inquiry of our lives.

Seeing then we must soon leave this world, and all its joys and sorrows, and seeing we must enter on an unchangeable, everlasting state of happiness or misery, be it our chief concern to end our present pilgrimage well. It matters but little whether we lie easy or not during this night of existence, if so be we awake in eternal day. It is but a trifle, hardly worth a thought, whether we be happy or miserable here, if we be happy for ever

hereafter. What then mean the bustle and noise of mankind about the things of time? Oh, sirs, eternity! Awful, all important eternity! Is the only thing that deserves a thought. I come,

II. To show the great and happy influence a suitable impression of the superior importance of invisible to visible things would have upon us. This I might exemplify in a variety of instances with respect to saints and sinners.

When we are tempted to any unlawful pleasures, how would we shrink away with horror from the pursuit, had we a due sense of the misery incurred, and the happiness forfeited by it!

When we find our hearts excessively eager after things below, had we a suitable view of eternal things, all these things would shrink into trifles hardly worth a thought, much less our principal concern.

When the sinner, for the sake of a little present ease, and to avoid a little present uneasiness stifles his conscience, refuses to examine his condition, casts the thoughts of eternity out of his mind, and thinks it too hard to attend painfully on all the means of grace, has he then a due estimate of eternal things? Alas! No; he only looks at the things that are seen. Were the mouth of hell open before him, that he might behold its torments, and had he a sight of the joys of paradise, they would harden him into a generous insensibility of all the sorrows and anxieties of this life, and his inquiry would not be, whether these things required of him are easy; but, whether they are necessary to obtain eternal happiness, and avoid everlasting misery.

When we suffer any reproach or contempt on a religious account, how would a due estimate of eternal things fortify us with undaunted courage and make us willing to climb to heaven through disgrace, rather than sink to hell with general applause!

How would a realizing view of eternal things animate us in our devotions? Were this thought impressed on our hearts when in the secret or social duties of religion, “I am now acting for eternity,” do you think we should pray, read, or hear with so much indifferency and languor? Oh no; it would rouse us out of our dead frames, and call forth all the vigor of our souls. With what unwearied importunity should we cry to God I with what eagerness hear the word of salvation!

How powerful an influence would a view of futurity have to alarm the secure sinner that has thought little of eternity all his life, though it be the only thing worth thinking of!

How would it hasten the determination of the lingering, wavering sinner, and shock him at the thought of living one day unprepared on the very brink of eternity!

In a word, a suitable impression of this would quite alter the aspect of things in the world, and would turn the concern and activity of the world into another channel. Eternity then would be the principal concern. Our inquiries would not be, Who will show us any temporal good? What shall we eat, or what shall we drink? But, What shall we do to be saved? How shall we escape the wrath to come? Let us then endeavor to impress our hearts with invisible things, and for that purpose consider, that

We shall, ere long, be engulfed in this awful eternity, whether we think of it or not. A few days or years will launch us there; and oh, the surprising scenes that will then open to us!

Without deep impressions of eternity on our hearts, and frequent thoughtfulness about it, we cannot be prepared for it.

And if we are not prepared for it, oh, how inconceivably miserable our case! But if prepared, how inconceivably happy!



Look not then at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

# *SERM. XII. THE SACRED IMPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN NAME.*

**A**cts 11:26.— *The Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

Mere names are empty sounds, and but of little consequence: and yet it must be owned there are names of honor and significancy; and, when they are attended with the things signified by them, they are of great and sacred importance.

Such is the Christian name; a name about seventeen hundred years old. And now when the name is almost lost in party-distinctions, and the thing is almost lost in ignorance, error, vice, hypocrisy, and formality, it may be worth our while to consider the original import of that sacred name, as a proper expedient to recover both name and thing.

The name of Christian was not the first by which the followers of Christ were distinguished. Their enemies called them Galileans, Nazarenes, and other names of contempt: and among themselves they were called Saints, from their holiness; Disciples, from their learning their religion from Christ as their teacher; Believers, from their believing in him as the Messiah; and Brethren, from their mutual love and their relation to God and each other.

But after some time they were distinguished by the name of Christians. This they first received in Antioch, a heathen city, a city infamous for all manner of vice and debauchery: a city that had its name from Antiochus Epiphanes, the bitterest enemy the church of the Jews ever had. A city very rich and powerful, from whence the Christian name would have an extensive circulation; but it is long since laid in ruins, unprotected by that sacred name: in such a city was Christ pleased to confer his name upon his followers; and you cannot but see that the very choice of the place discovers his wisdom, grace, and justice.

The original word, which is here rendered called, seems to intimate that they were called Christians by divine appointment, for it generally signifies an oracular nomination or a declaration from God; and to this purpose it is generally translated. Hence it follows that the very name Christian, as well as the thing, was of a divine original; assumed not by a private agreement of the disciples among themselves, but by the appointment of God. And in this view it is a remarkable accomplishment of an old prophecy of Isaiah, chap. 62:2. The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. So Isaiah 65:15. The Lord shall call his servants by another name.

This name was at first confined to a few; but it soon had a surprisingly extensive propagation through the world. In many countries, indeed, it was lost, and miserably exchanged for that of Heathen, Mahometan, or Musselman. Yet the European nations still retain the honor of wearing it. A few scattered Christians are also still to be found here and there in Asia and Africa, though crushed under the oppressions of Mahometans and Pagans. This name has likewise crossed the wide ocean to the wilderness of America, and is worn by the sundry European colonies on this continent.

We, in particular, call ourselves Christians, and should take it ill to be denied the honor of that distinction. But do we not know the meaning and sacred import of that name? Do we not know what it is to be Christians indeed? That is, to be in reality what we are in name: certainly it is time for us to consider the matter; and it is my present design that we should do so.

Now we may consider this name in various views; particularly as a name of distinction from the rest of the world, who know not the Lord Jesus, or reject him as an impostor;—as a patronymic name, pointing out the Father and Founder of our holy religion and the Christian church; —as a badge of our relation to Christ as his servants, his children, his bride;—as intimating our unction by the holy Spirit, or our being the subjects of his influences; as Christ was anointed by the holy Spirit, or replenished with his gifts above measure, (for you are to observe that anointed is the English of the Greek name Christ, and of the Hebrew, Messiah) and as a name of approbation, signifying that we are the property of Christ, and his peculiar people. Each of these particulars might be properly illustrated.<sup>t</sup> But my present design confines me to consider the Christian name only in two views; namely, as a catholic name, intended to bury all party denominations; and as a name of obligation upon all that wear it to be Christians indeed, or to form their temper and practice upon the sacred model of Christianity.

1. Let us consider the Christian name as a catholic name, intended to bury all party denominations.

The name Gentile was odious to the Jews, and the name Jew was odious to the Gentiles. The name Christian swallows up both in one common and agreeable appellation. He that hath taken down the partition-wall, has taken away partition names, and united all his followers in his own name, as a common denomination. For now, says Paul, “there is neither Greek nor Jew,

circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all.” Col. 3:11. “And ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:28. According to a prophecy of Zechariah, The Lord shall be king over all the earth; and in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one. Zech. 14:9.

It is but a due honor to Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, that all who profess his religion should wear his name; and they pay an extravagant and even idolatrous compliment to his subordinate officers and ministers, when they take their denomination from them. Had this humor prevailed in the primitive church, instead of the common name Christians, there would have been as many party-names as there were apostles or eminent ministers. There would have been Paulites from Paul; Peterites from Peter; Johnites from John; Barnabites from Barnabas, &c. Paul took pains to crush the first risings of this party spirit in those churches which he planted; particularly in Corinth, where it most prevailed. While they were saying, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ; he puts this pungent question to them: “Is Christ divided?” Are his servants the ringleaders of so many parties? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in or into the name of Paul, that ye should be so fond to take your name from him? He counted it a happiness that Providence had directed him to such a conduct as gave no umbrage of encouragement to such a humor. I thank God, says he, that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius: lest any should say, that I baptized in my own name, and was gathering a party for myself. 1 Cor. 1:12-15.

But alas! How little has this convictive reasoning of the apostle been regarded in the future ages of the church? What an endless variety of denominations taken from some men of character, or from some little

peculiarities, has prevailed in the Christian world, and crumbled it to pieces, while the Christian name is hardly regarded? Not to take notice of Jesuits, Jansenites, Dominicans, Franciscans, and other denominations and orders in the popish church, where having corrupted the thing, they act very consistently to lay aside the name, what party names have been adopted by the Protestant churches, whose religion is substantially the same common Christianity, and who agree in much more important articles than in those they differ; and who therefore might peaceably unite under the common name of Christians? We have Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, Zuinglians, Churchmen, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and a long list of names which I cannot now enumerate. To be a Christian is not enough now-a-days, but a man must also be something more and better; that is, he must be a strenuous bigot to this or that particular church. But where is the reason or propriety of this? I may indeed believe the same things which Luther or Calvin believed: but I do not believe them on the authority of Luther or Calvin, but upon the sole authority of Jesus Christ, and therefore I should not call myself by their name, as one of their disciples, but by the name of Christ, whom alone I acknowledge as the Author of my religion, and my only Master and Lord. If I learn my religion from one of these great men, it is indeed proper I should assume their name. If I learn it from a parliament or convocation, and make their acts and canons the rule and ground of my faith, then it is enough for me to be of the established religion, be that what it will: I may with propriety be called a mere conformist; that is my highest character: but I cannot be properly called a Christian: for a Christian learns his religion, not from acts of parliament or from the determinations of councils, but from Jesus Christ and his gospel.

To guard against mistakes on this head, I would observe that every man has a natural and legal right to judge and choose for himself in matters of religion; and that is a mean, supple soul indeed, and utterly careless about all religion, that makes a compliment of this right to any man, or body of men upon earth, whether pope, king, parliament, convocation, or synod. In the exercise of this right and searching for himself, he will find that he agrees more fully in lesser as well as more important articles with some particular church than others; and thereupon it is his duty to join in stated communion with that church; and he may, if he pleases, assume the name which that church wears, by way of distinction from others; this is not what I condemn. But for me to glory in the denomination of any particular church as my highest character; to lay more stress upon the name of a presbyterian or a churchman, than on the sacred name of Christian; to make a punctilious agreement with my sentiments in the little peculiarities of a party the test of all religion; to make it the object of my zeal to gain proselytes to some other than the Christian name; to connive at the faults of those of my own party, and to be blind to the good qualities of others, or invidiously to misrepresent or diminish them; these are the things which deserve universal condemnation from God and man; these proceed from a spirit of bigotry and faction, directly opposite to the generous catholic spirit of Christianity, and subversive of it. And yet how common is this spirit among all denominations! And what mischief has it done in the world! Hence proceed contentions and animosities, uncharitable suspicions and censures, slander and detraction, partiality and unreasonable prejudices, and a hideous group of evils, which I cannot now describe. This spirit also hinders the progress of serious practical religion, by turning the attention of men from the great concerns of eternity, and the essentials of Christianity, to

vain jangling and contest about circumstances and trifles. Thus the Christian is swallowed up in the partisan and fundamentals lost in extra-essentials.

My brethren, I would now warn you against this wretched, mischievous spirit of party. I would not have you entirely skeptical and undetermined even about the smaller points of religion, the modes and forms, which are the matters of contention between different churches; nor would I have you quite indifferent what particular church to join with in stated communion. Endeavour to find out the truth even in these circumstantial, at least so far as is necessary for the direction of your own conduct. But do not make these the whole or the principal part of your religion; do not be excessively zealous about them, nor break the peace of the church by magisterially imposing them upon others. "Hast thou faith in these little disputables?" it is well; "but have it to thyself before God," and do not disturb others with it. You may, if you please, call yourselves Presbyterians and Dissenters, and you shall bear without shame or resentment all the names of reproach and contempt which the world may brand you with. But as you should not be mortified on the one side, so neither should you glory on the other. A Christian! A Christian! Let that be your highest distinction; let that be the name which you labor to deserve. God forbid that my ministry should be the occasion of diverting your attention to anything else. But I am so happy that I can appeal to yourselves, whether I have during several years of my ministry among you, labored to instill into you the principles of bigotry, and make you warm proselytes to a party: or whether it has not been the great object of my zeal to inculcate upon you the grand essentials of our holy religion, and make you sincere, practical Christians. Alas! My dear people,



unless I succeed in this, I labor to very little purpose, though I should presbyterianize the whole colony.

Calumny and slander, it is hoped, have by this time talked themselves out of breath; and the lying spirit may be at a loss for materials to form a popular, plausible falsehood, which is likely to be credited where the dissenters are known. But you have heard formerly, and some of you may still hear strange and uncommon surmises, wild conjectures, and most dismal insinuations. But if you would know the truth at once, if you would be fully informed by one that best knows what religion I am of, I will tell you (with Mr. Baxter,) “I am a Christian, a mere Christian; of no other religion: my church is the Christian church.” The Bible! The Bible! Is my religion; and if I am a dissenter, I dissent only from modes and forms of religion which I cannot find in my Bible; and which therefore I conclude have nothing to do with religion, much less should they be made terms of Christian communion, since Christ, the only lawgiver of his church, has not made them such. Let this congregation be that of a Christian society, and I little care what other name it wears. Let it be a little Antioch, where the followers of Christ shall be distinguished by their old Catholic name, Christians. To bear and deserve this character, let this be our ambition, this our labor. Let popes pronounce, and councils decree what they please; let statesmen and ecclesiastics prescribe what to believe; as for us, let us study our Bibles: let us learn of Christ; and if we are not dignified with the smiles, or enriched with the emoluments of an establishment, we shall have his approbation, who is the only Lord and Sovereign of the realm of conscience, and by whose judgment we must stand or fall for ever.

But it is time for me to proceed to consider the other view of the Christian name, on which I intend principally to insist; and that is,

II. As a name of obligation upon all that bear it to be Christians indeed, or to form their temper and practice upon the sacred model of Christianity. The prosecution of this subject will lead me to answer this important inquiry, What is it to be a Christian?

To be a Christian, in the popular and fashionable sense, is no difficult or excellent thing. It is to be baptized, to profess the Christian religion, to believe, like our neighbors, that Christ is the Messiah, and to attend upon public worship once a week, in some church or other that bears only the Christian name. In this sense a man may be a Christian, and yet be habitually careless about eternal things; a Christian, and yet fall short of the morality of many of the heathens; a Christian, and yet a drunkard, a swearer, or a slave to some vice or other; a Christian, and yet a willful, impenitent offender against God and man. To be a Christian in this sense is no high character; and, if this be the whole of Christianity, it is very little matter whether the world be Christianized or not. But is this to be a Christian in the original and proper sense of the word? No; that is something of a very different and superior kind. To be a Christian indeed, is the highest character and dignity of which the human nature is capable: it is the most excellent thing that ever adorned our world: it is a thing that heaven itself beholds with approbation and delight.

To be a Christian is to be like to Christ, from whom the name is taken: it is to be a follower and imitator of him; to be possessed of his spirit and temper; and to live as he lived in the world: it is to have those just, exalted, and divine notions of God and divine things, and that just and full view of our duty to God and man, which Christ taught: in short it is to have our sentiments, our temper, and practice, formed upon the sacred model of the gospel. Let me expatiate a little upon this amiable character.

1. To be a Christian, is to depart from iniquity. To this the name obliges us; and without this we have no title to the name. “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,” 2 Tim. ii 19; that is, let him depart from iniquity, or not dare to touch that sacred name. Christ was perfectly free from sin: he was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” His followers also shall be perfectly free from sin in a little time; ere long they will enter into the pure regions of perfect holiness, and will drop all their sins, with their mortal bodies, into the grave. But this, alas! Is not their character in the present state, but the remains of sin still cleave to them. Yet even in the present state, they are laboring after perfection in holiness. Nothing can satisfy them until they are conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.

They are hourly conflicting with every temptation, and vigorously resisting every iniquity in its most alluring forms. And, though sin is perpetually struggling for the mastery, and sometimes, in an inadvertent hour, gets an advantage over them, yet, as they are not under the law, but under grace, they are assisted with recruits of grace, so that no sin has any habitual dominion over them. Rom. 6:14. Hence they are free from the gross vices of the age, and are men of good morals. This is their habitual, universal character; and to pretend to be Christians without this requisite, is the greatest absurdity.

What then shall we think of the drunken, swearing, debauched, defrauding, rakish, profligate, profane Christians, that have overrun the Christian world? Can there be a greater contradiction? A loyal subject in arms against his sovereign, an ignorant scholar, a sober drunkard, a charitable miser, an honest thief, is not a greater absurdity, or a more direct contradiction. To depart from iniquity is essential to Christianity, and

without it there can be no such thing. There was nothing that Christ was so remote from as sin: and therefore for those that indulge themselves in it to wear his name, is just as absurd and ridiculous as for a coward to denominate himself from Alexander the Great, or an illiterate dunce to call himself a Newtonian philosopher. Therefore, if you will not renounce iniquity, renounce the Christian name: for you cannot consistently retain both. Alexander had a fellow in his army that was of his own name, but a mere coward. “Either be like me,” says Alexander, “or lay aside my name.” Ye servants of sin, it is in vain for you to wear the name of Christ; it renders you the more ridiculous, and aggravates your guilt: you may with as much propriety call yourselves lords, or dukes, or kings, as Christians, while you are so unlike to Christ. His name is a sarcasm, a reproach to you, and you are a scandal to his name. His name is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.

2. To be a Christian is to deny yourselves and take up the cross and follow Christ. These are the terms of discipleship fixed by Christ himself. He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23. To deny ourselves is to abstain from the pleasures of sin, to moderate our sensual appetites, to deny our own interest for the sake of Christ, and in short, to sacrifice everything inconsistent with our duty to him, when these come in competition. To take up our cross, is to bear sufferings, to encounter difficulties, and break through them all in imitation of Jesus Christ, and for his sake. To follow him, is to trace his steps, and imitate his example, whatever it cost us. But this observation will coincide with the next head, and therefore I now dismiss it. These, sirs, and these only, are the terms, if you would be Christians, or the disciples of Christ. These he honestly warned mankind of

when he first called them to be his disciples. He did not take an advantage of them, but let them know beforehand upon what terms they were admitted. He makes this declaration in the midst of a great crowd, in Luke 14:25, &c. There went great multitudes with him, fond of becoming his followers: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. By hating, is here meant a smaller degree of love, or a comparative hatred; that is, if we would be Christ's disciples, we must be willing to part with our dearest relations, and even our lives, when we cannot retain them consistently with our duty to him. He goes on: Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and encounter the greatest sufferings after my example, cannot be my disciple. The love of Christ is the ruling passion of every true Christian, and for his sake he is ready to give up all, and to suffer all that earth or hell can inflict. He must run all risks, and cleave to his cause at all adventures. This is the essential character of every true Christian.

What then shall we think of those crowds among us who retain the Christian name, and yet will not deny themselves of their sensual pleasures, nor part with their temporal interest for the sake of Christ? Who are so far from being willing to lay down their lives, that they cannot stand the force of a laugh or a sneer in the cause of religion, but immediately stumble and fall away? Or, are they Christians, whom the commands of Christ cannot restrain from what their depraved hearts desire? No; a Christian, without self-denial, mortification, and a supreme love to Jesus Christ, is as great a contradiction as fire without heat, or a sun without light, a hero without courage, or a friend without love. And does not this strip some of you of the Christian name, and prove that you have no title at all to it?

3. I have repeatedly observed, that a true Christian must be a follower or imitator of Christ. Be ye followers of me, says St. Paul, as I also am of Christ. 1 Cor. 11:1. Christ is the model after whom every Christian is formed; for, says St. Peter, he left us an example, that we should follow his steps. 1 Pet. 2:21. St. Paul tells us, that we must be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, Rom. 7:29, and that the same mind must be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. Phil. 2:5; unless we partake of his spirit, and resemble him in practice; unless we be as he was in the world, we have no right to partake of his name.

Here I would observe, that what was miraculous in our Lord's conduct, and peculiar to him as the Son of God and Mediator, is not a pattern for our imitation, but only what was done in obedience to that law of God which was common to him and us. His heart glowed with love to his Father; he delighted in universal obedience to him; it was his meat and drink to do his will, even in the most painful and self-denying instances; he abounded in devotion, in prayer, meditation, fasting, and every religious duty. He was also full of every grace and virtue towards mankind; meek and lowly, kind and benevolent, just and charitable, merciful and compassionate; a dutiful son, a loyal subject, a faithful friend, a good master, and an active, useful, public-spirited member of society. He was patient and resigned, and yet undaunted and brave under sufferings; he had all his appetites and passions under proper government, he was heavenly-minded, above this world in heart while he dwelt in it. Beneficence to the souls and bodies of men was the business of his life; for he went about doing good. Acts 10:38. This is an imperfect sketch of his amiable character; and in these things every one that deserves to be called after his name, does in some measure resemble and imitate him. This is not only his earnest endeavor, but what he actually

attains, though in a much inferior degree; and his imperfections are the grief of his heart. This resemblance and imitation of Christ is essential to the very being of a Christian, and without it, it is a vain pretense. And does your Christianity, my brethren, stand this test? May one know that you belong to Christ by your living like him, and discovering the same temper and spirit? Do the manners of the divine Master spread through all his family; and do you show that you belong to it by your temper and conduct? Alas! If you must be denominated from hence, would not some of you with more propriety be called

Epicureans from Epicurus, the sensual atheistic philosopher, or mammonites from Mammon, the imaginary God of riches, or Bacchanals from Bacchus, the god of wine, then Christians from Christ, the most perfect pattern of living holiness and virtue that ever was exhibited in the world?

If you claim the name of Christians, where is that ardent devotion, that affectionate love to God, that zeal for his glory, that alacrity in his service, that resignation to his will, that generous benevolence to mankind, that zeal to promote their best interests, that meekness and forbearance under ill usage, that unwearied activity in doing good to all, that self-denial and heavenly-mindedness which shone so conspicuous in Christ, whose holy name you bear? Alas! While you are destitute of those graces, and yet wear his name, you burlesque it, and turn it into a reproach both to him and yourselves.

I might add, that the Christian name is not hereditary to you by your natural birth, but you must be born anew of the Spirit to entitle you to this new name; that a Christian is a believer, believing in him after whom he is called as his only Savior and Lord, and that he is a true penitent.

Repentance was incompatible with Christ's character, who was perfectly righteous, and had no sin of which to repent; but it is a proper virtue in a sinner, without which he cannot be a Christian. On these and several other particulars I might enlarge, but my time will not allow; I shall therefore conclude with a few reflections.

First, You may hence see that the Christian character is the highest, the most excellent and sublime in the world; it includes everything truly great and amiable. The Christian has exalted sentiments of the Supreme Being, just notions of duty, and a proper temper and conduct towards God and man. A Christian is a devout worshipper of the God of heaven, a cheerful observer of his whole law, and a broken-hearted penitent for his imperfections. A Christian is a compilation of all the amiable and useful graces and virtues; temperate and sober, just, liberal, compassionate, and benevolent, humble, meek, gentle, peaceable, and in all things conscientious. A Christian is a good parent, a good child, a good master, a good servant, a good husband, a good wife, a faithful friend, an obliging neighbor, a dutiful subject, a good ruler, a zealous patriot, and an honest statesman; and as far as he is such, so far, and no farther, he is a Christian. And can there be a more amiable and excellent character exhibited to your view? It is an angelic, a divine character. Let it be your glory and your ambition to wear it with a good grace, to wear it so as to adorn it.

To acquire the title of kings and lords, is not in your power; to spread your fame as scholars, philosophers, or heroes, may be beyond your reach; but here is a character more excellent, more amiable, more honorable than all these, which it is your business to deserve and maintain. And blessed be God, this is a dignity which the meanest among you, which beggars and slaves may attain. Let this therefore be an object of universal ambition and



pursuit, and let every other name and title be despised in comparison of it. This is the way to rise to true honor in the estimate of God, angels, and good men. What though the anti-christian Christians of our age and country ridicule you? Let them consider their own absurd conduct and be ashamed. They think it an honor to wear the Christian name, and yet persist in unchristian practices; and who but a fool, with such palpable contradiction, would think so? A beggar that fancies himself a king and trails his rags with the gait of majesty, as though they were royal robes, is not so ridiculous as one that will usurp the Christian name without a Christian practice; and yet such Christians are the favorites of the world. To renounce the profession of Christianity is barbarous and profane; to live according to that profession, and practice Christianity, is preciseness and fanaticism. Can anything be more preposterous? This is as if one should ridicule learning, and yet glory in the character of a scholar; or laugh at bravery, and yet celebrate the praises of heroes. And are they fit to judge of the wisdom and propriety, or their censures to be regarded, who fall into such an absurdity themselves?

Secondly, Hence you may see that, if all the professors of Christianity should behave in character, the religion of Christ would soon appear divine to all mankind, and spread through all nations of the earth. Were Christianity exhibited to the life in all its native inherent glories, it would be as needless to offer arguments to prove it divine, as to prove that the sun is full of light; the conviction would flash upon all mankind by its own intrinsic evidence. Did Christians exemplify the religion they profess, all the world would immediately see that that religion which rendered them so different a people from all the rest of mankind, is indeed divine, and every way worthy of universal acceptance. Then would Heathenism, Mahometanism, and all the false religions in the world, fall before the

heaven-born religion of Jesus Christ. Then it would be sufficient to convince an infidel just to bring him into a Christian country, and let him observe the different face of things there from all the world beside. But alas!

Thirdly, How different is the Christian world from the Christian religion! Who would imagine that they who take their name from Christ have any relation to him, if we observe their spirit and practice? Should a stranger learn Christianity from what he sees in Popish countries, he would conclude it principally consisted in bodily austerities, in worshipping saints, images, relics, and a thousand trifles, in theatrical fopperies and insignificant ceremonies, in believing implicitly all the determinations of a fallible man as infallibly true, and in persecuting all that differ from them, and showing their love to their souls by burning their bodies. In Protestant countries, alas! The face of things is but little better as to good morals and practical religion. Let us take our own country for a sample. Suppose a Heathen or Mahometan should take a tour through Virginia to learn the religion of the inhabitants from their general conduct, what would he conclude? Would he not conclude that all the religion of the generality consisted in a few Sunday formalities, and that the rest of the week they had nothing to do with God, or any religion, but were at liberty to live as they please? And were he told these were the followers of one Christ, and were of his religion, would he not conclude that he was certainly an impostor, and the minister of sin? But when he came to find that, notwithstanding all this licentiousness, they professed the pure and holy religion of the Bible, how Would he be astonished, and pronounce them the most inconsistent, bare-faced hypocrites! My brethren, great and heavy is the guilt that lies upon our country upon this account. It is a scandal to the Christian name; it is guilty

of confirming the neighboring heathen in their prejudices, and hinders the propagation of Christianity through the world. Oh let not us be accessory to this dreadful guilt, but do all we can to recommend our religion to universal acceptance!—I add,

Fourthly, and lastly, Let us examine whether we have any just title to the Christian name; that is, whether we are Christians indeed; for if we have not the thing, to retain the name is the most inconsistent folly and hypocrisy, and will answer no end but to aggravate our condemnation. A lost Christian is the most shocking character in hell; and unless you be such Christians as I have described, it will ere long be your character. Therefore, be followers of Christ, imbibe his spirit, practice his precepts, and depart from iniquity. Otherwise he will sentence you from him at last as workers of iniquity. And then will I profess unto them (they are Christ's own words) I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matt. 7:23.

# *SERM. XIII. THE DIVINE MERCY TO MOURNING PENITENTS.*

**J**er. 31:18,19,20.— *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised, me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son I is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.*

In these words the mourning language of a penitent child, sensible of ingratitude, and at once desirous and ashamed to return, and the tender language of a compassionate father, at once chastising, pitying, and pardoning, are sweetly blended: and the images are so lively and moving, that if they were regarded only as poetical descriptions founded upon fiction, they would be irresistibly striking. But when we consider them as the most important realities, as descriptive of that ingenuous repentance

which we must all feel, and of that gracious acceptance we must all obtain from God before we can be happy, what almighty energy should they have upon us! How may our hearts dissolve within us at the sound of such pathetic complaints, and such gracious encouragements! Hard indeed is that heart that can hear these penitential strains without being melted into the like tender relenting's; and inveterate is that melancholy, incurable is that despondency, that can listen to such expressions of fatherly compassion and love, without being cheered and animated.

This whole chapter had a primary reference to the Jews, and such of the Israelites as might mingle with them in their return from the Babylonian captivity. As they were enslaved to foreigners, and removed from their native land for their sins, so they could not be restored but upon their repentance. Upon this condition only a restoration was promised them. Lev. 26:40-43; Deut. 30:1-16.

In this chapter we have a prediction of their repentance under the heavy chastisement of seventy years' captivity, and of their return thereupon to their own land. In the text the whole body of penitents among them is called by the name of a single person, Ephraim. In the prophetic writings, the kingdom of the ten tribes, as distinguished from that of Judah, is frequently denominated by this name, because the Ephraimites were a principal family among them. And sometimes, as here, the name is given to the Jews, probably on account of the great number of Ephraimites mingled with them, especially on their return from captivity. All the penitent Jews are included under this single name, to intimate their unanimity in their repentance; their hearts consented, like the heart of one man, to turn to the Lord, from whom with horrid unanimity they had revolted. This single name Ephraim also renders this passage more easily applicable to particular penitents in all

ages. Every one of such may insert his own name, instead of that of Ephraim, and claim the encouragement originally given to them. And indeed this whole passage is applicable to all true penitents. Repenting Ephraim did but speak the language of every one of you, my brethren, who is made sensible of the plague of his own heart, and turned to the Lord; and the tender language of forgiving grace to mourning Ephraim is addressed to each of you; and it is with a view to you that I intend to consider this scripture.

The text naturally resolves itself into three parts, as it consists of three verses. In the first verse we find the careless, resolute impenitent, reduced by chastisement to a sense of his danger, and the necessity of turning to God; and yet sensible of his utter inability, and therefore crying for the attractive influence of divine grace. You hear Ephraim bemoaning his wretched case, and pouring out importunate groans for relief, thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, that struggles and wearies himself in vain to get free from it, and must be broken and tamed with severe usage. "Thus stubborn and unmanageable have I been; and now, when I am convinced of the necessity of a return to thee, I feel my obstinate heart reluctate, like a wild ox, and I cannot come. I therefore cry to thee for the attractive influence of thy grace;" Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee. "To whom but to thee should I return; and to whom but to thee should I apply for strength to return? For thou only art the Lord my God, who can help me, and whom I am under infinite obligations to serve." Thus the awakened sinner prayed; and mercy listened to his cries. The attractive influences of divine grace are granted, and he is enabled to return; which introduces the second branch of the text in the 19th verse, in which the new convert is represented as

reflecting upon the efficacy of converting grace, and the glorious change wrought in him by it: Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

While the returning prodigal is venting himself in these plaintive strains in some solitary corner, his heavenly Father's bowels are moving over him. The third part of the text represents the blessed God listening to the cries of his mourning child. I have surely heard; or, according to the emphasis of the original, hearing I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: and while Ephraim is going on in his passionate complaints, God, as it were, interrupts him, and surprises him with the soothing voice of mercy. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? Surely he is. Or we may understand the words thus, as if God should say, "Whose mourning voice is this I hear? Is this Ephraim, my dear son? Is this my pleasant child that bemoans himself as a helpless orphan, or one abandoned by his father? And can I bear to hear his complaints without mingling divine consolations with them, and assuring him of pardon? No; for since I spake against him in my threatening's, I do earnestly remember him still;" therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

I shall endeavor to illustrate each of these parts of the text, and thus shall be led to describe the preparative exercise, the nature and concomitants of true repentance; and the tender compassions of Heaven towards mourning penitents.

I. Let us view the returning sinner under his first spiritual concern, which is generally preparatory to evangelical repentance.

And where shall we find him? And what is he doing? We shall not find him, as usual in a thoughtless hurry about earthly things, confining all his

attention to these trifles, and unmindful of the important concerns of eternity. We shall not find him merry, inconsiderate, and vain, in a circle of jovial, careless companions; much less shall we find him intrepid and secure in a course of sin, gratifying his flesh, and indulging his lusts. In this enchanted road the crowd of hardy impenitents pass secure and cheerful down to the chambers of death, but the awakened sinner flies from it with horror; or, if his depraved heart would tempt him to walk in it, he cannot take many steps before he is shocked with the horrid apparition of impending danger. He finds the flattering paths of sin haunted with the terrible specters of guilt; and the sword of divine vengeance gleams bright and dreadful before him, and seems lifted to give the fatal blow. You will, therefore, find the awakened sinner solitary and solemn in some retired corner, not deceiving himself with vain hopes of safety in his present state, but alarmed with apprehensions of danger: not planning schemes for his secular advantage, nor asking, with sordid anxiety, “Who will show me any temporal good?” but solicitous about his perishing soul, and anxiously inquiring, What shall I do to be saved? He is not congratulating himself upon the imaginary goodness of his heart or life, or priding himself with secret wonder in a rich conceit of his excellencies; but you will hear him, in his sorrowful retirement, bemoaning, or (as the original signifies) condoling himself. He sees his case to be really awful and sad, and he, as it were, takes up a lamentation over himself. He is no more senseless, hard-hearted, and self-applauding, as he was wont to be: but, like a mourning turtle, he bewails himself in such tragical strains as these: “Unhappy creature that I am! Into what a deplorable state have I brought myself! And how long have I continued in it, with the insensibility of a rock and the stupidity of a brute? Now I may mourn over my past neglected and unimproved days, as so



many deceased friends, sent indeed from heaven to do me good, but cruelly killed by my ungrateful neglect and continued delays as to return to God and holiness. Fly back, ye abused months and years; arise from the dead; restore me your precious moments again, that I may unravel the web of life, and form it anew; and that I may improve the opportunities I have squandered away. Vain and desperate wish! The wheels of time will not return, and what shall I do? Here I am, a guilty, obnoxious creature, uncertain of life and unfit to die; alienated from God, and incapable (alas! I may add unwilling to return) a slave to sin, and too feeble to break the fetters of inveterate habits; liable to the arrest of divine justice, and unable to deliver myself; exposed to the vengeance of heaven, yet can make no atonement; destitute of an interest in Christ, and uncertain, awfully uncertain, whether I shall ever obtain it. Unhappy creatures! How justly may I take up a lamentation over myself! Pity me, ye brute creation, that know not to sin, and therefore cannot know the misery of my case; and have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends! And if these guilty lips may dare to pronounce thy injured name, O thou God of grace, have pity upon me! But, alas! I deserve no pity, for how long have I denied it to myself! Ah, infatuated wretch! Why did not I sooner begin to secure my unhappy soul, that has lain all this time neglected, and unpitied, upon the brink of ruin! Why did I not sooner lay my condition to heart? Alas! I should have gone on thoughtless still, had I not been awakened by the kind severity, the gracious chastisements of my dishonored Father!”

Thou hast chastised me. This, as spoken by Ephraim, had a particular reference to the Babylonish captivity; but we may naturally take occasion from it to speak of those calamities in general, whether outward or inward, that are made the means of alarming the secure sinner.

There are many ways which our heavenly Father takes to correct his undutiful children until they return to him. Sometimes he kindly takes away their health, the abused occasion of their wantonness and security, and restrains them from their lusts with fetters of affliction. This is beautifully described by Elihu. “He is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones, that were not seen, stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life unto the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit:—I have found a ransom.” Job 33:19, &c. Sometimes God awakens the sinner to bethink himself, by stripping him of his earthly supports and comforts, his estate, or his relatives, which drew away his heart from eternal things, and thus brings him to see the necessity of turning to God, the fountain of bliss, upon the failure of the streams. Thus he dealt with profligate Manasseh. 2 Chron. 33:11,12. He was taken in “thorns, and bound in fetters, and carried to Babylon; and when he was in affliction he sought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly before him, and prayed unto him,” &c. Thus also God promises to do with his chosen: “I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of my covenant.” Ezek. 20:37; Ps. 89:32; Prov. 22:15,29:15.

But the principal means of correction which God uses for the end of return to him is that of conscience; and indeed without this, all the rest are in vain. Outward afflictions are of service only as they tend to awaken the conscience from its lethargy to a faithful discharge of its trust. It is conscience that makes the sinner sensible of his misery and scourges him

till he return to his duty. This is a chastisement the most severe that human nature can endure. The lashes of a guilty conscience are intolerable; and some under them have chosen strangling and death rather than life. The spirit of a man may bear him up under outward infirmities; but when the spirit itself is wounded, who can bear it? Prov. 18:14. Conscience is a serpent in his breast, which bites and gnaws his heart; and he can no more avoid it, than he can fly from himself. Its force is so great and universal that even the heathen poet Juvenal, not famous for the delicacy of his morals, taught by experience, could speak feelingly of its secret blows, and of agonizing sweats under its tortures.

Let not such of you as have never been tortured with its remorse, congratulate yourselves upon your happiness, for you are not innocents; and therefore conscience will not always sleep; it will not always lie torpid and inactive, like a snake benumbed with cold, in your breast. It will awaken you either to your conversion or condemnation. Either the fire of God's wrath flaming from his law will enliven it in this world to sting you with medicinal anguish; or the unquenchable fire of his vengeance in the lake of fire and brimstone will thaw it into life, and then it will horribly rage in your breast, and diffuse its tormenting poison through your whole frame: and then it will become a never-dying worm, and prey upon your hearts forever. But if you now suffer it to pain you with salutary remorse, and awaken you to a tender sensibility of your danger, this intestine enemy will in the end become your bosom friend, will support you under every calamity, and be your faithful companion and guardian through the most dangerous paths of life. Therefore now submit to its wholesome severities, now yield to its chastisements. Such of you as have submitted to its authority, and obeyed its faithful admonitions, find it your best friend: and

you may bless the day in which you complied with its demands, though before divine grace renewed your heart, your wills were stubborn and reluctant; and you might say with Ephraim:

I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; that is, “As a wild young ox, unbroken from the herd, is unmanageable, refuses the yoke, becomes outrageous at the whip or goad, and wearies himself in ineffectual struggles to throw off the burden clapt upon him, and regain his savage liberty, and never will submit until wearied out, and unable to resist any longer; so has my stubborn heart, unaccustomed to obey, refused the yoke of thy law, O my God, and struggled with sullen obstinacy under thy chastisements. Instead of calmly submitting to thy rod, and immediately reforming under correction, instead of turning to thee, and flying to thy arms to avoid the falling blow, I was unyielding and outrageous, like a wild bull in a net. Isa. 51:20. I wearied myself in desperate struggles to free myself from thy chastising hand; or vainly tried to harden myself to bear it with obdurate insensibility. I tried to break the rod of conscience that I might no more groan under its lashes, and my heart reluctated and rebelled against the gracious design of thy correction, which was to bring me back to thee my heavenly Father. But now I am wearied out, now I am sensible I must submit, or perish, and that my conscience is too strong for me, and must prevail.”

You see, my brethren, the obstinate reluctance of an awakened sinner to return to God. Like a wild young bullock, he would range at large, and is impatient of the yoke of the law, and the restraints of conscience. He loves his sin and cannot bear to part with it. He has no relish for the exercises of devotion and ascetic mortification; and therefore will not submit to them. The way of holiness is disagreeable to his depraved heart, and he will not

turn his feet to it. He loves to be stupidly easy, and serene in mind, and cannot bear to be checked in his pursuit of business or pleasure by anxieties of heart, and therefore he is impatient of the honest warnings of his conscience, and uses a variety of wretched expedients to silence its clamorous remonstrances. In short, he will do anything, he will turn to anything rather than turn to God. If his conscience will be but satisfied, he will forsake many of his sins: he will, like Herod, Mark 6:20, do many things, and walk in the whole round of outward duties. All this he will do, if his conscience will be but bribed by it. But if conscience enlarges its demands, and, after he has reformed his life, requires him to make him a new heart, requires him to turn not only from the outward practice of gross vices, but from the love of all sins; not only to turn to the observance of religious duties, but to turn to the Lord with all his heart, and surrender himself entirely to him, and make it the main business of life to serve him; if conscience, I say, carries its demands thus far, he cannot bear it, he struggles to throw off the yoke.

And some are cursed with horrid success in the attempt: they are permitted to rest content in a partial reformation, or external religion, as sufficient, and so go down to the grave with a lie in their right hand. But the happy soul, on whom divine grace is determined to finish its work in spite of all opposition, is suffered to weary itself out in a vain resistance of the chastisements of conscience, till it is obliged to yield, and submit to the yoke. And then with Ephraim it will cry:

Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. This is the mourning sinner's language, when convinced that he must submit and turn to God, and in the meantime finds himself utterly unable to turn. Many essays he makes to give himself to the Lord; but oh! His heart starts back and shrinks away as

though he were rushing into flames, when he is but flying to the gracious embraces of his Father. He strives, and strives to drag it along, but all in vain. And what shall he do in this extremity, but cry, “Lord, turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee. Work in me to will and to do, and then I shall work out my own salvation.” Lord, though I am sensible of the necessity of turning to thee, though I exert my feeble strength in many a languid effort, to come, yet I cannot so much as creep towards thee, though I should die on the spot. Not only thy word, but my own experience now convinces me that I cannot come unto thee, unless thou draw me. John 6:44. Others vainly boast of their imaginary power, as though, when they set themselves about it, they could perform some great achievements. Thus I once flattered myself, but now, when I am most capable of judging, that is, when I come to the trial, all my boasts are humbled. Here I lie, a helpless creature, unable to go to the physician, unable to accept of pardon and life on the easy terms of the gospel, and unable to free myself from the bondage of sin; and thus I must lie forever, unless that God, from whom I have revolted, draws me back to himself. Turn me, oh thou that hast the hearts of all men in thy hands, and canst turn them whithersoever thou pleasest, turn me; and then weak, and reluctant as I am, I shall be turned; this backward heart will yield to the almighty attraction of thy grace.

“Here am I as passive clay in the hand of the potter; incapable to fashion myself into a vessel fit for thy house; but thou canst form me as thou pleasest. This hard and Stubborn heart will be ductile and pliable to thine irresistible power.” Thus you see the awakened sinner is driven to earnest prayer in his exigence. Never did a drowning man call for help, or a condemned malefactor plead for pardon with more sincerity and ardor. If

the sinner had neglected prayer all his life before now, he flies to it as the only expedient left, or if he formerly ran it over in a careless, unthinking manner, as an insignificant form, now he exerts all the importunity of his soul; now he prays as for his life, and cannot rest till his desires are answered.

The sinner ventures to enforce his petition by pleading his relation to God; “Turn me,—for thou art the Lord my God.” There is a sense in which a sinner in his unregenerate state cannot call God his God; that is, he cannot claim a special interest in him as his portion, nor cry “Abba, Father,” with the spirit of adoption, as reconciled to God. But even an unregenerate sinner may call him my God in other senses; he is his God by right, that is, though he has idolatrously yielded himself to other gods, yet by right he should have acknowledged him only. He is his God, as that name denotes authority and power, to which he should be subject: his God, as he would now choose him to be his God, his portion, and his all, which is implied in turning to him; he is his God by anticipation and hope, as upon his turning to him he will become his reconciled God in covenant; and he is his God by outward profession and visible relation. The force of this argument, to urge his petition for converting grace, may be viewed in various lights.

It may be understood thus: “Turn thou me, for thou only who art the Lord of the universe, and hast all the creation at thy control; thou only, who art my God and ruler, and in whose hand my heart is, art able to turn so obstinate a creature. In vain do I seek for help elsewhere. Not all the means upon earth, not all the persuasions, exhortations, invitations, and terrors that can be used with me, can turn this heart; it is a work becoming the Lord God Almighty, and it is thou alone canst effect it.”

Or we may understand the plea thus: “Turn thou me, and I shall turn to thee; to thee who art the Lord my God, and to whom I am under the most sacred obligations to return. I would resign thine own right to thee; I would submit to thee who alone hast a just claim to me as thy servant.”

Or the words may be understood as an abjuration of all the idol-lusts to which the sinner was enslaved before, “I will turn to thee; for to whom should I turn but to the Lord my God: “What have I to do any more with idols?” Hosea 14:8. “Why should I any longer submit to other lords, who have no right to me? I would renounce them all; I would throw off all subjection to them, and avouch thee alone for the Lord my God.” Thus have the Jews renounced their false gods upon their return from Babylon.

Or we may understand the words as an encouragement to hope for converting grace, since it is asked from a God of infinite power and goodness. “Though I have most grievously offended, and had I done the thousandth part so much against my fellow creatures, I could never expect a favorable admission into their presence; yet I dare ask so great a favor of thee, for thou art God, and not man: thy power and thy grace are all divine, such as become a God. I therefore dare to hope for that from thy hands, which I might despair of from all the universe of beings besides.”

Or finally, the passage may be looked upon as a plea drawn from the sinner’s external relation to God, as a member of his visible church, and as dedicated to him. “Turn me, and I will turn to thee, whose name I bear, and to whom I have been early devoted. I would now of my own choice acknowledge the God of my fathers, and return to the guide of my youth. And, since thou hast honored me with a place in thy visible church, I humbly hope thou wilt not reject me now, when I would sincerely consecrate myself to thee, and become thy servant in reality, as well as in



appearance.” In this sense the plea might be used with peculiar propriety by the Jews, who had been nationally adopted as the peculiar people of God.

In whatever sense we understand the words, they convey to us this important truth, that the awakened sinner is obliged to take all his encouragement from God, and not from himself. All his trust is in the divine mercy, and he is brought to a happy self-despair.

Having viewed Ephraim under the preparatory work of legal conviction, and the dawn of evangelical repentance, let us view him,

II. As reflecting upon the surprising efficacy of grace he had sought, and which was bestowed upon him in answer to his prayer.

We left him just now crying, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; here we find him actually turned. Surely after that I was turned, I repented. When the Lord exerts his power to subdue the stubbornness of the sinner, and sweetly to allure him to himself, then the sinner repents; then his heart dissolves in ingenuous, disinterested relenting's. His sorrow and concern before conversion are forced and mercenary; they are occasioned only by a selfish fear of punishment, and he would willingly get rid of them, but now his grief is free and spontaneous; it flows from his heart as freely as streams from a fountain; and he takes pleasure in tender relenting's before the Lord for his sin; he delights to be humble, and to feel his heart dissolve within him. A heart of flesh, soft and susceptible of impression, is his choice, and a stony, insensible heart a great burden; the more penitent the more happy, and the more senseless, the more miserable he finds himself. Now also his heart is actuated with a generous concern for the glory of God; and he sees the horrid evil of sin as contrary to the holiness of God, and an ungrateful requital of his uninterrupted beneficence.

We learn from this passage, that the true penitent is sensible of a mighty turn in his temper and inclinations. Surely after that I was turned, I repented. His whole soul is turned from what he formerly delighted in, and turned to what he had no relish for before. Particularly his thoughts, his will, and affections are turned to God; there is a heavenly bias communicated to them which draws them to holiness, like the law of gravitation in the material world. There is indeed a new turn given to his outward practice; the world may in some measure see that he is a new man; but this is not all; the first spring that turns all the wheels of the soul and actions of life is the heart, and this is first set right. The change within is as evident as that without, could our eyes penetrate the heart. In short, If any man be in Christ, he is throughout a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new.

Apply this touchstone to your hearts, my brethren, and see if they will stand the test.

The penitent proceeds, After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. The same grace that turns him does also instruct him; nay, it is by discovering to him the beauty of holiness, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that it draws him. He is brought out of darkness into marvelous and astonishing light, that surprises him with new discoveries of things: he is instructed particularly, as to the necessity of turning to God, as to the horrid ingratitude, vileness, and deformity of sin, and as to his folly and wickedness in continuing so long alienated from God. By the way, have you ever been let into these secrets, my hearers? And when instructed in these,

“He smites upon his thigh.” This gesture denotes consternation and amazement; and nature directs us thus to express these passions. Ezekiel is

enjoined to use this gesture as a prophetic action, signifying the horror and astonishment of his mind. Ezek. 21:12. This action, therefore, of the penitent, intimates what consternation and amazement he is cast into, when these new discoveries flash upon his soul. He stands amazed at himself. He is struck with horror to think what an ungrateful, ignorant, stupid wretch he has been all his life till this happy moment. “Alas! What have I been doing? Abusing all my days in ruining my own soul, and dishonoring the God of all my mercies! Contentedly estranged from him, and not seeking to return! Where were my eyes, that I never before saw the horrid evil of my conduct and the shocking deformity of sin, which now opens to me in all its hideous colors! Amazing! That divine vengeance has not broken out upon me before now? Can it be that I am yet alive! In the land of hope too! Yea, alive, a humble pardoned penitent! Let heaven and earth wonder at this, for surely the sun never shone upon a wretch so undeserving! So great a monument of mercy!”

The pardoned penitent proceeds—I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. We are ashamed when we are caught in a mean, base and scandalous action; we blush, and are confounded, and know not where to look, or what to say. Thus the penitent is heartily ashamed of himself, when he reflects upon the sordid dispositions he has indulged, and the base and scandalous actions he has committed. He blushes at his own inspection; he is confounded at his own tribunal. He appears to himself, a mean, base, contemptible wretch; and, though the world may honor him, he loathes himself, as viler than the earth he treads on; and is secretly ashamed to see the face of man. And how then shall he appear before God? How shall he hold up his face in the presence of his injured Father? He comes to him ashamed, and covering his head. He

knows not what to say to him; he knows not how to look him in the face, but he falls down abashed and confounded at his feet. Thus was penitent Ezra ashamed before God. He fell upon his knees, and lifted up his hands (his eyes, like the publican, he durst not lift up) unto the heavens, and he says, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God I for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments. Ezra 9:5-10. Thus it was foretold concerning the repenting Jews. Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed. Thou shalt be confounded and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame. Ezek. 16:61-63. There is good reason for this conscious shame, and therefore it is enjoined as a duty: Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Ezek. 36:32.

And what is the cause of this shame in the mourning penitent? Oh, says he, it is because I bear the reproach of my youth. "I carry upon me (as the original word signifies) the brand of infamy. My youth, alas! Was spent in a thoughtless neglect of God and the duties I owed him; my vigorous days were wasted in sensual extravagances, and gratifying my criminal inclinations. My prime of life, which should have been sacred to the author of my existence, was spent in rebellion against him. Alas! My first thoughts, my virgin love, did not aspire to him; nor did my young desires, as soon as fledged, wing their flight to heaven. In short, the temper of my heart, and my course of my life, from the first exercises of reason to this happy hour of my conversion, were a disgrace to my rational nature; I have degraded myself beneath the beasts that perish." Behold, I am vile; I loath and abhor myself for all my filthiness and abominations. Ezek. 36:31. "And how

amazing the grace of God to honor so base a wretch with a place among the children of his love!”

Thus I have delineated the heart of penitent Ephraim; and let me ask you, my brethren, is this your picture? Have you ever felt such ingenuous relenting's, such just consternation, such holy shame and confusion? There can be no transition from nature to grace, without previous concern, &c. You all bear the reproach of that youth, you have all spent some unhappy days in the scandalous ways of sin, and your consciences still bear the brand of infamy. And have you ever been made deeply sensible of it? Has God ever heard you bemoaning yourselves thus in some mournful solitude, “Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” Is there any such mourner here this day? Then listen to the gracious voice of your heavenly Father, while,

III. I am illustrating the last, the sweetest part of the text, which expresses the tender compassion of God towards mourning penitents.

While they are bemoaning their case, and conscious that they do not deserve one look of love from God, he is represented as attentively listening to catch the first penitential groan that breaks from their hearts. Ephraim, in the depth of his despondency, probably did hardly hope that God took any notice of his secret sorrows, which he suppressed as much as possible from the public view: but God heard him, God was watching to hear the first mournful cry; and he repeats all his complaints, to let him know (after the manner of men) what particular notice he had taken of them. “I have surely heard, or hearing I have heard that is, “I have attentively heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.”

What strong consolation may this give to desponding mourners, who think themselves neglected by that God to whom they are pouring out their

weeping supplications! He hears your secret groans, he courts your sighs, and puts your tears into his bottle. His eyes penetrate all the secrets of your heart, and he observes all their feeble struggles to turn to himself; and he beholds you not as an unconcerned spectator, but with all the tender emotions of fatherly compassion: for,

While he is listening to Ephraim's mournful complaints, he abruptly breaks in upon him, and sweetly surprises him with the warmest declarations of pity and grace. "Is this Ephraim, my dear son, whose mourning voice I hear; Is this my pleasant child, or (as it might be rendered) the child of my delights, who thus wounds my ear with his heart-rending groans?" What strange language this to an ungrateful, unyielding rebel, that continued obstinate till he was wearied out; that would not turn till drawn; that deserved to fall a victim to justice! This is the language of compassion all divine, of grace that becomes a God.

This passage contains a most encouraging truth, that, however vile and abandoned a sinner has been, yet upon his repentance, he becomes God's dear son, his favorite child. He will, from that moment, regard him, provide for him, protect him, and bring him to his heavenly inheritance, as his son and heir; for "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come," &c. Rom. 8:38, &c., shall separate him from his father's love but "he shall inherit all things." Rev. 21:7. Yea, all things are his already in title, and he shall be made "greater than the kings of the earth;" he shall be made such as becomes so dignified a relation as that of a Son to the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And is not this magnet sufficient to attract all this assembly to their Father's house? Can you resist the almighty energy of such compassion? Return, ye perishing prodigals! Return; though you have sinned against

Heaven, and before your Father, and are no more worthy to be called his sons, yet return, and you shall be made his dear sons, his pleasant children.

Are none of you in need of such strong consolation as this? Do you want encouragement to return, and are you ready to spring up and run to your Father's arms upon the first assurance of acceptance? If this be what you want, you have an abundance for your supply. Are all your souls then in motion to return? Does that eye which darts through the whole creation at once, now behold your hearts moving towards God? Or am I wasting these gracious encouragements upon stupid creatures, void of sensation, that do not care for them, or that are so conceited of their own worth, as not to need them? If so, I retract these consolations, with respect to you, and shall presently tell you your doom. But let us further pursue these melting strains of paternal pity.

“For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.” Many and dreadful were the threatening's denounced against the sinner, while impenitent; and, had he continued impenitent, they would certainly have been executed upon him. But the primary and immediate design of the threatening's are to make men happy, and not to make them miserable; they are designed to deter them from disobedience, which is naturally productive of misery, or to reclaim them from it, which is but to restrain them in their career to ruin. And consequently these threatening's proceed from love as well as the promises of our God, from love to the person, though from hatred to sin. So the same love which prompts a parent to promise a reward to his son for obedience, will prompt him also to threaten him, if he takes some dangerous weapon to play with: or, to choose a more pertinent illustration, for God is the moral ruler as well as the father of the rational world; the same regard to the public weal, which induces a lawgiver to

annex a reward to obedience, will also prompt him to add penalties to his law to deter from disobedience; and his immediate design is not to make any of his subjects miserable, but to keep them from making themselves and others miserable by disobedience; though when the threatening is once denounced, it is necessary it should be executed, to vindicate the veracity of the lawgiver, and secure his government from insult and contempt. Thus when the primary end of the divine threatening's, namely, the deterring and reclaiming men from disobedience, is not obtained, then it becomes necessary that they should be executed upon the impenitent in all their dreadful extent; but when the sinner is brought to repentance, and to submit to the divine government, then all these threatening's are repealed, and they shall not hurt one hair of his head. And the sinner himself will acknowledge that these threatening's proved necessary mercies to him, and that the denunciation of everlasting punishment was one means of bringing him to everlasting happiness, and that divine vengeance in this sense conspired with divine grace to save him.

Consider this, ye desponding penitents, and allay your terrors. That God, who has written such bitter things against you in his word, earnestly and affectionately remembers you still, and it was with a kind intent to you that he thundered out these terrors at which you tremble. These acids, this bitter physic, were necessary for your recovery. These coals of fire were necessary to awaken you out of your lethargy. Therefore read the love of your Father, even in these solemn warnings. He affectionately remembers you still; he cannot put you out of his thoughts.

Therefore my bowels (adds the all-gracious Jehovah) are troubled for him. Astonishing beyond conception! How can we bear up under such words as these? Surely they must break our hearts, and overwhelm our spirits I Here



is the great God, who has millions of superior beings to serve him, and who is absolutely independent upon them all, troubled, his very bowels troubled, for a rebellious, useless, trifling worm! Be astonished at this, ye angels of light, who are the witnesses of such amazing, such unbounded compassion; and wonder at it, O ye sons of men, who are more intimately concerned in it, stand and adore, as it were, in statues of admiration! It is true these words are not to be taken literally, as though the Deity were capable of sorrow, or any of the human passions: but he here condescends to adapt himself to the language of mortals, and to borrow such images as will convey to us the most lively ideas of his grace and tenderness to mourning penitents; and no image can answer this end better than that of a father, whose bowels are yearning over his mourning child, prostrate at his feet, and who, with eager embraces, raises him up, assuring him of pardon and acceptance. If any of you now know what it is to receive a penitent child in this manner, while all the father is tenderly working within you, you may form some affecting ideas of the readiness of our heavenly Father to receive returning sinners from this tender illustration.

The Lord concludes this moving speech with a promise that includes in it more than we can ask or think, sealed with his own sacred name. I will surely have mercy, or, (according to the more emphatical original) with mercy, I will have mercy upon him saith the Lord; this is, I will show abundant mercy to him, I will give him all the blessings that infinite mercy can bestow; and what can be needed more? This promise includes pardon, acceptance, sanctification, joy in the Holy Ghost, peace of conscience, and immortal life and glory in the future world. Oh sirs! What a God, what a Father is this! Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, &c. Micah 7:18.

And can you, ye mourners in Zion, can you fear a rejection from such a tender Father? Can you dread to venture upon such abundant mercies? Is there a mourning Ephraim in this assembly? I may call you, as God did Adam, Ephraim, where art thou? Let the word of God find you out, and force a little encouragement upon you; your heavenly Father, whose angry hand you fear, is listening to your groans, and will measure you out a mercy for every groan, a blessing for every sigh, a drop, a draught of consolation for every tear. His bowels are moving over you, and he addresses you in such language as this, "Is this my dear son? Is this my pleasant child?"

And as to you, ye hardy impenitents, ye abandoned profligates, ye careless formalists, ye almost Christians, can you hear these things, and not begin now to relent? Do you not find your frozen hearts begin to thaw within you? Can you resist such alluring grace? Can you bear the thoughts of continuing enemies to so good, so forgiving a Father? Does not Ephraim's petition now rise to your hearts, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned? Then I congratulate you upon this happy day; you are this day become God's dear sons, the children of his delights.

Is there a wretch so senseless, so wicked, so abandoned, as to refuse to return? Where art thou, hardy rebel? Stand forth and meet the terrors of thy doom. To thee I must change my voice, and instead of representing the tender compassions of a father, must denounce the terrors of an angry judge. Thy doom is declared and fixed by the same lips that speak to penitents in such encouraging strains; by those gracious lips that never uttered a harsh censure. God is angry with thee every day. Psal. 7:11. Except thou repentest, thou shalt surely perish. Luke 13:3. The example of Christ authorizes me to repeat it again; "Except thou repentest, thou shalt surely perish," ver. 5. "The God that made thee will destroy thee; and he

that formed thee will show thee no favor.” Isa. 26:11. “Thou art treasuring up wrath in horrid affluence against the day of wrath.” Rom. 2:5. “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence: yea, the world, and they that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” Nahum 1:2-6. These flaming thunderbolts, sinners, are aimed at thy heart, and if thou canst harden thyself against their terror, let me read thee thy doom before we part. You have it pronounced by God himself in Deuteronomy, the twenty-ninth chapter, at the nineteenth and the following verses, “If it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, The Lord will not spare him: but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law.” And now, sinner, if thou canst return home careless and senseless with this heavy curse upon thee, expect not a word of comfort, expect no blessing till thou art made truly penitent; for “how shall I bless whom God has not blessed?” The ministerial blessing falls upon one on thy right hand, and one on thy left, but it lights not upon thee. The curse is thy lot, and this must thou have at the hand of God, if thou continuest hardened and insolent in sin. Thou must lie down in sorrow. Isa. 1. 11.

Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Psal. 50:22.

# *SERM. XIV. CHRIST PRECIOUS TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.*

**1** Peter 2:7.— *Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious.*

Yes; blessed be God; though a great part of the creation is disaffected to Jesus Christ; though fallen spirits, both in flesh and without flesh, both upon earth and in hell, neglect him or profess themselves open enemies to him, yet he is precious; precious not only in himself, not only to his Father, not only to the choirs of heaven, who behold his full glory without a veil, but precious to some even in our guilty world; precious to a sort of persons of our sinful race, who make no great figure in mortal eyes, who have no idea of their own goodness; who are mean, unworthy creatures, in their own view, and who are generally despicable in the view of others; I mean he is precious to all true believers. And though they are but few comparatively in our world; though there are, I am afraid, but few additions made to them from among us; yet, blessed be God, there are some believers even upon our guilty globe; and I doubt not but I am now speaking to some such.

My believing brethren, (if I may venture to claim kindred with you,) I am now entering upon a design, which I know you have much at heart: and that is, to make the blessed Jesus more precious to you, and if possible, to recommend him to the affections of the crowd that neglect him. You know, alas! You love him but little; but very little, compared to his infinite excellency and your obligations to him; and you know that multitudes love him not at all. Whatever they profess, their practice shows that their carnal minds are enmity against him. This you often see, and the sight affects your hearts. It deeply affects you to think so much excellency should be neglected and despised, and so much love meet with such base returns of ingratitude. And you cannot but pity your poor fellow sinners, that they are so blind to the brightest glory and their own highest interest, and that they should perish, through willful neglect of their deliverer; perish, as it were, within reach of the hand stretched out to save them. This is indeed a very affecting, very lamentable, and alas! A very common sight. And will you not then bid me God-speed this day in my attempt to recommend this precious, though neglected, Jesus? Will you not contribute your share towards my success in so pious and benevolent a design by your earnest prayers? Now, shall not the interceding sigh rise to heaven from every heart, and every soul be cast into a praying posture? I shall hope to discharge my duty with more comfort and advantage, if you afford me this assistance. And surely such of you cannot deny me this aid, who desire that Jesus may become still more precious to your own hearts, and that he may be the object of universal love from all the sons of men, who are now disaffected to him.

To you that believe, he is precious—He? Who? Is it mammon, the god of the world? Is it pleasure, or honor? No; none of these is the darling of the

believing heart. But it is he who is the uppermost in every pious heart; he, who is first in the thoughts and affections; he whom every friend of his must know, even without a name; if it be but said of him, he is precious, this is enough to distinguish him from all others. “If it be he the apostle means,” may every believer say, “who is most precious to my soul, then I can easily point him out, though without a name. It must be Jesus, for oh! It is he that is most precious to me.” The connection also of the text directs us to the same person. It is he the apostle means, whom he had just described as a living stone, chosen of God, and precious; the chief corner-stone, the great foundation of the church, that spiritual temple of God, so stately and glorious, and reaching from earth to heaven; it is this precious stone, this heavenly jewel, that is precious to believers.

“To you that believe, he is precious,” i.e., he is highly valued by you. You esteem him one of infinite worth, and he has the highest place in your affections. He is dearer to your hearts than all other persons and things. The word τιμή requires a still stronger translation: “To you that believe, he is preciousness” preciousness in the abstract; all preciousness, and nothing but preciousness; a precious stone without one blemish. Or it may be translated with a little variation, “To you that believe, he is honor.” It confers the highest honor upon you to be related to him; and you esteem it your highest honor to sustain that relation. Though Jesus and his cross are names of reproach in the unbelieving world, you glory in them, and they reflect a real glory upon you. Or, “To you that believe, there is honor.” Honor is now conferred upon you in your being built as living stones in the temple of God upon this precious foundation; and honor is reserved for you in heaven, where the crown of righteousness awaits you.

“To you which believe, he is precious;” that is to say, the value of this precious stone is, alas! Unknown to the crowd. It is so far from being precious, that it is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; a stone disallowed of men, (v.4,) rejected even by the builders, (v.7,) but you believers, ye happy few, have another estimate of it. Faith enables you to see the glories of the blessed Jesus; and, when you know him through this medium, you cannot but love him. The blind world neglect the Lord of glory, because they know him not: but you believers know him, and therefore to you he is precious. Faith presents him to your view in a just light, and directs you to form a proper estimate of him. It is truly lamentable that such real excellency should be despised; but so it will be with the world till they believe. The mere speculative recommendation of their reason, the prepossessions of education in his favor, and the best human means, are not sufficient to render Jesus precious to them. Nothing but saving faith can effect this.

To you therefore which believe he is precious. The illative particle, therefore, shows this passage is an inference from what went before; and the reasoning seems to be this: “This stone is precious to God, therefore it is precious to you that believe. You have the same estimate of Jesus Christ which God the Father has; and for that very reason he is precious to you, because he is precious to him.” That this is the connection will appear, if you look back to the 4th and 6th verses; where you find Jesus described as “a chief corner-stone, laid in Zion, elect or chosen, and precious; disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” Men wickedly disapprove this stone, and even many of the professed builders of his church reject him. This, says the apostle, must be granted. But this is no objection to his real worth. He is precious to God, who knows him best, and



who is a perfect judge of real excellency; and for that very reason he is precious to you that believe. Faith teaches you to look upon persons and things in the same light in which God views them; it makes your sentiments conformed to his. Christ is the Father's beloved son, in whom he is well pleased; and he is your beloved Savior, in whom you are well pleased.

Is it any wonder that Jesus should be precious to believers, when he is so precious in himself, and in his offices, so precious to the angelic hosts, and so precious to his Father?

1. He is precious in himself. He is Immanuel, Godman; and consequently, whatever excellencies belong either to the divine or human nature, center in him. If wisdom, power, and goodness, divine or human, created or uncreated, can render him worthy of the highest affection, he has a just claim to it. Whatever excellencies, natural or moral, appear in any part of the vast universe, they are but faint shadows of his beauty and glory. All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; Col. 1:16,17. And whatever excellencies are in the effect must be eminently in the cause. You do not wonder nor censure, when you see men delighted with the glories of the sun, and the various luminaries of the sky; you do not wonder nor blame when they take pleasure in the beautiful prospects of nature, or in that rich variety of good things, which earth, and sea, and every element furnishes for the support of man, or the gratification of his senses: you do not wonder and blame, when they are struck with moral beauty, when you see them admire and approve wisdom, benevolence, justice, veracity, meekness, and mercy; you never think it strange, much less censurable, that men should love these things, and count them precious; and can you be astonished, can you ridicule or find fault, that Jesus is precious to poor believers? If the copy be so fair and

lovely, who would not love the original, that has eyes to behold it? Believers see so much of the worth of Christ as is sufficient to captivate their hearts, and to convince them of their guilt in loving him no more; and the clearer their views are of him, the more they are mortified at the criminal defects of their love; for oh, they see he deserves infinitely more!

2. The Lord Jesus is precious in his offices. His mediatorial office is generally subdivided into three parts, namely, that of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King: and how precious is Christ in each of these!

As a Prophet, how sweet are his instructions to a bewildered soul! How precious the words of his lips, which are the words of eternal life! How delightful to sit and hear him teach the way of duty and happiness, revealing the Father, and the wonders of the invisible state! How transporting to hear him declare upon what terms an offended God may be reconciled! A discovery beyond the searches of all the sages and philosophers of the heathen world! How reviving is it to listen to his gracious promises and invitations! Promises and invitations to the poor, the weary, and heavy-laden, to the broken-hearted, and even to the chief of sinners! The word of Christ has been the treasure, the support, and the joy of believers in all ages. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth," says Job, "more than my necessary food," Job 23:12. It is this precious word the Psalmist so often and so highly celebrates. He celebrates it as "more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb," Psalm 19:10. "Oh how I love thy law!" says he: "it is my meditation all the day," Psalm 119:97. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea sweeter than honey to my mouth," ver. 103. "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," ver. 72. "Behold, I have longed after thy precepts," ver. 40. "Thy statutes have been

my songs in the house of my pilgrimage,” ver. 54. “In my affliction, thy word hath quickened me,” ver. 50. “Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction,” ver. 92. This is the language of David, in honor of this divine Prophet, near three thousand years ago, when Christ had not revealed the full gospel to the world, but only some rays of it shone through the veil of the Mosaic dispensation. And must not believers now, who live under the more complete and clear instructions of the great Prophet, entertain the same sentiments of him? Yes, to such of you as believe, even in this age, he is most precious.

But this external objective instruction is not all that Christ as a Prophet communicates; and, indeed, did he do no more than this, it would answer no valuable end. The mind of man, in his present fallen state, like a disordered eye, is incapable of perceiving divine things in a proper light, however clearly they are revealed; and therefore, till the perceiving faculty be rectified, all external revelation is in vain, and is only like opening a fair prospect to a blind eye. Hence this great Prophet carries his instruction further, not only by proposing divine things in a clear objective light by his word, but inwardly enlightening the mind, and enabling it to perceive what is revealed by his Spirit. And how precious are these internal subjective instructions! How sweet to feel a disordered, dark mind opening to admit the shining’s of heavenly day; to perceive the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the beauties of holiness, and the majestic wonders of the eternal world! Speak, ye that know by happy experience, and tell how precious Jesus appears to you, when, by his own blessed Spirit, he scatters the cloud that benighted your understandings, and lets in the rays of his glory upon your admiring souls; when he opens your eyes to see the wonders contained in his law, and the glorious mysteries of his gospel.

What a divine glory does then spread upon every page of the sacred volume! Then it indeed appears the book of God, God-like, and worthy its Author. Oh, precious Jesus! Let us all this day feel thine enlightening influences, that experience may teach us how sweet they are! Come, great Prophet! Come, and make thine own Spirit our teacher, and then shall we be divinely wise.

Again, the Lord Jesus is precious to believers as a great High Priest. As a High Priest, he made complete atonement for sin by his propitiatory sacrifice on the cross; and he still makes intercession for the transgressors on his throne in heaven. It was his sacrifice that satisfied the demands of the law and justice of God, and rendered him reconcilable to the guilty, upon terms consistent with his honor and the rights of his government. It was by virtue of this sacrifice that he procured pardon for sin, the favor of God, freedom from hell, and eternal life for condemned, obnoxious rebels. And such of you, who have ever felt the pangs of a guilty conscience, and obtained relief from Jesus Christ, can tell how precious is his atoning sacrifice. How did it ease your self-tormenting consciences, and heal your broken hearts! How did it change the frowns of an angry God into smiles of love, and your trembling apprehensions of vengeance into delightful hopes of mercy!

How precious did Jesus appear, with a pardon in his hand, with atoning blood gushing from his opened veins, and making his cross, as it were, the key to open the gates of heaven for your admission! Blessed Saviour! Our great High Priest! Thus appear to us with all thy robes, dyed in thine own blood, and cause us all to feel the efficacy of thy propitiation.

Let us next turn our eyes upwards, and view this great High Priest as our Intercessor in the presence of God. There he appears as a lamb that was

slain, bearing the memorials of his sacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the blessings purchased for his people. There he urges it as his pleasure, as his authoritative will, that these blessings should in due time be conferred upon those for whom they were purchased. In this authoritative manner he could intercede even in the days of his humiliation upon earth, because of the Father's covenant engagements with him, the accomplishment of which he has a right to demand, as well as humbly to petition: "Father, I will—I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory," John 17:24. Now how precious must Christ appear in the character of Intercessor! That the friendless sinner should have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cause! That the great High Priest should oiler up the grateful incense of his own merit, with the prayers of the saints! That he should add the sanction of his authoritative will to the humble petition of faith! That he should urge the claims of his people, as his own claims, founded upon an unchangeable covenant with his Father, of which he has fully performed the conditions required! That he should not intercede occasionally, but always appear in the holy of holies as the constant ever-living Intercessor, and maintain the same interest, the same importunity at all times, even when the petitions of his people languish upon their lips! What delightful reflections are these! And how warmly may they recommend the Lord Jesus to the hearts of believers! How just is the apostle's inference, "Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Heb. 10:21-23. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;" for this reason, because "he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25. May

each of us entrust his cause to this all-prevailing Advocate, and we shall certainly gain it! The unchangeable promise has passed his lips, “that whatsoever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it us.” John 16:23.

Let me add, the kingly office of Christ is precious to believers. As King he gives laws, laws perfectly wise and good, and enforced with the most important sanctions, everlasting rewards and punishments. And how delightful, how advantageous, to live under such a government! To have our duty discovered with so much clearness and certainty which frees us from so many painful anxieties, and to have such powerful motives to obedience, which have a tendency to infuse vigor and spirit into our endeavors! As King, he appoints ordinances of worship. And how sweet to converse with him in these ordinances, and to be freed from perplexity about that manner of worship which God will accept, without being exposed to that question, so confounding to will-worshippers, Who hath required this at your hands? As King, he is head over all things to his church, and manages the whole creation, as is most subservient to her good. The various ranks of creatures in heaven, earth and hell, are subject to his direction and control; and they must all co-operate for the good of his people. He reclaims, confounds, subdues, or destroys their enemies, according to his pleasure. And how precious must he be in this august character to the feeble helpless believer! To have an almighty friend sitting at the helm of the universe, with the supreme management of all things in his hands; to be assured that even the most injurious enemy can do the believer no real or lasting injury, but shall at length concur to work his greatest good; and that, come what will, it shall go well with him, and he shall at last be made triumphant over all difficulty and opposition. Oh! What transporting considerations are here! But this is not the whole exercise of the royal power of Christ. He not only makes laws

and ordinances, and restrains the enemies of his people, but he exercises his power inwardly upon their hearts. He is the King of souls; he reigns in the hearts of his subjects; and how infinitely dear and precious is he in this view! To feel him subdue the rebellion within, sweetly bending the stubborn heart into willing obedience, and reducing every thought into a cheerful captivity to himself, writing his law upon the heart, making the dispositions of his subjects a transcript of his will, corresponding to it, like wax to the seal, how delightful is all this! Oh the pleasures of humble submission! How pleasant to lie as subjects at the feet of this mediatorial King without arrogating the sovereignty to ourselves, for which we are utterly insufficient! Blessed Jesus! Thus reign in our hearts thus subdue the nations to the obedience of faith! “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty! And ride prosperously, attend with majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness.” Psalm 45:3,4. “Send the rod of thy strength out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies,” Psalm 110:2, rule us, and subdue the rebel in our hearts.

Thus you see the Lord Jesus is precious to believers in all the views of his mediatorial office. But he is not precious to them alone: he is beloved as far as known, and the more known the more beloved: which leads me to add.

3. He is precious to all the angels of heaven.

St. Peter tells us that the things now reported to us by the gospel are things which the angels desire to look into, 1 Pet. 1:12. Jesus is the wonder of angels now in heaven; and he was so even when he appeared in the form of a servant upon earth. St. Paul mentions it as one part of the great mystery of godliness, that God manifested in the flesh was seen of angels. 1 Tim. 3:16. Angels saw him, and admired and loved him in the various stages of his life, from his birth to his return to his native heaven. Hear the manner in

which angels celebrated his entrance into our world. One of them spread his wings and flew with joyful haste to a company of poor shepherds that kept their midnight watches in the field, and abruptly tells the news, of which his heart was full: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord: and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host." Crowds of angels left their stations in the celestial court in that memorable hour, and hovered over the place where their incarnate God lay in a manger: Jesus, their darling, was gone down to earth, and they must follow him; for who would not be where Jesus is? Men, ungrateful men, were silent upon that occasion, but angels tuned their song of praise. The astonished shepherds heard them sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men." Luke 2:10-14. When he bringeth his first born into the world, the Father saith, Let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. 1:6. This seems to intimate that all the angels crowded round the manger, where the Infant-God lay, and paid him their humble worship. We are told, that when the devil had finished his long process of temptations, after forty days, and had left him, the angels came and ministered unto him. Matt, 4:11. When this disagreeable companion had left him, his old attendants were fond of renewing their service to him. In every hour of difficulty they were ready to fly to his aid. He was seen of angels, in his hard conflict, in the garden of Gethsemane; and one of them "appeared unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Luke 22:43. With what wonder, sympathy and readiness, did this angelic assistant raise his prostrate Lord from the cold ground, wipe off his bloody sweat, and support his sinking spirit with divine encouragements! But oh! Ye blessed angels, ye usual spectators, and adorers of the divine glories of our Redeemer, with



what astonishment and horror were you struck, when you saw him expire on the cross!

*“Around the bloody tree  
Ye press’d with strong desire,  
That wondrous sight to see,  
The Lord of life expire!  
And could your eyes Have known a tear,  
Had dropt it there In sad surprise.”*

Ye also hovered round his tomb, while he lay in the prison of the grave. The weeping women and his other friends found you stationed there in their early impatient visits to the sepulcher! Oh what wonders then appeared to your astonished minds! Could you, that pry so deep into the secrets of heaven, you that know so well what divine love can do, could you have thought that even divine love could have gone so far? Could have laid the Lord of glory a pale, mangled, senseless corpse in the mansions of the dead? Was not this a strange surprise even to you? And, when the appointed day began to dawn, with what eager and joyful haste did ye roll away the stone, and set open the prison doors, that the rising Conqueror might march forth!

*“And when arrayed in light,  
The shining conqueror rode,  
Ye hail’d his rapturous flight  
Up to the throne of God;  
And wav’d around  
Your golden wings,  
And struck your strings  
Of sweetest sound.*

When he ascended on high, he was attended “with the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” Psalm 68:17,18. And now, when he is returned to dwell among them, Jesus is still the darling of angels. His name sounds from all their harps, and his love is the subject of their everlasting song. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall ere long hear them, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Rev. 5:11,12. This is the song of angels, as well as of the redeemed from among men:

*“Jesus the Lord, their harps employs;  
Jesus, my love, they sing;  
Jesus, the name of both our joys,  
Sounds sweet from every string.”*

Oh my brethren, could we see what is doing in heaven at this instant, how would it surprise, astonish, and confound us? Do you think the name of Jesus is of as little importance there as in the world? Do you think there is one lukewarm or disaffected heart there among ten thousand times ten thousand of thousands of thousands? Oh no! There his love is the ruling passion of every heart, and the favorite theme of every song. And is he so precious to angels? To angels, who are less interested in him, and less indebted to him? And must he not be precious to poor believers bought with his blood, and entitled to life by his death? Yes, you that believe have an angelic spirit in this respect; you love Jesus, though unseen, as well as they who see him as he is, though alas! In a far less degree. But to bring his worth to the highest standard of all, I add,

4. He is infinitely precious to his Father, who thoroughly knows him, and is an infallible judge of real worth. He proclaimed more than once from the

excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. Behold,” says he, “my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” Isa. 42:1. He is called by the names of the tenderest endearment; his Son, his own Son, his dear Son, the Son of his love. He is a stone disallowed indeed of men; if their approbation were the true standard of merit, he must be looked upon as a very worthless, insignificant being, unworthy of their thoughts and affections. But let men form what estimate of him they please, he is chosen of God, and precious. And shall not the love of the omniscient God have weight with believers to love him too? Yes, the apostle expressly draws the consequence; he is precious to God, therefore to you that believe, he is precious. It is the characteristic of even the meanest believer, that he is God-like. He is a partaker of the divine nature, and therefore views things, in some measure, as God does; and is affected towards them as God is, though there be an infinite difference as to the degree. He prevailingly loves what God loves, and that because God loves it.

And now, my hearers, what think you of Christ? Will you not think of him as believers do? If so, he will be precious to your hearts above all things for the future. Or if you disregard this standard of excellence, as being but the estimate of fallible creatures, will you not think of him as angels do; angels, those bright intelligences, to whom he reveals his unveiled glories, who are more capable of perceiving and judging of him, and who therefore must know him better than you; angels, who have had a long acquaintance with him at home, if I may so speak, for near six thousand years, as God, i.e. ever since their creation, and for near two thousand years as God-man? Since angels then, who know him so thoroughly, love him so highly, certainly you may safely venture to love him; you might safely venture to

love him implicitly, upon their word. He died for you, which is more than ever he did for them, and will you not love him after all this love? It is not the mode to think much of him in our world, but it is the mode in heaven. Yes, blessed be God, if he be despised and rejected of men, he is not despised and rejected of angels. Angels, that know him best, love him above all, and as far as their capacity will allow, do justice to his merit; and this is a very comfortable thought to a heart broken with a sense of the neglect and contempt he meets with among men. Blessed Jesus I may not one congregation be got together, even upon our guilty earth, that shall in this respect be like the angels, all lovers of thee? Oh! Why should this be impossible, while they are all so much in need of thee, all so much obliged to thee, and thou art so lovely in thyself! Why, my brethren, should not this congregation be made of such, and such only as are lovers of Jesus? Why should he not be precious to every one of you, rich and poor, old and young, white and black? What reason can any one of you give why you in particular should neglect him? I am sure you can give none. And will you, without any reason, dissent from all the angels in heaven, in a point of which they must be the most competent judges? Will you differ from them, and agree in your sentiments of Christ with the ghosts of hell, his implacable, but conquered and miserable enemies?

If all this has no weight with you, let me ask you farther, will you not agree to that estimate of Jesus which his Father has of him? Will you run counter to the supreme reason? Will you set up yourselves as wiser than Omniscience? How must Jehovah resent it to see a worm at his footstool daring to despise him, whom he loves so highly! Oh let him be precious to you, because he is so to God, who knows him best.

But I am shocked at my own attempt. Oh precious Jesus! Are matters come to that pass in our world, that creatures bought with thy blood, creatures that owe all their hopes to thee, should stand in need of persuasions to love thee? What horrors attend the thought! However, blessed be God, there are some, even among men, to whom he is precious. This world is not entirely peopled with the despisers of Christ. To as many of you as believe, he is precious, though to none else.

Would you know the reason of this? I will tell you: None but believers have eyes to see his glory, none but they are sensible of their need of him, and none but they have learned from experience how precious he is.

1. None but believers have eyes to see the glory of Christ. As the knowledge of Christ is entirely from revelation, an avowed unbeliever who rejects that revelation, can have no right knowledge of him, and therefore must be entirely indifferent towards him, as one unknown, or must despise and abhor him as an enthusiast or impostor. But one, who is not an unbeliever in profession or speculation, may yet be destitute of that faith which constitutes a true believer, and which renders Jesus precious to the soul. Even devils are very orthodox in speculation; devils believe and tremble; and they could cry out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? We know thee, who thou art, the holy one of God." Mark 1:24. And there are crowds among us who believe, after a fashion, that Christ is the true Messiah, who yet show by their practices that they neglect him in their hearts, and are not believers in the full import of the character. True faith includes not only a speculative knowledge and belief, but a clear, affecting, realizing view, and a hearty approbation of the things known and believed concerning Jesus Christ; and such a view, such an approbation, cannot be produced by any human means, but only by the enlightening

influence of the holy Spirit shining into the heart. Without such a faith as this, the mind is all dark and blind as to the glory of Jesus Christ; it can see no beauty in him, that he should be desired. Honorable and sublime speculations concerning him may hover in the understanding, and the tongue may pronounce many pompous panegyrics in his praise, but the understanding has no realizing, affecting views of his excellency; nor does the heart delight in him and love him as infinitely precious and lovely. The god of this world, the prince of darkness, has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them. But as to the enlightened believer, God, who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This divine illumination pierces the cloud that obscured his understanding, and enables him to view the Lord Jesus in a strong and striking light; a light entirely different from that of the crowd around him; a light, in which it is impossible to view this glorious object without loving him. A believer and an unbeliever may be equally orthodox in speculation, and have the same notions in theory concerning Jesus Christ, and yet it is certainly true, that their views of him are vastly different. Believers, do you think that, if the Christ-despising multitude around you had the same views of his worth and preciousness which you have, they could neglect him, as they do? It is impossible. You could once neglect him, as others do now; you were no more charmed with his beauty than they. But oh! When you were brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, when the glories of the neglected Savior broke in upon your astonished minds, then was it possible for you to withhold your love from him? Were not your hearts captivated with delightful violence? You could no more resist. Did not your hearts then

as naturally and freely love him, whom they had once disgusted, as ever they loved a dear child or a friend, or the sweetest created enjoyment? The improving your reason into faith is setting the disordered eye of the mind right, that it may be able to see this subject; and when once you viewed it with this eye of reason restored and improved, how did the precious stone sparkle before you, and charm you with its brilliancy and excellence? Christ is one of those things unseen and hoped for, of which St. Paul says, faith is the substance and evidence. Heb. 11:1. Faith gives Christ a present subsistence in the mind, not as a majestic phantom, but as the most glorious and important reality: and this faith is a clear, affecting demonstration, or conviction, of his existence, and of his being in reality what his word represents him. It is by such a faith, that is, under its habitual influence, that the believer lives; and hence, while he lives, Jesus is still precious to him.

2. None but believers are properly sensible of their need of Christ. They are deeply sensible of their ignorance and the disorder of their understanding, and therefore they are sensible of their want of both the external and internal instructions of this divine prophet. But as to others, they are puffed up with intellectual pride, and apprehended themselves in very little need of religious instructions; and therefore they think but very slightly of him. Believers feel themselves guilty, destitute of all righteousness, and incapable of making atonement for their sins, or recommending themselves to God, and therefore the satisfaction and righteousness of Jesus Christ are most precious to them, and they rejoice in him as their all-prevailing Intercessor. But as to the unbelieving crowd, they have no such mortifying thoughts of themselves! They have so many excuses to make for their sins, that they bring down their guilt to a very trifling thing, hardly worthy of divine resentment: and they magnify their

good works to such a height, that they imagine they will nearly balance their bad, and procure them some favor at least from God, and therefore they must look upon this High Priest as needless. They also love to be free from the restraints of religion, and to have the command of themselves. They would usurp the power of self-government, and make their own pleasure their rule; and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, as a King, is so far from being precious, that he is very unacceptable to such obstinate, headstrong, rebels. They choose to have no lawgiver, but their own wills; and therefore they trample upon his laws, and, as it were, form insurrections against his government. But the poor believer, sensible of his incapacity for self-government, loves to be under direction, and delights to feel the dependent, submissive, pliant spirit of a subject. He counts it a mercy not to have the management of himself, and feels his need of this mediatorial King to rule him. He hates the rebel within, hates every insurrection of sin, and longs to have it entirely subdued, and every thought, every motion of his soul brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and therefore he feels the need of his royal power to make an entire conquest of his hostile spirit. His commands are not uneasy impositions, but most acceptable and friendly directions to him; and the prohibitions of his law are not painful restraints, but a kind of privileges in his esteem. The language of his heart is, "Precious Jesus! Be thou my King. I love to live in humble subjection to thee. I would voluntarily submit myself to thy control and direction. Thy will, and not mine be done! Oh subdue every rebellious principle within, and make me all resignation and cheerful obedience to thee!" To such a soul it is no wonder Jesus should be exceedingly precious: but oh how different is this spirit from that which generally prevails in the world? Let me add but one reason more why Jesus is precious to believers, and them only; namely,



3. None but believers have known by experience how precious he is. They, and only they, can reflect upon the glorious views of him, which themselves have had, to captivate their hearts for ever to him. They, and only they, have known what it is to feel a bleeding heart healed by his gentle hand; and a clamorous languishing conscience pacified by his atoning blood. They, and only they, know by experience how sweet it is to feel his love shed abroad in their hearts, to feel a heart, ravished with his glory, pant, and long, and breathe after him, and exerting the various acts of faith, desire, joy, and hope towards him. They, and only they, know by experience how pleasant it is to converse with him in his ordinances, and to spend an hour of devotion in some retirement, as it were, in his company. They, and only they, have experienced the exertions of his royal power, conquering their mightiest sins, and sweetly subduing them to himself. These are, in some measure, matters of experience with every true believer, and therefore it is no wonder Jesus should be precious to them. But as to the unbelieving multitude, poor creatures! They are entire strangers to these things. They may have some superficial notions of them floating in their heads, but they have never felt them in their hearts, and therefore the infinitely precious Lord Jesus is a worthless, insignificant being to them: and thus, alas! It will be with the unhappy creatures, until experience becomes their teacher; until they taste for themselves that the Lord is gracious. 1 Pet. 2:3.

There is an interesting question, which, I doubt not, has risen in the minds of such of you as have heard what has been said with a particular application to yourselves, and keeps you in a painful suspense: with an answer to which I shall conclude: “Am I indeed a true believer?” may some of you say; “and is Christ precious to me? My satisfaction in this sweet

subject is vastly abated, till this subject is solved. Sometimes, I humbly think, the evidence is in my favor, and I begin to hope that he is indeed precious to my soul; but alas, my love for him soon languishes, and then my doubts and fears return, and I know not what to do, nor what to think of myself.” Do not some of you, my brethren, long to have this perplexing case cleared up? Oh, what would you not give, if you might return home this evening fully satisfied in this point? Well, I would willingly help you, for experience has taught me to sympathize with you under this difficulty. Oh my heart! How often hast thou been suspicious of thyself in this respect? The readiest way I can now take to clear up the matter is to answer another question, naturally resulting from my subject; and that is, “How does that high esteem which a believer has for Jesus Christ discover itself? Or how does he show that Christ is indeed precious to him?” I answer, he shows it in various ways; particularly by his affectionate thoughts of him, which often rise in his mind, and always find welcome there. He discovers that Jesus is precious to him by hating and resisting whatever is displeasing to him, and by parting with everything that comes in competition with him. He will let all go rather than part with Christ. Honor, reputation, ease, riches, pleasure, and even life itself, are nothing to him in comparison of Christ, and he will run the risk of all; nay, will actually lose all, if he may but win Christ. He discovers his high esteem for him by the pleasure he takes in feeling his heart suitably affected towards him, and by his uneasiness when it is otherwise. Oh! When he can love Jesus, when his thoughts affectionately clasp around him, and when he has a heart to serve him, then he is happy, his soul is well, and he is lively and cheerful. But, alas! When it is otherwise with him, when his love languishes, when his heart hardens, when it becomes out of order for his service, then he grows

uneasy and discontented, and cannot be at rest. When Jesus favors him with his gracious presence, and revives him with his influence, how does he rejoice? But when his beloved withdraws himself and is gone, how does he lament his absence, and long for his return! He weeps and cries like a bereaved, deserted orphan, and moans like a loving turtle in the absence of its mate. Because Christ is so precious to him, he cannot bear the thought of parting with him, and the least jealousy of his love pierces his very heart. Because he loves him, he longs for the full enjoyment of him, and is ravished with the prospect of him. Because Christ is precious to him, his interests are so too, and he longs to see his kingdom flourish, and all men fired with his love. Because he loves him, he loves his ordinances; loves to hear, because it is the word of Jesus; loves to pray, because it is maintaining intercourse with Jesus; loves to sit at his table, because it is a memorial of Jesus; and loves his people, because they love Jesus. Whatever has a relation to his precious Savior is for that reason precious to him; and when he feels anything of a contrary disposition, alas! It grieves him, and makes him abhor himself. These things are sufficient to show that the Lord Jesus has his heart, and is indeed precious to him; and is not this the very picture of some trembling, doubting souls among you? If it be, take courage. After so many vain searches, you have at length discovered the welcome secret, that Christ is indeed precious to you: and if so, you may be sure that you are precious to him. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Mal. 3:17. If you are now satisfied, after thorough trial of the case, retain your hope, and let not every discouraging appearance renew your jealousies again; labor to be steady and firm Christians, and do not stagger through unbelief.

But, alas! I fear that many of you know nothing experimentally of the exercises of a believing heart, which I have been describing, and consequently that Christ is not precious to you. If this is the case, you may be sure indeed you are hateful to him. He is angry with the wicked every day. “Them that honor him, he will honor; and them that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.” 1 Sam. 2:30. And what will you do if Christ should become your enemy and fight against you? If this precious stone should become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you, over which you will fall into ruin, oh how dreadful must the fall be! What must you expect but to lie down in unutterable and everlasting sorrow!

# *SERM. XV. THE DANGER OF LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION.*

**R**ev. 3:15,16.— *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

The soul of man is endowed with such active powers, that it cannot be idle; and, if we look round the world, we see it all alive and busy in some pursuit or other. What vigorous action, what labor and toil, what hurry, noise, and commotion about the necessities of life, about riches and honors! Here men are in earnest: here there is no dissimulation, no indifferency about the event. They sincerely desire, and eagerly strive for these transient delights, or vain embellishments of a mortal life.

And may we infer farther, that creatures, thus formed for action, and thus laborious and unwearied in these inferior pursuits, are proportionably vigorous and in earnest in matters of infinitely greater importance? May we conclude, that they proportion their labor and activity to the nature of things, and that they are most in earnest where they are most concerned? A stranger to our world, that could conclude nothing concerning the conduct

of mankind but from the generous presumptions of his own charitable heart, might persuade himself that this is the case. But one that has been but a little while conversant with them, and taken the least notice of their temper and practice with regard to that most interesting thing, Religion, must know it is quite otherwise. For look round you, and what do you see? Here and there indeed you may see a few unfashionable creatures, who act as if they looked upon religion to be the most interesting concern; and who seem determined, let others do as they will, to make sure of salvation, whatever becomes of them in other respects; but as to the generality, they are very indifferent about it. They will not indeed renounce all religion entirely; they will make some little profession of the religion that happens to be most modish and reputable in their country, and they will conform to some of its institutions; but it is a matter of indifferency with them, and they are but little concerned about it; or in the language of my text, they are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot.

This threatening, I will spew thee out of my mouth, has been long ago executed with a dreadful severity upon the Laodicean church; and it is now succeeded by a mongrel race of Pagans and Mahometans; and the name of Christ is not heard among them. But, though this church has been demolished for so many hundreds of years, that lukewarmness of spirit in religion which brought this judgment upon them, still lives, and possesses the Christians of our age; it may therefore be expedient for us to consider Christ's friendly warning to them, that we may escape their doom.

The epistles to the seven churches in Asia are introduced with this solemn and striking preface, "I know thy works:" that is to say, your character is drawn by one that thoroughly knows you; one who inspects all your conduct, and takes notice of you when you take no notice of yourselves;

one that cannot be imposed upon by an empty profession and artifice, but searches the heart and the reins. Oh that this truth were deeply impressed upon our hearts: for surely we could not trifle and offend while sensible that we are under the eye of our Judge!

I know thy works, says he to the Laodicean church, that thou art neither cold nor hot. This church was in a very bad condition, and Christ reproves her with the gravest severity; and yet we do not find her charged with the practice or toleration of any gross immoralities, as some of the other churches were. She is not censured for indulging fornication among her members, or communicating with idolaters in eating things sacrificed to idols, like some of the rest. She was free from the infection of the Nicolaitans, which had spread among them. What then is her charge? It is a subtle, latent wickedness, that has no shocking appearance, that makes no gross blemish in the outward character of a professor in the view of others, and may escape his own notice; it is, Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot: as if our Lord had said, Thou dost not entirely renounce and openly disregard the Christian religion, and thou dost not make it a serious business, and mind it as thy grand concern. Thou hast a form of godliness, but deniest the power. All thy religion is a dull languid thing, a mere indifferency; thine heart is not in it; it is not animated with the fervor of thy spirit. Thou hast neither the coldness of the profligate sinner, nor the sacred fire and life of the true Christian; but thou keepest a sort of medium between them. In some things thou resemblest the one, in other things the other; as lukewarmness partakes of the nature both of heat and cold.

Now such a lukewarmness is an eternal solecism in religion; it is the most absurd and inconsistent thing imaginable: more so than avowed impiety, or a professed rejection of all religion: therefore, says Christ, I would thou

wert cold or hot—i.e., “You might be anything more consistently than what you are. If you looked upon religion as a cheat, and openly rejected the profession of it, it would not be strange that you should be careless about it, and disregard it in practice. But to own it true, and make a profession of it, and yet be lukewarm and indifferent about it, this is the most absurd conduct that can be conceived; for, if it be true, it is certainly the most important and interesting truth in all the world, and requires the utmost exertion of all your powers.”

When Christ expresses his abhorrence of lukewarmness in the form of a wish, I would thou wert cold or hot, we are not to suppose his meaning to be, that coldness or fervor in religion is equally acceptable, or that coldness is at all acceptable to him; for reason and revelation concur to assure us, that the open rejection and avowed contempt of religion is an aggravated wickedness, as well as a hypocritical profession. But our Lord’s design is to express, in the strongest manner possible, how odious and abominable their lukewarmness was to him; as if he should say, “Your state is so bad, that you cannot change for the worse; I would rather you were anything than what you are.” You are ready to observe, that the lukewarm professor is in reality wicked and corrupt at heart, a slave to sin, and an enemy to God, as well as the avowed sinner; and therefore they are both hateful in the sight of God, and both in a state of condemnation. But there are some aggravations peculiar to the lukewarm professor that render him peculiarly odious; as, 1. He adds the sin of a hypocritical profession to his other sins. The wickedness of real irreligion, and the wickedness of falsely pretending to be religious, meet and center in him at once. 2. To all this he adds the guilt of presumption, pride, and self-flattery, imagining he is in a safe state and in favor with God; whereas he that makes no pretensions to religion, has no



such umbrage for this conceit and delusion. Thus the miserable Laodiceans “thought, themselves rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing.”

3. Hence it follows, that the lukewarm professor is in the most dangerous condition, as he is not liable to conviction, nor so likely to be brought to repentance. Thus publicans and harlots received the gospel more readily than the self-righteous Pharisees. 4. The honor of God and religion is more injured by the negligent, unconscientious behavior of these Laodiceans, than by the vices of those who make no pretensions to religion; with whom therefore its honor has no connection. On these accounts you see lukewarmness is more aggravatedly sinful and dangerous than entire coldness about religion.

So then, says Christ, “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth;” this is their doom; as if he should say, “As lukewarm water is more disagreeable to the stomach than either cold or hot, so you, of all others, are the most abominable to me. I am quite sick of such professors, and I will cast them out of my church, and reject them forever.”

My present design is to expose the peculiar absurdity and wickedness of lukewarmness or indifferency in religion; a disease that has spread its deadly contagion far and wide among us, and calls for a speedy cure. And let me previously observe to you, that if I do not offer you sufficient arguments to convince your own reason of the absurdity and wickedness of such a temper, then you may still indulge it; but that if my arguments are sufficient, then shake off your sloth, and be fervent in spirit; and if you neglect your duty, be it at your peril.

In illustrating this point I shall proceed upon this plain principle, “That religion is, of all things, the most important in itself, and the most

interesting to us.” This we cannot deny, without openly pronouncing it an imposture. If there be a God, as religion teaches us, he is the most glorious, the most venerable, and the most lovely Being; and nothing can be so important to us as his favor, and nothing so terrible as his displeasure. If he be our Maker, our Benefactor, our Lawgiver and Judge, it must be our greatest concern to serve him with all our might. If Jesus Christ be such a Savior as our religion represents, and we profess to believe, he demands our warmest love and most lively service. If eternity, if heaven and hell, and the final judgment, are realities, they are certainly the most august, the most awful, important, and interesting realities: and, in comparison of them, the most weighty concerns of the present life are but trifles, dreams, and shadows. If prayer and other religious exercises are our duty, certainly they require all the vigor of our souls; and nothing can be more absurd or incongruous than to perform them in a languid, spiritless manner, as if we knew not what we were about. If there be any life within us, these are proper objects to call it forth: if our souls are endowed with active powers, here are objects that demand their utmost exertion. Here we can never be so much in earnest as the case requires. Trifle about anything, but oh do not trifle here! Be careless and indifferent about crowns and kingdoms, about health, life, and all the world, but oh be not careless and indifferent about such immense concerns as these!

But to be more particular: let us take a view of a lukewarm temper in various attitudes, or with respect to several objects, particularly towards God—towards Jesus Christ—a future state of happiness or misery—and in the duties of religion; and in each of these views we cannot but be shocked at so monstrous a temper, especially if we consider our difficulties and

dangers in a religious life, and the eagerness and activity of mankind in inferior pursuits.

1. Consider who and what God is. He is the original uncreated beauty, the sum total of all natural and moral perfections, the origin of all the excellencies that are scattered through this glorious universe; he is the supreme good, and the only proper portion for our immortal spirits. He also sustains the most majestic and endearing relations to us: our Father, our Preserver and Benefactor, our Lawgiver and our Judge. And is such a Being to be put off with heartless, lukewarm services? What can be more absurd or impious than to dishonor supreme excellency and beauty with a languid love and esteem; to trifle in the presence of the most venerable Majesty; to treat the best of Beings with indifferency; to be careless about our duty to such a Father; to return such a Benefactor only insipid complemental expressions of gratitude; to be dull and spiritless in obedience to such a lawgiver; and to be indifferent about the favor or displeasure of such a Judge! I appeal to heaven and earth, if this be not the most shocking conduct imaginable. Does not your reason pronounce it horrid and most daringly wicked? And yet thus is the great and blessed God treated by the generality of mankind. It is most astonishing that he should bear with such treatment so long, and that mankind themselves are not shocked at it: but such the case really is. And are there not some lukewarm Laodiceans in this assembly? Jesus knows your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; and it is fit you should also know them. May you not be convinced upon a little inquiry, that your hearts are habitually indifferent towards God? You may indeed entertain a speculative esteem or a good opinion of him, but are your souls alive towards him? Do they burn with his love? And are you fervent in spirit when you are serving him? Some of you, I hope, amid all your

infirmities, can give comfortable answers to these inquiries. But alas! How few! But yet as to such of you as are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, you are the most abominable creatures upon earth to a holy God. Be zealous, be warm, therefore, and repent. (ver. 19.)

2. Is lukewarmness a proper temper towards Jesus Christ? Is this a suitable return for that love which brought him down from his native paradise into our wretched world? That love which kept his mind for thirty-three painful and tedious years intent upon this one object, the salvation of sinners? That love which rendered him cheerfully patient of the shame, the curse, the tortures of crucifixion, and all the agonies of the most painful death? That love which makes him the sinner's friend still in the courts of heaven, where he appears as our prevailing Advocate and Intercessor? Blessed Jesus! Is lukewarmness a proper return to thee for all this kindness? No; methinks devils cannot treat thee worse. My fellow-mortals, my fellow-sinners, who are the objects of all this love, can you put him off with languid devotions and faint services? Then every grateful and generous passion is extinct in your souls, and you are qualified to venture upon every form of ingratitude and baseness. Oh was Christ indifferent about your salvation? Was his love lukewarm towards you? No: your salvation was the object of his most intense application night and day through the whole course of his life, and it lay nearest his heart in the agonies of death. For this he had a baptism to be baptized with, a baptism, an immersion in tears and blood; and how am I straitened, says he, till it be accomplished I For this with desire, he desired to eat his last passover, because it introduced the last scene of his sufferings. His love! What shall I say of it? What language can describe its strength and ardor? "His love was strong as death: the coals thereof were as coals of fire, which had a most vehement flame: many

waters could not quench it, nor the floods drown it.” Cant. 8:6,7. Never did a tender mother love her sucking child with a love equal to his. Never was a father more anxious to rescue an only son from the hands of a murderer, or to pluck him out of the fire than Jesus was to save perishing sinners. Now to neglect him after all; to forget him; or to think of him with indifferency, as though he were a being of but little importance, and we but little obliged to him, what is all this but the most unnatural, barbarous ingratitude, and the most shocking wickedness? Do you not expect everlasting happiness from him purchased at the expense of his blood? And can you hope for such an immense blessing from him without feeling yourselves most sensibly obliged to him? Can you hope he will do so much for you, and can you be content to do nothing for him, or to go through his service with lukewarmness and languor, as if you cared not how you hurried through it, or how little you had to do with it? Can anything be more absurd or impious than this? Methinks you may defy hell to show a worse temper. May not Christ justly wish you were either cold or hot; wish you were anything rather than thus lukewarm towards him under a profession of friendship? Alas! My brethren, if this be your habitual temper, instead of being saved by him, you may expect he will reject you with the most nauseating disgust and abhorrence. But,

3. Is lukewarmness and indifferency a suitable temper with respect to a future state of happiness or misery? Is it a suitable temper with respect to a happiness far exceeding the utmost bounds of our present thoughts and wishes; a happiness equal to the largest capacities of our souls in their most improved and perfect state; a happiness beyond the grave, when all the enjoyments of this transitory life have taken an eternal flight from us, and leave us hungry and famishing forever, if these be our only portion; a

happiness that will last as long as our immortal spirits, and never fade or fly from us? Or are lukewarmness and indifferency a suitable temper with respect to a misery beyond expression, beyond conception dreadful; a misery inflicted by a God of almighty power and inexorable justice upon a number of obstinate, incorrigible rebels for numberless, willful and daring provocations, inflicted on purpose to show his wrath and make his power known; a misery proceeding from the united fury of divine indignation, of turbulent passions, of a guilty conscience, of malicious tormenting devils; a misery (who can bear up under the horror of the thought?) that shall last as long as the eternal God shall live to inflict it; as long as sin shall continue evil to deserve it; as long as an immortal spirit shall endure to bear it; a misery that shall never be mitigated, never intermitted, never, never, never see an end? And remember, that a state of happiness or misery is not far remote from us, but near us, just before us; the next year, the next hour, or the next moment, we may enter into it; is a state for which we are now candidates, now upon trial; now our eternal all lies at stake; and oh, sirs, does an inactive, careless posture become us in such a situation? Is a state of such happiness, or such misery, is such a state just—just before us, a matter of indifferency to us? Oh can you be lukewarm about such matters? Was ever such a prodigious stupidity seen under the canopy of heaven, or even in the regions of hell, which abound with monstrous and horrid dispositions? No; the hardest ghost below cannot make light of these things. Mortals! Can you trifle about them? Well, trifle a little longer, and your trifling will be over, forever. You may be indifferent about the improving of your time; but time is not indifferent whether to pass by or not: it is determined to continue its rapid course, and hurry you into the ocean of eternity, though you should continue sleeping and dreaming

through all the passage. Therefore awake, arise; exert yourselves before your doom be unchangeably fixed. If you have any fire within you, here let it burn; if you have any active powers, here let them be exerted; here or nowhere, and on no occasion. Be active, be in earnest where you should be; or debase or sink yourselves into stocks and stones, and escape the curse of being reasonable and active creatures. Let the criminal, condemned to die to-morrow, be indifferent about a reprieve or a pardon; let a drowning man be careless about catching at the only plank that can save him: but oh do not you be careless and indifferent about eternity, and such amazing realities as heaven and hell. If you disbelieve these things you are infidels; if you believe these things, and yet are unaffected with them, you are worse than infidels: you are a sort of shocking singularities, and prodigies in nature. Not hell itself can find a precedent of such a conduct. The devils believe, and tremble; you believe, and trifle with things whose very name strikes solemnity and awe through heaven and hell. But,

4. Let us see how this lukewarm temper agrees with the duties of religion. And as I cannot particularize them all, I shall only mention an instance or two. View a lukewarm professor in prayer; he pays to an omniscient God the compliment of a bended knee, as though he could impose upon him with such an empty pretense. When he is addressing the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, he hardly ever recollects in whose presence he is, or whom he is speaking to, but seems as if he were worshipping without an object, or pouring out empty words into the air: perhaps through the whole prayer he had not so much as one solemn, affecting thought of that God whose name he so often invoked. Here is a criminal petitioning for pardon so carelessly, that he scarcely knows what he is about. Here is a needy, famishing beggar pleading for such immense blessings as everlasting

salvation, and all the joys of heaven, so lukewarmly and thoughtlessly, as if he cared not whether his requests were granted or not. Here is an obnoxious offender confessing his sins with a heart untouched with sorrow: worshipping the living God with a dead heart; making great requests, but he forgets them as soon as he rises from his knees, and is not at all inquisitive what becomes of them, and whether they were accepted or not. And can there be a more shocking, impious, and daring conduct than this? To trifle in the royal presence would not be such an audacious affront. For a criminal to catch flies, or sport with a feather, when pleading with his judge for his pardon, would be but a faint shadow of such religious trifling. What are such prayers but solemn mockeries and disguised insults? And yet, is not this the usual method in which many of you address the great God? The words proceed no further than from your tongue: you do not pour them out from the bottom of your hearts; they have no life or spirit in them, and you hardly ever reflect upon their meaning. And when you have talked away to God in this manner, you will have it to pass for a prayer. But surely such prayers must bring down a curse upon you instead of a blessing: such sacrifices must be an abomination to the Lord: Prov. 15:8; and it is astonishing that he has not mingled your blood with your sacrifices, and sent you from your knees to hell; from thoughtless, unmeaning prayer, to real blasphemy and torture.

The next instance I shall mention is with regard to the word of God. You own it divine, you profess it the standard of your religion, and the most excellent book in the world. Now, if this be the case, it is God that speaks to you; it is God that sends you an epistle when you are reading or hearing his word. How impious and provoking then must it be to neglect it, to let it lie by you as an antiquated, useless book, or to read it in a careless, superficial



manner, and hear it with an inattentive, wandering mind? How would you take it, if, when you spoke to your servant about his own interest, he should turn away from you, and not regard you? Or if you should write a letter to your son, and he should not so much as carefully read it, or labor to understand it? And do not some of you treat the sacred oracles in this manner? You make but little use of your Bible, but to teach your children to read: or if you read or hear its contents yourselves, are you not unaffected with them? One would think you would be all attention and reverence to every word; you would drink it in, and thirst for it as new-born babes for their mother's milk, you would feel its energy, and acquire the character of that happy man to whom the God of heaven vouchsafes to look; you would tremble at his word. It reveals the only method of your salvation: it contains the only charter of all your blessings. In short, you have the nearest personal interest in it, and can you be unconcerned hearers of it? I am sure your reason and conscience must condemn such stupidity and indifferency as incongruous, and outrageously wicked.

And now let me remind you of the observation I made when entering upon this subject, that if I should not offer sufficient matter of conviction, you might go on in your lukewarmness; but if your own reason should be fully convinced that such a temper is most wicked and unreasonable, then you might indulge at your peril. What do you say now is the issue? Ye modern Laodiceans, are you not yet struck with horror at the thought of that insipid, formal, spiritless religion you have hitherto been contented with? And do you not see the necessity of following the advice of Christ to the Laodicean church, be zealous, be fervent for the future, and repent, bitterly repent of what is past? To urge this the more, I have two considerations in reserve, of no small weight. 1. Consider the difficulties and dangers in your

way. Oh, sirs, if you know the difficulty of the work of your salvation, and the great danger of miscarrying in it, you could not be so indifferent about it, nor could you flatter yourselves such languid endeavors will ever succeed. It is a labor, a striving, a race, a warfare; so it is called in the sacred writings: but would there be any propriety in these expressions, if it were a course of sloth and inactivity? Consider, you have strong lusts to be subdued, a hard heart to be broken, a variety of graces, which you are entirely destitute of, to be implanted and cherished, and that in an unnatural soil, where they will not grow without careful cultivation, and that you have many temptations to be encountered and resisted. In short, you must be made new men, quite other creatures than you now are. And oh! Can this work be successfully performed while you make such faint and feeble efforts? Indeed God is the Agent, and all your best endeavors can never effect the blessed revolution without him. But his assistance is not to be expected in the neglect, or careless use of means, nor is it intended to encourage idleness, but activity and labor: and when he comes to work, he will soon inflame your hearts, and put an end to your lukewarmness. Again, your dangers are also great and numerous; you are in danger from presumption and from despondency; from coldness, from lukewarmness, and from false fires and enthusiastic heats; in danger from self-righteousness, and from open wickedness, from your own corrupt hearts, from this ensnaring world, and from the temptations of the devil: you are in great danger of sleeping on in security, without ever being thoroughly awakened; or, if you should be awakened, you are in danger of resting short of vital religion; and in either of these cases you are undone forever. In a word, dangers crowd thick around you on every hand, from every quarter; dangers, into which thousands, millions of your fellow-men have fallen and

never recovered. Indeed, all things considered, it is very doubtful whether ever you will be saved, who are now lukewarm and secure: I do not mean that your success is uncertain if you be brought to use means with proper earnestness; but alas! It is awfully uncertain whether ever you will be brought to use them in this manner. And, O sirs! Can you continue secure and inactive when you have such difficulties to encounter with in a work of absolute necessity, and when you are surrounded with so many and so great dangers? Alas! Are you capable of such destructive madness? Oh that you knew the true state of the case! Such a knowledge would soon fire you with the greatest ardor, and make you all life and vigor in this important work.

2. Consider how earnest and active men are in other pursuits. Should we form a judgment of the faculties of human nature by the conduct of the generality in religion, we should be apt to conclude that men are mere snails, and that they have no active powers belonging to them. But view them about other affairs, and you find they are all life, fire, and hurry. What labor and toil! What schemes and contrivances! What solicitude about success! What fears of disappointment! Hands, heads, hearts, all busy. And all this to procure those enjoyments which at best they cannot long retain, and which the next hour may tear from them. To acquire a name or a diadem, to obtain riches or honors, what hardships are undergone! What dangers dared! What rivers of blood shed! How many millions of lives have been lost! And how many more endangered! In short the world is all alive, all in motion with business. On sea and land, at home and abroad, you will find men eagerly pursuing some temporal good. They grow grey-headed, and die in the attempt without reaching their end; but this disappointment does not discourage the survivors and successors; still they will continue, or renew the endeavor. Now here men act like themselves; and they show they

are alive, and endowed with powers of great activity. And shall they be thus zealous and laborious in the pursuit of earthly vanities, and quite indifferent and sluggish in the infinitely more important concerns of eternity? What! Solicitous about a mortal body, but careless about an immortal soul! Eager in pursuit of joys of a few years, but careless and remiss in seeking an immortality of perfect happiness! Anxious to avoid poverty, shame, sickness, pain, and all the evils, real or imaginary, of the present life; but indifferent about a whole eternity of the most intolerable misery! Oh, the destructive folly, the daring wickedness of such a conduct! My brethren, is religion the only thing which demands the utmost exertion of all your powers, and alas! Is that the only thing in which you will be dull and inactive? Is everlasting happiness the only thing about which you will be remiss? Is eternal punishment the only misery which you are indifferent whether you escape or not? Is God the only good which you pursue with faint and lazy desires? How preposterous! How absurd is this! You can love the world, you can love a father, a child, or a friend; nay, you can love that abominable, hateful thing, sin: these you can love with ardor, serve with pleasure, pursue with eagerness, and with all your might; but the ever-blessed God, and the Lord Jesus, your best friend, you put off with a lukewarm heart and spiritless services. Oh inexpressibly monstrous! Lord, what is this that has befallen thine own offspring, that they are so disaffected towards thee? Blessed Jesus, what hast thou done that thou shouldst be treated thus? Oh sinners! What will be the consequence of such a conduct? Will that God take you into the bosom of his love? Will that Jesus save you by his blood, whom you make so light of? No, you may go and seek a heaven where you can find it; for God will give you none. Go, shift for yourselves, or look out for a Savior where you will; Jesus will have

nothing to do with you, except to take care to inflict proper punishment upon you if you retain this lukewarm temper towards him. Hence, by way of improvement, learn,

1. The vanity and wickedness of a lukewarm religion. Though you should profess the best religion that ever came from heaven, it will not save you; nay, it will condemn you with peculiar aggravations if you are lukewarm in it. This spirit of indifferency diffused through it, turns it all into deadly poison. Your religious duties are all abominable to God while the vigor of your spirits is not exerted in them. Your prayers are insults, and he will answer them as such by terrible things in righteousness. And do any of you hope to be saved by such a religion? I tell you from the God of truth, it will be so far from saving you, that it will certainly ruin you forever: continue as you are to the last, and you will be as certainly damned to all eternity, as Judas, or Beelzebub, or any ghost in hell. But alas!

2. How common, how fashionable is this lukewarm religion! This is the prevailing, epidemical sin of our age and country; and it is well if it has not the same fatal effect upon us it had upon Laodicea; Laodicea lost its liberty, its religion, and its all. Therefore let Virginia hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. We have thousands of Christians, such as they are; as many Christians as white men; but alas! They are generally of the Laodicean stamp; they are neither cold nor hot. But it is our first concern to know how it is with ourselves; therefore let this inquiry go round this congregation; are you not such lukewarm Christians? Is there any fire and life in your devotions? Or are not all your active powers engrossed by other pursuits? Impartially make the inquiry, for infinitely more depends upon it than upon your temporal life.

3. If you have hitherto been possessed with this Laodicean spirit, I beseech you indulge it no longer. You have seen that it mars all your religion, and will end in your eternal ruin: and I hope you are not so hardened as to be proof against the energy of this consideration. Why halt you so long between two opinions? I would you were cold or hot. Either make thorough work of religion, or do not pretend to it. Why should you profess a religion which is but an insipid indifferency with you? Such a religion is good for nothing. Therefore awake, arise, exert yourselves. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; strive earnestly, or you are shut out for ever. Infuse heart and spirit into your religion. Whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. Now, this moment, while my voice sounds in your ears, now begin the vigorous enterprise. Now collect all the vigor of your souls and breathe it out in such a prayer as this, “Lord, fire this heart with thy love.” Prayer is a proper introduction: for let me remind you of what I should never forget, that God is the only Author of this sacred fire; it is only he that can quicken you; therefore, ye poor careless creatures, fly to him in an agony of importunity, and never desist, never grow weary till you

4. And lastly: Let the best of us lament our lukewarmness, and earnestly seek more fervor of spirit. Some of you have a little life; you enjoy some warm and vigorous moments; and oh! They are divinely sweet. But reflect how soon your spirits flag, your devotion cools, and your zeal languishes. Think of this, and be humble: think of this, and apply for more life. You know where to apply. Christ is your life: therefore cry to him for the communication of it. “Lord Jesus! A little more life, a little more vital heat to a languishing soul.” Take this method, and “you shall run and not be weary; you shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31.

# *SERM. XVI. THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT THE JOY OF OUR WORLD.*

**P**salms 97:1.— *The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.*

Wise and good rulers are justly accounted an extensive blessing to their subjects. In a government where wisdom sits at the helm; and justice, tempered with clemency, holds the balance of retribution, liberty and property are secured, encroaching ambition is checked, helpless innocence is protected, and universal order is established, and consequently peace and happiness diffuse their streams through the land. In such a situation every heart must rejoice, every countenance look cheerful, and every bosom glow with gratitude to the happy instruments of such extended beneficence.

But, on the other hand, “Wo to thee, oh land, when thy king is a child,” Eccles. 10:16; weak, injudicious, humorsome, and peevish. This is the denunciation of Solomon, a sage philosopher, and an opulent king, whose station, capacity, and inclination, conspired to give him the deepest skill in politics: and this denunciation has been accomplished in every age. Empires have fallen, liberty has been fettered, property has been invaded, the lives of

men have been arbitrarily taken away, and misery and desolation have broken in like a flood, when the government has been entrusted in the hands of tyranny, of luxury, or rashness; and the advantages of climate and soil, and all others which nature could bestow, have not been able to make the subjects happy under the baleful influence of such an administration.

It has frequently been the unhappy fate of nations to be enslaved to such rulers; but such is the unavoidable imperfection of all human governments, that when, like our own, they are managed by the best hands, they are attended with many calamities, and cannot answer several valuable ends; and from both these considerations we may infer the necessity of a divine government over the whole universe and particularly over the earth, in which we are more especially concerned. Without this supreme universal Monarch, the affairs of this world would fall into confusion; and the concerns of the next could not be managed at all. The capacities of the wisest of men are scanty, and not equal to all the purposes of government; and hence many affairs of importance will be unavoidably misconducted; and dangerous plots and aggravated crimes may be undiscovered for want of knowledge, or pass unpunished for want of power. A wise and good ruler may be diffusing among his subjects all that happiness which can result from the imperfect administration of mortals, but he may be tumbled from his throne, and his government thrown into the greatest disorder by a more powerful invader; so that the best ruler could not make his subjects lastingly happy, unless he were universal monarch of the globe (a province too great for any mortal) and above the reach of the ambitious power of others. Further, human dominion cannot extend to the souls and consciences of men: civil rulers can neither know nor govern them; and yet these must be governed and brought into subjection to the eternal laws of reason,



otherwise tranquility cannot subsist on earth; and especially the great purposes of religion, which regard a future state, cannot be answered.

Men are placed here to be formed by a proper education for another world, for another class, and other employments; but civil rulers cannot form them for these important ends, and therefore they must be under the government of one who has access to their spirits, and can manage them as he pleases.

Deeply impressed with these and other considerations, which shall be presently mentioned, the Psalmist is transported into this reflection, “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”

The Psalmist seems to have the mediatorial empire of grace erected by Immanuel more immediately in view; and this indeed deserves our special notice; but no doubt he included the divine government in general, which is a just ground of universal joy; and in this latitude I shall consider the text.

Persons in a transport are apt to speak abruptly, and omit the particles of connection and inference usual in calm reasoning. Thus the Psalmist cries out, “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof!” but if we reduce the passage into an argumentative form, it will stand thus, “The Lord reigneth; therefore let the earth rejoice; and let the multitude of isles be glad upon this account.”

The earth may here signify by an usual metonymy, the rational inhabitants of the earth, who are especially concerned in the divine government; or, by a beautiful poetical prosopopoeia, it may signify the inanimate globe of the earth, and then it intimates that the divine government is so important a blessing, that even the inanimate and senseless creation would rejoice in it, were it capable of such passions. The isles may likewise be taken

figuratively for their inhabitants, particularly the Gentiles, who resided in them; or literally for tracts of land surrounded with water.

My present design is,

To illustrate this glorious truth, that Jehovah's supreme government is a just cause of universal joy.

For that end I shall consider the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial; and show that in each of these views the divine government is matter of universal joy.

I. The Lord reigneth upon a throne of legislation. “Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”

He is the one supreme Lawgiver, James 4:12, and is perfectly qualified for that important trust. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil society than to have good laws established, according to which mankind are to conduct themselves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the supreme and universal king has enacted and published the best laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular.

Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us, and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind. Human reason, or the light of nature, gives us some intimations of the duties of morality, even in our degenerate state, and for this information we should bless God; but alas! These discoveries are very imperfect, and we need supernatural revelation to make known to us the way of life. Accordingly, the Lord has favored us with the sacred oracles as a supplement to the feeble light of nature; and in them we are fully “taught what is good, and what the law requireth of us.” And what cause of joy is this! How painful are the anxieties that attend uncertainty about matters of

duty! How distressing a doubtful, fluctuating mind, in an affair of such tremendous importance! This, no doubt, some of you that are conscientious have had the experience of, in particular cases, when you were at a loss to apply to them the general directions in sacred Scripture.

Again, “let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad,” that these laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions. The sanctions are such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. The rewards of obedience in the divine legislation are not such toys as posts of honor and profit, crowns and empires, which are the highest rewards that civil rulers can promise or bestow; but rational peace and serenity of mind, undaunted bravery under the frowns of adversity, a cheerful confidence in the divine guardianship under all the calamities of life, and in the future world an entire exemption from all sorrow and from sin, the fruitful source of all our afflictions; the possession of every good, the enjoyment of the divine presence, of the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; in short, the fruition of a happiness above our present wishes, and equal to our then mature faculties, and all this forever: these are the rewards of evangelical obedience, not indeed for its own sake, but upon account of the righteousness of the blessed Jesus; and if these fail to allure men to obedience, what can prevail? And how happy is it to live under a government, where virtue and religion, which in their own nature tend to our happiness, are enforced with such resistless arguments! On the other hand, the penalty annexed by the divine Lawgiver to disobedience is proportionably dreadful. To pine and languish under the secret curse of angry Heaven, which, like a contagious poison, diffuses itself through all

the enjoyments of the wicked, Mal. 2:2; to sweat under the agonies of a guilty conscience in this world, and in the future world to be banished from the beatific presence of God and all the joys of heaven; to feel the anguish and remorse of guilty reflections; to burn in unquenchable fire; to consume a miserable eternity in the horrid society of malignant ghosts; and all this without the least rational expectation, nay, without so much as a deluded hope of deliverance, or the mitigation of torture, through the revolutions of endless ages, all this is a faint representation of the penalty annexed to disobedience; and it is a penalty worthy a God to inflict, and equal to the infinite malignity of sin. And “let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad,” on account not only of the promissory sanction of the law, but also of this tremendous penalty; for it flows not only from justice, but from goodness, as well as its promise. The penalty is not annexed to the law, nor will it be executed from a malignant pleasure in the misery of the creature, but it is annexed from a regard to the happiness of mankind, and will be executed upon individuals for the extensive good of the whole as well as for the honorable display of the divine purity and justice. A penalty is primarily intended to deter men from disobedience. Now disobedience tends in its own nature to make us miserable; it renders it impossible, in the nature of things, that we should be happy in the enjoyment of God and the employments of heaven, which are eternally and immutably contrary to sinful dispositions; and it fills us with those malignant and unruly passions which cannot but make us uneasy. Hence it follows, that, since the penalty tends to deter us from sin, and since sin naturally tends to make us miserable, therefore the penalty is a kind of gracious enclosure round the pit of misery, to keep us from falling into it: it is a friendly admonition not to drink poison; it is, in a word, a kind restraint upon us in our career to ruin;

and indeed it is a blessing we could not spare; for we find, that, notwithstanding the terror of the threatening, men will run on in sin; and with how much more horrid alacrity and infernal zeal would they continue their course, if there were no divine threatening to check and withhold them? The earth may also rejoice for the execution of the penalty of the divine law against sin; for the conspicuous punishment of the disobedient may serve as a loud warning to all rational beings that now exist, or that may hereafter be created, not to offend against God; and thus it may be the means of preserving them in obedience, and so promote the general good; and it may be that the number of those that shall be punished of the human and angelic natures, when compared to the number of reasonable beings that shall be confirmed in holiness and happiness by observing their doom, may bear no more proportion than the number of criminals executed in a government as public example does to all the subjects of it; and consequently such punishment may be vindicated on the same principles.

Farther, Justice is an amiable attribute in itself, and it appears so to all rational beings but criminals, whose interest it is, that it should not be displayed; and therefore the infliction of just punishment should be matter of general joy, since it is amiable in itself. So it is in human governments; while we are innocent, we approve of the conduct of our magistrates in inflicting capital punishment upon notorious malefactors, though the malefactors themselves view it with horror. But to proceed:

“Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad,” that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Human laws can only smooth our external conduct at best, but the heart in the meantime may be disloyal and wicked. Now this defect is supplied by the laws of the King of heaven, which are spiritual. They

require a complete uniformity and self-consistency in us, that heart and life may agree: and therefore they are wisely framed to make us entirely good. They have also an inimitable power upon the consciences of men. Should all the world acquit us, yet we cannot acquit ourselves when we violate them. The consciousness of a crime has made many a hardy offender sweat and agonize with remorse, though no human eye could witness to his offence. Now what cause of joy is it that these laws are quick and powerful, and that they are attended with almighty energy, which in some measure intimidates and restrains the most audacious, and inspires the conscientious with a pious fear of offending!

II. The Lord reigneth by his Providence. “Let the earth therefore rejoice; and the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”

The Providence of God is well described in our shorter Catechism: “It is his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.” To particularize all the instances of providential government which may be matter of joy to the earth would be endless, therefore I shall only mention the following:

Let the earth rejoice; and the multitude of isles be glad, that the Lord reigneth over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his sovereign and wise pleasure. We sometimes hear of wars, and rumors of wars, of thrones tottering, and kingdoms falling, of the nations tumultuously raging and dashing in angry conflict, like the waves of the boisterous ocean. In such a juncture we may say, “The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their waves. But the Lord reigneth, therefore the world shall be established that it cannot be moved.—The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” Psalm 93: Sometimes the

ambition of foreign power, or the encroachments of domestic tyranny, may threaten our liberties, and persecution may seem ready to discharge its artillery against the church of God, while every pious heart trembles for the ark, lest it should be carried into the land of its enemies. But the Lord reigneth! Let the earth, let the church rejoice! “the eternal God is her refuge, and underneath her are the everlasting arms.” Deut. 33:27. He will overrule the various revolutions of the world for her good; he will give kings for her ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for her; and the united powers of earth and hell shall not prevail against her. Though the frame of nature should be unhinged, we may find refuge in our God. Yet it must be owned, that the Lord for the chastisement of his people may suffer their enemies to break in upon them, and may cast them into the furnace of affliction. But let the earth rejoice, let the church be glad that the Lord reigneth over her most powerful enemies, and that they are but executing his will even when they have no regard to it, but are gratifying their own ambition. They are but a rod in the hand of a tender father, who corrects only to amend: and when he has used the rod for this gracious purpose, he will then lay it aside. In this language the Almighty speaks of the haughty Assyrian monarch who had pushed his conquest so far and wide. Isaiah 10:5,6,7. “Oh Assyrian, the rod of mine anger,” &c. “I will give him my commission, and send him against the Jews, my favorite people; because they are degenerated into a hypocritical nation, and he shall execute my orders.” “Howbeit, he meaneth not so;” it is far from his heart to obey my will in this expedition; but his only design is to aggrandize himself, “and to destroy and cut off nations not a few.” And when this instrument of the divine vengeance arrogates to himself the honor of his own successes, with what just insult and disdain does the King of kings speak of him! Ver. 12-15. “Shall the axe boast itself

against him that heweth therewith? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up,” &c. The design of God in these chastisements is to purge away the iniquity of his people; and this is all the fruit of them to take away their sin; and when this gracious design is answered, they shall be removed; “The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.” Psalm 125:3. Now what cause of universal joy is this, that one infinitely wise sits at the helm, and can steer the feeble vessel of his church through all the outrageous storms of this unfriendly climate and tempestuous ocean! He may seem at times to lie asleep, but in the article of extreme danger he will awake and still the winds and the sea with his sovereign mandate, Peace, be still. Men may form deep and politic schemes, and purpose their accomplishment in defiance of Heaven, “but God disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.” Job 5:12,13. This was exemplified in the cause of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 17:14. The hearts of men, yea of kings, “are in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth them whithersoever he will.” Prov. 21:1, (see also chap. 16:1,9, and 19:21.) And how joyful a thought this, that we are not at the arbitrary disposal of our fellow mortals, and that affairs are not managed according to their capricious pleasure, but that our God is in heaven, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth! Psalm 115:3.

Again, the church may be endangered by intestine divisions and offences. The professors of religion may stumble and fall, and so wound the hearts of the friends of Zion, and give matter of triumph and insult to its enemies. Some may apostatize, and return like the dog to his vomit. A general lukewarmness may diffuse itself through the church, and even those who



retain their integrity in the main may feel the contagion. Divisions and animosities may be inflamed, mutual love may be extinguished, and a spirit of discord succeed in its place. A most melancholy case this, and too much like our own: and our hearts sink at times beneath the burden. But the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad. He can reduce this confusion into order, and make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it: Psalm 76:10. It is the peculiarity of divine wisdom to educe good out of evil, and let us rejoice in it. God is supreme, and therefore can control all the wicked passions of the mind. He has the residue of the Spirit, and can rekindle the languishing flame of devotion. And oh let us apply to him with the most vigorous and unwearied importunity for so necessary a blessing!

Again, we are exposed to numberless accidental and unforeseen dangers, which we cannot prevent nor encounter. Sickness and death may proceed from a thousand unsuspected causes. Our friends, our estates, and, in short, all our earthly enjoyments, may be torn from us by a variety of accidents. We walk, as it were, in the dark, and may tread on remediless dangers ere we are aware. But the Lord reigneth: let the earth be glad! Contingent events are at his disposal, and necessity at his control. The smallest things are not beneath the notice of his providence, and the greatest are not above it. Diseases and misfortunes that seem to happen by chance, are commissioned by the Lord of all; and they that result evidently from natural causes are sent by his almighty will. He says to one, Go, and it goeth; and to another, Come, and it cometh; he orders the devastations that are made by the most outrageous elements. If flames lay our houses in ashes, they are kindled by his breath. If hurricanes sweep through our land, and carry desolation along with them, they perform his will, and can do nothing beyond it: his hand hurls the thunder, and directs it where to strike. An

arrow or a bullet shot at a venture in the heat of battle is carried to its mark by divine direction. How wretched a world would this be were it not under the wise management of divine Providence! If chance or blind fate were its rulers, what desolation would crowd upon us every moment! We should soon be crushed in the ruins of a fallen world. Every wind that blows might blast us with death, and fire and water would mingle in a blended chaos, and bury us in their destruction. But so extensive is the care of Providence, that even the sparrows may find safety in it; and we cannot lose so much as a hair of our heads without its permission: Matt. 10:29,30,31. And how much more then are our persons and our affairs of importance under its guardianship and direction!

Again we are in perpetual danger from the malignant agency of infernal spirits, who watch all opportunities to ruin the souls, bodies, and estates of men. These subtle spirits can inject ensnaring thoughts into our minds, and present such images to the fancy as may allure the soul to sin. This is repeatedly asserted in Scripture, and attested by the melancholy experience of multitudes in all ages. That they have power also in the material world to raise storms and tempests, and to ruin men's estates and inflict diseases on their bodies, is plain from the case of Job, and many in our Savior's time, and from Satan's being called the prince of the power of the air; and his associates spiritual wickedness in high places. And what horrid devastations would these powerful and malicious beings spread through the world if they were not under the control of divine Providence! They would perpetually haunt our minds with ensnaring or terrifying images; would meet us with temptations at every turn, and lead us willing captives to hell. They would also strip us entirely of all temporal enjoyments, torture our bodies with grievous pains, or molder them into dust with consuming and loathsome

diseases. But the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad. He keeps the infernal lions in chains, and restrains their rage. He sees all their subtle plots and machinations against his feeble sheep, and baffles them all. He will not suffer his people to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but with the temptation will also make a way to escape; 1 Cor. 10:13. And when he suffers them to be buffeted, his grace shall be sufficient for them, &c.: 2 Cor. 12:7,9. He hath also (as Satan himself confessed with regard to Job) made a hedge about us, about our houses, and about all that we have on every side; Job 1:10; and hence we live and enjoy the blessings of life. What cause of grateful joy is this! Who would not rather die than live in a world ungoverned by divine Providence? This earth would soon be turned into a hell, if the infernal armies were let loose upon it.

III. The Lord reigneth upon a throne of grace!

“Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”

It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which the Psalmist had more immediately in view; and this is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants. This is a kind of government peculiar to the human race; the upright angels do not need it, and the fallen angels are not favored with it. This is invested in the person of Immanuel, “who is made head over all things to his church,” Eph. 1:22; “to whom all power in heaven and earth is given,” Matt. 11:27, and 28:18. This is the kingdom described in such august language in Dan. 2. ver. 44,45, and 7:14. Luke 1:32,33. Hence that Jesus who was mocked with a crown of thorns, and condemned as a criminal at Pilate’s bar, wears on his vesture and on his thigh this majestic inscription, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev. 19:16. And behold I bring you glad tidings; this kingdom of God is come unto you, and you are called to become its subjects, and share

in its blessings. Wherever the gospel is preached, there Jehovah sits upon a mercy-seat in majesty tempered with condescending grace. From thence he invites rebels that had rejected his government to return to their allegiance, and passes an act of grace upon all that comply with the invitation. To his throne of grace he invites all to come, and offers them the richest blessings. From thence he publishes peace on earth, and good will towards men. From thence he offers pardon to all that will submit to his government, and renounce their sins, those weapons of rebellion. From thence he distributes the influences of his Spirit to subdue obstinate hearts into cheerful submission, to support his subjects under every burden, and furnish them with strength for the spiritual warfare. He subdues their rebellious corruptions, animates their languishing graces, and protects them from their spiritual enemies. He enacts laws for the regulation of his church, appoints ordinances for her edification, and qualifies ministers to dispense them. He hath ascended up on high; he hath received gifts for men; and these he hath distributed, and given “some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” Eph. 4:8,11,12. And it is by virtue of authority derived from him, that his ministers now officiate, and you receive his ordinances at their hands. Now how happy are we, that we live under the mediatorial administration! Under the empire of grace! —Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad upon this account. And let us pray that all nations may become the willing subjects of our gracious Sovereign. If this administration of grace had not yet been erected, in what a miserable situation should we have been! Guilty, miserable, and hopeless! Let us rejoice that the King of heaven, from whom we had revolted, has not suffered us to perish without

remedy in our unnatural rebellion, but holds out the scepter of his grace to us, that we may touch it and live.

IV. And lastly, the Lord will reign ere long upon a throne of universal judgment, conspicuous to the assembled universe. “Let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of isles be glad.”

Here I may borrow the inimitable language of the Psalmist, Ps. 96:10,13. “The Lord shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh! For he cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth.” This will indeed be a day of insupportable terror to his enemies, Rev. 6:15,16, but, on many accounts, it will prove a day of joy and triumph.

This day will unfold all the mysteries of divine Providence which are now unsearchable. There are many dispensations now for which we cannot account. Many blessings are bestowed, many calamities fall, and many events happen, of which mortals cannot see the reason. Prosperity is the lot of some who seem the peculiar objects of divine vengeance; and many groan under afflictions who seem more proper objects of providential beneficence. We are often led into ways the end of which we cannot see, and are bewildered in various perplexities about the designs of divine Providence towards us. Hence also impiety takes occasion to cavil at the ways of God as not equal, and to censure his government as weakly administered. But in that day all his ways will appear to be judgment. The clouds and darkness that now surround them will vanish, and the beams of wisdom, goodness, and justice, shall shine illustrious before the whole universe, and every creature shall join the plaudit, He hath done all things

well! Now we can at best but see a few links in the chain of providence, but then we shall see it all entire and complete; then the whole system will be exposed to view at once, which will discover the strange symmetry, connections, dependencies, and references of all the parts, without which we can no more judge of the excellency of the procedure than a rustic could tell the use of the several parts of a watch, if he saw them scattered in various places. Let the earth therefore be glad in expectation of this glorious discovery.

Again, let the earth rejoice that in that day the present unequal distributions of Providence will be forever adjusted, and regulated according to the strictest justice. This is not the place or season for retribution, and therefore we need not be surprised that the blessings and calamities of this life are not disposed according to men's real characters; but then every man shall be dealt with according to his works. Oppressed innocence will be redressed, and insolence forever mortified: calumny will be confuted, and flattery exposed: Lazarus shall be comforted, Dives tormented: impious kings shall be driven into the infernal pit, while pious beggars shall be advanced to the heights of happiness. In short, all matters will then be set right, and therefore let the earth rejoice.

Again, let the earth rejoice that in that day the righteous shall be completely delivered from all sin and sorrow, and advanced to the perfection of heavenly happiness. Then they shall enter upon the full fruition of that bliss, which is now the object of all their anxious hopes and earnest labors.

But we must change the scene into tragedy, and take a view of the trembling criminals hearing their dreadful doom, and sinking to hell with horrible anguish. And must the earth rejoice in this too? Yes, but with a

solemn tremendous joy. Even the condemnation and everlasting misery of these is right and just, is amiable and glorious; and God, angels and saints, will at the great day rejoice in it. The awful grandeur of justice will be illustrated in it; and this is matter of joy. The punishment of irreclaimable impenitents will be an effectual warning to all reasonable beings, and to all future creations, as has been observed; and by it they will be deterred from disobedience; and this is the cause of joy. These criminals will then be beyond repentance and reformation, and therefore it is impossible in the nature of things they should be happy; and why then should heaven be encumbered with them? Is it not cause of joy that they should be confined in prison who have made themselves unfit for society? In the present state sinners are objects of our compassion and sorrow, and the whole creation mourns for them. Rom. 8:22. But God will then rejoice in their ruin, and laugh at their calamity, Prov. 1:26; and all dutiful creatures will join in his joy.

Thus you see that the Lord reigneth. And who, poor feeble saints, who is this that sustains this universal government, and rules the whole creation according to his pleasure? It is your Father, your Savior, your Friend! It is he that entertains a tenderer regard for you than ever glowed in a human breast. And can you be so foolish as to regard the surmises of unbelief? Can you force yourselves to fear that he will ever leave or forsake you? Can you suspect that he will suffer you to fall a helpless prey to your enemies? No, your Lord reigneth, therefore rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say rejoice. While he keeps the throne of the universe, you shall be safe and happy. Your Father is greater than all, and none can pluck you out of his hands. Remember, he sits upon a throne of grace, therefore come to him with boldness. You may smile at calamity and confusion, and rejoice amid

the ruins of the world; you may borrow the language of David, Psalm 45.; or of Habakkuk, chap. 3. ver. 17,18. Remember also, that, as he is a king, he demands your cheerful obedience, and therefore make his service the business of your life.

And, unhappy sinners! Let me ask you, Who is this that reigns King of the universe? Why, it is he whom you have rejected from being King over you; it is he against whom you have rebelled, and who is therefore your just enemy. And are you able to make good your cause against him who has universal nature at his nod? How dreadful is your situation! That which may make the earth rejoice, may make you fear and tremble. The Lord reigneth, let sinners tremble. You must fall before him, if you will not cheerfully submit to his government. Let me therefore renew the usual neglected declaration, “He sits upon a throne of grace.” Let me once more in his name proclaim reconciliation! Reconciliation! In your ears, and invite you to return to your allegiance. Lay down your arms, forsake your sins! Hasten, hasten to him! The sword of his justice now hangs over your heads, while I am managing the treaty with you; and therefore delay not. Yield; yield, or die! Surrender, or perish! For you have no other alternative. Submit, and you may join the general joy at his government. You upon earth, and devils and damned ghosts in hell, are the only beings that are sorry for it; but upon your submission your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and you shall exult when the Lord of all comes to judge “the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.” Psalm 96:13.



# *SERM. XVII. THE NAME OF GOD PROCLAIMED BY HIMSELF.*

**E**xod. 33:18,19.— *And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.*  
*And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I*  
*will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.—*

WITH

Chap. 34:6,7.—*And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The*  
*Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant*  
*in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity*  
*and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.*

It is a very natural and proper inquiry for a creature, “Where is God my Maker?” And a heart that loves him must long to know more of him, and is ever ready to join with Moses in his petition, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory; or, “Reveal thyself to me.” That thou art, I infer from my own existence, and from thy numerous works all around me; and that thou art glorious, I learn from the display of thy perfections in thy vast creation, and in the government of the world thou hast made. But, alas! How small a portion of God is known in the earth! How faintly does thy glory shine in

the feeble eyes of mortals. My knowledge of things in the present state of flesh and blood depends in a great measure upon the senses; but God is a Spirit invisible to eyes of flesh, and imperceptible through the gross medium of sensation. How and when shall I know thee as thou art, thou great, thou dear unknown? In what a strange situation am I! I am surrounded with thy Omnipresence, yet I cannot perceive thee: thou art as near to me as I am to myself; “thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off;” thou penetratest my very essence, and knowest me altogether. Psalm 139:2, &c. But to me thou dwellest in impervious darkness, or which is the same, in light inaccessible. “Oh that I knew where I might find him! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.” Job 23:3,8,9. I see his perfections beaming upon me from all his works, and his providence ever-active, ruling the vast universe, and diffusing life, motion, and vigor through the whole: the virtue of his wisdom, power, and goodness,

*Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze;*

*Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;*

*Lives in all life, extends through all extent;*

*Spreads undivided, operates unspent;*

*Inspires our soul, informs our vital part.*—Pope.

But where is the great Agent himself? These are his works, and they are glorious: “in wisdom has he made them all,” but where is the divine Artificer? From these displays of his glory, which strike my senses, I derive some ideas of him; but oh! How faint and glimmering! How unlike to the all-perfect Archetype and Original! I have also heard of him by the hearing

of the ear; I read his own descriptions of himself in his word; I contemplate the representations he has given of himself in his ordinances; and these are truly glorious, but they are adapted to the dark and groveling minds of mortals in this obscure region, and fall infinitely short of the original glory. I can think of him; I can love him; I can converse and carry on a spiritual intercourse with him; I feel him working in my heart; I receive sensible communications of love and grace from him; I dwell at times with unknown delight in the contemplation of his glory, and am transported, with the survey: but, alas! I cannot fully know him; I cannot dive deep into this mystery of glory; my senses cannot perceive him; and my intellectual powers in the present state are not qualified to converse with spiritual objects, and form a full acquaintance with them. Oh! If it would please my God to show me his glory in its full luster I Oh that he would reveal himself to me so that my senses may assist my mind; if such a manner of revelation be possible!

Such thoughts as these may naturally rise in our minds; and probably some such thoughts possessed the mind of Moses, and were the occasion of his request, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.

These chapters, whence we have taken our subject of discourse, present us with transactions that must seem very strange and incredible to a mind that knows nothing of communion with the Father of spirits, and that is furnished only with modern ideas.

Here is, not an angel, but a man; not a creature only, but a sinner, a sinner once depraved as ourselves, in intimate audience with the Deity. Jehovah speaks to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. Moses uses his interest in favor of a rebellious people, and it was so great that he prevailed: nay, to show the force of his intercessions, and to give him an

encouragement to use them, God condescends to represent himself as restrained by this importunate petitioner, and unable to punish the ungrateful Israelites, while Moses pleaded for them. "Let me alone," says he, "that my wrath may wax hot against them, that I may consume them." Exod. 32:10. Moses urges petition upon petition; and he obtains blessing upon blessing, as though God could deny nothing to such a favorite. He first deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not immediately break out upon the Israelites, and cut them off, verses 11-14. When he has gained this point, he advances farther, and pleads that God would be their Conductor through the wilderness, as he had been till that time, and lead them into the promised land. In this article God seems to put him off, and to devolve the work of conducting them upon himself; but Moses, sensible that he was not equal to it, insists upon the request, and with a sacred dexterity urges the divine promises to enforce it. Jehovah at length appears, as it were, partly prevailed upon, and promises to send his angel before him as his guide. Chap, 32:34, and 33:2. But, alas! An angel cannot fill up his place; and Moses renews his petition to the Lord, and humbly tells him that he had rather stay, or even die where they were in the wilderness, than to go up to the promised land without him. If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence, chap, 33:15. "Alas! The company of an angel, and the possession of a land flowing with milk and honey, will not satisfy us without thyself." His prayers prevail for this blessing also, and Jehovah will not deny him anything. Oh the surprising prevalency of faith! Oh the efficacy of the fervent prayer of a righteous man!

And now, when his people are restored unto the divine favor, and God has engaged to go with them, has Moses anything more to ask? Yes, he found he had indeed great interest with God, and oh! He loved him, and longed,

and languished for a clearer knowledge of him; he found that after all his friendly interviews and conferences he knew but little of his glory; and now, thought he, it is proper time to put in a petition for this manifestation; who knows but it may be granted! Accordingly he prays with a mixture of filial boldness and trembling modesty, I beseech thee, show me thy glory; that is to say, “Now I am in converse with thee, I perceive thou art the most glorious of all beings; but it is but little of thy glory I as yet know. Oh! Is it possible for a guilty mortal to receive clearer discoveries of it? If so, I pray thee favor me with a more full and bright view.” This petition is also granted, and the Lord promises him, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.”

That you may the better understand this strange history, I would have you observe a few things.

1st. In the earliest ages of the world, it was a very common thing for God to assume some visible form, and in it to converse freely with his servants. Of this you frequently read in the history of the patriarchs, particularly of Adam, Abraham, Jacob, &c. It is also a tradition almost universally received in all ages, and among all nations, that God has sometimes appeared in a sensible form to mortals. You can hardly meet with one heathen writer but that you will find in him some traces of this tradition. Upon this, in particular, are founded the many extravagant stories of the poets concerning the appearances of their gods. Had there been no original truth in some appearances of the true God to men, there would have been no color for such fables; for they would have evidently appeared groundless and unnatural to every reader. This tradition therefore was no doubt originally derived from the appearances of the Deity, in a corporeal form, in early ages. Sometimes God assumed a human shape, and appeared as a

man. Thus he appeared to Abraham, in company with two angels, Gen. 18., and that good patriarch entertained them with food as travelers; yet one of them is repeatedly styled the Lord, or Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God; see verses 13,20,22,26, &c., and speaks in a language proper to him only, verses 14,21, &c. Sometimes he appeared as a visible brightness, or a body of light, or in some other sensible form of majesty and glory. Thus he was seen by Moses in the bush as a burning fire; thus he attended the Israelites through the wilderness, in the symbol of fire by night, and a cloud by day; and thus he often appeared in the tabernacle, and at the dedication of Solomon's temple, in some sensible form of glorious brightness, which the Jews called the Shechinah; and looked upon as a certain symbol of the divine presence.

2dly. You are to observe that God, who is a spirit, cannot be perceived by the senses; nor were these sensible forms intended to represent the divine essence, which is wholly immaterial. You can no more see God than you can see your own soul; and a bodily form can no more represent his nature than shape or colour can represent a thought or the affection of love. Yet,

3dly. It must be allowed that majestic and glorious emblems, or representations of God exhibited to the senses, may help to raise our ideas of him. When the senses and the imagination assist the power of pure understanding, its ideas are more lively and impressive: and though no sensible representations can bear any strict resemblance to the divine nature, yet they may strike our minds deeply, and fill them with images of grandeur and majesty. When I see a magnificent palace, it naturally tends to give me a great idea of the owner or builder. The retinue and pomp of kings, their glittering crowns, scepters, and other regalia, tend to inspire us with ideas of majesty. In like manner those sensible representations of Deity,

especially when attended with some rational descriptions of the divine nature, may help us to form higher conceptions of the glory of God; and the want of such representations may occasion less reverence and awe. For instance, had the description of the Deity, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, &c., been only suggested to the mind of Moses as an object of calm contemplation, it would not have struck him with such profound reverence, nor given him such clear or impressive ideas as when it was proclaimed with a loud majestic voice, and attended with a visible glory too bright for mortal eyes. Human nature is of such a make, that it cannot but be affected with things of this nature.

Consider the matter well in the light in which I have set it, and you may see something of the propriety and good tendency of these appearances, and at the same time guard yourselves against mistakes. Let me now give you what I apprehend the true history of this remarkable and illustrious appearance of God to Moses.

Moses had enjoyed frequent interviews with God, and seen many symbols of his presence and representations of his glory; but he still finds his knowledge of him very defective, and apprehends that God might give him some representation of his glory more striking and illustrious than any he had seen. Therefore, finding that now he was in great favor with him, he humbly moves this petition, I beseech thee show me thy glory; “give me some more full and majestic representations of thy glory than I have hitherto seen.” The Lord answers him, “I will cause all my goodness,” that is a glorious, visible representation of my goodness, which is, “my glory, to pass before thee,” which may strike thy senses, and make them the medium of conveying to thy mind more illustrious and majestic ideas of my glory. And as no sensible forms can fully represent the spiritual essence and

perfections of my nature, while I cause a visible representation of my glory to pass before thee, I will at the same time proclaim the name of the Lord, and describe some of the principal perfections that constitute my glory and goodness. But so bright will be the luster of that form which I shall assume, that thou art not able to see my face, or the most splendid part of the representation; the glory is too bright to be beheld by any mortal, ver. 20. But there is a place in a rock where thou mayest wait, and I will cast darkness over it till the brightest part of the form of glory in which I shall appear is passed by, and then I will open a medium of light, and thou shalt see my back parts; that is those parts of the representation which are less illustrious, and which pass by last: “the glory of these thou shalt be enable to bear, but my face shall not be seen.” ver. 2-23.

Thus God condescended to promise; and when matters were duly prepared, he performs his engagement. The Lord assumed a visible form of glory, and passed by before him and proclaimed his name, which includes his perfections. Things are known by their names, and God is known by his attributes, therefore his name includes his attributes. The proclamation ran in this august style, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” Moses was struck with reverence and admiration, and bowed and worshipped.

My present design is to explain the several names and perfections here ascribed to God, and show that they all concur to constitute his goodness. For you must observe this is the connection. Moses prays for a view of God’s glory. God promises him a view of his goodness, which intimates that his goodness is his glory; and when he describes his goodness, what is the description? It is “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-



suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.” That these attributes belong to his goodness we easily and naturally conceive; but what shall we think of his punitive justice, that awful and tremendous attribute, the object of terror and aversion to sinners? Is that a part of his goodness too? Yes, when God causes his goodness to pass before Moses, he proclaims as one part of it, that “he will by no means clear the guilty; and that he visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.” This awful attribute is an important part of his goodness, and without it he could not be good, amiable, or glorious.

I am now about to enter upon a subject the most sublime, august, and important, that can come within the compass of human or angelic minds, the name and perfections of the infinite and ever-glorious God. I attempt it with trembling and reverence, and I foresee I shall finish it with shame and confusion: for who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job 11:7. The question of Agur mortifies the pride of human knowledge; “What is his name, and what is his Son’s name, if thou canst tell?” Prov. 30:4. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” Psalm 139:6. “It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” Job 11:8,9. Lend me your skill, ye angels, who have seen his face without intermission from the first moment of your happy existence; or ye saints above, that “see him as he is, and know even as you are known,” inspire me with your exalted ideas, and teach me your celestial language, while I attempt to bring heaven down to earth, and reveal its glories to the eyes of mortals. In vain I ask; their knowledge is incommunicable to the inhabitants of flesh, and none but

immortals can learn the language of immortality. But why do I ask of them? Oh thou Father of angels and of men, who “canst perfect thy praise even out of the mouths of babes and suckling’s,” and who canst open all the avenues of knowledge, and pour thy glory upon created minds, do thou shine into my heart; to me give the light of the knowledge of thy glory; I beseech thee, show me thy glory: cause it to shine upon my understanding, while I try to display it to thy people, that they may behold, adore, and love.

As to you my brethren, I solicit your most solemn and reverential attention, while I would lead you into the knowledge of the Lord your maker. One would think a kind of filial curiosity would inspire you with eager desires to be acquainted with your divine Parent and original. You would not be willing to worship you know not what, or with the Athenians, adore an unknown God. Do you not long to know the greatest and best of beings, the glimmerings of whose glory shine upon you from heaven and earth? Would you not know him in whose presence you hope to dwell and be happy for ever and forever? Come then, be all awe and attention, while I proclaim to you his name and perfections, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.”

We may be sure God has assumed to himself such names as are best adapted to describe his nature, as far as mortal language can reach. And everything belonging to him is so dear and important, that his very name deserves a particular consideration. This is not to make empty criticisms upon an arbitrary unmeaning sound, but to derive useful knowledge from a word of the greatest emphasis and significance.

The first name in the order of the text, and in its own dignity, is, the Lord, or Jehovah; a name here twice repeated, to show its importance, the Lord

the Lord, or Jehovah, Jehovah. This is a name peculiar to God, and incommunicable to the most exalted creature. The Apostle tells us, There are gods many and, lords many. 1 Cor. 8:5. Magistrates in particular are so called, because their authority is some shadow of the divine authority. But the name Jehovah, which is rendered Lord in my text, and in all those places in the Bible, where it is written in capitals, I say, this name Jehovah is appropriated to the Supreme Being, and never applied to any other. He claims it to himself, as his peculiar glory. Thus in Psalm 83. ver. 18. “Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.” And in Isaiah 42. ver. 8. I am the Lord, or (as it is in the original) Jehovah; that is my name, my proper incommunicable name, and my glory will I not give to another; that is, I will not allow another to share with me in the glory of wearing this name. Thus also in Amos 4. ver. 13. “Lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, that declareth unto man what is in his thoughts, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name,” his distinguishing, appropriated name. There must therefore be something peculiarly sacred and significant in this name, since it is thus incommunicably appropriated to the only one God.

The Jews had such a prodigious veneration for this name as amounted to a superstitious excess. They call it “that name,” by way of distinction, “The great name, the glorious name, the appropriated name, the unutterable name, the expounded name,” because they never pronounced it, except in one instance, which I shall mention presently, but always expounded it by some other: thus when the name Jehovah occurred in the Old Testament, they always read it Adonai or Elohim, the usual and less sacred names, which we translate Lord God. It was never pronounced by the Jews in

reading, prayer, or the most solemn act of worship, much less in common conversation, except once a year, on the great day of atonement, and then only by the high priest in the sanctuary, in pronouncing the benediction: but at all other times, places, and occasions, and to all other persons, the pronunciation was deemed unlawful. The benediction was that which you read in Numbers 6. verses 24,25,26, where the name Jehovah is thrice repeated in the Hebrew, “Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” When this venerable name was pronounced upon this occasion, we are told by the Jewish rabbis, “that all the vast congregation then present bowed the knee, and fell down in the humblest prostration, crying out, Blessed be his glorious name for ever and ever” They supposed this name had a miraculous virtue in it, and that by it Moses and others wrought such wonders: nay, so great was their superstition that they thought it a kind of charm or magical word, and that he that had it about him, and knew its true pronounciation and virtue, could perform the most surprising things, and even shake heaven and earth.‘

I do not mention these things with approbation, but only to show that there is something peculiarly significant, important, und sacred in this name, from whence the Jews took occasion for such extravagant notions; and this will appear from its etymology. You know it is not my usual method to carry a great quantity of learned disquisition with me into the pulpit, or to spend your time in trifling, pedantic criticisms upon words, which may indeed have a show of literature, and amuse those who admire what they do not understand, but can answer no valuable end in a popular audience. However, at present I must take the liberty of showing you the original meaning of the name Jehovah, that I may thoroughly explain my

text, and that you may know the import of a name that will occur so often to you in reading your Bibles; for, as I told you, wherever you meet with the word Lord in large letters, it is always Jehovah in the original.

The name Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew verb, to be; and therefore the meaning of the word Jehovah is, The existent, the being, or, He that is. Thus it seems explained in Exodus 3. ver. 14. I am that I am, or, “I am because I am;” that is, I exist, and have being in and of myself without dependence upon any cause; and my existence or being is always the same, unchangeable and eternal. St. John well explains this name by the Who is, who was, and who is to come; or, as the passage might be rendered, “The present Being, the past Being, and the future Being;” or, The Being that is, the Being that was, and the Being that will be; that is, the perpetual, the eternal, and unchangeable Being. I shall only observe farther, that Jehovah is not a relative, but an absolute name: there is no pronoun or relative word that is ever joined with it; we can say, My Lord, our Lord, our God, &c., but the Hebrews never say or write, My Jehovah, our Jehovah, &c.; so that this name represents him as he is in himself, without any relation to his creatures, as he would have been if they had never existed. He would still have been the Being, the absolute, independent existent, in which view he has nothing to do with his creatures, and can sustain no relation to them.

From this name, thus explained, we learn the following glorious, incommunicable perfections of God; that he is self-existent and independent; that his being is necessary; that he is eternal; and that he is unchangeable.

While I am about to enter upon these subjects, I seem to stand upon the brink of an unbounded, fathomless ocean, and tremble to launch into it; but, under the conduct of Scripture and humble reason, let us make the

adventure; for it is a happiness to be lost and swallowed in such an ocean of perfection.

1. The name Jehovah implies that God is self-existent and independent. I do not mean by this that he produced himself, for that would be a direct contradiction, and suppose him to exist, and not to exist at the same time: but I mean that the reason and ground of his existence is in his own nature, and does not at all depend upon anything besides. Being is essential to him. He contains an infinite fulness of being in himself, and no other being has contributed in the least towards his existence; and hence with great propriety he assumes that strange name, I Am. He is Being throughout, perfectly and universally vital; and the reason of this is entirely within his own nature.

How gloriously is he distinguished in this respect from all other beings, even the most illustrious and powerful! Time was, when they were nothing. Angels and archangels, men and beasts, sun, moon, and stars; in short, the whole universe besides, were once nothing, had no being at all: and what was the reason that they ever came into being? Certainly it was not in them: when they were nothing there was no reason at all in them why they should ever be something: for in not being, there can be no reason or ground for being. The mere pleasure of God, the fiat of this self-existing Jehovah, is the only reason and sole cause of their existence. If it had not been for him, they would have continued nothing as they were: their being therefore is entirely precarious, dependent, and wholly proceeds from a cause without themselves. But Jehovah glories in an unborrowed, underived, independent being. Whatever he is, it is his own: he owes it only to himself. What a glorious Being is this! How infinitely different from and superior to the

whole system of creatures! Are you not already constrained to bow the knee before him, and wonder, adore, and love? But,

II. Hence it follows that his existence is necessary; that is, it is impossible for him not to be. His being does not depend upon anything without him, nor does it depend upon his own arbitrary will, but it is essential to his nature. That he should not be is as great an impossibility as that two and two should not make four. It is impossible that anything should be more closely connected with anything than being is with his essence, and it is impossible anything should be more opposite to anything than he is to non-existence. Since he received his being from nothing without himself, and since the reason of his existence is not derived from any other, it follows, that unless he exists by the necessity of his own nature, he must exist without any necessity: that is, without any reason at all, which is the same as to say that nothing is the cause or ground of his existence; and what imagination can be more absurd! His being therefore must exist by an absolute, independent necessity.

What a glorious Being is this! How infinitely distant from nothing, or a possibility of not being I What an unbounded fund of existence, what an immense ocean of Being is here! Alas! What are we, what is the whole universe besides in this comparison? They are nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Our Being is not only derived but arbitrary, depending entirely upon the mere pleasure of Jehovah. There was no necessity from our nature that we should be at all; and now there is no necessity that we should continue to be. If we exist, it is not owing to us. "He made us, and not we ourselves;" and if we shall continue to be forever, it is not owing to a fund of being within ourselves, but to the same God who first formed us. It is but lately since we sprung from nothing, and how near are we still to the

confines of nothing! We hang over the dreadful gulf of annihilation by a slender thread of being, sustained by the self-originated Jehovah. Remove him, take away his agency, and universal nature sinks into nothing at once. Take away the root, and the branches wither: dry up the fountain, and the streams cease. If any of you are such fools as to wish in your hearts there were no God, you imprecate annihilation upon the whole universe; you wish total destruction to yourself and everything else; you wish the extinction of all being. All depend upon God, the uncaused cause, the only necessary Being. Suffer me here to make a digression. Is this the God whom the daring sons of men so much forget, dishonor, and disobey? Are they so entirely dependent upon him, and yet careless how they behave towards him, careless whether they love and please him? Do they owe their being and their all entirely to him? And are they wholly in his hand? What then do they mean by withholding their thoughts and affections from him, breaking his laws and neglecting his gospel? Can you find a name for such a conduct? Would it not be entirely incredible did we not see it with our eyes all around us? Sinners, what mean you by this conduct? Let the infant rend the womb that conceived it, or tear the breasts that cherish it; go, poison or destroy the bread that should feed you; dry up the streams that should allay your thirst; stop the breath that keeps you in life: do these things, or do anything, but oh! Do not forget, disobey, and provoke the very Father of your being, to whom you owe it that you are not as much nothing now as you were ten thousand years ago, and on whom you depend, not only for this and that mercy, but for your very being, every moment of your existence, in time and eternity. He can do very well without you, but oh what are you without him! A stream without a fountain, a branch without a root, an effect without a cause, a mere blank, a nothing. He indeed is self-



sufficient and self-existent. It is nothing to him, as to his existence, whether creation exists or not. Let men and angels and every creature sink to nothing, from whence they came, his being is still secure: he enjoys an unprecarious being of his own, necessarily, unchangeably, and eternally existent. Men and angels bow the knee, fall prostrate and adore before this Being of beings. How mean are you in his presence! What poor, arbitrary, dependent, perishing creatures! What shadows of existence! What mere nothings! And is it not fit you should humbly acknowledge it? Can there be anything more unnatural, anything more foolish, anything more audaciously wicked, than to neglect or condemn such a Being, the Being of beings, the Being that includes all being? I can hardly bear up under the horror of the thought.

III. The name Jehovah implies that God is eternal that is, he always was, is, and ever will be. From everlasting to everlasting he is God. Psalm 90:2. This is his grand peculiarity, he only hath immortality, 1 Tim. 6:16, in a full and absolute sense. Men and angels indeed are immortal, but it is but a kind of half-eternity they enjoy. They once were nothing, and continued in that state through an eternal duration. But as Jehovah never will have an end, so he never had a beginning. This follows from his necessary self-existence. If the reason of his existence be in himself, then unless he always existed he never could exist, for nothing without himself could cause him to exist. And if he exists by absolute necessity, he must always exist, for absolute necessity is always the same, without any relation to time or place. Therefore he always was and ever will be.

And what a wonderful Being is this! A Being unbegun, and that can never have an end! A being possessed of a complete, entire eternity. Here, my brethren, let your thoughts take wing, and fly backward and forward, and

see if you can trace his existence. Fly back in thought about six thousand years, and all nature, as far as appears to us, was a mere blank; no heaven nor earth, no men nor angels. But still the great Eternal lived—lived alone, self-sufficient and self-happy. Fly forward in thought as far as the conflagration, and you will see “the heavens dissolving, and the earth and the things that are therein burnt up;” but still Jehovah lives unchangeable, and absolutely independent. Exert all the powers of numbers, add centuries to centuries, thousands to thousands, millions to millions; fly back, back, back, as far as thought can possibly carry you, still Jehovah exists: nay, you are even then as far from the first moment of his existence as you are now, or ever can be. Take the same prospect before you, and you will find the King eternal and immortal still the same: he is then no nearer an end than at the creation, or millions of ages before it.

What a glorious being is this! Here, again, let men and angels, and all the offspring of time, bow the knee and adore. Let them lose themselves in this ocean, and spend their eternity in ecstatic admiration and love of this eternal Jehovah.

Oh! What a glorious portion is he to his people! Your earthly enjoyments may pass away like a shadow; your friends die, yourselves must die, and heaven and earth may vanish like a dream, but your God lives! He lives forever, to give you a happiness equal to your immortal duration. Therefore, blessed, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.

But oh! Let sinners, let wicked men and devils tremble before him, for how dreadful an enemy is an eternal God! He lives forever to punish you. He lives forever to hate your sin, to resent your rebellion, and to display his justice; and while he lives you must be miserable. What a dismal situation are you in, when the eternal existence of Jehovah is an inexhaustible fund

of terror to you! Oh how have you inverted the order of things, when you have made it your interest that the Fountain of being should cease to be, and that with him yourselves and all other creatures should vanish into nothing! What a malignant thing is sin, that makes existence a curse, and universal annihilation a blessing! What a strange region is hell, where being, so sweet in itself, and the capacity of all enjoyments, is become the most intolerable burden, and every wish is an imprecation of universal annihilation! Sinners, you have now time to consider these miseries and avoid them, and will you be so senseless and fool-hardy as to rush headlong into them? Oh! If you were but sensible what will be the consequences of your conduct in a few years, you would not need persuasions to reform it: but oh, the fatal blindness and stupidity of mortals, who will not be convinced of these things till the conviction be too late!

IV. The name of Jehovah implies that God is unchangeable, or always the same. If he exists necessarily, he must always necessarily be what he is, and cannot be anything else. He is dependent upon none, and therefore he can be subject to no change from another; and he is infinitely perfect, and therefore cannot desire to change himself. So that he must be always the same through all duration, from eternity to eternity: the same, not only as to his being, but as to his perfections; the same in power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and happiness. Thus he represents himself in his word, as “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning:” James 1:17; “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;” Heb. 13:8. What a distinguished perfection is this! And indeed it is in Jehovah only that immutability can be a perfection. The most excellent creature is capable of progressive improvements, and seems intended for it; and to fix such a creature at first in an immutable state, would be to limit and restrain it from

higher degrees of perfection, and keep it always in a state of infancy. But Jehovah is absolutely, completely, and infinitely perfect, at the highest summit of all possible excellency, infinitely beyond any addition to his perfection, and absolutely incapable of improvement; and consequently, and as there is no room for, so there is no need of, a change in him; and his immutability is a perpetual, invariable continuance in the highest degree of excellency, and therefore the highest perfection. He is the cause and the spectator of an endless variety of changes in the universe, without the least change in himself. He sees worlds springing into being, existing awhile, and then dissolving. He sees kingdoms and empires forming, rising, and rushing headlong to ruin. He changes the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: Dan. 2:21; and he sees the fickleness and vicissitudes of mortals; he sees generations upon generations vanishing like successive shadows; he sees them now wise, now foolish; now in pursuit of one thing, now of another; now happy, now miserable, and in a thousand different forms. He sees the revolutions in nature, the successions of the seasons, and of night and day. These and a thousand other alterations he beholds, and they are all produced or permitted by his all-ruling providence; but all these make no change in him; his being, his perfections, his counsels, and his happiness, are invariably and eternally the same.

He is not wise, good, just, or happy, only at times, but he is equally, steadily, and immutably so through the whole of his infinite duration. Oh how unlike the fleeting offspring of time, and especially the changing race of man!

Since Jehovah is thus constant and unchangeable, how worthy is he to be chosen as our best friend! You that love him need fear no change in him. They are not small matters that will turn his heart from you: his love is

fixed with judgment, and he never will see reason to reverse it: it is not a transient fit of fondness, but it is deliberate, calm, and steady. You may safely trust your all in his hands, for he cannot deceive you; and whatever or whoever fail you, he will not. You live in a fickle, uncertain world; your best friends may prove treacherous or cool towards you; all your earthly comforts may wither and die around you; yea, heaven and earth may pass away; but your God is still the same. He has assured you of it with his own mouth, and pointed out to you the happy consequences of it: "I am the Lord;" Jehovah, says he, "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed:" Mal. 3:6.

What a complete happiness is this Jehovah to those who have chosen him for their portion! If an infinite God is now sufficient to satisfy your utmost desires, he will be so to all eternity. He is an ocean of communicative happiness that never ebbs or flows, and therefore completely blessed will you ever be who have an interest in him.

But oh! How miserable are they who are the enemies of this Jehovah! Sinners, he is unchangeable, and can never lay aside his resentments against sin, or abate in the least degree in his love of virtue and holiness. He will never recede from his purpose to punish impenitent rebels, nor lose his power to accomplish it. His hatred of all moral evil is not a transient passion, but a fixed, invariable, deep-rooted hatred. Therefore, if ever you be happy, there must be a change in you. As you are so opposite to him, there must be an alteration in the one or the other; you see it cannot be in him, and therefore it must be in you; and this you ought to labor for above all other things. Let us then have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire, (Heb. 12:28,29,) to his impenitent and implacable enemies.

## *SERM. XVIII. GOD IS LOVE.*

**1** John 4:8.— *God is love.*

Love is a gentle, pleasing theme, the noblest passion of the human breast, and the fairest ornament of the rational nature. Love is the cement of society, and the source of social happiness; and without it the great community of the rational universe would dissolve, and men and angels would turn savages, and roam apart in barbarous solitude. Love is the spring of every pleasure; for who could take pleasure in the possession of what he does not love! Love is the foundation of religion and morality; for what is more monstrous than religion without love to that God who is the object of it? Or who can perform social duties without feeling the endearments of those relations to which they belong? Love is the softener and polisher of human minds, and transforms barbarians into men; its pleasures are refined and delicate, and even its pains and anxieties have something in them soothing and pleasing. In a word, love is the brightest beam of divinity that has ever irradiated the creation; the nearest resemblance to the ever-blessed God; for God is love.

God is love. There is an unfathomable depth in this concise laconic sentence, which even the penetration of an angel's mind cannot reach; an ineffable excellence, which even celestial eloquence cannot fully represent. God is love; not only lovely and loving, but love itself; pure, unmixed love, nothing but love; love in his nature and in his operations; the object, source, and quintessence of all love.

My present design is to recommend the Deity to your affections under the amiable idea of love, and for that end to show that his other perfections are but various modifications of love.

I. Love comprehends the various forms of divine beneficence. Goodness, that extends its bounties to innumerable ranks of creatures, and diffuses happiness through the various regions of the universe, except that which is set apart for the dreadful, but salutary and benevolent purpose of confining and punishing incorrigible malefactors; grace, which so richly showers its blessings upon the undeserving, without past merit or the prospect of future compensation; mercy, that commiserates and relieves the miserable as well as the undeserving; patience and longsuffering, which so long tolerate insolent and provoking offenders; what is all this beneficence in all these its different forms towards different objects, what but love under various names? It is gracious, merciful, patient and longsuffering love; love variegated, overflowing, and unbounded; what but love was the Creator of such a world as this, so well accommodated, so richly furnished for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants? And what but love has planted it so thick with an endless variety of beings, all capable of receiving some stream of happiness from that immense fountain of it, the divine goodness? Is it not love that preserves such a huge unwieldy world as this in order and harmony from age to age, and supplies all its numerous inhabitants with

every good? And oh! Was it not love, free, rich, unmerited love, that provided a Savior for the guilty children of men? It was because God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16. Oh love, what hast thou done! What wonders hast thou wrought! It was thou, almighty love, that broughtest down the Lord of glory from his celestial throne, to die upon a cross an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. And what but love is it that peoples the heavenly world with colonies transplanted from this rebellious province of Jehovah's dominions; that forms such miracles of glory and happiness out of the dust, and the shattered, polluted fragments of human nature! And what but eternal love perpetuates their bliss through an eternal duration? But it is so evident, that these instances of divine goodness are only the effects of love, that it is needless to attempt any farther illustration.

II. What is divine wisdom but a modification of divine love, planning the best adapted schemes for communicating itself in the most advantageous, beneficent, and honorable manner, so as to promote the good of the great whole or collective system of creatures by the happiness of individuals; or to render the punishment and misery of individuals, which, for important reasons of state may be sometimes necessary in a good government, subservient to the same benevolent end? Whatever traces of divine wisdom we see in creation; as the order and harmony of the great system of nature, its rich and various furniture, and the conspiracy of all its parts to produce the good of each other and the whole; whatever divine wisdom appears in conducting the great scheme of providence through the various ages of time; or in the more astonishing and godlike work of redemption; in a word,



whatever displays of divine wisdom appear in any part of the universe, they are only the signatures of divine love.

Why was yonder sun fixed where he is, and enriched with such extensive vital influences, but because divine love saw it was best and most conducive to the good of the system; Why were our bodies so wonderfully and fearfully made, and all their parts so well fitted for action and enjoyment, but because divine love drew the plan, and stamped its own amiable image upon them? Why was the manifold wisdom of God displayed, not only to mortals, but also to angelic principalities and powers. Eph. 3:10, in the scheme of redemption, which advances at once the honors of the divine perfections and government, and the happiness of rebellious and ruined creatures, by an expedient which nothing but infinite wisdom could ever devise, the incarnation, the obedience, and passion of the co-equal Son of God? Why, I say, but because divine love would otherwise be under restraint, and incapable of giving full scope to its kind propensions in a manner honorable to itself and conducive to the public good? In short, divine wisdom appears to be nothing else but the sagacity of love, to discover ways and means to exercise itself to the greatest advantage; or, which is the same, divine wisdom always acts under the benign determination and conduct of love; it is the counsellor of love to project schemes subservient to its gracious purposes; and in all its councils love presides.

III. What is divine power but the omnipotence of love? Why did omnipotence exert itself in the production of this vast amazing world out of nothing? It was to open a channel in which the overflowing ocean of love might extend itself, and diffuse its streams from creature to creature, upwards as high as the most exalted archangel, and downwards as low as

the meanest vital particle of being, and extensive as the remotest limits of the universe, and all the innumerable intermediate ranks of existence in the endless chain of nature. And why does divine power still support this prodigious frame, but to keep the channel of love open from age to age? And for this purpose it will be exerted to all eternity. Perhaps I should assist your ideas of divine power, if I should call it the acting hand, the instrument, the servant of love, to perform its orders, and execute its gracious designs.

IV. What is the holiness of God but love—pure refined, and honorable love? What is it but the love of excellence, rectitude, and moral goodness? Holiness, in its own nature, has a tendency to promote the happiness of the universe; it is the health, the good constitution of a reasonable being; without which it has no capacity of relishing those enjoyments which are suitable to its nature. It is no arbitrary mandate of heaven that has established the inseparable connection between holiness and happiness, between vice and misery. The connection is as necessary, as immutable, and as much founded in the nature of things, as that between health of body and a capacity of animal enjoyments, or between sickness and a disrelish for the most agreeable food. Every creature in the universe, as far as he is holy, is happy; and as far as he is unholy, he is miserable. Therefore, by how much the more holy Jehovah is, by so much the more fit he is to communicate happiness to all that enjoy him; and consequently he is an infinite happiness, for he is infinitely holy. His taking so much care to promote holiness is but taking care of the public good. The strict exactions of his law, which contains every ingredient of the most perfect holiness, and admits of no dispensation, are but strict injunctions to his subjects to pursue that course which infallibly leads them to the most consummate happiness;

and every abatement in his demands of obedience would be a license to them to deduct so much from their happiness, and render themselves so far miserable with his consent. That mitigation of the rigor of his law, which some imagine he has made to bring it down to a level with the abilities of degenerate creatures, disabled by their voluntary wickedness, would no more contribute to their felicity than the allowing a sick man to gratify his vitiated taste by mixing a little deadly poison in his food would contribute to the recovery of his health, or the preservation of his life. The penal sanctions of the divine law are but friendly warnings against danger and misery, and honest admonitions of the destructive consequences of sin, according to the unchangeable nature of things; they are threatening's which discover no malignity or ill-nature, as sinners are apt to imagine, but the infinite benevolence of the heart of God; threatening's which are not primarily and unconditionally intended to be executed, but to prevent all occasion of their being executed, by preventing sin, the natural source, as well as the meritorious cause of every misery: threatening's which are not executed, but as the only expedient left in a desperate case, when all other means have been used in vain, and no other method can secure the public good, or render a worthless criminal a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, and fit for nothing else; of no other service to the great community of rational beings. These are some of the ingredients and displays of the holiness of God: and what are these but so many exertions of pure love and benevolence? It is because he loves his creatures so much that he requires them to be so holy: and that very thing, against which there are so many cavils and objections, as too severe and oppressive, and a rigid restraint from the pursuit of pleasure, is the highest instance of the love of God for them, and his regard for their happiness.

Let me therefore commence advocate for God with my fellow-men, though it strikes me with horror to think there should be any occasion for it. Ye children of the most tender Father, ye subjects of the most gracious and righteous Sovereign, ye beneficiaries of divine love, why do you harbor hard thoughts of him? Is it because his laws are so strict, and tolerate you in no guilty pleasure? This appointment is the kind restraint of love: the love of so good a being, will not allow him to dispense with your observance of anything that may contribute to your improvement and advantage, nor indulge you in anything that is in its own nature deadly and destructive, no more than a father will suffer a favorite child to play with a viper, or a good government permit a madman to run at large armed with weapons to destroy himself and others. Do you think hard of God because he hates all moral evil to such a degree, that he has annexed to it everlasting misery of the most exquisite kind? But what is this but an expression of his infinite hatred to everything that is hurtful to his creatures, and his infinite regard to whatever tends to their benefit? Or has he been too rigid in exacting holiness as a necessary pre-requisite to the happiness of heaven? You may as well complain of the constitution of nature, that renders abstinence from poison necessary to the preservation of health, or that does not allow you to quench your thirst in a fever with cold water. Let me remind you once more, that holiness is essential to the happiness of heaven, and that without it you labor under a moral incapacity of enjoyment; and a moral incapacity will as inevitably deprive you of the pleasures of enjoyment, as if it were natural. While unholy you can no more be happy even in the region of happiness than a stone can enjoy the pleasure of animal life, or a mere animal those of reason. “But why,” you will perhaps murmur and object, “why has God formed such a heaven as cannot be universally enjoyed?

Why has he not provided a happiness for every taste?" You may as well ask why he has not created a light that would be equally agreeable to every eye; to the mole and the owl, as well as to man and the eagle? Or why has he not formed light with all the properties of darkness; that is, why has he not performed contradictions? You may as well query, why has he not given us equal capacities of enjoyments in sickness and in health, and furnished us with equal pleasures in both? I tell you that, in the nature of things, the low and impure pleasures which would suit the depraved taste of the wicked, would be nauseous and painful to pure minds refined and sanctified; and they cannot mingle, they cannot approach each other without being destroyed. The element of water may as well be converted into a fit residence for the inhabitants of dry land, and yet retain all its properties that are suitable to its present natives; or the solid earth become a fit receptacle for fishes, and yet both it and the fishes retain their usual qualities. In short, men, beasts, birds, fishes, insects, angels, devils, the inhabitants of every zone and climate, of every planet, or any other region of the universe, may as well form one society in one and the same place, and mingle their respective food and pleasures, as a heaven of happiness be prepared that would suit every taste. God has prepared the only kind of heaven that is in its own nature possible; the only one that would be an expression of love, or afford real and extensive happiness to such of his creatures as are capable of it. The heaven of sinners would be a nuisance to all other beings in the universe; a private good only to malefactors, at the expense of the public; an open reward of wickedness, and a public discountenancing of all moral goodness. This would be the case upon the supposition that the heaven of sinners were possible. But the supposition is infinitely absurd; it is as

impossible as the pleasures of sickness, the sensibility of a stone, or the meridian splendors of midnight.

Therefore acknowledge, admire, and love the beauty of the Lord, his holiness. Give thanks, says the Psalmist, at the remembrance of his holiness, Ps. 97:12, of his holiness, as well as of his goodness and love; for it is the brightest modification of his love and goodness. An unholy being, in the character of supreme magistrate of the universe, cannot all be love, or communicate nothing but what is pleasing to all; nay, as far as he is unholy he must have a malignant disposition towards the public happiness, and be essentially deficient in benevolence.

V. What is the justice, even the punitive justice of God, but a modification of love and goodness!

As there is no divine perfection which appears so terrible to offenders as this, which therefore they toil and sweat to disprove or explain away, I shall dwell the longer upon it. And I hope to convince you that justice is not that grim, stern, tremendous attribute which is delineated by the guilty, partial imagination of sinners, who have made it their interest that there should be no such attribute to Deity, but that it is infinitely amiable and lovely, as well as awful and majestic; nay, that it is love and benevolence itself.

By the punitive justice of God, I mean that perfection of his nature which executes the sentence of his law upon offenders, or inflicts upon them the punishment he had threatened to disobedience, exactly according to his own denunciation. The present world, which is a state of trial and discipline, and not of final rewards and punishments, is not the proper theatre of vindictive justice, but of a promiscuous providence: All things come alike to all, and no man can know the love or hatred of the Ruler of the world to him, by all that is before him. Eccles. 9:1,2. Yet, sometimes, even in this life, justice

arrests the guilty, and displays its illustrious terrors upon them, especially upon guilty nations that have no existence in a national capacity in the eternal world, and therefore can be punished in that capacity in this only. It was vindictive justice that deluged the whole world in a flood of vengeance; that kindled the flames of Sodom and Gomorrah; and that cut off the nations of Canaan when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities. It is justice that arms kingdoms from age to age, and makes them the executioners of divine wrath upon one another, while they are gratifying their own ambition, avarice, or revenge. The devastations of earthquakes, inundations, plagues, epidemical sicknesses, famines, and the various calamities in which mankind have been involved, are so many displays of divine justice; and their being brought on the world according to the course of nature, and by means of secondary causes, will by no means prove that they are not so, but only that the very make and constitution of this world are so planned and formed by divine wisdom as to admit of the execution of justice at proper periods, and that all its parts are the instruments of justice to accomplish its designs. But these and all the other judgments of heaven upon our world are only preludes and specimens of the most perfect administration of it in a future state. There the penalty of the law will be executed upon impenitent offenders with the utmost impartiality. And Revelation assures us that the punishment will be endless in duration, and of as exquisite a kind and high degree as the utmost capacity of the subject will admit; and consequently that it will not, like fatherly chastisements, have any tendency to their reformation or advantage, but to their entire, and everlasting destruction. Now it is this display of punitive justice that appears so terrible and cruel to the guilty children of men; and therefore this

is what I shall principally endeavor to vindicate and to clothe with all the gentle and amiable glories of love and public benevolence.

For this end I beg you would consider, that whatever has a tendency to prevent sin tends to prevent misery also, and to promote the happiness of the world and of all the individuals in it; that good laws are absolutely necessary for the prevention of sin; that penal sanctions are essential to good laws; and that the execution of the penal sanctions upon offenders is absolutely necessary to their efficacy and good tendency; and consequently the execution of them is a display of love and benevolence.

Consider also, that many are excited to seek everlasting happiness, and deterred from the ways that lead down to destruction, by means of the threatening's of the law: that even those on whom they are finally executed were once in a capacity of receiving immortal advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency by their own willful obstinacy: and that the righteous execution of these threatening's upon the incorrigible, may promote the common good of the universe.

Consider farther, that criminals are incompetent judges of vindictive justice, because they are parties; and therefore we should not form an estimate of it by their prejudices, but from the judgment of the disinterested and impartial part of the creation.

Finally consider, that proceedings similar to those of the divine government, are not only approved of as just in all human governments, but also loved and admired as amiable and praiseworthy, and essential to the goodness and benevolence of a ruler.

Let us briefly illustrate these several classes of propositions.

I. "Whatever has a tendency to prevent sin, tends to prevent misery also, and to promote the happiness of the universe and of all the individuals in it:



good laws are absolutely necessary for the prevention of sin: penal sanctions are essential to good laws; and the seasonable execution of those sanctions is absolutely necessary to their efficacy and good tendency; and consequently the execution of them is a display of love and benevolence.”

“Whatever has a tendency to prevent sin, tends to prevent misery also,” and that for this reason, because sin is necessarily productive of misery, and destructive of happiness. Can a rational creature be happy that is disaffected to the Supreme Good, the only source of that kind of happiness which is adapted to a rational nature? This is as impossible as that you should enjoy animal pleasures while you abhor all animal enjoyments. Can a social creature be happy in eternal solitude, or in a state of society, while ill-affected towards the other members of society, or while they are ill-affected towards him and he to them, hateful, and hating one another? Can a creature, formed capable of felicity superior to what any good can communicate, be happy in the eager pursuit of bubbles; that is, of its highest happiness in inferior enjoyments? All those dispositions of heart, and the practices resulting from them, in which sin consists, enmity to God, uneasy murmurings and insurrections against his perfections, and the government of his law and providence; a churlish, malignant, envious temper towards mankind; an anxious, excessive eagerness of desire after vain, unsatisfactory enjoyments; a disrelish for the exalted pleasures of holiness and benevolence; what are these and the like dispositions, but so many ingredients of misery, and so many abatements of happiness? And consequently all measures that are taken for the prevention of sin are so many benevolent expedients for the prevention of misery and the increase of happiness.

I add, “good laws are absolutely necessary for the prevention of sin.” Indeed those dispositions and actions which are sinful and forbidden by the divine law would be of a deadly nature to the soul, even if they were not forbidden, as a stab to the heart would prove mortal to the body, although there were no laws against it, and for that very reason laws have been made against it. Therefore the laws of God do not properly constitute the destructive nature of sin, but only point out and warn us against what is destructive in its own nature previous to all explicit law. And is it not absolutely necessary, and an act of the highest benevolence, that the supreme Lawgiver should warn us against this pernicious evil, and plainly inform us what it is? This is the design of his laws both natural and revealed. And without them, what sure instructor, what unerring guide, or what strong inducements to a proper conduct could we have in this most important case? Is it not necessary, is it not kind, that the supreme Legislator should interpose his authority, and lay us under the strongest obligations to avoid our own ruin? And if good laws are necessary, so are penal sanctions; for “penal sanctions are essential to good laws.” Laws without penalties would be only the advices of an equal or an inferior, and not the obligatory commands of authority. They might be observed or not, according to pleasure, and consequently would answer no valuable purpose. They would also be infinitely absurd in their own nature; for if what the law enjoins be reasonable, necessary, and of good tendency, is it not necessary and fit that they who do not observe it should feel the bad effects of their omission? And what is this but a penalty? But on a point so plain I need not multiply words; I appeal to the common sense of mankind, I appeal to the universal practice of all governments. Have there ever been, or can there possibly be any laws without penal sanctions? Would not such laws be

exposed to perpetual insult and contempt, and be destitute of all force and energy? The common sense and universal practice of all the world, in all ages, remonstrate against such an absurdity. But if penal sanctions are essential to good laws, then so is their execution; for—

“The seasonable execution of penal sanctions is absolutely necessary to their efficacy and good tendency.” Penalties denounced can have no efficacy upon the subject of the law; that is, they cannot excite fear, and by that means deter them from disobedience, unless they are believed, and their execution expected. But they would soon cease to be believed, and their execution would no longer be expected, if in several instances they should be dispensed with, and a succession of sinners should pass with impunity. Other sinners, judging of future events by past facts, would expect the same indulgence, and therefore venture upon disobedience without any restraint from the penalty of the law. Here again I shall bring the matter to a quick decision, by appealing to the common reason and universal practice of mankind. Would human laws have any force if the penalty was hung up as an empty terror, and never executed? Would not such laws be liable to perpetual violation and insult, and become the sport of daring offenders? Would not the escapes of former offenders encourage all future generations to give themselves a-loose, in hopes of the same exemption? Is it not necessary in all government that public justice should make examples of some, to warn and deter others? Have not all nations, especially the more civilized, made such examples? And have not all the impartial world commended their proceeding as necessary to the safety and happiness of society, and expressive of their regard to the public good?

View all these things together, and methinks I may bid defiance to common sense to draw any other conclusion than that the justice of God, in

executing the penalties of his law upon impenitent offenders, is the height of goodness and love. If love requires that all proper expedients be used for the prevention of sin; if good laws are necessary for this end; if penalties are essential to good laws; and if the seasonable execution of penalties be absolutely necessary to give them their benevolent force and good tendency, does it not unavoidably follow, that love itself requires both the enacting of penal sanctions to the law of God, and the execution of them upon proper subjects? Without this wholesome severity, the divine laws would be less secure from contempt, and the divine government would be less favorable to the peace and happiness of the subjects than the laws and governments of mortals in all civilized nations.

“But why does the penalty rise so high? Why is the execution lengthened out through everlasting ages? Why might not a gentler punishment suffice?” This is the grand objection; and in such language as this the enmity of the rebellious heart against the justice of God generally expresses itself. But if the original design and natural tendency of the threatened penalty be to prevent sin, then by how much severer the penalty, by so much the more effectual tendency has it to answer this kind design. No punishment can rise higher than those which a righteous God has annexed to disobedience the natural source of every misery; and what is this but to say that no methods more effectual can be taken to prevent it than what he has actually taken? We may therefore infer the ardor of the love of God from the terror of his threatening’s. He has denounced the greatest misery against sin, in order to restrain his creatures from running into that very misery; and threatens the loss of heaven, in order to prevent his creatures from losing it.

I must also here repeat the common argument, which appears to me as valid as common; “that as the essence of sin consists in the breach of an

obligation, the evil of sin must be exactly proportioned to the strength of the obligation;” that as we are undoubtedly under infinite obligations to a God of infinite excellency, our Maker, Ruler, and Benefactor, the evil of sin, which violates those obligations, must be infinite also; and that no punishment short of what is infinite can be adequate to the demerit of an infinite evil, and consequently sinners ought to suffer a finite punishment through an infinite duration, because that is the only way in which they are able to bear an infinite punishment. But on this common topic a few hints may suffice.

I proceed to the next set of propositions.

II. “That many are excited to the pursuit of everlasting happiness, and deterred from the ways of destruction, by means of threatening’s of the divine law; that even those unhappy creatures on whom they are finally executed were once in a capacity of receiving immortal advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency by their own willful obstinacy: and that the righteous execution of these threatening’s upon the incorrigible may promote the common good of the universe.”

“Many are excited to the pursuit of everlasting happiness, and deterred from the ways of destruction, by means of the threatening’s of the divine law.” I appeal to experience and observation, whether the terrors of the Lord are not the very first thing that gives a check to sinners in their headlong career to ruin? It is the law that worketh wrath, Rom. 4:15; that is, an alarming apprehension of the wrath of God against sin; and constrains them to use the instituted means of deliverance. Thus even the terrors of the law are made subservient to divine love, in “turning sinners from the error of their way, and saving souls from death.” And could we consult the glorious assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, they would all own that if

their heavenly Father had not threatened them so severely, they would always have continued undutiful, and consequently rendered themselves miserable; and that they were saved from hell by being honestly warned of the danger of falling into it. It is true there are multitudes who do not receive this advantage by the penal sanctions of the divine law, but are made miserable for ever by the execution of them; yet it may be added,

“That even those unhappy creatures on whom they are executed, were once in a capacity of receiving infinite advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency in their own willful obstinacy.” The threatening’s of the divine law had the same good tendency in their own nature with respect to them, to deter them from disobedience, and urge their pursuit of happiness, as with respect to others; and these were some of the means of God appointed for their salvation. But they hardened themselves against them and thus defeated their good tendency, and obstinately ruined themselves in defiance of warning: they even forced a passage into the infernal pit through the strongest enclosures. But if they had not been thus warned, they not only would not have been saved in the event, but they would not have enjoyed the means of salvation. Now their enjoying these means was in itself an inexpressible blessing, though in the issue it only aggravates their misery; and consequently the enacting those penalties to the divine law was really an act of kindness even to them; and their abuse of the blessing does not alter its nature. The primary and direct end of a penalty is not the punishment of the subjects, hut to restrain them from things injurious to themselves, and others, and urge them to pursue their own interest. But when this good end is not answered, by reason of their willful folly and disobedience, then, and not till then, the execution is necessary for the good of others, which leads me to add,

“That the righteous execution of the threatened penalty upon the incorrigible may promote the common good of the universe.” This world of ours is a public theatre, surrounded with numerous spectators, who are interested in its affairs. Angels, in particular, are witnesses of the proceedings of Providence towards mankind and thence learn the perfections of God, and the maxims of his government. Hell is also a region dreadfully conspicuous to them; and there, no doubt, the offended Judge intends to show his wrath, and make his power known to them as well as to mankind. Now they are held in obedience by rational motives, and not by any mechanical compulsion. And among other motives of a gentler kind, no doubt this is one of no small weight; namely, their observing the destructive consequences of sin upon men and angels, and the terrible displeasure of God against it. It is not at all inconsistent with their dignity and purity to suppose them swayed by this motive in a proper connection with others of a more disinterested and generous nature. Therefore the confirmation of the elect angels in holiness, and their everlasting happiness is no doubt not a little secured and promoted by the execution of righteous punishment upon some notorious hardened malefactors, both of their own order and of the human race.

The same thing may be said of the spirits of just men made perfect; they are happily incapable of sinning, and consequently of becoming miserable; but their incapacity arises from the clear conviction of their understanding, which has the conduct of their will; and, while sin appears to them so deadly and destructive an evil, it is impossible, according to the make of a rational nature, that they should choose it. But the consequences of sin upon the wretched creatures on whom the penalty denounced against it is executed, is no doubt one thing that affords them this conviction; and so it

contributes to their perseverance in obedience and happiness. Thus the joys of heaven are secured by the pains of hell, and even the most noxious criminals, the enemies of God and his creatures, are not useless in the universe, but answer the terrible but benevolent end of warning all other creatures against disobedience; which would involve them in the same misery, just as the execution of a few malefactors in human governments is of extensive service to the rest of the subjects.

But as the greater part of mankind perish, it may be queried, “How is it consistent with love and goodness, that the majority should be punished and made monuments of justice, for the benefit of the smaller number?” To this I reply, that though it be equally evident from Scripture and observation, that the greater part of mankind go down to destruction in the smooth, broad descending road of sin, in the ordinary ages of the world; and though revelation assures us that the number of the apostate angels is very great, yet I think we have no reason to conclude that the greater part of the rational creation shall be miserable; nay, it is possible the number of those on whom the penalty of the divine law is inflicted, may bear no more proportion to that of the innumerable ranks of creatures that may be retained in obedience and happiness by means of their conspicuous and exemplary punishment, than the number of criminals executed in our government, for the warning of others, bears to the rest of the subjects. If we consider that those who have been redeemed from the earth, even in the ordinary ages of the world, though comparatively but few, yet absolutely are a “multitude which no man can number,” of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, Rev. 7:9, and that the elect angels are an innumerable company, Heb. 12:22, perhaps much greater than the legions of hell; if to those we add the prodigious numbers that shall be converted in



that long and blessed season when Satan shall be bound, when the prince of peace shall reign, and when “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High,” Dan. 7:27, in which not only the greater number of the generations that shall live in that glorious millennium shall be saved, but perhaps a greater number than all that perished in former generations, which is very possible, if we consider the long continuance of that time, and that the world will then be under the peculiar blessing of heaven, and consequently mankind will multiply faster, and not be diminished as they now are by the calamities of war, plagues, epidemical sicknesses, and the other judgments of God upon those times of rebellion; if we also borrow a little light from the hypothesis of philosophy, and suppose that the other planets of our system are peopled like our earth with proper inhabitants, and particularly with reasonable creatures, (for he that made those vast bodies made them not in vain, he made them to be inhabited;) if we further suppose that each of the innumerable fixed stars is a sun, the center of habitable worlds, and that all these worlds, like our own, swarm with life, and particularly with various classes of reasonable beings, (which is not at all unlikely, if we argue from parity of cases, from things well known to things less known, or from the immense ever-flowing goodness, wisdom and power of the great Creator, who can replenish the infinite voids of space with being, life, and reason, and with equal ease produce and support ten thousand worlds as ten thousand grains;) if we suppose that his creative perfections will not lie inactive for ever, contented with one exertion for six days but that he still employs and will employ them forever in causing new worlds, replenished with moral agents, to start into existence here and there in the endless vacancies of space; and finally, if we suppose that the flames

of hell will blaze dreadfully bright and conspicuous in the view of all present and future creations; or that the destructive nature of sin will be some way or another made known to the rational inhabitants of all worlds by the punishment inflicted upon a number of men and angels, and that by this means they are effectually deterred from sin, and preserved from the misery inseparable from it; I say, if we admit these suppositions, some of which are undoubtedly true, and the rest I think not improbable, then it will follow that the number of holy and happy creatures in the universe will be incomparably greater than that of miserable criminals, and that the punishment of the latter is one principal mean of preserving this infinite number in obedience and happiness; and consequently is highly conducive to the public happiness, and expressive of the love and goodness of the universal Ruler to the immense community of his subjects. And thus God is love, even in the most terrible displays of his vindictive justice.

To illustrate this subject, consider farther:

III. “That criminals are incompetent judges of vindictive justice.” They are parties, and it is their interest there should be no such attribute as justice in the Deity. It is natural for them to flatter themselves that their crimes are small; that their Judge will suffer them to escape with impunity, or with a gentle punishment, and that if he should do otherwise, he would be unmerciful, unjust, and cruel. The excess of self-love suggests to them a thousand excuses and extenuations of their guilt, and flatters them with a thousand favorable presumptions. An impenitent criminal is always an ungenerous, mean-spirited, selfish creature, and has nothing of that noble, disinterested self-denial and impartiality which would generously condemn himself and approve of that sentence by which he dies. A little acquaintance with the conduct of mankind will soon make us sensible of their partiality

and wrong judgments in matters where self is concerned; and particularly how unfit they are to form an estimate of justice when themselves are to stand as criminals at its bar. Now this is the case of all mankind in the affair now under consideration. They are criminals at the bar of divine justice; they are the parties to be tried; they are under the dominion of a selfish spirit; it is natural to them to palliate their own crimes, and to form flattering expectations from the clemency of their Judge. And are they fit persons to prescribe to their Judge how he should deal with him, or what measure of punishment he ought to inflict upon them? Sinners! Dare you usurp this high province! Dare you,

“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,  
Rejudge his justice, be the god of God!”

Rather stand at the bar, ye criminals! That is your place. Do not dare to ascend the throne; that is the place of your Judge. Stand silent, and await his righteous sentence, which is always just, always best; or, if creatures must judge of the justice of their Sovereign, I appeal to the saints; I appeal to angels, those competent disinterested judges; I appeal to every upright, impartial being in the universe. They approve, they celebrate, they admire, and love all the displays of punitive justice, as necessary to the public good; and their judgment may be depended on; it is not misled by ignorance nor perverted by self-interest. To whom would you appeal as judges of the proceedings of courts of justice among men? To malefactors in a dungeon, who have made justice their enemy, and who are therefore enemies to it? No; but you would appeal to obedient subjects, who are not obnoxious to justice themselves, but enjoy protection under its guardianship, and are sensible of its beauty and public utility. They all approve it with one voice, and would look upon a supreme Magistrate without it as a very

contemptible and odious character, and essentially deficient in goodness. Hence it follows that even the punitive justice of God not only is in reality, but to all impartial judges appears to be a most amiable, engaging, and beneficent perfection; majestic indeed, but not forbidding; awful, but not sullen and hateful; terrible, but only to criminals; and destructive only to what destroys the public good. I have so far anticipated myself that I need hardly add,

IV. “That proceedings similar to those of the divine government are not only approved of as just in all human governments, but also loved and admired as amiable and praise-worthy, and highly essential to the goodness and benevolence of a ruler.”

Does the supreme Lawgiver annex severe penalties to his laws, which render the disobedient miserable forever? So do human governments, with the unanimous approbation of their subjects; they inflict punishments that affect life, and cut off the offender from civil society forever; and this is the only kind of everlasting punishment that can be endured or executed by mortals. Does Jehovah maintain good order in his immense empire, protect his subjects, and deter them from offending by making examples of the guilty? And does he secure and advance the good of the whole by the conspicuous punishment of obnoxious individuals? This is done every day for the same ends in human governments, and that with universal approbation. Does he inflict punishments that are not at all intended for the reformation and advantage of the guilty sufferer, but only for the admonition and benefit of others? This is always the case in human governments when the punishments reaches to the life; for then the offender himself is put out of all capacity of reformation or personal advantage by it, but he suffers entirely for the good of others. Even criminals must be made

useful to society; and this is the only use they are fit to answer. Would it not be inexpedient and greatly injurious for a magistrate, in his public character, to forgive crimes and suffer criminals to escape, though to do so in a private character might be a virtue? Just so God, who is the supreme Magistrate of the universe, and not at all to be considered, in this case, as a private person acting only in a private character; the great God, I say, is obliged, by his regard for his own honor and the benefit of his subjects, to inflict proper punishments and distribute his pardoning mercy to individuals consistently with the general good of the whole. What would be revenge in a private person, which is the ruling passion of devils, is justice, honor, and benevolence itself in the supreme ruler of the world; and a failure in this would render him not only less glorious and majestic, but less amiable, less beneficent to his creatures.

I know hardly anything of so much importance to give us just sentiments of the proceedings of God, with his creatures, as that we should conceive of him as a moral Ruler, or the supreme Magistrate of the world. And it is owing to their not considering him in this character that sinners indulge such mistaken, dangerous presumptions concerning him. They choose to conceive of him under some fond and tender name, as a Being of infinite grace, the indulgent Father of his creature's, &c. All this is true; but it is equally true that he is their moral Ruler as well as their Father. His creatures are his subjects as well as his children: and he must act the wise and righteous Magistrate as well as the tender Father towards them. His goodness is that of a Ruler, and not of a private person; and his pardoning of sin and receiving offenders into favor, are not private kindnesses, but acts of government, and therefore they must be conducted with the utmost wisdom; for a wrong step in his infinite administration, which affects such

innumerable multitudes of subjects, would be an infinite evil, and might admit of no reparation.

Though I have thus enlarged upon this subject, yet I am far from exhausting my materials. But these things, I hope, are sufficient to convince your understandings that divine justice is not that unkind, cruel, and savage thing sinners are wont to imagine it; but that God is just, because God is love; and that he punishes, not because he is the enemy, but because he is the friend of his creatures, and because he loves the whole too well to let particular offenders do mischief with impunity.

I shall only add, that this is the view Jehovah has given of himself in the clearest manifestation of his perfections that he ever made to mortals. He promises his favorite Moses, that he would make all his goodness pass before him. Observe, it is his goodness he intends to exhibit; and the proclamation runs thus: “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity,” &c. That these are acts or modifications of goodness, will be easily granted. But observe, it is added even in this proclamation of his goodness, That he will by no means clear the guilty; intimating, that to be just and punish sin is an act of goodness, as well as to be merciful and to forgive it.

And now when we have this copious subject in review, does it not suggest to us such conclusions as these:

I. May we not conclude that the case of impenitent sinners is desperate indeed, when it is not excessive rigor, not a malignity of temper, nor tyranny, or a savage delight in torture that condemns them, but goodness itself, love itself? Even the gentler perfections of the Deity, those from which they derive their presumptuous hopes, are conspired against them, and unite their forces to render them miserable, in order to prevent greater

misery from spreading through the universe. Impenitent sinners! Even the unbounded love of God to his creatures is your enemy. Love, under the name and form of justice, which is equally love still, demands your execution; and to suffer you to escape would not only be an act of injustice, but an act of malignity and hostility against the whole system of rational beings. Therefore repent and be holy, otherwise divine love will not suffer you to be happy. God is love; therefore will he confine you in the infernal prison, as a regard to the public welfare in human governments shuts up criminals in a dungeon, and madmen in Bedlam.

II. May we not hence conclude that all the acts of the Deity may be resolved into the benevolent principle of love? God is love; therefore he made this vast universe, and planted it so thick with variegated life. God is love; therefore he still rules the world he has made, and inflicts chastisements and judgments upon it from every age. God is love; therefore he spared not his own Son, but made him the victim of his justice. God is love; therefore he requires perfect holiness, perfect obedience from all his subjects. God is love; therefore he has enacted such tremendous sanctions to his law, and executes them in their full extent upon offenders. God is love; therefore he has made the prison of hell, and there confines in chains of everlasting darkness those malevolent creatures, that would be a nuisance to society, and public mischiefs, if suffered to run at large. In short, whatever he does, he does it because he is love. How amiable a view of him is this! Therefore,

III. We may certainly conclude that if God be love, then all his creatures ought to love him. Love him, O all ye inhabitants of heaven! But they need not my exhortation; they know him, and therefore cannot but love him. Love him, all ye inhabitants of the planetary worlds! If such there be. These

also, I hope, need no exhortation, for we would willingly persuade ourselves that other territories of this immense empire have not rebelled against him as this earth has done. Love him, O ye children of men! To you I call: but oh! I fear I shall call in vain. To love him who is all love is the most hopeless proposal one can make to the world. But whatever others do, love the Lord, all ye his saints! You, I know, cannot resist the motion. Surely your love even now is all on fire. Love the Lord, O my soul! Amen.



# *SERM. XIX. THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.*

**J**ohn 5:28,29.— *The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

Ever since sin entered into the world, and death by sin, this earth has been a vast grave-yard, or burying-place, for her children. In every age, and in every country, that sentence has been executing, Dust thou art, and, unto dust thou shalt return. The earth has been arched with graves, the last lodgings of mortals, and the bottom of the ocean paved with the bones of men. Human nature was at first confined to one pair, but how soon and how wide did it spread! How inconceivably numerous are the sons of Adam! How many different nations on our globe contain many millions of men even in one generation! And how many generations have succeeded one another in the long run of near six thousand years! Let imagination call up this vast army: children that just light upon our globe, and then wing their flight into an unknown world; the gray-headed that have had a long journey

through life; the blooming youth and the middle-aged, let them pass in review before us from all countries and from all ages; and how vast and astonishing the multitude! If the posterity of one man (Abraham) by one son was, according to the divine promise, as the stars of heaven, or as the sand by the seashore, innumerable, what numbers can compute the multitudes that have sprung from all the patriarchs, the sons of Adam and Noah? But what is become of them all? Alas! They are turned into earth, their original element; they are all imprisoned in the grave, except the present generation, and we are dropping one after another in quick succession into that place appointed for all living. There has not been perhaps a moment of time for five thousand years, but what some one or other has sunk into the mansions of the dead; and in some fatal hours, by the sword of war or the devouring jaws of earthquakes, thousands have been cut off and swept away at once, and left in one huge promiscuous carnage. The greatest number of mankind beyond comparison are sleeping under ground. There lies beauty moldering into dust, rotting into stench and loathsomeness, and feeding the vilest worms. There lies the head that once wore a crown, as low and contemptible as the meanest beggar. There lie the mighty giants, the heroes and conquerors, the Samsons, the Ajaxes, the Alexanders, and the Caesars of the world! There they lie stupid, senseless, and inactive, and unable to drive off the worms that riot on their marrow, and make their houses in those sockets where the eyes sparkled with living luster. There lie the wise and the learned, as rotten, as helpless as the fool. There lie some that we once conversed with, some that were our friends, our companions; and there lie our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters.

And shall they lie there always? Shall this body, this curious workmanship of heaven, so wonderfully and fearfully made, always lie in ruins, and never be repaired? Shall the wide-extended valleys of dry bones never more live? This we know, that it is not a thing impossible, with God to raise the dead. He that could first form our bodies out of nothing, is certainly able to form them anew, and repair the wastes of time and death. But what is his declared will in this case? On this the matter turns; and this is fully revealed in my text. “The hour is coming, when all that are in the graves,” all that are dead, without exception, “shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth.”

And for what end shall they come forth? Oh! For very different purposes; “some to the resurrection of life; and some to the resurrection of damnation.”

And what is the ground of this vast distinction? Or what is the difference in character between those that shall receive so different a doom? It is this, “They that have done good shall rise to life, and they that have done evil to damnation.” It is this, and this only, that will then be the rule of distinction.

I would avoid all art in my method of handling this subject, and intend only to illustrate the several parts of the text. “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done well, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.”

I. They that are in the graves shall hear his voice. The voice of the Son of God here probably means the sound of the archangel’s trumpet, which is called his voice, because sounded by his orders and attended with his all-quickenings power. This all-wakening call to the tenants of the grave we frequently find foretold in Scripture. I shall refer you to two plain passages.

Behold, says St. Paul, I show you a mystery, an important and astonishing secret, we shall not all sleep; that is mankind will not all be sleeping in death when that day comes; there will be a generation then alive upon the earth; and though they cannot have a proper resurrection, yet they shall pass through a change equivalent to it. "We shall all be changed," says he, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound," it shall give the alarm; and no sooner is the awful clangor heard than all the living shall be transformed into immortals; and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; and we, who are then alive, shall be changed, 1 Cor. 15:51,52; this is all the difference, they shall be raised, and we shall be changed. This awful prelude of the trumpet is also mentioned in 1 Thess. 4:15,16. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep;" that is, we shall not be beforehand with them in meeting our descending Lord, "for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" that is, with a godlike trump, such as it becomes his majesty to sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: that is, before the living shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and when they are risen, and the living transformed, they shall ascend together to the place of judgment.

My brethren, realize the majesty and terror of this universal alarm. When the dead are sleeping in the silent grave; when the living are thoughtless and unapprehensive of the grand event, or intent on other pursuits; some of them asleep in the dead of night; some of them dissolved in sensual pleasures, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; some of them planning or executing schemes for riches or honors; some in the very act of sin; the generality stupid and careless about the concerns of eternity,

and the dreadful day just at hand; and a few here and there conversing with their God, and “looking for the glorious appearance of their Lord and Savior;” when the course of nature runs on uniform and regular as usual, and infidel scoffers are taking umbrage from thence to ask, “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” 2 Pet. 3:4. In short, when there are no more visible appearances of this approaching day, than of the destruction of Sodom on that fine clear morning in which Lot fled away; or of the deluge, when Noah entered into the ark; then in that hour of unapprehensive security, then suddenly shall the heavens open over the astonished world; then shall the all-alarming clangor break over their heads like a clap of thunder in a clear sky. Immediately the living turn their gazing eyes upon the amazing phenomenon; a few hear the long-expected sound with rapture, and lift up their heads with joy, assured that the day of their redemption is come, while the thoughtless world are struck with the wildest horror and consternation. In the same instant the sound reaches all the mansions of the dead, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they are raised, and the living are changed. This call will be as animating to all the sons of men, as that call to a single person, Lazarus, come forth. Oh what a surprise will this be to a thoughtless world! Should this alarm burst over our heads this moment, into what a terror would it strike many in this assembly! Such will be the terror, such the consternation, when it actually comes to pass. Sinners will be the same timorous, self-condemned creatures then, as they are now. And then they will not be able to stop their ears, who are deaf to all the gentler calls of the gospel now. Then the trump of God will constrain them to hear and fear, to whom the ministers of Christ now preach in vain. Then they must all hear, for,

II. My text tells you, all that are in the graves, all without exception, shall hear his voice. Now the voice of mercy calls, reason pleads, conscience warns, but multitudes will not hear. But this is a voice which shall, which must reach every one of the millions of mankind, and not one of them will be able to stop his ears. Infants and giants, kings and subjects, all ranks, all ages of mankind shall hear the call. The living shall start and be changed, and the dead rise at the sound. The dust that was once alive and formed a human body, whether it flies in the air, floats in ocean, or vegetates on earth, shall hear the new-creating fiat. Wherever the fragments of the human frame are scattered, this all-penetrating call shall reach and speak them into life. We may consider this voice as a summons not only to dead bodies to rise, but to the souls that once animated them, to appear and be reunited to them, whether in heaven or hell. To the grave, the call will be, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment; to heaven, ye spirits of just men made perfect; “descend to the world whence you originally came; and assume your new-formed bodies to hell,” “Come forth and appear, ye damned ghosts, ye prisoners of darkness, and be again united to the bodies in which you once sinned, that in them ye may now suffer.” Thus will this summons spread through every corner of the universe; and heaven, earth, and hell, and all their inhabitants, shall hear and obey. Devils, as well as sinners of our race, will tremble at the sound; for now they know they can plead no more as they once did, Torment us not before the time; for the time is come, and they must mingle with the prisoners at the bar. And now when all that are in the graves hear this all-quickenning voice,

III. They shall come forth. Now methinks I see, I hear the earth heaving, charnel-houses rattling, tombs bursting, graves opening. Now the nations underground begin to stir. There is a noise and a shaking among the dry

bones. The dust is all alive, and in motion, and the globe breaks and trembles, as with an earthquake, while this vast army is working its way through and bursting into life. The ruins of human bodies are scattered far and wide, and have passed through many and surprising transformations. A limb in one country, and another in another; here the head and there the trunk, and the ocean rolling between. Multitudes have sunk in a watery grave, been swallowed up by the monsters of the deep, and transformed into a part of their flesh. Multitudes have been eaten by beasts and birds of prey, and incorporated with them; and some have been devoured by their fellow-men in the rage of a desperate hunger, or of unnatural cannibal appetite, and digested into a part of them. Multitudes have moldered into dust, and this dust has been blown about by winds, and washed away with water, or it has petrified into stone, or been burnt into brick to form dwellings for their posterity; or it has grown up in grain, trees, plants, and other vegetables, which are the support of man and beast, and are transformed into their flesh and blood. But through all these various transformations and changes, not a particle that was essential to one human body has been lost, or incorporated with another human body, so as to become an essential part of it. And as to those particles that were not essential, they are not necessary to the identity of the body or of the person; and therefore we need not think they will be raised again. The omniscient God knows how to collect, distinguish, and compound all those scattered and mingled seeds of our mortal bodies. And now at the sound of the trumpet, they shall all be collected, wherever they were scattered; all properly sorted and united, however they were confused; atom to its fellow atom, bone to its fellow-bone. Now methinks you may see the air darkened with fragments of bodies flying from country to country, to meet and join their proper parts:

*“Scatter’d limbs, and all  
The various bones obsequious to the call,  
Self-mov’d, advance; the neck perhaps to meet  
The distant head, the distant legs, the feet.  
Dreadful to view, see through the dusky sky  
Fragments of bodies in confusion fly,  
To distant regions journeying, there to claim  
Deserted members, and complete the frame—  
The sever’d head and trunk shall join once more,  
Tho’ realms now rise between, and oceans roar;  
The trumpet’s sound each vagrant mote shall hear,  
Or fixed in earth, or if afloat in air,  
Obey the signal, wafted in the wind,  
And not one sleeping atom lag behind.”—  
All hear: and now, in fairer prospect shown,  
Limb clings to limb, and bone rejoins its bone.—*

Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be reanimated and organized; “and though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God.” Job 19:16.

And what a vast improvement will the frail nature of man then receive? Our bodies will then be substantially the same; but how different in qualities, in strength, in agility, in capacities for pleasure or pain, in beauty or deformity, in glory or terror, according to the moral character of the person to whom they belong? Matter, we know, is capable of prodigious alterations and refinements; and there it will appear in the highest perfection. The bodies of the saints will be formed glorious, incorruptible, without the seeds of sickness and death. The glorified body of Christ, which



is undoubtedly carried to the highest perfection that matter is capable of, will be the pattern after which they shall be formed. He will change our vile body, says St. Paul, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Phil. 3:21. "Flesh and blood," in their present state of grossness and frailty, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Cor. 15:50,53. And how vast the change, how high the improvement from this present state! "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power," verses 42,43, &c. Then will the body be able to bear up under the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory; it will no longer be a clog or an incumbrance to the soul, but a proper instrument and assistant in all the exalted services and enjoyments of the heavenly state.

The bodies of the wicked will also be improved, but their improvements will all be terrible and vindictive. Their capacities will be thoroughly enlarged, but then it will be that they may be made capable of greater misery: they will be strengthened, but it will be that they may bear the heavier load of torment. Their sensations will be more quick and strong, but it will be that they may feel the more exquisite pain. They will be raised immortal that they may not be consumed by everlasting fire, or escape punishment by dissolution or annihilation. In short, their augmented strength, their enlarged capacities, and their immortality, will be their eternal curse; and they would willingly exchange them for the fleeting duration of a fading flower, or the faint sensations of an infant. The only power they would rejoice in is that of self-annihilation.

And now when the bodies are completely formed and fit to be inhabited, the souls that once animated them, being collected from heaven and hell, re-enter and take possession of their old mansions. They are united in bonds which shall never more be dissolved: and the moldering tabernacles are now become everlasting habitations.

And with what joy will the spirits of the righteous welcome their old companions from their long sleep in the dust, and congratulate their glorious resurrection! How will they rejoice to re-enter their old habitations, now so completely repaired and highly improved! To find those bodies which were once their incumbrance, once frail and mortal, in which they were imprisoned, and languished, once their temptation, tainted with the seeds of sin, now their assistants and co-partners in the business of heaven, now vigorous, incorruptible, and immortal, now free from all corrupt mixtures, and shining in all the beauties of perfect holiness! In these bodies they once served their God with honest though feeble efforts, conflicted with sin and temptation, and passed through all the united trials and hardships of mortality and the Christian life. But now they are united to them for more exalted and blissful purposes. The lungs that were wont to heave with penitential sighs and groans, shall now shout forth their joys and the praises of their God and Savior. The heart that was once broken with sorrows shall now be bound up for ever, and overflow with immortal pleasures. Those very eyes that were wont to run down with tears, and to behold many a tragical sight, shall now behold the King in his beauty, shall behold the Savior whom, though unseen, they loved, and all the glories of heaven; and God shall wipe away all their tears. All the senses, which were once avenues of pain, shall now be inlets of the most exalted pleasure. In short, every organ, every member shall be employed in the most noble

services and enjoyments, instead of the sordid and laborious drudgery, and the painful sufferings of the present state. Blessed change indeed! Rejoice, ye children of God, in the prospect of it.

But how shall I glance a thought upon the dreadful case of the wicked in that tremendous day! While their bodies burst from their graves, the miserable spectacles of horror and deformity, see the millions of gloomy ghosts that once animated them, rise like pillars of smoke from the bottomless pit! And with what reluctance and anguish do they re-enter their old habitations! Oh what a dreadful meeting! What shocking salutations! “And must I be chained to thee again, (may the guilty soul say,) Oh thou accursed, polluted body, thou system of deformity and terror! In thee I once sinned, by thee I was once ensnared, debased, and ruined: to gratify thy vile lusts and appetites I neglected my own immortal interests, degraded my native dignity, and made myself miserable for ever. And hast thou now met me to torment me forever? Oh that thou hadst still slept in the dust, and never been repaired again! Let me rather be condemned to animate a toad or serpent than that odious body once defiled with sin, and the instrument of my guilty pleasures, now made strong and immortal to torment me with strong and immortal pains. Once indeed I received sensations of pleasure from thee, but now thou art transformed into an engine of torture; No more shall I through thine eyes behold the cheerful light of the day, and the beautiful prospects of nature, but the thick glooms of hell, grim and ghastly ghosts, heaven at an impassable distance, and all the horrid sights of wo in the infernal regions. No more shall thine ears charm me with the harmony of sounds, but terrify and distress me with the echo of eternal groans, and the thunder of almighty vengeance! No more shall the gratification of thine appetites afford me pleasure, but thine appetites, forever hungry, forever

unsatisfied, shall eternally torment me with their eager importunate cravings. No more shall thy tongue be employed in mirth, and jest, and song, but complain, and groan, and blaspheme, and roar forever. Thy feet, that once walked in the flowery enchanted paths of sin, must now walk on the dismal burning soil of hell. Oh my wretched companion! I parted with thee with pain and reluctance in the struggles of death, but now I meet thee with greater terror and agony. Return to thy bed in the dust; there to sleep and rot, and let me never see thy shocking visage more.” In vain the petition! The reluctant soul must enter its prison, from whence it shall never more be dismissed. And if we might indulge imagination so far, we might suppose the body begins to recriminate in such language as this: “Come, guilty soul, enter thy old mansion; if it be horrible and shocking, it is owing to thyself. Was not the animal frame, the brutal nature, subjected to thy government, who art a rational principle? Instead of being debased by me, it became thee to have not only retained the dignity of thy nature, but to have exalted mine, by nobler employments and gratifications worthy an earthly body united to an immortal spirit.

Thou mightest have restrained my members from being the instruments of sin, and made them the instruments of righteousness. My knees would have bowed at the throne of grace, but thou didst not affect that posture. Mine eyes would have read, and mine ears heard the word of life; but thou wouldest not set them to that employ, or wouldest not attend to it. And now it is but just the body thou didst prostitute to sin should be the instrument of thy punishment. Indeed, fain would I relapse into senseless earth as I was, and continue in that insensibility forever:—but didst thou not hear the all-rousing trumpet just now? Did it not even shake the foundations of thy infernal prison? It was that call that awakened me, and summoned me to

meet thee, and I could not resist it. Therefore, come, miserable soul, take possession of this frame, and let us prepare for everlasting burning. Oh that it were now possible to die! Oh that we could be again separated, and never be united more! Vain wish; the weight of mountains, the pangs of hell, the flames of unquenchable fire, can never dissolve these chains which now bind us together?”

O sirs! What a shocking interview is this! Oh the glorious, dreadful morning of the resurrection! What scenes of unknown joy and terror will then open! Methinks we must always have it in prospect; it must even now engage our thoughts, and fill us with trembling solicitude, and make it the great object of our labor and pursuit to share in the resurrection of the just.

But for what ends do these sleeping multitudes rise? For what purposes do they come forth? My text will tell you.

IV. They shall come forth, “some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation.” They are summoned from their graves to stand at the bar, and brought out of prison by angelic guards to pass their last trial. And as in this impartial trial they will be found to be persons of very different characters, the righteous Judge of the earth will accordingly pronounce their different doom.

See a glorious multitude, which none can number, openly acquitted, pronounced blessed, and welcomed “into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.” Now they enter upon a state which deserves the name of life. They are all vital, all active, all glorious, all happy. They “shine brighter than the stars in the firmament; like the sun for ever and ever.” All their faculties overflow with happiness. They mingle with the glorious company of angels; they behold that Savior whom unseen they loved; they dwell in eternal intimacy with the Father of their spirits;

they are employed with ever-new and growing delight in the exalted services of the heavenly sanctuary. They shall never more fear, nor feel the least touch of sorrow, pain, or any kind of misery, but shall be as happy as their natures can admit through an immortal duration. What a glorious new creation is here! What illustrious creatures formed of the dust! And shall any of us join in this happy company? Oh shall any of us, feeble, dying, sinful creatures, share in their glory and happiness? This is a most interesting inquiry, and I would have you think of it with trembling anxiety; and I shall presently answer it in its place.

The prospect would be delightful, if our charity could hope that this will be the happy end of all the sons of men. But, alas! Multitudes, and we have reason to fear the far greater number, shall come forth, not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of damnation! What terror is in the sound! If audacious sinners in our world make light of it, and pray for it on every trifling occasion, their infernal brethren, that feel its tremendous import, are not so hardy, but tremble and groan, and can trifle with it no more.

Let us realize the miserable doom of this class of mankind. See them bursting into life from their subterranean dungeons, hideous shapes of deformity and terror, expressive of the vindictive design for which their bodies are repaired, and of the boisterous and malignant passions that ravage their souls. Horror throbs through every vein, and glares wild and furious in their eyes. Every joint trembles, and every countenance looks downcast and gloomy. Now they see that tremendous day of which they were warned in vain, and shudder at those terrors of which they once made light. They immediately know the grand business of the day, and the dreadful purpose for which they are roused from their slumbers in the

grave; to be tried, to be convicted, to be condemned, and to be dragged away to execution. Conscience has been anticipating the trial in a separate state; and no sooner is the soul united to the body, than immediately conscience ascends its throne in the breast, and begins to accuse, to convict, to pass sentence, to upbraid, and to torment. The sinner is condemned, condemned at his own tribunal, before he arrives at the bar of his Judge. The first act of consciousness in his new state of existence is a conviction that he is condemned, an irrevocably condemned creature. He enters the court, knowing beforehand how it will go with him. When he finds himself ordered to the left hand of his Judge, when he hears the dreadful sentence thundered out against him, Depart from me, accursed, it was but what he expected. Now he can flatter himself with vain hopes, and shut his eyes against the light of conviction, but then he will not be able to hope better; then he must know the worst of his case. The formality of the judicial trial is necessary for the conviction of the world, but not for his; his own conscience has already determined his condition. However, to convince others of the justice of his doom, he is dragged and guarded from his grave to the judgment-seat by fierce, unrelenting devils, now his tempters, but then his tormentors. With what horror does he view the burning throne and the frowning face of his Judge, that Jesus whom he once disregarded, in spite of all his dying love and the salvation he offered! How does he wish for a covering of rocks and mountains to conceal him from his angry eye! But all in vain. Appear he must. He is ordered to the left among the trembling criminals; and now the trial comes on. All his evil deeds, and all his omissions of duty, are now produced against him. All the mercies he abused, all the chastisements he despised, all the means of grace he neglected or misimproved, every sinful, and even every idle word, nay, his

most secret thoughts and dispositions, are all exposed, and brought into judgment against him. And when the Judge puts it to him, “Is it not so, sinner? Are not these charges true?” conscience obliges him to confess and cry out, Guilty! Guilty! And now the trembling criminal being plainly convicted and left without all plea and all excuse, the supreme Judge, in stern majesty and inexorable justice, thunders out the dreadful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. 25:41. Oh tremendous doom! Every word is big with terror, and shoots a thunderbolt through the heart. “Depart: away from my presence; I cannot bear so loathsome a sight. I once invited thee to come to me, that thou mightest have life, but thou wouldst not regard the invitation; and now thou shalt never hear that inviting voice more. Depart from me; from me, the only Fountain of happiness, the only proper Good for an immortal mind.” “But, Lord,” (we may suppose the criminal to say,) “if I must depart, bless me before I go.” “No,” says the angry Judge, “depart accursed; depart with my eternal and heavy curse upon thee; the curse of that power that made thee; a curse dreadfully efficacious, that blasts whatever it falls upon like flashes of consuming, irresistible lightning.” “But if I must go away under thy curse, (the criminal may be supposed to say,) let that be all my punishment; let me depart to some agreeable, or at least tolerable recess, where I may meet with something to mitigate the curse.” “No, depart into fire; there burn in all the excruciating tortures of that outrageous element.” “But, Lord, if I must make my bed in fire, oh let it be transient blaze, that will soon burn itself out, and put an end to my torment.” “No, depart into everlasting fire; there burn without consuming, and be tormented without end.” “But, Lord, grant me (cries the poor wretch) at least the mitigation of friendly, entertaining, and sympathizing



company; or, if this cannot be granted, grant me this small, this almost no request, to be doomed to some solitary corner in hell, where I shall be punished only by my own conscience and thine immediate hand; but oh, deliver me from these malicious, tormenting devils; banish me into some apartment in the infernal pit far from their society.” “No, depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: thou must make one of their wretched crew forever: thou didst join with them in sinning, and now must share in their punishment: thou didst submit to them as thy tempters, and now thou must submit to them as thy tormentors.”

Sentence being pronounced, it is immediately executed. These shall go away into everlasting punishment. Matt. 25:46. Devils drag them away to the pit, and push them down headlong. There they are confined in chains of darkness, and in a lake burning with fire and brimstone, forever, forever I In that dreadful word lies the emphasis of torment; it is a hell in hell. If they might be but released from pain, though it were by annihilation after they have wept away ten thousand millions of ages in extremity of pain, it would be some mitigation, some encouragement; but, alas! When as many millions of ages are passed as the stars of heaven, or the sands on the seashore, or the atoms of dust in this huge globe of earth, their punishment is as far from an end as when the sentence was pronounced upon them. Forever I there is no exhausting of that word; and when it is affixed to the highest degree of misery, the terror of the sound is utterly insupportable. See, sirs, what depends upon time, that span of time we may enjoy in this fleeting life. Eternity! Awful, all-important eternity! Depends upon it.

All this while conscience tears the sinner’s heart with the most tormenting reflections. “Oh what a fair opportunity I once had for salvation, had I improved it! I was warned of the consequences of a life of sin and

carelessness; I was told of the necessity of faith, repentance, and universal holiness of heart and life; I enjoyed a sufficient space for repentance, and all the necessary means of salvation, but, fool that I was, I neglected all, I abused all; I refused to part with my sins; I refused to engage seriously in religion, and to seek God in earnest; and now I am lost forever, without hope. Oh! For one of those months, one of those weeks, or even so much as one of those days or hours I once trifled away; with what earnestness, with what solicitude would I improve it! But all my opportunities are past, beyond recovery, and not a moment shall be given me for this purpose any more. Oh what a fool was I to sell my soul for such trifles! To set so light by heaven, and fall into hell through mere neglect and carelessness!” Ye impenitent, unthinking sinners, though you may now be able to silence or drown the clamors of your consciences, yet the time, or rather the dread eternity is coming, when they will speak in spite of you; when they will speak home, and be felt by the most hardened and remorseless heart. Therefore now regard their warnings while they may be the means of your recovery.

You and I, my brethren, are concerned in the solemn transaction of the day I have been describing. You and I shall either be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, or while moldering “in the grave, we shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth, either to the resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of damnation.” And which, my brethren, shall be our doom? Can we foreknow it at this distance of time? I proposed it to your inquiry already, whether you have any good reason to hope you shall be of that happy number who shall rise to life? And now I propose it again, with this counterpart, Have you any evidence to hope you shall not be of that wretched, numerous multitude who shall rise to damnation? If there be

any inquiry within the compass of human knowledge that demands your solicitous thoughts, certainly it is this. Methinks you cannot enjoy one moment's ease or security while this is undetermined. And is it an answerable inquiry? Can we now know what are the present distinguishing characters of those who shall then receive so different a doom? Yes, my text determines the point; for,

V. "They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." These are the grounds of the distinction that shall then be made in the final states of men, doing good and doing evil. And certainly this distinction is perceivable now; to do good and to do evil are not so much alike as that it should be impossible to distinguish between them. Let us then see what is implied in these characters, and to whom of us they respectively belong.

1. What is it to do good? This implies, (1.) An honest endeavor to keep all God's commandments; I say, all his commandments, with regard to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, whether easy or difficult, whether fashionable or not, whether agreeable to our natural constitution or not, whether enjoining the performance of duty or forbidding the commission of sin, whether regarding the heart or the outward practice. I say, an uniform, impartial regard to all God's commandments, of whatever kind, in all circumstances, and at all times, is implied in doing good; for if we do anything because God commands it, we will endeavor to do everything that he commands, because where the reason of our conduct is the same, our conduct itself will be the same. I do not mean that good men, in the present state, perfectly keep the commandments of God in everything, or indeed in anything; but I mean that universal obedience is their honest endeavor. Their character is in some measure uniform and all of a piece; that is, they

do not place all their religion in obedience to some commands which may be agreeable to them, as though that would make atonement for their neglect of others; but, like David, they are for having a respect, and indeed have a respect to all God's commandments: Psalm 119:6. My brethren, try yourselves by this test.

(2.) To do good in an acceptable manner pre-supposes a change of nature and a new principle. Our nature is so corrupted that nothing really and formally good can be performed by us till it be renewed. To confirm this I shall only refer you to Eph. 2:10, and Ezek. 36:26,27, where being created in Christ Jesus to good works, and receiving a new heart of flesh, are mentioned as prerequisites to our walking in God's statutes. As for the principle of obedience, it is the love of God: 1 John 5:3, that is, we must obey God, because we love him; we must do good, because we delight to do good; otherwise it is all hypocrisy, constraint, or selfishness, and cannot be acceptable to God. Here, again, my brethren, look into your hearts, and examine what is the principle of your obedience, and whether ever you have been made new creatures.

(3.) I must add, especially as we live under the gospel, that your dependence for life must not be upon the good you do, but entirely upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. After you have done all, you must acknowledge you are but unprofitable servants; and renounce all your works in point of merit, while you abound in them in point of practice; Phil. 3:7,8. This is an essential characteristic of evangelical obedience, and without it you cannot expect to have a resurrection to eternal life and blessedness.

I might enlarge upon this head, but time will not permit; and I hope these three characters may suffice to show you what is implied in doing good. Let

us now proceed to the opposite character.

2. What is it to do evil? This implies such things as these; the habitual neglect of well-doing, or the performance of duties in a languid, formal manner, or without a right principle, and the willful indulgence of any one sin; the secret love of sin, though not suffered to break forth into the outward practice. Here it is evident at first sight that profane sinners, drunkards, swearers, defrauders, avowed neglecters of religion, &c., have this dismal brand upon them, that they are such as do evil. Nay, all such who are in their natural state, without regeneration, whatever their outside be, must be ranked in this class; “for that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” John 3:6; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God, nor be rightly subject to his law. Rom. 8:7,8.

And now who is for life, and who for damnation among you? These characters are intended to make the distinction among you, and I pray you apply them for that purpose.

As for such of you, who, amidst all your lamented infirmities, are endeavoring honestly to do good, and grieved at heart that you can do no more, you also must die; you must die, and feed the worms in the dust. But you shall rise gloriously improved, rise to an immortal life, and in all the terrors and consternation of that last day, you will be secure, serene, and undisturbed. The almighty Judge will be your friend, and that is enough. Let this thought disarm the king of terrors, and give you courage to look down into the grave, and forward to the great rising-day. Oh what a happy immortality opens its glorious prospects beyond the ken of sight before you! And after a few struggles more in this state of warfare, and resting awhile in the bed of death, at the regions of eternal blessedness you will arrive, and take up your residence there forever.

But are there not some here who are conscious that these favorable characters do not belong to them? That know that well-doing is not the business of their life, but that they are workers of iniquity? I tell you plainly, and with all the authority the word of God can give, that if you continue such, you shall rise to damnation. That undoubtedly will be your doom, unless you are greatly changed and reformed in heart and life. And will this be no excitement to vigorous endeavors? Are you proof against the energy of such a consideration? Ye careless sinners, awake out of your security, and prepare for death and judgment! This fleeting life is all the time you have for preparation, and can you trifle it away? Your all, your eternal all is set upon the single cast of life, and you must stand the hazard of the die. You can make but one experiment, and if that fail, through your sloth or mismanagement, you are irrecoverably undone forever. Therefore, by the dread authority of the great God, by the terrors of death, and the great rising-day, by the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, and by the value of your immortal souls, I entreat, I charge, I adjure you to awake out of your security, and improve the precious moments of life. The world is dying all around you. And can you rest easy in such a world, while unprepared for eternity? Awake to righteousness now, at the gentle call of the gospel, before the last trumpet give you an alarm of another kind.

# *SERM. XX. THE UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT.*

**A**cts 17:30,31.— *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

The present state is the infancy of human nature; and all the events of time, even those that make such noise, and determine the fate of kingdoms, are but the little affairs of children. But if we look forward and trace human nature to maturity, we meet with events vast, interesting, and majestic; and such as nothing but divine authority can render credible to us who are so apt to judge of things by what we see. To one of those scenes I would direct your attention this day; I mean the solemn, tremendous, and glorious scene of the universal judgment.

You have sometimes seen a stately building in ruins; come now and view the ruins of a demolished world. You have often seen a feeble mortal struggling in the agonies of death, and his shattered frame dissolved; come

now and view universal nature severely laboring and agonizing in her last convulsions and her well-compacted system dissolved. You have heard of earthquakes here and there that have laid Lisbon, Palermo, and a few other cities in ruins; come now and feel the tremors and convulsions of the whole globe, that blend cities and countries, oceans and continents, mountains, plains, and valleys, in one promiscuous heap. You have a thousand times beheld the moon walking in brightness, and the sun shining in his strength; now look and see the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.

It is our lot to live in an age of confusion, blood, and slaughter; an age in which our attention is engaged by the clash of arms, the clangor of trumpets, the roar of artillery, and the dubious fate of kingdoms; but draw off your thoughts from these objects for an hour, and fix them on objects more solemn and interesting: come view

*“A scene that yields*

*A louder trumpet, and more dreadful fields;*

*The world alarmed, both earth and heaven o’erthrown,*

*And gasping nature’s last tremendous groan;*

*Death’s ancient sceptre broke, the teeming tomb,*

*The Righteous Judge, and man’s eternal doom.”*

Such a scene there certainly is before us; for St. Paul tells us that “God hath given assurance to all men that he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;” and that his resurrection, the resurrection of him who is God and man, is a demonstrative proof of it.

My text is the conclusion of St. Paul’s defense or sermon before the famous court of Areopagus, in the learned and philosophical city of Athens. In this august and polite assembly he speaks with the boldness, and in the



evangelical strain, of an apostle of Christ. He first inculcates upon them the great truths of natural religion, and labors faithfully, though in a very gentle and inoffensive manner, to reform them from that stupid idolatry and superstition into which even this learned philosophical city was sunk, though a Socrates, a Plato, and the most celebrated sages and moralists of pagan antiquity had lived and taught in it. Afterwards, in the close of his discourse, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of Christianity, particularly the great duty of repentance, from evangelical motives, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment. But no sooner has he entered upon this subject than he is interrupted, and seems to have broken off abruptly; for when he had just hinted at the then unpopular doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, we are told, some mocked, and others put it off to another hearing: We will hear thee again of this matter.

In these dark times of ignorance which preceded the publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink or connive at the idolatry and various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world; that is, he seemed to overlook or to take no notice of them, so as either to punish them, or to give the nations explicit calls to repentance. But now, says St. Paul, the case is altered. Now the gospel is published through the world, and therefore God will no longer seem to connive at the wickedness and impenitence of mankind, but publishes his great mandate to a rebel world, explicitly and loudly, commanding all men everywhere to repent; and he now gives them particular motives and encouragements to this duty.

One motive of the greatest weight, which was never so clearly or extensively published before, is the doctrine of the universal judgment. This the connection implies: "He now commandeth all men to repent, because he hath appointed a day for judging all men." And surely the prospect of a

judgment must be a strong motive to sinners to repent:—this, if anything, will rouse them from their thoughtless security, and bring them to repentance. Repentance should, and one would think must, be as extensive as this reason for it. This St. Paul intimates. “He now commandeth all men to repent, because he hath given assurance to all men” that he has “appointed a day to judge the world.” Wherever the gospel publishes the doctrine of future judgment, there it requires all men to repent; and wherever it requires repentance, there it enforces the command of this alarming doctrine.

God has given assurance to all men; that is, to all that hear the gospel, that he has appointed a day for this great purpose, and that Jesus Christ, God-man, is to preside in person in this majestic solemnity. He has given assurance of this; that is, sufficient ground of faith; and the assurance consists in this, that he hath raised him from the dead'.

The resurrection of Christ gives assurance of this in several respects. It is a specimen and a pledge of a general resurrection, that grand preparative for the judgment: it is an incontestable proof of his divine mission; for God will never work so unprecedented a miracle in favor of an impostor: it is also an authentic attestation of all our Lord's claims; and he expressly claimed the authority of supreme Judge as delegated to him by the Father; “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.” John 5:22.

There is a peculiar fitness and propriety in this constitution. It is fit that a world placed under the administration of a Mediator should have a mediatorial Judge. It is fit this high office should be conferred upon him as an honorary reward for his important services and extreme abasement. Because he humbled himself, therefore God hath highly exalted him. Phil. 2:8,9. It is fit that creatures clothed with bodies should be judged by a man

clothed in a body like themselves. Hence it is said that “God hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.” John 5:27. This would seem a strange reason, did we not understand it in this light. Indeed, was Jesus Christ man only, he would be infinitely unequal to the office of universal Judge; but he is God and man, Immanuel, God with us; and is the fittest person in the universe for the work. It is also fit that Christ should be the supreme Judge, as it will be a great encouragement to his people for their Mediator to execute this office: and it may be added, that hereby the condemnation of the wicked will be rendered more conspicuously just; for, if a Mediator, a Savior, the Friend of sinners, condemns them, they must be worthy of condemnation indeed.

Let us now enter upon the majestic scene. But alas, what images shall I use to represent it? Nothing that we have seen, nothing that we have heard, nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time, can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and groveling, all is faint and obscure that ever the sun shone upon, when compared with the grand phenomena of that day; and we are so accustomed to low and little objects, that it is impossible we should ever raise our thoughts to a suitable pitch of elevation. Ere long we shall be amazed spectators of these majestic wonders, and our eyes and our ears will be our instructors. But now it is necessary we should have such ideas of them as may affect our hearts, and prepare us for them. Let us therefore present to our view those representations which divine revelation, our only guide in this case, gives us of the person of the Judge, and the manner of his appearance; of the resurrection of the dead, and the transformation of the living; of the universal convention of all the sons of men before the supreme tribunal; of their separation to the right and left hand of the Judge, according to their characters; of the judicial process

itself; of the decisive sentence; of its execution, and of the conflagration of the world.

As to the person of the Judge, the psalmist tells you, God is Judge himself. Psalm 50:6. Yet Christ tells us, “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” John 5:22,27. It is therefore Christ Jesus, God-man, as I observed, who shall sustain this high character; and for the reasons already alleged, it is most fit it should be devolved upon him. Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in him, and render him more fit for this office than if he were God only, or man only. This is the august Judge before whom we must stand; and the prospect may inspire us with reverence, joy, and terror.

As for the manner of his appearance, it will be such as becomes the dignity of his person and office. He will shine in all the uncreated glories of the Godhead, and in all the gentler glories of a perfect man. His attendants will add a dignity to the grand appearance, and the sympathy of nature will increase the solemnity and terror of the day. Let his own word describe him. “The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels.” Matt. 16:27. “The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” Matt. 25:31: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thess. 1:7,8. And not only will the angels, those illustrious ministers of the court of heaven, attend upon that solemn occasion, but also all the saints who had left the world from Adam to that day; for those that sleep in Jesus, says St. Paul, will God bring with him. 1 Thess. 4:14. The grand imagery in Daniel’s vision is applicable

to this day: and perhaps to this it primarily refers: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down," or rather set up, "and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." Dan. 7:9,10. Perhaps our Lord may exhibit himself to the whole world upon this most grand occasion, in the same glorious form in which he was seen by his favorite John, "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle: his head and his hairs white like wool, as white as snow; his eyes as a flame of fire: his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; his voice as the sound of many waters, and his countenance as the sun shining in his strength." Rev. 1:13, &c. Another image of inimitable majesty and terror the same writer gives us, when he says, "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." Astonishing! What an image is this! The stable earth and heaven cannot bear the majesty and terror of his look; they fly away affrighted, and seek a place to hide themselves, but no place is found to shelter them; every region through the immensity of space lies open before him. Rev. 20:11.

This is the Judge before whom we must stand; and this is the manner of his appearance. But is this the babe of Bethlehem that lay and wept in the manger? Is this the supposed son of the carpenter, the despised Galilean? Is this the man of sorrows? Is this he that was arrested, was condemned, was buffeted, was spit upon, was crowned with thorns, was executed as a slave and a criminal, upon the cross? Yes, it is he; the very same Jesus of

Nazareth. But oh how changed! How deservedly exalted! Let heaven and earth congratulate his advancement. Now let his enemies appear and show their usual contempt and malignity. Now, Pilate, condemn the King of the Jews as a usurper. Now, ye Jews, raise the clamor, Crucify him, crucify him!

*“Now bow the knee in scorn, present the reed;*

*Now tell the scourg’d Impostor he must bleed.”—Young.*

Now, ye Deists and Infidels, dispute his divinity and the truth of his religion if you can. Now, ye hypocritical Christians, try to impose upon him with your idle pretenses. Now despise his grace, laugh at his threatening’s, and make light of his displeasure if you are able. Ah! Now their courage fails, and terror surrounds them like armed men. Now they hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the Lamb that once bled as a sacrifice for sin now appears in all the terrors of a lion; and the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? Rev. 6:15. Oh! Could they hide themselves in the bottom of the ocean, or in some rock that bears the weight of the mountains, how happy would they think themselves. But, alas!

*“Seas cast the monsters forth to meet their doom,*

*And rocks but prison up for wrath to come.—Young.*

While the Judge is descending, the parties to be judged will be summoned to appear. But where are they? They are all asleep in their dusty beds, except the then generation. And how shall they be roused from their long sleep of thousands of years? Why, “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” 1 Thess. 4:16. The trumpet shall sound, and they that are then alive

shall not pass into eternity through the beaten road of death, but at the last trumpet they shall be changed, changed into immortals, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. 1 Cor. 15:51,52. Now all the millions of mankind, of whatever country and nation, whether they expect this tremendous day or not, all feel a shock through their whole frames, while they are instantaneously metamorphosed in every limb, and the pulse of immortality begins to beat strong in every part. Now also the slumberers underground begin to stir, to rouse, and spring to life. Now see graves opening, tombs bursting, charnel-houses rattling, the earth heaving, and all alive, while these subterranean armies are bursting their way through. See clouds of human dust and broken bones darkening the air, and flying from country to country over intervening continents and oceans to meet their kindred fragments, and repair the shattered frame with pieces collected from a thousand different quarters, whither they were blown away by winds, or washed by waters. See what millions start up in company in the spots where Ninevah, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, and London once stood! Whole armies spring to life in fields where they once lost their lives in battle, and were left unburied; in fields which fattened with their blood, produced a thousand harvests, and now produce a crop of men. See a succession of thousands of years rising in crowds from grave-yards round the places where they once attended, in order to prepare for this decisive day. Nay, graves yawn, and swarms burst into life under palaces and buildings of pride and pleasure, in fields and forests, in thousands of places where graves were never suspected. How are the living surprised to find men starting into life under their feet, or just beside them; some beginning to stir and heave the ground; others half-risen, and others quite disengaged from the incumbrance of earth, and standing upright before them! What vast

multitudes that had slept in a watery grave, now emerge from rivers, and seas, and oceans, and throw them into a tumult! Now appear to the view of all the world the Goliahs, the Anakims, and the other giants of ancient times; and now the millions of infants, those little particles of life, start up at once, perhaps in full maturity, or perhaps in the lowest state of mankind, dwarfs of immortality. The dead, small and great, will arise to stand before God; and the sea shall give up the dead which were in it. Rev. 20:12,13. Now the many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Dan. 12:2. Now the hour is come when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. John 5:28. Though after our skin, worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh shall we see God, whom we shall see for ourselves; and these eyes shall behold him, and not another. Job. 19:26,27. Then this corruptible [body] shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. 1 Cor. 15:23.

As the characters, and consequently the doom of mankind, will be very different, so we may reasonably suppose they will rise in very different forms of glory or dishonor, of beauty or deformity. Their bodies indeed will all be improved to the highest degree, and all made vigorous, capacious, and immortal. But here lies the difference: the bodies of the righteous will be strengthened to bear an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, but those of the wicked will be strengthened to sustain a heavier load of misery; their strength will be but mere strength to suffer a horrid capacity of greater pain. The immortality of the righteous will be the duration of their happiness, but that of the wicked of their misery; their immortality, the



highest privilege of their nature, will be their heaviest curse: and they would willingly exchange their duration with an insect of a day, or a fading flower. The bodies of the righteous will “shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever;” but those of the wicked will be grim, and shocking, and ugly, and hateful as hell. The bodies of the righteous will be fit mansions for their heavenly spirits to inhabit, and every feature will speak the delightful passions that agreeably work within; but the wicked will be but spirits of hell clothed in the material bodies; and malice, rage, despair, and all the infernal passions, will lower in their countenances, and cast a dismal gloom around them! Oh! They will then be nothing else but shapes of deformity and terror! They will look like the natives of hell, and spread horror around them with every look.

With what reluctance may we suppose will the souls of the wicked enter again into a state of union with these shocking forms, that will be everlasting engines of torture to them, as they once were instruments of sin! But oh! With what joy will the souls of the righteous return to their old habitations, in which they once served their God with honest though feeble endeavors, now so gloriously repaired and improved! How will they congratulate the resurrection of their old companions from their long sleep in death, now made fit to share with them in the sublime employments and fruitions of heaven? Every organ will be an instrument of service and an inlet of pleasure, and the soul shall no longer be encumbered but assisted by this union to the body. Oh what surprising creatures can Omnipotence raise from the dust! To what a high degree of beauty can the Almighty refine the offspring of the earth! And into what miracles of glory and blessedness can he form them!

Now the Judge is come, the Judgment-seat is erected, the dead are raised. And what follows? Why, the universal convention of all the sons of men before the Judgment-seat. The place of judgment will probably be the extensive region of the air, the most capacious for the reception of such a multitude; for St. Paul tells us the saint shall “be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” 1 Thess. 4:17. And that the air will be the place of judicature, perhaps, may be intimated when our Lord is represented as coming in the clouds, and sitting upon a cloudy throne. These expressions can hardly be understood literally, for clouds which consisted of vapors and rarified particles of water, seem very improper materials for a chariot of state, or a throne of judgment but they may very properly intimate that Christ will make his appearance, and hold his court in the region of the clouds; that is, in the air; and perhaps that the rays of light and majestic darkness shall be so blended around him as to form the appearance of a cloud to the view of the wondering and gazing world.

To this upper region, from whence our globe will lie open to view far and wide, will all the sons of men be convened. And they will be gathered together by the ministry of angels, the officers of this grand court. The Son of man, when he comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, “shall send forth his angels with a great sound of the trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other.” Matt. 24:30,31. Their ministry also extends to the wicked, whom they will drag away to judgment and execution, and separate from the righteous. For “in the end of the world,” says Christ, “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity: and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. 13:40,41,42.

What an august convocation, what a vast assembly is this! See flights of angels darting round the globe from east to west, from pole to pole, gathering up here and there the scattered saints, choosing them out from among the crowd of the ungodly, and bearing them aloft on their wings to meet the Lord in the air! While the wretched crowd look and gaze, and stretch their hands, and would mount up along with them; but, alas I they must be left behind, and wait for another kind of convoy; a convoy of cruel, unrelenting devils, who shall snatch them up as their prey with malignant joy, and place them before the flaming tribunal. Now all the sons of men meet in one immense assembly. Adam beholds the long line of his posterity, and they behold their common father. Now Europeans and Asiatics, the swarthy sons of Africa and the savages of America, mingle together. Christians, Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, the learned and the ignorant, kings and subjects, rich and poor, free and bond, form one promiscuous crowd. Now all the vast armies that conquered or fell under Xerxes, Darius, Alexander, Caesar, Scipio, Tamerlane, Marlborough, and other illustrious warriors, unite in one vast army. There, in short, all the successive inhabitants of the earth for thousands of years appear in one assembly. And how inconceivably great must the number be! When the inhabitants of but one county are met together, you are struck with the survey. Were all the inhabitants of a kingdom convened in one place, how much more striking would be the sight! Were all the inhabitants of the kingdoms of the earth convened in one general rendezvous, how astonishing and vast would be the multitude! But what is even this vast multitude compared with the long succession of generations that have peopled the globe, in all ages, and in all countries, from the first commencement of time to the last day! Here numbers fail, and our thoughts are lost in the immense survey. The

extensive region of the air is very properly chosen as the place of judgment; for this globe would not be sufficient for such a multitude to stand upon. In that prodigious assembly, my brethren, you and I must mingle. And we shall not be lost in the crowd, nor escape the notice of our Judge; but his eye will be as particularly fixed on every one of us as though there were but one before him.

To increase the number, and add a majesty and terror to the assembly, the fallen angels also make their appearance at the bar. This they have long expected with horror, as the period when their consummate misery is to commence. When Christ, in the form of a servant, exercised a god-like power over them in the days of his residence upon earth, they almost mistook his first coming as a Savior for his second coming as their Judge; and therefore they expostulated, Art thou come to torment us before the time? Matt. 8:29. That is to say, We expect thou wilt at last appear to torment us, but we did not expect thy coming so soon. Agreeable to this, St. Peter tells us, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Peter 2:4. To the same purpose St. Jude speaks: "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Jude 6. What horribly majestic figures will these be! And what a dreadful appearance will they make at the bar! Angels and archangels, thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers blasted, stripped of their primeval glories, and lying in ruins; yet majestic even in ruins, gigantic forms of terror and deformity; great though degraded, horribly illustrious, angels fallen, gods undeified and deposed.

Now the Judge is seated, and anxious millions stand before him waiting for their doom. As yet there is no separation made between them; but men and devils, saints and sinners, are promiscuously blended together. But see! At the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion! They part, they sort together according to their character, and divide to the right and left. When all nations are gathered before the Son of man, himself has told us, "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Matt. 25:32,33. And, oh! What strange separations are now made! What multitudes that once ranked themselves among the saints, and were highly esteemed for their piety, by others as well as themselves, are now banished from among them, and placed with the trembling criminals on the left hand! And how many poor, honest-hearted, doubting, desponding souls, whose foreboding fears had often placed them there, now find themselves, to their agreeable surprise, stationed on the right hand of their Judge, who smiles upon them! What connections are now broken! What hearts torn asunder! What intimate companions, what dear relations parted forever! Neighbor from neighbor, masters from servants, friend from friend, parents from children, husband from wife; those who were but one flesh, and who lay in one another's bosoms, must part for ever. Those that lived in the same country, who sustained the same denomination, who worshipped in the same place, who lived under one roof, who lay in the same womb, and sucked the same breasts, must now part for ever. And is there no separation likely to be made then in our families or in our congregation? Is it likely we shall all be placed in a body upon the right hand? Are all the members of our families prepared for that glorious station? Alas! Are there not some families among us who, it is to be feared, shall all be sent off to the left

hand, without so much as one exception? For who are those miserable multitudes on the left hand? There, through the medium of revelation, I see the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the liar, the defrauder, and the various classes of profane, profligate sinners. There I see the unbeliever, the impenitent, the lukewarm formalist, and the various classes of hypocrites, and half-Christians. There I see the families that call not upon God's name, and whole nations that forget him. And, oh! What vast multitudes, what millions of millions of millions do all these make! And do not some, alas! Do not many of you belong to one or other of these classes of sinners whom God, and Christ, and Scripture, and conscience conspire to condemn? If so, to the left hand you must depart among devils and trembling criminals, whose guilty minds forbode their doom before the judicial process begins. But who are those glorious immortals upon the right hand? They are those who have surrendered themselves entirely to God, through Jesus Christ, who have heartily complied with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel; who have been formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the most earnest, persevering endeavor of their lives to work out their own salvation, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. These are some of the principal lineaments of their character who shall have their safe and honorable station at the right hand of the sovereign Judge. And is not this the prevailing character of some of you? I hope and believe it is. Through the medium of Scripture revelation then I see you in that blessed station. And, oh! I would make an appointment with you this day to meet you there. Yes, let us this day appoint the time and place where we shall meet after the separation and dispersion that death will make among us; and let it be at the right hand of the Judge at the last day. If I be so happy as to obtain some humble place there, I shall look out for you, my

dear people. There I shall expect your company, that we may ascend together to join in the more exalted services and enjoyments of heaven, as we have frequently in the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth. But, oh I when I think what unexpected separations will then be made, I tremble lest I should miss some of you there. Are you not afraid lest you should miss some of your friends, or some of your families there? Or that you should then see them move off to the left hand, and looking back with eagerness upon you, as if they would say, “This is my doom through your carelessness; had you but acted a faithful part towards me, while conversant with you or under your care, I might now have had my place among the saints.” Oh! How could you bear such significant piercing looks from a child, a servant, or a friend! Therefore now do all in your power to “convert sinners from the error of their way, and to save their souls from death.”

When we entered upon this practical digression, we left all things ready for the judicial process. And now the trial begins. Now “God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” Rom. 2:16. All the works of all the sons of men will then be tried; “For,” says St. Paul, “we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Cor. 5:10. St. John in his vision “saw the dead judged according to their works.” Rev. 20:12,13. These works immediately refer to the actions of the life, but they may also include the inward temper, and thoughts of the soul, and the words of the lips; for all these shall be brought into judgment. “God,” says Solmon, “shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Eccl. 12:14. And though we are too apt to think our words are free, he that is to be our Judge has told us that “for every idle word which men speak, they shall give an account in the day

of judgment; for by thy words,” as well as thy actions, “thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matt. 12:36,37.

What strange discoveries will this trial make? What noble dispositions that never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes; what generous purposes crushed in embryo for want of power to execute them; what pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty, or misconstrued by ignorance and prejudice; what affectionate aspirations, what devout exercises of heart, which lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, are now brought to full light, and receive the approbation of the Supreme Judge before the assembled universe? But on the other hand, what works of shame and darkness, what hidden things of dishonesty, what dire secrets of treachery, hypocrisy, lewdness, and various forms of wickedness artfully and industriously concealed from human sight, what horrid exploits of sin now burst to light in all their hellish colors, to the confusion of the guilty, and the astonishment and horror of the universe! Sure the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell, or the biography of devils! Then the mask of dissimulation will be torn off. Clouded characters will clear up, and men as well as things will appear in their true light. Their hearts will be, as it were, turned outwards, and all their secrets exposed to full view. The design of the judicial inquiry will not be to inform the omniscient Judge, but to convince all worlds of the justice of his proceedings; and this design renders it necessary that all these things should be laid open to their sight, that they may see the grounds upon which he passes sentence. And may not the prospect of such a discovery fill some of you with horror? For many of your actions, and especially of your thoughts, will not bear the light. How would it confound you, if they were now all published, even in the small circle of your acquaintance? How then can you bear to have them all fully



exposed before God, angels, and men! Will it not confound you with shame, and make you objects of everlasting contempt to all worlds?

These are the facts to be tried. But by what rule shall they be tried? From the goodness and justice of God we may conclude that men will be judged by some rule known to them, or which at least it was in their power to know. Now the light of reason, the law of nature, or conscience, is a universal rule, and universally known, or at least knowable by all the sons of men, heathens and Mahometans, as well as Jews and Christians: and therefore all mankind shall be judged by this rule. This the consciences of all now forebodes; “for when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one another.” Rom. 2:14,15. By this rule their consciences now acquit or condemn them, because they know that by this rule they shall then be judged: this seems to be a kind of innate presentiment of human nature. As the heathens were invincibly ignorant of every rule but this, they shall be judged by this only. But as to those parts of the world that enjoyed, or might enjoy the advantages of revelation, whether by tradition with the Anti-Mosaic world, or in the writings of Moses and the prophets with the Jews, or in the clearer dispensation of the gospel with the Christian world, they shall be judged by this revealed law. And by how much the more perfect the rule, by so much the stricter will their account be. That which would be an excusable infirmity in an African or an American Indian, may be an aggravated crime in us who enjoy such superior advantages. This is evident from the repeated declarations of sacred writ. “As many as have sinned without law, (that is, without the

written law,) shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel.” Rom. 2:12,16. “If I had not come and spoken unto them,” says the blessed Jesus, “they had not had sin;” that is, they would not have had sin so aggravated, or they would not have had the particular sin of unbelief in rejecting the Messiah: but now they have no cloak for their sin, John 15:22; that is, now when they have had such abundant conviction, they are utterly inexcusable. “This,” says he, “is the condemnation;” that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation; “that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” John 3:19. “That servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, (observe, ignorance is no sufficient excuse, except when invincible,) shall be beaten with few stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Luke 12:47,48. Upon these maxims of eternal righteousness, the Judge will proceed in pronouncing the doom of the world; and it was upon these principles he declared, in the days of his flesh, “that it should be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon,” than for those places that enjoyed the advantages of his ministry, and misimproved it. Matt. 11:21,24. Whether upon these principles sinners among us have not reason to expect they will obtain a horrid precedence among the million of sinners in that day, I leave you to judge, and to tremble at the thought.

There is another representation of this proceeding, which we often meet with in the sacred writings, in allusion to the forms of proceedings in human courts. In courts of law, law-books are referred to, opened, and read

for the direction of the judges, and sentence is passed according to them. In allusion to this custom, Daniel, in vision, saw the judgment was set, and the books were opened: Dan. 7:10. And St. John had the same representation made to him: "I saw the dead," says he, "small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works:" Rev. 20:12.

Should we pursue this significant allusion, we may say, then will be opened the book of the law of nature; and mankind will be tried according to its precepts, and doomed according to its sentence. This is a plain and vast volume, opened and legible now to all that can read their own hearts; that have eyes to look round upon the works of God, which show his glory and their duty; and who have ears to hear the lectures which the sun and moon, and all the works of creation, read to them night and day. Then, too, will be opened the book of Scripture-revelation, in all its parts, both the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ; and according to it will those be judged who lived under one or other of these dispensations. Then it will appear that that neglected, old-fashioned book called the Bible is not a romance, or a system of trifling truths, but the standard of life and death to all who had access to it. Then will also be opened the book of God's remembrance. In that are recorded all the thoughts, words, actions, both good and bad, of all the sons of men: and now the immense account shall be publicly read before the assembled universe. Then, likewise, as a counterpart to this, will be opened the book of conscience; conscience which, though unnoticed, writes our whole history as with an iron pen and the point of a diamond. Then, also, we are expressly told, will be opened the book of life: Rev. 20:12, in which are contained all the names of all the heirs of heaven. This

seems to be an allusion to those registers which are kept in cities or corporations, of the names of all the citizens or members who have a right to all the privileges of the society. And I know not what we can understand by it so properly as the perfect knowledge which the omniscient God has, and always had from eternity, of those on whom he purposed to bestow eternal life, and whom he has from eternity, as it were, registered as members of the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, or as denizens of that blessed city. These, having been all prepared by his grace in time, shall be admitted into the New Jerusalem in that day of the Lord.

Farther, the representation which the Scripture gives us of the proceedings of that day leads us to conceive of witnesses being produced to prove the facts. The omniscient Judge will be a witness against the guilty. “I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress, and hear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts:” Mal. 3:5. And he will, no doubt, be a witness for his people, and attest their sincere piety, their interest in Christ, and those good dispositions or actions which were known only to him.

*And her dread diary with horror fills—  
Unnoted notes each moment misapply’d,  
In leaves more durable than leaves of brass,  
Writes our whole history; which Death shall read  
In every pale offender’s private ear;  
And Judgment publish, publish to more worlds  
Than this and endless age in groans resound.  
Such, sinner, is that sleeper in thy breast;*

*Such is her slumber; and her vengeance such  
For slighted counsel. —Young.*

Angels, also, that ministered to the heirs of salvation, and no doubt inspected the affairs of mankind, will be witnesses. Devils too, who once tempted, will now become accusers. Conscience within will also be a witness! It shall acquit the righteous of many unjust imputations, and attest the sincerity of their hearts and their many good actions. But oh! It will be the most terrible witness against the ungodly! They will be witnesses against themselves, (Josh. 24:22,) and this will render them self-tormentors. Conscience will re-echo to the voice of the Judge, and cry, Guilty, guilty, to all his accusations. And who can make the wicked happy when they torment themselves? Who can acquit them when they are self-condemned? Conscience, whose evidence is now so often suppressed will then have full scope, and shall be regarded. Whom conscience condemns the righteous Judge will also condemn; for, “if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things,” 1 John 3:20, knoweth many more grounds for condemning us than we, and therefore much more will he condemn us. In short, so full will be the evidence against the sinner, that the Scripture which is full of striking imagery to affect human nature, gives life to inanimated things upon this occasion, and represents them as speaking. Stones and dust shall witness against the ungodly. The dust under the feet of their ministers shall witness against them: Matt. 10:14. “The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.” Heb. 2:11. The rust of their gold and silver shall be a witness against them, and shall eat their flesh as it were fire. James 5:3. Nay, the heavens shall reveal their iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against them. Job 20:27. Heaven and earth were called to witness that life and death were set before them, Deut.

30:19, and now they will give in their evidence that they chose death. Thus God and all his creatures, heaven, earth, and hell, rise up against them, accuse and condemn them. And will not sinners accuse and witness against one another? Undoubtedly they will. They who lived or conversed together upon earth, and were spectators of each other's conduct, will then turn mutual witnesses against each other. Oh, tremendous thought! That friend should inform and witness against friend; parents against children, and children against parents; ministers against their people, and people against their ministers; alas! What a confounding testimony against each other must those give in who are now sinning together!

Thus the way is prepared for the passing sentence. The case was always clear to the omniscient Judge, but now it is so fully discussed and attested by so many evidences, that it is quite plain to the whole world of creatures, who can judge only by such evidence, and for whose conviction the formality of a judicial process is appointed. How long a time this grand court will sit, we cannot determine, nor has God thought fit to inform us; but when we consider how particular the trial will be, and the innumerable multitude to be tried, it seems reasonable to suppose it will be a long session. It is indeed often called a day; but it is evident a day in such cases does not signify a natural day, but the space of time allotted for transacting a business, though it be a hundred or even a thousand years. Creatures are incapable of viewing all things at once, and therefore, since the trial, as I observed, is intended to convince them of the equity of the divine proceedings, it is proper the proceedings should be particular and leisurely, that they may have time to observe them.

We are now come to the grand crisis, upon which the eternal states of all mankind turn; I mean the passing the great decisive sentence. Heaven and

earth are all silence and attention, while the Judge, with smiles in his face, and a voice sweeter than heavenly music, turns to the glorious company on his right hand, and pours all the joys of heaven into their souls, in that transporting sentence, of which he has graciously left us a copy; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Every word is full of emphasis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the desires of those to whom it is addressed. They desired, and longed, and languished to be near their Lord; and now their Lord invites them, Come near me, and dwell with me forever. There was nothing they desired so much as the blessing of God, nothing they feared so much as his curse, and now their fears are entirely removed, and their designs fully accomplished, for the supreme Judge pronounces them blessed of his Father. They were all poor in spirit, most of them poor in this world, and all sensible of their unworthiness. How agreeably then are they surprised, to hear themselves invited to a kingdom, invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood-royal, born to thrones and crowns! How will they be lost in wonder, joy, and praise, to find that the great God entertained thoughts of love towards them, before they had a being, or the world in which they dwelt had its foundation laid, and that he was preparing a kingdom for them while they were nothing, unknown even in idea, except to himself? O brethren! Dare any of us expect this sentence will be passed upon us? Methinks the very thought overwhelms us. Methinks our feeble frames must be unable to bear up under the ecstatic hope of so sweetly oppressive a blessedness. Oh! If this be our sentence in that day, it is no matter what we suffer in the intermediate space; that sentence would compensate for all, and annihilate the sufferings of ten thousand years.

But hark! Another sentence breaks from the mouth of the angry Judge, like vengeful thunder. Nature gives a deep tremendous groan; the heavens lower and gather blackness, the earth trembles, and guilty millions sink with horror at the sound! And see, he whose words are works, whose fiat produces worlds out of nothing; he who could remand ten thousand worlds into nothing at a frown; he whose thunder quelled the insurrection of rebel angels in heaven, and hurled them headlong down, down, down, to the dungeon of hell; see, he turns to the guilty crowd on his left hand; his angry countenance discovers the righteous indignation that glows in his breast. His countenance bespeaks him inexorable, and that there is now no room for prayers and tears. Now, the sweet, mild, mediatorial hour is past, and nothing appears but the majesty and terror of the judge. Horror and darkness frown upon his brow, and vindictive lightnings flash from his eyes. And now, (Oh! Who can bear the sound!) he speaks, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" Oh! The cutting emphasis of every word! Depart! Depart from me; from me, the Author of all good, the Fountain of all good, the Fountain of all happiness. Depart, with all my heavy, all-consuming curse upon you! Depart into fire, into everlasting, fire, prepared, furnished with fuel, and blown up into rage, prepared for the devil and his angels, once your companions in sin, and now the companions and executioners of your punishment!

Now the grand period is arrived in which the final, everlasting states of mankind are unchangeably settled. From this all-important era their happiness or misery runs on in one uniform, uninterrupted tenor; no change, no gradation, but from glory to glory, in the scale of perfection, or from gulf to gulf in hell. This is the day in which all the schemes of Providence, carried on for thousands of years, terminate.



*“Great day! For which all other days were made:  
For which earth rose from chaos: man from earth:  
And an eternity, the date of gods,  
Descended on poor earth-created man!”—Young.*

Time was; but it is no more! Now all the sons of men enter upon a duration not to be measured by the revolutions of the sun, nor by days, and months, and years. Now eternity dawns, a day that shall never see an evening. And this terribly illustrious morning is solemnized with the execution of the sentence. No sooner is it passed than immediately the wicked “go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” Matt. 25:46. See the astonished, thunder-struck multitude on the left hand, with sullen horror, and grief, and despair in their looks, writhing with agony, crying and wringing their hands, and glancing a wishful eye towards that heaven which they lost: dragged away by devils to the place of execution! See, hell expands her voracious jaws, and swallows them up! And now an eternal farewell to earth and all its enjoyments! Farewell to the cheerful light of heaven! Farewell to hope, that sweet relief of affliction!

*“Farewell, happy fields,  
Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! Hail,  
Infernal world! And thou, profoundest hell,  
Receive thy new possessors!”—Milton.*

Heaven frowns upon them from above, the horrors of hell spread far and wide around them, and conscience within preys upon their hearts. Conscience! O thou abused, exasperated power, that now sleepest in so many breasts! What severe, ample revenge wilt thou then take upon those that now dare to do thee violence! Oh the dire reflections which memory will then suggest! The remembrance of mercies abused! Of a Savior

slighted! Of means and opportunities of salvation neglected and lost! This remembrance will sting the heart like a scorpion. But O eternity! Eternity! With what horror will thy name circulate through the vaults of hell! Eternity in misery! No end to pain! No hope of an end! Oh this is the hell of hell! This is the parent of despair! Despair the direst ingredient of misery, the most tormenting passion which devils feel. But let us view a more delightful and illustrious scene.

See the bright and triumphant army marching up to their eternal home, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, where they shall ever be with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4:17, as happy as their nature in its highest improvements is capable of being made. With what shouts of joy and triumph do they ascend! With what sublime hallelujahs do they crown their Deliverer! With what wonder and joy, with what pleasing horror, like one that has narrowly escaped some tremendous precipice, do they look back upon what they once were! Once mean, guilty, depraved, condemned sinners! Afterward imperfect, brokenhearted, sighing, weeping saints! But now innocent, holy, happy, glorious immortals!

*“Are these the forms that mouldered in the dust?*

*Oh the transcendent glories of the just!”—Young.*

Now with what pleasure and rapture do they look forward through the long, long prospect of immortality, and call it their own! The duration not only of their existence, but of their happiness and glory! Oh shall any of us share in this immensely valuable privilege! How immensely transporting the thought!

*“Shall we, who some few years ago were less*

*Than worm, or mite, or shadow can express;*

*Were nothing; shall we live, when every fire*

*Of every star shall languish or expire?  
When earth's no more, shall we survive above,  
And through the shining ranks of angels move?  
Or, as before the throne of God we stand,  
See new worlds rolling from his mighty hand?—  
All that has being in full concert join,  
And celebrate the depths of love divine!”—Young.*

Oh what exploits, what miracles of power and grace, are these! But why do I darken such splendors with words without knowledge? The language of mortals was formed for lower descriptions. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” 1 Cor. 2:9.

And now when the inhabitants of our world, for whose sake it was formed, are all removed to other regions, and it is left a wide extended desert, what remains, but that it also meet its fate? It is fit so guilty a globe, that had been the stage of sin for so many thousands of years, and which even supported the cross on which its Maker expired, should be made a monument of the divine displeasure, and either be laid in ruins, or refined by fire. And see! The universal blaze begins! The heavens pass away with a great noise; the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein are burnt up. 2 Pet. 3:10. Now stars rush from their orbits; comets glare; the earth trembles with convulsions; the Alps, the Andes, and all the lofty peaks or long extended ridges of mountains burst out into so many burning Aetnas, or thunder, and lighten, and smoke, and flame, and quake like Sinai, when God descended upon it to publish his fiery law! Rocks melt and run down in torrents of flame; rivers, lakes, and oceans boil and evaporate. Sheets of fire and pillars of smoke, outrageous

and insufferable thunders and lightnings burst, and bellow, and blaze, and involve the atmosphere from pole to pole. The whole globe is now dissolved into a shoreless ocean of liquid fire. And where now shall we find the places where cities stood, where armies fought, where mountains stretched their ridges, and reared their heads on high? Alas! They are all lost, and have left no trace behind them where they once stood. Where art thou, oh my country? Sunk with the rest as a drop into the burning ocean. Where now are your houses, your lands, and those earthly possessions you were once so fond of? They are nowhere to be found. How sorry a portion for an immortal mind is such a dying world as this! And, oh!

*“How rich that God who can such charge defray,  
And bear to fling ten thousand worlds away!”—Young.*

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a view of the solemnities of the last day which our world shall see. The view has indeed been but very faint and obscure: and such will be all our views and descriptions of it, till our eyes and our ears teach us better. Through these avenues you will at length receive your instructions. Yes, brethren, those ears that now hear my voice shall hear the all-alarmed clangor of the last trumpet, the decisive sentence from the mouth of the universal Judge, and the horrid crash of falling worlds. These very eyes with which you now see one another, shall yet see the descending Judge, the assembled multitudes, and all the majestic phenomena of that day. And we shall not see them as indifferent spectators; no, we are as much concerned in this great transaction as any of the children of men. We must all appear before the judgment-seat, and receive our sentence according to the deeds done in the body. And if so, what are we doing that we are not more diligently preparing? Why does not the prospect affect us more? Why does it not transport the righteous with joy

unspeakable, and full of glory? 1 Peter 1:8. And why are not the sinners in Zion afraid? Why does not fearfulness surprise the hypocrites? Isa. 33:14. Can one of you be careless from this hour till you are in readiness for that tremendous day?

What! Do the sinners among you now think of repentance? Repentance is the grand preparative for this awful day; and the apostle, as I observed, mentions the final judgment in my text as a powerful motive to repentance. And what will criminals think of repentance when they see the Judge ascend his throne? Come, sinners, look forward and see the flaming tribunal erected, your crimes exposed, your doom pronounced, and your hell begun; see a whole world demolished, and ravaged by boundless conflagration for your sins! With these objects before you, I call you to repent! I call you! I retract the words: God, the great God, whom heaven and earth obey, commands you to repent. Whatever be your characters, whether rich or poor, old or young, white or black, wherever you sit or stand, this command reaches you; for God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. You are this day firmly bound to this duty by his authority. And dare you disobey with the prospect of all the awful solemnities of judgment before you in so near a view? Oh! Methinks I have now brought you into such a situation, that the often-repeated but hitherto neglected call to repentance will be regarded by you. Repent you must, either upon earth or in hell. You must either spend your time or your eternity in repentance. It is absolutely unavoidable. Putting it off now does not remove the necessity, but will only render it the more bitter and severe hereafter. Which then do you choose? The tolerable, hopeful medicinal repentance of the present life, or the intolerable, unprofitable, despairing repentance of hell? Will you choose to spend time or eternity in this melancholy exercise? Oh! Make the choice

which God, which reason, which self-interest, which common sense recommend to you. Now repent at the command of God, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given you all full assurance in that he raised him from the dead. Amen.

## SERM. XXI. THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

**L**uke 10:41,42.— *And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

For what are we placed in this world? Is it to dwell here always? You cannot think so, when the millions of mankind that have appeared upon the stage of time are so many instances of the contrary. The true notion therefore of the present state is, that it is a state of preparation and trial for the eternal world; a state of education for our adult age. As children are sent to school, and youth bound out to trades, to prepare them for business, and qualify them to live in the world, so we are placed here to prepare us for the grand business of immortality, the state of our maturity, and to qualify us to live forever. And is there a heaven of the most perfect happiness, and a hell of the most exquisite misery, just before us, perhaps not a year or even a day distant from us? And is it the great design, the business and duty of the present state, to obtain the one and escape the other? Then what are we

doing? What is the world doing all around us? Are they acting as it becomes candidates for eternity? Are they indeed making that the principal object of their most zealous endeavors, which is the grand design, business and duty of the present state? Are they minding this at all adventures, whatever else they neglect? This is what we might expect from them as reasonable creatures that love themselves, and have a strong innate desire of happiness. This a stranger to our world might charitably presume concerning them. But, alas! Look upon the conduct of the world around you, or look nearer home, and where you are more nearly interested, upon your own conduct, and you will see this is not generally the case. No; instead of pursuing the one thing needful, the world is all in motion, all bustle and hurry, like ants upon a mole-hill, about other affairs. They are in a still higher degree than officious Martha, careful and troubled about many things. Now to recall you from this endless variety of vain pursuits, and direct your endeavors to the proper object, I can think of no better expedient than to explain and inculcate upon you the admonition of Christ to Martha, and his commendation of Mary upon this head.

Martha was the head of a little family, probably a widow in a village near Jerusalem, called Bethany. Her brother and sister, Lazarus and Mary, lived along with her. And what is remarkable concerning this little family is, that they were all lovers of Jesus: and their love was not without return on his side; for we are expressly told that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. What a happy family is this! But oh how rare in the world! This was a convenient place of retirement to Jesus, after the labors and fatigues of his ministry in the city, and here we often find him. Though spent and exhausted with his public services, yet when he gets into the circle of a few friends in a private house, he cannot be idle; he still instructs them with his



heavenly discourse; and his conversation is a constant sermon. Mary, who was passionately devout, and eager for instruction, would not let such a rare opportunity slip, but sits down at the feet of this great Teacher, which was the posture of the Jewish pupils before their masters, and eagerly catches every word from his lips; from which dropped knowledge sweeter than honey from the honey-comb. Though she is solicitous for the comfort of her heavenly guest, yet she makes no great stir to provide for him an elegant or sumptuous entertainment; for she knew his happiness did not consist in luxurious eating and drinking: it was his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father; and as the sustenance of his body, plain food was most acceptable to him. He was not willing that any should lose their souls by losing opportunities of instruction, while they were making sumptuous provision for him. Mary was also so deeply engaged about her salvation, that she was nobly careless about the little decencies of entertainments. The body and all its supports and gratifications appeared of very small importance to her when compared with the immortal soul. Oh! If that be but fed with the words of eternal life, it is enough. All this she did with Christ's warm approbation, and therefore her conduct is an example worthy of our imitation: and if it were imitated, it would happily reform the pride, luxury, excessive delicacy, and multiform extravagance which have crept in upon us under the ingratiating names of politeness, decency, hospitality, good economy, and I know not what. These guilty superfluities and refinements render the life of some a course of idolatry to so sordid a god as their bellies; and that of others a course of busy, laborious, and expensive trifling. But to return:

Martha, though a pious woman, yet, like too many among us, was too solicitous about these things. She seemed more concerned to maintain her

reputation for good economy and hospitality, than to improve in divine knowledge at every opportunity; and to entertain her guest rather as a gentleman than as a divine teacher and the Savior of souls. Hence, instead of sitting at his feet with her sister, in the posture of a humble disciple, she was busy in making preparations; and her mind was distracted with the cares of her family. As moderate labor and care about earthly things is lawful, and even a duty, persons are not readily suspicious or easily convinced of their guilty excesses in these labors and cares. Hence Martha is so far from condemning herself on this account, that she blames her devout, sister for not following her example. Nay, she has the confidence to complain to Christ himself of her neglect, and that in language too that sounds somewhat rude and irreverent. "Carest thou not that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" Art thou so partial as to suffer her to devolve all the trouble upon me while she sits idle at thy feet?

Jesus turns upon her with just severity, and throws the blame where it should lie. Martha, Martha! There is a vehemence and pungency in the repetition, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. "Thy worldly mind has many objects, and many objects excite many cares and troubles, fruitless troubles and useless cares. Thy restless mind is scattered among a thousand things, and tossed from one to another with an endless variety of anxieties. But let me collect thy thoughts and cares to one point, a point where they should all terminate; one thing is needful; and therefore, dropping thy excessive care about many things, make this one thing the great object of thy pursuit. This one thing is what thy sister is now attending to, while thou art vainly careful about many things; and therefore, instead of blaming her conduct, I must approve it. She has made the best choice, for she hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away

from her. After all thy care and labor, the things of this vain world must be given up at last, and lost forever. But Mary hath made a wiser choice; the portion she hath chosen shall be her's forever; it shall never be taken away from her."

But what does Christ mean by this one thing which alone is needful?

I answer, We may learn what he meant by the occasion and circumstances of his speaking. He mentions this one thing in an admonition to Martha for excessive worldly cares and the neglect of an opportunity for promoting her salvation; and he expressly opposes this one thing to the many things which engrossed her care; and therefore it must mean something different from and superior to all the pursuits of time. This one thing is that which Mary was so much concerned about while attentively listening to his instruction. And what can that be but salvation as the end, and holiness as the means, or a proper care of the soul? This is that which is opposite and superior to the many cares of life;—this is that which Mary was attending to and pursuing: and I may add, this is that good part which Mary had chosen, which should never be taken away from her; for that good part which Mary had chosen seems intended by Christ to explain what he meant by the one thing needful. Therefore the one thing needful must mean the salvation of the soul, and an earnest application to the means necessary to obtain this end above all other things in the world. To be holy in order to be happy; to pray, to hear, to meditate, and use all the means of grace appointed to produce or cherish holiness in us; to use these means with constancy, frequency, earnestness, and zeal; to use them diligently whatever else be neglected, or to make all other things give way in comparison of this; this I apprehend is the one thing needful which Christ here intends: this is that which is absolutely necessary, necessary above all other things, and necessary for

ever. The end, namely, salvation, will be granted by all to be necessary, and the necessity of the end renders the means also necessary. If it be necessary you shall be forever happy, and escape everlasting misery, it is necessary you should be holy; for you can no more be saved without holiness than you can be healthy without health, see without light, or live without food. And if holiness be necessary, then the earnest use of means appointed for the production and improvement of holiness in us must be necessary too; for you can no more expect to become holy without the use of these means, than to reap without sowing, or become truly virtuous and good by chance or fatality. To be holy in order to be happy, and to use all the means of grace in order to be holy, is therefore the one thing needful.

But why is this concern which is so complex called one thing?

I answer: Though salvation and holiness include various ingredients, and though the means of grace are various, yet they may be all taken collectively and called one thing; that is, one great business, one important object of pursuit, in which all our endeavors and aims should center and terminate. It is also said to be one, in opposition to the many things that are the objects of a worldly mind. This world owes its variety in a great measure to contradiction and inconsistency. There is no harmony or unity in the earthly objects of men's pursuits, nor in the means they use to secure them. Riches, honors, and pleasures generally clash. If a man will be rich he must restrain himself in the pleasures of gratifying his eager appetites, and perhaps use some mean artifice that may stain his honor. If he would be honorable, he must often be prodigal of his riches, and abstain from some sordid pleasures. If he would have the full enjoyment of sensual pleasures, he must often squander away his riches, and injure his honor to procure them. The lusts of men as well as their objects, are also various and

contradictory. Covetousness and sensuality, pride and tranquility, envy and the love of ease, and a thousand jarring passions, maintain a constant fight in the sinner's breast. The means for gratifying these lusts are likewise contrary; sometimes truth, sometimes falsehood, sometimes indolence, sometimes action and labor are necessary. In these things there is no unity of design, nor consistency of means; but the sinner is properly distracted, drawn this way and that, tossed from wave to wave; and there is no steadiness or uniformity in his pursuits. But the work of salvation is one, the means and the end correspond, and the means are consistent one with another; and therefore the whole, though consisting of many parts, may be said to be one.

It may also be called the one thing needful, to intimate that this is needful above all other things. It is a common form of speech to say of that which is necessary above all other things, that it is the one or only thing necessary: so we may understand this passage. There are what we call the real necessities of life; such as food and raiment; there are also necessary callings and necessary labors. All these are necessary in a lower sense; necessary in their proper place. But in comparison of the great work of our salvation, they are all unnecessary; if we be but saved, we may do very well without them all. This is so necessary, that nothing else deserves to be called necessary in comparison of it.

This shows you also, not only why this is called one thing, but why or in what sense it is said to be necessary. It is of absolute and incomparable necessity. There is no absolute necessity to our happiness that we should be rich or honorable; nay, there is no absolute necessity to our happiness that we should live in this world at all, for we may live infinitely more happy in another. And if life itself be not absolutely necessary, then much less are

food, or raiment, or health, or any of those things which in a lower sense we call the necessities of life. In comparison of this, they are all needless. I add farther, this one thing may be said to be necessary, because it is necessary always, or forever. The necessities of this life we cannot want long, for we must soon remove into a world where there is no room for them; but holiness and salvation we shall find needful always: needful under the calamities of life; needful in the agonies of death; needful in the world of spirits; needful millions of ages hence; needful to all eternity; and without it we are eternally undone. This is a necessity indeed! A necessity, in comparison of which all other necessities are but superfluities.

I hope by this short explication I have cleared the way through your understandings to your hearts, and to your hearts I would now address myself. However solemnly I may speak upon this interesting subject, you will have more reason to blame me for the deficiency, than for the excess of my zeal and solemnity. I hope I have entered this sacred place to-day with a sincere desire to do some service to your immortal souls before I leave it. And may I not hope you have come here with a desire to receive some advantage? If not, you may number this seeming act of religion among the sins of your life; you have come here to-day to sin away these sacred hours in hypocrisy and a profane mockery of the great God. But if you are willing to receive any benefit, hear attentively: hear, that your souls may live.

My first request to you is, that you would make this passage the test of your characters, and seriously inquire whether you have lived in the world as those that really and practically believe that this is the one thing of absolute necessity. Are not all the joys of heaven and your immortal souls worth the little pains of seriously putting this short question to your consciences? Review your life, look into your hearts, and inquire, has this

one thing lain more upon your hearts than all other things together? Has this been, above all other things, the object of your most vehement desires, your most earnest endeavors, and eager pursuit? I do not ask whether you have heard or read that this one thing is necessary, or whether you have sometimes talked about it. I do not ask whether you have paid to God the compliment of appearing in his house once a week, or of performing him a little lip-service morning and evening in your families, or in your closets, after you have served yourselves and the world all the rest of your time, without one affectionate thought of God. Nor do I inquire whether in a pang of horror after the commission of some gross sin, you have tried to make your conscience easy by a few prayers and tears, of which you form an opiate to cast you again into a dead sleep in sin; I do not ask whether you have performed many actions that are materially good, and abstained from many sins.

All this you may have done, and yet have neglected the one thing needful all your lives.

But I ask you, whether this one thing needful has been habitually uppermost in your hearts, the favorite object of your desires, the prize of your most vigorous endeavors, the supreme happiness of your souls, and the principal object of your concern above all things in the world? Sirs, you may now hear this question with stupid unconcern and indifferency; but I must tell you, you will find, another day, how much depends upon it. In that day it will be found, that the main difference between true Christians and the various classes of sinners is this;—God, Christ, holiness, and the concerns of eternity, are habitually uppermost in the hearts of the former; but, to the latter, they are generally but things by the by; and the world engrosses the vigor of their souls, and is the principal concern of their lives.

To serve God, to obtain his favor, and to be happy for ever in his love, is the main business of the saint, to which all the concerns of the world and the flesh must give way; but to live in ease, in reputation, in pleasure, or riches, or to gratify himself in the pursuit and enjoyment of some created good, this is the main concern of the sinner. The one has made a hearty resignation of himself, and all that he is and has, to God, through Jesus Christ; he serves him with the best, and thinks nothing too good for him. But the other has his exceptions and reserves; he will serve God willingly, provided it may consist with his ease, and pleasure, and temporal interest; he will serve God with a bended knee, and the external forms of devotion; but, with the vigor of his spirit, he serves the world and his flesh. This is the grand difference between a true Christian and the various forms of half-Christians and hypocrites. And certainly this is a difference that may be discerned. The tenor of a man's practice, and the object of his love, especially of his highest love and practical esteem, must certainly be very distinguishable from a thing by the by, and from the object of a languid passion, or mere speculation. Therefore, if you make but an impartial trial, you have reason to hope you will make a just discovery of your true character; or if you cannot make the discovery yourselves, call in the assistance of others. Ask not your worldly and sensual neighbors, for they are but poor judges, and they will flatter you in self-defense; but ask your pious friends whether you have spoke and acted like persons that practically made this the one thing needful. They can tell you what subject you talked most seriously about, what pursuit seemed to lie most upon your hearts, and chiefly to exhaust your activity. Brethren, I beseech you, by one means or other, to bring this matter to an issue, and let it hang in suspense no longer. Why are you so indifferent how this matter stands with you? Is it because you imagine you



may be true Christians, and obtain salvation, however this matter be with you? But be not deceived: no man can serve two masters, whose commands are contrary; and ye cannot serve God and mammon, with a service equally devoted to both. If any man love the world, with supreme affection, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: a miserable harvest indeed; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap everlasting life. Gal. 6:7,8. Therefore you may be sure that if you live after the flesh, you shall die; and that you can never enjoy the one thing needful unless you mind and pursue it above all other things.

But I shall not urge you any farther to try yourselves by this test. I take it for granted the consciences of some of you have determined the matter, and that you are plainly convicted of having hitherto neglected the one thing needful. Allow me then honestly to expose your conduct in its proper colors, and tell you what you have been doing while you were busy about other things, and neglecting this one thing needful.

1. However well you have improved your time for other purposes, you have lost it all, unless you have improved it in securing the one thing needful. The proper notion of time is, that it is a space for repentance. Time is given us to prepare for eternity. If this is done, we have lived long enough, and the great end of time and life is answered, whatever else be undone. But if this be undone, you have lived in vain, and all your time is lost, however busily and successfully you have pursued other things. Though you have studied yourselves pale to furnish your minds with knowledge; though you have spent the night and the day in heaping up riches, or climbing up to the pinnacle of honor, and not lost an hour that

might be turned to your advantage, yet you have been most wretchedly fooling away your time, and lost it all, if you have not laid it out in securing the one thing needful. And, believe me, time is a precious thing. So it will appear in a dying hour, or in the eternal world, to the greatest spendthrift among you. Then, oh for a year, or even a week, or a day, to secure that one thing which you are now neglecting! And will you now waste your time, while you enjoy it? Shall so precious a blessing be lost? By this calculation, how many days, how many years, have you lost forever! For, is not that lost which is spent in crossing the end for which it was given you? Time was given you to secure an eternity of happiness, but you have spent it in adding sin to sin, and consequently in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. And is not your time than a thousand times worse than lost? Let me tell you, if you continue in this course to the end, you will wish a thousand times, either that you had never had one hour's time given you, or that you had made a better use of it.

2. Whatever else you have been doing, you have lost your labor with your time, if you have not labored above all things for this one thing needful. No doubt you have been busy about something all your life; but you might as well have been idle; you have been busy in doing nothing. You have perhaps toiled through many anxious and laborious days, and your nights have shared in the anxieties and labors of your days. But if you have not labored for the one thing necessary, all your labor and all the fruits of it are lost. Indeed God may have made use of you for the good of his church, or of your country, as we make use of thorns and briars to stop a breach, or of useless wood for firing to warm our families; but as to any lasting and solid advantage to yourselves, all your labor has been lost.

But this is not all. Not only your secular labor is lost, but all your toil and pains, if you have used any in the duties of religion, they are lost likewise. Your reading, hearing, praying, and communicating; all your serious thoughts of death and eternity, all your struggles with particular lusts and temptations, all the kind offices you have done to mankind, all are lost, since you have performed them by halves with a lukewarm heart, and have not made the one thing needful your great business and pursuit. All these things will not save you; and what is that religion good for which will not save your souls? What do those religious endeavors avail which will suffer you to fall into hell after all? Certainly such religion is vain.

And now, my hearers, do you believe this, or do you not? If you do, will you, dare you still go on in the same course? If you do not believe it, let me reason the matter with you a little. You will not believe that all the labor and pains you have taken all your life have been quite lost: no, you now enjoy the fruits of them. But show me now, if you can, what you have gotten by all that stir you have made, that will follow one step beyond the grave, or that you can call your own to-morrow. Where is that sure immortal acquisition that you can carry with you into the eternal world? Were you to die this hour, would it afford you any pleasure to reflect that you have lived a merry life, and had a satiety of sensual pleasures, or that you have labored for riches and honors, and perhaps acquired them? Will this reflection afford you pleasure or pain? Will this abate the agony of eternal pain, or make up for the loss of heaven, which you willfully incurred by an over-eager pursuit of these perishing vanities?

Do you not see the extravagant folly, the distracted frenzy of such a conduct? Alas! While you are neglecting the one thing needful, what are you doing but spending your time and labor in laborious idleness,

honorably debasing yourselves, delightfully tormenting yourselves, wisely befooling yourselves, and frugally impoverishing and ruining yourselves forever? A child or an idiot riding upon a staff, building their mimic houses, or playing with a feather, are not so foolish as you in your conduct, while you are so seriously pursuing the affairs of time, and neglecting those of eternity. But,

3. This is not all: all your labor and pains have not only been lost while you have neglected this one thing, but you have taken pains to ruin yourselves, and labored hard all your lives for your own destruction. To this you will immediately answer, “God forbid that we should do anything to hurt ourselves; we were far from having any such design.” But the question is not, what was your design? But, what is the unavoidable consequence of your conduct, according to the nature of things, and the unchangeable constitution of heaven? Whatever your design in going on in sin, the wages of sin is death, eternal death. You may indulge the carnal mind, and walk after the flesh, and yet hope no bad consequence will follow: but God has told you that to be carnally minded is death, and that if you live after the flesh you shall die. The robber on the highway has no design to be hanged; but this does not render him a jot safer. Therefore, design what you will, it is certain you are positively destroying yourselves while your labors about other things hinder you from pursuing the one thing needful. And does not this thought shock you, that you should be acting the part of enemies against yourselves, the most pernicious and deadly enemies to yourselves in the whole universe? No enemy in the whole universe could do you that injury without your consent which you are doing to yourselves. To tempt you to sin is all the devil can do; but the temptation alone can do you no injury; it is consenting to it that ruins you; and this consent is your own

voluntary act. All the devils in hell could not force you to sin without your consent, and therefore all the devils in hell do not injure you as you do yourselves. God has not given them so much power over you as he has given you over yourselves; and this power you abuse to your own destruction.

Oh! In what a distracted state is the world of the ungodly! If any other man be their enemy, how do they resent it! But they are their own worst enemies, and yet never fall out with themselves. If another occasion them a disappointment in their pursuits, defraud them of an expected good, or lay schemes to make them miserable, what sullen grudge, what keen revenge, what flaming resentments immediately rise in their breasts against him! And yet they are all their lives disinheriting themselves of the heavenly inheritance, laying a train to blow up all their own hopes, and heaping a mountain of guilt upon themselves to sink them into the bottomless pit: and all this while they think they are the best friends to themselves, and consulting their own interest. As for the devil, the common enemy of mankind, they abhor him, and bless themselves from him; but they are worse to themselves than devils, and yet never fall out with themselves for it.

This, sinners, may seem a harsh representation of your conduct, but, alas! It is true. And if it be so shocking to you to hear it, what must it be to be guilty of it! And oh! Think what must be the consequences of such a conduct, such unnatural suicide!

4. If you have hitherto neglected the one thing needful, you have unmanned yourselves, acted beneath and contrary to your own reason, and in plain terms behaved as if you had been out of your senses. If you have the use of your reason, it must certainly tell you for what it was given to

you. And I beseech you to tell me what was it given you for but to serve the God that made you, to secure his favor, to prepare for your eternal state, and to enjoy the supreme good as your portion? Can you once think your reason, that divina particula aura, was given you for such low purposes as the contrivances, labor, and pursuits of this vain life, and to make you a more ingenious sort of brutes? He was master of an unusual share of reason who said, "There is very little difference between having reason and having none, if we had nothing to do with it but cunningly to lay up for our food, and make provision for this corruptible flesh, and had not another life to mind." Therefore I may safely affirm that you have cast away your reason, and acted as if you were out of your wits, if you have not employed your rational powers in the pursuit of the one thing needful. Where was your reason when your dying flesh was preferred to your immortal spirits? Was reason your guide when you chose the trash of this perishing world, and sought it more than the favor of God and all the joys of heaven? Can you pretend to common sense, when you might have had the pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, and a title to heaven, secured to you ere now? But you have neglected all, and instead of having a sure title to heaven, or being prepared for it, you are fitted for destruction, and nothing else; and are only awaiting for a fever or a flux, or some other executioner of divine vengeance, to cut the thread of life, and let you sink to hell by your own weight. Thither you gravitate under the load of sin as naturally as a stone to the center; and you need no other weight to sink you down. What have you done all your life to make a wise man think you truly reasonable? Is that your reason, to be wise to do evil, while to do good you have no knowledge; or to be ingenious and active about the trifles of time, while you neglect that great work for which you were created and redeemed? Can

you be wise and yet not consider your latter end? Nay, can you pretend to so much as common sense, while you sell your eternal salvation for the sordid pleasures of a few flying years? Have you common sense, when you will not keep yourselves out of everlasting fire? What can a madman do worse than willfully destroy himself? And this you are doing every day.

And yet these very persons are proud of their madness, and are apt to fling the charge of folly upon others, especially if they observe some poor weak creatures, though it be but one in five hundred, fall into melancholy, or lose their reason for a time, while they are groaning under a sense of sin, and anxious about their eternal state; then what a clamor against religion and preciseness, as the ready way to make people run mad! Then they even dare to publish their resolution that they will not read and pore so much upon these things, lest it should drive them out of their senses. O miserable mortals! Is it possible they should be more dangerously mad than they are already? Do you lay out your reason, your strength, and time in pursuing vain shadows, and in feeding a mortal body for the grave, while the important realities of the eternal world, and the salvation of your immortal souls are forgotten or neglected? Do you sell your Savior with Judas for a little money, and change your part in God and heaven for the sordid pleasures of sin, which are but for a season? And are you afraid of seriously reflecting upon this course, that you may reform it, for fear such thoughts should make you mad? What greater madness than this can you fear? Will you run from God, from Christ, from mercy, from the saints, from heaven itself, for fear of being mad? Alas! You are mad in the worst sense already. Will you run to hell to prove yourselves in your senses? He was a wise and good man who said, "Though the loss of a man's understanding is a grievous affliction, and such as I hope God will never lay upon me, yet I

had a thousand times rather go distracted to Bedlam with the excessive care about my salvation, than to be one of you that cast away the care of your salvation for fear of being distracted, and will go among the infernal Bedlams into hell for fear of being mad.” Distraction in itself is not a moral evil, but a physical, like those disorders of the body from which it often proceeds, and therefore is no object for punishment; and had you no capacity of understanding you would have a cloak for your sin; but your madness is your crime, because it is voluntary, and therefore you must give an account for it to the Supreme Judge.

It would be easy to offer many more considerations to expose the absurdity and danger of your conduct in neglecting the one thing necessary; but these must suffice for the present hour. And I only desire you to consider farther, if this be a just view of the conduct of such as are guilty of this neglect, in what a miserable, pitiable condition is the world in general. I have so often tried the utmost energy of my words upon you with so little success as to many, that I am quite grown weary of them. Allow me therefore for once to borrow the more striking and pungent words of one now in heaven; of one who had more success than almost any of his contemporaries or successors in the important work of “converting sinners from the error of their way and saving souls from death.” I mean that incomparable preacher, Mr. Baxter, who sowed an immortal seed in his parish of Kidderminster, which grows and brings forth fruit to this day. His words have, through the divine blessing, been irresistible to thousands; and oh that such of you, my dear hearers, whose hearts may have been proof against mine, may not be so against his also!

“Look upon this text of Scripture,” says he, “and look also upon the course of the earth, and consider of the disagreement; and whether it be not



still as before the flood, that all the imaginations of man's heart are evil continually. Gen. 6:5. Were it possible for a man to see the affections and motions of all the world at once, as God seeth them, what a pitiful sight it would be! What a stir do they make, alas, poor souls! For they know not what! While they forget, or slight, or hate the one thing needful. What a heap of gadding ants should we see, that do nothing but gather sticks and straws! Look among persons of every rank, in city and country, and look into families about you, and see what trade it is they are most busily driving on, whether it be for heaven or earth! And whether you can discern by their care and labors that they understand what is the one thing necessary! They are as busy as bees; but not for honey, but in spinning such a spider's web as the besom of death will presently sweep down. Job 8:14. They labor hard, but for what? For the food that perisheth, but not for that which endureth to everlasting life. John 6:27. They are diligent seekers; but for what? Not first for God, his kingdom and righteousness, but for that which they might have had as an addition to their blessedness. Matt. 6:33. They are still doing; what are they doing? Even undoing themselves by running away from God, to hunt after the perishing pleasures of the world. Instead of providing for the life to come, they are making provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts. Rom. 13:14. Some of them hear the word of God, but presently choke it by the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this life. Luke 8:14. They are careful and troubled about many things; but the one thing that should be all to them is cast by as if it were nothing. Providing for the flesh and minding the world is the employment of their lives. They labor with a canine appetite for their trash; but to holiness they have no appetite, and are worse than indifferent to the things that are indeed desirable. They have no covetousness for the things which they are commanded earnestly to

covet. 1 Cor. 12:31. They have so little hunger and thirst after righteousness, that a very little or none will satisfy them. Here they are pleading always for moderation, and against too much, and too earnest, and too long; and all is too much with them that is above stark naught, or dead hypocrisy; and all is too earnest and too long that would make religion seem a business, or engage them to seem serious in their own profession, or put them past jest in the worship of God and the matters of their salvation. Let but their children or servants neglect their worldly business, (which I confess they should not do,) and they shall hear of it with both their ears; but if they sin against God, or neglect his word or worship, they shall meet with more patience than Eli's son did: a cold reproof is usually the most; and it is well if they be not encouraged in their sin; it is well if a child or servant that begins to be serious for salvation be not rebuked, derided, and hindered by them. If on their days of labor they oversleep themselves, they shall be sure to be called up to work, (and good reason,) but when do they call them up to prayer? When do they urge them to consider or converse upon the things that concern their everlasting life? The Lord's own day, which is appointed to be set apart for matters of this nature, is wasted in idleness or worldly talk. Come at any time into their company, and you may talk enough, and too much of news, or other men's matters, of their worldly business, sports, and pleasures, but about God and their salvation they have so little to say, and that so heartlessly, and by-the-by, as if they were things that belonged not to their care and duty, and no whit concerned them. Talk with them about the renovation of the soul, the nature of holiness, and the life to come, and you will find them almost as dumb as a fish. The most understand not matters of this nature, nor much desire or care to understand them. If one would teach them personally, they are too old to be catechized

or to learn, though not too old to be ignorant of the matters they were made for and preserved for in the world. They are too wise to learn to be wise, and too good to be taught how to be good, though not too wise to follow the seducements of the devil and the world, nor too good to be the slaves of Satan and the despisers and enemies of goodness. If they do anything which they call serving God, it is some cold and heartless use of words to make themselves believe that for all their sins they shall be saved; so that God will call that a serving their sins and abominations, which they will call a serving of God. Some of them will confess that holiness is good, but they hope God will be merciful to them without it; and some do so hate it, that it is a displeasing irksome thing to them to hear any serious discourse of holiness; and they detest and deride those as fanatical, troublesome precisians that diligently seek the one thing necessary: so that if the belief of the most may be judged by their practices, we may confidently say, that they do not practically believe that ever they should be brought to judgment, or that there is any heaven or hell to be expected: and that their confession of the truth of the Scriptures and the articles of the Christian faith are no proofs that they heartily take them to be true. Who can be such a stranger to the world as not to see that this is the case of the greatest part of men? And, which is worst of all, they go on in this course against all that can be said to them, and will give no impartial, considerate hearing to the truth, which would recover them to their wits, but live as if it would be a felicity to them in hell to think that they came thither by willful resolution, and in despite of the remedy.”

This, sinners, is a true representation of your case, drawn by one that well knew it and lamented it. And what do you now think of it yourselves? What do you think will be the consequence of such a course? Is it safe to persist

in it? Or shall I be so happy as to bring you to a stand? Will you still go on, troubling yourselves with many things? Or will you resolve for the future to mind the one thing needful above all? I beseech you to come to some resolution. Time is on the wing, and does not allow you to hesitate in so plain and important an affair. Do you need any farther excitements? Then I shall try the force of one consideration more contained in my text, and that is necessity.

Remember necessity, the most pressing, absolute necessity, enforces this care upon you. One thing is needful, absolutely needful, and needful above all other things. This, one would think, is such an argument as cannot but prevail. What exploits has necessity performed in the world! What arts has it discovered as the mother of invention! What labors, what fatigues, what sufferings has it undergone! What dangers has it encountered! What difficulties has it overcome! Necessity is a plea which you think will warrant you to do anything and excuse anything. Reasoning against necessity is but reasoning against a hurricane; it bears all before it. To obtain the necessities of life, as they are called, how much will men do and suffer! Nay, with what hardships and perils will they not conflict for things that they imagine necessary, not to their life but to their ease, their honor, or pleasure! But what is this necessity when compared to that which I am now urging upon you? In comparison of this, the most necessary of those things are but superfluities; for if your ease, or honor, or pleasure, or even your life in this world be not absolutely necessary, as they cannot be to the heirs of immortality, then certainly those things which you imagine necessary to your ease, your honor, your pleasure, or mortal life, are still less necessary. But oh! To escape everlasting misery, and to secure everlasting salvation, this is the grand necessity! This will appear necessary in every point of your

immortal duration; necessary when you have done with this world forever, and must leave all its cares, enjoyments, and pursuits behind you. And shall not this grand necessity prevail upon you to work out your salvation, and make that your great business, when a far less necessity, a necessity that will last but a few years at most, set you and the world around you upon such hard labors and eager pursuits for perishing vanities? All the necessity in the world is nothing in comparison of that which lies upon you to work out your salvation; and shall this have no weight? If you do not labor or contrive for the bread that perisheth, you must beg or starve; but if you will not labor for the bread that endureth unto everlasting life, you must burn in hell for ever. You must lie in prison if your debts with men be not paid; but, oh! What is it to the prison of hell, where you must be confined forever if your debts to the justice of God be not remitted, and you do not obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can make satisfaction for them! · You must suffer hunger and nakedness unless you take care to provide food and raiment; but you must suffer eternal banishment from God and all the joys of his presence, if you do not labor to secure the one thing needful. Without the riches of this world you may be rich in faith, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. Without earthly pleasures you may have joy unspeakable and full of glory in the love of God, and the expectation of the kingdom reserved in heaven for you. Without health of body you may have happiness of spirit; and even without this mortal life you may enjoy eternal life. Without the things of the world you may live in want for a little while, but then you will soon be upon an equality with the greatest princes. But without this one thing needful you are undone, absolutely undone. Though you were as rich as Croesus, you “are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Your very being becomes a curse to you. It is your

curse that you are a man, a reasonable creature. It had been infinitely better for you if you had been a toad or a snake, and so incapable of sin and of immortality, and consequently of punishment. Oh then let this grand necessity prevail with you!

I know you have other wants, which you should moderately labor to provide for, but oh how small and of how short continuance! If life and all should be lost, you may more than find all in heaven. But if you miss at this one thing, all the world cannot make up the loss.

Therefore to conclude with the awakening and resistless words of the author I before quoted, “Awake, you sluggish, careless souls! Your house over your head is in a flame! The hand of God is lifted up! If you love yourselves, prevent the stroke. Vengeance is at your backs, the wrath of God pursues your sin, and wo to you if he finds it upon you when he overtaketh you. Away with it speedily! Up and begone; return to God; make Christ and mercy your friends in time, if you love your lives! The Judge is coming! For all that you have heard of it so long, yet still you believe it not. You shall shortly see the majesty of his appearance and the dreadful glory of his face; and yet do you not begin to look about you, and make ready for such a day? Yea, before that day, your separated souls shall begin to reap as you have sowed here. Though now the partition that stands between you and the world to come do keep unbelievers strangers to the things that most concern them, yet death will quickly find a portal to let you in; and then, sinners, you will find such doings there as you little thought of, or did not sensibly regard upon earth. Before your friends will have time enough to wrap up your pale corpse in your winding-sheet, you will see and feel that which will tell you to the quick, that one thing was necessary. If you die without this one thing necessary, before your friends can have finished your

funerals, your souls will have taken up their places among devils in endless torments and despair, and all the wealth, and honor, and pleasure that the world afforded you will not ease you. This is sad, but it is true, sirs; for God hath spoken it. Up, therefore, and bestir you for the life of your souls. Necessity will awake even the sluggard. Necessity, we say, will break through stone walls. The proudest will stoop to necessity: the most slothful will bestir themselves in necessity: the most careless will be industrious in necessity: necessity will make men do anything that is possible to be done. And is not necessity, the highest necessity, your own necessity, able to make you cast away your sins, and take up a holy and heavenly life? O poor souls! Is there a greater necessity for your sin than of your salvation, and of pleasing your flesh for a little time than of pleasing the Lord and escaping everlasting misery? Oh that you would consider what I say! And the Lord give you understanding in all things.” Amen.

# *SERM. XXII. SAINTS SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY, AND THE CERTAIN PERDITION OF SINNERS.*

**1** Pet. 4:18.— *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear.*

This text may sound in your ears like a message from the dead; for it is at the request of our deceased friend' that I now insist upon it. He knew so much from the trials he made in life, that if he should be saved at all, it would be with great difficulty, and if he should escape destruction at all, it would be a very narrow escape; and he also knew so much of this stupid, careless world, that they stood in need of a solemn warning on this head; and therefore desired that his death should give occasion to a sermon on this alarming subject. But now the unknown wonders of the invisible world lie open to his eyes; and now also he can take a full review of his passage through this mortal life; now he sees the many unsuspected dangers he narrowly escaped, and the many fiery darts of the devil which the shield of faith repelled; now, like a ship arrived in port, he reviews the rocks and



shoals he passed through, many of which lay under water and out of sight; and therefore now he is more fully acquainted with the difficulty of salvation than ever. And should he now rise and make his appearance in this assembly in the solemn and dread attire of an inhabitant of the world of spirits, and again direct me to a more proper subject, methinks he would still stand to his choice, and propose it to your serious thoughts, that “if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

The apostle’s principal design in the context seems to be to prepare the Christians for those sufferings which he saw coming upon them, on account of their religion. “Beloved,” says he, “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:” verse 12, “but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings:” it is no strange thing that you should suffer on account of your religion in such a wicked world as this, for Christ the founder of your religion met with the same treatment; and it is enough that the servant be as his master, ver. 13, only he advises them, that if they must suffer, that they did not suffer as malefactors, but only for the name of Christ, ver. 14,15. “Yet,” says he, “if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed;” ver. 16, “for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” He seems to have a particular view to the cruel persecutions that a little after this was raised against the Christians by the tyrant Nero, and more directly to that which was raised against them everywhere by the seditious Jews, who were the most inveterate enemies of Christianity. The dreadful destruction of Jerusalem, which was plainly foretold by Christ in the hearing of St. Peter was now at hand. And from the sufferings which Christians, the favorites of heaven, endured, he infers how much more

dreadful the vengeance would be which should fall upon their enemies, the infidel Jews. If judgment begin at the house of God, his church, what shall be the doom of the camp of rebels? If it begin at us Christians who obey the gospel, what shall be the end of them that obey it not? Alas! What shall become of them? Them that obey not the gospel of God, is a description of the unbelieving Jews, to whom it was peculiarly applicable; and the apostle may have a primary reference to the dreadful destruction of their city and nation which was much more severe than all the sufferings the persecuted Christians had then endured. But I see no reason for confining the apostle's view entirely to this temporal destruction of the Jews; he seems to refer farther to that still more terrible destruction that awaits all that obey not the gospel in the eternal world: that is to say, if the children are so severely chastised in this world, what shall become of rebels in the world to come, the proper state of retribution? How much more tremendous must be their fate!

In the text he carries on the same reflection. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? The righteous is the common character of all good men or true Christians; and the ungodly and sinner are characters which may include the wicked of all nations and ages. Now, says he, if the righteous be but scarcely saved, saved with great difficulty, just saved, and no more, where shall idolaters and vicious sinners appear, whose characters are so opposite?

The abrupt and pungent form of expression is very emphatical. Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? I need not tell you, your own reason will inform you: I appeal to yourselves for an answer, for you are all capable of determining upon so plain a case. Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Alas! It strikes me dumb with horror to think of it: it is so

shocking and terrible that I cannot bear to describe it. Now they are gay, merry, and rich; but when I look a little forward, I see them appear in very different circumstances, and the horror of the prospect is hardly supportable.

St. Peter here supposes that there is something in the condition and character of a righteous man that renders his salvation comparatively easy; something from whence we might expect that he will certainly be saved, and that without much difficulty: and on the other hand, that there is something in the opposite character and condition of the ungodly and the sinner, that gives us reason to conclude that there is no probability at all of their salvation while they continue as such. But he asserts that even the righteous, whose salvation seems so likely and comparatively easy, is not saved without great difficulty; he is just saved, and that is all: what then shall we conclude of the ungodly and the sinner, whose character gives no ground for favorable expectations at all? If our hopes are but just accomplished, with regard to the most promising, what shall become of those whose case is evidently hopeless? Alas! Where shall they appear?

The method in which I intend to prosecute our subject is this:

I. I shall point out the principal difficulties, which even the righteous meet with in the way to salvation.

II. I shall mention those things in the condition and character of the righteous, which render his salvation so promising and seemingly easy, and then show you that, if with all these favorable and hopeful circumstances he is not saved but with great difficulty and danger, those who are of an opposite character, and whose condition is so evidently and apparently desperate, cannot be saved at all.

I. I am to point out the principal difficulties which even the righteous meet with in the way to salvation»

Here I would premise, that such who have become truly religious, and persevered in the way of holiness and virtue to the last, will meet with no difficulty at all to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. The difficulty does not lie here, for the same apostle Peter assures us, that if we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, we shall never fall; but so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:10,11. But the difficulty lies in this, that, all things considered, it is a very difficult thing to obtain, and persevere in real religion in the present corrupt state of things, where we meet with so many temptations and such powerful opposition. Or in other words, it is difficult in such a world as this to prepare for salvation; and this renders it difficult to be saved, because we cannot be saved without preparation.

It must also be observed, that a religious life is attended with the most pure and solid pleasures even in this world; and they who choose it act the wisest part with respect to the present state: they are really the happiest people upon our globe. Yet, were it otherwise, the blessed consequences of a religious life in the eternal world would make amends for all, and recommend such a course, notwithstanding the greatest difficulties and the severest sufferings that might attend it.

But notwithstanding this concession, the Christian course is full of hardships, oppositions, trials, and discouragements. This we may learn from the metaphorical representations of it in the sacred writings, which strongly imply that it is attended with difficulties which require the utmost exertion of all our powers to surmount. It is called a warfare, 1 Tim 1:18; fighting, 2

Tim. 4:7. The graces of the Christian, and the means of begetting and cherishing them, are called weapons of war: there is the shield of faith: the hope of salvation, which is the helmet; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:13,17. The end of the Christian's course is victory after conflict, Rev. 2:7. And Christians are soldiers; and such as must endure hardships, 2 Tim. 2:3. Now a military life, you know, is a scene of labor, hardships and dangers; and therefore so is the Christian life, which is compared to it in these respects, it is compared to a race, Heb. 12:1,2, to wrestling and the other vigorous exercises of the Olympic games, Eph. 6:12; Luke 13:24, to walking in a narrow way, Matt. 7:14, and entering at the strait gate, Luke 13:24. This, my brethren, and this only, is the way to salvation. And is this the way in which you are walking? Or is it the smooth, easy downward road to destruction? You may slide along that without exertion or difficulty, like a dead fish swimming with the stream; but oh! Look before you, and see whither it leads!

The enemies that oppose our religious progress are the devil, the world, and the flesh. These form a powerful alliance against our salvation, and leave no artifice untried to obstruct it.

The things of the world, though good in themselves, are temptations to such depraved hearts as ours. Riches, honors, pleasure, spread their charms, and tempt us to the pursuit of flying shadows to the neglect of the one thing needful. These engross the thoughts and concerns, the affections and labors of multitudes. They engage with such eagerness in an excessive hurry of business and anxious care, or so debauch and stupefy themselves with sensual pleasures, that the voice of God is not heard, the clamors of conscience are drowned, the state of their souls is not inquired into, the interests of eternity are forgotten, the eternal God, the joys of heaven, and

the pains of hell, are cast out of the mind, and disregarded; and they care not for any or all of these important realities, if they can but gratify the lust of avarice, ambition, and sensuality. And are such likely to perform the arduous work of salvation? No; they do not so much as seriously attempt it. Now these things which are fatal to multitudes throw great difficulties in the way even of the righteous man. He finds it hard to keep his mind intent upon his great concern in the midst of such labors and cares as he is obliged to engage in; and frequently he feels his heart estranged from God and ensnared into the ways of sin, his devotion cooled, and his whole soul disordered by these allurements. In short, he finds it one of the hardest things in the world to maintain a heavenly mind in such an earthly region, a spiritual temper, among so many carnal

The men of this world also increase his difficulties. Their vain, trifling, or wicked conversation, their ensnaring examples, their persuasions, false reasonings, reproaches, menaces, and all their arts of flattery and terror, have sometimes a very sensible effect upon him. These would draw him into some guilty compliances, damp his courage, and tempt him to apostatize, were he not always upon his guard; and sometimes in an inadvertent hour he feels their fatal influence upon him. As for the generality, they yield themselves up to these temptations, and make little or no resistance; and thus are carried down the stream into the infernal pit. Alas! How many ruin themselves through a base, unmanly complaisance, and servile conformity to the mode! Believe it, sirs, to be fashionably religious and no more, is to be really irreligious in the sight of God. The way of the multitude may seem easy, pleasant, and sociable; but, alas, my brethren! See where it ends; it leadeth down into destruction. Matt. 7:14.

But in the next place, the greatest difficulty in our way arises from the corruption and wickedness of our own hearts. This is an enemy within; and it is this that betrays us into the hands of our enemies without. When we turn our eyes to this quarter, what vast difficulties rise in our way! Difficulties which are impossible to us, unless the almighty Power enables us to surmount them. Such are a blind mind, ignorant of divine things, or that speculates only upon them, but does not see their reality and dread importance; a mind empty of God and full of the lumber and vanities of this world. Such are a hard heart, insensible of sin, insensible of the glory of God, and the beauties of holiness, and the infinite moment of eternal things. Such are a heart disaffected to God and his service, bent upon sin, and impatient of restraint. Such are wild, unruly passions thrown into a ferment by every trifle, raised by vanities, erroneous in the choice of objects, irregular in their motions, and extravagant in the degree of attachment. Such difficulties are strong, ungovernable lusts and appetites in animal nature, eager for gratification, and turbulent under restraint. And how strangely does this inward corruption indispose men for religion! Hence their ignorance, their security, carelessness, presumptuous hopes, and impenitence. Hence their unwillingness to admit conviction, their resistance to the Holy Spirit, and their contempt of the gospel, their disregard to all religious instructions, their neglect of the means of grace, and the ordinances of Christ, or their careless, formal, lukewarm attendance upon them. Hence their earthly-mindedness, their sensuality, and excessive love of animal pleasures. Hence it is so difficult to awaken them to a just sense of their spiritual condition, and to suitable earnestness in their religious endeavors; and hence their fickleness and inconstancy, their relapses and backslidings, when they have been a little alarmed. Hence it is so difficult

to bring their religious impressions to a right issue, and to lead them to Jesus Christ as the Savior. In short, hence it is that so many thousands perish amidst the means of salvation. These difficulties prove eventually insuperable to the generality: and they never surmount them. But even the righteous, who is daily conquering them by the aid of divine grace, and will at last be more than a conqueror, he still finds many hinderances and discouragements from this quarter. The remains of these innate corruptions still cleave to him in the present state, and these render his progress heavenward so slow and heavy. These render his life a constant warfare, and he is obliged to fight his way through. These frequently check the aspirations of his soul to God, cool his devotion, damp his courage, ensnare his thoughts and affections to things below, and expose him to the successful attacks of temptation. Alas! It is his innate corruption that involves him in darkness and jealousies, in tears and terrors, after hours of spiritual light, joy, and confidence. It is this that banishes him from the comfortable presence of his God, and causes him to go mourning without the light of his countenance. Were it not for this, he would glide along through life easy and unmolested; he would find the ways of religion to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. In short, it is this that lies upon his heart as the heaviest burden, and renders his course so rugged and dangerous. And such of you as do not know this by experience, know nothing at all of true experimental Christianity.

Finally, the devil and his angels are active, powerful, and artful enemies to our salvation: their agency is often unperceived, but it is insinuating, unsuspected, and therefore the more dangerous and successful. These malignant spirits present ensnaring images to the imagination, and no doubt blow the flame of passion and appetite. They labor to banish serious



thoughts from the mind, and entertain it with trifles. They give force to the attacks of temptations from the world, and raise and foment insurrections of sin within. And if they cannot hinder the righteous man from entering upon a religious course, or divert him from it, they will at least render it as difficult, laborious, and uncomfortable to him as possible.

See, my brethren, see the way in which you must walk if you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. In this rugged road they have all walked who are now safe, arrived at their journey's end, the land of rest. They were saved, but it was with great difficulty: they escaped the fatal rocks and shoals, but it was a very narrow escape; and methinks it is with a kind of pleasing horror they now review the numerous dangers through which they passed, many of which they did not perhaps suspect till they were over. And is this the way in which you are walking? Is your religion a course of watchfulness, labor, conflict, and vigorous exertions? Are you indeed in earnest in it above all things in this world? Or are not many of you lukewarm Laodiceans and indifferent Gallios about these things? If your religion (if it may be so called) is a course of security, carelessness, sloth, and formality—alas! If all the vigor and exertion of the righteous man be but just sufficient for his salvation, where, oh where shall you appear? Which leads me,

II. To mention those things in the character and condition of the righteous, which render his salvation so promising and seemingly easy, and then show, that if with all those hopeful circumstances he shall not be saved but with great difficulty, that they, whose character is directly opposite, and has nothing encouraging in it, cannot possibly be saved at all. And this head I shall cast into such a form as to exemplify the text.

1. If those that abstain from immorality and vice be but scarcely saved, where shall the vicious, profligate sinner appear?

It is the habitual character of a righteous man to be temperate and sober, chaste, just, and charitable; to revere the name of God, and everything sacred, and religiously observe the holy hours devoted to the service of God. This is always an essential part of his character, though not the whole of it. Now such a man looks promising; he evidently appears so far prepared for the heavenly state, because he is so far conformed to the law of God, and free from those enormities which are never found in the region of happiness. And if such shall scarcely be saved, where shall those of the opposite character appear? Where shall the brute of a drunkard, the audacious swearer, the scoffer at religion, the unclean, lecherous wretch, the liar, the defrauder, the thief, the extortioner, the Sabbath-breaker, the reveler, where shall these appear? Are these likely to stand in the congregation of the righteous, or to appear in the presence of God with joy? Is there the least likelihood that such shall be saved? If you will regard the authority of an inspired apostle in the case, I can direct you to those places where you may find his express determination. 1 Cor. 6:9,10. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." So Gal. 5:19-21. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, heresies, seditions, envying's, revellings, and such like, of the which I tell you before;" that is, I honestly forewarn you, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom

of God. Rev. 21:8. “The fearful, (that is, the cowardly in the cause of religion,) the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” You see, my brethren, the declarations of the Scripture are express enough and repeated on this point. And are there not some of you here who indulge yourselves in one or other of these vices, and yet hope to be saved in that course? That is, you hope your Bible and your religion too are false; for it is only on that supposition that your hope of salvation can be accomplished. Alas! Will you venture your eternal all upon the truth of such a blasphemous supposition as this? But,

2. If those that conscientiously perform the duties of religion be scarcely saved, where shall the neglecters of them appear?

The righteous are characterized as persons that honestly endeavor to perform all the duties they owe to God. They devoutly read and hear his word, and make divine things their study; they are no strangers to the throne of grace; they live a life of prayer in their retirements, and in a social capacity. They make their families little churches, in which divine worship is solemnly performed. Let others do as they will; as for them and their houses, like Joshua, they will serve the Lord: Josh. 24:15. They gratefully commemorate the sufferings of Christ, and give themselves up to him at his table; and seriously improve all the ordinances of the gospel. In short, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, they walk in all the commandments and ordinances of God, blameless: Luke 1:6. This is their prevailing and habitual character. And there is something in this character that gives reason to presume they will be saved; for they have now a relish for the service of God, in which the happiness of heaven consists; they are training up in the humble forms of devotion in the church below, for the more exalted

employments of the church triumphant on high. Now if persons of this character are but scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly appear, who persist in the willful neglect of these known duties of religion? Can they be saved who do not so much as use the means of salvation? Can those who do not study their Bible, the only directory to eternal life, expect to find the way thither? Can prayerless souls receive answers to prayer? Will all the bliss of heaven be thrown away upon such as do not think it worth their while importunately to ask it? Are they likely to be admitted into the general assembly and church of the Firstborn in heaven, who do not endeavor to make their families little circles of religion here upon earth? In a word, are they likely to join forever in the devotions of the heavenly state, who do not accustom themselves to these sacred exercises in this preparatory state? Will you venture your souls upon it that you shall be saved, notwithstanding these improbabilities, or rather impossibilities? Alas! Are there any of you that have no better hopes of heaven than these? Where, then, will you appear?

3. If they that are more than externally moral and religious in their conduct, that have been born again, created in Christ Jesus to good works, as every man that is truly righteous has been; if such, I say, be but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who rest in their mere outward morality, their proud self-righteous virtue, and their religious formalities, and have never been made new creatures, never had the inward principles of action changed by the power of God, and the inbred disorders of the heart rectified? Where shall they appear who have nothing but a self-sprung religion, the genuine offspring of degenerate nature, and never had a supernatural principle of grace implanted in their souls? Has that solemn asseveration of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, lost all its force, and

become falsehood in our age and country? “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:” John 3:3. Is there no weight in such apostolic declarations as these? “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God:” 2 Cor. 5:17. “Neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision:” Gal. 6:15: that is to say, a conformity to the rituals of the Jewish or Christian religion availeth nothing, but the new creature. Can men flatter themselves they shall be saved by the Christian religion, in opposition to these plain, strong, and repeated declarations of the Christian revelation? And yet, are there not many here who are entirely ignorant of this renovation of the temper of their mind, of this inward, heaven-born religion?

4. If they that are striving to enter in at the strait gate and pressing into the kingdom of heaven, do but just obtain admission; if they who forget the things that are behind, and reach after those that are before them, and press with all their might towards the goal, do scarcely obtain the prize, what shall become of those lukewarm, careless, formal, presumptuous professors of Christianity who are so numerous among us? Where shall they appear who have but a form of godliness without the power, 2 Tim. 3:5; and have no spiritual life in their religion, but only a name to live? Rev. 3:1. If those whose hearts are habitually solicitous about their eternal state, who labor in earnest for the immortal bread, who pray with unutterable groans, Rom. 8:26; who, in short, make the care of their souls the principal business of their life, and in some measure proportion their industry and earnestness to the importance and difficulty of the work; if such are but scarcely saved, with all their labor and pains, where shall they appear who are at ease in Zion, Amos 6:1, whose religion is but a mere indifferency, a thing by-the-by

with them? If we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven unless our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matt. 5:20, where shall they appear whose righteousness is far short of theirs? And are there not many such in this assembly? Alas! My brethren, where do you expect to appear?

5. If they that have believed in Jesus Christ, which is the grand condition of salvation, be but scarcely saved, where shall the unbeliever appear?

Faith in Christ is an essential ingredient in the character of a righteous man; and faith cannot be implanted in our hearts till we have been made deeply sensible of our sins, of our condemnation by the law of God, and our utter inability to procure pardon and salvation by the merit of our repentance, reformation, or anything we can do. And when we are reduced to this extremity, then we shall listen with eager ears to the proposal of a Savior. And when we see his glory and sufficiency, and cast our guilty souls upon him; when we submit to his commands, depend entirely upon his atonement, and give up ourselves to God through him, then we believe. Now, if they who thus believe, to whom salvation is so often ensured, be not saved but with great difficulty, where shall those appear who never have experienced those exercises which are the antecedents or constituents of saving faith? Who have never seen their own guilt and helplessness in an affecting light; who have never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; who have never submitted to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and who do not live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God? Alas! Are they likely to be saved who are destitute of the grand pre-requisite of salvation? And yet, is not this the melancholy case of some of you? You may not be avowed unbelievers; you may believe there is one God, and that Jesus is the true Messiah: in this you do well, but still it is no mighty attainment, for the

devils also believe and tremble, and you may have this speculative faith, and yet be wholly destitute of the faith of the operation of God, the precious faith of God's elect; that faith which purifies the heart, produces good works, and unites the soul to Jesus Christ. Certainly the having or not having of such a faith, must make a great difference in a man's character, and must be followed by a proportionally different doom. And if they that have it be but scarcely saved, I appeal to yourselves, can they be saved at all who have it not?

6. If true penitents be scarcely saved, where shall the impenitent appear?

It is the character of the righteous that he is deeply affected with sorrow for his sins in heart and practice; that he hates them without exception with an implacable enmity; that he strives against them, and would resist them even unto blood; that his repentance is attended with reformation, and that he forsakes those things for the commission of which his heart is broken with sorrows. Now, repentance appears evidently to the common reason of mankind a hopeful preparative for acceptance with God and eternal happiness; and therefore if they who repent are saved with great difficulty, where shall they appear who persist impenitent in sin? Where shall they appear who have hard, unbroken hearts in their breasts, who are insensible of the evil of sin, who indulge themselves in it, and cannot be persuaded to forsake it? Can you be at any loss to know the doom of such, after Christ has told us with his own lips, which never pronounced a harsh censure? Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luke 13:3,5. And are there not some of this character in this assembly? Alas! There is not the least likelihood, or even possibility of your salvation in such a condition.

7. The righteous man has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and it produces the usual sentiments and conduct of love towards him. God is

dearer to him than all other things in heaven and earth: the strength of his heart, and his portion forever. Psalm 73:25,26. His affectionate thoughts fix upon him, Psalm 63:6; he rejoices in the light of his countenance, Psalm 4:7; and longs and languishes for him in his absence, Psalm 42:1,2, and 63:1; Cant. 3:1. His love is a powerful principle of willing obedience, and carries him to keep his commandments. 1 John 5:3. He delights in the law and service of God, and in communion with him in his ordinances. Now, such a principle of love is a very hopeful preparative for heaven, the region of love, and for the enjoyment of God. Such a one would take pleasure in him and in his service, and therefore he certainly shall never be excluded. But if even such are but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who are destitute of the love of God? There are few indeed but pretend to be lovers of God, but their love has not the inseparable properties of that sacred passion. Their pretense to it is an absurdity, and if put into language, would be such jargon as this, "Lord, I love thee above all things, though I hardly ever affectionately think of thee; I love thee above all, though I am not careful to please thee; I love thee above all, though my conduct towards thee is quite the reverse of what it is towards one I love." Will such an inconsistency as this pass for genuine supreme love to God, when it will not pass for common friendship among men? No, such have not the least spark of that heavenly fire in their breasts, for their carnal mind is enmity against God. And are these likely to be saved? Likely to be admitted into the region of love, where there is not one cold or disloyal heart? Likely to be happy in the presence and service of that God to whom they are disaffected? Alas I no. Where, then, shall they appear? Oh! In what forlorn, remote region of eternal exile from the blessed God!



I shall now conclude with a few reflections. 1. You may hence see the work of salvation is not that easy trifling thing which many take it to be. They seem mighty cautious of laying out too much pains upon it; and they cannot bear that people should make so much ado, and keep such a stir and noise about it. For their part, they hope to go to heaven as well as the best of them, without all this preciseness and upon these principles they act. They think they can never be too much in earnest, or too laborious in the pursuit of earthly things; but religion is a matter by-the-by with them; only the business of an hour once a week. But have these learned their religion from Christ the founder of it, or from his apostles whom he appointed teachers of it? No; they have formed some easy system from their own imaginations suited to their depraved taste, indulgent to their sloth and carnality, and favorable to their lusts, and this they call Christianity. But you have seen this is not the religion of the Bible; this is not the way to life laid out by God, but it is the smooth downward road to destruction. Therefore,

2. Examine yourselves to which class you belong, whether to that of the righteous, who shall be saved, though with difficulty, or to that of the ungodly and the sinner, who must appear in a very different situation. To determine this important inquiry, recollect the sundry parts of the righteous man's character which I have briefly described, and see whether they belong to you. Do you carefully abstain from vice and immorality? Do you make conscience of every duty of religion. Have you ever been born again of God, and made more than externally religious? Are you sensible of the difficulties in your way from Satan, the world, and the flesh? And do you exert yourselves as in a field of battle or in a race? Do you work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and press into the kingdom of God? Are you true believers, penitents, and lovers of God? Are these or the contrary

the constituents of your habitual character? I pray you, make an impartial trial, for much depends upon it.

3. If this be your habitual character, be of good cheer, for you shall be saved, though with difficulty. Be not discouraged when you fall into fiery trials, for they are no strange things in the present state. All that have walked in the same narrow road before you have met with them, but now they are safe arrived in their eternal home. Let your dependence be upon the aids of divine grace to bear you through, and you will overcome at last. But,

4. If your character be that of the ungodly and the sinner, pause and think, where shall you appear at last? When, like our deceased friend, you leave this mortal state, and launch into regions unknown, where will you then appear? Must it not be in the region of sin, which is your element now? In the society of the devils, whom you resemble in temper, and imitate in conduct? Among the trembling criminals at the left hand of the Judge, where the ungodly and sinners shall all be crowded? If you continue such as you now are, have you any reason at all to hope for a more favorable doom?

I shall conclude with a reflection to exemplify the context in another view, that is, “If judgment begin at the house of God,” what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel? If the righteous, the favorites of heaven, suffer so much in this world, what shall sinners, with whom God is angry every day, and who are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, what shall they suffer in the eternal’ world, the proper place for rewards and punishments, and where an equitable Providence deals with every man according to his works? If the children are chastised with various calamities, and even die in common with the rest of mankind, what shall be the doom of enemies and rebels? If those meet with so many difficulties in the pursuit of salvation, what shall these suffer in enduring damnation? If

the infernal powers are permitted to worry Christ's sheep, how will they rend and tear the wicked as their proper prey? Oh that you may in this your day know the things that belong to your peace, before they are forever hid from your eyes. Luke 19:42.

*SERM. XXIII.*  
*INDIFFERENCE TO LIFE*  
*URGED FROM ITS*  
*SHORTNESS AND*  
*VANITY.*

**1** Cor. 7:29,31,30.— *But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away.*

A creature treading every moment upon the slippery brink of the grave, and ready every moment to shoot the gulf of eternity, and launch away to some unknown coast, ought to stand always in the posture of serious expectation; ought every day to be in his own mind taking leave of this world, breaking off the connections of his heart from it, and preparing for his last remove into that world in which he must reside, not for a few months or years as in this, but through a boundless everlasting duration. Such a situation requires habitual, constant thoughtfulness, abstraction from

the world, and serious preparation for death and eternity. But when we are called, as we frequently are, to perform the last sad offices to our friends and neighbors who have taken their flight a little before us; when the solemn pomp and horrors of death strike our senses, then certainly it becomes us to be unusually thoughtful and serious. Dying beds, the last struggles and groans of dissolving nature, pale, cold, ghastly corpses:

*“The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave:*

*The deep damp vault, the darkness and the worm;”*

these are very alarming monitors of our own mortality: these out-preach the loudest preacher; and they must be deep and senseless rocks, and not men, who do not hear and feel their voice. Among the numberless instances of the divine skill in bringing good out of evil, this is one, that past generations have sickened and died to warn their successors. One here and there also is singled out of our neighborhood or families, and made an example, a memento mori, to us that survive, to rouse us out of our stupid sleep, to give us the signal of the approach of the last enemy, death, to constrain us to let go our eager grasp of this vain world, and set us upon looking out and preparing for another. And may I hope my hearers are come here to-day determined to make this improvement of this melancholy occasion, and to gain this great advantage from our loss? To this I call you as with a voice from the grave; and therefore he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

One great reason of men’s excessive attachment to the present state, and their stupid neglect of the concerns of eternity, is their forming too high an estimate of the affairs of time in comparison with those of eternity. While the important realities of the eternal world are out of view, unthought of, and disregarded, as, alas! They generally are by the most of mankind, what

mighty things in their esteem are the relations, the joys and sorrows, the possessions and bereavements, the acquisitions and pursuits of this life? What airs of importance do they put on in their view? How do they engross their anxious thoughts and cares, and exhaust their strength and spirits! To be happy, to be rich, to be great and honorable, to enjoy your fill of pleasure in this world, is not this a great matter, the main interest in many of you? Is not this the object of your ambition, your eager desire and laborious pursuit? But to consume away your life in sickness and pain, in poverty and disgrace, in abortive schemes and disappointed pursuits, what a serious calamity, what a huge affliction is this in your esteem? What is there in the compass of the universe that you are so much afraid of, and so cautiously shunning? Whether large profits or losses in trade be not a mightier matter, ask the busy, anxious merchant. Whether poverty be not a most miserable state, ask the poor that feel it, and the rich that fear it. Whether riches be not a very important happiness, ask the possessors; or rather ask the restless pursuers of them, who expect still greater happiness from them than those that are taught by experience can flatter themselves with. Whether the pleasures of the conjugal state are not great and delicate, consult the few happy pairs here and there who enjoy them. Whether the loss of an affectionate husband and a tender father be not a most afflictive bereavement, a torturing separation of heart from heart, or rather a tearing of one's heart in pieces, ask the mourning, weeping widow, and fatherless children, when hovering round his dying-bed, or conducting his dear remains to the cold grave. In short, it is evident from a thousand instances, that the enjoyments, pursuits, and sorrows of this life are mighty matters! Nay, are all in all in the esteem of the generality of mankind. These are the

things they most deeply feel, the things about which they are chiefly concerned, and which are the objects of their strongest passions.

But is this a just estimate of things? Are the affairs of this world then indeed so interesting and all-important?

Yes, if eternity be a dream, and heaven and hell but majestic chimeras, or fairy lands; if we were always to live in this world, and had no concern with anything beyond it; if the joys of earth were the highest we could hope for, or its miseries the most terrible we could fear, then indeed we might take this world for our all, and regard its affairs as the most important that our nature is capable of. But this I say, brethren, (and I pronounce it as the echo of an inspired apostle's voice,) this I say, the time is short; the time of life in which we have anything to do with these affairs is a short, contracted span. Therefore it remaineth, that is, this is the inference we should draw from the shortness of time, they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it, or using it to excess; for the fashion of this world, these tender relations, this weeping and rejoicing, this buying, possessing, and using this world passeth away. The phantom will soon vanish, the shadow will soon fly off; and they that have wives or husbands in this transitory life, will in reality be as though they had none; and they that weep now, as though they wept not; and they that now rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that now buy, possess and use this world, as though they never had the least property in it. This is the solemn, mortifying doctrine I am now to inculcate upon you in the further illustration of the several parts of my text; a doctrine justly alarming to the lovers of this world, and the neglecters of that life which is to come.

When St. Paul pronounces anything with an unusual air of solemnity and authority, and after the formality of an introduction to gain attention, it must be a matter of uncommon weight, and worthy of the most serious regard. In this manner he introduces the funeral sentiments in my text. This I say, brethren; this I solemnly pronounce as the mouth of God: this I declare as a great truth but little regarded; and which therefore there is much need I should repeatedly declare: this I say with all the authority of an apostle, a messenger from heaven; and I demand your serious attention to what I am going to say.

And what is it he is introducing with all this solemn formality? Why, it is an old, plain, familiar truth universally known and confessed, namely, that the time of our continuance in this world is short. But why so much formality in introducing such a common plain truth, as this? Because, however generally it be known and confessed, it is very rarely regarded; and it requires more than even the most solemn address of an apostle to turn the attention of a thoughtless world to it. How many of you, my brethren, are convinced against your wills of this melancholy truth, and yet turn every way to avoid the mortifying thought, are always uneasy when it forces itself upon your minds, and do not suffer it to have a proper influence upon your temper and practice, but live as if you believed the time of life were long, and even everlasting? Oh! When will the happy hour come when you will think and act like those who believe that common, uncontroverted truth, that the time of life is short? Then you would no longer think of delays, nor contrive artifices to put off the work of your salvation; then you could not bear the thought of such negligent, or languid, feeble endeavors in a work that must be done, and that in so short a time.



This I say, my brethren, the time is short: the time of life is absolutely short; a span, an inch, a hair's breadth. How near the neighborhood between the cradle and the grave! How short the journey from infancy to old age, through all the intermediate stages! Let the few among you who bear the marks of old age upon you in gray hairs, wrinkles, weakness, and pains, look back upon your tiresome pilgrimage through life, and does it not appear to you, as though you commenced men but yesterday? And how little a way can you trace it back till you are lost in the forgotten unconscious days of infancy, or in that eternal non-existence in which you lay before your creation! But they are but a very few that drag on their lives through seventy or eighty years. Old men can hardly find contemporaries: a new race has started up, and they are become almost strangers in their own neighborhoods. By the best calculations that have been made, at least one half of mankind die under seven years old. They are little particles of life, sparks of being just kindled and then quenched, or rather dismissed from their suffocating confinement in clay, that they may aspire, blaze out, and mingle with their kindred flames in the eternal world, the proper region, the native element of spirits.

And how strongly does the shortness of this life prove the certainty of another? Would it be worthwhile, would it be consistent with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, to send so many infant millions of reasonable creatures into this world, to live the low life of a vegetable or an animal for a few moments, or days, or years, if there were no other world for these young immortals to remove to, in which their powers might open, enlarge, and ripen? Certainly men are not such insects of a day: certainly this is not the last stage of human nature: certainly there is an eternity; there is a heaven and a hell:—otherwise we might expostulate with our Maker, as

David once did upon that supposition, Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? Psalm. 89:47.

In that awful eternity we must all be in, a short time. Yes, my brethren, I may venture to prophesy that, in less than seventy or eighty years, the most, if not all this assembly, must be in some apartment of that strange untried world. The merry, unthinking, irreligious multitude in that doleful mansion which I must mention, grating as the sound is to their ears, and that is hell! And the pious, penitent, believing few in the blissful seats of heaven. There we shall reside a long, long time indeed, or rather through a long, endless eternity. Which leads me to add,

That the time of life is short absolutely in itself, so especially it is short comparatively; that is, in comparison with eternity. In this comparison, even the long life of Methuselah and the antediluvians shrink into a mere point, a nothing. Indeed no duration of time, however long, will bear the comparison. Millions of millions of years! As many years as the sands upon the sea-shore! As many years as the particles of dust in this huge globe of earth; as many years as the particles of matter in the vaster heavenly bodies that roll above us, and even in the whole material universe, all these years do not bear so much proportion to eternity as a moment, a pulse, or the twinkling of an eye, to ten thousand ages! Not so much as a hair's breadth to the distance from the spot where we stand to the farthest star, or the remotest corner of creation. In short, they do not bear the least imaginable proportion at all; for all this length of years, though beyond the power of distinct enumeration to us, will as certainly come to an end as an hour or a moment; and when it comes to an end, it is entirely and irrecoverably past; but eternity (oh the solemn, tremendous sound!) eternity will never, never, never come to an end! Eternity will never, never, never be past!

And is this eternity, this awful, all-important eternity, entailed upon us? Upon us, the offspring of the dust? The creatures of yesterday? Upon us, who a little while ago were less than a gnat, less than a mote, were nothing? Upon us who are every moment liable to the arrest of death, sinking into the grave, and moldering into dust one after another in a thick succession? Upon us whose thoughts and cares, and pursuits are so confined to time and earth, as if we had nothing to do with anything beyond? Oh! Is this immense inheritance unalienably ours? Yes, brethren, it is; reason and revelation prove our title beyond all dispute. It is an inheritance entailed upon us, whether we will or not; whether we have made it our interest it should be ours or not. To command ourselves into nothing is as much above our power as to bring ourselves into being. Sin may make our souls miserable, but it cannot make them mortal. Sin may forfeit a happy eternity, and render our immortality a curse; so that it would be better for us if we never had been born; but sin cannot put an end to our being, as it can to our happiness, nor procure for us the shocking relief of rest in the hideous gulf of annihilation.

And is a little time, a few months or years, a great matter to us? To us who are heirs of an eternal duration? How insignificant is a moment in seventy or eighty years! But how much more insignificant is even the longest life upon earth, when compared with eternity! How trifling are all the concerns of time to those of immortality! What is it to us who are to live forever, whether we live happy or miserable for an hour? Whether we have wives, or whether we have none; whether we rejoice, or whether we weep; whether we buy, possess, and use this world; or whether we consume away our life in hunger, and nakedness, and the want of all things? It will be all one in a little, little time. Eternity will level all; and eternity is at the door.

And how shall we spend this eternal duration that is thus entailed upon us? Shall we sleep it away in a stupid insensibility or in a state of indifferency, neither happy nor miserable? No, no, my brethren; we must spend it in the height of happiness or in the depth of misery. The happiness and misery of the world to come will not consist in such childish toys as those that give us pleasure and pain in this infant state of our existence, but in the most substantial realities suitable to an immortal spirit, capable of vast improvements and arrived at its adult age. Now, as the apostle illustrates it, we are children, and we speak like children, we understand like children; but then we shall become men, and put away childish things. 1 Cor. 13:11. Then we shall be beyond receiving pleasure or pain from such trifles as excite them in this puerile state. This is not the place of rewards or punishments, and therefore the great Ruler of the world does not exert his perfections in the distribution of either; but eternity is allotted for that very purpose, and therefore he will then distribute rewards and punishments worthy himself, such as will proclaim him God in acts of grace and vengeance, as he has appeared in all his other works. Then he will show his wrath, and make his power known on the vessels of wrath who have made themselves fit for destruction and nothing else; and he will show the riches of the glory of his grace upon the vessels of mercy whom he prepared beforehand for glory. Rom. 9:22,23. Thus heaven and hell will proclaim the God, will show him to be the Author of their respective joys and pains, by their agreeable or terrible magnificence and grandeur. Oh eternity! With what majestic wonders art thou replenished, where Jehovah acts with his own immediate hand, and displays himself God-like and unrivalled, in his exploits both of vengeance and of grace! In this present state, our good and evil are blended; our happiness has some bitter ingredients, and our

miseries have some agreeable mitigations; but in the eternal world good and evil shall be entirely and forever separated; all will be pure, unmingled happiness, or pure, unmingled misery. In the present state the best have not uninterrupted peace within; conscience has frequent cause to make them uneasy; some mote or other falls into its tender eye, and sets it a-weeping; and the worst also have their arts to keep conscience sometimes easy, and silence its clamors. But then conscience will have its full scope. It will never more pass a censure upon the righteous, and it will never more be a friend, or even an inactive enemy to the wicked for so much as one moment. And oh what a perennial fountain of bliss or pain will conscience then be! Society contributes much to our happiness or misery. But what misery can be felt or feared in the immediate presence and fellowship of the blessed God and Jesus (the friend of man); of angels and saints, and all the glorious natives of heaven! But, on the other hand, what happiness can be enjoyed or hoped for, what misery can be escaped in the horrid society of lost, abandoned ghosts of the angelic and human nature; dreadfully mighty and malignant, and rejoicing only in each other's misery; mutual enemies, and mutual tormentors, bound together inseparably in everlasting chains of darkness! Oh the horror of the thought! In short, even a heathen could say,

*“Had I a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths,  
An iron voice, I could not comprehend  
The various forms and punishments of vice.”*

The most terrible images which even the pencil of divine inspiration can draw, such as a lake of fire and brimstone, utter darkness, the blackness of darkness, a never-dying worm, unquenchable everlasting fire, and all the most dreadful figures that can be drawn from all parts of the universe, are not sufficient to represent the punishments of the eternal world. And, on the

other hand, the eye, which has ranged through so many objects, has not seen: the ear, which has had still more extensive intelligence, has not heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, the things that God hath laid up for them that love him. The enjoyments of time fall as much short of those of eternity, as time itself falls short of eternity itself.

But what gives infinite importance to these joys and sorrows is, that they are enjoyed or suffered in the eternal world, they are themselves eternal. Eternal joys! Eternal pains! Joys and pains that will last as long as the King eternal and immortal will live to distribute them! As long as our immortal spirits will live to feel them! Oh what joys and pains are these!

And these, my brethren, are awaiting every one of us. These pleasures, or these pains, are felt this moment by such of our friends and acquaintance as have shot the gulf before us; and in a little, little while, you and I must feel them.

And what then have we to do with time and earth? Are the pleasures and pains of this world worthy to be compared with these? “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;” the enjoyments and sufferings, the labors and pursuits, the laughter and tears of the present state, are all nothing in this comparison. What is the loss of an estate or of a dear relative to the loss of a happy immortality? But if our heavenly inheritance be secure, what though we should be reduced into Job’s forlorn situation, we have enough left more than to fill up all deficiencies. What though we are poor, sickly, melancholy, racked with pains, and involved in every human misery, heaven will more than make amends for all. But if we have no evidences of our title to that, the sense of these transitory distresses may be swallowed up in the just fear of the miseries of eternity. Alas I what avails it that we play away a few

years in mirth and gayety, in grandeur and pleasure, if when these few years are fled, we lift up our eyes in hell, tormented in flames! Oh what are all these things to a candidate for eternity! An heir of everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery!

It is from such convictive premises as these that St. Paul draws his inference in my text; “It remaineth therefore that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it.”

The first branch of the inference refers to the dear and tender relations that we sustain in this life. It remaineth that those that have wives, and by a parity of reason those that have husbands, parents, children, or friends dear as their own souls, be as though they had none. St. Paul is far from recommending a stoical neglect of these dear relations. That he tenderly felt the sensations, and warmly recommended the mutual duties of such relations, appears in the strongest light in other parts of his writings, where he is addressing himself to husbands and wives, parents and children. But his design here is to represent the insignificancy even of these dear relations, considering how short and vanishing they are, and comparing them with the infinite concerns of eternity. These dear creatures we shall be able to call our own for so short a time, that it is hardly worthwhile to esteem them ours now. The concerns of eternity are of so much greater moment, that it is very little matter whether we enjoy these comforts or not. In a few years at most, it will be all one. The dear ties that now unite the hearts of husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend, will be broken forever. In that world where we must all be in a little, little time, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are in this respect like the

angels. And of how small consequence is it to creatures that are to exist for ever in the most perfect happiness or misery, and that must so soon break off all their tender connections with the dear creatures that were united to their hearts in the present transitory state! Of how small consequence is it to such, whether they spend a few years of their existence in all the delights of the conjugal state and the social life, or are forlorn, bereaved, destitute, widowed, childless, fatherless, friendless! The grave and eternity will level all these little inequalities. The dust of Job has no more sense of his past calamities, than that of Solomon who felt so few; and their immortal parts are equally happy in heaven, if they were equally holy upon earth. And of how small consequence is it to Judas now, after he has been above seventeen hundred years in his own place, whether he died single or married, a parent or childless? This makes no distinction in heaven or hell, unless that, as relations increase, the duties belonging to them are multiplied, and the trust becomes the heavier; the discharge of which meets with a more glorious reward in heaven, and the neglect of which suffers a severer punishment in hell.

Farther, the apostle, in saying that they who have wives should be as though they had none, intends that we should not excessively set our hearts upon any of our dearest relatives so as to tempt us to neglect the superior concerns of the world to come, or draw off our affections from God. We should always remember who it was that said, "He that loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children, more than me, is not worthy of me." "He that is married," says St. Paul, in the context, "careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife," verse 33. But we should beware lest this care should run to excess, and render us careless of the interests of our souls, and the concerns of immortality. To moderate excessive care and anxiety about



the things of this world is the design the apostle has immediately in view in my text; for having taught “those that have wives to be as though they had none,” &c., he immediately adds, “I would have you without carefulness;” and this is the reason why I would have you form such an estimate of all the conditions of life, and count them as on a level. Those that have the agreeable weights of these relations ought no more to abandon themselves to the over-eager pursuit of this world, or place their happiness in it; ought no more to neglect the concerns of religion and eternity, than if they did not bear these relations. The busy head of a numerous family is as much concerned to secure his everlasting interest as a single man. Whatever becomes of him and his in this vanishing world, he must by no means neglect to provide for his subsistence in the eternal world; and nothing in this world can at all excuse that neglect.

Oh that these thoughts may deeply affect the hearts of such of us as are agreeably connected in such relations! And may they inspire us with a proper insensibility and indifference towards them when compared with the affairs of religion and eternity! May this consideration moderate the sorrows of the mourners on this melancholy occasion, and teach them to esteem the gain or loss of a happy eternity as that which should swallow up every other concern!

The next branch of the inference refers to the sorrows of life. “It remaineth that they that weep be as if they wept not.” Whatever afflictions may befall us here, they will not last long, but will soon be swallowed up in the greater joys or sorrows of the eternal world. These tears will not always flow; these sighs will not always heave our breasts. We can sigh no longer than the vital breath inspires our lungs; and we can weep no longer than till death stops all the fountains of our tears; and that will be in a very little

time. And when we enter into the eternal world, if we have been the dutiful children of God here, his own gentle hand shall wipe away every tear from our faces, and he will comfort the mourners. Then all the sorrows of life will cease forever, and no more painful remembrance of them will remain than of the pains and sickness of our unconscious infancy. But if all the discipline of our heavenly Father fails to reduce us to our duty, if we still continue rebellious and incorrigible under his rod, and consequently the miseries of this life convey us to those of the future, the smaller will be swallowed up and lost in the greater as a drop in the ocean. Some desperate sinners have hardened themselves in sin with this cold comfort, “That since they must be miserable hereafter, they will at least take their fill of pleasure here, and take a merry journey to hell.” But, alas! What a sorry mitigation will this be! How entirely will all this career of pleasure be forgotten at the first pang of infernal anguish! Oh! What poor relief to a soul lost forever, to reflect that this eternity of pain followed upon and was procured by a few months or years of sordid guilty pleasure! Was that a relief or an aggravation which Abraham mentions to his lost son, when he puts him in mind, “Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things?” Luke 16:25. Thou hadst then all the share of good which thou ever shalt enjoy; thou hadst thy portion in that world where thou didst choose to have it, and therefore stand to the consequences of thine own choice, and look for no other portion. Oh! Who can bear to be thus reminded and upbraided in the midst of remediless misery!

Upon the whole, whatever afflictions or bereavements we suffer in this world, let us moderate our sorrows and keep them within bounds. Let them not work up and ferment into murmurings and insurrections against God, who gives and takes away, and blessed be his name! Let them not sink us

into a sullen dislike of the mercies still left into our possession. How unreasonable and ungrateful, that God's retaking one of his mercies should tempt us to despise all the rest! Take a view of the rich inventory of blessings still remaining, and you will find them much more numerous and important than those you have lost. Do not mistake me, as if I recommended or expected an utter insensibility under the calamities of life. I allow nature its moderate tears; but let them not rise to floods of inconsolable sorrows; I allow you to feel your afflictions like men and Christians, but then you must bear them like men and Christians too. May God grant that we may all exemplify this direction when we are put to the trial.

The third branch of the inference refers to the joys and pleasures of life. "The time is short;" it remaineth therefore that they that rejoice be as if they rejoiced not that is, the joys of this life, from whatever earthly cause they spring, are so short and transitory, that they are as of no account to a creature that is to exist for ever; to exist for ever in joys or pains of an infinitely higher and more important kind. To such a creature it is an indifferency whether he laughs or weeps, whether he is joyful or sad, for only a few fleeting moments. These vanishing, uncertain joys should not engross our hearts as our chief happiness, nor cause us to neglect and forfeit the divine and everlasting joys above the skies. The pleasure we receive from any created enjoyment should not ensnare us to make it our idol, to forget that we must part with it, or to fret, and murmur, and repine, when the parting hour comes. When we are rejoicing in the abundance of earthly blessings, we should be as careful and laborious in securing the favor of God and everlasting happiness as if we rejoiced not. If our eternal All is secure, it is enough; and it will not at all be heightened or diminished by the

reflection that we lived a joyful or a sad life in this pilgrimage. But if we spend our immortality in misery, what sorry comfort will it be that we laughed, and played, and frolicked away a few years upon earth? Years that were given us for a serious purpose, as a space for repentance and preparation for eternity? Therefore, let “those that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not;” that is, be nobly indifferent to all the little amusements and pleasures of so short a life.

And let “those that buy be as if they possessed not.” This is the fourth particular in the inference from the shortness of time, and it refers to the trade and business of life. It refers not only to the busy merchant, whose life is a vicissitude of buying and selling, but also to the planter, the tradesman, and indeed to every man among us; for we are all carrying on a commerce, more or less, for the purposes of this life. You all buy, and sell, and exchange, in some form or other; and the things of this world are perpetually passing from hand to hand. Sometimes you have good bargains, and make large acquisitions. But set not your hearts upon them; but in the midst of all your possessions, live as if you possessed them not. Alas! Of what small account are all the things you call your own upon earth, to you who are to stay here so short a time; to you who must so soon bid an eternal farewell to them all, and go as naked out of the world as you came into it; to you who must spend an everlasting duration far beyond the reach of all these enjoyments? It is not worth your while to call them your own, since you must so soon resign them to other hands. The melancholy occasion of this day may convince you, that success in trade, and plentiful estate, procured and kept by industry and good management, is neither a security against death, nor a comfort in it. Alas! What service can these houses and lands, and numerous domestics, perform to the cold clay that molds in

yonder grave, or to the immortal spirit that is fled we know not where? Therefore buy, sensible that you can buy nothing upon a sure and lasting title; nothing that you can certainly call yours to-morrow. Buy, but do not sell your hearts to the trifles you buy, and let them not tempt you to act as if this were your final home, or to neglect to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; treasures which you can call your own when this world is laid in ashes, and which you can enjoy and live upon in what I may call an angelic state, when these bodies have nothing but a coffin, a shroud, and a few feet of earth.

Finally, let “those that use this world use it as not abusing it.” This is the fifth branch of the inference from the shortness of time; and it seems to have a particular reference to such as have had such success in their pursuit of the world, that they have now retired from business, and appear to themselves to have nothing to do but enjoy the world, for which they so long toiled. Or it may refer to those who are born heirs of plentiful estates, and therefore are not concerned to acquire the world, but to use and enjoy it. To such I say, “Use this world as not abusing it;” that is, use it, enjoy it, take moderate pleasure in it, but do not abuse it by prostituting it to sinful purposes, making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, indulging yourselves in debauchery and extravagance, placing your confidence in it, and singing a requiem to your souls: “Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; for thou hast much goods laid up in store for many years.” Oh! Presumptuous “fool, this night thy soul may be required of thee.” Luke 12:19,20. Do not use this world to excess, (so the word may be translated,) by placing your hearts excessively upon it as your favorite portion and principal happiness, and by suffering it to draw off your thoughts and affections from the superior blessedness of the world to come.

Use the world, but let it not tempt you to excess in eating, drinking, dress, equipage, or in any article of the parade of riches. Religion by no means enjoins a sordid, niggardly, churlish manner of living; it allows you to enjoy the blessings of life, but then it forbids all excess, and requires you to keep within the bounds of moderation in your enjoyments. Thus “use this world as not abusing it.”

The apostle’s inference is not only drawn from strong premises, but also enforced with a very weighty reason; “for the fashion of this world passeth away.” The whole scheme and system of worldly affairs, all this marrying, and rejoicing, and weeping, and buying, and enjoying, passeth away, passeth away this moment; it not only will pass away, but it is even now passing away. The stream of time, with all the trifles that float on it, and all the eager pursuers of these bubbles, is in motion, in swift, incessant motion to empty itself and all that sail upon it into the shoreless ocean of eternity, where all will be absorbed and lost forever. And shall we excessively doat upon things that are perpetually flying from us, and in a little time will be no more our property than the riches of the world before the flood? “O ye sons of men, how long will ye follow after vanity? Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which profiteth not?”

Some critics apprehend this sentence, the fashion of this world passeth away, contains a fine striking allusion to the stage, and that it might be rendered, “the scene of this world passeth away.” “You know,” says a fine writer upon this text, “that upon the stage the actors assume imaginary characters, and appear in borrowed forms. One mimics the courage and triumph of the hero; another appears with a crown and a scepter, and struts about with all the solemnity and majesty of a prince; a third puts on the

fawning smile of a courtier, or the haughtiness of a successful favorite; and the fourth is represented in the dress of a scholar or a divine. An hour or two they act their several parts on the stage, and amuse the spectators; but the scenes are constantly shifting; and when the play is concluded, the feigned characters are laid aside, and the imaginary kings and emperors are immediately divested of their pretended authority and ensigns of royalty, and appear in their native meanness.”

“Just so this world is a great stage that presents as variable scenes, and as fantastical characters: princes, politicians, and warriors, the rich, the learned, and the wise; and, on the other hand, the poor, weak, and despised part of mankind possess their several places on the theatre; some lurk absolutely in a corner, seldom come from behind the scenes, or creep along unnoticed; others make a splendid show and a loud noise, are adorned with the honors of a crown, or possessed of large estates and great powers; fill the world with the glory of their names and actions, conquer in the field, or are laboriously employed in the cabinet. Well, in a little time the scene is shifted, and all these vain phantoms disappear. The king of terrors clears the stage of the busy actors, strips them of all their fictitious ornaments, and ends the vain farce of life; and being brought all upon a level, they go down to the grave in their original nakedness, are jumbled together undistinguished, and pass away as a tale that is told.”

Farther: “Upon the Greek or Roman theatres, to which the apostle alludes, the actors, if I mistake not, frequently, if not always, came upon the stage in a disguise, with a false face, which was adapted to the different person or character they designed to assume; so that no man was to be seen with his real face, but all put on borrowed visages. And in allusion to this, the text might be rendered, ‘The masquerade of the world passeth away,’ pointing

out the fraud and disguises which mankind put on, and the flattering forms in which they generally appear, which will all pass away when the grave shall pull off the mask; and ‘they go down to the other world naked and open,’ and appear at the supreme tribunal in their due characters, ‘and can no more be varnished over with fraudulent coloring.’ ”

Others apprehend, the apostle here alludes to some grand procession, in which pageants or emblematical figures pass along the crowded streets. The staring crowd wait their appearance with eager eyes, and place themselves in the most convenient posture of observation: they gape at the passing show, they follow it with a wondering gaze;— and now it is past, and now it begins to look dim to the sight, and now it disappears. Just such is this transitory world. Thus it begins to attract the eager gaze of mankind; thus it marches by in swift procession from our eyes to meet the eyes of others; and thus it soon vanishes and disappears.

And shall we always be stupidly staring upon this empty parade, and forget that world of substantial realities to which we are hastening? No; let us live and act as the expectants of that world, and as having nothing to do with this world, but only as a school, a state of discipline, to educate and prepare us for another.

Oh! That I could successfully impress this exhortation upon all your hearts! Oh! That I could prevail upon you all this day to break off your over-fond attachment to earth, and to make ready for immortality! Could I carry this point, it would be a greater advantage than all the dead could receive from any funeral panegyrics from me. I speak for the advantage of the living upon such occasions, and not to celebrate the virtues of those who have passed the trial, and received their sentence from the supreme Judge. And I am well satisfied the mourning relatives of our deceased friend, who



best knew and esteemed his worth, would be rather offended than pleased, if I should prostitute the present hour to so mean a purpose. Indeed, many a character less worthy of praise, often makes a shining figure in funeral sermons. Many that have not been such tender husbands, such affectionate fathers, such kind masters, such sincere, upright friends, so honest and punctual in trade, such zealous lovers of religion and good men, have had their putrefying remains perfumed with public praise from a place so solemn as the pulpit; but you can witness for me, it is not my usual foible to run to this extreme. My business is with you, who are as yet alive to hear me. To you I call, as with the voice of your deceased friend and neighbor,—Prepare! Prepare for eternity! Oh! If the spirits that you once knew, while clothed in flesh, should take my place, would not this be their united voice, “Prepare, prepare for eternity! Ye frail short-lived mortals! Ye near neighbors of the world of spirits! Ye borderers upon heaven or hell, make ready, loosen your hearts from earth, and all that it contains: weigh anchor, and prepare to launch away into the boundless ocean of eternity, which methinks is now within your ken, and roars within hearing!” And remember, “this I say, brethren,” with great confidence, “the time is short: it remaineth therefore,” for the future— “that they that have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as if they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world,” all its schemes of affairs, all the vain parade, all the idle farce of life, “passeth away.” And away let it pass, if we may at last obtain a better country; that is, a heavenly: which may God grant for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

# *SERM. XXIV. THE PREACHING OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED THE MEAN OF SALVATION.*

**C**or. 1:22-24.— *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

If we should consider Christianity only as an improvement of natural religion, containing a complete system of morality, and prescribing a pure plan of worship, it is a matter of the utmost importance, and worthy of universal acceptance. In the one view, it is necessary to inform the world in matters of sin and duty, and reform their vicious practices; and in the other, to put an end to that foolish and barbarous superstition which had over-run the earth, under the notion of religious worship. And these ends the Christian religion fully answers. Never was there such a finished system of morality, or such a spiritual and divine model of worship invented or

revealed, as by the despised Galilean, and the twelve fishermen that received their instructions from him.

But this is not the principal excellency of the gospel; and did it carry its discoveries no farther, alas! It would be far from revealing a suitable religion for sinners. A religion for sinners must reveal a method of salvation for the lost, of pardon for the guilty, and of sanctifying grace for the weak and wicked. And, blessed be God! The gospel answers this end; and it is its peculiar excellency that it does so. It is its peculiar excellency that it publishes a crucified Christ as an all-sufficient Savior to a guilty, perishing world. It is its glorious peculiarity that it reveals a method of salvation every way honorable to God and his government, and every way suitable to our necessities; and that is, by the sufferings of Christ, the Founder of this religion. This is the ground, the substance, and marrow of the gospel; and it is this, above all other things, that its ministers ought to preach and inculcate. It should have the same place in their sermons which it has in that gospel which it is their business to preach; that is, it should be the foundation, the substance, the center, the drift of all.

This was the practice of the most successful preacher of the gospel that ever bore that commission: I mean St. Paul. And in this he was not singular; his fellow apostles heartily concurred with him, We preach Christ crucified. The sufferings of Christ, which had a dreadful consummation, in his crucifixion, their necessity, design, and consequences, and the way of salvation thereby opened for a guilty world, these are the principal materials of our preaching; to instruct mankind in these is the great object of our ministry, and the unwearied labor of our lives. We might easily choose subjects more pleasing and popular, more fit to display our learning and abilities, and set off the strong reasoner, or the fine orator; but our

commission, as ministers of a crucified Jesus, binds us to the subject; and the necessity of the world peculiarly requires it. Further, this was not the apostle's occasional practice, or a hasty wavering purpose; but he was determined upon it. "I determined," says he, "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified:" 1 Cor. 2:2. This theme, as it were, engrossed all his thoughts; he dwelt so much upon it, as if he had known nothing else: and as if nothing else had been worth knowing. Indeed, he openly avows such a neglect and contempt of all other knowledge, in comparison of this: "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord:" Phil. 3:8. The crucifixion of Christ, which was the most ignominious circumstance in the whole course of his abasement, was an object in which he gloried; and he is struck with horror at the thought of glorying in anything else. "God forbid," says he, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Gal. 6:14. In short, he looked upon it as the perfection of his character as a Christian and an apostle, to be a constant student, and a zealous, indefatigable preacher of the Cross of Christ.

But though a crucified Jesus was of so much importance in a religion for sinners; though this doctrine was the substance of the gospel, and the principal object of the apostle's ministry; yet, as it was not the invention of human reason, so neither was it agreeable to the proud reasonings, or corrupt taste of the world. The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness. However, there were some that had the same sentiment of it with St. Paul; even as many as were in the way of salvation. Unto us that are saved, it is the power of God, ver. 18. To such, that weak and contemptible thing, the cross, was the brightest display of divine power to be found in the universe.

Mankind had had time enough to try what expedients their reason could find out for the reformation and salvation of a degenerate and perishing world. The sages and philosophers of the heathen world had had a clear stage for many hundreds of years; and they might have done their utmost without control. But, alas! Did any of them, amid all their boasted improvements, succeed in the experiment? Or could they so much as find out a method in which sinners might be reconciled to their God? No; in this most interesting point, they were either stupidly thoughtless, or all their searches issued in perplexity, or in the most absurd and impious contrivances. “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?” Let them appear and produce their schemes upon this head. But hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Ver. 20. Yes, indeed, he has, by proposing a method most perfectly adapted to this end, which they not only never would have once thought of, but which, when revealed, their wisdom cannot relish. Their wisdom appears but folly, in that when they had the world to themselves about four thousand years, they could not, in all that time, find out any successful expedient to amend and save it. And now, if anything be done at all, it is time for God to do it; and how strange, how unexpected, how mysterious was his expedient! And yet how glorious and effectual! “For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe;” ver. 21. This was the contrivance for effecting what all the wisdom and learning of the world could never effect; the plain unadorned preaching of Christ crucified; which, both for the matter and manner of it, was counted foolishness.

But how did the world bear this mortification of their intellectual pride? And what reception did this bounteous divine scheme meet with when

revealed? Alas! I am sorry to tell you: The prejudices of their education were different: but they were unitedly set against the gospel. The Jews had been educated in a religion established by a series of miracles; and therefore they were extravagant in their demands of this sort of evidence. Notwithstanding all the miracles Christ was working daily before their eyes, they were perpetually asking him, What sign showest thou? Those that are resolved not to be convinced, will be always complaining of the want of proof, and demanding more, to vindicate their infidelity. As for the Greeks, their prejudices were of another kind; it was even a proverb among them, that “miracles were for fools;” and therefore they did not desire that sort of evidence. But they seek after wisdom. They had been accustomed to fine orations, strong reasoning, and a parade of learning; and these were the evidences they desired to recommend a doctrine to them. And finding the doctrine of Christ crucified had none of these embellishments, they despised and rejected it as foolishness and nonsense.

The method of salvation by the crucifixion of a supposed malefactor, was so extremely opposite to the reasoning, pride, and prejudices of Jews and Gentiles, that they could not bear it. The Jews expected the Messiah would appear as a victorious temporal prince, who instead of falling a prey to his enemies, would subdue them all with an irresistible power, and advance the family of David to universal empire. And of all other deaths, that of crucifixion was the most odious and abominable to them, because, according to the custom of the Romans, it was the punishment only of slaves; and by their own law it was pronounced accursed; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Gal. 3:13. Deut. 21:23.

Hence, by way of contempt, the Jews called the blessed Jesus the hanged man. Nay, this was a shock to the faith of the apostles themselves, until

their Jewish prejudices were removed by better information. Finding that, instead of setting up a glorious kingdom, their Master was apprehended by his enemies, and hung upon a cross, they had nothing to say, but, We trusted that it had been he which should have delivered Israel: we simply thought so; but alas! Now we see our mistake. Luke 24:21. No wonder the cross of Christ should be a stumbling-block to such as had imbibed such notions of the Messiah. When, instead of the power of signs and miracles which they were extravagantly demanding, they saw him crucified in weakness, they could not admit the thought that this was that illustrious character of a universal king. They were so dazzled with worldly glory, and so insensible of their spiritual wants, that they had notions of a spiritual Savior, and a kingdom of grace; nor could they see how such prophecies were accomplished in one that only professed to deliver from the slavery of sin and Satan, and the wrath to come. Hence they stumbled at the cross, as an obstacle which they could not get over. When Christ called Lazarus from the dead, he had crowds of followers, who attended his triumphant procession into Jerusalem as a mighty conqueror; and when he had fed so many thousands with a few loaves, they were about forcibly to make him king; for they knew that one who could raise his soldiers to life after they had been killed, and support an army with so little provisions, could easily conquer the world, and rescue them from the power of the Romans. But when they saw him seized by his enemies, without making resistance, or working a miracle for his own defense, they immediately abandoned him; and the hosannas of the multitude were turned into another kind of cry, Crucify him, Crucify him. And when they saw him hanging helpless and dying upon the cross, it was demonstrated to them that he was an impostor. It was this that rendered the preaching of Christ by his apostles so

unpopular among the Jews: it seemed to them like a panegyric upon an infamous malefactor; and they thought it an insult to their nation to have such a one proposed to them as their Messiah. Thus Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block.

As to the Greeks, who were a learned philosophical people, it seemed to them the wildest folly to worship one as a God who had been crucified as a malefactor; and to trust in one for salvation who had not saved himself. Their Jupiter had his thunder, and according to their tradition, had crushed the formidable rebellion of the giants against heaven: their Bacchus had avenged himself upon the despisers of his worship; and the whole rabble of their deities had done some god-like exploit, if the fables of their poets were true; and would they abandon such gods, and receive in their stead a despised Nazarene, who had been executed as the vilest criminal by his own nation? Would they give up all their boasted wisdom and learning, and become the humble disciples of the cross, and receive for their teachers a company of illiterate fishermen, and a tent-maker from the despised nation of the Jews, whom they held in the utmost contempt from their ignorance, bigotry, and superstition? No, the pride of their understandings could not bear such a mortification. If their curiosity led them to be St. Paul's hearers, they expected to be entertained with a flourish of words, and fine philosophic reasoning; and when they found themselves disappointed, they pronounced him a babbler, (Acts 17:18,) and his preaching foolishness. Corinth, to which this epistle was sent by St. Paul, was a noted city among the Greeks, and therefore, what he says upon this head was peculiarly pertinent and well applied.

The prejudices of the Jews and Greeks in this respect outlived the apostolic age, as we learn from the writings of the primitive fathers of the



Christian church, who lived among them, and were conversant with them. Trypho, the Jew, in a dialogue with Justin Martyr, about a hundred years after St. Paul wrote this epistle, charges it upon the Christians as the greatest absurdity and impiety, that they placed their hopes in a crucified man. Justin, after long reasoning, constrains him at length to make sundry concessions, as, that the prophecies which he had mentioned did really refer to the Messiah; and that, according to these prophecies, the Messiah was to suffer. “But, (says the Jew,) that Christ should be so ignominiously crucified; that he should die a death which the law pronounces accursed, this we cannot but doubt; this I yet find a very hard thing to believe, and therefore if you have any further evidence upon this head, would willingly hear it.” Here you see the cross was a stumbling-block, which the Jews could not get over in a hundred years; nay, they have not got over it to this day. Lactantius, about three hundred years after Christ’s birth, observes, that the sufferings of Christ were wont to be cast upon Christians as a reproach; it was thought a strange and scandalous thing that they should worship a man; a man that had been crucified, and put to the most infamous and tormenting death by men. A heathen, in Minutius Felix, is introduced as saying, “He who represents a man punished for his crime with the severest punishment, and the savage wood of the cross, as the object of their worship, and a ceremony of their religion, ascribes a very proper altar to such abandoned and wicked creatures, that they may worship that which they deserve to hang upon.” And referring to the many barbarous persecutions they then groaned under, he jeers them! “See here,” says he, “are threatening’s for you, punishments, tortures, and crosses, not to be adored, but endured.” “The calumniating Greek,” says Athanasius, “ridicule

us and set up a broad laugh at us, because we regard nothing so much as the cross of Christ.”

Thus you see, the doctrine of the cross was, of all other things, the most unpopular among Jews and Gentiles, and the most disagreeable to their taste. A man could not expect to shine, or cut a figure as a man of sense and learning, by making this the subject of his discourses. But will Paul give it up, and display his talents upon some more acceptable theme? This, as a fine scholar, he was very capable of; but he abhors the thought.

“Let the Jews and Greeks desire what they please; we,” says he, “will not humor them, nor gratify their taste; however they take it, we will preach Christ crucified; though to the Jews he should prove a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” And there are some that relish this humble doctrine. To them that believe, both Jews and Greeks, whether learned or unlearned, whether educated in the Jewish or Pagan religion, however different their prejudices, or their natural tastes, to all that believe, notwithstanding these differences, Christ, that is, Christ crucified, is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The wisdom and power of God are not the only perfections that shine in this method of salvation by the cross; but the apostle particularly mentions these, as directly answering to the respective demands of Jews and Greeks. If the Jew desire the sign of power in working miracles, the believer sees in Christ crucified a power superior to all the powers of miracles. If the Greeks seek after wisdom, here, in a crucified Christ, the wisdom of God shines in the highest perfection. Whatever sign or wisdom the Jew or Greek desires and seeks after, the believer finds more than an equivalent in the cross. This is the greatest miracle of power, the greatest mystery of wisdom in all the world.

The prejudices of the Jews and Gentiles were not only confined to the early ages of Christianity; the same depraved taste, the same contempt of the humble doctrines of the cross may be found among us, though professed Christians; some resemble the Jews, who were perpetually demanding signs; they affect visions and impulses, and all the reveries of enthusiasm, instead of the preaching of Christ crucified. Others, like the Greeks, through an affectation of florid harangues, moral discourses, and a parade of learning and philosophy, nauseate this sort of preaching, and count it foolishness. It is therefore high time for the ministers of the gospel to stand up as advocates for the cross, and with a pious obstinacy to adhere to this subject, whatever contempt and ridicule it may expose them to. For my part, I know not what I have to do, as a minister of the gospel, but to preach Christ crucified. I would make him the substance, the center, the end of all my ministrations. And if we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel—you know his doom—let him be accursed. Gal. 1:9.

We are to consider the apostles as sent out into the world to reform and save the corrupt and perishing sons of men, and the preaching of Christ crucified as the mean they used for this important end. This is the formal view the apostle had of preaching Christ in this place, viz., as a mean found out by the wisdom of God to save them that believe, after that all the wisdom of the world had tried in vain to find out a method for this end. This is evident from verse 21. After that the world by all its wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching; that is, by the preaching a crucified Savior, which the world counts foolishness, to save them that believe. This is the excellency of this preaching, this is the reason why the apostle could not be prevailed upon by any motive to desert it, that it is the only mean of salvation; and it is in this view I now intend to

consider it. And if your everlasting salvation be of any importance to you, certainly this subject demands your most serious attention.

I have been the longer explaining the context, because it is so closely connected with the subject I have in view, and reflects light upon it. And I shall only add, that preaching Christ crucified is the same thing as preaching salvation through the sufferings of Christ. His sufferings were of long continuance, even from his conception to his resurrection; and they were of various kinds, poverty, weariness and labor, hunger and thirst, contempt and reproach, buffeting, scourging, and a thorny crown. But there are two words, which by a synecdoche are often used in Scripture to signify all his sufferings of every kind, from first to last; viz., his blood and his cross. And the reason is, the shedding of his blood, and the death of the cross, were the worst kind and highest degree of his sufferings. In his crucifixion all his other sufferings were united and centered; this was a complete summary and consummation of them all; and therefore, they are frequently included under this. In this latitude I shall use the word in this discourse; which I hope you will take notice of, that no part of the meaning may escape you.

Our inquiry shall be,

What are the reasons that the preaching of Christ crucified is, above all others, the best, and the only effectual mean for the salvation of sinners?

These reasons may be reduced under two general heads, namely, That through the crucifixion of Christ, and through that only, a way is really opened for the salvation of sinners; and that the preaching of Christ crucified makes such a discovery of things, as has the most direct tendency to bring them to repentance, and produce in them that temper which is necessary to salvation. Or in other words, in this way salvation is provided,

and sinners are made fit to enjoy it; both which are absolutely necessary. Our world is deeply and universally sunk in sin. Men have cast contempt upon the divine government, broken the divine law, and so incurred its penalty; they have forfeited the favor of God, and rendered themselves liable to his displeasure. Had mankind continued innocent, there would have been no difficulty in their case. It would be very plain what would be fit for the divine government to do with dutiful subjects. But, alas! Rebellion against God has made its entrance into our world, and all its inhabitants are up in arms against Heaven. This has thrown all into confusion, and rendered it a perplexing case what to do with them. In one view, indeed, the case is plain, viz., that proper punishments should be executed upon them. This would appear evidently just to the whole universe, and no objection could be made against it, though the criminals themselves, who are parties, and therefore not fit judges, might murmur against it as unmerciful and severe. But the difficulty is, how such rebels may not only be delivered from the punishments they deserve, but made happy for ever. If they cannot be saved in a way that displays the perfections of God, and does honor to his government; a way in which sin will meet with no encouragement, but, on the other hand, an effectual warning will be given against it; a way in which depraved creatures may be sanctified and made fit for the pure bliss of heaven; I say, if they cannot be saved in such a way as this, they cannot be saved at all; their salvation is quite impossible: for each of these particulars is of such importance, that it cannot be dispensed with. God is the best and most glorious being in himself; and it is fit he should do justice to his own perfections, and exhibit them in the most God-like and glorious manner to his creatures; to do otherwise would be to wrong himself, to obscure the brightest glory, and

dishonor the highest excellency. This therefore cannot be done; men and angels must be happy, in a way consistent with his glory, otherwise they must perish; for the display of his glory is a greater good, and a matter of more importance, than the happiness of the whole creation. God is also the moral Governor of the world. And his government over our world is a government over a country of rebels; and that is a tender point, and requires a judicious management. An error in government, in such a case, may have the most fatal consequences, both as to the ruler and his subjects in all parts of his dominions. A private person may, if he pleases, give up his rights, may pardon offenders, and conceal his justice, and other qualities for government; but a ruler is not at liberty in this case. He must maintain his character, make known his capacity for government, and support the dignity of the law: otherwise, all might rush into confusion and lawless violence. If the ruler of a small kingdom on our little globe should fail to discover his justice; if he should pardon criminals, and admit them into favor, and into posts of honor and profit, without giving proper expressions of his displeasure against their conduct, and a striking warning against all disobedience, how fatal would be the consequences? How soon would such a ruler fall into contempt, and his government be unhinged? And how soon would his kingdom become a scene of confusion and violence? Criminals might like such an administration; but I appeal to yourselves, would you choose to live under it? Now, how much more terrible and extensively mischievous would be the consequences, if the universal Ruler of men and angels, and of more worlds than we have heard the fame of, should exercise such a government over our rebellious world? It would be reproachful to himself; and it would be most injurious to his subjects; in short, it might throw heaven and earth, and unknown regions of the universe, into

confusion. He must, therefore, display his own rectoral virtues; he must maintain the honor of his government, he must show his displeasure against disobedience, and deter his subjects from it; I say, he must do these things in saving the sinners of Adam's race, or he cannot save them at all. Should he save them upon other terms, it would reflect dishonor upon himself and administration; and it would be injurious to the good of the whole, which is always the end of a wise ruler; for the favor thus injudiciously shown to a part of the creation in our world, might occasion a more extensive mischief in other more important worlds; and so it would be promoting a private interest to the detriment of the public, which is always the character of a weak or wicked ruler. Again, sinners cannot be saved until their dispositions be changed, so that they can relish and delight in the fruition and employments of the heavenly state. Provision, therefore, must be made for this; otherwise, their salvation is impossible.

Now, the way of salvation, through Christ crucified, most completely answers these ends in the most illustrious manner.

1. The salvation of sinners, in this way, gives the brightest display of the perfections of God, and particularly of those that belong to him, as the Supreme Ruler of the rational world, and maintains the honor of his government.

Justice and clemency, duly tempered, and exercised with wisdom, is a summary of those virtues that belong to a good ruler. Now these are most illustriously displayed in a happy conjunction in Christ crucified. Justice shines brighter than if every sin had been punished upon offenders, without any mercy; and mercy and clemency shine brighter than if every sin had been pardoned, and every sinner made happy, without any execution of justice. Mercy appears in turning the divine mind with such a strong

propensity upon the salvation of sinners; and justice appears in that when the heart of God was so much set upon it, yet he would not save them without a complete satisfaction to his justice. Mercy appears in providing such a Savior; and justice, in inflicting the punishment due to sin upon him, without abatement, though he loved him more than the whole universe of creatures. Mercy, in transferring the guilt from the sinner upon the Surety, and accepting a vicarious satisfaction: justice in exacting the satisfaction, and not passing by sin, when it was but imputed to the darling Son of God. Mercy, in pardoning and saving guilty sinners: justice in punishing their sin.

Mercy, in justifying them, though destitute of all personal merit and righteousness: justice in justifying them only and entirely on account of the merit and righteousness of Christ. Thus the righteousness or justice of God is declared not only in the punishment, but in the remission of sins, Rom. 3:26, and we are justified freely through his grace, and in the meantime by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, (verse 24.) Mercy appears in providing a Savior of such infinite dignity: justice, in refusing satisfaction from an inferior person. Mercy, in forgiving sin: justice, in not forgiving so much as one sin without a sufficient atonement. Mercy, rich, free mercy towards the sinner: justice, strict, inexorable justice towards the Surety. In short, mercy and justice, as it were, walk hand in hand through every step of this amazing scheme. They are not only glorious each of them apart, but they mingle their beams, and reflect a glory upon each other. By this scheme of salvation, by the Cross of Christ, also, the honor of the divine government is secured and advanced. The clemency and compassion of God towards his rebellious subjects, are most illustriously displayed; but, in the meantime, he takes care to secure the sacred rights of his government. Though innumerable multitudes of rebels are pardoned, yet not one of them



is pardoned until their rebellion is punished according to its demerit in the person of the Surety. The precept of the law, which they had broken, was perfectly obeyed; the penalty which they had incurred, was fully endured, not by themselves indeed, but by one that presented himself in their place; and it is only on this footing they are received into favor. So that the law is magnified, and made honorable, and the rights of government are preserved sacred and inviolable, and yet the prisoners of justice are set free, and advanced to the highest honors and blessedness.

2. In this way of salvation, God's hatred to sin is discovered in the most striking light; the evil of sin is exposed in the most dreadful colors; and so an effectual warning is given to all worlds to deter them from it. Now it appears, that such is the divine hatred against all sin, that God can by no means connive at it, or suffer it to pass without punishment; and that all the infinite benevolence of his nature towards his creatures cannot prevail upon him to pardon the least sin without an adequate satisfaction. Nay, now it appears that when so malignant and abominable a thing is but imputed to his dear Son, his co-equal, his darling, his favorite, even he could not escape unpunished, but was made a monument of vindictive justice to all worlds. And what can more strongly expose the evil of sin? It is such an intolerably malignant and abominable thing, that even a God of infinite mercy and grace cannot let the least instance of it pass unpunished. It was not a small thing that could arm his justice against the Son of his love. But when he was but made sin for us, and was perfectly innocent in himself, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up unto death, the shameful, tormenting, and accursed death of the cross. Go, ye fools, that make a mock at sin, go and learn its malignity and demerit at the cross of Jesus. Who is it that hangs there writhing in the agonies of death, his hands and feet pierced

with nails, his side with a spear, his face bruised with blows, and drenched with tears and blood, his heart melting like wax, his whole frame racked and disjoined; forsaken by his friends, and even by his Father; tempted by devils, and insulted by men? Who is this amazing spectacle of woe and torture? It is Jesus, the eternal Word of God; the man that is his fellow; his Elect, in whom his soul delighteth; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. And what has he done? He did no wickedness; he knew no sin; but was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And whence then all these dreadful sufferings from heaven, earth, and hell? Why, he only stood in the law-place of sinners; he only received their sin by imputation. And you see what it has brought upon him! You see how low it has reduced him! And what a horrid evil must that be, which has tremendous consequences, even upon the Darling of heaven! Oh! What still more dreadful havoc would it have made, if it had been punished upon the sinner himself in his own person! Surely all the various miseries which have been inflicted upon our guilty world in all ages, and even all the punishments of hell, do not so loudly proclaim the terrible desert and malignity of sin as the cross of Christ; and hence it follows, that in this way of salvation, the most effectual warning is given to the whole universe, to deter them from disobedience. Rebels are pardoned and made happy, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to others to repeat the transgression. And this was the tender and critical point. If rebels can be pardoned without reflecting dishonor upon the government, and doing injury to the society, it is well; but how this shall be done is the difficulty. But by the strange expedient of a crucified Savior, all the difficulty is removed. Sinners can no more presume upon sin, with a pretense that the Supreme Ruler has no great indignation against it, or that there is no great

evil in it; for, as I observed, his hatred to sin, and the infinite malignity of it, appear nowhere in so striking and awful a light as in the cross of Christ. Let a reasonable creature take but one serious view of that, and sure he must ever after tremble at the thought of the least sin. Again, though sinners are pardoned in this way, yet no encouragement is given to the various territories of the divine dominions to flatter themselves that they also will be forgiven in case they should imitate the race of man in their rebellion. There is but one instance that we know of in the whole universe of the forgiveness of sin, and the restoration of rebels into favor; and we are so happy as to find that only instance in our guilty world. But what a strange revolution has been brought about! What amazing miracles have been wrought in order to prepare the way for it! The eternal Son of God must become a man, and die the death of a criminal and slave upon the cross. The very first effort of pardoning grace went thus far; and is it possible it should go any farther; or is there reason to hope that such a miracle should often be repeated?—that the Son of God should hang upon a cross as often as any race of creatures may fall into sin? Such hopes receive a damp from the case of the apostate angels, for whom he refused to die and assume the office of a Savior. Or is there any other being that can perform that task for some other kingdom of rebels which Christ has discharged for the sons of men? No: he only is equal to it; and none else has sufficient dignity, power, or love. This, therefore, must strike a terror into all worlds at the thought of sin, and leave them no umbrage to presume they shall escape punishment, when they observe that the redeemed from among men could not be saved but at so prodigious an expense, and that the fallen angels are suffered to perish without any salvation provided for them at all.

3. In this way, provision is made for the sanctification of sinners, that they may be fit for the fruitions and employments of the heavenly state. Their taste is so vitiated, that they have no relish for (hat pure bliss, and therefore can no more be happy there, than a sick man can relish the entertainments of a feast. And they are so far gone with the deadly disease of sin, that they are not able to recover themselves; nay, they are not so much as disposed to use means for that end. They are estranged from God, and engaged in rebellion against him; and they love to continue so. They will not submit, nor return to their duty and allegiance. Hence, there is need of a superior power to subdue their stubborn hearts, and sweetly constrain them to subjection; to inspire them with the love of God, and an implacable detestation of all sin. And for this purpose, the Holy Spirit of God is sent into the world: for this purpose he is at work, from age to age, upon the hearts of men. And though he be most ungratefully resisted, grieved, and despitefully treated, and he gives up many to the lusts of their own hearts, yet numerous and glorious are the conquests he has gained over rebellious sinners. Many a stubborn will has he sweetly subdued; many a heart of stone has he softened, and dissolved into ingenuous repentance, like snow before the sun; many a depraved soul has he purified, and at length brought to the heavenly state in all the beauties of perfect holiness. And hence it is, that there is any such thing as true religion to be found upon earth, and that any of the sons of men are recovered to obedience and happiness. But for this inestimable blessing we are indebted to a crucified Christ. It is the dear purchase of his blood, and had it not been so purchased, it would never have been communicated to our guilty world; and consequently never would one rebel have submitted, never would one heart have felt the love of God, among all the sons of men.

Thus, my brethren, you see a way is really opened for the salvation of sinners through the crucifixion of Christ. And oh! What an amazing, unexpected, mysterious way! How far beyond the reach of human wisdom! And how brilliant a display of the divine! To display the perfections of God by occasion of sin more illustriously than if sin had never entered into the world, and thus bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil—to pardon and save the sinner, and yet condemn and punish his sin!—to give the brightest display of justice in the freest exercise of mercy; and the richest discovery of mercy in the most rigorous execution of justice—to dismiss rebels from punishment, and advance them to the highest honors, and yet secure and even advance the honor of the government against which they had rebelled—to give the most effectual warning against sin, even in rewarding the sinner; and to let it pass unpunished, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to it—to magnify the law in justifying those that had broken it—to discover the utmost hatred against sin, in showing the highest love to the sinner—what an astonishing God-like scheme is this! What a stupendous display of the infinite wisdom of God! Could the Socrateses, the Platos, and other oracles of the heathen world, ever have found out an expedient to answer this end, and reconcile these seeming contradictions! No; this would have nonplussed men and angels; for in what a strange, unthought-of way is it brought about! That the Son of God should become the Son of man; the Head of the universe appear in the form of a servant; the Author of life die upon a cross; the Lawgiver become the subject of his own law, and suffer its penalty, though perfectly innocent! Who would ever have thought of such strange events as these? This is to accomplish astonishing things in an astonishing way. You may as well set a human understanding to draw the plan of a world, as to form such

a scheme as this. Oh! It is all divine; it is the wonder of angels; and the greatest miracle in the universe.

Thus, you see, there are very good reasons, reducible to this head, why the Cross of Christ should be the grand weapon to destroy the kingdom of darkness, and rescue sinners and bring them into a state of liberty and glory.

And there are reasons, equally important, that fall under the other head, viz.: That the preaching of Christ crucified makes such a discovery of things, as has the most direct tendency to bring sinners to repentance, and produce in them that temper which is necessary to their salvation.

If a representation of the most moving, the most alluring, and most alarming matters, can affect the mind of man, certainly the preaching of the cross cannot be without effect; for,

1. The preaching of a crucified Savior gives the strongest assurance to the guilty sons of men, that their offended God is reconcilable to them, and willing to receive them into favor again, upon their penitent return to him. The provision he has made for this end, and particularly his appointing his Son to be their Savior, and delivering him up to the death of the cross for them, leaves no room for doubt upon this head. It is full demonstration that he is not only willing, but that his heart is earnestly set upon reconciliation; otherwise he would not have been at such infinite pains and expense to remove obstructions, and clear the way for it. Now this is an assurance that the light of nature could never give. It leaves us dreadfully in the dark. And indeed, nothing but an express declaration from God himself can inform us what he intends to do with criminals that lie entirely at mercy, and that he may do what he pleases with. The heathen world were either stupidly thoughtless about this point, or full of anxiety; and their philosophers, amid all their boasted knowledge could only offer plausible conjectures. And yet

this assurance is necessary to keep up religion in the world, and encourage rebellious sinners to return to obedience; for with what heart can they serve that God, as to whom they fear he will accept of no service at their hands, or return to him, when they have no encouragement that he will receive them? The hope of acceptance is the spring of repentance and all attempts for reformation; and when once the sinner concludes there is no hope, he lies down inactive and sullen in despair, or confirms himself in hardened impenitence, and gives the full rein to his lusts. This the Psalmist observed long ago: “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” Ps. 130:4. The fear of God is often used in Scripture for the whole of religion; and so it seems taken here. As much as to say, “There is forgiveness with thee; and thou hast assured us of it, that religion might be preserved in the world, that mankind may not abandon thy service as wholly in vain: or give up themselves to sin, as despairing of acceptance upon their repentance.” Oh! What an acceptable assurance must this be to a guilty, trembling sinner! And how suitable a remedy to such sinners is the preaching of the cross of Christ, which alone gives them this welcome assurance!

2. The preaching of a crucified Savior gives the most moving display of the love of God; and love is a strong attractive to repentance and obedience. There cannot be so strong an expression of love as the sufferings of Christ. For God to give us life, and breath, and all things—what is this, in comparison to the gift of his Son, and those immortal blessings which he has purchased with his blood? To create such a world as this for our residence, to furnish it with such a rich variety of blessings for our accommodation, and to exercise a tender providence over us every moment of our lives, this is amazing love and goodness. But what is this in comparison of his dying love! To speak an all-creating word, and to hang,

and agonize, and expire upon the cross I to give us the blessings of the earth, and to give the blood of his heart; these are very different things; they will not hold in comparison.

My brethren, let me make an experiment upon you with the cross of Christ, and try with that weapon to slay your sins, and break your hearts. Can you view such agonies and question the love that endured them? Or can you place yourselves under the warm beams of that love, and yet feel no love kindled in your hearts in return? What! Not the love of a worm for the dying love of a God! The apostle John reasons very naturally, when he says, We love him, because he first loved us, 1 John 4:19. Love for love is but a reasonable retaliation; especially the love of a redeemed sinner for the love of a crucified Savior. St. Paul felt the energy of this love irresistible: The love of Christ constraineth us, 2 Cor. 5:14; or according to the emphasis of the original word, it carries us away like a resistless torrent. And it appeared to him so shocking, that he could not mention it without weeping, that any should be enemies to the cross of Christ: Phil, 3:18. Hear what expectations he had from the energy of his cross who himself hung upon it. "I," says he, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32. This the evangelist teaches us to understand of the manner of his death, viz., his being raised up from the earth, and suspended on the cross. There, sinners, he hung to attract your love: and can you resist the force of this attraction, this almighty magnet? Jesus, if I may so speak, expects that this will carry all before it: that every sinner who sees him hanging there will immediately melt into repentance, and be drawn to him by the cords of love. And oh! Can you find in your hearts to resist! Where, then, is the gratitude? Is that generous principle quite dead within you? I must honestly tell you, if the love of a crucified Savior does not attract your



love, nothing else will: you will continue his enemies, and perish as such. This is the most powerful inducement that can be proposed to you: all the reasonings of the ablest philosophers, all the persuasions of the ministers of the gospel, all the goodness of God in creation and providence, will never prevail upon you, if your hearts are proof against the attraction of the cross. But, blessed be his name who died upon it, many an obstinate and reluctant heart has this cross allured and subdued: and oh! That we may all feel its sweet constraints!

3. The preaching of Christ crucified gives such a representation of the evil of sin, and the dreadful punishment due to it, as naturally tends to turn sinners from it, and bring them to repentance. In the Cross of Christ the sinner may see what malignity there is in sin, when it brought such heavy vengeance on the head of the Surety. There the sinner may see how God hates it, when he punished it so severely in his beloved Son. If the almighty Redeemer sunk under the load, how shall the feeble sinner bear up under it? If God spared not his own Son, who was but a surety, how can the sinner escape, who was the original debtor? Oh sinners! Never call it cruel that God should punish you for your sins; so he dealt with Jesus, his favorite; and how can you hope for more favor? Read the nature of sin as written in characters of blood on the cross of Christ, and surely you can make light of it no more. You must tremble at the very thought of it; and immediately reform and repent of it. All the harangues of moralists upon the intrinsic deformity, the unreasonableness, the incongruity of vice, never can represent it in such a shocking light as you view it in the sufferings of Christ. And can you look upon your sins piercing him, stretching him upon the cross, and slaughtering him, and yet not mourn over them? Oh! Can you indulge the murderous things that shed his blood? Then you practically

pronounce him an impostor, and join the cry of the Jewish rabble, Crucify him, crucify him!

4. The preaching of Christ crucified presents us with such a perfect pattern of obedience, as has at once the force of an example, and an inducement to holiness. We need no longer view the law in theory: we see it reduced into a uniform practice, and presented to the life, in the whole of our Lord's conduct towards God and man. We see one in our nature, upon our guilty globe, in our circumstances, behaving exactly agreeable to the divine law, and leaving us an example that we might follow his steps. And shall we not delight to imitate our best friend, and the most perfect pattern that ever was exhibited? Oh! How sweet to walk as he walked in the world, and to trace the steps of his lovely feet! Until the doctrine of the cross was introduced, the world was sadly at a loss about a rule of duty. All the admired writings of pagan antiquity cannot furnish out one complete system even of morality; but here we have a perfect law, and a perfect example, which has the force of a law. Therefore, let us be followers of this incarnate God as dear children.

For an Application:

1. Hence we may learn our great happiness in enjoying the preaching of Christ crucified. It is but a very small part of the world that has heard this joyful sound; and the time has been, when none of the sons of men enjoyed it in that full evidence which we are favored with. Now, since it pleases God by this foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe, since this is the most effectual mean for our recovery from sin and ruin—how great, how distinguishing, how peculiar is our privilege! It becomes us, my brethren, to know our happiness that we may be thankful. How few among the sons of men enjoy this privilege! How does the whole world lie in

wickedness! Alas! They are fatally unconcerned, or fruitlessly anxious about a way of reconciliation with God. Their priests and philosophers can afford them no relief in this case; but either mislead them or increase their perplexity. But we have the strongest assurance that God is reconcilable to us; and the clearest discovery of the way. We have the most powerful inducements to repentance, and the most effectual restraints from sin. And what gratitude does this call for from us, to our divine Benefactor! And how solicitous should we be to make a proper improvement of our peculiar advantages!

2. Hence we may learn the shocking guilt and danger of our modern infidels, the Deists, who, like the Greeks, count the preaching of Christ crucified foolishness, and deny the Lord that bought them. This is to reject the best, the last, the only remedy. Now, let them consult their feeble reason; let them go to the oracles of wisdom in the heathen world, and ask of them how guilty offenders may be restored into favor, in consistency with the honor of the divine perfections and government! Alas, they can find no satisfactory answer! Now also they have lost the strongest motive to love and obedience, when they have turned away their eyes from the cross. They have lost the most full and amiable view of the divine nature and perfections that ever was exhibited to the world. Should they shut their eyes against the light of the sun, and abhor all the beauties of nature, it would not be such an astonishing instance of infatuation. St. Paul represents it as the most amazing folly, nay, a kind of witchcraft and incantation, that any should desert the truth, that had ever had the least view of Christ crucified. “Oh foolish Galatians! Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” Gal. 3:1. What wickedness, what madness, what an

unnatural conspiracy against their own lives must it be for men to reject the only expedient found out by infinite wisdom and goodness for their salvation! What base ingratitude thus to requite the dying love of Jesus! Can such monsters expect salvation from his hands? No; they willfully cut themselves off from all hope, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. If the cross of Christ does not break their hearts, it is impossible to bring them to repentance; the last and most powerful remedy has proved ineffectual; the last and strongest effort of divine grace has been used with them in vain. Since they obstinately reject the sacrifice of Christ, there remains no other sacrifice for their sin, and nothing awaits them but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour them as adversaries.

3. Hence we should inquire what effect the preaching of Christ crucified has had upon us. Since this is the grand mean Divine Wisdom has found out for the recovery of our wicked world, when all other means had been in vain, it is of the utmost importance to us, that we should inquire, whether it is likely to answer this end upon us. It pleases God by this foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. Observe the limitation—they that believe. They, and only they, can be saved by it. As for unbelievers, they cannot be saved in this or any other way. Let us then abandon every other concern for a while, and seriously examine ourselves in this point. Faith comes by hearing; and have we been brought to believe by hearing the preaching of the cross? Do we relish this humble, despised doctrine with peculiar pleasure? Is it the life and nourishment of our souls, and the ground of all our hopes? Or do we secretly wonder what there can be in it, that some should be so much affected with it? “To them that perish,” says the apostle, and to them only, “the preaching of the cross is foolishness.” And is

that our dreadful characteristic? Or does a crucified Christ appear to us as the wisdom of God, and the power of God, as he does to all them that believe, however different their natural tastes, and the prejudices of their education, and their outward circumstances? Do we suspend all our hopes upon the cross of Christ? Do we glory in it above all other things, whatever contempt the world may pour upon it? Do we feel our necessity of a Mediator in all our transactions with God, and depend entirely upon the merit of his death for acceptance, sensible that we have no merit of our own to procure one smile from God? Have we ever had our hearts enlightened to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have we admired the scheme of salvation through a crucified Jesus, as illustrating the perfections of God, and securing the honor of the divine government, while it secures our salvation? And do we delight in it upon that account? Or are we quite indifferent about the glory of God, if we may be but saved? Alas! Hereby we show we are entirely under the government of selfish principles, and have no regard for God at all. Do our thoughts frequently hover and cluster about the cross with the tenderest affections? And has the view of it melted our hearts into the most ingenuous lamenting's for sin, and given us such a hatred against it, that we can never indulge it more? My brethren, put such questions as these home to your hearts, and then endeavor to come to some just conclusion with regard to yourselves. And if the conclusion be against you, then,

4. Consider your guilt and danger—consider your ingratitude in rejecting all the love of God, and a crucified Savior—your hardness of heart, that has not been broken by such a moving representation—the aversion of your souls to God, that have not been allured to him by the powerful attraction of the cross—and oh! Consider your danger: the last remedy has been tried

upon you in vain; Christ's grand expedient for the salvation of sinners has had no effect upon you. Had the religion of the Jews, or of the heathen world, failed to bring you to repentance, there might be still some hope that the preaching of Christ crucified might prevail. But, alas! When that fails, how discouraging is your case! Therefore, I pray you, take the alarm, and labor to get your hearts affected with this representation. Oh yield to the attraction of the cross! Let him draw you to himself whom you see lifted up on it; and do not attempt such an exploit of wickedness as to resist the allurements of such love. And oh! Cry to God for his enlightening Spirit. Alas! It is your blindness that renders you unaffected with this moving object. Did you but know the Lord of glory, who was crucified; did you but see the glory of the plan of salvation through his sufferings, you would immediately become the captive of his cross, conquered by the power of his love. And such, believe me, such you must be, before you can be saved. But if the result of your examination turn out in your favor, then,

5. You may entertain the joyful hope of salvation; of salvation through one that was insulted as not able to save himself; of crowns of glory, through him that wore the crown of thorns; of fulness of joy through the man of sorrows; of immortal life through one that died upon a cross; I say, you may entertain a joyful hope of all this; for in this way of salvation there is no hinderance, no objection. God will be glorified in glorifying you, the law magnified in justifying you. In short, the honor of God and his government concur with your interest; and, therefore, if you heartily embrace this plan of salvation, you may be as sure that God will save you, as that he will take care of his own glory, for they are inseparably connected. And do not your hearts, dead as they are, spring within you at the thought? Do you not long to see your Savior on the throne, to whose

cross you are indebted for all your hopes? And oh! Will you not praise his name while you live, and continue the song through all eternity? Are you not ready to anticipate the anthem of heaven, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing: for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood? Rev. 5:9,12.

Finally, let me congratulate my reverend brethren, on their being made ministers of the New Testament, which reveals that glorious and delightful subject, Christ crucified, in full light, and diffuses it through all their studies and discourses. The Lamb that was slain is the theme that animates the songs of angels and saints above, and even our unhallowed lips are allowed to touch it without profanation. Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, delight to dwell upon it. Let us do justice to the refined morality of the gospel; let us often explain and enforce the precepts, the graces, and the virtues of Christianity; and teach men to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. But let us do this in an evangelical strain, as ministers of the crucified Jesus, and not as the scholars of Epictetus or Seneca. Let us labor to bring men to a hearty compliance with the method of salvation through Christ; and then we shall find it comparatively an easy matter, a thing of course, to make them good moralists. Then a short hint of their duty to God and man will be more forcible than whole volumes of ethics, while their spirits are not cast in the gospel-mold. Thus may we be enabled to go on, till our great Master shall take our charge off our hands, and call us to give an account of our stewardship!

*SERM. XXV.*  
*INGRATITUDE TO GOD*  
*AN HEINOUS BUT*  
*GENERAL INIQUITY.*

**2** Chron. 32:25.— *But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.*

Among the many vices that are at once universally decried, and universally practiced in the world, there is none more base or more common than ingratitude; ingratitude towards the supreme Benefactor. Ingratitude is the sin of individuals, of families, of churches, of kingdoms, and even of all mankind. The guilt of ingratitude lies heavy upon the whole race of men, though, alas! But few of them feel and lament it. I have felt it of late with unusual weight; and it is the weight of it that now extorts a discourse from me upon this subject. If the plague of an ungrateful heart must cleave to us while in this world of sin and imperfection, let us at least lament it; let us bear witness against it; let us condemn ourselves for it; and let us do all we can to suppress it in ourselves. I feel myself, as it were, exasperated, and full of indignation against it, and against myself, as guilty of it. And in the



bitterness of my spirit, I shall endeavor to expose it to your view in its proper infernal colors, as an object of horror and indignation.

None of us can flatter ourselves that we are in little or no danger of this sin, when even so good and great a man as Hezekiah did not escape the infection. In the memoirs of his life, which are illustrious for piety, zeal for reformation, victory over his enemies, glory and importance at home and abroad, this, alas! Is recorded of him, “That he rendered not again to his divine Benefactor according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.”

Many had been the blessings and deliverances of this good man’s life. I shall only particularize two, recorded in this chapter. The Assyrians had overrun a great part of the country, and intended to lay siege to Jerusalem. Their haughty monarch who had carried all before him, and was grown insolent with success, sent Hezekiah a blasphemous letter, to intimidate him and his people. He profanely bullies and defies Hezekiah and his God together; and Rabshakeh, his messenger, comments upon his master’s letter in the same style of impiety and insolence. But here observe the signal efficacy of prayer! Hezekiah, Isaiah, and no doubt many other pious people among the Jews, made their prayer to the God of Israel; and, as it were, complained to him of the threatening’s and profane blasphemy of the Assyrian monarch. Jehovah hears, and works a miraculous deliverance for them. He sends out an angel (one was sufficient), who destroyed in one night, as we are elsewhere told, (2 Kings 19:35,) no less than a hundred fourscore and five thousand men; which extensive slaughter, a Jewish tradition tells us, was made by means of lightning, a very supposable and sufficient cause. Sennacherib, with the thin remains of his army, fled home

inglorious; and his two sons assassinated him at an idolatrous altar. Thus Jerusalem was freed from danger, and the country rescued from slavery and the ravages of war. Nay, we find from profane history, that this dreadful blow proved fatal in the issue to the Assyrian monarchy, which had oppressed the world so long; for upon this the Medes, and afterwards other nations, threw off their submission; and the empire fell to pieces. Certainly so illustrious a deliverance as this, wrought immediately by the divine hand, was a sufficient reason for ardent gratitude.

Another deliverance followed upon this. Hezekiah was sick unto death; that is, his sickness was in its own nature mortal, and would have been unto death, had it not been for the miraculous interposition of Providence. But, upon his prayer to God, he was recovered, and fifteen years added to his life. This also was great cause of gratitude. And we find it had this effect upon him, while the sense of his deliverance was fresh upon his mind; for in his eucharistic song upon his recovery, we find these grateful strains: The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. But, alas! Those grateful impressions wore off in some time; and pride, that uncreaturely temper, began to rise. He began to think himself the favorite of heaven, in some degree, on account of his own personal goodness. He indulged his vanity in ostentatiously exposing his treasures to the Babylonian messengers; which was the instance of selfish pride and ingratitude that seems here particularly referred to.

This pride and ingratitude passed not without evidences of the divine indignation; for we are told, therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon

Judah and Jerusalem. As the crime was not peculiar to him, so neither is the punishment. Nations and individuals have suffered in this manner from age to age; and under the guilt of it we and our country are now languishing.

In order to make you the more sensible of your ingratitude towards your divine Benefactor, I shall give you a brief view of his mercies towards you, and expose the aggravated baseness of ingratitude under the reception of so many mercies.

Mercy has poured in upon you upon all sides, and followed you from the first commencement of your existence; rich, various, free, repeated, uninterrupted mercy. The blessings of a body wonderfully and fearfully made, complete in all its parts, and not monstrous in any: the blessings of a rational, immortal soul, preserved in the exercise of sound reason for so many years, amid all those accidents that have shattered it in others, and capable of the exalted pleasure of religion, and the everlasting enjoyment of the blessed God, the Supreme Good: the blessing of a large and spacious world, prepared and furnished for our accommodation; illuminated with an illustrious sun, and the many luminaries of the sky: the earth enriched and adorned with trees, vegetables, various sorts of grain, and animals, for our support or convenience; and the sea, a medium of extensive trade, and an inexhaustible store of fishes: the blessing of the early care of parents and friends, to provide for us in the helpless days of infancy, and direct or restrain us in the giddy, precipitant years of youth: the blessing of being born in the adult age of the world, when the improvements of art are carried to so high a degree of perfection; of being born, not among savages in a wilderness, but in a humanized, civilized country; not on the burning, sandy deserts of the torrid zone, nor under the frozen sky of Lapland or Iceland, but in a temperate climate, as favorable to the comfort and continuance of

life as most countries upon earth; not in a barren soil, scarcely affording provision of the coarsest sort for its inhabitants, but in a land of unusual plenty, that has never felt the severities of famine: the blessing of not being a race of slaves under the tyranny of an arbitrary government, but free-born Britons and Virginians in a land of liberty: these birthright blessings are almost peculiar to us and our nation. Let me enumerate also the blessing of a good education; good, at least, when compared to the many savage nations of the earth; the blessing of health for months and years; the blessing of raiment suited to the various seasons of the year; the blessing of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, of summer and winter, of seedtime and harvest; the agreeable vicissitude of night and day; the refreshing repose of sleep, and the activity and enjoyment of our waking hours, the numerous and refined blessings of society, and the most endearing relations; the blessings included in the tender names of friend, husband or wife, parent or child, brother or sister; the blessings of peace; peace in the midst of a peaceful country, which has been our happy lot till of late years: or peace in the midst of a ravaged, bleeding country, which is a more distinguished and singular blessing, and which we now enjoy, while many of our fellow-subjects feel a terrible reverse; blessings in every age of life; in infancy, in youth, in adult age, and in the decays of old age; blessings by sea and land, and in every country where we have resided; in short, blessings as numerous as our moments, as long continued as our lives; blessings personal and relative, public and private; for while we have the air to breathe in, the earth to tread upon, or a drop of water to quench our thirst, we must own we are not left destitute of blessings from God. From God, I say, all these blessings originally flow: and to him we are principally obliged for them. Indeed, they are conveyed to us by means of our fellow

creatures; or they seem to be the spontaneous productions of natural causes, acting according to the established laws of nature. But then it was God, the Fountain of being and of all good, that gave our fellow-creatures the disposition, the ability, and the opportunity of conveying these blessings to us; and it is the great God who is the Author of those causes which spontaneously produce so many blessings for our enjoyment, and of those laws of nature, according to which they act. These are but channels, channels cut by his hand; and he is the source, the ocean of blessings. Creatures are but the hands that distribute his charity through a needy world; but his is the store from which they derive their supplies. On this account, therefore, we should receive all these blessings as gifts from God, and feel ourselves obliged to him, as the supreme, original Benefactor. Besides, it is very probable to me, that in order to bestow some of these blessings upon us by means of natural causes, God may give these causes a touch to turn them in our favor more than they would be according to the established course of nature; a touch so efficacious as to answer the kind design: though so gentle and agreeable to the established laws of nature, as not to be perceivable, or to cast the system of nature into disorder. The blessings conveyed in this way are not only the gifts of his hand, but the gifts of his immediate hand.

Therefore let God be acknowledged the supreme, the original Benefactor of the world, and the proper Author of all our blessings; and let all his creatures, in the height of their benevolence and usefulness, own that they are but the distributors of his alms, or the instruments of conveying the gifts of his hand. Let us acknowledge the light of yonder sun, the breath that now heaves our lungs, and fans the vital flame, the growing plenty that is now bursting its way through the clods of earth, the water that bubbles up in

springs, that flows in streams and rivers, or rolls at large in the ocean; let us own, I say, that all these are the bounties of his hand, who supplies with good the various ranks of being, as high as the most exalted angel, and as low as the young ravens, and the grass of the field. Let him stand as the acknowledged Benefactor of the universe to inflame the gratitude of all to him, or to array in the crimson colors of aggravated guilt the ingratitude of those sordid, stupid wretches, who still continue unthankful.

The positive blessings I have briefly enumerated, have some of them been interrupted at times; but even the interruption seemed only intended to make way for some deliverance; a deliverance that reinstated us in the possession of our former blessings with a new and stronger relish, and taught us, or at least was adapted to teach us, some useful lessons, which we were not likely to learn, had not our enjoyment been a while suspended. This very hour let us turn our eyes backward, and take a review of a length of ten, twenty, forty, or sixty years; and what a series of deliverances rise upon us! Deliverances from the many dangers of childhood, by which many have lost their limbs, and many their lives; deliverances from many threatening and fatal accidents; deliverances from exquisite pains, and from dangerous diseases; deliverances from the gates of death, and the mouth of the grave; and deliverances for yourselves, and for your dear families and friends! When sickness, like a destroying angel, has entered your neighborhood, and made extensive havoc and desolation around you, you and yours have escaped the infection, while you were every day in anxious expectation of the dreadful visit, and trembling at the dubious fate of some dear relative or your own; or if it has entered your houses, like a messenger of death, it has not committed its usual ravages in them. Or if it has torn

from your hearts one or more members of your family, still you have some left, or perhaps some new members added to make up the loss.

When you have been in deep distress, and covered with the most tremendous glooms, deliverance has dawned in the most seasonable hour, and light and joy have succeeded to nights of darkness and melancholy. In short, your deliverances have been endless and innumerable. You appear this day so many monuments of delivering goodness. You have also shared in the deliverances wrought for your country and nation in former and latter times: deliverances from the open violences and clandestine plots and insurrections of enemies abroad, and traitors and rebels at home: deliverances from the united efforts of both, to subvert the British Constitution, and to enslave free-born Britons to civil or ecclesiastical tyranny, or a medley of both; and deliverances from drought, and the threatening appearances of famine, which we have so lately experienced in these parts; and yet they are long enough past to be generally forgotten!

In these instances of deliverances, as well as in the former, of positive blessings, let the great God be acknowledged the original efficient, whatever creatures he is pleased to make use of as his instruments. Fortuitous accidents are under his direction; and necessary causes are subject to his control. Diseases are his servants, his soldiers; and he sends them out, or recalls them according to his pleasure.

And now mention the benefactor if you can, to whom you are a thousandth part so much obliged as to this Benefactor. What a profusion of blessings and deliverances has the Almighty made you a subject of! And oh! What obligations of gratitude do such favors lay upon you! What ardent love, what sincere thanksgiving, what affectionate duty do they require of

you! These are the cords of love, the bonds of a man, wherewith he would draw you to obedience.

Dare you now make the inquiry, What returns has this divine Benefactor received from you for all this goodness? Alas! The discovery which this inquiry will make, may convict, shock, confound, and mortify us all; for we are all, in a prodigious degree, though some much more than others, guilty in this respect, guilty of the vilest ingratitude. Alas! Are there not many of you that do not return to God the gratitude of a dog to his master? That brute animal who receives but crumbs and blows from you, will welcome you home with a thousand fond and obliging motions. The very dull ox you fodder, knows his owner. But oh! The more than brutal ingratitude of reasonable creatures! Some of you, perhaps, do not so much as acknowledge the agency of Providence in these enjoyments; but, affecting a very unphilosophical infidelity under the name of philosophy, you make natural causes the authors of all good to you, without the agency of the first Mover of all the springs of nature. Others of you, who may be orthodox in your faith as to this point, yet are practical infidels, the most absurd and inconsistent sort in the world; that is, while you certainly acknowledge, and speculatively believe the agency of Providence in these things, yet you live as if there were no such thing: you live thoughtless of the divine Benefactor, and disobedient to him for days and years together. The very mercies he bestows upon you, you abuse to his dishonor, by making them occasions of sin. Do not your consciences now convict you of that monster sin, ingratitude, the most base, unnatural, and yet indulged ingratitude? How do you resent it, if one whom you have deeply obliged should prove ungrateful, and use you ill? But it is impossible any one of your fellow-creatures should be guilty of such enormous ingratitude towards you as you



are guilty of towards God; because it is impossible any one of them should be so strongly obliged to you as you are to him.

Ye children of God, his peculiar favorites, whose hearts are capable of, and do actually feel some generous sensations of gratitude, what do you think of your conduct towards such a Benefactor? I speak particularly to you, because you are most likely to feel what I say. Have you rendered again to your God according to the benefits done you? Oh! Are you not mortified, and shocked to reflect upon your ingratitude, your sordid, monstrous ingratitude? Do you not abhor yourselves because you were capable of such base conduct? From you I expect such a generous resentment. But, as to others, they are dead in trespasses and sins, dead toward God, and therefore it is no wonder if they are dead to all penitential ingenuous relenting's for their ingratitude.

But if all this does not suffice to make you sensible of your enormous guilt in this particular, let me lay before you an inventory of still richer blessings. At the head of this stands Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of God. "God so loved the world, (hear it, men and angels, with grateful wonder!) that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him, might be saved." John 3:17. The comforts of this life alone would be a very inadequate provision for creatures who are to exist for ever in another; for what are sixty or seventy years in the long duration of an immortal being! But in the unsearchable riches of Christ are contained the most ample provisions for your immortal state. Jesus Christ is such a gift as draws all other gifts after it; for so the apostle argues, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also

freely give us all things.” Rom. 8:32. And the purposes for which he gave this gift, render it the more astonishing. He gave him not only to rule us by his power, but to purchase us with the blood of his heart. He gave him up to death, even the death of the cross. In consequence of which an economy of grace, a ministry of reconciliation, is set up in our guilty world. Various means are appointed, and various endeavors are used to save you, perishing sinners. For your salvation Jesus now intercedes in his native heaven, at the right hand of God. For your salvation the Holy Spirit strives with you; conscience admonishes you; Providence draws you by blessings, and drives you by chastisements; angels minister to you; Bibles are put into your hands; ministers persuade you; friends advise you; and thousands of saints pray for you. For this end, prayer, preaching, baptism, and the Lord’s supper, and a great variety of means of grace, are instituted. For this end, heaven is prepared and furnished with many mansions; the pearly gates open, and dart their splendors from afar to attract our eyes; and things which the eye, which has seen so many things, had never seen; which the ear, that has had still more extensive intelligence, had never heard; nor the heart of man, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, had never conceived, are brought to light by the gospel. Nay, for this purpose, your salvation, Sinai thunders, hell roars and throws its devouring flames, even to warn a stupid world not to plunge themselves into that place of torment. In short, the kind designs of redeeming love run through the whole economy of Providence towards our world. Heaven and earth, and, in the sense mentioned, hell itself, are trying to save you. The strongholds of sin and Satan, in which you are held prisoners, are attacked in kindness to you from all quarters. What beneficent efforts, what heroic exploits of divine goodness are these! And, blessed be God, these efforts are not in vain.

The celestial regions are fast peopling, though, alas! Not so fast as the land of darkness, with numerous colonies from our guilty globe. Even in these dregs of time, when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, Jesus is gaining many hearts and saving many souls, in the various apartments of his church. Though you and thousands more should be left, and continue to neglect, yet such excellencies shall not want admirers, such a Physician shall not want employ in our dying world. No, “he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” Isa. 53:11. And I doubt not but there are some among you who are the trophies of his victorious love—of his victorious love, I say; for it is by the force of love he sweetly conquers.

Now you, my brethren, are the subjects of this administration of grace; with you, these means are used for your salvation; to you Jesus is offered as a Savior; and heaven and earth are striving to lodge you safe in his arms. You should not rejoice in the wants of others; but certainly it may make you the more sensible of your peculiar obligations, to reflect that your lot, in this respect, is singular. It is but a very small part of mankind that enjoy these great advantages for a happy immortality. You live under the gospel, whilst the most of the nations of the earth are sunk in heathen idolatry, groaning under Popish tyranny, seduced by Mahometan imposture, or hardened in Jewish infidelity.

And what peculiar obligations of gratitude result from such peculiar, distinguishing favors? Men have obliged you, and you feel the obligation. But can men, can angels, can the whole created universe bestow such gifts upon you, and make such provisions for you, as those which have been mentioned? Gifts of infinite value, dear to the Giver; provisions for an everlasting state; an everlasting state of as complete happiness as your

nature, in its highest improvements, is capable of. These are favors worthy of God; favors that bespeak him God. And must he not, then, be the object of your supreme gratitude? Can anything in the world be more reasonable?

And yet—hear, oh earth, with horror; be astonished, O ye heavens, at this: be ye horribly afraid! How little gratitude does God receive from our world after all! How little gratitude from you, on whom these favors are showered down with distinguished profusion! Do not many of you neglect the unspeakable gift of God, Jesus Christ, as well as that salvation which he bought with his blood? Do you not ungratefully neglect the means of your salvation, and resist the generous efforts that are used, from all quarters, to save you! Oh! The mountainous load of ingratitude that lies upon you! Enough to sink the whole world into the depth of hell.

But I must now address such of you, who are still more deeply obliged to your divine Benefactor, and whose ingratitude therefore is black and horrid; I mean such of you who have not only shared in the blessings and deliverances of life, and lived under the advantages of a dispensation of grace, but have experimentally known the love of God to your souls in a manner peculiar to yourselves, and are actually entitled to all the unknown blessings prepared for those that love him. If I am so happy as to belong to your number, I am sure I am so unhappy as to share deeply with you in the guilt, the black guilt of ingratitude. When you were dead in trespasses and sins, God quickened you, out of his great love wherewith he loved you. When you were rushing on towards destruction, in the enchanting paths of sin, he checked your mad career, and turned your faces heavenward. When you were sunk into sorrows, borne down with a sense of guilt, and trembling every moment with the fears of immediate execution, he relieved you, led you to Jesus, and, as it were, lodged you safe in his arms. When

dismal glooms have again gathered upon your minds, and overwhelming fears rushed again upon you like a deluge, he has relieved you again by leading you to the same almighty and ever constant Savior. When your graces and virtues have withered in the absence of the Sun of righteousness, he has again risen upon you with healing in his wings, and revived your languishing souls. He has shed abroad his love in your hearts, which has made this wretched wilderness a paradise to you. He has, at times, afforded you, as you humbly hoped, joy and peace in believing; yea, even caused you to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. He has met you in your retirements, and allowed you to converse with him in his ordinances, with the heart of a friend. He has, as it were, unlocked his peculiar treasures to enrich you, and given you an unshaken title to the most glorious inheritance of the saints in light. He has made you his own, his own in a peculiar sense: his people, his friends, his children. You are indeed his favorites: you were even so, long before time began. He loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness has he drawn you; and having loved you once, he will love you always, and he will continue in his love to all eternity. Neither life, nor death, things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate you from his love. Rom. 8:38,39. His love to you is an unbounded ocean, that spreads over eternity, and makes it, as it were, the channel of the ocean of your happiness.

In you he intends to show to all worlds what glorious creatures he can form of the dust, and of the polluted fragments of degenerate human nature. What is all the profession of kings to their favorites, what are all the benefactions of creatures, nay, what are all the bounties of the divine hand itself within the compass of time, when compared to these astonishing,

unparalleled, immortal, infinite, God-like favors? They all dwindle into obscurity, like the stars of night in the blaze of noon.

And now I am almost afraid to turn your thoughts to inquire, what return you have made for all these favors, lest you should not be able to bear the shock. You know you have a thousand times repeated Hezekiah's offence. I need not be particular. Your conscience accuses you, and points out the particulars; and I shall only join the cry of conscience against you. Oh! The ingratitude! Oh! The base, vile, unnatural, horrid, unprecedented ingratitude! From you your God might have expected better things; from you, whom he has so peculiarly, so infinitely obliged, and whose hearts he has made capable of generous sensations. But oh! The shocking, horrid ingratitude! Let our hearts burst into a flood of sorrows at the thought. They may be justly too full to allow us to speak much upon it; but, oh! They can never be too full of shame, confusion, and tender relenting's for the crime. Methinks the thought must break the hardest heart among us.

Let me now add a consideration, that gives an astonishing emphasis to all that has been said. All this profusion of mercy, personal and relative, temporal and spiritual, is bestowed upon creatures that deserve not the least mercy; creatures that deserve to be stripped naked of every mercy; nay, that deserve to be made miserable in time and eternity; creatures that deserve not to breathe this vital air, to tread the ground, or drink the stream that runs waste through the wilderness, much less to enjoy all the blessings which the infinite merit of Jesus could purchase, or the infinite goodness of God can bestow; creatures that are so far from deserving to be delivered from the calamities of life, that they deserve to have them all heightened and multiplied, till they convey them to the more intolerable punishments of hell; creatures that are so far from making adequate returns, that they are

perpetually offending their God to his face; and every day receiving blessings from him, and every day sinning against him. Oh! Astonishing! Most astonishing! This wonder is pointed out by Jesus Christ himself, who best knows what is truly marvelous. The Most High, says he, “is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.” Luke 6:35. “Your heavenly Father maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matt. 5:45.

It need afford you no surprise, if my subject so overwhelms me, as to disable me from making a formal application of it. I leave you to your own thoughts upon it. And I am apt to think they will constrain you to cry out in a consternation with me, “Oh! The amazing, horrid, base, unprecedented ingratitude of man! And oh! The amazing, free, rich, overflowing, infinite, unprecedented goodness of God! Let these two miracles be the wonder of the whole universe!”

One prayer, and I have done. May our divine Benefactor, among his other blessings, bestow upon us that of a thankful heart, and enable us to give sincere, fervent, and perpetual praise to his name, through Jesus Christ, his unspeakable gift! Amen.

# *SERM. XXVI. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND THEIR CONSEQUENT JOYS AND BLESSINGS.*

**I**saiah 53:10,11.— *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.*

This chapter contains a most lively and moving account of very tragical sufferings; and, if we have but a small share of humanity, we cannot hear it without being affected, even though we did not know the person concerned. Here is one so mangled and disfigured, that he has no form nor comeliness; one despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; one wounded, bruised, oppressed, afflicted; one brought as a lamb to the slaughter; one cut off out of the land of the living. And who is he? Were he an enemy, or a malefactor, we could not but pity him. But this was not his character; “for he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” And he was so far from being our enemy, that “he hath borne our



griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities,” not for his own. Were he a child or a friend that had suffered such things, it would raise all our mournful and sympathizing passions to hear the history. But what if this should be the man that is God’s fellow, the Redeemer, to whom we are bound by the most endearing obligations! A person of infinite dignity and perfect innocence, our best friend, and only Savior! What-if it should be he? Would not this move your hearts, and raise all your tender passions? Or shall he die in such agonies unpitied, unlamented, unbeloved, when even a dying criminal excites our compassion? What do you think would be the issue, if I should make an experiment of this to-day? If I should make a trial, what weight will the sufferings of Jesus have upon your hearts? Do you think the representation of his sufferings and love would have any effect upon you? That they may have this effect, is my design in the prosecution of this subject; for that it is Jesus who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the subject of these sufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of passages quoted from this chapter to him in the New Testament. This chapter has been a successful part of the Scriptures, and there are some now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the Ethiopian eunuch was reading, when he asked Philip, “Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or some other man?” and Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus: and he believed with all his heart and was baptized; and went on his way homeward (and heavenward) rejoicing. Acts 8:32,35. This was the chapter that opened to the penitent Earl of Rochester the way of salvation through the sufferings of Christ, which alone relieved his mind from the horrors of guilt, and constrained him to hope that even such a sinner as he might find mercy. Oh!

That it may have the same effect upon you, my brethren, to-day, that with the eunuch you may return home rejoicing!

The design and method I now have in view, is only to illustrate and improve the several parts of my text, especially those that represent how pleasing and satisfactory the conversion and salvation of sinners, by the death of Christ, is to him.

1. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." An offering for sin is when the punishment of sin is transferred from the original offender to another, and that other person suffers in his stead. Thus the Lord Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. The punishment of our sin was transferred to him, and he bore it in his own body on the tree. He became our substitute, and took our place in law, and therefore the penalty of the law due to us was executed upon him. It is in this, my brethren, that we have any hope of salvation: blood for blood, life for life, soul for soul: the blood, the life, the soul of the Son of God, for the blood, and life, and soul of the obnoxious criminal. Here, sirs, your grateful wonder may begin to rise upon our first entrance on the subject; and you will find the wonders will increase as we go along.

You see Jesus presented an offering for sin; and what was it he offered? "Silver and gold he had none," the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of heifers, would not suffice; and these too he had not. But he had blood in his veins, and that shall all go; that he will offer up to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made an offering for sin. His soul on offering for sin! His pure, spotless soul! His soul that was of more value than the whole universe beside! You may find those that will give a great many things for the deliverance of a friend, but who would give his soul!

His soul for his enemies!— this is the peculiar commendation of the love of Jesus.

His soul here may signify his whole human nature; in which sense it is often taken in the Sacred Writings. And then the meaning is, that both his soul and body, or his whole human nature, bore the punishment due to us. Or his soul may be here understood properly for his rational and immortal part, in opposition to his body; and then the meaning is, that he suffered in soul as well as in body. His soul suffered by the foresight of his suffering; by the temptations of the devil; by an affecting view of the sins of men; and especially by the absence of his heavenly Father. Hence, when his body was untouched, in the garden of Gethsemane, he cries out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;” and elsewhere, “Now is my soul troubled.” In short, as one expresses it, the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings. The sense of bodily pain may be swallowed up in the pleasing sensations of divine love. So some have found by happy experience, who have suffered for righteousness’ sake. But Jesus denied himself that happiness which he has given to many of his servants. His soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and all this for such sinners as we. And shall this have no weight among the creatures for whom he endured all this? Make an experiment upon your hard hearts with this thought, and try if they can resist its energy, “Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.” Thou shalt make; that is, thou, the great God and Father of all. This sacrifice is provided by thy wisdom and grace, and appointed by thy authority, who hast a right to settle the terms of forgiveness; and therefore we may be sure this sacrifice is acceptable; this atonement is sufficient. This method of salvation is thy contrivance and establishment, and therefore valid and firm. Here, my brethren, is a sure foundation; here,

and nowhere else. Can you produce a divine warrant for depending on your own righteousness, or anything else? No; but this offering for sin is of divine appointment, and therefore you may safely venture your eternal all upon it. “Come, ye afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;” come, build upon this rock, and you shall never fall.

Or the words may be rendered, “When his soul shall make an offering for sin.” And in this sense it is signified that this was Christ’s own voluntary act. He consented to the arduous undertaking; he consented to be our substitute, and offered himself a sacrifice for us. He was under no previous constraint; subject to no compulsion. This he tells us himself: “No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself.” John 10:18. Thus it was his own free choice; and this consideration prodigiously enhances his love. A forced favor is but a small favor. But Jesus willingly laid down his life when he had power to keep it. He voluntarily ascended the cross, when he might have still continued on the throne. He was absolute Lord and proprietor of himself, under no obligations to any, till he assumed them by his own consent. When martyrs have died in the cause of righteousness, they did but what was their previous duty; their lives were not theirs, but his who gave them, his to whom they devoted them; and they had no right to them when he demanded them; nor were they able to protect them against the power of their enemies. But Jesus resigned what was his own absolute property; and he resigned his life when it was in his power to have retained it. All the united forces of earth and hell could not have touched his life had not he consented. As with one word he spoke them into being, so with a word he could have blasted all their powers, or remanded them into nothing, as he found them. Of this he gave a specimen, when by saying I am he, (John 18:6,) I am the despised Nazarene whom ye are seeking, he

struck an armed company down to the earth; and he could as easily have chained them there, and never suffered them to rise more. Here was love indeed, that he should offer himself a voluntary, self-devoted sacrifice I and if he made his soul an offering for sin when he was not obliged to it, will not you voluntarily love and serve him, when you are obliged to it; obliged by all the ties of authority and gratitude, of duty and interest? Let me bring home this overture to your hearts: will you, of your own choice, devote yourselves to his service, who consented to devote himself a victim for your sins? Are you willing to live to him, when you are bound to do it; to him who died for you, when he was not bound to do it? You have the easier task of the two: to live a life of holiness, and to die upon a cross, are very different things; and will you not do thus much for him? Could there be such a thing as a work of supererogation, or an overplus of obedience, methinks this overplus of love might constrain you to it; and will you not so much as honestly attempt that which you are bound to by the most strong and endearing obligations? If you reject this proposal, make no pretensions to gratitude, a regard to the most sacred and rightful authority, or any noble disposition. You are sunk into the most sordid and aggravated degree of wickedness, and every generous and pious passion is extinct within you.

Now, what shall be the consequence, what the reward of all these sufferings of Christ? Shall he endure all this in vain? Shall he receive no compensation? Yes; for,

2. My text tells you he shall prolong his days. The self-devoted victim shall have a glorious resurrection. His days were cut off in the midst; but he rose again, and shall enjoy an endless length of happy and glorious days. That he was once dead he was not ashamed to own, when he appeared in a form of so much majesty to John. "Fear not," says he, "I am the first and the

last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore;" Rev. 1:17,18. The man that hung on Calvary, and lay dead in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, where is he now? Oh! He has burst the bonds of death, triumphed over the grave, and enjoys an immortal life. And this immortal life he spends in a station of the most exalted dignity and perfect happiness forever. See! Jesus, "who was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honor;" Heb. 2:9. Because "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess:" Phil. 2:8-11. It was for this end that "Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living:" Rom. 14:9. By his death he acquired universal government, and has the keys of the vast invisible world, and of death that leads into it; Rev. 1:18. This was a great part of that joy which was set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame; Heb. 12:2.

And is the poor, despised, insulted, crucified Jesus thus exalted? Then I proclaim, like the herald before Joseph, when advanced to be prime minister to Pharaoh, Bow the knee! Submit to him, ye sons of men. He has bought you with his blood, and has a right to your subjection; therefore yield yourselves to him. This day become his willing subjects, and swear allegiance to him at his table. To him let every knee bow in this assembly, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. And do you now feel your hearts begin to yield? Are your souls in the posture of humble homage? Are you ready to say, "Lord Jesus, reign over this soul of mine; see, I resign it as the willing captive of thy cross?" Or will you stand it out against him? Shall

your hearts and practices, as it were, send a message after him, now when he is advanced to his heavenly throne, “We will not have this man to reign over us?” Then I proclaim you rebels, willful, inexcusable rebels against the supreme, the most rightful, and the most gracious government of Christ; and if you continue such, you must perish forever by the sword of his justice, without a possibility of escaping. You cannot rebel against the crucified Jesus with impunity, for he is not now dying on the cross, or lying senseless in the grave. He lives! He lives to avenge the affront. He lives forever, to punish you forever. He shall prolong his days to prolong your torment. Therefore, you have no alternative, but to submit to him or perish.

I may also propose the immortality and exaltation of Christ to you, as an encouragement to desponding souls. So the apostle uses it, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth.” Heb. 7:25. In trusting your souls to him, you do not commit them to a dead Savior. It is true, he was once dead, above 1700 years ago; but now he is alive; and behold he liveth for evermore. He lives to communicate his Spirit for your sanctification; he lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness; he lives to send down supplies to you according to your exigencies; he lives to make perpetual intercession for you (which is the thing the apostle had in view), to plead your cause, to urge your claims founded on his blood, and to solicit blessings for you. He lives forever to make you happy for ever. And will you not venture to trust your souls in his hand? You may safely do it without fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the Supreme Being, Lord of all, and having all things subjected to him; and consequently, nothing can hurt you if he undertakes to be your guard. Ye trembling weaklings, would it not be better for you to fly

to him for refuge than to stand on your own footing, afraid of falling every hour? He can, he will support you, if you lean upon him.

And does not he appear to you as an object of love in his exalted state? He is all-glorious, and deserves your love; and he is all benevolence and mercy, and therefore self-interest, one would think, would induce you to love him; for to what end is he exalted? Isaiah will tell you, “He is exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.” Isa. 30:18. He has placed himself upon his throne, as upon an eminence, may I so speak, that he may more advantageously scatter blessings among the needy crowd beneath him, that look up to him with eager wishful eyes, like the lame beggar on Peter and John, expecting to receive something from them. And shall not such grace and bounty, in one so highly advanced above you, excite your love? Certainly it must, unless that the principle of gratitude be lost in your breasts.

Finally, May I not propose the exaltation and immortality of the Lord Jesus, as an object of congratulation to you that are his friends? Friends naturally rejoice in the honors conferred upon one another, and mutually congratulate each other's success. And will not you that love Jesus rejoice with him, that he is not now where he once was; not hanging on a painful and ignominious cross, but seated on a glorious throne; not insulted by the rabble, but adored by all the heavenly armies; not pierced with a crown of thorns, but adorned with a crown of unfading glory; not oppressed under loads of sufferings, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys? Must you not rejoice that his sufferings for you had so happy an issue with regard to himself? Oh! Can you be sunk in sorrow while your Head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain he endured for you? Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all his



members; and if you have no reason to rejoice on your own account, yet rejoice for your Head; share in the joys of your Lord.

Thus you see Jesus Christ has obtained the richest reward in his own person. But is this all? Shall his sufferings have no happy consequences with regard to others; in which he may rejoice as well as for himself? Yes, for,

3. My text tells you, that he shall see his seed. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. What an emphatical variety of expressions are here to signify the pleasure which Christ takes in observing the happy fruits of his death, in the salvation of many of the ruined sons of men!

He shall see his seed. By his seed are meant the children of his grace, his followers, the sincere professors of his religion. The disciples or followers of a noted person, for example, a prophet or philosopher, are seldom denominated his seed or children. These words are parallel to those spoken by himself, in the near prospect of his sufferings; “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a com of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” John 12:24. So unless Jesus had fallen to the ground and died, he would have abode alone; he would have possessed his native heaven in solitude, as to any of the sons of Adam; but now by his dying, and lying entombed in the ground, he has produced a large increase. One dying Christ has produced thousands, millions of Christians. His blood was prolific; it was indeed “the seed of the church.” And, blessed be God, its prolific virtue is not yet failed. His spiritual seed have been growing up from age to age, and oh the delightful thought! They have sprung up in this barren soil, though, alas! They too often appear thin and withering. These tender plants of righteousness have sprung up in some

of your families; and I trust, a goodly number of them are here in the courts of the Lord to-day. If you search after the root, you will find it rises from the blood of Jesus; and it is his blood that gives it nourishment. Jesus came into our world, and shed the blood of his heart on the ground, that it might produce a crop of souls for the harvest of eternal glory; and without this, we could no more expect it than wheat without seed or moisture. A part of this seed is now ripened and gathered into the granary of heaven, like a shock of corn come in his season. Another part is still in this unfriendly climate suffering the extremities of winter, covered with snow, nipped with frost, languishing in drought, and trodden under foot. Such are you, the plants of righteousness, that now hear me. But you are ripening apace, and your harvest is just at hand. Therefore, bear up under the severities of winter; for that coldness of heart, that drought for want of divine influences, those storms of temptations, and those oppressions that now tread you down, will ere long be over. Oh! When shall we see this heavenly seed spring up in this place, in a more extensive and promising degree? When you travel through the country, in this temperate season, with which God has blessed our country that was parched and languishing last year, how agreeable is the survey of wide, extensive fields, promising plenteous crops of various kinds! And oh! Shall we not have a fruitful season of spiritual seed among us! May I accommodate the words of Jesus to this assembly, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest?" John 4:35. Oh! Is the happy season come, when we shall see a large crop of converts in this place? Then welcome, thou long-expected season! But alas! Is not this a flattering hope? Is it not, on the other hand, a barren season with us? Is not the harvest past and the summer over, while so many are not

saved? Oh! The melancholy thought! If it has been so with us for some time, oh let us endeavor to make this a fruitful day!

We may perhaps more naturally understand this metaphor as taken, not from the seed of vegetables, but that of man; and so it signifies a posterity, which is often called seed. This only gives us another view of the same case. Spiritual children are rising up to Christ from age to age, from country to country; and blessed be his name, the succession is not yet at an end, but will run on as long as the sun endureth. Spiritual children are daily begotten by his word in one part of the world or other; and even of this place it may be said, “that this and that man was born here.” And are there none among you now that feel the pangs of the new birth, and are about to be added to the number of his children? Oh that many may be born to him this day! Oh that this day we may feel the prolific virtue of that blood which was shed above 1700 years ago!

He shall see his seed. It is a comfort to a dying man to see a numerous offspring to keep up his name, and inherit his estate. This comfort Jesus had in all the calamities of his life, and in all the agonies of death; and this animated him to endure all with patience. He saw some of his spiritual children weeping around him while hanging on the cross. He looked forward to the end of time, and saw a numerous offspring rising up from age to age to call him blessed, to bear up his name in the world, and to share in his heavenly inheritance. And oh! May we not indulge the pleasing hope, that from his cross he cast a look towards Hanover in the ends of the earth: and that in his last agonies he was revived with this reflection; “I see I shall not die in vain: I see my seed dispersed over the world, and reaching the wilds of America? I foresee that a number of them, towards the end of the world, will meet in Hanover, gratefully to commemorate the sufferings I am

now enduring, and devote themselves to me forever.” O my brethren! Will you not afford the blessed Jesus this pleasure? It is but little, very little, for all the tortures he bore for you: your sins have given him many a wound, many a pang, and will you not now grant him this satisfaction? But the cross is not the only place from whence he takes a view of his spiritual seed. He is now exalted to his throne in the highest heavens; and from thence he takes a wide survey of the universe. He looks down upon our world: he beholds kings in their grandeur, victorious generals with all their power, nobles and great men in all their pomp; but these are not the objects that best please his eyes. “He sees his seed;” he sees one here, and another there, bought with his blood, and born of his Spirit; and this is the most delightful sight our world can afford him. Some of them may be oppressed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghastly with famine; they may make no great figure in mortal eyes; but he loves to look at them, he esteems them as his children, and the fruits of his dying pangs. And let me tell you his eyes are upon this assembly to-day; and if there be one of his spiritual seed among us, he can distinguish them in the crowd. He sees you drinking in his words with eager ears; he sees you at his table commemorating his love; he sees your hearts breaking with penitential sorrows, and melting at his cross. And oh! Should we not all be solicitous that we be of that happy number on whom his eyes are thus graciously fixed?

But these are not the only children whom he delights to view; they are not all in such an abject, imperfect state. No, he sees a glorious company of them around his throne in heaven, arrived to maturity, enjoying their inheritance, and resembling their divine Parent. How does his benevolent heart rejoice to look over the immense plains of heaven, and see them all peopled with his seed! When he takes a view of this numerous offspring,

sprung from his blood, and when he looks down to our world, and we hope to this place among others, and sees so many infants in grace, gradually advancing to their adult age; when he sees some, perhaps every hour since he died upon Calvary, entering the gates of heaven, having finished their course of education upon earth; I say, when this prospect appears to him on every hand, how does he rejoice! Now the prophecy in my text is fulfilled. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. If you put the sentiments of his benevolent heart into language, methinks it is to this purpose, "It is enough; since my death has been so fruitful of such a glorious posterity, I am satisfied. If sinners will submit to me, that I may save them, if they will but suffer me to make them happy, I desire no other reward for all my agonies for them. If this end be but answered, I do not at all repent of my hanging on the tree for them." O sirs, must not your heart melt away within you, to hear such language as this? See the strength of the love of Jesus? If you be but saved, he does not grudge his blood and life for you. Your salvation would make amends for all. He asks no other reward from you than that you will become his spiritual seed, and behave as children towards him. This he would count the greatest joy; a joy more than equivalent to all the pains he endured for you. And oh I my brethren, will you not afford him this joy to-day? This is a point I have much at heart, and therefore I must urge it upon you; nay, I can take no denial in it. Jesus has done and suffered a great deal for you; and has gratitude never constrained you to inquire how you can oblige him? Or what you shall do for him in return? If this be your inquiry, you have an answer immediately; devote yourselves to his service, love and obey him as his dutiful children, that he may save you. If you would oblige him, if you would give him full satisfaction for all the sorrows you have caused him, do this; do this or

nothing; for nothing else can please him. Suppose he should this day appear to you in that form, in which he once was seen by mortals, sweating great drops of blood, accused, insulted, bruised, scourged, racked upon the cross; and suppose he should turn to you with a countenance full of love and pity, and drenched with blood and tears, and address you in such moving language as this: "See! Sinners, see what I suffer for you: see at what a dear rate I purchase your life; see how I love you. And now I have only this to ask of you in return, that you would forsake those murderous sins which thus torment me; that you would love and serve me; and accept of that salvation which I am now purchasing for you with the blood of my heart; this I ask with all the importunity of my last breath, of bleeding wounds, and expiring groans. Grant me but this, and I am satisfied; I shall think all my sufferings well bestowed." I say, suppose he should address you thus in person, what answer would he receive from this assembly? Oh! Would you not all cry out with one voice, "Lord Jesus, thou hast overcome us with thy love: here we consent to thy request. Prescribe anything, and we will obey. Nothing can be a sufficient compensation for such dying love." Well, my brethren, though Jesus be not here in person, yet he makes the same request to you by the preaching of the gospel, he makes the same request by the significant representation of his sufferings, just about to be given by sacramental signs; and therefore make the same answer now, which you would to himself in person. He has had much grief from Hanover ere now: many sins committed here lay heavy upon him, and bruised and wounded him; and oh! Will you not afford him joy this day? Will you not give him the satisfaction he desires? His eyes are now running through this assembly, and shall he not see of the travail of his soul? Shall he not see the happy fruits of his death? There is joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner,

and Jesus has a principal share in the joy. And will you endeavor to rob him of it? If you reject his proposal, the language of your conduct is, "He shall have no cause of joy, as far as I can hinder it; he shall, however, have none from me; all his sufferings shall be in vain, as far as I can render them so." And are you not shocked at such blasphemy and base ingratitude? The happiness of his exalted state consists, in a great degree, in the pleasure of seeing the designs of his death accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners; and therefore, by denying him this, you attempt to degrade him, to rob him of his happiness, and to make him once more a man of sorrows. And can you venture upon such impiety and ingratitude? I tell you, sirs, it will not do to profess his name, to compliment him with the formalities of religion, and to be Christians in pretense, while you do not depart from iniquity, and while your hearts are not fired with his love. He takes no pleasure in seeing such spurious seed, that have no resemblance to their pretended Father; but he will disown them at last, as he did the Jews, and tell them, Ye are of your father, the devil, whose deeds ye do. John 8:44. The thing in which he would rejoice, and which I am inculcating upon you, is, that as penitent, helpless sinners, you will cast yourselves entirely upon the merit of his atonement, devote yourselves to his service, and submit to him as your Lord; that is, that you would become true, genuine, sincere Christians. This, and nothing short of this, would afford him pleasure; and can you refuse it to him; especially when it will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves? Permit me, my dear brethren, to insist upon it, that you rejoice the heart of the blessed Jesus to-day. I request you in his name and stead; and to which of you shall I make the request with success? Will you, the free-born descendants of Britons, gratify him in this? Or, if you refuse, Behold I turn to the Gentiles. Some of you, poor negroes, have,

I hope, rejoiced the heart of Christ, by submitting to him as your Savior; and are there no more among you that will do him this kindness? Oh! Can any of you bear the thought of refusing? He bore the black crimes of many a poor negro; and now he is looking upon you, to see what return you will make him. Come, then, ye that are at once slaves to men, and slaves to sin, let the Son make you free, and you shall be free indeed; he will deliver you from sin and Satan, the worst of masters, and bring you into the glorious liberty of his children.

Here I would, for a while, drop my address to the noble principle of gratitude, and endeavor to work upon that of self-love, which, though less noble, is more strong in degenerate creatures. In affording Christ this pleasure, you will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves; for it is your happiness, your salvation, that he rejoices in, and therefore, in grieving him, you ruin yourselves. Accept of him as your Savior and Lord, and you shall be happy for ever; but if you reject him, you are forever undone; he will not save you, and where will you look for a Savior? To which of the saints, to which of the angels, will you turn? Alas! They all will cast you off if Christ renounces you. If you will not suffer him to rejoice over you in doing you good, he will rejoice over you in doing you evil; he will glorify himself in your destruction; he will please himself in the execution of justice upon you. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright to reflect the splendors of his perfections. But, on the other hand, if you afford him joy at your conversion this day, he will reward you forever; he will reward you with all the unspeakable joys of heaven.

Here, then, is a twofold cord to draw you to Jesus Christ, the love of Christ and the love of yourselves; and one would think such a cord could not easily be broken. Can any of you resist the united force of gratitude and



self-interest? Are you so unnatural as to sin against Christ, and against your own life; to ruin yourselves rather than to oblige him? Who would think that the once noble nature of man should ever be capable of such a degree of degeneracy? And oh! Who would have thought that the Son of God would lay down his life, or even entertain one benevolent thought for such base ungrateful creatures, that care so little for him, or even for their own true interest? I must bring this matter to a short issue; and it is this; you must either afford Christ this generous pleasure, by receiving and submitting to him this day, or you will return home under the additional guilt of rejecting him, and doing all you could to reduce him into misery again; and if you continue such, which, alas! Is not improbable, you must feel his eternal resentments, and perish forever under the weight of his righteous vengeance. Let us now proceed to another part of the text.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. It is the pleasure of the Lord that sinners should be saved through the mediation of Jesus Christ; I say, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; for he is determined they shall not be saved in any other way; he is determined that those who refuse to be saved in this way, shall not be saved at all; because their salvation in any other way would not be consistent with the glory of his perfections, the honor of his government, and his character as the supreme Magistrate of the universe; and his honor and glory are of more importance than the happiness of all created worlds; and therefore their happiness cannot be obtained in any way inconsistent with it. But through the mediation of Christ sinners may be saved, and in the meantime the honor of the divine perfections and government secured, and even illustrated. He has made atonement for sin, and answered the demands of the divine law and justice; so that God can now be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus.

Hence God is in Christ; observe, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. 2 Cor. 5:19. His heart is set on it; and the success of this scheme affords him the greatest pleasure. It is not only your interest, but your duty to be saved. It is as much your duty to enter into heaven, as to pray, or to perform any other part of religion. And your destruction will not only be your righteous punishment, but your sin; the most criminal self-murder. God has been pleased to interpose his authority, to give greater force to the principle of self-love. Your interest has this additional recommendation, that it is your duty; and you sin against God in ruining yourselves. Here again my subject leads me to address myself to the united principles of gratitude and self-love. Will you not afford the Lord that made you this benevolent pleasure? Will you not gratify him in this, when it is your happiness he seeks? Has neither the pleasure of God nor your own immortal interest any weight with you? Is sin dearer to you than both? Alas! If you are not to be wrought upon by considerations drawn from the love of God, or love to yourselves, from gratitude or self-interest, from what topic shall I reason with you? If this be the case, you are no longer to be dealt with as reasonable creatures, but as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.

This work of saving sinners, God has entrusted to Jesus Christ: and he has chosen a very proper person for so grand and difficult an undertaking. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, or under his management. He knows how to carry on the scheme to the best advantage. The work has been going on from Adam to this day, in spite of all opposition; and it is not now at a stand. Oh that it may prosper among you, my dear people! Oh that the sacred Trinity, and all the angels on high, may look down with pleasure this day on this guilty spot, rejoicing to see the grand scheme of salvation successfully going on! My brethren, will you not fall in with the design? A

design so favorable to yourselves. Will you not all concur to promote it, and carry it into execution upon a child, a friend, a neighbor, and especially upon yourselves? Or will you set yourselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed, by refusing to fall in with this scheme? Will you join in the conspiracy against it with the malevolent powers of hell, who oppose it with all their might, because it tends to your salvation? You readily concur in any scheme for your temporal advantage, and why not in this? Is the happiness of heaven the only kind of happiness that you are careless about? Is the salvation of your immortal soul the only deliverance for which you have no desire? Alas! Are you become so stupidly wicked?

This subject affords strong consolation to such of you as have complied with the method of salvation through Christ, since the salvation of sinners in this way is the pleasure of the Lord; and since it is entrusted to the faithful and skillful hands of Christ, under whose management it will prosper, you may be sure his pleasure will be accomplished with respect to you, and that the divine scheme shall be carried into complete execution, in spite of all opposition. Therefore rejoice in your security, and bless his name to whom you owe it.

I shall conclude with a few advices adapted to this solemn sacramental occasion.

The table of the Lord is just about to be spread among us. This is another instance of the grace and benevolence of Christ; for to remember him, who is the design of this ordinance, is not only your duty, but your privilege and happiness. The remembrance of him has virtue in it to refresh your souls, to heal your wounded consciences, and to revive your languishing graces. Hence it is that this ordinance is not only a memorial of Christ, but a feast for your refreshment and support; and consequently his making it a standing

ordinance in his church is a standing evidence of his good-will to his people to the end of the world. It is true it is an institution little regarded, even in the Christian world: to many the table of the Lord is contemptible, for they stand by and gaze at it as unconcerned or curious spectators. But this does not depreciate it, nor is it a reason why you should desert it. Come, ye children, crowd round your Father's table to-day. Let Jesus see his seed feasting together in commemoration of him, and in mutual love with one another. Let him now see of the travail of his soul, the children with whom he travailed as in birth; let him now see a goodly company of them around his table, that he may be satisfied. Let me remind you that you have caused him many a heavy hour and much pain and sorrow; therefore let him in return have pleasure and satisfaction from you this day.

Oh! Rejoice the heart you have often broken, and let there be joy in heaven over you. Let the angels that are ministering to the saints, and that are no doubt hovering unseen over this assembly, viewing those humble memorials of that Savior whom they behold without a veil in his native heaven, let them carry up glad tidings to their Lord this evening, and tune their harps above to higher strains of joy and praise. And oh! That the lost sheep would this day return, that their kind Shepherd may rejoice over them: he came from heaven in search of you, and will you keep out of his way and fear falling into his hands? Let wandering prodigals return, that there may be joy in your Father's house, whose arms are stretched out to embrace you, and who is looking after you with eager eyes. Oh let the pleasure of the Lord prosper among us this day, and it will be a day gratefully to be remembered to all eternity.

This ordinance is also a seal of the covenant of grace; therefore come to it this day to renew your contract with your God and Savior; to take him for

your God, and to give up yourselves to him as his people, in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. Make a sure covenant; call heaven and earth, God, angels and men, to be witness to it, and seal it with the memorials of your dying Redeemer. You had need to make it firm, for much depends upon it; and you have much to go through to perform the duties of the Christian life; to conflict with powerful temptations: to die; to stand at the supreme tribunal; these are the things you are to go through; and you cannot pass through them with honor or safety, unless you make sure of an interest in God, and give up your all into his hands.

This institution is also intended to cultivate the communion of the saints; and therefore, as children, you are to sit down at the table of your common Father, with hearts full of ardent love to mankind, and especially to the household of faith. Let no angry or malicious passion pollute this sacred feast; but be all charity and benevolence like that Redeemer whose death you celebrate.

Finally, You are now to renew your vows and obligations to be the Lord's, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life. See that you enter into them with an entire dependence upon his strength; and oh! Remember them afterwards, to carry them into execution. One would think that all traitors would be forever deterred from sitting down at the Lord's table, by the shocking example of Judas, the first hypocrite that profaned it. And oh! One would think that vows, made in so solemn a posture, and with the emblems of Christ's body and blood in your hands, would not soon be forgotten as trifles. It is, methinks, an exploit of wickedness to be capable of this; and none of you, I hope, are hardy enough to venture upon it.

# *SERM. XXVII. LIFE AND IMMORTALITY REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.*

**2** Tim. 1:10.— *And hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

So extensive have been the havoc and devastation which death has made in the world for near six thousand years, ever since it was first introduced by the sin of man, that this earth has now become one vast grave-yard, or burying-place for her sons. The many generations that have followed upon each other, in so quick a succession from Adam to this day, are now in the mansions underground. And there must we and all the present generation sleep ere long. Some make a sort of journey from the womb to the grave: they rise from nothing at the creative fiat of the Almighty, and take an immediate flight into the world of spirits, without an intermediate state of probation. Like a bird on the wing, they perch on our globe, rest a day, a month, or a year, and then fly off for some other regions. It is evident, these were not formed for the purposes of the present state, where they make so short a stay; and yet we are sure they are not made in vain by an all-wise

Creator; and therefore we conclude they are young immortals, that immediately ripen in the world of spirits, and there enter upon scenes, for which it was worth their while coming into existence. Others spring up and bloom for a few years; but they fade away like a flower, and are cut down. Others arrive at the prime or meridian of human life; but in all their strength and gaiety, and amid their hurries and schemes, and promising prospects, they are surprised by the arrest of death, and laid stiff, senseless, and ghastly in the grave. A few creep into their beds of dust under the burden of old age and the gradual decays of nature. In short, the grave is the place appointed for all living; the general rendezvous of all the sons of Adam. There the prince and the beggar, the conqueror and the slave, the giant and the infant, the scheming politician and the simple peasant, the wise and the fool, Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians, all lie equally low, and mingle their dust without distinction. Their beauty in all its charms putrefies into stench and corruption, and feeds the vilest insects. There the sturdy arm of youth lies torpid and benumbed, unable to drive off the worms that crawl through their frame, and riot upon their marrow. There lie our ancestors, our neighbors, our friends, our relatives, with whom we once conversed, and who were united to our hearts by strong and endearing ties; and there lies our friend, and sprightly vigorous youth, whose death is the occasion of this funeral solemnity. This earth is overspread with the ruins of the human frame; it is a huge carnage, a vast charnel-house, undermined and hollowed with the graves, the last mansions of mortals.

And shall these ruins of time and death never be repaired? Is this the final state of human nature? Are all these millions of creatures, that were so curiously formed, that could think, and will, and exercise the superior powers of reason, are they all utterly extinct, absorbed into the yawning

gulf of annihilation, and never again to emerge into life and activity? If this be the case, the expostulation of the psalmist upon this supposition, seems unavoidable; Lord, wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? Psalm 89:47. It was not worthwhile to come into being, if it must be resigned so soon. The powers of reason were thrown away upon us, they were given only for low purposes of the present life.

But my text revives us with heavenly light to scatter this tremendous gloom. Jesus hath abolished death, overthrown its empire, and delivered its captives; and he hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

Life and immortality here seem to refer both to the soul and the body, the two constituents of our person. As applied to the body, life and immortality signify, that though our bodies are dissolved at death, and return into their native elements, yet they shall be formed anew with vast improvements, and raised to an immortal existence; so that they shall be as though death never had had any power over them; and thus death shall be abolished, annihilated, and all traces of the ruins it had made for ever disappear, as though they had never been. It is in this sense chiefly that the word Immortality or Incorruptibility, is made use of in my text. But then the resurrection of the body supposes the perpetual existence of the soul, for whose sake it is raised: therefore life and immortality, as referring to the soul, signify that it is immortal, in a strict and proper sense; that is, that it cannot die at all, or be dissolved like the body; but it lives in the agonies of the dying animal; it lives after the dissolution of the animal frame in a separate state; it lives at the resurrection to re-animate the new formed body; and it lives forever, like its mortal parent, and shall never be dissolved nor annihilated. In this complex sense we may understand the immortality of which my text speaks.



Now it is to the gospel that we owe the clear discovery of immortality in both these senses. As for the resurrection of the dead, which confers a kind of immortality upon our mortal bodies, it is altogether the discovery of divine revelation. The light of nature could not so much as give a hint of it to the most sagacious philosophers in the heathen world. They did not hope for it as possible, much less believe it as certain. And when, among other important doctrines of pure revelation, it was first preached to them by St. Paul, their pride could not bear the mortification of being taught by a tent-maker what all their studies had not been able to discover; and therefore rejected it with scorn, and ridiculed it as a new-fangled notion of the superstitious Jews. This seems to have been an entire secret to all nations, (except the Jews,) till the light of Christianity dawned upon the world. They bade an eternal farewell to their bodies, when they dropped them in the grave. They never expected to meet them again in all the glorious improvements of a happy resurrection. But that divine revelation from whence we learn our religion, opens to us a brighter prospect; it strengthens our eyes to look forward through the glooms of death, and behold the many that sleep in the dust awaking; “some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt:” Dan. 12:2. It assures us, “that the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation:” John 5:28. Therefore, be it known unto thee, O Death, thou king of terrors, that though we cannot now resist thy power nor escape thy arrest, yet we do not surrender ourselves to thee as helpless, irredeemable prisoners. We shall yet burst thy bonds, and obtain the victory over thee. And when we commit the dust of our friends or our own to thee, O grave!

Know, it is a trust deposited in thy custody, to be faithfully kept till called for by him who was once a prisoner in thy territories, but regained his liberty, and triumphed over thee, and put that song of victory into the mouths of all his followers, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 1 Cor. 15:55.

As for the immortality of the soul, Christian philosophers find it no difficulty to establish it upon the plain principles of reason. Their arguments are such as these, and I think they are conclusive: That the soul is an immaterial substance, and therefore cannot perish by dissolution, like the body; that the soul is a substance distinct from the body, and therefore the dissolution of the body has no more tendency to destroy the soul, than the breaking of a cage to destroy the bird enclosed in it; that God has implanted in the soul the innate desire of immortality; and that as the tendencies of nature in other instances and in other creatures, are not in vain, this innate desire is an indication that he intended it for an immortal duration; that, as God is the moral Governor of the rational world, there must be rewards and punishments, and therefore there must be a future state of retribution; for we see mankind are now under a promiscuous providence, and generally are not dealt with according to their works; and if there be a future state of retribution, the soul must live in a future state, otherwise it could not be the subject of rewards and punishments. These and the like topics of argument have been improved by the friends of immortality, to prove that important doctrine beyond all reasonable suspicion. And because these arguments from reason seem sufficient, some would conclude, that we are not at all obliged to the Christian revelation in this respect. But it should be considered, that those are not the arguments of the populace, the bulk of mankind, but of a few philosophic studious men. But as immortality is the

prerogative of all mankind, of the ignorant and illiterate, as well as of the wise and learned, all mankind, of all ranks of understanding, are equally concerned in the doctrine of immortality; and therefore a common revelation was necessary, which would teach the ploughman and mechanic, as well as the philosopher, that he was formed for an immortal existence, and consequently, that it is his grand concern to fit himself for a happiness beyond the grave, as lasting as his nature. Now, it is the gospel alone that makes this important discovery plain and obvious to all. It must also be considered, that men may be able to demonstrate a truth when the hint is but once given, which they would never have discovered, nor perhaps suspected, without that hint. So when the gospel of Christ has brought immortality to light, our Christian philosophers may support it with arguments from reason; but had they been destitute of this additional light, they would have been lost in perplexity and uncertainty, or at best have been advanced to no farther than plausible or probable conjectures. Persons may be assisted in their searches by the light of revelation; but, being accustomed to it, they may mistake it for the light of their own reason; or they may not be so honest and humble as to acknowledge the assistance they have received. The surest way to know what mere unassisted reason can do, is to inquire what it has actually done in those sages of the heathen world who had no other guide, and in whom it was carried to the highest degree of improvement. Now we find, in fact, that though some philosophers had plausibility's and presumptions, that their souls should exist after the dissolution of their bodies, yet that they rather supposed, or wished, or thought it probable, than firmly believed it upon good evidence. The Socrateses, the Platos, and the Ciceros of Greece and Rome, after all their searches, were more perplexed on this point, than a plain common

Christian of the smallest intellectual improvements in our land of evangelical light. Whoever reads their writings upon this subject, will find, when they draw their conclusion of the soul's existence after death, it is often from extravagant and chimerical premises; such as the pre-existence of human souls, their successive transmigrations from body to body, their being literally particles of the Deity, whom they supposed to be the Anima Mundi, the universal soul of the world, &c. All these premises want the support of proper evidence; and some of them are directly subversive of the proper notion of a future state, as a state of rewards and punishments. Sometimes, indeed, they seem to reason from better principles; but then they still hesitate about the conclusion, and fluctuate between the presumptions for it and the objections against it. Socrates was confessedly the brightest character in the heathen world, and seemed to have the fairest claim of any among them to the honor of a martyr for the cause of truth and virtue; and yet even he, when making his defense before his judges, speaks in the language of uncertainty and perplexity. "Death," says he, "either reduces us to nothing and entirely destroys all sense and consciousness or, as some say, it conveys us from this world in to some other region."

Thus standing on the brink of eternity he was not assured whether he was not about to leap into the hideous gulf of annihilation, or to pass into some vital region replete with inhabitants. When he was condemned, his last words to the court were these: "It is time for us to part; I, that I may suffer death; and you, that you may enjoy life; but which of us has the happier lot, is known only to God." Poor honest Socrates! How happy hadst thou been hadst thou but enjoyed one glimmering of that heavenly light which multitudes among us despise! My brethren, let us be thankful for our superior advantages, and let us prize and improve that precious gospel,

which gives us full information in this important point, and renders the meanest Christian wiser, in this respect, than Socrates himself.

My present design is not to propose arguments for the conviction of your judgments, which I hope you do not so much need; but I shall give you some idea of immortality, in both the senses I have mentioned, and then improve it.

Let us first look through the wastes and glooms of death and the grave to the glorious dreadful morning of the resurrection. At the all-alarming clangor of the last trumpet, Adam, and the sleeping millions of his posterity, start into sudden life. “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” John 5:28.

Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be organized, and reanimated; and “though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God.” Job 19:26. “Then this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.” 1 Cor. 15:53.

And may not the prospect alarm us, and set us upon earnest preparation for these important scenes? Shall we take so much care of our bodies in this mortal state, where after all our care, they must soon fall to dust, and become the prey of worms; and shall we take no care that they may have a happy and glorious resurrection? What does it signify how they are fed or dressed, while they are only fattening for worms, and the ornaments of dress may be our winding sheet? What does this signify, in comparison with their doom at the great rising day, and their state through eternity? My brethren, you must not let sin reign in your mortal bodies now, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof, if you would have them raised holy and

happy in that awful morning; but you must consecrate your bodies, and keep them holy as the temples of the Holy Ghost; and yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Can you flatter yourselves that bodies polluted with filthy lusts and sensual gratifications shall ever be admitted into the regions of perfect purity? It would be an unnatural element to such depraved constitutions. Shall those feet ever walk the crystal pavement of the New Jerusalem, which have been accustomed to run into the foul paths of sin? Shall those tongues ever join the songs of heaven, which have been oftener employed in swearing and imprecation, the language of hell, than in prayer and praise? Shall those ears ever be charmed with celestial music, which have not listened with pleasure and eagerness to the joyful sound of the gospel, but were entertained with the song of drunkards, the loud unthinking laugh, and the impure jest? Are those knees likely to bow in delightful homage before the throne of God and the Lamb on high, which have not been used to the posture of the petitioners at the throne of grace on earth? Are those members likely to be the instruments of a heavenly spirit, in the exercise of that blessed state, which have not been “instruments of righteousness unto holiness” in this state of trial and discipline? No, my brethren, this is not at all probable, even to a superficial inquirer; and to one that thinks deeply, and consults right reason and the sacred Scriptures, this appears utterly impossible. Therefore, take warning in time. Methinks this consideration might have some weight, even with epicures and sensualists, who consider themselves as mere animals, and make it their only concern to provide for and gratify the flesh. Unless you be religious now, unless you now deny yourselves of your guilty pleasures, not only your soul, that neglected, disregarded trifle, must perish, but your body, your dear body, your only care, must be

wretched too; your body must be hungry, thirsty, pained, tortured, hideously deformed, a mere system of pain and loathsomeness. But if you now keep your bodies pure, and serve God with them, and with your spirits too, they will bloom forever in the charms of celestial beauty; they will flourish in immortal youth and vigor! They will forever be the receptacles of the most exquisite sensations of pleasure. And will you not deny yourselves the sordid pleasures of a few years, for the sake of those of a blessed immortality?

But let me give you a view of immortality of a more noble kind, the proper immortality of the soul. And here, what an extensive and illustrious prospect opens before us! Look a little way backward, and your sight is lost in the darkness of non-existence. A few years ago you were nothing. But at the creative fiat of the Almighty, that little spark of being, the soul, was struck out of nothing; and now it warms your breast, and animates the machine of flesh. But shall this glimmering spark, this *divinae particula auroe*, ever be extinguished! No; it will survive the ruins of the universe, and blaze out into immortality: it will be coeval with the angels, the natives of heaven, and the *Indigenae*, the original inhabitants of the world of spirits; nay, with the great Father of spirits himself. The duration of your souls will run on from its first commencement, in parallel lines with the existence of the Deity. What an inheritance is this entailed upon the child of dust, the creature of yesterday! Here let us pause,— make a stand,—and take a survey of this majestic prospect! This body must soon molder into dust, but the soul will live unhurt, untouched, amid all the dissolving struggles and convulsions of animal nature. “These heavens shall pass away with a great noise; these elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the

things that are therein, shall be burnt up,” 2 Pet. 3:10; but this soul shall live secure of existence in the universal desolation:

*“Unhurt amidst the war of elements,*

*The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.”—Addison.*

And now, when the present system of things is dissolved, and time shall be no more, eternity, boundless eternity, succeeds; and on this the soul enters as on its proper hereditary duration. Now look forward as far as you will, your eyes meet with no obstruction, with nothing but the immensity of the prospect: in that, indeed, it is lost, as extending infinitely beyond its ken. Come, attempt this arithmetic of infinities, and exhaust the power of numbers: let millions of millions of ages begin the vast computation; multiply these by the stars of heaven; by the particles of dust in this huge globe of earth; by the drops of water in all the vast oceans, rivers, lakes, and springs that are spread over the globe; by all the thoughts that have risen in so quick a succession in the minds of men and angels, from their first creation to this day; make this computation, and then look forward through this long line of duration, and contemplate your future selves. Still you see yourselves in existence; still the same persons; still endowed with the same consciousness, and the same capacities for happiness or misery, but vastly enlarged; as much superior to the present as the capacities of an adult to those of a new-born infant, or an embryo in the womb. Still will you bloom in immortal youth, and are as far from an end as in the first moment of our existence. O sirs, methinks it may startle us to view our future selves so changed, so improved, removed into such different regions, associated with such strange unacquainted beings, and fixed in such different circumstances of glory or terror, of happiness or misery.



Men of great projects and sanguine hopes are apt to sit and pause, and take an imaginary survey of what they will do, and what they will be in the progress of life. But then death, like an apparition, starts up before them, and threatens to cut them off in the midst of their pursuits. But here no death threatens to extinguish your being or snap the thread of your existence; but it runs on in one continued everlasting tenor. What a vast inheritance is this, unalienably entailed upon every child of Adam! What importance, what value, does this consideration give to that neglected thing the soul! What an awful being is it! Immortality! What emphasis, what grandeur in the sound! Immortality is so vast an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinity to anything to which it is annexed, however insignificant in other respects: and on the other hand, the want of this would degrade the most exalted being into a trifle. The highest angel, if the creature of a day, or of a thousand years, what would he be? A fading flower, a vanishing vapor, a flying shadow. When his day or his thousand years are past, he is as truly nothing as if he had never been. It is little matter what becomes of him: let him stand or fall, let him be happy or miserable, it is just the same in a little time; he is gone, and there is no more of him,—no traces of him left. But an immortal! A creature that shall never, never, never cease to be! That shall expand his capacities of action, of pleasure, or pain, through an everlasting duration! What an awful, important being is this! And is my soul, this little spark of reason in my breast, is that such a being? I tremble at myself. I revere my own dignity, and am struck with a kind of pleasing horror to view what I must be. And is there anything so worthy of the care of such a being, as the happiness, the everlasting happiness, of my immortal part? What is it to me, who am formed for an endless duration, what I enjoy, or what I must suffer in this vanishing state? Seventy or eighty years bear not the least

imaginable proportion to the duration of such a being; they are too inconsiderable a point to be seen; mere ciphers in the computation! They do not bear as much proportion as the small dust that will not turn the balance, to this vast globe of earth, and all the vaster globes that roll in their orbits through the immense space of the universe.

And what shall become of me through this immortal duration? This, and this only, is the grand concern of an immortal; and in comparison of it, it does not deserve one thought what will become of me while in this vanishing phantom of a world. For consider, your immortality will not be a state of insensibility, without pleasure or pain; you will not draw out a useless, inactive existence, in an eternal stupor, or a dead sleep. But your souls will be active as long as they exist; and as I have repeatedly observed, still retain all their capacities; nay, their capacities will perpetually enlarge with an eternal growth, and forever tower from glory to glory in heaven, or plunge from depth to depth in hell. Here, then, my fellow-immortals! Here pause and say to yourselves, “What is like to become of my soul through this long space forever? Is it likely to be happy or miserable?” What though you are now rich, honorable, healthy, merry, and gay! Alas! Terrestrial enjoyments are not proper food for an immortal soul; and besides, they are not immortal, as your souls are. If these are your portion, what will you do for happiness millions of ages hence, when all these are fled away like a vapor? Are you provided with a happiness which will last as long as your souls will live to crave it? Have you an interest in God? Are you prepared for the fruition of the heavenly state? Do you delight in God above all? Have you a relish for the refined pleasures of religion? Is the supreme good the principle object of your desire? Do you now accustom yourselves to the service of God, the great employment of heaven? And are you preparing

yourselves for the more exalted devotion of the church on high, by a serious attendance on the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth? Are you made pure in heart and life, that you may be prepared for the regions of untainted holiness, to breathe in that pure salubrious air, and live in that climate, so warm with the love of God, and so near the Sun of Righteousness? Do not some of you know that this is not your prevailing character? And what then do you think will become of you without a speedy alteration in your temper and conduct? Alas! Must your immortality, the grand prerogative of your nature, become your eternal curse? Have you made it your interest that you should be a brute? That is, that you should perish entirely, and your whole being be extinguished in death? Then it is no wonder you strive to disbelieve the doctrine of a future state, and your own immortality. But alas! In vain is the strife. The principles of atheism and infidelity may lull your consciences into a stupid repose for a little while, but they cannot annihilate you. They may lead you to live like beasts, but they cannot enable you to die like beasts; no, you must live, live to suffer righteous punishment, whether you will or not. As you did not come into being by your own consent, so neither can you lay down your being when you please. And will you not labor to make your immortality a blessing? Is there anything in this world that can be a temptation to you to forfeit such an immense blessing? Oh that you were wise! That you would consider this!

I shall now accommodate my subject to the present melancholy occasion, and endeavor to make a particular improvement of it.

Do you expect a character of our deceased friend? This is not my usual practice; and I omit it, not because I can see nothing amiable in mankind, nor because I would enviously deny them their just praises, but because I

have things of much greater importance to engage your attention. The dead have received their just and unchangeable doom at a superior tribunal; and our panegyrics or censures may be often misapplied. My business is with the living; not to flatter their vanity with compliments, but to awaken them to a sense of their own mortality, and to a preparation for it. However, if you must have a character, I will draw it to you in the most important and interesting light. Here was a youth in the bloom of life, in the prime of his strength, with a lively flow of spirits, who seemed as secure from the stroke of death as any of us; a youth that had escaped many dangers by sea and land; a youth launched into the world with, no doubt, the usual projects and expectations of that sanguine age. But where is he now? In yonder grave, alas! Lies the blooming, promising flower withered in the morning of life. There lies the mortal body, moldering into dust, and feeding the worms. Come to his grave, ye young and gay, ye lively and strong, ye men of business and hurry, come and learn what now may, and shortly must, be your doom. Thus shall your limbs stiffen, your blood stagnate, your faces wear the pale and ghastly aspect of death, and your whole frame dissolve into dust and ashes. Thus shall your purposes be broken off, your schemes vanish like smoke, and all your hopes from this world perish. Death perpetually lurks in ambush for you, ready every moment to spring upon his prey. “Oh that death!” (said a gentleman of large estate, strong constitution, and cheerful temper,) “I do not love to think of that death; he comes in and spoils all.” So he does indeed; he spoils all your thoughtless mirth, your idle amusements, and your great schemes. Methinks it becomes you to prepare for what you cannot avoid. Methinks, among your many schemes and projects, you should form one to be religious. You may make a poor shift to live without religion, but you can make none to die without it. You may

ridicule the saint, but he really has the advantage of you. “Well, after all,” said a celebrated unbeliever, “these Christians are the happiest people upon earth.” Indeed they are; and if you are wise, you will labor to be of their number.

But was our departed friend nothing but an animal, a mere machine of flesh? Is the whole of him putrefying in yonder grave? No; I must draw his character farther. He was an immortal; and no sooner did he resign his breath, than his soul took wing, and made its flight into the regions of spirits. There it now dwells. And what amazing scenes now present themselves to his view! What strange, unknown beings does he now converse with! There also, my brethren, you and I must ere long be. We too must be initiated into those grand mysteries of the invisible world, and mingle in this assembly of strangers. We must share with angels in their bliss and glory, or with devils in their agonies and terrors. And our eternal doom shall be according to our present character, and the improvement we make of our opportunities for preparation.

And do you, sirs, make it your main concern to secure a happy immortality? Do you live as expectants of eternity? Or do you live as though this world were to be your eternal residence, and as if your bodies, not your souls, were immortal? Does your conscience approve of such conduct? Do you really think it is better for you, upon the whole, to commence fashionably wicked, or perhaps ringleaders in debauchery and infidelity, in a country overrun with all manner of vice? Is this better than to retain the good impressions you might perhaps receive in youth, and to act upon the model built for you in a religious education? Which do you think you will approve of in the hour of death, that honest hour, when things begin to appear in a true light? And of which, think ye, will you be able to

give the most comfortable account at the supreme tribunal? Brethren, form an impartial judgment upon this comparison, and let it guide your conduct. Behave as “strangers and pilgrims on earth, that have here no continuing city;” behave as expectants of eternity, as candidates for immortality; as “beholding him that is invisible, and looking for a city which has foundations, eternal in the heavens.” In that celestial city may we all meet at last, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

# *SERM. XXVIII. JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY FOUNDATION.*

**I**saiah 28:16,17.— *Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.*

The context, like many other passages of the prophetical scriptures, seems to have a double sense. The primary sense may be thus represented. The judgments of God were ready to break in upon and overwhelm the impenitent nation of the Jews, like “a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing,” and bearing all before it. (ver 2.) The prophet had repeatedly given them timely warning of these approaching judgments; but they still continued secure and impenitent, and unapprehensive of danger. They flattered themselves they had artifice enough to keep themselves safe. They thought themselves impreguably intrenched and fortified in their riches, their strongholds, and the sanctity of their temple and nation. They might also think their arts of negotiation

would secure them from the invasion of the neighboring powers, particularly the Assyrians, to whom they were not exposed. These were the lies which they made their refuge, and the falsehood under which they hid themselves. These, they imagined, like moles or ditches, would keep off the deluge of wrath, so that it should not come to them, much less overwhelm them; and they were as secure as if they had made “a covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave,” not to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, “We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come to us; for we have made lies (that is what the prophet calls lies,) our refuge and under what he calls falsehoods have we hid ourselves, (ver. 15.) It is in this connection my text is introduced; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which these sinners trusted; as if he had said, since the refuge to which you flee is not safe, and since my people need another, Therefore, thus saith the Lord, behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation that is, “My promises, my providential care, the supporting influences of my grace, and the various means I shall take for the comfort and safety of my people in this national distress, shall as effectually bear them up, as a firm foundation of stone does a building erected upon it. They that build their hopes upon this foundation shall stand unshaken amidst all the storms and tempests of the national calamity, that may beat upon our guilty land.” He that believeth shall not make haste; that is, “he that trusts in this refuge shall not be struck into a distracted hurry and consternation upon the sudden appearance of these calamities. He shall not, like persons surprised with unexpected danger, fly in a wild haste to improper means for his safety, and thus throw



himself into destruction by his ill-advised, precipitate attempts to keep out of it; but he shall be calm and serene, and have presence of mind to take the most proper measures for his deliverance.” Or the meaning may be, “He that believeth shall not make such haste to be delivered, as to fly to unlawful means for that purpose; but will patiently wait God’s time to deliver him in a lawful way.” The prophet proceeds, “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;” that is, “God will try the Jews with strict justice, as an architect examines a building with a line and plummet. Such of them who have built their hopes upon the foundation above described, shall stand firm and unshaken, whatever tempests fall upon them, like a regular and stately building, founded upon a solid rock. But as to others, they shall be overwhelmed in the public calamity!” “the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies in which they trusted; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” And then your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: “when the overflowing scourge shall pass through then shall ye be trodden down by it.” (ver. 18.)

This seems to be a primary sense of the context; and thus, it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. In this view it is very applicable to us, in the present state of our country and nation, when the enemy is likely to break in like a flood upon us. But I must add, that it is very likely, that even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to Jesus Christ. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words, when they are applied to any other; and the connection will admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus, “Since the refuge of sinners is a refuge of lies, behold I will provide one that will effectually secure all that fly to it from all the judgments to

which they are exposed,” I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, &c. “I send my Son into the world, as an Almighty Savior; and all that put themselves under his protection, and build their hopes upon him, shall be so safe, that all the calamities of life shall not do them a lasting injury; and the vengeance of the eternal world shall never fall upon them.”

But whether we can find Christ in the primary sense of these words or not, it is certain we shall find him in their ultimate, principal sense. And we have the authority of an inspired apostle for this application. St. Peter quotes this passage according to the LXX, with some improvements, and applies it expressly to Christ, “To whom coming,” says he, “as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore, also, it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.” 1 Peter 2:4,6. Taking the passage in this evangelical sense, the general meaning is to this purpose:—The Lord Jesus is represented as a tried, precious, and sure foundation, laid in Zion, that is, in the church, for the sons of men to build their hopes upon. His church thus built on him, is compared to a stately, regular, and impregnable temple, consecrated to the service of God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices; and proof against all the storms and tempests that may beat upon it. It shall stand firm and immoveable through all eternity, for its foundation is sure.

But, alas I thought Jesus Christ be the only foundation, yet the sons of men are so full of themselves, that they venture to build their hopes upon something else, and promise themselves safety, though they reject this sure foundation. They think themselves as secure as if they had entered into a treaty with death and the grave, and brought them over to their interest.

But, lo! The wrath of God will at last beat upon a guilty world, like a storm of hail, or break in upon it like an overwhelming torrent: then every soul that is not built upon this rock must be swept away, and all the other refuges and hiding-places shall be laid in ruins forever.

The great God will also strictly inquire who is founded upon this rock, and who not. He will critically try the temple of his church, like a workman, with line and plummet: he will discover all irregularities and useless appendages. And in consequence of this examination, the storms and torrents of divine indignation shall sweep away and overwhelm all that are not built upon this foundation, and that are not compacted into this building.

These remarks contain the general meaning of our text: but it is necessary I should be more particular.

Brethren, our nature, our circumstances, and the important prospects before us, are such, that it is high time for us to look about us for some sure foundation upon which to build our happiness. The fabric must endure long, for our souls will exist for ever; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement forever. The fabric must rise high, for the capacities of our souls will perpetually expand and enlarge; and a low happiness of a vulgar size will not be equal to them. The fabric must be strong and impregnable, proof against all the storms that may beat upon it; for many are the storms that will rise upon us, upon our country, and upon this guilty world in general. Losses, bereavements, sicknesses, and a thousand calamities that I cannot name, may yet try us. The enemy is now breaking in like a flood upon our country, and we and our earthly all are in danger of being overwhelmed. Death will certainly attack us all; and that must be a strong building indeed which the king of terrors will not be able to demolish. Besides, when all the purposes of divine love in our world shall

be accomplished, an almighty tempest of divine indignation shall break upon it, and sweep away all that it contains; and blend cities, kingdoms, plains and mountains, seas and dry land, kings and beggars, in one vast heap of promiscuous ruin. Or, to shift the metaphor according to the emphatical variety in my text, the fiery deluge of divine vengeance, which has been gathering and swelling for thousands of years, but has been, as it were, restrained and kept within bounds by divine patience, shall then rise so high as to burst through all restraints, and overwhelm the guilty globe, and turn it into a universal ocean of liquid fire. This resistless torrent shall sweep away all the refuges of lies, and them that trusted in them, into the gulf of remediless destruction. We, my brethren, shall be concerned in this universal catastrophe of nature; and where shall we find a support to bear us up in this tremendous day? Where shall we find a rock to build upon, that we may be able to stand the shock, and remain safe and unmoved in the wreck of dissolving worlds? What can support the fabric when this vast machine of nature, formed with so much skill and strength by the hands of a divine Architect, shall be broken up and fall to pieces? Now is the time for us to look out; it will be too late when all created supports are swept away, and this solid globe itself is dissolved beneath our feet into a sea of fire. Now, now is the time for you to provide. And where will you look? Whither will you turn? This earth, and all its riches, honors, and pleasures, will prove but a quicksand in that day. Your friends and relations, were they ever so great or powerful, can then afford you no support. If they can but find refuge for themselves, that will be all; therefore bethink yourselves once more; where shall you find a rock on which you may build a happiness that will stand the shock in that day?

If you are anxious and perplexed, I need only point you to my text for relief. “Behold,” says the Lord God, “behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste.” Let me expatiate a little upon the properties of this foundation.

1. It is a stone; a stone for solidity, stability, and durableness. “Everything else,” says the charming Hervey, “is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honor an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider’s web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of the true happiness.” And blessed be God! He is sufficient for this purpose. Is a stone firm and solid? So is Jesus Christ. His power is almighty, able to support the meanest of his people that build their hope upon him, and render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm, immovable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal all upon this rock: it will stand for ever, without giving way under the heaviest pressure; without being broken by the most violent shock. Let thousands, let millions, with all the mountainous weight of guilt upon them, build upon this foundation, and they shall never be moved. Is a stone durable and lasting? So is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, his strength an everlasting strength, and himself the everlasting Father. He liveth for ever to make intercession for his people, and therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, to the uttermost point of duration, all that come unto God by him. Here is a stone that can

never molder away by the waste of all-consuming time. Parian marble, and even the flinty rocks decay; the firm foundations, the stately columns, the majestic buildings of Nineveh, Babylon, and Persepolis, and all the magnificent structures of antiquity, though formed of the most durable stone, and promising immortality, are now shattered into ten thousand fragments, or lying in ruinous heaps. But here is a foundation for immortal souls, immortal as themselves; a foundation that now stands as firm under Adam, Abel, and Abraham, as the first moment they ventured their dependence upon it; a foundation that will remain the same to all eternity. Therefore it deserves the next character given to it, namely—

2. A tried stone. “Tried,” says the same fine writer, “in the days of his humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny.” His obedience was tried; and it appeared upon trial that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried, by the abusive treatment he met with from men. His patience and resignation to the divine will was tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into his hand, and when the absence of his Father extorted that bitter cry from him, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matt, 27:46. His love to his Father, and his zeal for his honor, were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed without once languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men—to sinners—to enemies, was tried: tried to the uttermost: it was put to the trial, whether his own life or theirs was most dear to him; whether he would rather see his enemies perish by the sword of justice, or that himself should feel the agonies of a cross. This was a trial indeed; and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone

was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

Jesus has also been tried under the capacity of a Savior, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing to expiate the most enormous guilt; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions; and to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him. Ten thousand times ten thousand have built their hopes upon this stone, and it has never failed so much as one of them. Manasseh and Paul, that had been bloody persecutors, Mary Magdalen, that had been possessed of seven devils, and thousands more that were sinners of the most atrocious characters, have ventured upon this rock with all their load of sin upon them, and found it able to sustain them. This stone is the foundation of that living temple, the church, which has been now building for near six thousand years, and the top of which already reaches the highest heaven. All the millions of saints from Adam to this day, both those in heaven and those on earth, are living stones built upon this foundation-stone; this supports the weight of all. And this trial may encourage all others to build upon it; for it appears sufficient to bear them all.

But I must farther observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of a tried stone, it may be rendered, “a stone of trial;” or, “a trying stone;” that is, this is the true touch-stone of men’s characters. It is this that, above all other things, discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Savior, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring

forward and embrace him as a Savior, they are true subjects to the King of heaven; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to Jesus Christ as a Savior, is not a single command of God, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole law and gospel; it is the grand capital precept; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of heaven towards the sons of men. And therefore, while men refuse to submit to this command, they are guilty of a kind of universal disobedience; and it is in vain for them to pretend to have a real regard to God and his authority in any one instance whatsoever. If they obey God sincerely in falling in with this command, they will obey him in everything; but if they will not obey him in this, they will truly obey him in nothing. Hence it is that good works are the inseparable fruits of faith in Christ, and that unbelief is the root of all evil. Submission to Christ is also the most effectual trial, whether the corrupt dispositions of the heart, whether the innate enmity to God, pride, stubbornness, &c., be thoroughly subdued. If a man is once made so dutiful, so humble, so pliable, as to submit to this humbling, mortifying method of salvation through Jesus Christ, it shows that divine grace has got an entire victory over him, and that now the rebel is so subdued that he will be obedient in anything. There is nothing in the whole law or gospel to which the hearts of sinners are so averse, as this method of salvation; and therefore, when they are subdued to this, and made willing captives of the cross of Christ, we may be sure they have surrendered themselves to universal obedience.

This text has made strange discoveries in the world in every age. This touch-stone has discovered many glittering virtues to be but dross. The pharisees and scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this



trying-stone was applied to them; and then it appeared what they were; and then it appeared they were the most inveterate enemies of God upon earth. These were the builders that rejected this stone, and would not build upon it. They rather chose to build upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness. Nay, instead of making him the foundation of their hopes, they made him a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, Rom. 9:32,33. 1 Pet. 2:8, and they stumbled and fell into destruction. Christ crucified, says the apostle, is to the Jews a stumbling-block, 1 Cor. 1:23. This test made strange discoveries also in the heathen world. Many of the sages of Greece and Rome had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue; they gloried in it themselves, and they were admired and celebrated by the populace. But when this stone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud disdain, and thought it much more safe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of one that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touch-stone be applied likewise to the men of this generation, and it will discover a great many counterfeits. You will find some who have an amiable, ingratiating conduct, who are temperate, just, charitable, and shine with the appearance of many virtues. You will find others who are very punctual in the duties of religion; they are frequent in prayer, and strict attendants upon all the solemnities of divine worship; all this looks well. But tell them that all this is no sufficient ground for their hopes of the divine acceptance; nay, that they must renounce all this in point of dependence, as having no merit at all; and that they must, as helpless, guilty, self-condemned sinners, place their trust only in Jesus Christ; and they then begin to show their pride: then their hearts rise against this mortifying doctrine, and perhaps against him that inculcates it. They

cannot bear that all their imaginary merit should have such contempt cast upon it. They will own indeed, as others around them do, that Christ is the only Savior; but their real dependence is at bottom upon some supposed goodness in themselves. And thus they discover that all their righteousness is but the proud self-righteousness of a Pharisee, or the self-confident virtue of a stoic philosopher, and not the humble religion or genuine sterling virtue of a true Christian. Thus the reception which men give to Jesus Christ is the grand criterion of their character. And this is agreeable to the prophecy of good old Simeon concerning him: Behold this child, says he, is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against;—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Luke 2:34,35. The secret thoughts, reasonings, and dispositions of many hearts, that were before unsuspected, are revealed by this trial. And I wish it may not make very ungrateful discoveries among you.

As this is a trying stone with regard to men's present characters, so it will be also as to their final doom and everlasting state. All that are built upon this foundation, however frail and tottering in themselves, shall grow up into a glorious impregnable temple, and stand firm when the frame of nature is dissolved. But all that are not built upon this foundation, however strong or well established in their own conceit, or however high they raise the fabric of their hopes, shall be demolished and laid in ruins forever. The one may be likened, says Christ, unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And the other may be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of

it. Matt. 7:24,27. What a confounding fall will this be to those that have built a towering Babel of hopes that reaches to heaven! But,

3. This is a precious stone. “More precious than rubies, (to borrow the words of Mr. Hervey,) the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations.” “Precious with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects greater than Jonah; wiser than Solomon; fairer than the children of men; chiefest among ten thousand; and, to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, altogether lovely.”

He is precious in himself, as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the sum total of all divine excellencies, and as clothed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In short, all moral excellency, divine and human, created and uncreated, center in him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. He is precious to angels; Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, is their eternal song. He is dear to all good men in all ages. Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious, says St. Peter: 1 Peter 2:7. How precious are his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness to the guilty, self-condemned soul! How precious is his sanctifying grace to the soul heavy-laden with sin, and groaning under that body of death! How precious the assistance of his almighty arm to his poor soldiers in the spiritual warfare! How precious the light of his instructions to the benighted, wandering mind; how sweet the words of his mouth; sweeter than honey from the honey-comb. How precious the light of his smiling countenance, and the sensations of his love to the desponding, sinking soul! How precious that eternal salvation which he imparts! And how precious the price he paid for it! Not corruptible things, such as silver

and gold, says St. Peter, but his own precious blood: 1 Peter 1:18,19. In short, he is altogether lovely, altogether precious. Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious stones in the universe, cannot represent his worth. Oh that a thoughtless world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then say to his friends, Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee? I enlarge upon this article with the more pleasure, as I doubt not but the experience of several among you can affix your Amen to what I say, and to much more. I am now but complying with the request of one of my friends, at the distance of near four thousand miles, who writes to me thus: — “Dear sir, recommend him to poor sinners, recommend him to poor believers, as a most wonderful Savior and Redeemer; abundantly able to deliver them from all that hell and sin can do to destroy them. Oh that his divine excellencies and worth could be set forth! Surely the most abandoned sinners would fall before him with ravishment and wonder.” These are British sterling thoughts concerning this precious stone, my brethren, and I hope the same thoughts are to be found among you. Oh that they were universal among us, and among all the sons of men!

4. This stone is a sure foundation. “Such (says Mr. Hervey) as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world. The rock of ages, such as never has failed, never will fail those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes upon this immovable basis.” The foundation is sure, because it is of divine appointment. Behold, says the Lord God, who has authority to make the appointment, “behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.” It is also sure, because of the extent of his power, the perfection of his righteousness, and the eternity of his existence. But these I

have already touched upon. Indeed, his excellencies are so sweetly blended and complicated, like the colors of the rainbow, that it is hard to describe one of them, without running into another.

The author, whom I have repeatedly quoted, thinks the words may be otherwise rendered: “A foundation! A foundation!” “There is,” says he, “a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence thus understood; it speaks the language of agreeable surprise and exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek, and find not; it is here! It is here! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.”

5. This is a corner-stone. “It not only,” says Mr. Hervey, “sustains, but unites the edifice; incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages and manifold denominations, here, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love; hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy.” To this purpose, and in this style, speaks the apostle: He is our peace who hath made both, that is, both Jews and Gentiles, one; one regular, compact, magnificent superstructure, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye [Gentiles] also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit:” Ephes, 2:14,20,22. Materials for this sacred temple are collected from thrones and cottages, from bond and free, from Jews and Gentiles, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America: but notwithstanding these distinctions, they are all united in this cornerstone; all harmoniously compacted into one regular, magnificent temple, where the God of heaven delights to dwell.

Jesus Christ may also be called a corner-stone, to signify his peculiar importance in this spiritual building. Hence he is elsewhere repeatedly called the chief cornerstone, and the head of the corner: Psal. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7; Ephes. 2:20. We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in a subordinate sense; but Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone. He has the most important place in the building. It is he that holds up and connects all. Apostles, prophets, and all, are but sinking sand without him. Their righteousness, their strength, are nothing without him. On him all their doctrines depend, in him they all terminate, and from him they derive all their efficacy. Take away this cornerstone, and immediately the saints in heaven fall from their throne; and the saints upon earth, that are gradually rising heavenward, sink forever. Take away this corner-stone, and this glorious living temple, that has been building for so many ages, breaks to pieces, and covers heaven and earth with its ruins.

Having thus illustrated the particular properties of this stone, I shall take notice of this general property of it, that it is a foundation. So it is repeatedly called in my text, "It is laid in Zion as a foundation." It is a sure foundation. It must be the foundation, and have the principal place in the spiritual building, or none at all. "No other foundation," says St. Paul, "can any man lay, then that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ." And he must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstructure cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with his in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. To make our own merit the ground of our claim to his righteousness; that is, to hope that God will save us for Christ's sake, because we are so good as to deserve some favor at least for our own sakes, that is to lay a foundation of stone upon a

quicksand. The stone would have stood, had it been in its proper place, that is, at the bottom of all; but when it is founded upon the sand, it must give way, and all the superstructure must fall. This is the grand fundamental mistake of multitudes in the Christian world. They all own Christ is the only Savior; but then the ground of their expecting salvation through him, is not his righteousness, but their own. Their own worthless works, which their ignorance and vanity call good, lie at the bottom of all their hopes, as the first foundation; and Christ's righteousness is rather part of the superstructure, than the entire foundation. This is the refuge of lies, the delusive hiding-place which multitudes are building all their lives with a great deal of pains, and, when they think themselves provided with a strong everlasting mansion, suddenly they feel themselves swept away into destruction by the overwhelming torrent of divine indignation.

Here, brethren, let us pause a while, and turn our attention to a question that I hope you have anticipated— “Am I a living stone built upon this foundation? Are all my hopes of acceptance with God and eternal happiness founded upon this rock?” Are you not desirous to make this important discovery? To make it now while you have time? If you have made a mistake, to correct it, by pulling down the old building, and beginning a new one on the right foundation? Have you no anxiety about this? If not, I must tell you, you care not for the God that made you, or the Savior that bought you with his blood: heaven and hell are but trifles to you, and you are indifferent which should be your eternal lot. You have not the sensibility of a man, with regard to pleasure and pain, but the stupidity of a brute, or rather of a senseless stone. And if you continue thus stupidly careless about eternal things, you shall forever be cut off’ from the rewards of pious diligence, and feel the dreadful doom of the slothful servant. Brethren, can

you be indifferent in a matter of such infinite consequence? Let me remind you, that a dreadful hurricane is gathering over this guilty world, which will burst upon you, and sweep you away, unless you be founded upon the rock of ages. Think of the last part of my text: the hail shall sweep away the refuge, or hope of lies, the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. You may be parts of the outward court of this spiritual building; I mean, you may be members of the visible church; but that is only a scaffold to the sacred temple, and when this is finished, that shall be pulled down. Remember, this building will be critically inspected: the great Architect “will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;” and if you do not stand that test, you will be demolished, as useless appendages or incumbrances, and you never can be built up again; the temple of God will then be complete, and no new stones shall be added to it forever. Therefore now is the time to discover fundamental errors, and correct them. Discover them you can and will in the eternal world: but oh! It will then be too late to correct them!

Would you, then, know whether you are really built upon this sure foundation? If so, I shall willingly assist you to make the trial. And for this purpose I solemnly propose a few questions to your consciences in the sight of God.

1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build anywhere else with hopes of safety. If you have ever fled to him as a hiding-place, you have seen it was your last refuge. And have all your false hopes, all your refuges of lies been swept away? Have you seen that honors, riches, pleasures, and all the world were but breaking bubbles? Have you been sensible that your own righteousness was a rotten foundation, and that you were just ready to sink every moment under the burden of your sins, and to be swept away by



the torrent of divine vengeance? Like a sinking man, you have been ready to catch at every twig or straw for support; but were you obliged at length with Peter to turn to Christ, and cry out, Help, Lord, I perish? Have you let go every other hold, and taken fast hold of him as the only support? Have you given up all other grounds of hope, and as poor, guilty, perishing, helpless creatures, placed your whole dependence upon this foundation? If you can honestly give a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it looks encouraging: but if not, you may be sure you are building upon some sandy foundation; you are lurking in some refuge of lies, and must be overwhelmed at last in inevitable ruin.

2. Have you ever been sensible of the preciousness, the excellency, and the stability of this divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Christ, it has been at once an act of the last necessity, and of the most free choice. Oh! How precious did this stone appear to you! Like the loadstone, it had a strong attraction upon you, and you were effectually drawn to it. You need go no farther than your own hearts to find the truth of what I have said of the preciousness of Christ; the preciousness of his strength, his righteousness, and everything in him. To you that believe he is precious. 1 Pet. 2:7. This is the assertion of an apostle concerning all believers, without exception. And shall I conclude this is the real sentiment of this assembly concerning Christ? Shall I conclude it, brethren? Oh shall I allow myself to be so happy? Does your conscience tell you there is ground for your saying that Christ is precious to you? Alas! Is it not quite the reverse with many of you?

3. Where is your habitual dependence? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Or is it upon something else? Do you not feel the need of strength, of spiritual life, of pardon, and righteousness, and eternal life? Certainly, if you know

yourselves, you feel the need of these things. And upon whom do you depend for them? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Is it habitual, and, as it were, natural to you, since you first ventured upon this foundation, to rest there, sensible that you have always needed this support, and that every other foundation is but sinking sand? Brethren, what does conscience reply to these questions?

4. Have you been formed into proper stones for this spiritual temple? Has God hewn you, may I so speak, by his word, and broken off whatever was rugged, irregular, and unfit to be compacted into the building? Has he shaped and polished your souls for a place in it? Do you feel this divine Architect daily carrying on this work in you, polishing you more and more into a resemblance to Christ? Or are you still the same rough, irregular unpolished pieces, with human nature unsanctified in its present degenerate state? Then you may be sure you are not built upon this foundation.

I think I may pronounce these few queries fully decisive in this case. And what discoveries do they now make among you? Where, now, appears to be the foundation of your hope? Have not some of you rejected the chief corner-stone which God has appointed, and built upon a quicksand? If so, even a friendly tongue cannot but denounce some terrible things to you.

While you are not founded upon Christ, you shall, you must unavoidably sink forever. There is nothing that can support you. Build your hopes ever so high, the fabric will fall, and bury you in its ruins. Nay, this only foundation of hope and happiness will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, the occasion of your more aggravated guilt, and more dreadful destruction. There are a few texts of Scripture which I would ring like peals of alarming thunder in your ears. The same Lord of hosts who shall be for a sanctuary to his people, “shall be for a stone of stumbling and

for a rock of offence, for a gin and for a snare; and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” Isa. 8:14. “Unto you which believe,” says St. Peter, “he is precious; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them which stumble at the word.” 1 Pet. 2:7,8. If this stone be not made by you the foundation of your hopes, it will fall upon you and crush you in pieces. Remember the declaration of Christ himself, “Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken;” that is, whosoever shall reject him while in a humble form in the days of his flesh, shall perish, “but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder;” that is, whosoever shall reject him in his state of exaltation, shall perish in a still more dreadful manner. And will not all these alarming considerations have a weight with you, to persuade you to make him your only foundation?

If you have already made him so, then be assured you are safe and immovable forever. Let storms of private or public calamity rise and beat upon you; let your fears and doubts rise to ever so high a deluge; let temptations make ever so severe attacks upon you, still the foundation on which you stand abides firm and unshaken. Nay, let all nature go to wreck, and seas and land, and heaven and earth, be blended together, still this foundation stands firm, and the living temple built upon it will remain immovable forever. You that believe need not make haste, you need not be struck with consternation upon the appearance of danger, nor fly to unlawful means of deliverance; your all is safe, and therefore you may be serene and calm. Is the burthen of guilt intolerable, and are you ready to sink under it? Or are you sinking under a load of sorrow? Whatever be the burden, cast it upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. This foundation is able to bear you up, however great the pressure. Come, ye that are weary and heavy-laden, come, and build your hopes, and place your rest here. Oh!

What joyful tidings are these! I hope they will prove a word in season to some soul that is weary.

What now remains, but that I should more explicitly point out this precious stone to you all, by illustrating the emphatical word behold, prefixed to the text.

Behold, ye poor sinking souls, behold with wonder and gratitude: here is a sure foundation for you; cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it, and it will support you. Say no more, “Alas! I must sink forever under this mountain of guilt;” but turn to Jesus, with sinking Peter, and cry, Help, Lord, I perish; and he will bear you up. Yes, whatever storms may blow, whatever convulsions may shake the world, you are safe.

Behold, ye joyful believers. See here the foundation of all your joys and hopes. Do you not stand firm like Mount Zion? See, here is the rock that supports you. Gratefully acknowledge it, and inscribe this precious stone with your praises. Point it out to others as the only ground of hope for perishing souls.

Behold, ye wretched, self-righteous Pharisees, the only rock on which you must build if you expect to stand. Your proud, self-confident virtue, your boasted philosophical morality, is but a loose, tottering foundation. Virtue and morality are necessary to complete and adorn the superstructure; but when they are laid at the bottom of all, they will prove but a quicksand.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish! Perish you must, if you set at naught this precious stone. To you this only foundation is like to prove a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. To you the nature of things is inverted; the only ground of hope will heighten your despair; and the Savior of men will be your destroyer.

Behold, ye glorious angels, behold the firm foundation divine love has laid for the salvation of guilty worms. It is as firm as that on which you stand. Are the affairs of mortals beneath your notice? No, we are concerned with Jesus too who is your Head; and our connection with him must give us an importance in your view. Therefore join with us in celebrating the praises of this foundation. This precious stone appears to you in all its splendors; its brilliancy dazzles your admiring eyes. We also admire it as far as we know it; but to us it is like a foundation laid deep underground, that supports us though we see it not. When shall we be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly Zion, where it will appear full to our view, and be the object of our delightful contemplation for ever and ever?

# *SERM. XXIX. THE NECESSITY AND EXCELLENCE OF FAMILY RELIGION.*

**1** Tim. 5:8.— *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

The great Author of our nature, who has made us sociable creatures, has instituted various societies among mankind, both civil and religious, and joined them together by the various bonds of relation. The first and radical society is that of a family, which is the nursery of the church and state. This was the society instituted in Paradise in the state of innocence, when the indulgent Creator, finding that it was not good for man, a sociable creature, to be alone, formed a help meet for him, and united them in the endearing bonds of the conjugal relation. From thence the human race was propagated; and when multiplied, it was formed into civil governments and ecclesiastical assemblies. Without these associations the worship of God could not be publicly and socially performed, and liberty and property could not be secured. Without these, men would turn savages and roam at

large, destitute of religion, insensible of the human passions, and regardless of each other's welfare. Civil and religious societies are therefore wisely continued in the world, and we enjoy the numerous advantages of them. But these do not exclude, but presuppose domestic societies, which are the materials of which they are composed; and as churches and kingdoms are formed out of families, they will be such as the materials of which they consist. It is therefore of the greatest importance to religion and civil society that families be under proper regulations, that they may produce proper plants for church and state, and especially for the eternal world, in which all the temporary associations of mortals in this world finally terminate, and to which they ultimately refer.

Now in families, as well as in all governments, there are superiors and inferiors; and as it is the place of the latter to obey, so it belongs to the former both to rule and to provide. The heads of families are obliged not only to exercise their authority over their dependents, but also to provide for them a competency of the necessities of life; and indeed their right to rule is but a power to provide for themselves and their domestics.

This is implied in my text, where the apostle makes the omission of this duty utterly inconsistent with Christianity, and a crime so unnatural, that even infidels are free from it. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

The apostle, among other things, in this chapter, is giving directions how widows should be treated in the church. If they were widows indeed; that is widowed and entirely destitute of relations to support them; then he advises to maintain them at the public expense of the church; (ver. 3,9,10.) But if they were such widows as had children or nephews, then he orders that they

should be maintained by these their relatives, and that the charge should not fall upon the church; (ver. 4,16.)

He supposes that the relatives, of some of them might be unwilling to put themselves to this expense: and to engage such to their duty, he in the text exposes the unnatural wickedness of neglecting it. “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

By a man’s own are meant poor relatives, who are unable to support themselves. And by his house are meant those that are his domestics, and that live with him, as wife, children, servants. The former a man is obliged to provide for, but especially the latter; and if he neglect it, he has denied the faith in fact, however much he may profess it in words; he is no Christian, nor to be treated as such; nay, he is worse than an infidel: for many heathens have had so much humanity and natural light, as to observe their duty, supporting their domestics and such of their relatives as could not procure a subsistence for themselves.

In order to make provision for our families, we must be careful or laborious, according to our circumstances, and see that all our domestics be so too. And him that will not work, neither let him eat. 2 Thess. 3:10.

“This,” some of you will say, “is excellent doctrine, and this is our favorite text, which we often descant upon to justify our eager pursuit of the world. This commandment have we kept from our youth up; and, as we exert ourselves to provide estates for our children, we are not chargeable with any guilt in this case.” But stay, sirs; before you peremptorily conclude yourselves innocent, let me ask you, are your domestics, your wives, children, and servants, nothing but material bodies? If so, I grant your duty is fulfilled by providing for their bodies. If they are only formed for this



world, and have no concern with a future, then it is enough for you to make provision for them in the present state. They are like your cattle, upon this hypothesis, and you may treat them as you do your beasts, fodder them well, and make them work for you. But are you so absurd as to indulge such a thought? Are you not fully convinced that your domestics were made for eternity, endowed with immortal souls, and have the greatest concern with the eternal world? If so, can you think it sufficient that you provide for their bodies and their temporal subsistence? I appeal to yourselves, is there not as much reason for your taking care of their immortal spirits as of their perishing bodies? Ought you not to be as regardful, and as laborious for their comfortable subsistence in eternity as in time? Nay, is not your obligation to family religion as much more strong, as an immortal spirit is more important than a machine of animated clay, and the interests of eternity exceed those of this transitory world? If then he that does not provide for his domestics a competency of the necessities of life has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel, what shall we say of him that neglects their souls, and takes no pains to form them for a happy immortality? Surely he must be worse than one that is worse than an infidel; and how extremely bad then must he be! He has more than denied the faith, however confidently he may profess it.

You see that though this text does not immediately refer to family religion, yet it will admit of a very natural accommodation to that purpose: and in this view I intend to handle it.

Several of you, my hearers, I doubt not, have long since formed and practiced Joshua's resolution: As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Josh. 24:15. While vanity laughs aloud, and impiety belches out its blasphemies in families around you, the voice of spiritual rejoicing and

salvation is heard in your tabernacles. Psalm 118:15. I congratulate you, my dear brethren, and hope your families will be nurseries for religion in future times, and educate many for the heavenly state; nay, I hope you have seen some of the happy effects of it already in the early impressions that begin to appear upon the tender minds of your dear children, and the promising solemnity and reformation of some of your slaves. It were to be wished that all of you made conscience of this matter, and it would not at all seem extravagant to expect it; for surely it would not be extravagant to expect that you, who attend upon public worship, and profess the religion of Jesus, should not so grossly deny the faith as to be worse than infidels. But, alas! My friends, though I do not affect to be a spy into your families, I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, lest some of you habitually neglect this very important duty. Though family religion be not the peculiarity of a party, but owned to be obligatory by Christians in general, (and therefore Christians of all denominations should conscientiously observe it, if they would act consistently with their own principles,) yet are there not several in this assembly who live without religion in their houses? Conscience can find out the guilty, and I need not be more particular. It is certainly a most lamentable thing that any who have enjoyed such opportunities for instruction, who have been solemnly and frequently warned, exhorted and persuaded, and who have come under the strongest obligation to this duty, should, notwithstanding, live in the willful and habitual neglect of it. For persons to omit it for want of instruction about its obligation might be very consistent with a tender conscience, and nothing would be necessary to bring such to the practice, but to convince them it is their duty, which it is very easy to do; but to omit family religion in our circumstances, my brethren, discovers such a stupid indifferency about religion, or so

inveterate an aversion to it, that it is lamentably doubtful, whether a conviction of the duty will determine you to the practice of it. When persons have long habituated themselves to sin against light, it is hard to take any effectual measures to deal with them. All that the ministers of the gospel can do, is to convince their understandings, to persuade, to exhort, to invite, to threaten; but such are accustomed to resist these means, and now they find it no great difficulty to master them. I therefore make this attempt with discouragement, and hardly hope to succeed with such of you as have hitherto obstinately fought against conviction; and the attempt is still the more melancholy, as I know that, if what shall be offered does not prevail upon you to make conscience of family religion, the additional light you may receive will but render you more inexcusable, increase your guilt, and consequently your punishment. This is one of the tremendous consequences of the ministry of this neglected, disregarded gospel, that may strike ministers and people with a solemn horror. However, I am not without hopes of success with some of you, who have not yet been cursed with a horrid victory over your consciences. I hope that when you are more fully convinced of this duty, you will immediately begin the practice of it. But though I had no expectation of success, I am still obliged to make the attempt. Though nothing can animate a minister more than the prospect of success, yet he is not to regulate his conduct wholly according to this prospect. He must labor to deliver his own soul, by warning even such as may not regard it. He must declare the whole counsel of God, whether they hear, or whether they forbear. I shall therefore, my dear brethren, endeavor honestly this day to bring you to Joshua's resolution, that you and your houses will serve the Lord; and let him who is hardy enough to despise it

prepare to answer for it at the supreme tribunal; for he despises not man but God.

I would not have you perform any thing as a duty, till you have sufficient means to convince you that it is a duty; and I would not confine you to an over-frequent performance of the duty I am now to open to you; therefore, when I have briefly mentioned the various parts of family religion, I shall,

I. Prove it to be a duty, from the law of nature and Scripture revelation.

II. Show in what seasons, or how frequently family religion should be statedly performed.

III. I shall consider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are invested with to maintain religion in their houses.

IV. And lastly, I shall answer the usual objections made against this important duty.

As to the parts of family religion, they are prayer, praise, and instruction. We and our families stand in need of blessings in a domestic capacity, therefore in that capacity we should pray for them; in that capacity, too, we receive many blessings; therefore in that capacity we should return thanks for them; and singing of psalms is the most proper method of thanksgiving. Further: Our domestics need instruction about the great concerns of religion, therefore we should teach them. But I need not stay to prove each of these branches to be a duty, because the following arguments for the whole of family religion, will be equally conclusive for each part of it, and may be easily accommodated to it. Therefore,

I. I shall prove that family religion is a duty, from the light of nature and of Scripture.

To prepare the way, I would observe that you should hear what shall be offered with a mind in love with your duty when it appears. You would not willingly have a cause tried by one that is your enemy; now the carnal mind is enmity against God, and consequently while you retain that carnal mind, you are very unfit to judge of the force of those arguments that prove your duty towards him. If you hate the discovery, you will shut your eyes against the light, and not receive the truth in love. Therefore lie open to conviction, and I doubt not but you shall receive it from the following arguments.

If family religion be due to the supreme Being upon the account of his perfections, and the relation he bears to us—if it be one great design of the institution of families —if it tend to the advantage of our domestics—if it be our privilege—then family religion appears to be our duty from the law of nature.

1. If family religion be a just debt to the supreme Being, upon account of his perfections and the relation he sustains to us as families, then it must be our duty to maintain it according to the law of nature. Now this is the case in fact.

God is the most excellent of beings, and therefore worthy of homage in every capacity, from his reasonable creatures. It is the supreme excellency of the Deity that renders him the object of personal devotion, or the religion of individuals, and the same reason extends to family religion; for such is his excellency, that he is entitled to all the worship which we can give him: and after all, he is exalted above all our blessing and praise, Neh. 9:5, that is, he still deserves more blessing and praise than we can give him. Hence it follows, that our capacity is the measure of our obligation to serve him; that is, in whatever capacity we are that admits of service to him, we are bound to perform all that service to him, because he justly deserves it all. Now we

are capable of worshipping him as a family for family devotion, you must own, is a thing possible in itself, therefore we are bound to worship him in that capacity. If any of you deny this, do but put your denial into plain words, and you must shudder at yourselves: it must stand thus, “I must own that such is the excellency of the Deity, that he has a right to all the homage which I can pay him in every capacity: yet I owe him none, I will pay him none in the capacity of a head of a family. I own I owe him worship from myself as an individual, but my family as such shall have nothing to do with him.” Will you, sirs, rather run into such an impious absurdity as this, than own yourselves obliged to this duty?

Again, God is the Author of our sociable natures, and as such claims social worship from us. He formed us capable of society, and inclined us to it: and surely this capacity ought to be improved for religious purposes. Is there any of you so hardy as to say, “Though God has made me a sociable creature, yet I owe him no worship as such, and will pay him none?” You may as well say, “Though he formed me a man, and endowed me with powers to serve him, yet as a man or an individual, I will not serve him.” And what is this but to renounce all obligations to God, and to cut yourselves off from all connection with him. Now if your social nature lays you under an obligation to social religion, then it must oblige you to family religion, for a family is the first society that ever was instituted; it is a radical society, from which all others are derived, therefore here social religion began (as it must have begun in families before it had place in other societies,) and here it ought still to continue.

Again, God is the Proprietor, Supporter, and Benefactor of our families, as well as of our persons, and therefore our families as such should pay him homage. He is the owner of your families, and where is the man that dares

deny it? Dare any of you say, God has nothing to do with my family; he has no right there, and I will acknowledge none? Unhappy creatures! Whose property are you then? If not God's, you are helpless orphans indeed; or rather the voluntary avowed subjects of hell. But if your families are his property, must you not own that you should worship him as such? What! Pay no acknowledgment to your great Proprietor? How unjust! The apostle argues, that because our persons are his, therefore we should serve him, 1 Cor. 6:19,20, and surely the argument is equally strong in this case. Further, Are not your families entirely dependent upon God as their Supporter and Benefactor? Should he withdraw his supporting hand, you and your houses would sink into ruin together. Are you not then obliged in a family capacity to acknowledge and praise him? You also receive numberless blessings from him in a domestic capacity: every evening and morning, every night and day you find his mercies flowing down upon your houses; and shall no grateful acknowledgments ascend from them to him? You also every moment stand in need of numerous blessings, not only for yourselves, but for your families; and will you not jointly with your families implore these blessings from your divine Benefactor? Here again consider the language of your refusal, and it must strike you with horror: "I own that God is the proprietor of my family, that he is the constant support of my family, that I and mine every moment receive mercies from him, and depend entirely upon him for them, yet my family as such shall pay no worship, shall serve him no more than if we had no concern with him." Can you venture upon such a declaration as this?

2. If family religion was the principal design of the institution of families, then is family religion our indispensable duty.

That families were founded by God may be inferred from the creation of different sexes, the institution of marriage, and the various relations among mankind, and from the universal agency of his providence. Psalm 68:6, and 113:9.

And that family religion was the principal end of the institution, is evident; for can you think that God would unite a number of immortals, heirs of the eternal world, together in the most intimate bonds, in this state of trial, without any reference to their future state? Were your families made for this world only, or for the next? If for the next, then religion must be maintained in them, for that alone can prepare you for eternity: or if you say your families were formed for this world, pray what was this world made for? To be the final residence? Or to be only a stage along which to pass into your everlasting home, a place of probation for candidates for immortality? And must not religion then be maintained in your families? They should be nurseries for heaven; and that they cannot be, if you banish devotion from them.

If the conjugal relation, which is the foundation of families, was first instituted for religious purposes, then certainly the worship of God ought to be maintained in them. But the former is true; Did not he make one? Mal. 2:15; that is, one of each sex, that there might be one for one; and that the very creation of our nature might carry an intimation that polygamy was unnatural. “And wherefore one?” that is, wherefore did God make but one of each sex, when he had the residue of the spirit, and could have made more? Why, his design was that he might seek a godly seed; that is, that children might not only be procreated, but retain and convey down religion from age to age. But can this design be accomplished if you refuse to



maintain religion in your families? Can you expect that godliness shall run on in the line of your posterity, if you habitually neglect it in your houses?

Can a godly seed be raised in so corrupt a soil? Therefore if you omit this duty, you live in families in direct opposition to the end of the institution, and deny your domestics the greatest advantage they can enjoy as members of a family; a consideration which leads me to another argument.

3. If family religion tends to the greatest advantage of our families, then it is our duty; and to neglect it is wickedly to rob ourselves and ours of the greatest advantage.

If you deny that religion is advantageous, you may renounce the name of Christians; yes, and of men too. Religion places its subjects under the blessing and guardianship of heaven; it restrains them from those practices which may be ruinous to them in time and eternity; it suppresses such dispositions and passions as are turbulent and self-tormenting; and affords the most refined and substantial joys.

Now I appeal to yourselves whether it be not more probable that your family will be religious, if you solemnly worship God with them, and instruct them, than it would be if you neglected these duties? How can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family religion? Can prayerless parents expect to have praying children? If you neglect to instruct them, can you expect they will grow up in the knowledge of God and of themselves? If they see that you receive daily mercies from the God of heaven, and yet refuse him the tribute of praise, is it not likely they will imitate your ingratitude, and spend their days in a stupid insensibility of their obligations to their divine Benefactor? Is it as likely they will make it their principal business in life to secure the favor of God and prepare for

eternity, when they see their parents and masters thoughtless about this important concern, as if they saw you every day devoutly worshipping God with them, and imploring his blessing upon yourselves and your households? Their souls, sirs, their immortal souls, are entrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, while you neglect to maintain your religion in your families? Will you not be accessory to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last? Therefore, if you love your children; if you would make some amends to your servants for all the service they do to you; if you would bring down the blessing of heaven upon your families: if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age; if you would deliver your own souls—I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives.

4. You are to consider family religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace. How great the privilege to hold a daily intercourse with heaven in our dwellings! To have our houses converted into temples for that adorable Deity whom the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain! To mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! To vent the overflowing's of gratitude! To spread the savor of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps and in anthems of praise! To have our families devoted to him while others live estranged from the God of their life! If all this does not appear the highest privilege to

you, it is because you are astonishingly disaffected to the best of Beings. And since the Almighty condescends to allow you this privilege, will you wickedly deny it yourselves? If he had denied it to you, you would no doubt have caviled at it as hard: you would have murmured had he laid a prohibition on your family and told you, “I will accept of worship from other families: they shall converse with me every day; but as for yours, I will have nothing to do with them, I will accept of no worship from them; you may not make mention of the name of the Lord.” How would you tremble if God had marked your families with such a brand of reprobation? And will you put this brand upon them with your own hand? Will you deny that privilege to your families which would strike you with horror if God denied it? Will you affect such a horrid singularity, that when other families are admitted into a familiar audience with the Deity, you will keep off from him, and pay him no homage in yours?

These arguments are chiefly derived from the light of nature, and plainly show that family-religion is a duty of natural religion. Accordingly heathens and idolaters have observed it. The heathens had their Lares, their Penates, or household gods. Such were Laban’s gods which Rachel stole from him, Gen. 31:34; and such were those of Micah, Judges 17:4,5. These indeed were idols, but what did they stand instead of? Did they not stand instead of the true worship of the true God? What reformation was necessary in this case? The renouncing of these idols, and taking nothing in their room? Or the renouncing of them and taking the true God in their place? Undoubtedly the latter. And will you not blush that heathens should exceed you? That you should be according to the text, worse than infidels? And must you not tremble lest they should rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you?

I now proceed to some arguments more purely scriptural, which prove the necessity of family religion in general, or of some peculiar branch of it.

1. We may argue from the examples of the saints, recorded and commended in Scripture.

Good examples infer an obligation upon us to imitate them; and when they are transmitted down to posterity with honor in the sacred records, they are proposed to our imitation, and as really bind us to the duty as express precepts.

Now we are here surrounded with a bright cloud of witnesses. Even before the introduction of the clearer dispensations of the gospel, we find that the saints carefully maintained family religion.

On this account Abraham was admitted into such intimacy with God, that he admits him into his secrets. “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; for —I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,” &c. Gen. 18:17,18.

We find Isaac and Jacob, by the influence of his good example and instructions, follow the same practice. They, as well as he, built an altar to the Lord wherever they pitched their tents; an altar then being a necessary utensil for divine worship. This you will find repeatedly in the short history we have of these patriarchs, particularly in Gen. 26:25; 28:18, and 33:20.

We find Job so intent upon family devotion, that he rises up early in the morning and offers burnt-offerings: and this he did, we are told, not upon extraordinary occasions only, but continually. Job 1:5.

The devout king David, after he had spent the day in the glad solemnity of bringing the ark to its place, returned to bless his house. 2 Sam. 6:20. He had his hour for family devotion; and when that is come, he leaves the

solemnity of public worship, and hastens home. This was agreeable to his resolution, I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Psal. 101:2.

Daniel ran the risk of his life rather than omit this duty, which some of you omit with hardly any temptation. When the royal edicts prohibited him, upon penalty of being cast into the lion's den, he still prayed and gave thanks to God, as he did aforetime. As he did aforetime. This is added to show that he had always observed a stated course of devotion in his family, and that it was not a transient fit of zeal that now seized him. Dan. 6:10.

These illustrious patterns we find under the dark dispensation of the Old Testament. How much more zealous should we be, who enjoy the meridian light of the gospel, to keep the religion of Jesus in our families!

In the New Testament we repeatedly find our blessed Lord in prayer with his family, the apostles. St. Paul thrice mentions a church in a private house, Rom. 16:5, 1 Cor. 16:19, and Col. 4:15, by which he probably means the religious families of Nymphas, and that pious pair Priscilla and Aquila. And Cornelius is an instance peculiarly observable, who, though a heathen, and ignorant of the coming of Christ, feared God (an expression that often signifies to worship God) with all his house; and prayed unto God always; that is, at all proper seasons. And when a divine messenger was sent to him to direct him to send for Peter, we are told he was found praying in his house; that is, with his domestics, as the word often signifies. Acts 10:2,30.

If it might have any weight after such authentic examples as these, I might add, that in every age persons of piety have been exemplary in family religion. And if you look around you, my brethren, you will find, that by how much the more religious persons are, by so much the more conscientious they are in this duty. What though some, like the Pharisees,

use it as a cloak for their clandestine wickedness, this is no objection against the practice; otherwise there is hardly one branch of religion or morality but what must be rejected too; for every good thing has been abused by hypocrites to disguise their secret villainy.

2. We may argue from several Scripture precepts, which either directly or consequently refer to the whole, or to some branch of family religion.

The apostle Paul, having given various directions about relative duties in families, subjoins, Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving: Col. 4:2. Peter exhorts husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, &c.—that their prayers might not be hindered: 1 Peter, 3:7, which certainly implies that they should pray together. And here I may observe, by-the-by, what is, perhaps, immediately intended in this text, that beside the stated worship of God, common to all the family, it may be very proper for the husband and wife to retire for prayer at proper seasons by themselves together. As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize those things that could not be prudently mentioned before others. But to return: we are enjoined to pray always with all prayer and supplication; Ephes. 6:18; and surely family prayer must be included in these comprehensive terms.

As to family instruction, it was expressly enjoined upon the Israelites. “These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house;” Deut. 6:6,7, and 11:19. They were commanded to instruct their domestics in the nature and design of the ordinances of that dispensation, particularly the passover; Exod. 12:26,27. And the Psalmist

mentions all the wonderful works of God as what ought to be taught by parents to children from age to age. And must not parents now be under even superior obligations to inform their children of the more glorious doctrines and ordinances of the gospel? Again, It is enjoined as a duty common to Christians in general, though they should not be united in one family, to exhort one another daily; Heb. 3:13; and to teach and admonish one another; Col. 3:16. How much more then is it our duty to teach, and admonish, and exhort our families, which are more particularly entrusted to our care?

As to family praise, it is a duty, because thanksgiving is so often joined with prayer in Scripture; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17,18; and psalmody must be owned the most proper method of expressing thankfulness by such as own it a part of divine worship. “The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous;” Psal. 118:15; an expression that may properly signify, praising God in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as we are commanded, Col. 3:16.

And now, my brethren, I presume you are convinced that family religion is a duty, unless you shut your eyes against the light of nature and the light of Scripture; and if convinced, you are reduced to this dilemma, either to set up the worship of God immediately in your families; or sin willfully against the knowledge of the truth. And which side will you choose? Oh, sirs, the case is so plain, you need no time to deliberate; it is as plain as whether you should choose life or death, heaven or hell!

If you from henceforth make conscience of this important duty, it will be a most happy omen to your families and to this congregation. If the grateful incense of family devotion were ascending to heaven every morning and evening, from every family among us, we might expect a rich return of

divine blessings upon ourselves and ours. Our houses would become the temples of the Deity, and our congregation feel his gracious influences. Our children would grow up in the knowledge and fear of God, and transplant religion from our families into their own whenever they should be formed. Our servants and slaves would become the servants of righteousness, and heirs with us of the grace of life. The animosities and contests that may now disturb our households, and render them like the dens of wild beasts, would cease. Vice would wither and die among us, and languishing religion, would lift up its head and revive. This would certainly be the consequence in several instances, if we were but to maintain family religion in a proper manner: for God hath not commanded us to seek his face in vain; and if this desirable success should not be granted universally, we shall still have the comfort to reflect that we have done our duty.

But how shocking is the prospect if you are determined to resist conviction, and live in the willful neglect of this duty! Your families are like to be nurseries for hell; or if there should be an Abijah in them, one “in whom some good thing is found towards the Lord God of Israel,” (1 Kings 14:13,) no thanks to you for it; you must be punished for your neglect of him as though he had perished by your iniquity.

Remember, sirs, that the omission of a known, practical duty against the remonstrances of your conscience, is a certain evidence that you are entirely destitute of all religion; and therefore I must discharge the artillery of heaven against you in that dreadful imprecation which, as dictated by inspiration, is equivalent to a prediction, or denunciation. “Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.” Jer. 10:25. Observe here that you are ranked with heathens that know not God; and that the divine fury is imprecated upon you, and it shall



fall, it shall fall speedily upon your devoted heads and your prayerless families, unless you fly out of its reach by flying to the Lord in earnest supplications in your houses. Will you rather run the venture, will you rather destroy yourselves and your domestics too, than spend a quarter or half an hour, morning and evening, in the most manly, noble, heavenly, evangelical exercises of devotion? Surely you are not so hardy! Surely you are not so averse to God, and careless about your own welfare, and that of your dearest relatives and domestics! I request, I beg, I adjure you by your regard to the authority of God, by your concern for your own salvation and that of your families, by the regards you bear the interests of religion in this place, and your poor minister, that this may be the happy evening from whence you may date the worship of God in your houses; that this may be the blessed era from which you and your houses will serve the Lord.

I proceed,

II. To show in what seasons, or how frequently, family religion should be statedly performed.

Now it is more than intimated in Scripture, that it should be performed every day, and particularly morning and evening. Thus the sacrifices under the law, which were attended with prayer, were offered daily, morning and evening. To this the Psalmist alludes; Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, which was offered in the morning, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice, Psalm 141:2. He elsewhere resolves, every day will I bless thee. Psalm 145:2. Yea, his devotion was so extraordinary, that he resolves, Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud. Psalm 55:17. So Daniel performed family-worship thrice a day. Hence we are undoubtedly bound to perform family religion twice at least in the day. And thus frequently it seems to be enjoined for common. “It is a

good thing to show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.” Psalm 92:1,2. Farther, reason directs us to morning and evening as the proper season for family worship; for, pray, which would you omit? Dare you venture your families out into the world all the day without committing them to the care of Providence in the morning? Can you undertake your secular pursuits without imploring the divine blessing upon them? And as to the evening, how can you venture to sleep without committing yourselves and yours to the divine protection, and returning thanks for the mercies of the day? Again, the very course of nature seems to direct us to these seasons. Our life is parceled out into so many days; and every day is a kind of life, and sleep a kind of death. And shall we enter upon life in the morning, without acknowledging the Author of our life? Or shall we, as it were, die in the evening, and not commend our departing spirits into his hands? Night is a kind of pause, a stop, in the progress of life, and should kindle a devout temper in us towards our divine Preserver. I shall only add, that the prophet hints that we should seek the Lord as the Author of the revolutions of night and day; “Seek him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night,” Amos 5:8; that is, seek him under that notion; and what time so proper for this as evening and morning? Therefore, my brethren, determine to begin and conclude the day with God.

III. I shall consider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are invested with to maintain religion in their houses.

In all societies there must be a subordination, and particularly in families, and it is the place of the head of such societies to rule and direct. Particularly it belongs to the head of a family, when there is no fitter person

present, to perform worship in it, to use proper means to cause all his domestics to attend upon it. The gentler means of persuasion ought to be used, where they will succeed; but when it is unavoidable, compulsive measures may be taken, to oblige all our domestics to an attendance. The consciences of all, bond and free, are subject to God only, and no man ought to compel another to anything, as a duty, that is against his conscience. But this is not the case here. Your domestics may plead a great many excuses for not joining in family worship, but they will hardly plead that it is against their conscience; that is, they will hardly say that they think they should sin against God in so doing. Here, then, you may use your authority; and perhaps some word they hear may touch their hearts. You should, in common cases, cause them all to attend morning and evening, unless your servants are scattered in different quarters, and make conscience of praying together, which you should exhort them to do, and for which you should allow them convenient time.

That you are authorized and obliged to all this, is evident from God's commending Abraham for commanding his children, &c.; from Joshua's resolving, that not only he, but also his house, should serve the Lord; a resolution he could not perform, unless he had authority over his house to compel them, at least externally, to serve the Lord, (Josh. 24:10,) and from the superiority which you have over your domestics, which enables you to command them in this case, as well as in your own affairs.

IV. And lastly, I come to answer the usual objections against this important duty of family religion.

It would be more honest for people frankly to own that they have no heart to it, and that this is the real cause of their neglecting it, and not any valid

objections they have against it; but since they will torture their invention to discover some pleas to excuse themselves, we must answer them.

1st Objection. “I have no time, and my secular business would suffer by family religion.”

Were you formed for this world only, there would be some force in this objection; but how strange does such an objection sound in the heir of an eternity! Pray, what is your time given to you for? Is it not principally that you may prepare for eternity? And have you no time for what is the great business of your lives?

Again, Why do you not plead, too, that you have no time for your daily meals? Is food more necessary for your bodies than religion for your souls? If you think so, what is become of your understandings?

Further, What employment do you follow? Is it lawful or unlawful? If unlawful, then renounce it immediately; if lawful, then it will admit of the exercise of family religion, for God cannot command contradictions; and since he has commanded you to maintain his worship in your houses, that is demonstration that every calling which he allows you to follow will afford time for it.

Finally, May you not redeem as much time from idle conversation, from trifling, or even from your sleep, as may be sufficient for family religion? May you not order your family devotion so as that your domestics may attend upon it, either before they go out to their work, or when they come to their meals?

2d Objection. “I have not ability to pray; I am too ignorant.”

If you had a proper sense of your wants, this plea would not hinder you. Did you ever hear a beggar, however ignorant, make this objection? A sense of his necessities is an unfailing fountain of his eloquence.

Further, how strange does this objection sound from you! What! Have you enjoyed preaching, Bibles, and good books so long, and yet do not know what to ask of God? Alas! What have you been doing?

Again, Is neglecting prayer the way to improve in knowledge, and qualify you to perform it?

Finally, May you not easily furnish yourselves with forms of prayer, which you may use as persons weak in their limbs do their crutches, till you can lay them aside? It is bigotry only that will say that you should neglect the substance of the duty, if you cannot perform every circumstance of it in the best manner.

3d Objection. “I am ashamed.”

But is this shame well grounded? Is it really a shame to worship the God of heaven, and share in the employment of angels?

Are sinners ashamed to serve their Master?

A little practice will easily free you from all this difficulty.

4th Objection. “But, alas! I know not how to begin it.”

Here, indeed, the difficulty lies; but why will you not own that you were hitherto mistaken, and that you would rather reform than persist obstinately in the omission of an evident duty?

5th Objection. “But my family will not join with me.”

How do you know? Have you tried? Are you not master of your own family? Exert that authority in this which you claim in other cases.

6th Objection. “But I shall be ridiculed and laughed at.”

Are you then more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the displeasure of God? Would you rather please men than him?

Will you never become religious till you can obtain the applause of the wicked for being so? Then you will never be religious at all.

Think how you will bear the contempt of the whole universe at last for the neglect of this duty!

Therefore, wherever you have your habitation, there let Jehovah, may I so speak, have an altar, and there let morning and evening prayers and praises be presented, till you are called to worship him in his temple above, where your prayers shall be swallowed up in everlasting praise. Amen.

## *SERM. XXX. THE RULE OF EQUITY.*

**M**<sup>att. 7:12.</sup>— *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

Christianity is not a fragment, but a complete system of religion; and it is intended and adapted to make us good entirely and throughout: it teaches us a proper conduct and temper towards every being with whom we have any connection, particularly towards God and our fellow men. A Christian is a complete, uniform, finished character; a character in which there is the most amiable symmetry and proportion; it is all of a piece, without chasms and inconsistencies. A Christian is a penitent, a believer, a lover of God, conscientious in devotion, and diligent in attendance upon every ordinance of religious worship; he begins his religion with a supreme regard to God, the Supreme of beings, sensible that unless he begins here, he inverts the order of things, and that all his religion and virtue must be preposterous and vain. To love the Lord his God with all his heart, and to serve him from that exalted principle, is the first and great commandment with him; and he

observes it as such. Religion, virtue, morality, and everything that bears a specious name among mankind, is a poor, maimed thing, monstrously defective, if a proper regard to God be left out of the system. It is shocking and unnatural for the creatures of God to be punctual in observing the duties they owe to one another, and yet entirely negligent of those radical fundamental duties they owe to him, their common Parent, the highest excellence, and the original of all authority and obligation.

But though Christianity begins with, and chiefly consists in our duty to God, yet it extends farther; it also includes a proper conduct and temper towards men. A good Christian is not only devout, but moral and virtuous: he is not only a dutiful servant of God in matters purely religious, but he is a useful member of every society to which he belongs, and makes conscience of justice, charity, and all the good offices due to his fellow-creatures. He is a good ruler or a good subject, a good neighbor, a good father or child, a good master or servant; in short, he endeavors to have a “conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.” I have made it the great object of my ministry among you to bring you to pay a proper regard to God, as he has revealed himself in the gospel of his Son; and for this purpose have inculcated the important doctrines of faith, repentance, love, and those other graces which are essential to every good man. But I must not forget another part of my office, which is, to teach you the second great command, or summary of the divine law, namely, “That you should love your neighbor as yourselves,” and inculcate upon you those important duties which you owe to mankind; and it is very extravagant for persons to disgust these, through a pretended relish for the gospel and the doctrines of grace, since these are no inconsiderable parts of the gospel, and the lessons of morality run through the whole New Testament.



When I would discourse upon the duties of social life, I cannot choose a text more pertinent or copious than that I have read to you, which is a fundamental and most comprehensive rule of morality; “all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.”

In the illustration and improvement of this subject, I shall,

I. Offer a few things for the right understanding of this divine rule of social duty.

II. Consider the reason of it.

III. Open its excellency.

IV. Mention some important instances of particular cases to which it should be applied. And,

Lastly, show the necessity and advantage of observing it.

I. I am to offer a few things for the right understanding of this divine rule.

It is proper, then, to observe, that as there is a great diversity in the stations and characters of men, there is a proportionable diversity in the duties which they owe one to another; and self-love may make a man very extravagant in his expectations and desires about the conduct of another towards him. On these accounts it is necessary that we should understand this precept with these two cautions or limitations.

1. That we should do that to others which we would expect and wish from them upon a change of condition, or if they were in our circumstances and we in theirs. Every man should be treated according to his character and station; and therefore that conduct which may be proper towards me in my station, may not be proper towards another in a different station: but let me suppose myself in his place and he in mine, and then that behavior which I would expect from him, the same I should observe towards him. Thus, for

example, a magistrate is bound to protect his subjects, and to behave towards them as he would desire a ruler to behave towards him if he were a subject; but he is not bound to yield that submission to his subjects, while a ruler, which he may justly demand of them. The rule in such cases is, let every man act in character; let him perform to others those duties which he would desire from others if they were in his circumstances, and he in theirs; and where there is a sameness of circumstances, there, and there only, his duty to others must be the same that he expects from them.

2. We should make only our reasonable and lawful expectations from others the rule of our conduct towards them. A man may expect and wish very extravagant and sinful things from others; he may desire another should give him all his estate, or gratify his wicked lusts and passions by some criminal compliance; such desires are by no means to be the rule of conduct; for we cannot indulge them, nor others comply with them, without acting wickedly and unreasonably. But those things which we may desire and expect from others, consistently with right reason, religion, and the laws of society, those things we ought to perform to them; those things which our consciences justify, and not those to which our inordinate self-love or some extravagant passion may prompt us.

If we understand this precept with such limitations as these, we may safely follow it as a general rule of conduct; and then it will not be liable to such objections as may be otherwise made against it. For example, a criminal may plead, "If I were in the place of my judge, and he in mine, I would acquit him and grant him his life." Or a judge might think, "If I were in the place of that poor criminal, I should be glad if my judge would forgive me; and therefore, if I would do as I would be done by, I must forgive him." Such thoughts as these, arising from wrong principles, are not

to be the rule and measure of our actions or expectations; for our own consciences cannot approve of them in our sedate and impartial moments. I proceed,

## II. To consider the reason of this precept.

Now the reason or foundation of it is evidently this, namely, the natural equality of mankind. For notwithstanding the great difference in the capacities, improvements, characters, and stations of men, yet, considered as men, they share in the same common nature, and are so far equal; and therefore, in the same circumstances, they have a right to the same treatment. A superior, for example, should treat his inferior just in the manner in which he would reasonably expect to be treated himself if he was in a low condition and his inferior advanced to his station. If there be any reason why another should behave in such a manner to me, there is the very same reason that I should behave in the same manner towards him; because he is to himself what I am to myself, as near, as dear, as important. Is it reasonable my neighbor should make no encroachments upon my property? It is equally reasonable that I should not encroach upon his; for his property is as much his as my property is mine. Do I expect my neighbor should observe the rules of justice in his dealings with me? Then certainly I should observe them in my dealings with him; for he has as good a right to be treated according to these rules, by me, as I have to be so treated by him. If it is reasonable that he should be tender of my good name, it is equally reasonable that I should be tender of his. If he should relieve me in my calamities, certainly I am equally bound to relieve him when in the same circumstances. And the reason is plain; he is to himself what I am to myself, and he is to me what I am to him, and therefore I am obliged to treat him as I would justly expect he would treat me; we are equal, and consequently our

obligations are equal, and our duties mutual or reciprocal. Hence you see that this precept is the most reasonable thing in the world. My next business is,

III. To open the excellency of it.

And this appears (1.) from its comprehensiveness; it includes all the social duties of life; it is a short summary of the whole divine law, as far as it refers to our conduct towards man. This excellency Christ himself points out: This, says he is the law and the prophets; that is, it is the substance of both; do to others what you would have others do to you, and then you do to them all that the law and the prophets, and I may add, all that Christ and the apostles require you to do. Now it is a great advantage to have the whole of our duty collected into such narrow bounds, and presented to us at one view; we are not sent to pore over tedious volumes of laws and statutes, or to gather up fragments of precepts here and there in order to learn our duty to one another; it is all summed up in this, “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” With this is connected another excellency of this precept; and that is,

2. Its conciseness; it is what I may call a portable directory, which you may always carry about with you and easily recollect; and therefore you need never be at a loss to know your duty. You may always know your own expectations and desires; do to others, then, what you would expect and desire from them, and you are right; you do all that the law and the prophets require you to do. Tedious precepts and long discourses are not so easily learned or remembered; but the shortest memory cannot fail to recollect this concise command.

3. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is universal, and extends to all mankind, in all circumstances; to superiors, inferiors, and equals. It is

true there is a great diversity in the characters and stations of men, which it is not your business, nor is it in your power to alter; and there is a correspondent variety in the duties you owe them. But you can easily imagine them all in the same circumstances; or you can easily suppose yourselves in their place, and they in yours; and then you can with equal ease look into your own minds, and consider what treatment you would expect from them in such a change of circumstances; and that will immediately discover how you should treat them in their present circumstances. Thus the rule may be universally applied without impropriety.

4. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is plain and convictive. Common minds may be bewildered, instead of being guided, by an intricate, tedious system of laws; but a man of the weakest understanding may easily perceive this rule. It is an appeal to his own sensations. “What would you expect or wish from others? How would you have them treat you?” Surely you cannot but know this; “Well, treat them just in the same manner.” This is also a most convictive rule; every man that thinks a little, must immediately own that it is highly reasonable; consult your own consciences, and they will tell you, you need no other adviser, and you are self-condemned if you violate this precept. It is written upon your hearts in illustrious, indelible characters: it shines and sparkles there, like the Urim and Thummim on the breast of Aaron. I am,

IV. To mention some important instances of particular cases to which this excellent rule ought to be applied. And here I shall throw a great many things together without method, that my description may agree the nearer to real life, in which these things happen promiscuously without order.

Would you desire that another should love you, be ready to serve you, and do you all the kind offices in his power? Do you expect your neighbor should rejoice in your prosperity, sympathize with you in affliction, promote your happiness, and relieve you in distress? Would you have him observe the rules of strict justice in dealing with you? Would you have him tender of your reputation, ready to put the kindest construction upon your actions, and unwilling to believe or spread a bad report concerning you. Do you desire he should direct you when mistaken, and labor to reclaim you from a dangerous course? In short, do you think it reasonable he should do all in his power for your good, in soul, body, and estate? Are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others towards you? Then in this manner should you behave towards them; you have fixed and determined the rule of your own conduct: your expectations from others have the force of a law upon yourselves; and since you know how they should behave towards you, you cannot be at a loss to know how to behave towards them.

If you were a servant, how would you have your master to behave towards you? Consider and determine the matter; and you will know how you should behave towards your servants. The same thing may be applied to rulers and subjects in general, to parents and children, husbands and wives, neighbor and neighbor.

On the other hand, we may consider this rule negatively. Do you desire that another should not entertain angry and malicious passions against you? That he should not envy your prosperity, nor exult over your adversity? That he should not take the advantage of you in contracts? That he should not violate the laws of justice in commerce with you, nor defraud you of your property? That he should not injure your reputation, or put an unkind

construction upon your conduct? Would you expect that if you were a servant, your master should not tyrannize over you, and give you hard usage; or that if you were a master, your servant should not be unfaithful, disobedient, and obstinate? Are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others? Then you have prescribed a law for your own conduct: do not that to others which you would not have them do to you: treat every man as another self, as a part of the same human nature with yourself. How extravagant and ridiculous is it that you should be treated well by all mankind, and yet you be at liberty to treat them as you please? What are you? What a being of mighty importance are you? Is not another as dear to himself as you are to yourself? Are not his rights as sacred and inviolable as yours? How came you to be entitled to an exemption from the common laws of human nature? Be it known to you, you are as firmly bound by them as any of your species.

By these few instances you may learn how to apply this maxim of Christian morality to all the cases that may occur in the course of your lives.

Were I reading to you a letter of moral philosophy in the school of Socrates or Seneca, what I have offered might be sufficient. But in order to adapt this discourse to the Christian dispensation, and make it true Christian morality, it is necessary I should subjoin two evangelical peculiarities, which are the qualifications of that virtue which God will accept.

The first is, that all our good offices to mankind should proceed not only from benevolence to them, but from a regard to the divine authority, which obliges us to these duties. We should do these things not only as they are commanded, but because they are commanded. We cannot expect that God will accept of that as obedience to him, which we do not intend in that view. Let us apply that rule to every social duty, which the apostle particularly

applies to the duty of servants to their masters: Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Col. 3:23.

The second qualification of evangelical virtue or true Christian morality, is, that you perform it in the name of Christ, or that you depend not upon the merit of your obedience, but entirely upon his mediatorial righteousness, to procure acceptance with God. Without this all your actions of charity and justice, however fair and splendid they appear in the eyes of men, are but proud philosophic virtue, utterly abhorred by a holy God. But with this evangelical temper, you will be accepted as serving God, even in serving men. And oh! That with these qualifications this rule may regulate the conduct of each of us! I am sure there is reason enough for it, if the greatest necessity, or the greatest advantage can be a reason. Which consideration leads me,

V. And lastly, To show the necessity and advantage of observing this rule.

(1.) The observance of this rule is absolutely necessary to constitute you real Christians. I hinted at this in the beginning of my discourse; but it is of such vast importance, that it merits a more thorough consideration. A Christian not only prays, attends upon religious ordinances, discourses about religion, and the like, but he is also a strict moralist; he is just and charitable, and makes conscience of every duty to mankind; and morality is not ornamental but essential to his character; and it is in vain for you to pretend to the Christian character without morality. An unjust, uncharitable Christian, is as great a contradiction as a prayerless, or a swearing Christian. You can no more be a good man without loving your neighbor, than without loving your God. “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother,” and neglects the duties he owes to him, is really in darkness even until now, (1 John 2:9,) let him pretend what he will. Therefore if you count it of any



importance to be Christians indeed, you must do to others what you would have them do to you. No inward experience, no religious duties, no zeal in devotion can make you true Christians, or entitle you to the charity of others as such, without a proper temper and behavior towards mankind. I would have you, my dear brethren, to be complete, finished Christians; if there be any thing in the world that I have at heart, it is this: I would have Christianity appear in you in its full glory, unmaimed and well-proportioned; and therefore I would have you to be not only zealous in devotion in secret, in your families, and in public, but also just, honorable, and faithful in all your dealings with mankind; kind, affectionate, meek, and inoffensive in your conduct towards them; in short, that you should treat them as you would have them treat you. You find a great deal of fault with the conduct of others towards you, but consider, have they not equal reason to blame your conduct towards them? My dear brethren, be yourselves what you would have others be. Would you have them to be better than yourselves? Would you merely resign to them that true honor? Do you desire that they should be better Christians and better men than you? What an awkward, perverse, preposterous humility is this? But,

(2.) A proper conduct towards mankind in the professors of religion, is necessary to recommend religion to the world, and reflect honor upon their profession; whereas the want of it brings a reproach upon the Christian name. The blind world has but little knowledge, and still less concern about the duties that we owe immediately to God, and therefore the neglect of them is not so much observed; but as to the duties we owe to mankind, they themselves are concerned in them, and therefore they take the more notice of the omission of them, and are more sensible of the importance. And when they see a man that makes a mighty profession, that talks a great deal

about religion, and is zealous in frequent attendance upon sermons, prayer, &c., when they see such a man make no conscience of the laws of justice and charity towards men; when they observe he is as deceitful, as over-reaching, as sordid and covetous as others, and perhaps more so, what will they think of his religion? Will they not think it a cloak for his knavery, and a stratagem to accomplish his own wicked designs? And thus are they hardened in impiety, and confirmed in their neglect of all religion. My brethren, it is incredible what injury the Christian religion has received from this quarter: the bad lives of professors is the common objection against it in the mouths of heathens, Jews, Turks, and infidels, among ourselves. There is indeed no real force in the objection: you may as well say that moral honesty is but villainy, because many who pretend to it are knaves, and make that pretense to carry on their knavery with more success. It must also be confessed, that many discover much of their enmity against religion itself, by raising a clamor against the bad lives of its professors; and that there is much less ground for the objection than they would have you believe. The true secret is this: they hate strict religion themselves, and would find some umbrage to expose it in others, in order to excuse or defend their own neglect of it; and as they can find no objection against religion itself, they abuse all its professors: and if it is evident that their visible conduct is good, they would find out some secret flaw; and if they can discover no glaring defect in their duty to God, they pry into their conduct towards man, to discover some secret wickedness: and, alas! In too many instances, their malignant search is successful; and they find some that make a mighty profession, who are secretly guilty of some mean or wicked artifices in their transactions with men. Now they think they have found them out, and surmise, “They are all such; they pray and make a

great stir about religion, but they will cheat and lie, when they can do it clandestinely, as readily as their neighbors.” This imputation, when made to Christians in the bulk, is not only ungenerous, but utterly false. But it must, alas! Be owned, that the fact, upon which it is founded, is true with regard to some. And what a melancholy thought is this! The innocent, I mean the consistent and uniform professors of religion, suffer by this conduct of their false brethren; for the same artful hypocrisy will be surmised of them; and religion itself suffers by such conduct; for it gives a disadvantageous idea of religion, as though it were all show and ostentation, and made its most zealous votaries no better in reality than those that neglect and despise it. My brethren, I seriously tell you, I know of nothing in the world that would have a more efficacious tendency to propagate Christianity through the nations of the earth, than the good behavior of its professors. The impiety and bad morals of those that make no profession of religion is evident to all; and if all that profess it would live according to their profession, then the difference would be discernible to all: and even common sense would teach a heathen that it is a difference much for the better; and the world would soon conclude there is something singularly excellent and divine in a religion that sanctifies everything within its reach, and makes its subjects so evidently better than all mankind besides: they would need no labored arguments to convince them of this point; their own consciences would afford them sufficient evidence of it, and then it would be sufficient to make a heathen a Christian, to bring him into the acquaintance of Christians; and it would be impossible there should be such a thing as a deist, or an infidel freethinker, in a Christian country: he would receive conviction from the practice of every one about him, and he would not be able to shut his eyes against it. I am sorry, my brethren, the case is so much the reverse through

the generality of the Christian world. It is really melancholy that the name of a Christian should raise in a stranger any ideas but those of justice, benevolence, and everything honorable and excellent. I am sure our religion, as we find it in the Bible, is such; but, alas! How different, how opposite is the Christian world! Those that trade among infidels, or that are employed as missionaries among the heathen, can inform you what a fatal obstruction the bad lives of its professors is to the propagation of our holy religion. Why should they embrace a religion which leaves the morals of its followers as bad or worse than their own? This inquiry the light of nature teaches them to make; and it is really hard to answer it satisfactorily. When a Turk could turn upon a Christian, who insinuated that he lied, with this reprimand, “What! Do you think I am a Christian, that I should lie?” When an Indian can tell a Christian missionary, “If your religion be so much better than ours, as you say it is, how comes it that you white people are no better than we? Nay, you have taught us many vices, which we knew nothing of till our acquaintance with you?” I say, when Turks and heathens can make such repartees, is there any prospect that Christianity should be received among them? Alas, no! The same thing may be applied to those careless, vicious, impious multitudes among ourselves, who do indeed usurp the name of Christians, but can hardly be said to make any profession of Christianity, as their whole lives are openly and avowedly contrary to it. If all who make a stricter profession were to live in character, it would soon afford conviction to these profane sinners: they could not but see the difference, and that it is a shocking difference for the worse on their side. And now, my brethren, shall our holy religion suffer? Shall nations be prejudiced against it? Shall multitudes of souls be lost by our misconduct? Oh! Can you bear the thought of incurring such dreadful guilt! Well, if you

would avoid it, observe the sacred precept in my text. On the other hand, would you not contribute all in your power to render your religion amiable in the world, to convert mankind to it, and thus save souls from death? If you would, then observe this divine rule. Let the world see that you are really the better for your religion, and that your singular profession is not a vain, idle, ostentatious pretense. I have this particular much at heart, and therefore you will bear with me that I have enlarged so much upon it.

(3.) The observance of this sacred rule of equity would have the most happy influence upon human society, and would make this world a little paradise. If men did to others whatever they would have others do to them, such a conduct would put an end to a great part of the miseries of mankind. Then there would be no wars and tumults among the nations, no jealousies and contentions in families, no oppression, fraud, or any form of injustice, no jars, animosities, and confusions in neighborhoods; but human society would be a company of friends, and justice, equity, love, charity, kindness, gratitude, sympathy, and all the amiable train of virtues, would reign among them. What a happy state of things would this be! How different from the present! And shall not each of us contribute all in our power to bring about such a glorious revolution?

(4.) The observance of this rule is a piece of prudence with regard to ourselves. It is of great importance to our happiness in this world, that others should treat us well. There are none of us absolutely independent of others; we are not able to stand as the butt of universal opposition; or if we are now in happy circumstances, we stand upon a slippery place, and may soon fall as low as our neighbors. Now, the readiest way to be treated well by others, is to treat others well ourselves. If you would have others to behave agreeably to you, you must do so to them; do what you expect from

them. Men often complain of bad neighbors, when they are the occasion of it by being bad neighbors themselves. There is hardly any place so bad, but a benevolent, inoffensive man may live peaceably in it; but the contentious will always meet with contention; for they raise the storm which disturbs them. Therefore, if no other argument has weight with you, for your own sakes observe this divine rule.

(5.) I shall only add, that unless you conscientiously observe the duties of social life, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Not only sins done immediately against God, and the omission of duties to him, but also sins against our fellow creatures, and the omission of the duties we owe to them, will exclude men from the kingdom of God. Of this we have abundant evidence in Scripture. I need only refer you to two comprehensive passages, 1 Cor. 6:9,10; Gal. 5:19,20,21; in which you see that all unrighteousness, hatred, variance, strife, envy, extortion, and the like, which are offensive against men, will as certainly shut the gates of heaven against you, as idolatry or heresies, which are sins against God. The most plausible experiences, the greatest diligence and zeal in devotion, and the most promising profession of religion, will never bring you to heaven, though absolutely necessary in their place, unless you also abound in good works towards men. And shall this argument have no weight with you? Is your eternal salvation an insignificant thing with you? Are you proof against the terrors of everlasting destruction? If you would enjoy the one and escape the other, “Do to others what you would have them do to you.”

I shall conclude with one or two reflections.

1. If this be the rule of our conduct, alas! How little true morality is there in the world! Men seem to act as if they were entirely detached from one another, and had no connection, or were not at all concerned to promote

each other's interest. Self-interest is their pursuit, and self-love their ruling passion; if that be but promoted, and this gratified, they have little or no concern besides. "Let their neighbors look to themselves, they have no business with them." If I shall only mention one particular case under this general rule, namely, commerce and bargaining, what a scene of iniquity would it open! Men seem to make this their rule, to get as much for what they sell, and give as little for what they buy, as they can: they hardly ever think what the real value of the thing is, and whether the other party has a tolerable bargain of it: "Let him look," say they, to that; "it is none of their care." Alas! My brethren, where are the laws of justice and charity, when men behave in this manner? And yet, alas! How common is such a conduct in the commercial world!

2. We ought to examine our own conduct in this respect, and it will go a great way to determine whether our religion be true and sincere, or not. If we make a conscience of social duty, it is a promising sign that God has written his law in our hearts. But if we can willingly indulge ourselves in any sinful and mean conduct towards men, we may be sure our religion is in vain, whatever our pretensions be. Let us feel, then, the pulse of our souls, whether it beats warm and full, both with the love of God and the love of our neighbor. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, [or venerable,] whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. 4:8.

# *SERM. XXXI. DEDICATION TO GOD ARGUED FROM REDEEMING MERCY.*

**1** Cor. 6:19,20.— *What! Know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

My first and last business with you to-day, is to assert a claim which perhaps you have but little thought of, or acknowledged. In the name of God I enter a claim to you, to the whole of you, soul and body, and whatever you possess; to every one of you, high and low, old and young, freemen as well as slaves; I enter a claim to you all as God's right, and not your own: and I would endeavor to bring you voluntarily to acknowledge his right, and by your own free act to surrender and devote yourselves to him, whose you are, and whom therefore you are bound to serve.

It is high time for me to assert, and for you to acknowledge, God's right to you; for have not many of you behaved as if you thought you were your own, and had no master or proprietor? Have you not practically said, with those insolent sinners the psalmist mentions, Our lips are our own, who is lord over us? Ps. 12:4; for have you not refused to employ your tongues for



the honor of God, and spoke what you pleased, without any control from his law? Have you not said by your practice, what Pharaoh was bold and plain enough to speak out in words, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? Exod. 5:2. Have you not aimed at pleasing yourselves, as if you were not bound to please the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, whose authority confines the stubborn powers of hell in chains of everlasting darkness, and sets all the armies of heaven in motion to execute his sovereign orders? Have you not followed your own inclinations, as if you were at liberty to do what you pleased? Or if you have in some instances restrained yourselves, have not the restraints proceeded, not from a regard to his authority, but from a regard to your own pleasure or interest? Have you not used your bodies, your souls, your estates, and all your possessions, as if they were your own absolutely and independently, and there were no God on high, who has an original and superior claim to you, and all that you are and have? Do not your own consciences convict you of these things? Is it not, then, high time for you to be made sensible whose right you are? That you are not your own, but God's?

This reason would render this subject very seasonable at any time. But there is another reason which peculiarly determines me to make choice of it to-day; and that is, the greatest business of this day is to surrender and devote ourselves to God as his servants forever. In so solemn a posture as at the Lord's table, in so affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happiness, and with such solemn emblems as those of bread and wine in our hands, which represent the broken body and flowing blood of Jesus, we are to yield ourselves to God, and seal our indenture to be his. This is the solemn business we are now entering upon. And that we may perform it the more heartily, it is fit we

should be sensible that we are doing no more than what we are obliged to do; no more than what God has a right to require us to do, seeing we are not our own, but his.

The apostle speaks of it with an air of surprise and horror, that any under the profession of Christianity should be so stupid as not to know and acknowledge that they are not their own, but God's. What! Says he, know ye not, that ye are not your own? As if he had said, can you be ignorant in so plain a point as this. Or can you be so hardy, as knowing the truth, to practice contrary to knowing it? Knowing you are not your own, dare you act as if you were your own? Acknowledging that you are God's, dare you withhold from him his property? Will a man rob God? Shall not his professed servants serve him? Since your bodies and your souls are his, dare you use them as if they were absolutely your own, and refuse to glorify him with them?

The same claim, my brethren, is valid with regard to you, which the apostle here asserts with regard to the Corinthians. You are no more your own than they were; you are as much God's property as they were.

And his property in you depends upon such firm foundations as cannot be shaken without the loss of your being, and your relapse into nothing. If you made yourselves, you may call yourselves your own. But you know the curious frames of your bodies were not formed by your own hands, nor was it your feeble breath that inspired them with those immortal sparks of reason, your souls. A greater absurdity cannot be mentioned, than that a creature should be its own creator; for then it must act before it had a being. You owe your being to a divine Original, the Fountain of all existence. It was Jehovah, the uncreated, all-creating Jehovah, who so wonderfully and fearfully formed your bodies, and who is likewise the Father of your spirits.

And what right can be more valid than that founded upon creation? It is a right founded upon your very being, and which nothing but the entire loss of being can destroy. He that makes servants out of nothing, has he not a right to their service? Did he form your souls and bodies, and may he not require you to glorify him with them? Can you call them your own, or dare to dispose of them as you please, without any regard to God, when you would have had neither soul nor body, nor been anything at all, if it had not been for him? You think you have such a right to a thousand things as entitles you to the use of them; but show me one thing, if you can, to which you have such a right as God has to you, to your whole souls and bodies, to you, who have no master upon earth, and who are your own property in exclusion to all the claims of your fellow-creatures. Did you produce out of nothing any of those things you call yours? No, you only bought them with money, or you formed them into what they are, out of materials already created to your hand. But it is Jehovah's right alone that is founded upon creation. And will you not acknowledge this right? Will not your hearts declare, even now, "My Maker, God, this soul and this body are thine; and to thee I cheerfully surrender them? The work of thine own hands shall be thine by my free and full consent; and I renounce all claim to myself that is not dependent upon and subordinate to thee."

Again, the providence of God towards you has made you his absolute property; and on this footing he claims your service. You could no more support yourselves in being, than you could give being to yourselves at first. Who but he has preserved you alive for so many months and years; preserved you so frail and precarious, surrounded with so many dangers, and exposed to so many wants? Whose earth have you trod upon? Whose air have you breathed in? Whose creatures have you fed upon? The earth is

the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, Ps. 24:1; and consequently all the supports and enjoyments, all the necessities and comforts of life, are his. Show me the mercy, if you can, which you created. Mention the moment, if you can, in which you supported your own life, independently of the Almighty. Show me that property of yours, if you can, which is so dependent upon you as you are upon him. This moment, if he should withdraw his supporting hand, you would instantaneously become as entirely nothing as you were ten thousand years ago. If he should now strip you of all that is his, and only leave you what is originally your own, he would leave you nothing at all. The earth, and all its productions, the air, the light, and your very being would be entirely vanished, and your place would be no more known in the creation. Oh! That you knew, oh! That you felt, oh! That you practically acknowledged, how entirely dependent you are upon God! And dare you call yourselves your own, when you cannot support yourselves in being or in happiness one moment? Oh! Renounce so haughty a claim, and this day give up yourselves to God as his. A son honoreth his father: and since God is your Father, where is his honor? The dull ox knows his owner, and the stupid ass knows his master's crib; and will not you know and acknowledge your divine Benefactor and Preserver? He has nourished and brought you up as his children, and dare you rebel against him?

Thus you see the divine right to you may be made good upon the footing of creation and providence. But this is not the foundation of right which the apostle here has in view, or which I would chiefly insist upon. The ground of claim that he has here in view, is that of redemption by Jesus Christ; Ye are not your own, says he, for ye are bought with a price. This is a ground of claim still more endearing. You are God's, not only because he made

you, because he preserved you, but because he hath bought you; bought you, saith St. Peter, “not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Pet. 1:18,19. What an expensive purchase is this! A purchase by blood! Not by the blood of bulls and of goats, not by the blood of man, but by the blood of Jesus, which St. Paul does not scruple to call the blood of God himself; “the Church of God, says he, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28. This was the immense ransom; this is what the apostle calls a price, by way of eminence, in my text; ye are bought with a price; a price so vast and distinguishable, that it may easily be known without being particularly described; every Christian must know it, if he is but told that it is the price with which he was bought.

The words buying, purchase, ransom, redemption, and the like, occur so often in the account of our salvation by Christ, that they deserve a particular explication.

They are sometimes taken in a proper sense, and sometimes in an improper, in the sacred Scriptures. I shall particularly consider the word redeem, which most frequently occurs, as a specimen of the rest.

To redeem, in a lax improper sense, signifies in general, to deliver from oppression and misery, in whatever way the deliverance is effected, and not necessarily implying that it is effected by a proper payment of a price. So you very often read of the Israelites being redeemed from slavery in Egypt; and on this account God assumed the title of their Redeemer. In this lax sense of the word we have been redeemed by Jesus Christ: redeemed, that is, delivered from slavery to sin and Satan. Our freedom from sin is called redemption by Christ, in the sacred language. So in Tit. 2:14, the apostle says, “Our Savior Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us

from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” It is by Christ’s freely giving himself a sacrifice for us, that the influences of the Holy Spirit are procured to mortify our corrupt dispositions, and subdue the power of sin, and thus to free us from our sordid slavery to his usurped jurisdiction. Sin has still retained its power over fallen angels: through the space of at least near six thousand years, notwithstanding all the punishment they have already suffered for it, and notwithstanding all that they have seen of the wonders of divine Providence, and the amiable and tremendous displays of the divine perfections, they sin on still impenitent and unreformed, and will do so for ever. But many a sinner of the race of man has been recovered to a state of holiness and happiness, and been freed from the tyrannical dominion of sin. And the reason is, Jesus did not give himself for the fallen angels, but for the fallen sons of Adam; for these, but not for the former, he purchased sanctifying grace; and this makes the difference. While the former are hardened more and more in wickedness in the furnace of hell, the fallen offspring of Adam are purified by his Spirit, and made a peculiar people, distinguishable from all others by their purity and zeal for good works, and peculiarly his above all others. St. Peter also uses the word redeem, in the same sense, to signify deliverance from sin. Ye know, says he, that ye were redeemed from your vain conversation with the precious blood of Christ. 1 Pet. 1:18,19. This is a very glorious redemption indeed, much more illustrious than the deliverance of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian bondage: which is so often called redemption.

Again, Jesus Christ has redeemed, that is, delivered his people from the guilt of sin; and consequently from the wrath of God, and the punishments of hell. He obtained eternal redemption for his people. Heb. 9:12. “Jesus

delivered us from the wrath to come.” 1 Thess. 1:10. All the saints that are now in heaven, and all that shall be added to their happy number in all the future ages of the world, are indebted to him for their great, their everlasting deliverance. To Jesus they owe it, that they have the actual enjoyment of complete happiness, and the sure prospect of its everlasting continuance, instead of feeling the vengeance of eternal fire. To Jesus they owe it, that they rejoice forever in the smiles of divine love, instead of sinking under the frowns of divine indignation. To Jesus they owe it, that they enjoy the pleasures of an applauding conscience, instead of agonizing under the pangs of guilt, and the horrors of everlasting despair. To Jesus they owe it, that their voice is employed in songs of praise and triumph, instead of infernal groans and howling’s. To Jesus they are indebted for all this; and they are very sensible of their obligations; and their everlasting anthems acknowledge it. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall hear them ere long, singing with a loud voice, “Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Rev. 5:9. “These are they which were redeemed from the earth, and from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb.” Rev. 14:3,4.

Thus you see that taking the word Redemption in a lax improper sense, as signifying deliverance, though without a price, that we may be said to be bought or redeemed by Jesus Christ. But if we take the word in a strict and proper sense, it signifies a particular kind of deliverance; namely, by the payment of a price. And it is in this way that Jesus redeemed his people. He gave himself, says St. Paul, a ransom for all. 1 Tim. 2:6. And himself has told us, the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many. Matt. 20:28. Now a ransom is a price paid to redeem a thing that was forfeited, or

a person that was held in captivity and slavery. So to redeem an estate, is to pay a price equivalent to it, and so to recover it. To redeem a prisoner or a captive, is to lay down a price as an equivalent for his liberty. In this sense, Christ bought his people with a price, or redeemed them with his blood as the ransom. This will lead us to conceive of his work in our salvation in various views.

He is said to redeem us to God by his blood. Rev. 5:9. This implies that we were lost to God, because justice required we should be given up to punishment, and God could take no pleasure in us. We were lost to God, just as a criminal delivered up to justice is lost to his family and his country. But Jesus pays the ransom to divine justice with his own blood; that is, he bears the punishment in his own person, which justice demanded of the sinner; and hereupon, the poor, helpless, lost sinner is recovered to God, becomes his property again upon the footing of mercy, and recovers the divine favor which he had lost. The blessed God, as it were, recovers his lost creature, receives him with delight from the arrest of justice safe and unhurt, and rejoices over him as redeemed from eternal death. Now, like the father of the prodigal in the parable, he gives orders for public rejoicings, through all the heavenly court, saying, It is meet we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost and is found. Luke 15:32. And again, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Job 33:24. Again, Jesus is said to redeem us from the curse of the law: "God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Gal. 4:4. 5. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. 3:13. Here you see what he redeemed us from, namely, the curse of the law, the penalty threatened in the law to disobedience; and also the manner in which he



redeemed us, namely, by becoming a curse for us, or suffering the penalty in his own person which was due to us for disobedience. This representation supposes that the law of God has demands upon us, demands of punishment, and that it detains us as prisoners under arrest till these demands are answered by some adequate satisfaction. Now the Lord Jesus entered into our law-place, and by his sufferings made a satisfaction equivalent to the demands of the law: and it is this satisfaction that is called the ransom by which he redeemed us. By his obedience and suffering all the demands of the law are completely answered, so that now the prisoner is dismissed, the captive set free; set free upon the footing of a ransom, or for and in consideration of full payment made. By this a way is opened for the salvation of sinners upon the plan of the gospel; that is, by the righteousness of Jesus imputed to them upon their believing in him; imputed to such as have no personal merit, but must sink into everlasting condemnation, if dealt with according to the rigor of the law. Thus Jesus is made to believers righteousness and redemption, 1 Cor. 1:30, righteousness to answer the precept of the law, and redemption from its

In short, our salvation is accomplished so much in the way of redemption, that this word, or one of the same sense, is very often used in the affair. Heaven is called a purchased possession, Eph. 1:14, because when we had forfeited our right to it, it was purchased for us by the blood of Christ. Believers are called a peculiar, 1 Peter 2:9, or, as the word is sometimes rendered, a purchased people. The resurrection is called the redemption of our body, Rom. 8:23; because, after having been made a helpless captive under the power of death, and shut up in the prison of the grave, it is dismissed and set at liberty by Jesus Christ. And our salvation is called

eternal redemption, because all the blessings contained therein are redeemed for us after they had been forfeited and lost.

Thus you see the death of Christ may be called the great price with which we are bought, and by which all spiritual and everlasting blessings were bought for us. As for believers, it is beyond all dispute that they have been thus dearly bought; and on this account they are not their own, but God's. They are his on the footing of redemption; and therefore he has the strongest claim to their service. Oh! Shall not those favored creatures whom he has redeemed from hell, redeemed from sin and Satan, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, devote themselves to their Deliverer as his servants forever? Can you bear the thought of withholding his own from him, when he redeemed you when lost, and purchased a right to you by the blood of his Son? One drop of which is of more value than a thousand worlds!

A thousand worlds so bought were bought too dear.

Must not the love of Christ constrain you, as it did St. Paul, to judge thus: That if this illustrious personage died for you, then you that live should no longer live to yourselves, but to him that died for you and rose again: 2 Cor. 5:14,15.

Thus, you see, the argument concludes with full force as to believers, who are indisputably purchased by the blood of Christ. But will it conclude also as to those who are now unbelievers? Were they so redeemed, or bought by Jesus Christ, that they are no longer their own but God's, and upon that footing obliged to devote themselves to him? There is hardly any subject in divinity more intricate than the extent of Christ's redemption; and it would by no means suit the present occasion to perplex a practical discourse with this controversy. I shall, therefore, only lay down a few principles which are

indisputable, and will fully answer my present design. (1.) As to those who believe that Christ laid down his life as a price for the redemption of every individual of mankind, the argument concludes with full force; for by their own confession they are bought with a price, and therefore they are not their own, but God's. (2.) You all hope that Jesus Christ died for you: unless you have this hope, you can have no hope at all of being saved according to the gospel; for the gospel allows you no hopes of salvation at all, but upon the supposition of Christ's dying for you. Have you, then, any hope of salvation? Undoubtedly you have; for you do not look upon yourselves as shut up under remediless despair. Well, then, just as much hope as you have of salvation, just so much hope you have that Christ died for you; and consequently, upon your own principle, you are so far obliged to act as persons bought with a price, and therefore not your own but God's; that is, as far as you hope for heaven, so far are you obliged to devote yourselves to God as his, and no longer to live to yourselves. And if you deny his claim to you upon the footing of redemption, you renounce all hope, and give yourselves over as lost and hopeless. And what can bind you more strongly than this? Will you rather rush into despair, and fling yourselves headlong into ruin, than acknowledge God's right, and behave as those that are his, and not your own? (3.) I venture to assert that Christ died for every man, in such a sense as to warrant all that hear the gospel to regard the offer of salvation by his death as made to them without distinction; and to oblige all indefinitely to embrace that offer, or to believe in him, and to conduct themselves towards him, as one that, by his death, placed them under a dispensation of grace. Therefore, all are obliged to behave themselves towards him as their Redeemer, and to own that he has a right to them upon the footing of redemption. This is sufficient to my present purpose: for if

this be the case, then I may enter a claim to you all, in the name of God as his property: and you cannot refuse to resign yourselves to him, without denying the Lord that bought you. He claims your souls and bodies as his due, and requires you to glorify him with both, upon the footing of redemption.

Here I am naturally led to consider the duty the apostle infers from these premises; and that is, to glorify God. “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price;” your souls and your bodies are God’s; “therefore glorify God with your souls and your bodies, which are his.” This is the connection of the apostle’s reasoning.

Here you are ready to inquire, What is it to glorify God with our souls and bodies? I answer in short, The connection intimates that it consists in using our souls and bodies, and all that we are and possess, not as our own, but as his; that is, that we serve him with all the powers of both. We should consider our understandings as his, and therefore employ them to think of him and know him: our wills as his, and therefore choose him: our love, our desire, our joy as his, and therefore love, desire, and rejoice in him above all; our sorrow, our indignation, and all the various forms of our irascible passions as his, and therefore level them against his enemies, particularly against sin: our consciences as his, and therefore regard them as his deputies; our powers of action as his, and therefore to be governed by his authority. We should consider our whole souls as his, and therefore not willingly harbor anything in them that may displease him; no chosen darkness, vanity, or error in the mind; no enmity, no coldness, or lukewarmness in the heart. We should love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; because our hearts, our souls, our minds, and strength are his; his, and not our own. So also our

bodies are his, and therefore all our members should be instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Your eyes are his, therefore let them glorify him by viewing the wonders of his word and works. Your ears are his, therefore let them hear his voice. Your tongues are his, therefore use them as instruments of praise, and of making known his glory. In short, you are all entirely his, therefore be all entirely devoted to him. You are his servants, even when you are serving yourselves; therefore whatsoever ye do, even in your own affairs, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not to men. This is to “glorify God with your souls and bodies which are his.” And this should be your universal practice in all your actions; “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Cor. 10:31. Whether you live, you should live to the Lord: and whether you die, you should die to the Lord: that living and dying you may be the Lord’s. Rom. 14:7,8.

You have now had a brief view of those grounds upon which Jehovah claims you as his, and of the duty resulting from this claim. And what remains but that I wind up the whole with a serious, plain, warm proposal to your hearts? And that is, whether you will this day practically acknowledge God’s right in you, by devoting yourselves entirely to him? Will you, or will you not? Pause, and think upon the proposal. Perhaps you may be willing to comply without any further excitements. If not, come and let us reason the matter together.

Consider how entirely, and how long you have unjustly detained his own property from God. Have you not lived to yourselves, and not to him? Have you not used the faculties of your souls, and the members of your bodies, your time, your estates, and your all, as if he had no right in them, but they were entirely your own? Has not self been the ruling principle in you, as if

you had no Master in heaven; or as if no blood had been shed upon Mount Calvary to purchase a superior right in you? You have thought your own thoughts, spoke your own words, consulted your own pleasure, and followed your own will; as if you usurped the disposal of yourselves, and did not acknowledge a superior. When were your thoughts, your words, your time, your powers of action devoted to the Lord that bought you? The patience of God has lent some of you many days and years, but which of them have you used for his glory? And is it not high time for you now to return to your rightful Master, and to “render to God the things that are God’s?”

Again, Consider, that while you have thus lived to yourselves, you have most unjustly usurped a right to what was not your own. Did you make yourselves? Did you redeem yourselves? Have you preserved yourselves? Is it you that gave the least virtue to the food to nourish you? Can you enable the earth to support you, or the air to heave your lungs with the breath of life? Can you recover yourselves when sick, or revive yourselves when dying? Can you make yourselves happy in the world of spirits, and provide for yourselves through an immortal duration? If you can do all these things, you may set up for independency with a better grace, and call yourselves your own; and you may boldly lift up your faces to heaven, and tell the Sovereign of the universe, you will not be obliged to him, but he may take away from you all that is his, and leave you to shift for yourselves. But are you not struck with horror at such claims as these? You must then acknowledge you are not your own. And what aggravated sacrilege have you been guilty of, in robbing God of his right! If he that robs you of a little money is punished with death for the crime, what do you deserve who have robbed God of your souls and bodies, and that all your

life long? Oh! Will you not this day restore him his own? He will accept it again, when freely restored, though abused, dishonored, and rendered unfit for service by you.

Farther, If you will not give up yourselves to God, pray what will you do with yourselves? You are not capable of self-subsistence, or independency. A new-born, naked, helpless infant may as well refuse the breast, reject the mother's care, and set up for itself, as you pretend to shift for yourselves independently of the God that made you, and the Savior that redeemed you. Alas! If you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die and putrefy. If you will not give up yourselves to God, whom will you choose for your patron? Will you yield yourselves to sin and Satan? Alas! That is but to submit to a merciless tyrant, who will employ you in sordid, cruel drudgery, and then reward you with death and destruction. Will you give up yourselves to the world, to riches, honors, and pleasures? Alas! What service can the world do you when it is laid in ashes by the universal flames of the last conflagration? What service can the world do you when your unwilling souls are torn away from it, and must leave all its enjoyments for ever and ever? Will not the God of grace prove a better Master to you? Has he ever forsaken any of his servants in their last extremity? No; he has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. 13:5. And the long train of his servants, through thousands of years, bear a united testimony, that they have always found him faithful to his promise. And why then will you not choose him for your Master? Alas! If you refuse, you become what I may call the lumber and rubbish of the universe; useless to yourselves, and lost to God and your fellow-creatures, a property not worth

winning. While you call yourselves your own, you degrade yourselves, and lose all your dignity and importance; you cut yourselves off from all happiness, and can expect no other heaven than what such guilty, helpless creatures as you can create for yourselves. If you will not voluntarily surrender yourselves to God, he will not own you as his, but leave you to yourselves, to shift for yourselves as you can. He will hide his face from you, according to his threatening, that he may see what will be your end. Deut. 32:19,20. And oh! What wretched outcasts, what poor, helpless orphans will you then be!

Let me farther try whether you have the least spark of gratitude still remaining in you. Has the love of Jesus no sweetly constraining force upon you? Can you look upon him dying for you on the cross, and yet keep him out of his right? Can you view him paying your ransom with his blood and life, and yet refuse to give him up what he has redeemed at so high a price? Shall poor captives, redeemed from sin and hell with the blood of Jesus, rather continue still in bondage than submit to so good a Master? Are you capable of such base ingratitude? Can you treat your kind Redeemer so unkindly?

Let me conclude this exhortation with the more forcible, though plain and artless language of another. "Consider when judgment comes, inquiry will be made, whether you have lived as your own, or as His that bought you. Then he will require his own with improvement." Luke 19:23. The great business of that day will not be so much to search after particular sins or duties which were contrary to the scope of heart and life, but whether you lived to God, or to your flesh; and whether your time and care and wealth were expended for Christ in his members and interest, or for your carnal selves? You, that Christ hath given authority to, shall then be accountable,



whether you improved it to his advantage. You that he hath given honor to, must then give account whether you improved it to his honor. In the fear of God, sirs, cast up your accounts in time, and bethink you what answer will then stand good. It will be a doleful hearing to a guilty soul, when Christ shall say, I gave thee thirty or forty years time; thy flesh had so much in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and laboring; in idleness and vain talking, and recreations, and other vanities; but where was my part? How much was laid out for promoting my glory? I lent you much of the wealth of the world: so much was spent in provisions for your backs and bellies; so much on costly toys, or superfluities: so much in revengeful suits and contentions: and so much was left behind for your posterity; but where was my part? How much was laid out for the furtherance of the gospel, or to relieve the souls or bodies of your brethren? I gave thee a family, and committed them to thy care to govern them for me; but how didst thou perform it? O brethren! Bethink you in time what answer to make to such questions. Your judge hath told you that your doom must then pass according as you have improved your talents for him; and that he that hideth his talent, though he give God his own, shall be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matt. 25:30. How easily will Christ then evince his right in you, and convince you that it was your duty to have lived to him! Do you think, sirs, that you shall then have the face to say, I thought, Lord, I had been made and redeemed for myself? I thought I had nothing to do on earth but live in as much plenty as I could, and pleasure to myself, and serve thee on the by, that thou mightest continue my prosperity, and save me when I could keep the world no longer; I knew not that I was thine, and should have lived to thy glory? If any of you plead thus, what store of arguments hath Christ to silence you?

He will then convince you that his title to you was not questionable. He will prove that thou wast his by thy very being, and fetch unanswerable arguments from every part and faculty; he will prove it from his incarnation, his life of humiliation, his bloody sweat, his crown of thorns, his cross, his grave: he that had wounds to show, after his resurrection, for the satisfaction of a doubting disciple, will have such scars to show then, as shall suffice to convince a self-excusing rebel: all these shall witness that he was thy rightful Lord.

And now, my brethren, may I not presume that I have carried my point, if I had only to do with your reason? Does not your reason plead in favor of resigning yourselves to God this day? Take notice, I again proclaim God's right in you. Can any of you deny this claim? Certainly you dare not. Well, then, let heaven and earth bear witness, that you were all claimed this day as God's property upon the footing of redemption; and not one of you dared to deny it. Therefore, render to God the things that are God's. May I hope you now feel your hearts beginning to yield? I make the proposal to you all; to you, masters and freemen, as well as to you, slaves; shall we all this day, with one consent, devote ourselves to God as his servants? Will you allow me, as it were, to draw up your indenture, and speak for you? I hope I am willing to lead the way, and will you follow me? Methinks I hear you say, "Yes, we are willing: after many struggles and reluctances, we are at length willing, and can hold out no longer." But hold! I am afraid some of you know not what you are going about. And if you rashly and inconsiderately engage in the service, you will soon desert it. As soon as the force of persuasion has ceased, and the flow of passion is over, you will retract all. Therefore I must put you back, till I inform you of some things with relation

to this contract, that you may make sure work, an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

Take notice, then, 1. Your resignation of yourselves must not be the act of mere nature, without much greater assistance; but you must be urged and sweetly constrained to it by the Holy Spirit making you willing by his power. Whatever professions you may make, whatever external forms of self-dedication you may force yourselves to use, yet your hearts are by no means willing; nay, they are utterly averse to this surrender, till they are changed by divine grace. This, indeed, should not discourage you from making the attempt; for it is while you are making the attempt, you are to hope for the assistance of divine grace. But I mention the necessity of divine power, lest you should mistake the efforts of mere nature under the constraints of persuasion, or in a warm fit of passion, for a hearty, voluntary surrender of yourselves to God. The same thing is to be applied to your future performance of your engagement. As you cannot, of yourselves, rightly devote yourselves to God, neither will you be able, of yourselves, to perform your vow. Therefore be humble and self-diffident in this transaction. Entertain no sanguine expectations from yourselves, or you will be surely disappointed. Trust in divine strength for all, for that alone is sufficient for you.

2. Your resignation must be unreserved and universal. God claims your all; Jesus bought all; your souls and bodies, and whatever belongs to you, and therefore you must give him all. He will not share his property with sin and Satan; you must make no reserve of this or that favorite lust or interest, but part with all that is inconsistent with your duty to him; and you must give up what is dearest to you to your heavenly Master, to be disposed of as

he shall think proper. Here pause, and inquire whether you are willing to be unreserved and universal in your surrender.

3. You must resign yourself to God at all adventures resolving to be his, whatever your attachment to him may cost you; though it should cost you your reputation among men, a part or even the whole of your estate; nay, though it should cost you your life. Blessed be God, we are now in such happy circumstances that our duty to him is not likely to do us much injury, even in this world, where persecution and tribulation is the usual lot of his servants. Resignation to him indeed exposes you to a senseless laugh or a sneer, to reviling and calumny; but who that has the spirit of a man within him, would be so meanly complaisant as to offend his God, and lose his heaven, in order to shun the ridicule and contempt of fools? Fools they are, if tried by the standard of true wisdom, however wise they may be in other respects. This is but a slight kind of persecution to one that makes a proper estimate of things which cannot so much as make a finger ache, or raise the skin into a moment's pain. But times may yet change with us. The day may yet come, when the servants of Christ among us may be called to forsake "father and mother, and wife and children, and lands, and even to lay down their lives, for the sake of Christ." This would be no unusual event; the servants of the crucified Jesus have been a company of cross-bearers, if I may so call them, from age to age; and their religion has cost them dear in the estimate of the world, though they are always immense gainers by it in the issue. This persecution, even to death, therefore, you may perhaps meet with, and it is proper you should insert this article into the contract, that you will part with life for Christ's sake. Perhaps your indulgent Master may not insist upon it, and yet perhaps he may; it is therefore necessary you should

consent to it. And what do you think of it? Does not this article cause some of you to draw back? Let me add,

4. Your dedication of yourselves must be fixed and habitual. It is not a formality to be performed only at a sacramental occasion, not a warm, transient purpose under a sermon, or in a transport of passion; but it must be the steady, uniform, persevering disposition of your souls to be the Lord's at all times, and in all circumstances, in life, in death, and through all eternity.

These, brethren, are the qualifications of an acceptable surrender of yourselves to God; and are you willing to be his upon these terms? Or will you refuse and perish? Deliberate upon the matter, and come to some conclusion.

Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. May I hope you answer me to this purpose: "We have weighed the case impartially; we see difficulties before us, if we become the Lord's servants; but notwithstanding these difficulties, we are resolved upon it: his we will be who bought us with his blood?" Is this your determinate resolution, my dear brethren? Then make the transaction as solemn and explicit as you can, and follow me; I say, let all, white and black, old and young, follow me, while I speak for you; "Lord, here is a poor sinner, thy creature, redeemed by the blood of thy Son, that has long been a slave to other masters, and withheld from thee thy just and dear-bought property; here, Lord, I would now, freely and without reserve, devote and surrender myself, my soul and body, and my all to thee, to be universally and forever thine. And let the omnipotent God, let angels and men be witness to the engagement."

Do you, my dear brethren, heartily consent to this formula? Then the contract is ready for sealing; therefore let us rise and crowd round the table of our Lord, and there annex our solemn seals, and acknowledge it as our

act and deed. Oh! Happy day! If we should be prepared to use this sacred ordinance for this purpose! Come, ye servants of the Lord, take a refreshment to strengthen you for your Master's work. Come, ye redeemed slaves, commemorate the price of your redemption. Come, see how your Master loved you, and how much he suffered for you; and oh! Let his love constrain you to live not to yourselves, but to him that died for you, and rose again; rose again to plead your cause, and prepare a place for you in heaven, the region of immortal life and glory!

But if any of you refuse to comply with the proposal, or, which is much the same, are careless and indifferent about giving yourselves up to God, not forming any express determination one way or other, heaven and earth will bear witness against you, that your refusal is not owing to your not knowing God's claim upon you. I have asserted it this day, in the presence of God and his people; and if you still refuse to acknowledge it, I denounce unto you, that you shall surely perish, shall perish by the hand of divine justice, as willful rebels against the highest authority, and as insolently and ungratefully denying the Lord that bought them. Think on your dreadful doom, and let your hearts meditate terror, till you be delivered from it by a voluntary surrender of yourselves to God, through Jesus Christ, your Redeemer. And now what account could such of you as have refused your compliance, give of the transactions of this day, even to one of your fellow-creatures? Suppose one should ask you upon your return home, "What were you doing to-day?" You must answer, "I was engaged in a treaty with the Proprietor of the universe, and the Redeemer that bought me with his blood, about becoming his servant, and acknowledging his right in me." "Well, and what was the issue? Certainly you did not dare to refuse. Certainly you are now the willing servant of God."—"No, I refused, and so the treaty broke

up.” O thou monster! Could you bear the dreadful narrative? Would not everyone that heard it gaze and stare at you with horror, and ask in consternation, “Were you not afraid? Had you no regard for your own welfare? Alas! What will you do with yourself now? What rock or mountain can you find to hide your devoted head? How will you answer for your refusal in the great and terrible day of the Lord?”

# *SERM. XXXII. THE CHRISTIAN FEAST.*

**1** Cor. 5:8.— *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

As we have the agreeable prospect of celebrating the Lord's supper on the next Lord's day, we cannot spend this day to better purpose than preparing for it. And no preparative can be of more importance than a right knowledge of the end and design of that solemn ordinance, and the qualifications necessary in those that would worthily partake of it. To this I would devote the present discourse: and so important a design certainly demands the attention of all, especially of such of you as intend to join in the participation of the sacred supper.

Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude, yet it is justly supposed to have a particular reference to this institution, which has the same place under the gospel dispensation which the passover had under the law. St. Paul had very naturally glided into the style of the Jewish law concerning the paschal supper, in the directions he had been giving concerning a



scandalous member of the Corinthian Church: and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity, when he comes to speak of the gospel-dispensation, and particularly of the Lord's supper. He had directed the Church of Corinth to cast the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, because if they should tolerate such a corrupt member among them, it would tend to corrupt the whole society. Wickedness is of a spreading, infectious nature, and the indulgence of it in one instance may occasion extensive mischief; for, says he, Know ye not that leaven ferments and diffuses itself, till at length it has leavened the whole lump I Just so one corrupt member in a church may spread a contagion through the whole. Therefore purge out the old leaven; cast out this scandalous offender, and labor also to purge your Church, and your own hearts from all corruption, that ye may be as a new, solid, and pure lump: for ye are more strongly bound to keep yourselves morally pure, and to guard your Church against infection, than the Jews were to abstain from all things mixed with leaven at the feast of the passover; for though that feast is no more to be observed, yet that which was signified by the paschal Lamb is now come to pass: Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, and the ordinance of his supper is appointed as a sacred feast, in commemoration of him, and our deliverance by him, as the passover was commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt, and the destroying angel. And this is the stronger reason for the more purity of particular persons and congregations under the gospel, than there could be for ceremonial purity under the law. "Therefore," says he, "let us keep this evangelical feast, not with old leaven," not with those corrupt dispositions which we once indulged, and which, like leaven, soured our nature, and fermented through our frame; "neither with the leaven of malice, or any kind of wickedness;" but

renouncing our old temper and practice, and with hearts universally sanctified, and full of love and good will to all mankind, let us religiously celebrate this gospel feast with those dispositions which were signified by the unleavened bread, namely, sincerity and truth.

It was the practice of the Jews, when the passover was approaching, to search every corner of their houses with lighted candles, that they might be sure there was no leaven to be found under their roofs. The apostle probably alludes to that practice, and exhorts Christians to a like care in searching and purging their hearts, and the churches to which they belong, that they may be pure and fit for partaking of so holy an ordinance.

My design is to show you the principal ends of the institution of the Lord's supper: and as I go along, to delineate the character of those who are fit to attend upon it; for by knowing the former, we may easily know the latter.

The Lord's supper partakes of the general nature of those divine institutions which are called sacraments: in this, That it is intended to represent things spiritual by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood. As we have not only rational minds, but also animal bodies endowed with senses, God has wisely adapted his institutions to the make of human nature, and called in the assistance of our eyes, and our ears, to help our conceptions of divine things, and to affect our minds with them. And this method is agreeable to the nature of mankind; God has been pleased to use it in every age, and under every dispensation of religion. The tree of life was the sacrament of the first covenant; a sensible confirmation to Adam that he should obtain eternal life by his obedience. The rainbow was appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with Noah,

that the world should no more perish by a deluge; and we have not only the assurance of the divine promise, but we may receive the confirmation through our eyes by beholding that illustrious sign in the clouds. Circumcision and the Passover were noted sacraments of the covenant of grace, under the Jewish dispensation; and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appointed in their room, and answer the like ends under the gospel. In all these ordinances God consults our weakness, and, as I observed, makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds. Indeed this method of representing and confirming things by sensible signs and significant actions is so natural and expressive, that men have used it in all ages in their transactions with one another. It was remarkably in use among the ancients; and it is not quite laid aside in our age, which does not abound in such methods of representation. In our age and country it is usual to confirm contracts by annexing seals to an instrument of writing; to confirm an agreement by shaking hands; to signify love by a kiss, and complaisance by bowing; and we sometimes give some token as a memorial to a parting friend. I mention these low and familiar instances that I may, if possible, give some just ideas of a sacrament to the meanest capacity. It partakes of the general nature of these significant signs and actions, and it is intended, like them, to strike our senses; and through that medium to instruct or affect our minds: and such a sign, such a seal, such a significant action is the Lord's Supper in particular.

Having made this remark upon its general nature, I now go on to show the particular ends of its institution. And,

I. This ordinance was intended as a memorial of the sufferings of Christ for his people.

That this is its immediate and principal design we learn from the words of the blessed Jesus at its first institution.

This do in remembrance of me. That we are to remember him particularly and principally as suffering for our sins, is evident from his words in distributing the elements, This is my body which is broken for you. Here a moving emphasis is laid upon his body's being broken; broken, crushed, and mangled with an endless variety of sufferings. So again, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Hence it is evident this ordinance was appointed as a memorial of a suffering Savior; and it is under this notion that we are particularly to remember him. We are to show the Lord's death, says the apostle; his death which was the consummation of his sufferings, till he come again to visit our world in a very different and glorious manner.

The Lord's supper in this view is to be looked upon as a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they see it they may remember him. Our Lord knew we should be very apt to forget him; and, therefore, that the memory of his sufferings might never be lost, he instituted this ordinance; and by the humble elements of bread and wine, he represents himself to our senses as broken under the burden of his sufferings, and shedding his blood. Corn, out of which bread is made, which is first threshed, then ground in a mill, then baked in an oven, is a very proper emblem to signify the violences which our Lord's sacred body endured; and wine pressed from the grape, and poured into the cup, is a striking representation of his blood, which was forced from him by the crushing weight of his agonies. Therefore there was a peculiar propriety in appointing these elements to be the memorial of his sufferings.

This remembrance of a suffering Savior must be attended with suitable affections. To remember him with a careless indifferency, or with contempt, is the most ungrateful insult. Were he an insignificant person, in whom we have no concern, we might treat him thus; but thus to treat the beloved Son of God, and our only Savior, thus to requite all his love and sufferings for us, what can be more shocking? What can be more base ingratitude? We should therefore remember him in this ordinance with a penitent sense of our sins, which were the cause of his death; with an ardent love and gratitude for his dying love to us; with a humble faith and confidence in the merit of his death, to procure us acceptance with God: and with a voluntary dedication of ourselves to him and his service for ever.

And hence you may learn the character of those who are prepared to communicate in this feast. They, and only they, are prepared, who are true penitents, fully convinced of their sins, and deeply sensible of their malignity, especially as the causes of his death, and thoroughly determined to forsake them; who are lovers of a crucified Jesus, and feel their hearts fired with gratitude to him for all his love; who are sensible that they have no personal righteousness, and therefore place all their dependence upon his only; who feel his love constraining them, and are determined to “live no more to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.”

Self-examination is a necessary preparative to this ordinance. Let a man examine himself, says the apostle, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. Therefore, my brethren, inquire whether this be your character; if it be not, you have no right to this privilege. It is a shocking incongruity to pretend to commemorate the death of Christ without love to him, or penitential sorrows for those sins for which he died. Memorials of friendship and love-tokens are only for friends; and when others use them,

it is mere farce and hypocrisy. Therefore, till you have these dispositions, do not adventure to come to his table.

II. The Lord's supper was appointed as a badge of our Christian profession, and of our being the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is appointed for our initiation into the Christian church at our first assuming the Christian profession: and by partaking of this ordinance of the Lord's supper, we declare our constancy in that profession, and that we do not repent of our choice, nor desire to change our Master. We openly profess that we are not ashamed of the cross or the religion of the despised Nazarene, but publicly avow our relation to him before the world. This perhaps may be intended by that expression of St. Paul, showing the Lord's death. We show, profess, and publish to all the world the regard we have even to his ignominious death. We may look upon this ordinance as an oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ. And hence probably it was first called [sacramentum] a sacrament; which properly signifies an oath, and particularly that kind of oath which the Roman soldiers took to their generals, in which they engaged to be faithful to their leaders, and to fight for their country, and never desert its cause.

To this practice probably St. Augustine, about fourteen hundred years ago, refers, as well known to his hearers, when he addresses them thus: "Ye know, my beloved, that the soldiers of this world, who receive but temporal rewards from temporal masters, do first bind themselves by military sacraments or oaths, and profess that they will be faithful to their commanders; how much more, then, ought the soldiers of the eternal King, who shall receive eternal rewards, to bind themselves with the heavenly sacraments or oaths, and publicly profess their fidelity to him!"

Now if we receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in this view, we assume a badge or mark of distinction from the rest of the world, and openly profess ourselves his disciples. We take a solemn oath of allegiance to him, and swear that we will be his faithful servants and soldiers to the end of life.

This shows the peculiar propriety of this ordinance as following upon baptism, especially with regard to those that were baptized in infancy, as we have generally been. In baptism our parents offered us up to God as his servants, and members of the Christian church, before we were capable of personal choice, or doing anything for ourselves; and when we arrive to years of discretion, it is expected we should approve of what they did, by our own personal act. Now the Lord's supper is an institution in which we may make their act our own, and acknowledge that we may stand to the contract they made for us. And as often as we partake of it, so often we make this profession. And hence by the way, you may see that such who neglect this ordinance when they are grown up to a capacity of acting for themselves, do virtually renounce their baptism, and disown the act of their parents in devoting them to God. Their parents were to act for them no longer than while they were incapable to act for themselves; and now when they are arrived at that age, and refuse to confirm the act of their parents, they practically disown it, and willfully make heathens of themselves; and consequently they proclaim themselves rebels against Christ; for what but rebels are we to account such who refuse the oath of allegiance when tendered to them, and that over and over?

From hence you may learn another qualification of an acceptable communicant, namely, a hearty willingness to renounce his lusts and pleasures, and every sin, and to become universally and eternally the

devoted servant and disciple of Jesus Christ. Here again examine yourselves whether you have this qualification.

III. We may consider this ordinance of the Lord's supper as a seal of the covenant of grace, both upon God's part and upon ours.

Every sacramental institution seems to partake of the general nature of a seal; that is, it is a sensible sign for the confirmation of a covenant or contract. This St. Paul expressly asserts, with regard to circumcision, when he says, that "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith." Rom. 4:11. And Christ asserts the same thing concerning the ordinance now under consideration: This cup, says he, is the New Testament, or covenant, in my blood; that is, it is a ratifying sign or seal of the covenant of grace, which is founded in my blood.

That you may rightly understand this, you must observe that God has cast his dispensation towards our guilty world into the form of a covenant, or contract, in which God and man are the parties, and Christ is the Mediator between them. The tenor of the covenant on God's part is to this purpose, "that he will graciously bestow, for the sake of Christ, pardon of sin, eternal life, and all the blessings of his purchase, upon all such sinners of the race of man as comply with the terms on which the blessings are offered." The tenor or terms upon our part are to this purpose, "That we receive and submit to the Lord Jesus as our only Savior and Lord; or, in other words, that we believe in him with all our hearts, and repent of our sins, and devote ourselves to his service." This is the substance of that happy contract: and of this the Lord's supper is a seal as to both parties.

On God's part this covenant can receive no intrinsic confirmation. He has plainly declared it in his word; and no oaths or confirming signs can add any intrinsic certainty to his declaration. We say, "an honest man's word is



as good as his oath, or bond and seal;” and surely we may apply this in the highest sense to the declarations of eternal truth. But though this covenant cannot be made more certain in itself on God’s part, yet the evidence of its certainty may be made more sensible and affecting to poor creatures that are so slow of heart to believe. And hence God has been pleased, in condescension to our weakness, to confirm it with the most solemn oaths and sacramental signs. This institution, in particular, is a standing evidence, obvious to our senses, in all the ages of the Christian church, that he is unchangeably willing to stand to the articles on his part; that he is ready to give his Son and all his blessings to such as believe, as he is to give bread and wine as signs and seals of them.

As to our part in receiving these elements, we signify our hearty consent to the covenant of grace, and, as it were, set our seal to it to confirm it. The language of that speaking action is to this purpose; “I cordially agree to the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel; and in token thereof I hereunto affix my seal. As I take this bread and wine before many witnesses, so I openly and avowedly take and receive the Lord Jesus as my only Savior and Lord, and the food and life of my soul: I cheerfully receive the offer of salvation according to the terms proposed in the gospel; of which let this bread and wine given and received be a token or pledge and seal.”

This, my brethren, is the meaning of this solemn action. And hence you may know whether you are qualified to join in it. If you have not heartily consented to the contract, it is the greatest absurdity and dissimulation to set your seal to it. What! Will you, as it were, annex your hand and seal to a bargain that you do not agree to? Can you dare thus to be trifling with a heart-searching, all-knowing God? But, if divine grace has powerfully

engaged your hearts to consent to this agreement, come with humble boldness, and attest and seal it before men and angels. And remember, for your comfort, that on God's part it always stands firm and unalterable. You have his word, his handwriting, his oath, his seal, to confirm your faith; and what can you desire more to give you strong consolation?

IV. This ordinance of the Lord's supper was intended for the saints to hold communion together.

By the communion of saints, I mean that mutual love and charity, that reciprocal acknowledgement of each other, that brotherly intercourse and fellowship, which should be cultivated among them as children of the same father, in the same family, and as members of the same society, or mystical body. This is a thing of so much importance, that it is an article of the common creed of the Christian church.

Our sitting down at the same table, partaking of the same elements, and commemorating the same Lord, are very expressive of this communion, and have a natural tendency to cultivate and cherish it. In such a posture we look like children of one family, fed at the same table upon the same spiritual provisions. It is a significant expression, that we are one in heart and affection; that we have one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one God and Father of all; and that we acknowledge one another as brethren and fellow-Christians.

Hence this ordinance has been frequently and justly called the communion. And St. Paul assures us it deserves the name, 1 Cor. 10:16,17. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" that is, Is it not a token and pledge of our joint share and communion in the blessings purchased by his blood? "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" that is, Is it not a sign

of our common right to the happy effect of the sufferings of his body? “For,” says he, “we being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread,” that is, “As many grains make but one loaf of bread, and as many members make but one body, so we, being many, are, as it were, but one bread, and one sacred body politic, of which Christ is the head, and our partaking together of one bread in the Lord's Supper, is a sign and pledge of this union.” This appears still clearer from the design of the apostle in these verses, which was to caution the Corinthians against partaking with heathens in those religious feasts, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols, after they had offered their sacrifice, This he represents as idolatrous. My dearly beloved, says he, flee from idolatry, ver. 14. And then, to convince them that in communicating with idolaters in these feasts they really join with them in their idolatry, he argues from the nature of the Lord's supper, which is also a feast upon sacrifice. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” So by joining with idolaters in these religious entertainments, we hold communion with them in their idolatry. He illustrates the same thing from the feasts upon sacrifice among the Jews, ver. 18.

Hence you may learn another qualification for this ordinance, namely love and charity to all mankind, and especially to our fellow-communicants. To sit down at this feast of love with a heart possessed with angry and malicious passions is certainly an aggravated wickedness. To this we may accommodate the words of Christ, though spoken before the institution of this ordinance. “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar,

and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Matt. 5:23,24.

Hence also you may learn that none but such as make a credible profession of the Christian religion have a right to this ordinance. If it be a sign of the communion of saints, and if we should love our fellow-communicants as saints, then it follows that they should give us some ground for this charity, and that they should, as far as we can judge, be real saints or true Christians. Their being such in reality is necessary to give them a right in the sight of God; and their appearing such, in a judgment of charity, is necessary to give them a right in the sight of the visible church, which can only judge of an outward visible profession; therefore such ought not to be admitted, however strenuously they insist that they are Christians, whose gross ignorance, or wrong notions of religion, or whose immoral and irreligious practices leave no ground for a rational charity to hope that they are true Christians. How can we cultivate the communion of saints with such who do not so much as appear to be saints? To have been baptized, to call themselves Christians, and to attend upon the worship of the Christian church, and the like, is far from being sufficient to constitute a credible profession; for all this a man may do, and yet be further from practical Christianity than a heathen. But a man must profess and act habitually in some measure as a Christian, before he can justly be looked upon as a Christian. Alas! The number of Christians in our land are generally of a very different character! They may call themselves Christians, as you or I may call ourselves kings or lords; but the profession is ridiculous; and that charity is under no rational or scriptural limitation that can communicate with them as fellow-Christians.

V. In this ordinance God maintains communion with his people, and they with him.

This is a communion of a more divine and exalted kind than the former: and is often mentioned in Scripture as the privilege of the people of God. Our fellowship, says St. John, is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3. The communion of the Holy Ghost is a part of the apostolical benediction, which we also use at the close of our religious assemblies.

This communion consists partly in that intercourse which is carried on between God and his people, partly in the community of property, and partly in the interchange of property. There is a spiritual intercourse carried on between him and them. He communicates his love and the influences of his Spirit to them; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship. Hence he is said to dwell in them, and to walk in them; 2 Cor. 6:16. And our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, in which he resides. 1 Cor. 6:19. Christ speaks of this mutual intercourse in the strongest terms; “If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” John 14:23. There is also a kind of community of goods between Christ and his people. They are children of the same Father, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren; they are joint heirs of the same inheritance. They have a fellowship in his sufferings, Phil. 3:10, and are sharers in the glory and bliss of his resurrection and exaltation. The relation between them is often represented by that between husband and wife, between whom all things are common. Hence the apostle argues, that if we are Christ’s then all things are ours. 1 Cor. 3:21, ad fin.

There is also a happy interchange of property between Christ and his people; happy for them, though it was terrible to him. He took their sins upon him, and they have his righteousness in exchange. He endured the death they had incurred, and they enjoy the life he obtained. He assumes the curse due to them, and they have the blessing transferred to them which was due to him. Here again the conjugal relation may be a proper illustration. As the wife is entitled to the inheritance of her husband, and he is answerable for her debts and obligations, so Christ made himself answerable in behalf of his people, for all their debts to the law and justice of God; and they are entitled to all the blessings he has purchased. Oh what a gracious and advantageous exchange is this for us!

Now the Lord's Supper is a very proper emblem of this communion, and a suitable mean to cultivate it. It is the place where Christ and his people meet, and have their interviews. He, the great Master of the feast, feeds them at his own table, upon his own provisions, in his own house, and they eat and drink, as it were, in company with him; and thus it is a social entertainment between them. There he favors them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him; and they draw near to him with humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech and conversation with him. There, under the elements of bread and wine, he makes over to them his body and blood, and all the blessings purchased by his sufferings; and they receive them with eager desire; they cast their guilt and unworthiness upon him, and give themselves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them. There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciously acknowledges their title good. There is a solemn exchange made between them of guilt for righteousness, of misery for happiness, of the curse for a blessing, of life for death. Christ takes the evils upon himself,

and they cast them off themselves upon him; and he makes over the blessings to them, and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, and, as it were, sitting down together at one table, like husband and wife, or parent and children, is a very proper emblem and representation. And I doubt not but some of you, upon such occasions, have enjoyed the pleasures of communion with him, which gives you a high esteem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design, than is in the power of any language to afford.

Here again you may learn one important preparative for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and that is, reconciliation to God, and a delight in communion with him. You cannot walk together, or maintain fellowship with him, till you are agreed, and take pleasure in his society; therefore carefully inquire into this point.

Having thus shown you the principal ends of this institution, and the qualifications necessary in those that would partake of it, I shall subjoin this one general remark, That it is evident from all that has been said, that persons who live vicious and irreligious lives, whatever their profession be, have no right to this ordinance, and should not be admitted to it by the officers of the church, till they profess their repentance and reformation. When we exclude such, we are not taking too much upon us, nor pretending to judge of what we have nothing to do with; but we only exercise that power which is inherent in every society, and with which Christ has expressly invested his church. Every society has a power to exclude those from its peculiar privileges, who violate the essential and fundamental laws of its constitution. And no law can be so essential to any constitution as a life of holiness is to the character of a Christian, and the constitution of the Christian church. It is no matter what persons profess with their lips, it is

the life that is to be regarded as the decisive evidence. What would it signify for a man to insist upon it that he was honest, if he persisted in theft and robbery: or to take the oath of allegiance, when his conduct was a course of rebellion against his sovereign? And equally insignificant and absurd is a profession of Christianity without a correspondent practice. If we consider the design and end of this ordinance, we cannot but see that such persons cut themselves off from all right to it. Is it fit that a drunkard, a swearer, or any profane sinner should commemorate the death of the holy Jesus, while he has no love to him, but is determined to go on in sin? Should they wear the badge of Christ's disciples, whose lives proclaim them his enemies? Should they affix their seals to the covenant of grace, who have never consented to it, but are grossly violating it by their practice? Should they hold communion with Christ and his people, who have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Hear the apostle upon this head: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils," 1 Cor. 10:21; the thing is absurd and impracticable. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." 2 Cor. 6:14-17. As to public offences, the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, which is binding upon all the ministers of Christ: Them that sin, that is, that sin publicly, rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 1 Tim. 5:20. To the same purpose he speaks to Titus; a man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject, Tit. 3:10, or cast out of the church. This indeed is immediately intended of fundamental errors in principle, but it may



undoubtedly be applied to vicious practices; for, as Archbishop Tillotson justly observes, “The worst of heresies is a bad life.” As to private offences against a particular person, in which the church, as such, is not concerned, private measures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, till they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprised of it; and if he pay no regard to that authority, he is to be excluded from the society. This is according to Christ’s express direction, in Matt, 18:15, &c. “If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen-man and a publican.” There is nothing more plain in Scripture, than that scandalous members should be cast out of the church; and an excessive indulgence is most severely censured. St. Paul orders Timothy to “turn away from such as have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.” 2 Tim. 3:5. He lays the weight of his apostolic authority upon the Christian church in this case. “We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” 2 Thess. 3:6. The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are severely threatened by Christ himself, for tolerating the corrupt sect of the Nicolaitanes, and the followers of Balaam’s and Jezebel’s profane and loose practices, and not casting them out of their communion. Rev. 2:14, &c. And the church of Ephesus is commended for her strict discipline, and that she could not bear them that were evil, and had tried pretended apostles, discovered and rejected them as impostors. But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies, for abundant evidence of the necessity of this

holy discipline. Here St. Paul warmly rebukes the Corinthian church for allowing a scandalous member to continue in communion with them; and solemnly charges them to cast him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the god of this world. And this he strongly describes, in order to strike terror into the offender, as a delivering him over to Satan. He urges this wholesome severity, as a proper expedient to bring the offender himself to repentance, and especially to keep their church pure. Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? And just so the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt the whole society.

It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline, that the primitive church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathens and idolaters. And it is the want of this that has so scandalously corrupted the generality of our modern churches, whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess. Let not us imitate them, but pity and pray for them, lest we become a mere mass of corruption, like them. The apostle forbids not only all religious communion, but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more shy of them than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. I wrote to you, says he, not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world: that is, “I do not mean that you should break off all intercourse with the fornicators of this world, who are professedly of the world, and make no pretensions to Christianity; or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world;” all places are so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them without leaving human society altogether. But now I have written unto you, says he, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother, a Christian

brother by profession, here lies the emphasis, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat. 1 Cor. 5:10,11. Cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with such a one: do not make a choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much less in the sacred feast of the Lord's supper.

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority to the faithful exercise of discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of mankind, yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make a compliment of the ordinances of Christ, it is at our peril. It is therefore the most unreasonable and absurd thing for persons by their offences to constrain the officers of the church to animadvert upon them, and then to take it ill that they faithfully do their duty. All that is required of them is a profession of deep repentance for their misconduct, and a promise of reformation for the future. And is this too much to do to repair the injury they have done to religion, to satisfy the society to which they belong, and restore themselves into the charity of their brethren, whose hearts are so grieved by their conduct? Or are they indeed determined not to repent and reform, but to go on in their wicked courses? Then they have nothing to do with the peculiar privileges of the Christian Church, and therefore should not claim them. It is in vain here to object, "That none can forgive sins but God, and therefore they will not confess them to man." For, as I told you, every member of the Christian church ought to give his fellow-members some evidence that he is indeed one of their body, and worthy of their charity. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into some scandalous sin inconsistent with his profession, he does not so much as

profess his repentance? It is only God that can pardon the sin, as it is done against him: but the church is also offended, and every society as well as the particular person who is offended, has a right to demand satisfaction. Hence we are commanded to confess our faults to one another, James, 5:16, and that is a proud impenitent creature indeed, unworthy of a place among Christians, who thinks it a mighty thing to make this small satisfaction. The incestuous Corinthian was brought to repentance by the wholesome severities used with him. And upon this, the apostle, in his second epistle, advises them to forgive him, (which implies, that in some sense, the offence was against the church; and in that sense, they had power to forgive him.) “that they should comfort him, and confirm their love towards him, lest he should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow.” 2. Cor. 2:7,8. And shall we be more obstinate than an incestuous, excommunicated Corinthian?

As this subject naturally came in my way, and as it is necessary for us as church-members to have right ideas of gospel discipline, I have taken this opportunity to enlarge on it; and I hope you will so remember it, as to render all instructions on this head needless hereafter.

I now proceed to what is more practical.

Let me as a herald of Jesus Christ proclaim to you the business of the next Lord’s day. We are going to commemorate the most important event that ever happened upon our globe; an event accomplished about seventeen hundred years ago, but never to be forgotten; an event that extends its happy consequences to the remotest periods of eternity, I mean the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for us. And who among you is prepared and willing to commemorate this grand event? Where are the broken-hearted penitents? Where the lovers of a crucified Savior? Where the happy persons that believe in him with all their hearts? Come, take the dear memorials of your

precious Redeemer; come, refresh your souls once more with the sweet remembrance of his love. Oh! Shall his dear name be forgot among us? What! Forgotten, after all he has done, after all he has suffered for us? Can you bear the thought? We are going to profess openly before a scoffing world, that we are the servants and disciples of a crucified Christ; we are going to put on the badges of his servants, and wear his livery; to enlist as volunteers under his banner, and swear allegiance and fidelity to him. And where are those that are willing to join with us? Who is upon the Lords side? Who? Come ye that will have Christ for your Master, come enter your names in his list: be fixed and determined for him. How long will you halt between two opinions? It is a plain case, and requires no long time to deliberate. Come ye that would stand among his people at his right hand at last, come now with prepared hearts and mingle among them at his table. We are going to enter into an everlasting covenant with our God, and to set our solemn seal to the contract. And who among you gives his consent? Who is willing to take the Lord Jesus for his only Savior and Lord, and to give himself up to him entirely and forever? Who will avouch the Lord to be his God, that he may avouch him to be one of his people? How are your hearts, my brethren, disposed in this respect? Do they give a full consent? And are you willing from this time to renounce and abjure all your lusts and sinful pleasures? In short, do you consent to the covenant of grace? If so, come and confirm it with that solemn oath and seal. God and Christ are agreed to the proposal; and if you agree, the happy contract is made; it is established firmer than the pillars of heaven; and if you had them, you might venture ten thousand souls upon it. We are going to maintain communion with the saints, and sit down with them at the same table of our common Lord. And who of you would join yourselves with that little flock,

that despised but happy few? If you would mingle with them in heaven, separate from the wicked world, and join them now; and as a token of it, eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with them. But we are going to maintain communion of a still more exalted kind: communion with the Father of our spirits, with the Son of his love, and with the Holy Ghost. And where are they that pant and languish for this sacred and divine fellowship? Come to the table of the Lord, the place of interview, and you may humbly hope to meet him there. There you may pour out your hearts to him with all the freedom of intimacy and filial boldness, and there you may receive the tokens of his love.

My brethren, if upon careful self-examination, you find reason to hope you have the qualifications of acceptable communicants, which I have described, I require you, in the name of that Jesus who expired upon the cross for you, a name which one would think should have some weight with you; in his endearing, irresistible name, I require you to come to his table. This is not only your privilege, but your duty; and you cannot neglect it, without the basest ingratitude and wickedness. Shall Jesus, when he views the guests around his table, find your seat empty? Alas! Shall he have reason to say, "What! Has such a one turned his back upon me? I bought him with my blood, and have I deserved to be thus treated by him?" O my brethren! Is it come to that pass with you that you stand in need of persuasions to commemorate that Savior who laid down his life for you? Had he been as shy of a cross as you are of his table, as backward to die as you are to commemorate his death, alas! What would have become of you?

What are the obstructions and encouragements that lie in your way? Mention them, and methinks I can remove them all in a few words, when the case is so plain. Do you urge, that you are afraid you are not prepared?

But have you examined yourselves impartially by what I have said? Are you sure you have the qualifications mentioned? If so, your way is very clear. Or if you are not sure, does it appear probable to you? If so, you may humbly venture. Or if you cannot go so far as a probability, have you some trembling hopes? Hopes which, though they often waver, yet you cannot entirely cast away, though you admit all the evidence you can get, and are desirous to know the very worst of yourselves. Why, if you have even thus much of encouragement, I would advise you to come, though with trembling. If you are impartial in self-examination, and yet cannot after all discover that you are destitute of those qualifications I have mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that you are deceived: persons are never deceived in this case but by their own carelessness and partiality; therefore, take courage. If you look out with a careful eye, there is little danger of your splitting on this rock.

Or are you afraid that you will not be able to perform your sacramental vows, but may apostatize from your God? But I need not tell you that your strength is entirely from God; and I appeal to yourselves, whether it be most likely you will obtain strength from him in the way of duty, or in the neglect of it? My brethren, do you do your duty, and leave the consequence to him. Trust in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raise you up if you should fall. It is not his usual way to desert those that, sensible of their own weakness, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himself by promise that he will not do it; but you shall be kept by his power through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1:5; and he will never leave you nor forsake, you, Heb. 13:5; therefore in his strength, humbly make the adventure.

As for such of you as have not the qualifications described, and yet are communicants at the Lord's table, I have a few serious considerations to offer to you.

1. Did you never observe that solemn warning of St. Paul, which, like a flaming sword, hovers round the table of the Lord to guard it from your profanation? "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; and eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himself." 1 Cor. 11:27,29. Keep off, therefore, ye unholy sinners, lest the weight of this tremendous curse fall upon you and crush you to ruin.

2. To what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you Christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted can do this, without an interest in Christ, and universal holiness of heart and life. And will you incur such dreadful guilt, without answering any valuable end by it?

3. How absurd is it for you to pretend friendship to Christ in this ordinance, when your hearts are not well affected towards him! This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a seal; but what do you set your seal to, when you do not heartily and practically consent to the covenant of grace? How can you hold communion with the saints, when you are none of them? Or with God, when you neither know him nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his servants, when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people, when you belong to the camp of the gloomy god of this world? Will you act the part of Judas over again, and compliment Christ with a traitorous kiss? What absurdity, what gross hypocrisy, what a daring insult is this! Can Omniscience be imposed upon by such pretensions? Or will a jealous God



let them escape unpunished? Do but read a part of the fiftieth Psalm: you will see your doom, ver. 16-22. “Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do, that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and easiest my words behind thee? These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Oh, sirs, consider, it will be a poor plea at last to have it to say, “Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? And thou hast taught in our streets.” The supreme Judge will, notwithstanding, pronounce the dreadful sentence upon you, Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Luke 13:26,27.

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance; and in the use of which you may hope to obtain proper qualifications? His word, prayer, meditation, and such means, are for the common use of saints and sinners and intended to beget as well as to confirm grace in the hearts of men. But the Lord’s supper is the peculiar privilege of such as are true Christians already; and is intended only to cherish and improve true religion where it is begun. Therefore your partaking of it without this grand preparative, is preposterous, and directly contrary to the order of divine appointment. Sinners, go first upon your bended knees before God; cry to him with all the earnestness of perishing creatures, for converting grace. Think upon your miserable condition, and never take off your thoughts from the melancholy contemplation, till your hearts are deeply affected. Read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you

have succeeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels, and men will bid you welcome.

5. Consider how aggravated your punishment will be, if you continue in your present condition. To sink into hell from the table of the Lord! Oh! What a terrible fall! They that perished from Sodom and Gomorrah, though their punishment will be intolerable, will be but slightly punished in comparison of you. A lost communicant! One that went to hell with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Savior, as it were, in his mouth! Oh! Methinks such a one must be the most shocking sight in the infernal regions. How will lost angels, and lost heathens, wonder and stare at you as a horrible phenomenon, a dreadful curiosity! How will they upbraid you, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning I art thou also become as one of us?” To tell the truth without reserve, I cannot but tremble at the thought of seeing such of you on the left hand of the Judge. Oh! What a shocking figure will you make there! Therefore do not make the profanation of the body and blood of Christ the whole of your religion, but begin where you should, in earnest endeavors after a new heart and life, in the use of the means appointed for that end.

But there are some of you, perhaps, who may take encouragement from hence, and think you are safe, because you have not been guilty of profaning this solemn institution. You are conscious you are not prepared, and therefore most contentedly stay away. There are, no doubt, sundry of you who have lived in this neglect all your lives. I have a few things to say to you, and I pray you to apply them to yourselves.

1. Consider what it is you say, when you declare you are unfit for this ordinance. There are some who seem to make a merit of it that they stay away from a sense of their want of preparation. But what is this want? It is

the want of all love to God, of faith in Christ, of repentance for sin; it is the want of holiness of heart and life, and every good thing; it is to be without pardon, without a title to heaven, without any interest in the righteousness of Christ; it is to be a slave to sin and Satan, an heir of hell, a poor perishing creature, liable every moment to be cut off, and sink under the weight of divine vengeance; this is your case if you are unfit for this ordinance. Nothing but such things as I have mentioned can render you unfit. And is this a safe case? Can you contentedly rest in it? Alas! Is there so much merit in neglecting to remember Christ in this institution, as will render your case safe, and indemnify you? Must you not be shocked at the thought?

2. Are you using all proper means to obtain preparation, with the utmost diligence and earnestness? Or are you inactive and unconcerned about it? If so, it is plain you love to be unprepared; you take pleasure in being disqualified to remember the Lord Jesus. And while you are careless about this, you are virtually careless what will become of you, careless whether heaven or hell will be the place of your everlasting residence; and oh! What will be the end of such a course I and how terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you that you have lived so many years in the world, without affectionately commemorating that Savior who died for you, without devoting yourselves to God, consenting to his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? Oh! Is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in suffering so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by neglected? What can be a more aggravated wickedness?

4. This neglect clearly proves that you have no regard for Jesus Christ. You do perhaps insist upon it that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love: If ye love me, keep my commandments. Now this brings the matter to a short issue. There is no command in the whole Bible more

plain than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the willful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus. With what face then can you pretend that you love him? Your love is reprobated, and will not stand the test.

5. Let me remind you of what I observed before, that, by the neglect of this ordinance, you practically renounce your baptism. You are now of age to act for yourselves, and you have not approved of the act of your parents, by ratifying it in your own person; therefore, you abjure it; you renounce the blessed Trinity, in whose name you were baptized, and to whom you were devoted; and you give yourselves back to a horrible trinity of another kind, to the world, to sin, and the devil. And are you indeed willing to have no more to do with the God that made you, and with Jesus of Nazareth? Pause and think, before you agree to such a dreadful renunciation. But, alas! You have agreed to it already, by refusing to renew your early dedication in your own persons. Therefore the best you can now do is to recall your renunciation and immediately acknowledge the act of your parents as your own.

I would inculcate this particularly on young people. You that are eight or ten years old, or more, you have sense enough to act for yourselves in so plain a case. And what are you resolved, upon? Will you be Christ's or Satan's? You cannot avoid choosing one or the other for your master; for not positively choosing Christ, is virtually choosing the devil for your Lord, and hell for your home. If you stand to the act of your parents in dedicating you to God, come make it your own at his table. Such young guests would be an ornament to it: and oh! That we may early see you there properly prepared!

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourselves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you list. Your obligations do not depend upon your consent. You were born the servants of God, and you will continue under obligations to be such in spite of you. Is he not the most excellent of beings, your Creator, your Lawgiver, your Preserver, your Redeemer? And do these things infer no obligation upon you? Have you not also, in sickness, or under horror of conscience, made vows and resolutions in your own persons? And are you free to sin still? The truth of the case is, do what you will, you are under the strongest obligations to God, and you cannot shake them off; and if you will not observe these obligations to duty, you must submit for ever to your indispensable obligation to punishment. And he will make you know that he has a right to punish you, if you will not acknowledge his right to your obedience.

7. What avails it that you can avoid the Lord's table, when you cannot possibly shun death, or avoid his tribunal? Here try all your art, and you will find it in vain. And if you are not prepared for this ordinance of worship in the church on earth, much less are you prepared for those more exalted forms of worship in the church in heaven. What then will become of you?

In short, it is a national sin in our country, that the table of the Lord is contemptible; that men who call themselves Christians live in the willful neglect of that ordinance which was appointed by him, whom they acknowledge as the Founder of their religion, to be a memorial of himself. Alas! The very memory of Christ is almost lost among us. "Shall I not visit for these things? Saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Jer. 5:9.

Perhaps some of you will say, "You shut us up in a strange dilemma indeed. If we come unprepared, we sin; and if we stay away, we sin; and what then shall we do?" My brethren, I thus shut you up, on purpose that you may see what a wretched case you are in, and that there is no safety for you while you continue in it. You are shut up under a necessity of sinning, and the best choice in such a condition can be only the less evil; though even that is extremely aggravated. Whether you come or stay away, you grievously sin: it is all sin, peril, ruin, and misery all through: you should neither come unprepared, nor stay away unprepared; that is, you should not be unprepared at all. Your want of preparation is in itself a complication of wickedness; and whatever you do in that state, you are neither safe nor in the way of duty; it is altogether a state of sin and danger. The only way of safety and duty is to seek for preparation immediately, and with the utmost earnestness, and then to come to the Lord's supper. And oh! Let me set all this congregation upon this work before we part to-day, and make it the business of this week. You have spent many a week about things of less importance, and will you refuse one to this great work? Now set about it; now begin to look into the state of your neglected souls; now recollect your sins; look in upon your depraved hearts; look back upon a miserable misspent life; look forward to death, eternity, and the divine tribunal just before you; look to Jesus in the agonies of crucifixion on Mount Calvary; and oh! Look up to God in earnest prayer for his mercy. Let these things follow you home to your houses; let them dwell upon your heart's night and day. Do not laugh, or talk, or trifle them away; for oh! They will rebound upon you with overwhelming weight at last, if you now turn them off. Oh! That God may prepare a people for himself in this poor place! Oh! That he

would visit this barren spot with the showers of divine grace! And may he prepare our hearts for the rich entertainment before us! Amen.

# *SERM. XXXIII. THE NATURE AND BLESSEDNESS OF SONSHIP WITH GOD.*

**1** John 3:1,2.— *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Though the schemes of divine Providence run on with the most consummate harmony, and will at last terminate in the wisest ends, yet, to the undiscerning eyes of mortals, confusion reigns through this world, and nothing appears in this infant state of things in that light in which eternity, the state of maturity, will represent everything. This remark is particularly exemplified in the dispensations of grace towards the heirs of heaven. Though they are not in such unmingled darkness, even in this region of ignorance and uncertainty, as to have no evidences at all of their being the objects of divine love, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, but may, in some



shining moments, at least, conclude that they are even now the sons of God; yet they can form no adequate ideas of the immensity of that love which has adopted them as the sons of God, and made them heirs of heaven, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There are indeed such rays of this love, that, like a flash of lightning, break through the cloud that surrounds them, as cast them into a pleasing consternation, and make them stand and pause in delightful astonishment. In a kind of transport of ignorant admiration, they are often exclaiming, What manner of love is this! How great, how vast, how immense, how unaccountable, how incomprehensible, that love which has given us, us rebellious sinners and heirs of ruin, the title of the sons of God, and the many privileges of such relation! Behold what sort of unheard of, unparalleled love is this! Behold it with intense observation and grateful wonder.

Ye trifling sons of men, abstract your thoughts from the toys of earth, and here fix your attention; here look and gaze, till you are so transported with the survey of this love, as to be engaged to the most vigorous endeavors to be partakers of it. Our brethren in grace, that share in the same privilege, do you especially pause, behold, and wonder. Let all your admiring powers exert themselves to the utmost in the contemplation of that love which has bestowed upon you so gracious, so honorable a distinction as that of sons of the King of heaven. And ye blessed inhabitants of heaven, who know the import of this glorious title, and the riches of the inheritance reserved for us; ye angels that are happy in your Maker's goodness, but have not been distinguished with redeeming grace, look down from your celestial thrones, look down to this contemptible earth, and view the greatest exploit of divine, infinite love; for surely no achievement of Almighty grace among your various orders through the vast of heaven can equal this, that we

rebellious worms should be called the sons of God, the highest title in which you can glory. Behold, and wonder, and adore with us, and supply our defects of praise. You see farther into the secrets of this mystery of love than we in our present state, who can only pause in silent admiration, or vent our blind conjectures upon it. What manner of love is this! Therefore give all your contemplative powers a loose upon a theme you can so deeply penetrate.

Farther, As the sons of God in their present state cannot comprehend that love which has conferred this title upon them, so they know not fully the glorious import of the title: they only know in general, that when their Father appears they shall be like him, but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeness is: it doth not yet appear, even to themselves, what they shall be. Their liveliest imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will ere long be: they are utter strangers to their future selves. They know themselves only at present in their infancy; but when these little children of God, these babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fullness of the stature of Christ, they will be prodigies to themselves, and mysteries which they cannot now conceive. In this world we are accustomed to little and obscure things, and our thoughts are like their objects; we see nothing sufficiently glorious to suggest to us any proper images of the glory of the sons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The splendor of the meridian sun, the grandeur of kings, and the parade of nobles, are but obscure shadows of the glory and magnificence of the meanest pious beggar, of the poorest Lazarus that ever languished upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven. The difference is greater than that between Job upon the dung-hill, lying in ashes, and covered with ulcers,

and Solomon in all his glory. However, amidst all our ignorance, we may rest confident in this, that if we are now the children of God, we shall be conformed to him when he appears to us in all his glory on the other side of death, and especially when he appears in the clouds in all the majesty of the universal judge, when every eye shall see him: and though we should know no more than this in general, we may rest implicitly satisfied that we shall be inconceivably glorious and happy, since the perfection of our nature consists in conformity to God. We may be sure that that state which the apostle here, by unerring inspiration, calls a likeness to God, the standard of all excellency, must be as perfect as our nature can bear. The apostle having said, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, subjoins, for we shall see him as he is. This vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the evidence, or, as the cause of our likeness to God when he shall appear. Considering it as an evidence, the meaning is, “It is evident that we shall be in some measure like to God when he appears, otherwise we could not bear the full vision of his glories; we could not see him and live.” It is also evident the apostle here speaks of the vision of God as a happiness, and the blessed privilege of his sons. Now to see God could afford no pleasure to such as are not like to him: they would be shocked and confounded at the sight, and shrink from it, and by how much the clearer the vision, by so much the more they would hate him, because by so much the more they would discover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a sufficient evidence of our likeness to God, that we can bear the vision of his naked perfections with pleasure, for none that are unlike to him can bear it. Considering the passage in the other view, which probably was what the apostle intended, as the cause of likeness to him, it means, that the full and direct views of him will be transformative and efficacious to change the

beholders into his likeness. As the light shining upon glass renders it transparent, or as the sun diffuses its luster into a diamond, and gives it an intrinsic radiancy, so the discoveries of the divine perfections will impress their image upon the minds they illuminate. Their views will not be superficial and speculative, nor attract an idle gaze, but they shall be vital, efficacious, and impressive; and no wonder if such views, which we now know so little of, should produce a perfection we can now so little conceive.

If the sons of God are such strangers to the riches of their present title, and the dignity and glory of their future selves, no wonder a blind world should not know them. If it does not yet appear to themselves what they shall be, much less does it appear to others, who are strangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and therefore cannot discern his children by their resemblance to him. This the apostle may intimate when he says, It doth not appear, (that is, it doth not appear to others,) what we shall be; and we are led to this sense by the former verse, therefore the world, the general run of mankind, who are strangers to God, know us not; that is, do not distinguish, love, and honor us, who are children of God, because they know him not. As they are ignorant of our Father, and disregard him, so they accordingly treat us. They look upon us with contempt, and are wholly ignorant of our heavenly extraction and dignity, and thus it will be till we shine in all the glory of the children of so illustrious a king, and possess the inheritance of the saints in light: then, to their confusion, they shall discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Mal. 3: ult. I shall,

I. Show you what is the import of the glorious title, the sons of God.

II. Mention some instances of the present ignorance of the sons of God, with regard to their future state. And,

III. Show in what respects they are mistaken and unknown to the world.

I. I shall show what is the import of this glorious title, the sons of God.

It is evident that the title is used here, not in so general a sense, as elsewhere, where it signifies no more than the creatures of God, Luke 3: ult., (Acts 17:28,29,) for here it is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of true Christians, in which the world in general does not partake. In the sense of the text, it implies that believers are born again of God: that they are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and that they are the heirs of heaven.

1. To be the sons of God, implies that they are regenerated, or born of him.

He is a son, who is begotten and born; and therefore to be a child of God, supposes that we are begotten by him. This seems to be the peculiar foundation of that sonship the apostle here has immediately in view; for it is the thought of being born of God, mentioned in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, that seems to introduce the text, and wraps him away in the fourth verse of this chapter, into that transported exclamation, Behold! What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!

This new birth you have often heard me describe, as a thorough universal change of a corrupt, rebellious sinner into an affectionate, penitent, obedient servant of God. His views of things, and dispositions towards them, are happily altered, which produce a corresponding change in his practice. But I cannot enlarge without excluding the other subjects of my discourse.

I pray God you would seriously consider the importance of this spiritual birth, and not vainly deem yourselves the sons of God while you are strangers to it: you may as well become the sons of men without being generated by human parents, as the sons of God without being regenerated

by supernatural grace; for the Scripture has repeatedly declared the absolute necessity of it in various terms. All that become the children of God are born of him, and not of blood, or by natural generation, nor of the will of the flesh, or by any natural propensions of theirs, nor of the will of man, or by the best endeavors of others with them. John 1:12,13. The God and Father of our Lord. Jesus Christ begets them again, 1 Peter 1:3; and creates them anew, Ephes. 2:10; so that old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new. 2 Cor. 5:17. And Christ himself, who best knows the terms of admission into heaven, has assured us with a “verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3,5. And this is the declaration of infallible inspiration, that neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewish or Christian religion is of no avail to salvation, but the new creature. Gal. 6:15.

2. They that are the sons of God are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and this is implied in their title.

God here treats us with his usual condescension in expressing divine things in the humble language of mortals, by metaphors borrowed from affairs among men, that are familiar to us. Therefore from an idea of the usual privileges which a child enjoys from a gracious and powerful father, and leave proper room for the infinitely superior perfections of our heavenly Father to those of the most excellent human parents, and you may from the analogy know something of the peculiar privileges of the children of God. A son, you know, has liberty of access to his father, however great; he obtains his requests; he has the guardianship and compassion of his father; and is seasonably corrected by him for his good. And thus our heavenly Father deals with the children of his grace.

He gives them liberty of access to him in prayer and the institutions of the gospel. He not only allows them to attend upon his ordinances, which many do that continue strangers to him, but at times he enlarges their hearts, so that they find themselves near him; they are admitted into the presence-chamber in free audience with him, and pour out all their hearts before him, vent their complaints, beg a supply of their wants, and render their grateful acknowledgments for his mercies. This temper of mind is so suitable to their relations as the sons of God, that the Holy Spirit, as the author of it, is called the Spirit of Adoption; and the children of God are not capable of exercising this filial freedom at pleasure, but just as he enables them to draw near with humble boldness to the throne of grace. Rom. 8:14,15,26,27; Heb. 10:22, and 2 Cor. 3:17. And the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of liberty and adoption, is a privilege entailed upon the sons of God, and which they at times enjoy. Gal. 4:5,6.

Again, As the children of God have liberty to address their Father, so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. A human parent is ready to give good gifts to his children, and much more is our heavenly Father. Thus Christ reasons in the most familiar and moving manner, in Matt. 7:7,11, and Luke 11:11-13, and he seems to intimate that this privilege is implied in the relation, by repeating the endearing term Father, in Matt. 6:6,8, 9. “Pray to thy Father—and thy Father shall reward thee—Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father,” &c.

Again, the children of God are entitled to his protection and compassion. His guardian care is celebrated in Psalm 92. and Psalm 121., and his tender compassion in Psalm 103:13; Isa. 63:9, and in numberless passages that speak of his bowels of mercy, his compassions, &c.

Another privilege of the children of God is, that they are seasonably corrected by his fatherly displeasure. This indeed they are too apt to count a calamity rather than a privilege; but since his correction is necessary for their reformation, since it proceeds from the benevolence of a Father, and not from the vengeance of an incensed judge, since it is intended for their benefit and not for their destruction, since they are supported under it, and it has a proper measure and seasonable end, and since it will be more than compensated with future rewards, it follows that their chastisement is one of their blessings, and as such it seems promised rather than threatened, and mentioned as a badge of the sons of God, Psalm 89:30-34, Heb. 12:5-11; and many of the children of God have found reason to praise him for his wholesome severity. Psalm 119:67,68,71. Upon this principle St. James exhorts them to rejoice when they enter into divers temptations, James 1:2; and St. Peter tells them that they will befall them only if need be. 1 Pet. 1:6.

3. The children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and their relation implies a title to it.

They are born to a crown, begotten to “an inheritance incorruptible and that fadeth not away,” &c. 1 Pet. 1:3,4. “If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Rom. 8:16,17; Gal. 4:7. And how vast their inheritance is, you may learn from Rev. 21:7, and 1 Cor. 3:21,22.

What advancement is this to mean, sinful, miserable creatures! Out of prison they come to reign. They are raised from the dung-hill, and set among the princes of heaven. No wonder the apostle should exclaim, “Behold! What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”



Thus I have briefly shown you the glorious import of your relation, the sons of God; and you see it should be the greatest concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the children of God, you have been supernaturally begotten by him, as I observed before, (James 1:18,) and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honor him; you love and fear to offend him, and cheerfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulness; you are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4, and bear the lineaments of his holiness. But if it be otherwise with you, as I fear it is with many; if you be not conformed to the moral perfections of God and bear his image; if you have not the dispositions of dutiful children towards him, but the temper of the devil, and do his works, then you are of your father the devil. And though you may resent this, as the Jews did, the charge is fixed upon you. Therefore awaken all the importunity of your souls, and cry to him for regenerating grace, that you also may become the sons and daughters of the living God. But if you find these characters of the children of God which I just now mentioned, then “rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice;” you are happier than princes, more great and honorable than the sons of earthly kings. You cannot now form any ideas what miracles of glory and blessedness your Father will make of such mean, guilty, and wretched things as yourselves. Which introduces what I next proposed.

II. To mention some instances of the ignorance of the sons of God with regard to their future state.

It is true indeed, and some of you, I doubt not, know it by experience, that the children of God in some shining moments enjoy prelibation’s of heaven; and even now, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” 1 Pet. 1:8,

just as a child in infancy stumbles upon a manly thought: and as the first dawning's of reason may give a child some obscure hint of the masterly reasonings of a mature genius; so from these foretastes of heaven, the sons of God may form some faint ideas of the perfection of its happiness in full enjoyment. They find these dispositions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will constitute their blessedness; and they now find so much real happiness in the exercise of such dispositions, though in an imperfect degree, as fully convinces them that nothing is necessary to make them completely happy but the perfection of such exercises, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is they have not yet experienced; their highest thoughts fall short of it: and it doth not yet appear to them what they shall be in the following particulars:

1. It doth not yet appear what they shall be with respect to the enlargement of the faculties of their souls.

That the human soul is capable of vast enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimensions, is evident; and we find by experience its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the close of life, especially in men of a studious turn. And we may be sure that when, like a bird out of a cage, it gets loose among its kindred spirits, and flies at large in its proper element, its faculties will be vastly improved: otherwise it would be over-borne and crushed with the weight of glory; it would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightness, like a mole that has wrought itself into daylight. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exercises, so, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the soul would be incapable of exercising them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted services of that mature world. You may

therefore rest confident in this, ye sons of God, that your little souls will then be vastly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of riper years, so it is with you. Compare your present selves with your infant selves, and you will see a vast difference even in the present state; and how vast the difference between what you now are and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the proper region, the natural elements of spirits! Beloved, you are now the sons of God; and he will make you such beings as becomes so near a relation to such a Father; and what prodigies can he make of you! He that could make you what you are out of nothing, in the course of a few years, what can he make you out of what you now are, through the series of everlasting ages! How can he mature and enlarge your souls from one degree of perfection to another! So that, in some future period, you will no more resemble what you are now, than you now resemble what you were in the womb, or upon the breast. Your understandings, through an endless duration, may be still brightening, without ever coming to their meridian; and your views be still enlarging, though still infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that souls so improved should be united to bodies suited to them. Which leads me to observe,

2. It does not yet appear to you what kind of glorious bodies you will have after the resurrection.

We are sure they will still be material bodies, otherwise they would not be bodies at all. But matter, we know, is capable of prodigious refinements. Yonder globe of light, the sun, is of the same original matter with a clod of earth, and differs only in modifications. How vast the difference between this animal flesh on our bodies, and earth and water! And yet they are originally the same. Earth and water are the materials of which grain and

other vegetables, that animals feed upon, are formed; and our bodies consist of grain formed into bread, and of the flesh of beasts; so true is it, not only with respect to Adam, but all his posterity, that they are but dust. In short, there is a transmutation of matter into a surprising variety of forms, wherever we cast our eyes: the linen we wear was once earth, that was first refined into flax, then formed into thread, then woven into what we now see it. Thus our bodies may be changed in a most amazing manner, and yet continue substantially the same. St. Paul tells us, that they will be spiritual bodies, 1 Cor. 15:44; that is, so exquisitely refined, that they will resemble proper spirits, as near as it is possible, while they retain their materiality; and elsewhere he says, that “the Lord Jesus will change our vile body, that it may be formed like unto his glorious body.” Phil. 3:21. Such is the glory of Christ’s body in its now exalted state, that the splendors breaking from it struck Paul and his fellow travelers to the ground, and deprived him of sight for three days; how illustrious, then, must those bodies be that resemble his, though we allow him a suitable superiority! This the apostle intimates by representing the change of the bodies of saints at the resurrection as a mighty exploit of God’s all-subduing power. Phil. 3:21. We are sure the body will not then be a clog to the active spirit, but a proper instrument for the employments of heaven. It may be free from the law of gravitation, and capable of moving every way with equal speed; it may be nimble and quick as a glance of lightning; it may be adorned with a visible glory more bright than the sun in its meridian luster, like the body of Christ on the mount of transfiguration, Matt, 17:2; Dan. 7:3; and Matt 13:53. It will then be incapable of pain, sickness, and death, Isa. 33:24; 1 Cor. 15:33, and will no more feel hunger and thirst, nor any of the appetites of animal nature, Rev. 7:16; it will be capable of the most excellent sensations of pleasure through

every organ; and a suitable companion to an improved and glorified soul. Such bodies will the saints have: but what it is to have such bodies, we have now no experience; and shall never know till the glorious morning of the resurrection.

3. It doth not yet appear to us what it is to be perfect in holiness.

However enlarged and glorious our souls and bodies should become, we should be still miserable without a proportionable perfection in holiness. Now this, alas I we do not as yet know. We humbly hope some of us know what it is to feel the spark of divine love in our breasts. We hope we have tasted some small drops of bliss, though intermingled with gall and wormwood. We know what it is to exert our feeble powers in the service of the blessed God, and in contemplating and admiring his excellencies; but, alas! Sin still cleaves to us, and deadens our powers; numberless imperfections attend our best moments. But oh! To have all the powers of soul and body enlarged; to exert them to the full stretch in the exercises of heaven; to find them animated and directed by the most consummate holiness, and free from every the least taint of sin, what an inconceivable state is this! Oh how unlike the present! Sure, in such a state we should hardly know ourselves: it would astonish us to find that we, who had been so long accustomed to be assaulted and perplexed with some guilty thought or sinful inclination, should at once commence perfectly free from it; that we, who have so long made such languid essays, should find all our powers full of unwearied, immortal vigor! What a happy surprise will this be!

4. It does not yet appear what will be the employments and services of the heavenly world.

We know, from the plain declarations of sacred writ, that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of

nature and grace, celebrating the praises of God, and prostrate adorations before him, will be no small part of the happiness of a future state. But we have no reason to suppose that it will consist entirely in contemplation and adoration. A state of activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will separate spirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in these mortal regions? A very pleasant employ to generous and benevolent minds! Will they be ambassadors of their Sovereign to the most remote parts of his empire, to bear his messages, and discharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important services to the present and future creations, and the instruments of divine beneficence to worlds now unknown? A philosophic curiosity would pry into these things, and even a pious thirst for knowledge would be satisfied: but, alas! We know not what answer to give to these inquiries till the light of eternity shall break on us. But,

5. The sons of God, in consequence of their improvements, natural and moral, and of their exalted services and employments, will be made so exquisitely happy, as they can have now no ideas of the felicity.

We know not what it is, in the present state, to have every want supplied, every desire satisfied, and all our vast capacity of happiness filled to the utmost; and therefore we can form no just conceptions of our future selves, when we shall be thus perfectly happy.

Behold, ye sons of God; behold the wonders that open before you! See to what vast things you are born! Can you survey this mystery, and not be lost in pleasing wonder, and cry out, Behold, what manner of love is bestowed upon us?

Alas! Can you forget your own happiness; and let your thoughts and affections run out upon the things of this world, as if they were your

portion? Shall the King's sons thus degrade their dignity, and depreciate their inheritance?

And you, unhappy sinners; ye who are not the sons of God by regeneration, what do you think of your case, when it is the very reverse of all this? Your souls, indeed, will be enlarged, but enlarged only that they may be more capacious vessels for torment: and your bodies shall be made strong and immortal; but it will be to bear strong, immortal misery. Instead of becoming perfect in holiness, you will arrive to a horrid perfection in sin. As all sin will be rooted out from the hearts of the children of God, so all the virtuous and amiable qualities you might retain in this world, will fall from you: and as the children of God will be transformed into pure unmingled holiness, you will degenerate into pure unmingled wickedness, and consequently you must be as miserable as they will be happy; and all your enlarged capacities will be as full of torment as theirs of bliss. I may therefore adapt the text to you, sinners: now you are the children of the devil; but it doth not appear what you shall be; you know not what prodigies of vengeance, what miracles of misery you shall be made; therefore awake from your carelessness and neglect, and seek earnestly to become the children of God.

III. And lastly, I proceed to show in what respects the sons of God are unknown to the world, and mistaken by them.

The irreligious world may see a considerable difference between those that are, in the judgment of charity, the children of God, and others; but this they rather look upon as an odious singularity, than as a peculiar glory and excellency. They may see their life is not according to the course of this world; and, if they were witnesses to their secret devotions, or could penetrate their hearts, they would see a vastly greater difference; but by

how much the greater difference, by so much the more they hate them. And though they still profess a mighty veneration for religion, yet, wherever it appears, they hate, oppose, and asperse it; not indeed under that honorable name, but under some odious character that will cloak their wickedness, and the more effectually expose it. They love religion, they say, and God forbid they should speak a word against it; but they hate hypocrisy, preciseness, &c.; and wherever a person appears remarkably religious, they will be sure to brand him with some of their odious names. Thus living Christianity, and its professors, have always met with more contempt and hatred in the world, than easy and pliable, or even the most profligate and abandoned sinners.

Now this is owing to the ignorance of the world as to what the sons of God shall ere long be. They do not look upon them as such favorites of heaven; otherwise they would not dare to despise them at such a rate. The sons of God are princes in disguise; and therefore they are not known by a blind world, who, as they are ignorant of their Father, cannot discern his features in them.

O sinners! Could you but see in all his future glory the meanest saint whom you now contemn and ridicule, how would it astonish you! It would tempt you rather to the extreme of adoration than contempt; how willingly would you change conditions with him!

Well, stay a little, and there will be a full manifestation of the sons of God. Rom. 8:19. You will then see those whom you now account stupid, mopish creatures, that have no taste for the pleasures of life, shining more glorious than the sun; happy as their natures can admit, and, in their humble sphere, resembling God himself.



It is, however, all things considered, an instance of divine wisdom, that it does not yet appear to themselves or to others what the sons of God shall be. Such a manifestation would quite stun and confound the world, and strike it into a torpid consternation. It would render the children of God utterly impatient of the present life and its enjoyments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth; it would put an end to the necessary activity about temporal concerns, break off the designs of Providence, and quite alter the form of administration in this world. Therefore the manifestation is wisely put off to the most proper season.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

First. What a state of darkness and imperfection is this! We slipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation: and we shall be, ere long, we know not what. Alas! How short are our views! All before us is impenetrable darkness, and we can see but a very little way behind us. What small cause, then, have the wisest of us to be elated with our own knowledge! In comparison of angelic beings, and even of our future selves, we see no more than the mole groveling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly. But what surprising discoveries of things will flash upon us when we enter the other world! O my brethren! When we ascend the heavenly mount, and take large surveys all-around of the immensity of the works of God; when the unveiled perfections of the Deity suddenly shine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our waking from the sleep of death, how shall we be lost in wonders! What scenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How shall we be astonished at ourselves, and ready to vent our surprise in some such strains as these! “Is this I, who so lately was groveling in yonder world? How changed! How ennobled!

How glorified! Is this the soul that was once so overrun with the leprosy of sin! Once so blind and dark! Once so perverse and depraved! So feeble and weak! Tormented with vain anxieties and trifling cares, or transported with empty joys and delusive prospects! Is this the soul that had so many hard conflicts with temptations, that felt such shocks of jealousy, and so often languished under desponding fears of seeing this glorious place! Oh how changed! How free from every anxious care! Unmolested by so much as a guilty thought I nobly triumphant over sin and sorrow, and all that is feared in its mortal state! And is this my once frail, mortal body? My incumbrance in yonder world? How amazingly transformed! How gloriously fashioned! Oh to what a pitch of excellency and bliss can almighty grace raise the meanest worm! And oh! In what raptures of praise should I celebrate this grace through all eternity!” Thus may we think the glorified saint would express his wonder. But alas! We know just nothing about it. The sensations and language of immortals are beyond our comprehension. But,

Thirdly, We are just on the brink of this surprising state. A few years, perhaps a few moments, may open to our eyes these amazing scenes: the next day, or the next hour they may flash upon us; and oh! Where are we then? In what a strange world! Among what new beings! And what shall we then be? Oh! How amazingly transformed! Should you see a clod from beneath your feet, rising and brightening into a star, or shining like the noon-day sun, the transformation would not be half so astonishing. Then we have done with all beneath the sun; all the little things of this trifling world will vanish at once like a vapor; and all before us will be the most important and majestic realities. Therefore,

Fourthly, how astonishing is it that we should think so little of what is before us! That we should still stumble on in the dark, thoughtless of these

approaching wonders! Ye sons of God, what are you doing, that you think no more of your relation to God, and your heavenly inheritance? If a large estate, or the government of the kingdom should fall to you to-morrow, and you were told of it beforehand, would it not always dwell upon your thoughts, and keep you awake this night with the eager prospect? What I would things comparatively low fix your attention? And can you be thoughtless of a glory and bliss that infinitely surpass all your present conceptions? And you, unregenerate sinners, though I cannot say you are near to glory, yet I may assure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its solemn wonders: this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your present condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miserable for ever. Therefore,

Fifthly, O sinners, why do you not labor to become the sons of God now while you may? Consider what prodigies of misery, what monuments of vengeance you will soon be, if you continue unregenerate! Alas! Sirs, it does not yet appear what you shall soon be, otherwise you could no more rest in your present case, than upon the top of a mast, or upon burning coals. And, poor creatures, have you a mind to be initiated into those horrid mysteries of woe, and be taught them by experience? Will not you believe the repeated declarations of eternal truth, that they are intolerably dreadful, and that, till you are the sons of God, till you are born again, and have the dispositions of children towards him, you cannot have a moment's security for escaping them? Alas! I must pity you; and I call upon all the children of God to pour out the tears of their compassion over you.

Sixthly: Let me call upon all the sons of God in this assembly to admire his love in conferring this dignity upon them. "Behold! What manner of love is this, that we shall be called the sons of God!" Consider what you

were, guilty, rebellious creatures, condemned to everlasting tortures; and you will own, that to be just delivered from hell, though it had been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favor for you: but for you to be the sons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be transformed into happy somethings that you can now form no ideas of, and this, too, at the expense of the blood of God; what love is this! Go home, and forget it if you can. I may as well bid you live without breathing if you can.

Seventhly: Let me conclude with this reflection: how honorable, how happy, how glorious, are the sons of God! How immense their privileges! How rich their inheritance! Why then are they so backward to enter upon it? How unaccountable, how absurd their eager attachment to this world, and their unwillingness to die! Why so much afraid of ascending to their Father's house? Why so shy of glory and bliss? Why so fond of slavery and imprisonment? Oh, my brethren, be always on the wing, ready for flight, and be always looking out and crying, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

# *SERM. XXXIV. A SERMON ON THE NEW YEAR.*

**J**er. 28:16.— *This year thou shalt die.*

While we are entering upon the threshold of a new year, it may be proper for us to stand, and pause, and take a serious view of the occurrences that may happen to us this year, that we may be prepared to meet them. Future contingencies are indeed unknown to us; and this ignorance is as agreeable to our present state, and as conducive to our improvement and happiness, as our knowledge of the things which it concerns us to know. But though we cannot predict to ourselves the particular events that may befall us, yet the events of life in general, in a vague indeterminate view, are not so contingent and unknowable as to leave no room for rational suppositions, and probable expectations. There are certain events which regularly happen to us every year, and therefore we may expect them this year. There are others which sometimes occur in the compass of a year, and sometimes do not; such are many of the blessings and afflictions of life; of these we should be apprehensive, and prepare for them. And there are events which we know are before us, and we are sure they will occur; but at

what particular time they will happen, whether this year or next, whether this day or to-morrow, is to us an utter uncertainty. Such is that interesting event, the close of the present life, and our entrance into eternity. That we must die, is as certain as that we now live; but the hour or year when, is kindly and wisely concealed from us, that we may be always ready, and stand in the posture of constant vigilant expectation; that we may not be surprised. But certainly it becomes us to reflect seriously upon the mere possibility of this event happening this year, and realize to ourselves those important consequences that result from this supposition. The mere possibility of this may justly affect us more than the certain expectation of any other futurity. And it is not only possible, but highly probable, death may meet some of us within the compass of this year. Yes, it is highly probable, that if some prophet, like Jeremiah, should open to us the book of the divine decrees, one or other of us would there see our sentence, and the time of its execution fixed. Thus saith the Lord—This year thou shalt die. There some of us would find it written, “This year thou shalt enjoy a series of prosperity, to try if the goodness of God will lead thee to repentance.” Others might read this melancholy line, “This year shall be to thee a series of afflictions: this year thou shalt lose thy dearest earthly support and comfort; this year thou shalt pine away with sickness, or agonize with torturing pain, to try if the kind severities of a father’s rod will reduce thee to thy duty.” Others, I hope, would read the gracious decree, “This year, thy stubborn spirit, after long resistance, shall be sweetly constrained to bow to the despised gospel of Christ. This year shalt thou be born a child of God, and an heir of happiness, which the revolution of years shall never, never, terminate.” Oh happy and glorious event! May we hope this mercy is reserved among the secrets of heaven for any thoughtless impenitent sinner

among us? And that the decree will bring it forth this year? This year which finds us in a dead sleep, stupidly careless of our everlasting interest, and which, if like the preceding, will be a season of thoughtless impenitence and presumptuous security? Others perhaps would read this tremendous doom, “This year my spirit so long resisted, shall cease to strive with thee; this year I will give thee up to thine own heart’s lusts, and swear in my wrath thou shalt not enter into my rest.” Oh! Dismal sentence! None can equal it in terror but one, and that is, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; and the former is an infallible presage of the latter. Others (Oh! Let our souls dwell upon the thought!) would probably find the doom of the false prophet Hananiah pronounced against them: “Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die.”

This year you may die, for your life is the greatest uncertainty in the world. You have no assurance of another year, another day, or even another moment.

This year you may die, because thousands have died since the last new year’s day; and this year will be of the same kind with the last; the duration of mortals; a time to die. The causes of death, both in the human constitution and in the world without, will exist and operate in this year as well as in the last.

This year you may die; for thousands of others will die: it is certain they will, and why may not you? What peculiar security have you to confide in?

This year you may die, though you are young; for the regions of the dead have been crowded with persons of your age; and no age is the least security against the stroke of death.

This year you may die, though you are now in health and vigor, and your constitution seems to promise a long life; for thousands of such will be hurried into the eternal world this year, as they have been in years past. The principles of death may be even now working within you, notwithstanding the seeming firmness of your constitution; and you may be a pale, cold, lifeless corpse, sooner than the invalid whose life is apparently near its close.

This year you may die, though you are full of business, though you have projected many schemes, which it may be the work of years to execute, and which afford you many bright and flattering prospects. Death will not consult your leisure, nor be put off till another year, that you may accomplish your designs. Thousands have died before you, and will die this year amidst their golden prospects, and while spinning out their eternal schemes. And what has happened to them may happen to you.

This year you may die, though you have not yet finished your education, nor fixed in life, but are preparing to appear in the world, and perhaps elated with the prospect of the figure you will make in it. Many such abortive students are now in the dust. Many that had passed through a laborious course of preparation for public life, and had inspired their friends, as well as themselves, with high hopes, have been snatched away as they were just stepping upon the stage: and this may be your doom also.

This year you may die, though you are not prepared for it. When death shows you his warrant under the great seal of heaven, it will be no excuse to plead, "I am not ready." Though the consequence of your dying unprepared will be your everlasting ruin, yet that dreadful consideration will have no weight to delay the execution.



This year you may die, though you deliberately delay your preparation, and put it off to some future time. You may fix upon the next year, or the decline of life, as the season for religion; but that time may never be at your disposal. Others may live to see it, but you may be engulfed in the boundless ocean of eternity before it arrives, and your time for preparation may be over for ever.

This year you may die, though you are unwilling to admit the thought. Death does not slacken his pace towards you, because you hate him, and are afraid of his approach. Your not realizing your latter end as near, does not remove it to a greater distance. Think of it or not, you must die: your want of thought can be no defense; and you know not how soon you may feel what you cannot bear to think of.

This year you may die, though you may strongly hope the contrary, and flatter yourself with the expectation of a length of years. You will not perhaps admit the thought of a short abortive life; but notwithstanding this, you may be a lifeless corpse before this year finishes its revolution.

Thus it appears very possible, that one or other of us may die this year. Nay, it is very probable, as well as possible, if we consider that it is a very uncommon, and almost unprecedented thing, that not one should die in a whole year, out of such an assembly as this. More than one have died the year past, who made a part of our assembly last new year's day. Therefore, let each of us (for we know not on whom the lot may fall,) realize this possibility, this alarming probability, "This year I may die."

And what if you should? Surely you may be startled at this question: for oh! The surprising change! Oh! The important consequences!

If you should die this year, then all your doubts, all the anxieties of blended hopes and fears about your state and character will terminate

forever in full conviction. If you are impenitent sinners, all the artifices of self-flattery will be able to make you hope better things no longer; but the dreadful discovery will flash upon you with the resistless blaze of intuitive evidence. You will see, you will feel yourselves such. If you lie under the condemnation of the divine law, you will no longer be able to flatter yourselves with better hopes: the execution of the penalty will sadly convince you of the tremendous truth. To dispute it would be to dispute the deepest heart-felt sensations of the most exquisite misery. But, on the other hand, if your fears and doubts are the honest anxieties of a sincere, self-diffident heart, ever jealous of itself, and afraid of every mistake in a matter of such vast importance, you will meet with the welcome demonstration of your sincerity, and of your being unquestionably the favorites of heaven. Sensation will afford you conviction; and you will believe what you see. In short, the possibility that this year may be your last, may be joyful tidings to you. If you die this year, this year you shall be in heaven, imparadised in the bosom of God. And is it possible your salvation is so near! Transporting thought!

It would be easy to enumerate several happy consequences of death with regard to those who have spent their life in preparation for it; and the nearness of death, instead of striking them with terror, may heighten the transport of expectation. It would afford me no small pleasure to trace those blessed consequences, and it would be an act of kindness and compassion to the heirs of heaven, many of whom go on mourning and trembling even towards the regions of happiness, as though they were going to the place of execution, and anticipate but very little of those infinite pleasures which are so near at hand. But I intend to devote the present hour chiefly to the service of a part, perhaps the greater part of my hearers, who are in a more

dangerous and alarming situation, I mean such who may die this year, and yet are not prepared; such who are as near to hell as they are to death, and consequently stand in need of the most powerful and immediate applications, lest they be undone forever beyond recovery.

To you, therefore, my dear brethren, my fellow mortals, my fellow candidates for eternity, whose everlasting state hangs in a dread suspense, who have a secret conviction that you are not qualified for admission into the kingdom of heaven, and who cannot promise yourselves that you shall not sink into the infernal pit this year, but upon this supposition, which is the most precarious and doubtful in the world, namely, that you shall live out another year; to you I would address myself with affectionate tenderness, and yet with plainness and pungency. And I beg your most solemn attention to an affair of infinite moment, to which you may not have another year to attend.

This year you may die: and should you die this year, you will be forever cut off from all the pleasures of life. Then farewell, an everlasting farewell to all the mirth and gaiety, the tempting amusements and vain delights of youth. Farewell to all the pleasures you derive from the senses, and all the gratification of appetite. This year the sun may lose his luster as to you; and all the lovely prospects of nature may become a dismal blank. To you music may lose all her charms, and die away into everlasting silence; and all the gratifications of the palate may become insipid. When you lie in the cold grave, you will be as dead to such sensations as the clay that covers you. Then farewell to all the pompous but empty pleasures of riches and honors. The pleasures both of enjoyment and expectation from this quarter will fail forever. But this is not all.

If you should die this year, you will have no pleasures, no enjoyments to substitute for those you will lose. Your capacity and eager thirst for happiness will continue, nay, will grow more strong and violent in that improved adult state of your nature. And yet you will have no good, real, or imaginary, to satisfy it; and consequently the capacity of happiness will become a capacity of misery; and the privation of pleasure will be positive pain. Can imagination feign anything more wretched than a creature formed for the enjoyment of the infinite good, pining away forever with hungry, raging desires, without the least degree of gratification! Banished at once from the supreme good, and from all the created enjoyments that were wont to be poorly substituted in its stead! Yet this may be your case in the short compass of the following year. Oh! What a terrible change! What a prodigious fall!

Should you die this year, all your hopes and prospects as to a future life will perish abortive. Several of you now are in a state of education, preparing to enter upon the stage of the world; and you are perhaps often pleasing yourselves with gay and magnificent dreams about the figure you will make upon it. You may be planning many schemes to be accomplished in the several periods of a long life: and are perhaps already anticipating in idea the pleasure, the profit, or the honor you expect to derive from their execution. In these fond hopes your affectionate parents, friends, and teachers concur with generous pleasure. But, alas! In the swift revolution of this beginning year, all these sanguine expectations and pleasing prospects may vanish into smoke. Youth is the season of promise, full of fair blossoms; but these fair blossoms may wither, and never produce the expected fruits of maturity. It may perhaps be the design of heaven, that after all the flattering hopes and projects, and after all the pains and expense

of a liberal education, you shall never appear upon the public stage; or that you shall vanish away like a phantom, as soon as you make your appearance. Certainly then you should extend your prospects beyond the limits of mortality; extend them into that world, where you will live to execute them, without the risk of a disappointment. Otherwise,

If you die this year, you will not only be cut off from all the flattering prospects of this life, but from all hope entirely, and forever. If you die in your sins, you will be fixed in an unchangeable state of misery; a state that will admit of no expectation but that of uniform, or rather ever-growing misery; a state that excludes all hopes of making a figure, except as the monuments of the vindictive justice of God, and the deadly effects of sin. How affecting is the idea of a promising youth cut off from the land of the living useless and hopeless in both worlds! Fallen from the summit of hope into the gulf of everlasting despair! Yet this may be your doom, my dear youth, your doom this very year, if you should die in your sins.

If you should die this year, then all the ease and pleasure you now derive from thoughtlessness, self-flattery, and suppressing the testimony of your consciences, will forever be at an end. You will then be obliged to view yourselves in a just light, and to know the very worst of your condition. The secret plaudits of self-flattery will be forever silenced, and conscience will recover itself from that state of insensibility into which you have cast it by repeated violences, and, as exasperated by your ill-treatment, it will become your everlasting tormentor; it will do nothing but accuse and upbraid you forever; you will never more be able to entertain so much as one favorable thought of yourselves. And what a wretched state will this be! For a man to be self-condemned! To disapprove of his whole past conduct! To be pleased with nothing in himself, but heartily, though with horror, to concur in the

condemning sentence of the Supreme Judge, and the whole creation! To esteem himself a fool, a sinner, a mean, sordid wretch; an enemy to himself, and the whole universe; a self-destroyer, an outcast from all happiness, and from the society of all happy beings; an unlovely, odious, useless, miserable, despairing creature forever! O miserable situation! Does it not alarm you to think you may be so near it?

If you should die this year, you will be deprived forever of all the means of salvation. All these are confined to the present life, and have no place in the world of eternal punishment. There the thunders of the divine law roar; but the gentle voice of the gospel never sounds. There the Lion of the tribe of Judah rends the prey; but never exhibits himself as a Lamb that was slain, an atonement for sin, and the Savior of the guilty. There conscience exerts its power, not to excite the medicinal anguish of kindly repentance, but the hopeless horrors of everlasting despair. There Jehovah works, but not to enable the sinner to work out his own salvation, but to touch all the springs of painful sensation, and open all the sources of misery in the criminal. There mercy no more distributes her bounties, but justice reigns in her awful rigors. There the sanctifying Spirit no more communicates his purifying, all-healing influences, but sin, the great Apollyon, diffuses its deadly poison. In a word, when you leave this state of trial, all the discipline of the present state, all your advantages for salvation, all the means of grace, and all the encouragements of hope will be forever removed out of your reach; and consequently all possibility of your salvation will cease forever; for when the necessary means are taken away, the end becomes utterly impossible. Therefore,

If you should die this year, all your hopes of heaven will vanish forever. No more happiness for you! You have received your portion in this life, a

few years of sordid, unsatisfactory happiness; and an entire eternity of misery, permanent, exquisite, consummate misery follows behind! No more honor for you, but shame and everlasting contempt. No more intellectual amusements and pleasing studies! No more gentle beams of science I but the blackness of darkness forever! Intense poring upon your hopeless wretchedness! Tormenting recollections of your past folly and madness involuntarily rushing into the pit! No agreeable companion! No sympathizing friend! No relaxation! No pleasing exercise! No encouraging prospects! No comforting reviews! No friendly intercourse with heaven! No token of love! No gift of grace from the Father of mercy! None of the conscious joys of self-approbation! No hope in the future! No relief from the past! No refuge, no escape, at the expense of existence, into the gulf of annihilation! But above, an angry God and a lost heaven! Behind, a misspent life, and opportunities of salvation irrecoverably lost! Within, a guilty, remorseful conscience, an implacable self-tormentor! Around, malignant, enraged ghosts, mutual tormentors! Before, an eternity of hopeless misery, extending infinitely beyond the ken of sight! Oh tremendous doom! Who can bear the thought?

And is it possible it should be so near to any of us? Where is the unhappy creature, that we may all drop our tears over him? Where is he? Rather, where is he not? An impenitent sinner is almost everywhere to be found; and that is the wretched creature who stands every moment upon the slippery brink of this horrible precipice; and this year, nay, this hour, for what mortals or angels know, he may be thrown down, engulfed and lost forever.

And is this a safe situation for you, thoughtless, foolhardy mortals! Does it become you in such a situation to be cheerful, merry, and gay; or busy,

restless, and laborious in the pursuits of this transitory life? Does it become you to dread nothing but the disasters and calamities of the present state, or spin out your eternal schemes of grandeur, riches, or pleasures, in hopes to accomplish them within the narrow, uncertain limits of time allotted you? Alas I before another year has run its hasty round, the world and all that it contains, all its pursuits and enjoyments, all its cares and sorrows, may be as insignificant to you as the grandeur of Caesar, or the riches of the world before the flood. Earthly riches or poverty, liberty or slavery, honor or disgrace, joy or sorrow, sickness or health, may in this year become as little your concern, and be as much nothing to you as to your coffin, or the dust that shall cover it, or to Judas that has been gone to his own place above seventeen hundred years.

Does it not rather become you to turn your thoughts to another inquiry, “Is it possible for me to escape this impending danger? Where, how, whence may I obtain deliverance?” If you are not desirous seriously to attend to this inquiry, it will be to no purpose for me to solve it; to you it will appear as a solemn trifle, or an impertinent episode. But if you will lay it to heart, if you will, as it were, give me your word that you will pay a proper regard to it, I shall enter upon the solution with the utmost alacrity.

I assure you, then, in the first place, your case is not yet desperate, unless you choose to make it so; that is, unless you choose to persist in carelessness and impenitence, as you have hitherto done. If you now begin to think seriously upon your condition, to break off from your sins, and attend in good earnest upon the means appointed for your salvation, there is hope concerning you; yes, miserable sinners! There is hope that this year, which now finds you in so deplorable a state, will introduce you into



another, under the blessing of heaven, safe from all danger, and entitled to everlasting happiness.

I presume you all know so well the external means you should use for your salvation, that I need not particularly direct you to them. You all know that prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, meditation upon divine things, free conference with such as have been taught by experience to direct you in this difficult work; you all know, I say, that these are the means instituted for your conversion; and if you had right views of things and a just temper towards them, you would hardly need instruction or the least persuasion to make use of them. But to give you such views, and inspire you with such a temper, this is the difficulty. Oh! That I knew how to undertake it with success! I can only give you such directions as appear to me proper and salutary; but it is the almighty power of God alone that can give them force and efficacy.

You must learn to think, to think seriously and solemnly upon your danger, and the necessity of a speedy escape. You must retire from the crowd, from talk, dissipation, business, and amusement, and converse with yourselves alone in pensive solitude.

You must learn to think patiently upon subjects the most melancholy and alarming, your present guilt and depravity, and your dreadful doom so near at hand, if you continue in your present condition. The mind, fond of ease, and impatient of such mortifying and painful thoughts, will recoil, and fly off, and seek for refuge in every trifle: but you must arrest and confine it to these disagreeable subjects; you must force upon it this medicinal pain, as you often force your stomach, when your health requires it. There is not any moroseness in this advice; no ill-natured design upon your pleasure and happiness. On the other hand, it is intended to procure you more pleasure

and happiness than you can possibly obtain any other way: it is intended to prevent many sorrowful days and years, nay, a complete eternity of misery. The alternative proposed to you is not, whether you shall feel the bitter anguish of repentance, or not; whether you shall be pensive and serious, or not; whether you shall think upon gloomy and alarming subjects, or not: This is not at all the state of the case; for you must feel the sorrows of repentance; you must be thoughtful and pensive; you must confine your minds to subjects of terror: you must, whether you will or not; it is utterly unavoidable. But the only alternative proposed to your choice is, whether you will voluntarily submit to the kindly, hopeful, medicinal, preventive sorrows of repentance in this state of trial, which will issue in everlasting joy; or be forced to submit to the despairing pangs, and useless, destructive horrors of too late a repentance in the eternal world; which will only torment you, but not save you; which will be your punishment, and not a mean of your reformation, or a preparative for happiness. Whether you will confine your thoughts for a time to the contemplation of your present miserable circumstances, while hope irradiates even the darkest gloom of discouragement, and the gospel opens such bright and inviting prospects beyond those melancholy views that now first present themselves to your thoughts; or whether you will choose to pine away a doleful eternity in sullen, intense, hopeless poring's upon your remediless misery, in pale reviews of past folly, and shocking surveys of endless ages of woe before you. This is the true state of the case: and can you be at a loss what choice to make! Does not the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, of self-interest and self-love, as well as the voice of God, direct you to choose a few serious, sad, solemn, sorrowful, penitent hours now, rather than to invert the choice and to purchase a few hours of presumptuous ease at the

expense of a wretched, despairing eternity? Oh choose life, that you may live. While you indulge a trifling levity of mind, and a roving dissipation of thought, there is no hope you will ever seriously attend to your most important interest, or use the means of grace in earnest. Hence it is that I have made it so much my endeavor to-day to make you serious and thoughtful. To enforce this, let me repeat what I think cannot but have some effect; especially as it comes not from the priesthood, but the court; and from a courtier as eminent as England ever boasted.

“Ah! My friends! While we laugh, all things are serious round about us. God is serious, who exerciseth patience towards us: Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us: the Holy Ghost is serious, who striveth against the obstinacy of our hearts: the holy Scriptures bring to our ears the most serious things in the world; the holy sacraments represent the most serious and awful matters: the whole creation is serious in serving God and us: all that are in heaven and hell are serious:—How then can we be gay?”

I pray you, my dear brethren, yield an immediate compliance. Do not delay this great affair for another year, till you are sure you shall live another year. You may perhaps have time enough before you to work out your salvation, if you immediately begin to improve it: but, if you loiter, you may perish for want of time: the riches of the world will not be able then to redeem one of those precious hours you now squander away.

Let me now make you one of the most reasonable, salutary, and advantageous proposals that heaven itself can make to you: and that is, that you endeavor to enter upon this new year as new creatures. Let the old man with his affections and lusts die with the old year. “Let the time past of your life more than suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh. What profit had you then in those things of which you would now be ashamed?” How

shocking the thought that your old guilt should follow you into the new year, and haunt you in future times! Oh! Begin this year as you would wish to end your life! Begin it so as to give hopes that your future time will be so spent as to render death harmless, and even welcome to you.

Let the possibility suggested in my text have due weight with you: This year you may die.

But perhaps some of you may be inverting this consideration, and whispering to yourselves, “This year I may not die:” and therefore there is no immediate necessity of preparation for death. But what if you should not die this year, if you still delay the great work for which your time is given you? Alas! If you persist in this, one would think it can give you but little pleasure whether you die this year or not? What end will your life answer, but to add to your guilt, and increase your punishment? What safety can another year afford you, when you must die at last? What valuable end do you intend to answer in future life? Do you purpose to spend this year as you have your past years? What! In offending your God I abusing his mercies! Neglecting the precious seasons of grace! Hardening yourselves more and more in impenitence! Adding sin to sin, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! Is it worth your while to live for such horrid, preposterous purposes as these? Can you wish for another year with these views? Could you venture to pray for it? Will the prayer bear to be put into words? Come, put on the hardness of an infernal ghost, that you may be able to support yourselves, under the horror of the sound. “Thou supreme Excellence! Thou Author of my being, and all my powers! Thou Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge of the world! I have spent ten, twenty, or thirty years in displeasing thee and ruining myself; but I am not yet satisfied with the pleasures of such a conduct. Grant me, I pray thee,

another year to spend in the same manner. Grant me more mercies to abuse; more time to misspend; more means of grace to neglect and profane.” Could you now fall on your knees, and present such petitions to heaven? Surely you could not. Surely your frame would shudder; nay, would not the heavens gather blackness, and the earth tremble at the sound! But have your temper and practice no language? Language expresses the thoughts and intentions of the mind; and are not the habitual temper and practice a more certain discovery of the thoughts and intentions than mere words? Words, which may be spoken without a thought, or in a passion, and which may soon be heartily retracted? But the temper and practice is a steady and sure rule of judging, and decisive of a man’s predominant character. Therefore, while your temper and practice are agreeable to such a prayer: that is, while you are disposed to spend your time that God gives you in sin and impenitence, you are perpetually insulting heaven with such petitions, and that too in a manner much more expressive and strong than if you should utter them in words. And can you quietly bear the thought of this horrid blasphemy, which you are constantly breathing out against heaven? Can you wish and pray for another year for this purpose? What though you should not die this year? Will this exempt you from death in another, or from the punishment of misspent life? Alas! No; this will only render you a greater criminal, and a more miserable wretch in eternity. One year of sinning will make a dreadful addition to your account.

Therefore conclude, every one for himself, “It is of little importance to me whether I die this year, or not; but the only important point is, that I make a good use of my future time, whether it be longer or shorter.” This, my brethren, is the only way to secure a happy new year: a year of time, that will lead the way to. a happy eternity.

# *SERM. XXXV. AN ENROLMENT OF OUR NAMES IN HEAVEN THE NOBLEST SOURCE OF JOY.*

**L**uke 10:20.— *Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

This is the answer Christ gave to his disciples, when returned from their mission, flushed with victory over the most mighty and most malignant enemies, the infernal powers. Lord, say they, even the devils are subject to us, through thy name. This they probably mentioned with a tincture of vanity, and were secretly proud of their new power, which their Master had given them. Though they owned it was his gift, they gloried in it, as conferring some new honor and dignity upon themselves. And probably like the rest of their countrymen, their heads were filled with notions of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and his conquests over the other nations of the earth in favor of the Jews; and inferred that they should have an irresistible power over their enemies on earth, from the power they had

been enabled to exercise over evil spirits, so much more mighty, and seemingly unconquerable.

Their Lord and Master, among other things in his answer, checks this secret vanity, and points out to them a superior cause of joy. Rejoice not in this; that is, rejoice not so much as you do, rejoice not principally in this, that the spirits, (that is, evil spirits,) are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven; as if he should say, “Though you may safely rejoice in the victory you have obtained through my name over the powers of hell, yet you ought to take care that it be not a vain, selfish, carnal joy, a joy springing from the gratification of your own ambition. And take care also, that it does not run into excess; for I will show you a much greater cause of joy than even this; and that is, that your names are written in heaven. It is possible, that while you are casting the devil out of the bodies of others, your own souls may be under his power, and you may be his miserable slaves forever. But since your names are written in heaven, you are safe; and that is cause of joy indeed. Rejoice in this above all other things.”

How should we rejoice, and perhaps boast, if the mighty powers of hell were subject unto us, and we could make them fly at a word? But the meanest Christian is more happy than this, and has cause of greater joy.

For the further explication of the text, it is only necessary to inquire, what is meant by their names being written in heaven?

Heaven is here compared to a city or corporation, in which a list or record is kept of all the citizens or freemen who are entitled to its privileges and immunities. And, therefore, to have our names written in heaven, signifies to be citizens, or freemen of the heavenly city; that is, to have a right to an inheritance there, and to all its privileges and enjoyments.

This naturally suggests a very important inquiry, the decision of which may hold us all in an anxious suspense: “How may I know (may each of us ask) whether my unworthy name be written in heaven? Who can open and read the records of heaven, and show me whether my name is registered there?”

I answer, This is a secret that may be discovered; for all that have their names written in heaven, may be distinguished by their characters, their temper, and practice, while upon earth. And their characters are such as these:

1. They are deeply sensible of the vanity of all earthly things, and that heaven alone is a sufficient portion and happiness. All that are registered as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, have a superlative esteem of that privilege, and count all things but loss in comparison of it, Matt. 6:24-26, and 13:45,46. And is this your character? Are your hearts in heaven? Or are your highest affections confined to the earth?

2. All that have their names written in heaven have a heavenly nature; a nature very different from that of the men of this world, and like that of the citizens of heaven? And is this your temper? Or is it earthly and sensual?

3. All that have their names written in heaven have a peculiar love for all their fellow-citizens, who are heirs of heaven. They love them as members of the same corporation with themselves. 1 John 3:14.

4. If your names are written in heaven, it is the chief business and concern of your life to obtain an interest in heaven. This is not the object of languid, lazy wishes, or of lukewarm, spiritless prayers; but of your vigorous, anxious, persevering desires. And do you thus seek the kingdom of heaven? Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16.



These marks must suffice at present to assist you in self-examination; and I beg you would bring them to your hearts, and see if they will stand this test.

If your names are written in heaven, then my text authorizes me to tell you, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy. But on the other hand,

If your names are not written in heaven, there is nothing in the world that can happen to you, that can be a cause of rational, lasting joy to you.

I. If your names are written in heaven, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy. This will appear by an induction of particulars.

Are you rich in this world? Has God blessed your industry and frugality, so that you are in easy, affluent circumstances? This is cause of joy and gratitude to God, as it furnishes you with the materials of earthly happiness, frees you from many anxieties, and painful wants, and puts it in your power to enjoy the generous pleasure of doing good with your substance. But what is this, when compared with the blessings of the sanctified use of riches, and the assurance that God has given you, that all things shall work together for your good? What is this to the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that fulness of grace and glory, in which you have an interest? Rejoice more in this than in thousands of gold and silver.

Or if you are not in affluent circumstances, are you above extreme want, and able by your labor and industry to provide yourselves and your dependents with the necessities of life? This is the happiness of most, even of the poor in our country; and this is cause of joy. But what is this to the happiness of having provision made for your subsistence through everlasting ages? Is it not superior cause of joy, that when you are stripped

of all the enjoyments of the present life, you shall also be delivered from all its wants and labors, and shall not only have a bare sufficiency, but a rich Overflowing abundance of happiness equal to the capacities of your souls in their highest enlargements? In this you may warrantably rejoice, and you cannot run into excess.

Do you enjoy health of body? In this rejoice: but how trifling a cause of joy is this to that of your souls being in health and prospering, and bearing the symptoms of immortal life and vigor.

Are your bodies free from diabolical possession? Rejoice not so much in this, but rather rejoice that the devil is cast out of your souls, and that you are not under his spiritual tyranny.

Are you happy in your friends and relations, and every domestic blessing? Rejoice not so much in this as that you have the most honorable relations and friends in heaven. God is your father; Christ is your Savior, your elder brother, your friend; the Holy Ghost is your sanctifier; the angels and all the saints are your fellow-servants, your brethren of the same household of God.

Do you rejoice in the salvation of your country, and that you are delivered from the hands of your savage and perfidious enemies on earth? Rather rejoice that you are delivered from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and from the condemnation of the divine law.

Do you rejoice that our forces have been victorious over our enemies? Rather rejoice in the victory which the Captain of your salvation has gained for you over your spiritual enemies. Rather rejoice in the victory you are enabled to gain over sin, Satan, and the world, through the blood of the Lamb. Rather rejoice to see your lusts slain, or at least mortally wounded, and dying in your hearts.

Do you rejoice that you have the prospect of living in safety and peace in your country? Rather rejoice that you have peace of conscience, and peace with God, through Jesus Christ: and that you shall enter into everlasting peace whenever you leave this restless world.

Do you rejoice that your earthly possessions, your property and liberty are safe? Rather rejoice that your heavenly inheritance is safe; and that whatever becomes of the kingdoms of the earth, you have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, eternal in the heavens.

Do you rejoice that you live under the government of a good king? And that you enjoy the blessings of our happy constitution? This is a peculiar happiness indeed; but rejoice not so much in this, as that you are the subjects of the King of kings, and under a dispensation of grace, and the government of a Mediator. The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice. Psalm 97:1. Rejoice, above all, in this, that you and all your affairs are under the direction of a divine hand, that will manage all for your good. Rejoice that ere long you shall be admitted to the court of the heavenly King, and see him in all his glory.

Do you rejoice that your life is prolonged, while so many are dropping into the grave around you? Rather rejoice that you are not to live always in this most wretched world. Rejoice that death itself, your last enemy, will not be able to do you any lasting injury, but only convey you home to your Father's house, and the full possession of your heavenly inheritance.

Do you rejoice that you enjoy the gospel and the means of salvation, and that these invaluable blessings are not likely to be torn from you by the hands of Indian savages and Popish idolaters? This indeed is cause of rejoicing; but how much more ought you to rejoice that the gospel and the means of salvation are made effectual by divine grace for your conversion

and sanctification! Many enjoy them as well as you, to whom they are of no service, but an occasion of more aggravated guilt and ruin.

Let me, therefore, persuade you to rejoice, not only as a privilege, but as a duty. God enjoins it upon you by the same authority by which he requires you to pray, or to love himself or your neighbor. “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.” Psalm 32:11. “Rejoice evermore,” 1 Thess. 5:16, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice,” Phil. 4:4. It is decent and congruous that you should now rejoice in that in which you shall rejoice forever. And, on the other hand, it is highly unbecoming that you should walk towards heaven melancholy and dejected, as if you were going to the place of execution. Let sinners be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, who stand every moment on the slippery brink of eternal misery. Sorrow and lamentation become their circumstances. But will you always mourn and droop, who stand every moment on the threshold of heaven, and know not but you may be there before another sun shall rise? How indecent is this! Therefore rejoice with all your hearts, that your worthless names are written in heaven. This is greater cause of joy than if they were registered in the annals of fame, or among princes of the blood royal.

And do not excuse yourselves from this agreeable duty, by saying, “I would rejoice, if I were sure my name is written in heaven; but, alas! I am not.” For is not this uncertainty your own fault? The effect of your own negligence? Besides, have you not some cheerful hopes and probabilities, and even some transient assurance? And is not this cause of joy to creatures that deserve to be left under the pangs of everlasting despair?

Let me advance a step farther, and tell you, that you should rejoice that your names are written in heaven, not only more than in all other causes of

joy, but also in opposition to all causes of sorrow.

What though you are poor in this world, when the heavenly inheritance is yours? That you are despised among men, when you have the honor of being the sons of God? That you are weak, or sick and pained in body, when your souls are recovering from the deadly disease of sin? That you are the slaves of men, when you are free from the heavenly city, members of the same corporation with the armies of heaven, and sharers in the liberty of the sons of God? That your enemies should prove victorious over you upon earth, when you shall certainly overcome at last? That your mortal relations and friends die, when your heavenly Father and all your spiritual kindred live, and you cannot be bereaved of them? In short, what though you endure all the afflictions that can crowd upon one man in the present life, when they are all short and transitory, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and when you will soon arrive in the land of rest, beyond the reach of every misery? In spite of all these calamities, rejoice; “rejoice and be exceeding glad, since your names are written in heaven.”

But I must proceed to address another class of hearers; and to them I must say,

II. If your names are not written in heaven, you can have no cause of solid, rational, and lasting joy in any thing. This also I shall illustrate by an induction of particulars.

Rejoice not that you are rich, or at least enjoy the comforts of life, while you are destitute of spiritual and everlasting riches. Will it be any pleasure to you to pass from a splendid well-furnished house into the regions of horror and darkness? From faring sumptuously every day, to suffer the extremities of eternal want? From gay and merry company, to the society of

the lost spirits in hell? From all the luxuries of life, to weep and wail, and gnash the teeth forever? From wearing silks and laces, and every form of finery, to be wrapped in sheets of infernal flame? Alas! What joy can you take in all the advantages that riches can give you, while you must be stripped of them all so soon, and feel a terrible reverse? Many who are styled worshipful, honorable, and hear nothing but titles of dignity among men, are vile, despicable creatures in the sight of God, and must ere long sink into shame and everlasting contempt. Many a body adorned with whatever riches can procure, is animated by a poor, worthless soul, full of sin, and void of the beauties of holiness. And can you rejoice in such trifles as these? A man that has a gangrened foot may as well rejoice that it is covered with a silken plaster; or a criminal, that he is carried to the gallows in a coach of state.

Besides, remember how hardly shall rich men enter into the kingdom of God! It is a human impossibility; but it is not impossible to Omnipotence. As riches increase, temptations increase; temptations to love the world more, and to think less of heaven; temptations from pride, flattery, hurry, company, &c. And can you rejoice that your salvation is made more difficult? That you, who are apt to stumble at straws, have mountains thrown up in your way? Alas! If this were rightly considered, would the wealthy and affluent be so resolute and eager in the pursuit of riches?

What though you are in good business, and prospering in the world, while you are not doing the work of your salvation, nor carrying on a trade for heaven, and your hurry of business is a great occasion of this pernicious neglect?

What though you enjoy health of body, while your souls are dead in trespasses and sins, and your health is no security against death or hell?

What though you enjoy friends and relatives, while the great God is your enemy?

Or mirth and pleasure, when they will end in eternal howling's, and you will be upbraided with them another day, like Dives, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time didst enjoy thy good things?"

What though the French and Indians are routed? Alas! The devil and your sins are still lords over you! What though your country is safe, when you shall stay in it but a very little time, and you have no place prepared for you in heaven? What though you are the free-born descendants of Britons, and never were in bondage to any man? Alas! You are the slaves of sin. What though you live under the government of the best of kings, while you are the captives of the prince of darkness, and the King of heaven is your enemy? What though your bodies are not exposed to the sword of your fellow-mortals, when you are liable every moment to the sword of divine justice? What though you are safe, as to your outward estate, when your immortal souls are in danger? What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or to enjoy the gospel, while you receive no advantage from it, but abuse it to your more aggravated ruin? What avails it that God is merciful, when you have no share in his mercy, and never will, if you continue in your vain, carnal joy? That Christ died for sinners, while you willfully exclude yourselves from the blessed effects of his death?

In short, what upon earth, or even in heaven, can afford you any pleasure or rational joy, while your names are not written in heaven, and you are not using earnest endeavors to be admitted citizens there? Alas! Your case calls for sighs, and tears, and sorrow, rather than joy. What have you to do with politics, news, and the fate of armies and kingdoms, while you know not whether you will be out of hell one day longer?

And as the joy of the righteous, in having their names written in heaven, may swallow every other joy, so your sorrow, on account of your names not being written there, may swallow up all other sorrows. Be sorrowful on this account, above all other things.

Have you lost your friends, your relatives, your estate? This is sad; but oh! It is nothing to the loss of God, of heaven, and your souls. All will be lost ere long, if you continue in your present condition. Are you poor in this world? That is but a trifling affliction, compared with that everlasting poverty you must ere long suffer. Are you mean and despised by men? Alas! What is that to your being despised and abhorred by the God that made you? Are you the slaves of men? This would be trifling, and you need not care for it, were it not that you are the slaves to sin and Satan, and under the condemnation of the divine law. Are you disordered in body? That is nothing to the disorders of your souls. Are you afraid of natural death? Alas! What is that to spiritual death, which has seized your souls, and the eternal death which is just before you? In short, nothing in all the world ought so to distress and grieve you as this, that your names are not written in heaven.

Therefore, instead of vain rejoicing, and mirth, and gaiety, I must read to you the denunciation of Jesus Christ against you; “But wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep,” Luke 6:24,25; and call upon you as the apostle James does, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you,” James 5:1; and again, “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.” James 4:9.



I can honestly assure you, I am no enemy to the pleasures of mankind. But it is because I love you, that I wish you may return home sad and sorrowful from this place; for I well know, you are forever undone, unless you turn to the Lord, and that you never will turn to him, without rending of your hearts, weeping, and mourning. Joel 2:12.

If your joy and mirth were rational, I should say nothing against it; but is it not frenzy and madness to be merry in the chains of sin, under the wrath of God, and upon the brink of eternal ruin?

Is it not also dishonorable to God? It is as if you should tell him to his face, that you can be merry and happy without his favor, and that you care nothing for his displeasure.

I should not reprove your mirth, if it were harmless; but, alas! It will ruin you if you indulge it. For, let me tell you, such sinners as you cannot become converts, without alarming fears and deep sorrows. Without this you never will be in earnest in your religious endeavors.

You will tell me perhaps, “you see Christians cheerful, and sometimes merry; and why may not you be so?” I answer, (1.) There is a great difference in your case and theirs; they have a lively hope of everlasting happiness; but you can have no hope in your present condition. And may not they rejoice, while you have cause to mourn and weep? What would you think of a criminal under condemnation, if he allowed himself in that mirth and amusement, which may be lawful and becoming in others? (2.) The Christians you know now are cheerful with good reason; but did you know any of them under their first convictions; were they cheerful then? Then, when they received a sight of their sin and danger, and were in an awful suspense what would be their everlasting doom? Were they merry and gay while they saw themselves without a Savior, and under the displeasure

of God? No: then all was sadness, fear, and sorrow. And this is what your case now requires. Can you expect the same cheerfulness in one under the power of a deadly disorder as in one recovering? Or would it be becoming?

Finally, I should not endeavor to damp your joys and turn them into sorrow, if they would last. But oh! They will soon end, and nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will succeed. Look down into that hideous gulf, the prison of divine justice, where Dives and Judas, and thousands of sinners lie; and can you see no cheerful look, or hear one laugh among them? No, no; they have done with all joy; and must spend a miserable eternity in grief and tears. And will you not rather mourn in time, than mourn forever? Will you choose now to receive your consolation? Or will you not rather delay it till you have reason to rejoice?

To conclude: Suffer a friend to your best interest to prevail upon you to return home this evening sadly pensive and sorrowful, and to resolve you will never indulge yourselves in one hour's mirth and gaiety, till you have some reason to believe that your names are written in heaven. This is what your own interest requires; and if you refuse, you will unavoidably be sorry for it forever, when your sorrow can be of no service to you. Betake yourselves in serious sadness to the earnest use of all the means of salvation, and you have reason to hope God will have mercy upon you, and turn you to himself. Then you will have reason to rejoice, to rejoice in your temporal blessings, and especially because your names are written in heaven. And then God, and Christ, and angels will rejoice over you, and join in your joy.

# *SERM. XXXVI. THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL BY THE DIVINE POWER UPON THE SOULS OF MEN.*

**2** Cor. 10:4,5.— *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience, of Christ.*

This restless world is now in an unusual ferment; kingdom rising up against kingdom, and nation against nation; magazines filling, arms brightening, cannons roaring, and human blood streaming, both by sea and land. These things engross the thoughts and conversation of mankind, and alarm their fears and anxieties. But there is another kind of war carrying on in the world; a war, the issue of which is of infinitely greater importance; a war of near six thousand years standing; that is, ever since the first grand rebellion of mankind against God; a war in which we are all engaged as parties, and in the result of which our immortal interest is concerned;

though, alas! It engages but little of the attention and solicitude of the generality among us; I mean, the war which Jesus Christ has been carrying on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to reduce the rebellious sons of men to their duty, and redeem them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, from their wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is the design in which the apostles were embarked, and which St. Paul describes in the military style in my text. As some members of the Corinthian church had taken up a very low opinion of St. Paul, his design in the context is to raise the dignity of his apostolic office. And for that purpose, he describes in military language the efficacy and success of those apostolic powers with which he was furnished for the propagation of Christianity, and the reduction of the world into obedience to the gospel. Those powers were such as these; the power of working miracles to attest his divine commission; the preaching of the doctrine of the cross, and the rod of discipline for the reformation of offenders; which in the hands of the apostles, seems to have been attended with the power of inflicting temporal judgments, and particularly bodily sicknesses; and which St. Paul here threatens to exercise upon such of the Corinthians as continued obstinate in their opposition to his ministry.

These powers he here calls weapons of war. This tent-maker and a few fishermen were sent out upon a grand expedition, in opposition to the united powers of Jews and Gentiles, of earth and hell. All the world, with their gloomy god, were ready to join against them. They were ready to oppose them with all the force of philosophy, learning, authority, threatening's, and all the cruel forms of persecution. For the Christian cause in which these soldiers of Jesus Christ were engaged, was contrary to their lusts and prejudices, their honor and secular interests. This opposition of the world to

the gospel, the apostle also describes in the military style. Their lusts, prejudices, and interests, their vain imaginations and false reasonings, are so many strongholds and high things or castles in which they, as it were, fortify and intrench themselves. These they hold and garrison under the prince of darkness: in these they stand out in their rebellion against heaven, and fight against God, against his gospel, and against their own consciences. And with what weapons did the apostles attack these rebels in their strongholds! Not with carnal weapons, such as the heroes and conquerors of the world are wont to use, but with weapons of a spiritual nature, the force of evidence and conviction, the purity of their doctrines and lives, the terrors of the Lord, and the all-conquering love of a dying Savior. With these weapons they encountered the allied powers of men and devils; with these they propagated the religion of their Master; and not with the sword, like Mahomet; or with the bloody artillery of persecution, like the church of Rome; or by the dragoonade, like the tyrants of France.

What unpromising weapons were these! What avails the light of evidence in a world that loves darkness rather than light, and where lust, prejudice, and interest generally prevail against truth and reason? Is the contemptible weapon of the cross likely to do execution? Are the unpopular, mortifying doctrines of one that was crucified like a malefactor and a slave likely to prevail against all the prejudices of education; the attachment of mankind to the religion of antiquity, established by law; the policy of priestcraft; the love of gain; the powers of the world; and the various oppositions of the depraved hearts of mankind? Are such gentle and weak weapons as these likely to have any success? Yes, these weapons, though not carnal, were mighty, resistless, all-conquering—but then you must observe, they were mighty through God. The excellency of the power was of God, and such

unpromising arms were used on purpose to show this. It was he that gave edge to the weapons and force to the blow. Without the energy of his grace, they could have done nothing, even in the hands of apostles. But, by the might of his Spirit, they became almighty, and carried all before them: these contemptible weapons, with his concurrence, pulled down strongholds; cast down towering imaginations, and reasonings that seemed impregnable, and demolished every high thing, every battery, castle, or citadel, that was erected against the knowledge of God, that knowledge of him which the gospel brought to light, and reduced every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. Sinners were brought not only to compliment Jesus with a bended knee, and profess subjection to him with their lips, but to bow their stubborn hearts to him, and let him reign in their affections. That gospel to which they were so averse, gained a complete victory over their minds; their minds, which the Alexanders and Caesars of the world could not subdue; and reduced not only their external conduct, but their thoughts; not only some thoughts, but every thought, to the obedience of Christ. When God gives the commission, the stately walls of Jericho will fall, even at the feeble sound of rams' horns.

To bring into captivity, is generally understood in a bad sense, and signifies the carrying away of loyal subjects against their wills, into a foreign country, and there enslaving them to the enemy. But here it is a significant catachresis, and signifies the deliverance of sinners from the slavery of sin and Satan, and their restoration into a state of liberty, into favor with God, and this too by their own free consent. And it is called a captivating, to intimate, that, though when the sinner submits he does it voluntarily, yet he had really made a strong resistance, and did not submit till sweetly constrained to it; and that he looked upon his state of slavery to

sin as a state of freedom, and was as unwilling to leave it as a free-born subject would be to be captivated and enslaved in an enemy's country.

I foresee I cannot take time to do justice to this copious subject. But I shall endeavor to compress my thoughts in as little room as possible, in a few propositions, to which each head in my text may be reduced. And the whole will be but a short history of the revolt of mankind against the great God, their rightful Sovereign, and their miserable slavery to sin and Satan—of an important expedition set on foot and carried on by the ministry of the gospel, to recover them from their state of slavery, and reduce them to their obedience—of their various methods of opposition to this design; or the various ways in which they fortify themselves against the attacks made upon them by divine grace for this end—of the issue of this siege, particularly the terms of surrender—and their consequent deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan, and their willing subjection to their rightful Lord and Proprietor.

I. All mankind, in their present state of apostacy, have revolted from God, and surrendered themselves slaves to sin and Satan.

We might produce abundant evidence of this from the sacred writings; but as the evidence from plain undeniable fact may be more convictive, I shall insist chiefly upon it. Mankind are secretly disaffected to God and his government in their hearts; and hence they do not take pleasure in his service. They are not solicitous for the honor and dignity of his government. They will not bear the restraints of his authority, nor regard his law as the rule of their conduct, but will follow their own inclinations, let him prescribe what he will. Nay, they have no disposition to return to their duty, or listen to proposals for reconciliation; and hence they disregard the gospel (which is a scheme to bring about a peace) as well as the law. In short, they

will not do anything that God commands them, unless it suit their own corrupt inclinations; and they will not abstain from anything which he forbids, for his sake, if they have any temptation to it from their own lusts. These things, and a thousand more which might be mentioned, fix the charge of rebellion upon them. It is undeniable, they are disaffected to his government in their hearts, whatever forced or complementary expressions of loyalty some of them may at times give him. Look into your own hearts, and take a view of the world around you, and you will find this is evidently the case.

But though they are thus disobedient to their rightful Sovereign, yet to sin and Satan, those usurping and tyrannical masters, they are the most tame and obsequious slaves. For these, they will go through the most sordid drudgery, for no other wages than death. For these, they will give up their most important interests, and exchange their souls, and their share in heaven, without any retaliation, but the sorry, transitory pleasures of sin. Let temptation but beckon, they immediately take the signal, and obey. Let sin command them to hurt their souls and bodies, and perhaps their estates, with excessive drinking, the poor slaves comply. Let sin order them to swear, to lie, to defraud, they submit, though eternal damnation be the consequence. Let sin order them to pursue riches, honor, or sensual pleasures, through right and wrong, at the loss of their ease, the danger of their lives, and the destruction of their souls, they engage in the drudgery, and toil all their days in it. Let sin forbid them to serve God, to attend seriously to his word, to pray to him importunately, in secret and in their families, to reflect upon their miserable condition, to repent and believe the gospel; let sin but lay them under a prohibition to those things, they will cautiously refrain from them; and all the arguments which God and man can



use with them will have little or no weight. In short, let sin but order them to give up their interest in heaven, and run the risk of eternal ruin; let sin but command them to neglect and disregard the God that made them, and the Savior that died for them, they will venture upon the self-denying and destructive enterprise. They will do more for sin than they will do for the great God, their rightful Sovereign and constant Benefactor. Sin has more influence with them than all the persuasions of parents, ministers, and their best friends; nay, more influence than the love, the dying groans and agonies of a crucified Savior. There is nothing so sacred, so dear or valuable in heaven, but they will give it up if sin requires them. Nothing so terrible in hell, but they will rush into it, if sin sets them upon the desperate attempt. They are the most tame, unresisting captives to sin. Sin is an arbitrary, absolute, despotic tyrant over them; and, which is most astonishing, they are not weary of its tyranny, nor do they pant and struggle for liberty. Liberty to them has lost its charms, and they hug their chains and love their bondage. Alas! Are there not many free-born Britons in this assembly, who are slaves in this sense? Slaves in a worse sense than the poorest negro among us; slaves to sin, and consequently to Satan; for sin is commander-in-chief under the prince of darkness, the gloomy God of this world: it is by sin, as his deputy, that he exercises his power, and therefore sinners are in reality slaves to him! This, one would think, would be a shocking reflection to them, that they are slaves of the most malignant being in nature; a being not only malignant, but also very powerful; that they have broken off from the indulgent and equitable government of the Sovereign of the universe, and sold themselves slaves to such a lawless, tyrannical usurper! But, alas! They do not resent the usurpation, nor struggle to throw off the yoke, and

regain their liberty. They resign themselves voluntary slaves, and love their master and his drudgery.

This is a very melancholy, but, alas! It is a true history of human nature in its present state. Thus are mankind disaffected to the divine government, and held in a wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is indeed a very dismal and threatening state, and we might tremble for the consequences had we no gospel to inform us of a plan of reconciliation. Here I may borrow the words of one of the greatest and best of Christians. “When we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him; that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? How did it issue? What was the event? And would expect to hear, Why, fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened and swallowed them up quick; yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear that fire and brimstone, flames and thunder-bolts came down instantly upon them, and destroyed them in a moment, who would not say, So I thought; who could expect better?” But what grateful astonishment may it raise in heaven and earth to hear that their offended Sovereign has been so far from this, that he has sent his Son, his only Son, to die for them, in order to bring about a peace! And that,

II. He has set on foot an important expedition, and is carrying it on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to recover these rebels from their voluntary slavery to sin and Satan, and reduce them to their duty, and so bring them into a state of liberty and happiness!

This is the benevolent design on which the Son of God came down from his native heaven, and for which he endured the shame and the agonies of

the cross. This is the design on which he set out his apostles into the world, armed, not with instruments of mischief and destruction, but with the most beneficent powers, powers of doing good, the powers of preaching the most important doctrines, of proving them by argument, and the evidence of miracles and prophecies, and of exercising proper discipline upon offenders, to bring them to repentance. To carry on this design, the ministry of the gospel is perpetuated in the world from age to age; and for this purpose, my dear people, I would exercise my ministry among you, I would make an attack upon your hearts to break them open for the admission of the King of heaven. I have continued the siege for near ten years, the space spent in reducing the stubborn Trojans; and now, in the name of God, I once more would renew the attack, and summon you to capitulate and surrender.

For this purpose the ministers of the gospel have their arms; they begin the attack with the artillery of the divine law, which thunders the terrors of the Lord against you. They surround you with troops of arguments, which one would think would soon overpower a reasonable creature, and constrain him immediately to submit. They reason the matter with you, and lay before you the wickedness, the baseness, the unnatural ingratitude, and the dangerous consequences of your rebellion. They inform you what a good king and what an excellent government you have rejected; what holy, just, and good laws you have insolently broken; what rich mercies you have ungratefully abused; what long-continued patience you have provoked; and what friendly warnings you have despised. They expose to your view the terrible consequences of your rebellion, if you persist in it: they honestly warn you that the wages of sin is death; death in all its terrible forms; death temporal, spiritual, and eternal; that if you continue the unequal war against heaven, it will issue in your eternal, remediless destruction. They open to

you the corruption of your natures; the aversion of your hearts to all that is spiritually good and excellent: your innate propensions to sin, and voluntary indulgence of your lusts and guilty pleasures. They put you upon a review of your lives, to recollect your willful omissions of duty to God and man, and your commissions of known sin, in spite of the restraints of authority, the allurements of mercy, and the admonitions of your own consciences. When they have thus discharged the dreadful artillery of the law, the thunders and lightnings of Sinai against you, the way is prepared for proposing the terms of surrender and articles of reconciliation. They make an attack upon the citadel of your heart, with the gentler arms from the magazine of the gospel of peace. They represent your injured Sovereign as reconcilable, reconcilable through Jesus Christ. They give you the strongest assurances from his own word, that he is willing to make up the difference and conclude a lasting peace with you; that upon your laying down your arms (that is, forsaking your sins and submitting upon his terms,) he will freely pardon all your past rebellion, and receive you again into his favor. They also inform you of the strange method in which this peace may be brought about, consistently with the honor of his character as the Ruler of the world, and with the sacred rights of his government, and that is, through the mediation of his Son, the great Peace-maker, who, in your stead, has obeyed that law which you have broken, and endured that penalty which you have incurred. They likewise inform you in what manner you are to accede to this treaty, or consent to this plan of accommodation, namely, by believing in his Son, by accepting peace with God, and every blessing as his free gift through Jesus Christ, by a deep, ingenuous repentance for your past rebellion, and by devoting yourselves to his service for the future. These overtures of reconciliation they enforce from various topics, which, one

would think, you would not be able to resist. They represent to you the riches of divine grace and mercy, and the all-conquering love of Jesus. That contemptible weapon, the cross, is a weapon of tried and well-known energy; many a hard heart has it broken; many an obstinate rebel has it subdued. They pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; and if you should be hardy enough to refuse such a request, they urge it with arguments drawn from its reasonableness in justice and gratitude, from its being of the last importance to your happiness, as being the only way in which apostate creatures can re-obtain the favor of their injured Sovereign—and from the terrible consequences of a refusal; for unless you submit upon these terms, you may expect nothing but wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour you as adversaries.

You cannot but know, my brethren, that the ministry of the gospel has, with such arms as these, laid close siege to your hearts, year after year. And who would have thought that one heart among you would have been proof against this divine artillery, and stood it out so long? Some of you, I doubt not, have surrendered, and are now the willing subjects of your heavenly King. But, alas! Do not some of you still obstinately refuse to submit, and persist in your rebellion? And are you not fortifying yourselves more and more against the attempts made to reduce you to obedience? This naturally leads me,

III. To give you a kind of history of the various ways in which sinners oppose this benevolent design of the ministry of the gospel to subdue them to the obedience of Christ.

Alas! They also have their artillery, with which they labor to repel all the attacks made upon them by the gospel. They, as it were, throw up various

lines of intrenchments around them, to defend them against conviction. Particularly,

Sinners hide themselves in the darkness of ignorance; ignorance of God, of Jesus Christ, of the law and gospel, and consequently of themselves. They endeavor to keep up their courage by refusing to know their danger. They muffle themselves up in ignorance, so that they do not see their almighty enemy, nor the instruments of death he has prepared for them; and hence they are so stupid as to conclude that neither does he see them, nor can find them out. They also fortify themselves, as it were, in the enclosure of a hard heart; a heart of rock and adamant, which is proof against the artillery of the gospel. This, like an impregnable cave cut in a rock, stands out against all the terrors of the Lord set in array against it. The sinner, shut up in this stronghold, can laugh at the shaking of Jehovah's spear! Let the law thunder out tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish against him; let the gospel attack him with the cross of Christ, with all the love of a dying Savior, and all the mercy of a reconcilable God, he is still secure, and bids defiance to all these attacks. The rock is impregnable till the power of God gives force to these weapons, and then indeed it begins to tremble; then the sinner is struck into a consternation, and is dreadfully apprehensive he cannot hold out the siege.

This natural fortification, (so I may call it, for his ignorance and hardness of heart are natural to him, though dreadfully improved by art,) this natural fortification, I say, begins to fail him; and hereupon he sets himself to work upon artificial fortifications, which may enable him to hold out the longer in his opposition.

He throws up an intrenchment of objections and excuses, or (a little to alter the metaphor) he discharges whole volleys of objections and excuses

against those that besiege him. Perhaps he dares to plead that he is already a dutiful subject to the King of heaven, and therefore that the ministry of the gospel has missed its aim in directing its artillery against him as an enemy. And if to this plea it be answered, that his temper and conduct towards his Sovereign plainly show that he is really disaffected to him in his heart, whatever outward professions of duty he may make; he replies, that if in some instances he allows himself in the breach of the divine laws, yet he has no bad design in so doing; that he has a good heart notwithstanding; and that he hopes the King of Heaven will not be so strict as to take notice of these things. He objects, that he is as loyal as other people about him, and why may not that suffice; and that, if he should be very punctual and zealous in his duty, he would soon be out of fashion, and draw the contempt and ridicule of the world upon him. He objects, that he has not been so bold and daring a rebel as many others, and therefore he cannot think that so mild and gracious a King will severely punish him. He objects, that he is now too busy about other things to listen to proposals of reconciliation; and therefore begs that the matter may be put off, at least, till he has finished some important affairs he has now in hand. And he promises, that the next year, or in old age, or upon a death-bed, he will submit, and conclude a peace.

He pleads that he enjoys a great deal of pleasure under his present master, sin, which he must give up as unlawful, if he should change masters; and that the service of God is a drudgery to him, and that he has no relish for it, and that the laws of the King of Heaven are so strict, that he cannot live under them. These, and a thousand other pleas, the rebel urges to excuse his non-compliance with the proposals of reconciliation; and in these he trusts as a sufficient defense.

Moreover, the lusts of the flesh, his pride, presumption, and love of ease, the cares of the world, the company of the wicked, who persuade him by all means not to surrender, and furnish him with arms and all the assistance in their power to continue the war, these are all so many strongholds in which the sinner fortifies himself against the Lord Jesus.

But if the weapons of the gospel prove mighty through God to diminish these strongholds, and the rebel finds they can defend him no longer, then he abandons these outworks, and intrenches himself secretly in his own righteousness. He, as it were, surrounds himself with a line of good works, repentance, and reformation. And now he thinks he is safe. Now he hopes he shall pass for a friend and subject of the King of heaven, as he is holding a place for him, and that the artillery of the law will continue to play upon him no longer. This is the sinner's last refuge; and it is the greatest difficulty of all to drive him out of this. He will not abandon this, till he is driven to great extremity indeed. And here many continue in it until they are dragged out of it to the tribunal of their supreme Judge.

It must also be observed, that the sinner tries all the arts of dissimulation to secure his stronghold. When he finds he cannot defend himself as an open enemy by his declared hostilities, he feigns a submission; he pretends to capitulate and surrender; but then, he does not cordially consent to all the terms. He makes a reserve of some favorite lusts, and will not deliver them up to the sword of the conqueror: he has secret exceptions to the conditions of surrender, and will not comply with them all. There are some instances of duty, from which he will excuse himself. In short, his heart is not well-affected to the Conqueror. His submission is forced and involuntary, and therefore is resented as the basest treachery by him that searches the heart, and must reign in the hearts of all his subjects.



Are not some of you, my brethren, now intrenched and fortified against the gospel in these strongholds? And such of you as are now the willing subjects of Jesus Christ, may you not recollect, that thus did you once strengthen yourselves in your opposition to him! But he has sweetly overcome your enmity, and constrained you to submit. And this leads me,

IV. To describe the issue of this war, where it is effectually carried on, and particularly the terms of surrender.

The success of this war depends entirely upon the concurrence of the almighty power of God. If the weapons of our warfare prove mighty, it is through God. Let the ministers of the gospel attack the sinner with all the arms with which the magazines of the law and gospel, of Scripture and reason, furnish them, they will never subdue one soul to the obedience of Christ: the sinner will still stand it out, and bid them defiance. What is the reason that there are so many secure, presumptuous rebels among us, though the gospel-ministry has so often and so long played off its artillery against them? The reason is, the weapons of our warfare are not made mighty through God. God does not give edge and force to these arms by the all-conquering power of his Spirit. But when he begins to work, then the hardest sinner begins to tremble, the rocky heart breaks to pieces, and his strongholds are demolished. All his objections are silenced; he is convinced that he is indeed a rebel against his rightful Sovereign; that his rebellion is most unnatural, ungrateful, unreasonable, and the height of wickedness; and that it is a most astonishing instance of condescending grace, that his provoked Sovereign should stoop to treat him with and deign to propose him articles of reconciliation. He sees that he might justly cut him off, without one offer of mercy. He is struck with horror to think that ever he, a poor dependent worm, should engage in a war against the Lord of armies,

who has universal nature at his command, and especially that he has dared to stand out so long against him. He is sensible of the danger of delays, sensible that he has been ungrateful and rebellious too long already, and that, if he delays his submission, his almighty enemy may take his strongholds by storm, and put him to the sword. He is now sensible that the slavery of sin is intolerable; that his lusts are tyrannical masters, and will give him no other wages but death: and therefore he pants and struggles for liberty. The artillery of the divine law demolishes the promising intrenchment which he had formed for his own good works, and leaves him naked and defenseless to its vindictive fire. Conscience also calls to the sinner to surrender, to surrender in time, while terms of peace may be obtained, and warns him of the dreadful consequences of continuing the war. The trumpet of the gospel is still publishing peace, and summoning him to submit. The gospel assures him of pardon and acceptance, if he will but surrender. Now also (if I may so boldly accommodate the military style of this subject) now his provisions and ammunition begin to fail; he finds he can subsist no longer; and, like the prodigal, is just perishing with hunger. He finds he can defend himself no longer, but must submit or die. If he continues in arms, he is sure to die; but if he submits, he has some hopes of pardon; for oh! He has heard that the King of Israel is a merciful King. He must however make the trial. All this time the Spirit of God is at work within, sweetly inclining the stubborn heart to yield, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. He gives the rebel favorable thoughts of the government of the Conqueror, and the infinite advantages of living under it. In short, he enforces upon the heart all the applications made from without by the ministry of the gospel.

And now the sinner begins to think in earnest of surrendering; now he eagerly listens to terms of peace; and at length he lays down his arms, submits to the Conqueror, falls at his feet, casts himself upon his mercy, and welcomes him into the citadel of his heart. This is the most happy and important hour the sinner ever saw; the transactions of this hour extend their blessed consequences through all his future life, and to the remotest periods of eternity. It may be necessary for me to inform you more particularly of the manner of this surrender.

(1.) The sinner surrenders himself as an obnoxious rebel, lying entirely at the mercy of the Conqueror. He has no plea to excuse his rebellion, no merit to ingratiate himself, or procure a pardon. He pleads guilty, and surrenders himself to the will of the Conqueror, conscious that he may do with him as he pleases. His high imaginations of himself are all demolished, his confidence in his own righteousness is entirely mortified, and he has nothing to plead but mercy, free, unmerited mercy. On this he casts himself as his only ground of hope.

(2.) He surrenders himself entirely upon the terms prescribed by the Conqueror. He is conscious that he has no right to dictate, or to stand upon terms. His province is to submit. The way of reconciliation revealed in the gospel, appears to him infinitely reasonable, and to stand in need of no amendment. Particularly, he is willing to lay down his arms; that is, to forsake his sins, and to walk for the future in ways of holiness; or to make the pleasure of his Sovereign the rule of his conduct. Above all it must be noticed, that he is willing to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The mediation of Jesus Christ, the glorious peculiarity of the Christian religion, is the only medium through which he would approach to God, and expect reconciliation with him. It is only in the righteousness of Christ he trusts to

make atonement for his guilt, and procure the divine favor. In short, he is willing the Conqueror should make his own terms, and he submits, if he may but have his life for a prey. He puts a blank into his hands, desirous he should fill it up with what articles he pleases, and he will cheerfully subscribe to them. His language is like that of Paul, when struck down prostrate at the feet of the persecuted Jesus, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts 9:6. Lord, do thou command, and I will obey. Now the rebel is all submission, all obedience.

(3.) He submits voluntarily and cheerfully. The power of divine grace has rooted out the enmity of his carnal mind, and implanted the principle of love in his heart. He breaks off from sin and Satan, as from the most cruel usurpers and destroyers; and he submits to Christ, not merely as to an irresistible Conqueror, but as to a Deliverer. He enters upon a religious life, not as a state of slavery and unwilling captivity, but as a state of the most glorious liberty. He submits to the terms of reconciliation, not as the arbitrary impositions of an imperious usurper, but as the gentle and reasonable prescriptions of a wise and good ruler. He esteems all his laws holy, and just, and good; and with all his heart he acquiesces and rejoices in the blessed gospel of peace. In short, the rebel's heart is now entirely changed and rendered well-affected to the divine government: and consequently, he cordially and freely submits to it. Once indeed he hated it, and then he did at best but feign submission to it; but now, his enmity being subdued, he surrenders himself with all his heart. It is one of the freest acts of his whole life.

(4.) He makes a universal surrender of himself and all that he is and has to Jesus Christ. He makes no reserve of one favorite lust, but gives them all up to be slain; he makes no secret exceptions to any of the articles of

reconciliation, but heartily consents to them all. He devotes his whole soul and all its faculties to God, in and through Jesus Christ; his understanding to know him; his heart to love him; and his will to be governed by him. This is implied in my text; Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Every thought, every passion, every motion of the soul must submit to Christ, and every insurrection of sin in his heart alarms him, as an intestine enemy. He also yields his body to God, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. He also devotes all his accomplishments, his genius, learning, influence, and popularity, his riches, and in short, all his possessions of every kind; willing to employ them all in the service of his new Master, or to resign them all, if their perversion should be inconsistent with his duty to him. Oh! How different a temper is this from that which is natural to the sinner!

Thus the treaty of peace is happily concluded; and he that was once a rebel against heaven, and an enemy to the Cross of Christ, is now become a friend and a loyal subject. The past difference is entirely forgotten and buried, and he is received into favor, as though he had never offended. Once God was angry with him every day, but now he accepts him in the Beloved. Now the prince of hell has lost a captive; and Jesus has the satisfaction of seeing one more of his spiritual seed born unto his family. Now there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, upon this addition to the number of loyal subjects. Oh! The happy, the glorious peace! Oh! The blessed change in the circumstance of the poor condemned criminal!

What now remains?

V. We take a view of the true convert's state and conduct in consequence of this reconciliation.

This you may be sure is very different from what it was before. He is now delivered from his sordid slavery to sin, as well as from guilt, and the sentence of condemnation. He is justified and accepted before God, through Jesus Christ, and entitled to a heavenly crown and kingdom. Sin, indeed, is not entirely subdued; it forms frequent and violent insurrections, and struggles hard to recover its former power over him. The old man with his affections and lusts was immediately crucified, upon the sinner's surrender to Christ; but crucifixion is a lingering death, and hence sin is never entirely dead while he continues in this imperfect state: it is every day plotting against him, and laboring to ensnare him. And hence his life is a constant warfare, an incessant conflict. He lives the life of a sentinel, perpetually upon the watch; or of a soldier, night and day under arms. If he is off his guard but for an hour, he is liable to be surprised, and sometimes, alas! He is overcome. But he rises again, and renews the combat, and will rather die than submit: he would resist even unto blood, striving against sin. In short, whatever inadvertences he may fall into, he is habitually on God's side: he espouses the cause of God in this rebellious world, whatever it costs him. He is an enemy to the kingdom of darkness, and all its interests; and it is the great business of his life to oppose it in himself and others. The longer he lives under the government of King Jesus, the more he is attached to him, and in love with his administration; and it is his habitual endeavor to lead a life of universal obedience.

And now, my brethren, there is an inquiry I would set you upon, and that is, whether you have ever been captivated into a willing obedience to Jesus Christ? I am afraid this matter is not so plainly and unquestionably in your favor, as to render all inquiry into it needless. I am afraid it is dismally dark and doubtful, with regard to some of you, whether you are the servants of

Christ or the slaves of sin and Satan. Nay, I am afraid, there are plain evidences against some of you. However, put the matter to trial, that you may see how it will turn out; for I assure you it is a matter of too much importance to be slightly passed over.

Now it is evident, in the first place, that you are still the enemies of Jesus Christ, unless you have been deeply convinced of your enmity. It is impossible you should be reconciled to him, till you have seen your need of reconciliation; and it is impossible you should see your need of reconciliation till you are convinced that you are at variance with him. Such of you, therefore, are undoubtedly his enemies, who imagine you have always been his friends.

In the next place turn the substance of what has been said into so many queries to yourselves, and by these means, you may discover the truth of your case. Has ever the dreadful artillery of the law discharged its terrors upon you? Have you ever been driven out of all your carnal confidences, and particularly your own righteousness? Have you ever surrendered yourselves to the Conqueror? Has he overcome you by the sweet constraints of his love? And upon what terms did you surrender? Did you surrender as a rebel, lying at mercy? Did you submit to his terms without pretending to dictate any of your own? Did you submit voluntarily and cheerfully? Did you surrender yourselves universally, without any reserve? Do you since endeavor to behave as dutiful subjects? And do you find his service to be perfect freedom?

And now, in consequence of this trial, Who is upon the Lord's side? Who? What is your real character? Are you to be ranked among the subjects of Christ, or among the enemies of his crown and dignity?

Could I now collect the rebels together into one company, I would tell them some very alarming things from that God to whom they refuse to submit. Yes, sinner, as Ehud said to Eglon, king of Moab, I have a message from God unto thee. Judges 3:20.

In his name, and as his ambassador, I warn you of the dreadful consequences of your unnatural rebellion against him. You cannot make good your cause against him. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered? All nature is subject to him, and he can order the meanest part of it to be the executioner of his vengeance upon you. If you refuse to submit, you shall as surely perish as you have a being. Of this you have reason to be apprehensive at all times, but especially at this time, when your almighty enemy is attacking your country with the terrors of war, and your neighborhood with an epidemical raging distemper. Sickneses are his soldiers, and fight in his cause against a rebellious world. He says to one, Go, and it goeth; and to another, Come, and it cometh. And are you not afraid some of these deadly shafts may strike you now, when they are flying so thick around you? God has for many a year used gentler weapons with you, but now he seems about to take the citadel by storm. Now, therefore, now without delay, lay down your arms and surrender yourselves to him.

I have also joyful news to communicate, even to you rebels, if you are disposed to hear it; and that is, that your injured Sovereign is willing to be reconciled to you after all your hostilities, if you will now submit to the terms of reconciliation.

Therefore, I pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. Christ is not here in person; but lo! I am here to manage the treaty in his name, though I also am formed out of the clay.



*SERM. XXXVII. THE  
DIVINE PERFECTIONS  
ILLUSTRATED IN THE  
METHOD OF SALVATION,  
THROUGH THE  
SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.*

**J**ohn 12:27,28.— *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

Should a favorite child now come running to you, with all the marks of agony in his countenance, and with these words in his mouth, “I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and I know not what to say;” it would raise all the tender sensations of fatherly compassion and anxiety in your breasts, and you would solicitously inquire, “What ails my dear child; what is the cause of your distress?” But here your ears are struck with a more strange and affecting sound; you hear the source of all consolation complaining of sorrow: “I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and in a

commotion like the stormy ocean.” You see the wisdom of God, the guide of the blind, pausing—hesitating—at a stand—at a loss what to say. And will you not so far interest yourselves in his sorrows, as solicitously to inquire, “What ails my dear Lord?” Judas has not yet betrayed him; the rabble have not yet apprehended him, and dragged him away, like a flagitious malefactor: as yet his face is not dishonored with spitting nor bruised with blows; as yet I see no crown of thorns upon his sacred head; no nails in his hands and feet; no spear in his side; no streams of blood and water running down his body. He is at liberty, and surrounded with his usual friends: nay, at this time even the despised Jesus begins to grow popular; the humble Jesus, the man of sorrows, has just now entered Jerusalem in triumph, like a conqueror, surrounded with the applauses and hosannas of the multitude. Now also the first fruits of the Gentiles are brought to him; a number of Greek proselytes beg an interview with him, and desire his instructions; a thing so agreeable to him, that as soon as he hears of it, he cries out, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified, John 12:23. And why does my Lord alter his voice so soon? Why, my blessed Jesus, why this sudden fall from joy to trouble, from triumph to sorrow and perplexity? The reason was, that though his sufferings were not now upon him, yet he saw them approaching: he saw the fatal hour just at hand; and this immediate prospect raises all the passions of his human nature, and throws him into a sea of troubles. He did not fall into his sufferings through inadvertency, or the want of foresight; and his fortitude and resolution were not owing to any hopes of escape, or an expectation of better usage. But we are expressly told, that Jesus knew all things that should come upon him, John 18:4. He saw the rugged road before him, all the way from his cradle to his cross. He rushed into dangers with his eyes open, and went on

courageously to encounter the last enemy, death, fully expecting to meet him in all his terrors.

Now the foresight of sufferings is a peculiar aggravation; it brings them upon the anxious expectant by anticipation: they are reflected back upon him, before they are actually inflicted; and thus the pain of a few moments may be diffused through a length of years. And sometimes the expectation of an evil is more tormenting than the evil itself. Our happiness is in a great measure owing to our being happily blind to the future, and ignorant of the calamities. But Jesus had not this mitigation of his sufferings: the cross, the scourge, the nails, the crown of thorns, were ever before his mind: so that he could say with yet greater reason than his servant Paul, I die daily, I am in deaths oft. By this painful foresight, the crown of thorns was always upon his head; the nails were all his days fastened in his hands and feet; and his whole life was, as it were, one continued crucifixion. How peculiarly aggravated, how long continued, how uninterrupted do the severities of his sufferings appear, when viewed in this light! And how does this display his fortitude and the strength of his love! Though he had this tragical prospect before him, yet he did not draw back or give up the arduous undertaking; but he resolutely held on his way; he was irresistibly carried to meet all these terrors, by his ardent zeal for his Father's glory, and his unconquerable love to the guilty creatures whose salvation he had undertaken. Sometimes, indeed, he shows he was a man; that he was capable of all the tender and painful sensations of human nature: and if he had not been such, his sufferings would have been no sufferings. At such times his innocent humanity seems struck aghast, pauses and hesitates, and would fain shrink away from the burden, would fain put by the bitter cup. But immediately the stronger principles of zeal for the divine glory, and

love to man, gain the ascendant, calm all these tumults of feeble nature, and irresistibly impel him on to the dreadful encounter in its most shocking appearances. Oh! The generous bravery of the Captain of our salvation! Oh! The all-conquering power of his love! The critics are in raptures on the bravery of Homer's Achilles, who engaged in the expedition against Troy, though he knew he should never return. But how much more worthy to be celebrated is the heroic love of Jesus, who voluntarily exposed himself to infinitely greater sufferings, when he foresaw them all, and knew what would be the consequence!

The language of raised passions is abrupt and hurrying; and in such language does our Lord here speak. Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? "What petition shall I ask of my Father? Such an hour of distress is a proper time to address him. But what shall I say to him? Shall I yield to the reluctance of my frail, human nature, that would draw back from suffering? Shall I urge the petition my feeble flesh would put into my mouth, and say, Father, save me from this hour? Father, dismiss me from this undertaking, and resign the glory which thou wouldst gain by the execution of it? Father, if it be possible, save sinners in some easier way; or let them perish, rather than that I should suffer so much for them? Shall this be my petition? No; I cannot bear the thought, that my Father should lose so much glory, and the objects of my love should perish. It was to suffer for these important purposes that I came unto this hour. For this I undertook to be the sinner's Friend and Mediator; for this I left my native paradise, and assumed this feeble flesh and blood; for this I have spent three-and-thirty painful years in this wretched world, that I might meet this dismal hour. And now, when it is come, shall I fly from it, or shall I drop an undertaking which I have so much at heart, and in which I am so far engaged? No; this

petition I will not urge, though it be the natural cry of my tender humanity. What then shall I say? Father, glorify thy name. This is the petition on which I will insist, come on me what will. Let the rabble insult me, as the offscouring of all things; let false witnesses accuse me, and perfidious judges condemn me, as a notorious criminal; let the blood-thirsty murderers rack me on the cross, and shed every drop of blood in my veins, still I will insist upon this petition; and not all the tortures that earth and hell can inflict shall force me to retract it; Father, glorify thy name: display the glory of thy attributes by my sufferings, and I will patiently submit to them all. Display the perfections of thy nature, exhibit an honorable representation of thyself to all worlds by the salvation of sinners through my death, and I will yield myself to its power in its most shocking forms. Let this end be but answered, and I am content. This consideration calms the tumult of passions in my breast, overpowers the reluctance of my human nature, and makes it all patience and submission.”

I intend, my brethren, to confine myself at present to this part of my text, this petition on which Jesus insists, and in which his mind acquiesces after perplexity and hesitation: Father, glorify thy name. And it evidently suggests to us this important truth, that the divine perfections are most illustriously displayed and glorified in the method of salvation through the sufferings of Christ.

This truth I shall endeavor to illustrate, after I have premised that it is most fit and proper that the glory of God should be the last end of all things, and particularly, that it should be his own principal end in all his works. He is in himself the most glorious of all beings, the supreme excellence, and the supreme good; and it is infinitely fit and reasonable that he should be known and acknowledged as such, and that it should be his great end in all

his works to represent himself in this light. It is but justice to himself, and it is the kindest thing he can do for his creatures, since their chief happiness must consist in the enjoyment of the supreme good, and as they cannot enjoy him without knowing it. Selfishness in creatures is a vile and wicked disposition, because they are not the greatest or best of beings; but for God to love and seek himself above all, is the same thing as to love and seek what is absolutely best; for such he is. The aims of creatures should reach beyond themselves, because God, the supreme good, lies beyond them; they should all terminate upon him, and should not fall short of him, as they cannot fly beyond him, because he is the supreme excellence, and it is not to be found anywhere else. But for this reason he must aim at himself, if he aims at what is absolutely best; for he only is so. For creatures to aim principally at their own glory, to set themselves off, and make it their end to gain applause, is vanity and criminal ambition, because they are really unworthy of it, and were formed for the glory of another, even of the great Lord of all. But for God to make his own glory the highest end, for him to aim at the display of his attributes in all his works is more decent and just, and infinitely distant from a vain ostentation, because there is nothing else so excellent, and so worthy of a display: his perfections deserve to be represented in the most illustrious light, and demand the highest veneration and love from the whole universe. In short, for God to aim at his own glory in all his actions, is but for him to do justice to infinite merit, to display the most perfect beauty, to illustrate supreme excellence, to exhibit the supreme good in a just light, to procure honor to what is in itself most honorable, and to represent the true God in the most godlike manner: and what can be more fit or decent? A lower end than this would be unworthy of him. This is of more real worth than the existence or the happiness of ten thousand worlds.

And this is the end which he has uniformly pursued in all the steps of creation, providence, and redemption. This particularly was his end in the permission of sin, and in the form of his administration towards our guilty world, through a Mediator. As, on the one hand, we are sure that he is not at all accessory to sin, as its proper producing cause, so we may be equally sure, on the other hand, that it has not entered into the world without his permission: that is, it could not have happened if he had hindered it. Now there were undoubtedly very good reasons for this permission; and one appears evident, namely, that if sin had never entered, it would have been impossible in the nature of things, that some of the divine perfections, particularly his punishing justice and his forgiving grace, should be displayed in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures. Pardoning grace could never be displayed, if there were no sin to be pardoned; nor vindictive justice, if there were no crimes to be punished: and, consequently, if moral evil had never been permitted, these perfections must have been for ever idle, concealed, and as much unknown, as if they did not belong to the divine nature. But now there is room for the various economy of providence towards guilty creatures, and particularly for the mediatorial scheme of salvation to our world. And I now proceed to show, that in this scheme all the perfections of God have an illustrious display, and are represented to the greatest advantage.

Here I would consider this scheme, both absolutely in itself and relatively, as a part of the grand administration towards the rational world. In the latter view, I shall consider it but briefly, and therefore I shall begin with it.

Considering it relatively, as a part of the divine economy towards the rational world, it concurs with the other parts, to show the amiable and wise

variety of the divine government, or in how many ways God can answer his ends, and display his perfections in his dispensations towards his creatures.

The Scriptures give us an account of the divine conduct towards two sorts of reasonable creatures, angels and men. And from thence we may also learn the wise variety of the divine dispensations towards them. A part of the angels were preserved in their primitive state of holiness, and a part of them were suffered to fall into sin. But the whole human race was permitted to fall, and not one of them continued in their original state of integrity. A part of the angels are happy for ever; and so is a number of mankind. But here lies the difference: the angels are continued in a state of happiness, from which they never fell; but the saved from among men are recovered from a state of sin and misery, into which they fell, to a state of happiness, which they had entirely lost. The angels are entitled to happiness upon the footing of a covenant of works, to which they have yielded perfect obedience; but men are saved entirely upon the plan of the covenant of grace, on account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to them and accepted for them, though it be not originally their own. The angels having never offended, have no need of a Mediator, or of redemption through his blood. But it is through a Mediator only that guilty mortals have access to God; and they owe their salvation to his death. As to the fallen angels, there was no Savior provided for them; but to us is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. They were never placed in a second state of trial, or under a dispensation of grace, but given up to irrecoverable ruin immediately, upon their first apostacy; but our guilty race is placed under a dispensation of grace, and made probationers, for a happy immortality after their first fall. The devils are irrecoverably lost for want of a Savior, but the sinners from among men perish by the neglecting a Savior. All the fallen angels, without



exception, are remedilessly miserable; but only a part of mankind share in their doom. The angels stood every one for himself, but Adam was constituted our representative; our concerns were lodged in his hands, and we fell in him. Now what a surprising variety is here! Here are some holy and happy beings, that were never otherwise; and some that are recovered to holiness and happiness, who had been deeply involved in guilt and misery: here are some rewarded for their own personal works of obedience; and some are saved by the righteousness of another; here are some that have access to God without a Mediator, and some through a Mediator. Some that have always gone on in an easy, natural tenor of uniform obedience; and some that have passed through various conflicts and temptations, and ascended to heaven from the field of battle; here are some shining in all the glory of native innocence, highly improved, but not new-created; and some repaired from their ruins, and formed anew. Here are some that perish without a dispensation of grace: some without the offer of a Savior, and some for rejecting the offer. Here are some sinners abandoned forever for the first offence; and some lost by abusing their time of trial and the means of their recovery. What various theatres are these, on which to display the glory of the divine perfections! What amazing wisdom to form so many different models of government, and so conduct and manage them all, as to answer the best ends! If there be any of the divine attributes that are most properly exercised upon sinless creatures that never fell, they meet with a proper object in the elect angels. If there be any perfections that cannot be displayed but upon the guilty, here are guilty men and angels, in the conduct toward whom they may shine in their full glory. If there be any of the divine attributes that may be represented in the most illustrious light, in the recovery of lost sinners through the obedience and sufferings of a Mediator,

here are thousands saved in this way from among men, who will be the everlasting monuments of their amiable glories. If any of the divine perfections can receive more honor by punishing abandoned criminals immediately given up to remediless ruin, they receive that honor from the everlasting punishment of the fallen angels; or if any of them be displayed to greater advantage, by the punishment of the ungrateful abusers of the means of grace, and a time of trial, the impenitent and unbelieving sons of men are a proper object for them. To all which I may add, that here we have the divine perfections displayed in justification by works and by grace, in inflicting punishment upon the proper offender, and upon Jesus Christ as a surety: and whatever glory may be peculiar to one or other of these ways, or may result from them all conjunctly as one whole, or system of government, all that glory redounds to the divine perfections. Thus you see the method of salvation through Christ, considered as a part of the grand scheme of the divine government, tends to the illustration of the perfections of God: it is one link in the bright chain; and should it be broken or removed, the whole system and contexture would be shattered or left incomplete. Thus St. Paul tells us, that by the dispensations of grace towards the church, are made known, not only to men, but to principalities and powers (that is, to the angels) the manifold wisdom of God, his variegated and beautifully diversified wisdom.

Ephes, 3:10. And oh! That our eyes may be enlightened to behold and admire it! However little this divine scheme be regarded in our blind and ungrateful world, the various ranks of angels cannot behold it with careless eyes: they stoop, and look, and pry into it, with a divine curiosity and an insatiable eagerness, through all eternity. But let us now proceed to a more particular survey of this scheme, considered absolutely in itself; and, in this

view, we shall find the divine perfections are displayed more gloriously by it, than by any other; particularly—as to the degree—the harmony—the universality—the grace and benevolence—and the wonderful and surprising manner of the display.

I. By this scheme the divine perfections are displayed in the highest degree possible. It appears that such and such attributes not only belong to God, but that they are in him in the highest perfection. Goodness had already displayed itself all the world over, in giving life, and breath, and all things to the sons of men, from age to age. But what are the blessings of the sun and rain, what are the productions of the earth, when compared to his only begotten Son, the man that was his fellow, whom he loved more than ten thousand worlds! This is an unspeakable gift; this the richest gift which even the infinite goodness of God could bestow: almighty love could do no more; this was its *ne plus ultra*. The creation and support of millions of worlds would not have displayed such a degree of love and goodness as this. God had displayed his holiness and justice, and his abhorrence of sin, by the variety of his judgments upon a guilty world; and he will display these attributes to all eternity by the more dreadful punishments of hell. But the subjects of these punishments are creatures of an inferior order; and they have provoked their gracious Sovereign, and most justly incurred his displeasure, by their own personal crimes. These he may therefore punish, and yet spare his Son, when he only becomes the surety of the guilty, and he is chargeable with no sin of his own, but only the imputed guilt of others. The dignity of his person, the greatness of the love of his Father to him, his personal innocence, and the benevolence of his design, plead for him, and seem to promise him an exemption, or at least the mitigation of his sufferings. This now is the greatest trial that can be made, whether divine

justice be strictly inexorable, whether God can be prevailed upon by the strongest possible inducements to connive at sin, and dispense with his law. Had the doom of the whole created universe been suspended on it, it would not have been so great a trial. And what was the issue? St. Paul will tell you the amazing result, God spared not his own Son, his proper, peculiar Son, but delivered him up to death. Rom. 8:32. When the honor of his justice and holiness were at stake, even the Father would not relent; but with his own mouth he issues out the dread commission, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd.” Zech. 13:7. Now it even pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief. Isa. 53:10. And could there be a more astonishing display of justice and the sacred honors of the divine government? Could a more striking proof be given of the infinite holiness of the divine nature, the malignity of sin, and his implacable hatred to it? No! All the punishments of hell can never give such an illustrious display of these perfections. I might show how sundry other attributes, particularly wisdom and veracity, are illustrated to the highest degree possible by this scheme; but my time denies me that pleasure.

II. The divine perfections are displayed in the most perfect harmony in this method of salvation: I mean such of them as seemed to jar, to cloud the glory of each other, or to be incapable of being illustrated at once, are now reconciled and mingle their beams, and, instead of obscuring, reflect a glory upon each other. The matter was so circumstanced, that it seemed really impossible to men and angels to display several divine perfections conjunctly. There seemed to be a necessity that one or other of them should be eclipsed; for if grace should be displayed in the universal pardon of sin, without the infliction of punishment, what will become of justice? How will

the holiness of God be displayed? How will the honor of the law and the sacred rights of government be secured? But if these be illustrated by the punishment of sin, how will the goodness, grace, and mercy of God appear in diffusing happiness, in conferring blessings on the unworthy, and in relieving the miserable! If sinners are saved without a satisfaction, how will it appear that God is righteous, and hates all moral evil? Or if a full satisfaction be made, how will it appear that their salvation is of grace? Can sin be punished, and yet the sinner escape without punishment? What device shall be found out for this? If sin pass unpunished, where is the honor of justice? And if all sinners are punished, where is the glory of grace? If the threatened penalty be not executed, is not the divine veracity rendered suspicious? And if it be executed, what will become of the amiable attribute of mercy? These, my brethren, are a few of the difficulties with which the case was embarrassed and perplexed; and they would have nonplused all created understandings: nothing but the infinite wisdom of God could surmount them. You see that the illustration of one set of perfections seems to cast a cloud over another set. To whatever side the Deity inclines, there seems to be a necessity that he should be but half-glorious, like the sun under a partial eclipse. And is there any method in which he may be represented as he is, all-glorious throughout?

*“A God all o’er, consummate, absolute,*

*Full-orb’d, in his whole round of rays complete,”—Young.*

Yes; such a method is the plan of salvation through Christ. These apparently clashing attributes harmonize: and are so far from clouding each other, that they are each of them displayed to greater advantage than if only one had been singly exercised. They reflect a mutual glory upon each other; and every one appears more illustrious in conjunction with the rest, than if

it shone alone with his own peculiar glory. Here justice is honored by the infliction of the punishment upon Christ, as the surety of sinners; and yet goodness, grace, and mercy, shine in full glory in their salvation. They are saved upon the footing of strict justice, because their surety made a complete satisfaction for them; and yet they are saved through grace, because it was grace that provided and accepted this method of vicarious satisfaction. The honors of the divine government are secured by Christ's perfect obedience to the law; and the philanthropy and mercy of the divine administration are also exhibited in the salvation of those who in their own persons had broken the law. Thus, according to that prophetic oracle, Mercy and truth are met together, and agreed; righteousness and peace have kissed each other in perfect friendship. Psalm 85:10,11. Here also the wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed, in concerting such an amazing plan as would reconcile these seemingly opposite attributes, and advance the honor of all by the exercise of each; and even of that which appeared most inconsistent with the rest. This scheme bears the peculiar seal and stamp of the most finished wisdom. In it are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Oh! The depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God that appears in it! It was only his infinite wisdom that could invent such a scheme: it surpassed all created understanding. Hence it is often called "the wisdom of God in a mystery: the mystery which has been hid from ages and generations:" and it is said to reveal things "which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived." 1 Cor. 2:9.

To this head I may subjoin, that in Christ, as Mediator, are reconciled the most opposite and seemingly contradictory characters. Things may be truly and consistently predicated of him which cannot agree to any one subject besides himself. A God-man, divinity and humanity united in one person;

the Ancient of Days, yet not but 1760 years old; the everlasting Father, and yet the virgin Son, the child of Mary; the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and yet the Servant of servants. The highest dignity and glory, and the lowest condescension and humility meet in him. Here is justice punishing every the least sin, and yet grace to pardon the very greatest of sinners. Here are infinite majesty, and the most transcendent meekness: the deepest reverence toward God, and a full equality with him: infinite worthiness of good, and the most perfect patience under the suffering of evil; a submissive, obedient spirit, and supreme and universal dominion; absolute sovereignty and humble resignation. Jesus conquers by falling, saves others by dying himself, and the blood of his heart becomes the grand cure for the dying world. In him we see the highest love to God, and in the meantime the greatest love to the enemies of God; the greatest regard to the divine holiness, and the greatest benevolence to unholy sinners. It would be endless to enumerate all the opposite excellencies and characters that meet and harmonize in Jesus Christ; but these may suffice as a specimen. And what a surprising complication of things is here! Things that never did, or could meet in any other, harmoniously center in him. How justly is his name called Wonderful! For as his name is, so is he: and as such, he will appear to all that know him to all eternity. How bright and astonishing is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! “That face, in which sense discovers nothing but marks of pain and disgrace; that bloated, mangled visage, red with gore, covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes, and pale with death; that would be the last object in which the carnal mind would seek to see the glory of the God of life, a visage clouded with the horror of death; in that face we may see more of the divine glory than in the face of heaven and earth.” He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God;

that is, in him is the brightest display of his wisdom and power, as well as of his other attributes. But I must proceed.

III. The perfections of God are more universally displayed in the method of salvation through Christ than in any other way.

The wisdom, power, and goodness of God are displayed in the formation of the world; and there are many traces of these perfections, as well as of his justice, discoverable in the government of it. But there is a more full and striking view of these exhibited in the government of the world upon the plan of redemption, with the additional illustration of some other attributes, which would have been unknown or discovered only by some feeble glimmerings, if the world had never been governed upon this plan. Here, as I observed, the goodness of God in all its forms is illustriously displayed; grace in bestowing free favors upon the guilty and undeserving; mercy and compassion in relieving the miserable; patience and long-suffering in bearing so long with provoking, obstinate rebels; whereas if there had been no guilt, misery and rebellion permitted to enter into the world; or if no guilt had been pardoned, no misery relieved, no rebellion endured, there would have been no room for the display of grace, mercy, and patience. Here justice shines, and shines with peculiar advantage; now it appears to be an inseparable attribute of the Deity, and which he can in no case dispense with. Here veracity appears unstained, in executing the penalty of the law, even upon the darling Son of God. The majesty of the divine government and its sacred rights, these, too, are represented as inviolable and venerable, and demanding the regard of the whole creation; whereas, if there had been no guilt, there could have been no object upon which the awful honors of divine justice might be displayed; and if all guilt had been pardoned without satisfaction, this majestic attribute, so venerable and so



amiable in the character of a ruler, would have been for ever concealed; or rather, great umbrage would have been given, that such a perfection did not belong to the supreme Governor of the world. And a judge without justice, a lawgiver who does not enforce his laws by proper sanctions, could be agreeable to none but willful criminals. A petty kingdom of the earth would soon become a scene of lawless violence and confusion under such a ruler; and how dreadful would be the case, if the whole universe were under such a head! Here also is a most illustrious display of divine power. Though Christ was crucified in weakness, yet omnipotence shone even upon the cross. This may seem a paradox. "The Jews thought Christ's crucifixion a demonstration of his want of power; hence they upbraided him, that he that wrought so many miracles, suffered himself to hang upon the cross; but this was the greatest miracle of all. They asked why he, who saved others, saved not himself: they named the reason, without taking notice of it: that was the very reason why at that time he saved not himself, because he saved others. The motive of his enduring the cross was powerful divine love, stronger than death: the fruits of it powerful divine grace, the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16, making new creatures, raising souls from the dead; these are acts of omnipotence. We justly admire the power of the Creator, in the motion of the heavenly bodies; but the motion of souls towards God as their center is far more glorious. The curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. So they found it who first brought it upon themselves. It sunk legions of angels, who excel in strength, from the heaven of heavens to the bottomless pit. And the same weight hung over the head of man. Before man could bear it, before any person could bear his own proportion of it, it behooved, as it were, to be divided into numberless parcels, and distributed among all mankind, allowing every sinner his share.

Man, after numberless ages, would have borne but a small part; the wrath to come would have been wrath to come to all eternity. But Christ had strength to bear it all, to bear it all at once, to bear it all alone; and what a glorious manifestation of his might was this! Of the noblest kind of might, that he was mighty to save?”—I might be more particular, but time will not allow.

IV. The scheme of salvation through the sufferings of Christ gives the most gracious, benevolent, and amiable display of the divine perfections. This is evident at first sight, from this consideration, that by this scheme sinners, such sinners as we, may be saved. Oh the joyful sound! Salvation for the lost, pardon for the condemned, sanctification for the unholy, life for the dead! What can be more agreeable to us? Angels contemplate this plan with eternal pleasure, though they do not need nor receive such blessings from it; and how much more should we who are so nearly interested! Goodness, grace, and mercy, are always the favorite attributes to guilty creatures such as we are; and where do they shine so bright in heaven or earth, as in the cross of our dying Jesus? But you will say, “Suppose that the sins of men had been pardoned, and they saved, without the sufferings of Christ in their stead? Suppose that the stern attribute of justice had never been displayed in the infliction of punishment either upon sinners, or upon their surety, where would have been the injury? Would not the Deity have appeared in a still more amiable light, as all benevolence and mercy?” So criminals may surmise, whose interest it is that there should be no such attribute as punitive justice. But I appeal to angels, who are not parties, as criminals are, but competent judges; I appeal to every lover of virtue and piety; nay, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether a ruler without justice would be an amiable character in their view? Would they choose to live under a government where vice, violence, and confusion,

were not restrained by the execution of the law, but shared in the rewards, or at least, in the indemnity of perfect obedience? Would they choose a king, who, through a false notion of lenity and mercy, would suffer criminals to pass with impunity? Do not the innocent part of the subjects approve of the conduct of their rulers in condemning and executing criminals, as well as in protecting themselves? And what a murmuring spreads through a government, when such are tolerated or approved? The complaint we hear of the excessive strictness of divine justice, the cruelty of eternal torments, &c., is the voice of guilt, and we should regard it no more than the clamors of a band of robbers against the just laws of their country. Justice, my brethren, is not that grim, horrible, and forbidden attribute, which the guilty are apt to imagine; it is not only a majestic, but an amiable, agreeable, lovely perfection; it is a part of the moral beauty of the divine nature; it is essential to the character of a good ruler; it is necessary to the public good; it is absolutely necessary to the exercise of goodness itself. The judicious, well-conducted exercise of goodness is not a promiscuous, indiscriminating communication of happiness at random; but the communication of happiness according to the real characters of the subjects; it supposes a distinction of the obedient and disobedient. No government can subsist without this; and this is the very nature of distributive justice. Hence it follows, that the display of divine justice, as well as grace, in the sufferings of Christ, represents the divine nature in an amiable light to us, as infinitely worthy of our love as well as of our fear. But,

V. The way of salvation through the sufferings of Jesus Christ gives the most wonderful and surprising display of the perfections of God. That is a cause of wonder and surprise, which is strange and uncommon, new and

unexpected; and certainly we can never meet with things more strange, uncommon, and unexpected, than in the way of salvation through Christ. I have mentioned some of them already with another view; and now I shall enumerate a few wonders more. At the creation, a world was brought out of a state of non-existence into being; but in this way sinners are brought into a state of complete happiness and glory out of a state infinitely worse than that of nonexistence. In the old creation, as there were no preexistent materials or tendency to existence, so there was no resistance: but in the new creation, there is a strong resistance, an obstinate opposition of corrupt nature against the operation; and yet, behold all things are made new! Who would ever have thought that the apostate angels should have been abandoned to remediless ruin, while a Savior is provided for the inferior order of man? Had Adam been plainly informed that He, by whom he and all things were made, should assume his frail and mortal nature, how would he have wondered! And how must angels wonder, to see the Creator and the creature made one person! To see their Lord and Master become man, a man that in his best estate was made a little lower than they! How strange, that guilty mortals should be saved by the death of the Lord of life! How astonishing that a church should be purchased by the blood of God I how strange and surprising, that the reputed son of the carpenter, the despised Nazarene, should be made “head over all things! That every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him,” that had been so rudely insulted and treated as the most contemptible malefactor! That the reputed criminal, condemned by Pilate, and crucified on Mount Calvary, should be made the only Savior, and the supreme Judge of mankind! How strange, that the blood of the cross should restore peace to earth and heaven, and be the grand remedy of a dying world! That the guilty should be redeemed by the

death of the innocent! That death should be conquered by the death of the Author of life! That the greatest sin that ever was committed on our guilty globe, namely, the murder of the Son of God, should be the occasion of the pardon of sin, even for his murderers! Are not these, my brethren, strange, unprecedented things! Can you find anything like them in heaven or earth? These are objects of grateful astonishment to all the celestial armies through all the periods of their happy immortality.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections and exhortations.

1. You hence see what should principally recommend the gospel scheme to us; namely, that it promotes the glory of God, and gives such an advantageous, amiable, and majestic view of his perfections. This is the grand design of God, and the only design worthy of him in all his works, and particularly in making this constitution. It was this consideration induced the blessed Jesus to go through his painful work, and therefore on this account principally we should delight in this method. And this is the disposition of all those that are conformed to God, and have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Our own salvation should indeed be dear to us, but not merely because it is ours, but because it tends to bring glory to God, the great end of all things. Therefore,

2. They who have never been sensible of the glory of God manifested in this method of salvation, and charmed with the divine perfections displayed therein, have not complied with it, and cannot be saved by it. None can be saved by it, that do not heartily approve of it; and none can rationally approve of it, till they see its glory. It is the characteristic of all true believers, that God hath shined into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 4:6, and 3:18. It is natural to all to desire to be saved: but they are not solicitous about the

glory of God; let them be but safe, and the selfish creatures care little for anything else. But heaven itself is recommended to a pious soul by the thought that it may be brought thither in a way that tends to advance his glory. Alas! If this be the case, how many of you are quite off from the only plan of salvation! You see no peculiar glories in it, and it does not attract your hearts as the grand scheme for illustrating the divine perfections; and consequently you have no interest in it.

3. Hence see the aggravated guilt of not accepting this method of salvation; it is a hostile attempt upon the divine glory; it is the worst of sacrilege; and as such Jehovah resents it.

4. You may hence see how secure you are of salvation who are upon the gospel plan. Your salvation in this way is for the glory of the divine perfections. God is so far from having any objections against it, that on the other hand, his honor is advanced by it; and therefore he will take the same care of your salvation as he will of his own glory, which is concerned therein.

5. These things may endear the institution of the Lord's supper to you as exhibiting these glories, by sacred emblems, to your senses: therefore you should esteem it, and reverently attend upon it.

It is true, this ordinance represents the Lord Jesus in his lowest state of abasement. But even in his lowest state there appears a peculiar glory. Here I cannot deny you the pleasure of a quotation from that excellent man, Mr. Mac Laurin, once my friend and correspondent, now the companion of angels, an inhabitant of a better world. "Even the meanness of Christ did not wholly becloud his glory: many beams shone through the disguise. His birth was mean on earth below: but it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above. He had a poor lodging; but a star lighted

visitants to it from distant countries. Never prince had such visitants, so conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other kings have: but he was attended with multitudes of patients, seeking and obtaining healing of soul and body; that was more true greatness than if he had been attended with crowds of princes. He made the dumb that attended him to sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. He had no guard of soldiers, nor magnificent retinue of servants: but, as the centurion that had both, acknowledged, health and sickness, life and death, took orders from him; even the winds and storms, which no earthly power could control, obey him; and death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey when he demanded it. He did not walk upon tapestry; but when he walked on the sea, the waters supported him. All parts of the creation, except sinful man, honored him as their Creator. He had no treasure; but when he had occasion for money, the sea sent it to him in the mouth of a fish. He had no barns nor corn-fields; but when he inclined to make a feast, a few loaves covered a sufficient table for many thousands. Nor was his glory wholly clouded at his death: he had not indeed that fantastic equipage of sorrow that other great persons have on such occasions, but the frame of nature solemnized the death of its Author: heaven and earth were mourners, the sun was clad in black; and if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth trembled under the awful load. There were few to pay the Jewish compliment of rending their garments; but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels. He had not a grave of his own, but other men's graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of such a tenant in their territories; but he came there not as a subject, but as an invader, a conqueror; it was then that the king of terrors lost his sting, and on the third day the Prince of Life

triumphed over him, spoiling death and the grave.” These are the things, my brethren, this ordinance was designed to commemorate: and certainly these are full of glory.

6. These things may furnish you with proper materials for meditation this day. Fix your thoughts upon the glories of God displayed in a crucified Jesus; take a survey of the scheme of salvation through his blood, as bringing not only salvation to you, but honor to him; and wonder, love, and adore.

Finally, let us all fall in with this glorious method of salvation; and join with God and Christ, and the whole creation, in glorifying God in this way; and in this way, and none else, we shall find salvation for ourselves.



# *SERM. XXXVIII. RELIGION THE HIGHEST WISDOM, AND SIN THE GREATEST MADNESS AND FOLLY.*

**P**salms 111:10.— *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.*

Wisdom is a character so honorable and ornamental to a reasonable being, that those who best knew the dignity of their own nature, have had no higher ambition than to be esteemed and called lovers of it. Hence the original of the name Philosopher, which signifies no more than a lover of wisdom. On the other hand, there is hardly any character deemed more reproachful, or that is more resented, than that of a fool. Men are often as jealous of the reputation of their understandings as of their morals, and think it as great a reproach to be without sense as without goodness.

There is a prodigious diversity in the intellectual capacities of mankind, and their souls differ as much as their bodies; but whether it be owing to the intrinsic difference of their souls, or to the different formation of their bodies, is not my present purpose to determine. Some, that share in human

nature, give very little discoveries of reason above the most sagacious sorts of brutes.

The generality are endowed with common sense, which, though it has nothing brilliant or pompous in it, and does not qualify them for high improvements in science, or making a figure in the learned world, yet it is sufficient for all the purposes of life, and the necessities of a human creature. There are a few also who seem raised beyond their species, and perhaps approach near to the lower ranks of angels by a superior genius. These have been the first inventors and improvers of useful arts and sciences; which others, of inferior understanding, are able to put in practice for their own purposes, though they had not sagacity at first to discover them.

This little world of ours is an improved spot in the creation. How vastly different an appearance does it now make from its original state of pure nature, when it emerged out of chaos, uncultivated by art! What numerous arts and trades have been found out to furnish life with necessities and comforts! How deeply have some penetrated into the world of knowledge! They have traced the secret workings of nature; they have even brought intelligence from the worlds above us, and discovered the courses and revolutions of the planets.

When you see these discoveries, you would conclude mankind to be a wise race of creatures; and indeed in such things as these, they discover no inconsiderable abilities. Almost every man in his province can manage his affairs with some judgment. Some can manage a farm; others are dexterous in mechanics; others have a turn for mercantile affairs; others can unfold the mysteries of nature, and carry their searches far into the ideal worlds; others can conduct an army, or govern a nation. In short, every man forms some

scheme which he apprehends will conduce to his temporal advantage; and prosecutes it with some degree of judgment.

But is this all the wisdom that becomes a candidate for eternity? Has he a good understanding who only acts with reason in the affairs of this life; but, though he is to exist for ever in another world, and to be perfectly happy or miserable there, yet takes no thought about the concerns of his immortal state? Is this wisdom? Is this consistent even with common sense? No; with sorrow and solemnity I would speak it, the most of men in this respect are fools and madmen; and it is impossible for the most frantic madman in Bedlam to act more foolishly about the affairs of this life, than they generally do about the affairs of religion and eternity. There is such a thing as a partial madness; a person may have, as it were, one weak side to his mind, and it may be sound and rational in other respects. You may meet with some lunatics and madmen that will converse reasonably with you, and you would not suspect their heads are disordered till you touch upon some particular point, and then you are to expect reason from them no more; they talk the wildest nonsense, and are governed entirely by their imaginations. Thus, alas! It is with the generality of mankind in the present case. They are wise for this world; they talk and act at least agreeably to common sense; but hear them talk and observe their conduct about the concerns of their souls, and you can call them reasonable creatures no longer. They “are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge: there is none that understandeth: there is none that seeketh after God.” To bring them to themselves by exposing to them their madness, is my present design.

The text shows us the first step to true wisdom, and the test of common sense: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good

understanding have all they that do his commandments.” This is so frequently repeated, that it may pass for a Scripture maxim: and we may be sure it is of singular importance. Job starts the question, “Where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” He searches nature through in quest of it, but cannot find it; he cannot purchase it with the gold of Ophir; and its price is above rubies. At length he recollects the primitive instruction of God to man, and there he finds it: “To man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” Job 28:28. Solomon, the wisest of men, begins his proverbs with this maxim, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Prov. 1:7; and he repeats it again, Prov. 9:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy, (the knowledge of those that may be called saints with a sneer,) is understanding.”

The fear of the Lord, in Scripture, signifies not only that pious passion of filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion; hence it is explained in the last part of the verse, by doing his commandments. The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of Christianity; in short, all that holiness of heart and life which is necessary to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. So that the sense of the text is this: “To practice religion and virtue, to take that way which leads to everlasting happiness, is wisdom, true wisdom, the beginning of wisdom, the first step towards it; unless you begin here, you can never attain it; all your wisdom, without this, does not deserve the name; it is madness and nonsense. To do his commandments is the best test of a good understanding; a good, sound understanding have all they that do this, all of them without exception; however weak some of them may be in other things, they are wise in the

most important respect; but without this, however cunning they are in other things, they have lost their understandings; they contradict common sense; they are beside themselves. In short, to pursue everlasting happiness as the end, in the way of holiness as the mean, this is wisdom, this is common sense; and there can be none without this.”

Wisdom consists in two things; choosing a right end, and using right means to obtain it. Now what end so becoming a creature to live forever, as everlasting happiness? And in what way can it be obtained but in the way of holiness? Consult the judgment of God in his word; consult your own conscience, or even common sense, and you will find that this is the case. Therefore he is a man of sense that pursues this end in this way; but he is a fool, he is brutish, that chooses an inferior end, or that pursues this in a wrong way.

My time will not allow me to do any more than to mention some instances of the folly and madness of such as do not make the fear of the Lord the beginning of their wisdom.

I. Men will not take the safest side in religion, which their reason and self-love carry them to do in other cases.

It is very possible the love of ease and pleasure, and a self-flattering disposition, may prompt your invention to form a plausible system of religion; a religion that admits of great hopes with little evidences, and that allows you many indulgences, and lays few restraints upon you; a religion purged, as you imagine, from some of the melancholy and gloomy doctrines of Christianity, and that releases you from those restraints, so painful to a wicked heart, which the holy religion of Jesus lays upon you. It is very possible you may hope you shall obtain eternal happiness without much pains, and without observing the strictness of universal holiness; you may

indulge hopes of heaven, though you indulge yourselves willfully in sin; you may flatter yourselves that God is not so inexorably just as the sacred Scriptures represent him; and that his threatening's are only tremendous sounds without any design to be executed in all their strictness; you may flatter yourselves that the punishments of a future state are not intolerably dreadful, nor of everlasting duration; you may excuse and diminish your sins, and make a great many plausible apologies for them. But are you sure of these things? Have you demonstration for them upon which you may venture your eternal all? Think the matter over seriously again; have you certainty that these things are so? And are you willing to perish forever if they should be otherwise? What if you should be mistaken? What if you should find God as strict and holy as his word represents him? What if all his dreadful threatening's should be sincere and true, and your sins have infinitely greater malignity in his eyes than in yours? What if in a little time you should find that the Scriptures give a more just account of the punishments of hell than your self-flattering heart suggested to you, and that they are indeed intolerable and strictly eternal? What if you should find, when it is too late to correct the mistake, that those neglected, ridiculous things, regeneration, conversion, holiness of heart and practice, the mortification of sin, and a laborious course of devotion—what if you should find they are absolutely necessary to everlasting happiness? What if it should appear that the willful indulgence of the least known sin will eternally ruin you? Stand and pause, and ask yourselves, What if you should find matters thus, quite the reverse to what you flattered yourselves? What will become of you then? You are undone, irreparably undone through all eternity. Well, to speak modestly, this may be the case, for what you know; and is it not then the part of a wise man to provide against such a dreadful

contingency? Will you run so terrible a risk, and yet claim a good understanding? Do you esteem a life of religion so burdensome, that you had better make such a desperate venture than choose it? Do you esteem the pleasures of sin so sweet, so solid, so lasting, that it is your interest to run the risk of intolerable, eternal misery, rather than part with them? Can you form such an estimate as this while in your senses? No, he is a mad-man with whom certain pleasures for a little time, the sordid pleasures of sin, outweigh an eternity of perfect happiness. He is certainly not in his right mind that would rather be tormented in hell for ever, than lead a holy life, and labor to escape the wrath to come. Therefore act in this as you do in other cases of uncertainty, choose the safest side. Believe and regard what God has said; Be holy in all manner of conversation; strive with all your might to enter in at the straight gate; accept of Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do this, and you are safe, let the case be as it will; there are no bad consequences that can possibly follow from this conduct. It will, upon the whole, be the most pleasant for you, even in this life; and your reason will tell you, this is a more certain way to escape everlasting misery, and secure eternal happiness, than the contrary. But if you are resolutely set upon running the risk, and fool-hardy enough to venture your eternal all upon such improbabilities, not to say impossibilities, you forfeit the character of a reasonable being; you are mad in this respect, however wise you may be in others.

II. Is it not the greatest folly to believe, or profess to believe, the great truths of religion, and yet act quite contrary to such a belief?

How many are there who own God to be the greatest and the best of beings, and yet neglect him, and pay a greater regard to a thousand other things! They own him lovely, and do not love him; their King, and they do

not obey him; and their Benefactor, and make no returns of gratitude to him. They confess that heaven is better than earth, and yet they pursue the things of this life, to the neglect of all the happiness of heaven. They believe their souls are of more importance than their bodies; and yet they will not take half the care about them that they take about their bodies. They confess that a life of sin and impenitence is very dangerous, and that it will end in everlasting misery; yet, with this confession in their mouth, and this conviction in their consciences, they will, they obstinately will, go on impenitently in sin. They own that religion and virtue are excellent things, and yet they never make it the main business of their life, but live carelessly without them. They believe they are sinners, worthy of punishment, and yet they are generally as unconcerned as if they were innocent. They believe that Christ is the only Savior of sinners, and yet they are as little concerned to get an interest in him as if they could be saved without him. They believe that all the pleasures of this transitory life are infinitely inferior to the pleasures of religion and the happiness of the heavenly state; they believe these pleasures will ruin them forever if they continue in them, and yet they will persist in them, though by this they throw away their everlasting happiness, and incur eternal misery! Thus they believe, or profess to believe; and our country is full of such believers; but what absurd, self-contradicting creatures are they! What madness is it to entertain a belief that answers no other end but to condemn their practice, and aggravate their sin! Do they really believe these things, or do they not? If not, what folly is it to profess to believe them! Do they think to impose by an empty profession on Him who searches the hearts and the reins? Or have they no other end in their profession of religion, than just to be esteemed Christians by men? Can they think that their faith will indemnify them in contradicting it? Or



that they may sin safely, because they sin against knowledge? Are these the conclusions of a sound mind? Must not a man be out of his senses before he can admit them? But if you suppose they believe these things, it is certain they are entirely mad in this affair. What! To neglect God, and holiness, and heaven, when they know they are of infinite importance! To choose the ways of sin, when they believe they will end in ruin! Is this the part of a wise man? Should a sick man tell you he is certain to die unless he takes such a medicine, and yet you should see that he does not take it, but continues to drink the most deadly poison; what would you think of him? Would you not conclude either that he did not believe himself, or that he was distracted? But this is the very conduct of many professed believers, who yet think they have no small share of wisdom. I will not dispute your wisdom about your secular affairs; you may be wise to do evil; but I am sure in these instances you are quite delirious; and yourselves will be convinced of it to your cost, when God shall say unto you, “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.” Luke 12:20.

All your pleas to vindicate or excuse your conduct do but aggravate your folly. Do you say, “Your lusts are headstrong and ungovernable, and you cannot restrain them?” I doubt not but this is true; but is this a reason why you should be so easy and careless? Are your enemies so strong? And will you, on that very account, be faint and inactive in your resistance? Ought you not to rise and cry to God for his grace to change your nature; to subdue these strong sins, and make you holy, since without it you cannot be saved? Besides, consider whether your pretended excuse be not a real aggravation. “Your lusts are so strong, you say, that you cannot restrain them.” What is this but to say that you are so wicked, that you have no heart to break off from sin? And is the inveteracy of your wickedness an excuse

for it? Does not common sense remonstrate against such an absurdity? Do you plead, that “you intend to repent of this inconsistent conduct hereafter?” But if religion is an excellent thing, as you profess to believe it, why do you not choose it now? The sooner the better. Again, is it not the greatest folly to indulge yourselves in a practice that you deliberately intend to repent of? If your present conduct be wise, why do you intend to repent of it? The very intention implies that you are even now convinced it is foolish; and what will your repentance be but a deep sense of your folly? And can there be a greater madness than deliberately to do anything which at the very time you intend to repent of? Is there anything more absurd and ridiculous? Is this your conduct in other things? Will you make a bargain which you know you will afterwards repent of? Will you prosecute a scheme which you deliberately intend afterwards to condemn and be sorry for? Can you do such things, and yet take it ill to be called fools? Further, why do you design to repent? Is it because you hate sin? No; for if that was the reason, you would immediately forsake it. Is it because you love God and holiness? No; for then you would devote yourselves to the service of God immediately, and could not bear a delay. But you intend to force yourselves upon a little remorse of conscience, when the punishment of sin is just ready to fall upon you, with no other design but just to escape it. And can you think there is any value in such extorted sorrows, that proceed not from hatred of sin, or love to God, but merely from self-love and servile fear of punishment? Can any wise man look upon this as repentance to life, or hope that God will accept of it? Finally, are you sure of that uncertain hereafter, in which you purpose to repent? Is there any man in his senses that dare pretend he is certain of another day? Or that he shall not die by

some sudden accident, or in a delirium, in which he has no time nor composure to repent?

III. Is it not the greatest folly for men to pretend to love God, when their temper and conduct are inconsistent with it, and plainly evidential of the contrary?

If you go round the world with the question, “Do you love God? Do you love him above all?” you will hardly meet with anyone but what will answer, “Yes, to be sure; I have loved him all my life.” Well, but where are the evidences and effects of this love? If you pretend friendship to men, they expect the expressions of it from you on every occasion; otherwise they will see through the pretense and pronounce it flattery. They expect you should often think of them with tender affection, perform them all the good offices in your power, study to please them, be tender of their characters, solicitous about their interest, and delight in their society. These are the inseparable effects of love; and certainly, if you love God, your love will have such effects, especially since, if you love him at all with sincerity, you love him above all other persons and things. But men will insist upon it that they love him above all, and yet very seldom or never think of him with tender affection: they love him above all, and yet indulge themselves in sin, that abominable thing, which he hates: they love him above all, and yet have little solicitude about pleasing him, and doing his will: they love him above all, and yet are unconcerned about the interests of religion in the world, which are his interests, and careless about his honor and glory: they love him above all, and yet have no pleasure in conversing with him in prayer, and the other ordinances of his grace, where he holds spiritual interviews with his people. They love him above all, and yet love and delight in a thousand other things more than him; and they would highly

resent it if one should begin to question the sincerity of their love; and they hope God will accept of it, and reward it. But can men in their senses think that this will pass for true and supreme love with him that knows all things? They cannot expect that their fellow-creatures should thus be imposed upon; and is it not the greatest madness to imagine they can thus impose upon Omniscience? Indeed it may astonish any man that knows what love is, to find that the most of men pretend they love God, even while they are giving the most glaring evidences of disaffection to him; and after all, it is almost impossible to convince them that they do not thoroughly love him. What madness has seized the world, that they will not receive conviction in such a plain case! What mean thoughts must they have of God, when they think to put him off with such an empty compliment, and hypocritical profession!

IV. Is it not the greatest folly for men to hope for heaven, when they have no evidences at all of their title to it, or fitness for it?

Is it not the dictate of common sense, that no man can be happy in anything but what he has a relish for, and delights in? Can an illiterate rustic find pleasure in rigid mathematical demonstrations, and learned speculations; or a man of pleasure and business in the ascetic, mortified life of a hermit? Can a man, whose taste is vitiated by sickness, enjoy happiness in the entertainments of a feast? No, nothing can make a man happy, but what is suited to his relish and disposition. And yet there are thousands that have no relish for the enjoyment of God, no pleasure in thinking of him, or conversing with him, no delight in his service and acts of devotion, who yet hope to be forever completely happy in these exercises in heaven. The happiness of heaven, as I have often told you, consists in such things as these, and how can you hope to be happy there while you have no pleasure

in them? There are thousands who have no delight in anything holy or religious, but only in the gratification of their senses and the enjoyment of earthly things, who yet hope to be happy in heaven, in the want of all sensual and earthly enjoyments. There are thousands who now disgust the society of the religious as intolerably precise, who yet flatter themselves they shall be perfectly happy in the company of saints and angels, where the meanest is incomparably more holy than the most sanctified creature upon earth. And have they a sound understanding who can entertain such absurd hopes? Does not common sense tell us, that God, who does everything wisely, will bring none to heaven but those whom he has made fit for it beforehand? And that as none shall be sent to hell but those that were previously wicked, so none shall be admitted into the world of glory but those who are previously made holy? None first begin to be holy in heaven or wicked in hell: both parties bring with them those dispositions which are fit for their respective places and employments. How absurd is it, therefore, to hope for heaven, while you have no heavenly dispositions! You may as well hope to see the sun without eyes. Further, God has assured you in his word, and you profess to believe him, that without regeneration, faith, repentance, and interest in Christ, and universal holiness, you cannot enter into his kingdom; and yet, are there not some of you who are foolish enough to hope for it, though destitute of all these? Has he not told you that drunkards, swearers, unclean, malicious, contentious persons, liars, and the like, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? And yet, though you know these are your characters, and the world knows it too, you will hope for admission to it, in defiance of God's most express repeated declarations! What madness is this! And how peculiar to this affair! The debauchee will not expect happiness in mortification and devotion, nor the prodigal in

hoarding up useless wealth; and yet thus absurdly will they act in their expectations of heaven!

V. And lastly, Is it not the greatest madness to be more concerned about the affairs of time than those of eternity?

It is plain to any man in his senses, that the happiness and misery which are extreme, and which shall endure forever, are of infinitely greater importance than all the enjoyments and all the sufferings of this transitory state. And you will hardly meet with any man but will own this to be his belief. But alas! Into what consternation may it strike us, when we survey the conduct of the generality!

Are they as much concerned about the eternal world to which they are hastening, as the concerns of time? Are they as laborious and zealous to obtain everlasting happiness as to gain the riches of this world, or to gratify their sensual appetites? Are they as solicitous to avoid everlasting misery as to shun sickness, poverty, or any temporal calamity? Are they as cautious of sinning, which ruins their souls forever, as of drinking poison, which may endanger their health or temporal life? Do not many of you know it is quite the reverse with you? Are not the concerns of this life the principal objects of your thoughts, your cares, and labors? And what can be a more consummate folly? You practically prefer a trifle of an hour to a substantial good of endless duration. You are careless about everlasting torment, and yet cautiously shun the light sufferings of a few moments. It matters not what you think or say in this matter; it is your practice that determines the affair; and does not that show that time outweighs a vast eternity with you? And what can be more absurd! If you should throw away an estate to gain a farthing, if you should run upon a drawn sword to escape a prickle, if you should prefer pebbles to crowns and kingdoms, darkness to light, or one

luxurious meal to the support of your whole life, it would not be so shocking a piece of madness.

I might give you many more instances of the madness of those who do not begin this wisdom with the fear of the Lord, but the inferences from the subject are so numerous and important, that I must reserve the rest of the time for them.

1. Since there is so much folly in the world in matters of religion, how astonishing is it that it is not universally contemned and ridiculed, or pitied and lamented! If men act a foolish part in other things, they soon furnish matter of laughter and contempt to the gay and witty part of mankind; and the thoughtful and benevolent view them with compassion. But let them act ever so foolishly in the concerns of eternity, there is hardly any notice taken of it; the absurdity is no way shocking; nay, the generality commend their conduct by imitating it themselves; and if any are so wise as to find fault with this madness, they are termed fools themselves, and the general laugh is turned against them. How unaccountable is this, that men who act prudently in other things, and are easily shocked with a mad and frantic behavior, can view the folly of mankind in this respect without horror, or perhaps with approbation! The only reason for it is, that the generality are madmen in this respect, and the folly is approved because it is common. To be singularly wise is to be foolish, in the opinion of the world; and to be fools with the multitude, is the readiest way to get the reputation of wisdom. They prove religion to be folly, by a majority of votes; and as many who are fools in this affair are wise in other respects, their judgment is implicitly submitted to. But pray, sirs, use your own reason, and judge impartially for yourselves, and I am sure you must see the wild absurdity of their conduct. Be nobly singular in beginning wisdom with the fear of the Lord; and

whatever others think of you now, God, angels, and good men will applaud your wisdom; and even those who now ridicule it, will approve of it at last.

2. With what an ill grace do the irreligious condemn and despise those that make religion their great concern, as weak, silly creatures! Sinners, let your own reason determine, can there be anything more foolish than your own behavior? And does it become you to brand others with the odium of folly? Alas! You have reason to turn your contempt upon yourselves, and to be struck with horror at your own willful stupidity. Do you set yourselves up as the standards of wisdom, who want sense to keep out of everlasting ruin? Are you wise men, who throw away your eternal happiness for the trifles of time? No, they only are wise who are wise for eternity. You may excel them in a thousand things; nature may have favored you with a better genius; you may have had a more liberal education; you may be better acquainted with men and books; you may manage your secular affairs with more discretion; in such things you may be wiser than many of them. But they are wise for eternity! They have sense to escape everlasting burnings! They have wisdom to obtain eternal happiness! And this is a more important piece of wisdom than all your acquisitions. The wisdom of Solomon, of Socrates, or Plato, is the wildest madness without this. How absurd is it therefore for you, without this, to arrogate the character of men of wisdom, or even of common sense!

3. How absurd is it for men to pretend they will not turn their thoughts to religion, lest it should make them melancholy or distracted! Alas, sinners! You cannot be more so than you are already; and you will never come to yourselves till, with the prodigal, you determine to return to your father's house. And will you continue fools through the fear of becoming such? I



can assure you, I would rather be the wildest frantic in Bedlam, than be that wretch who ruins his soul for fear of running mad by thinking of it.

4. If the fear of the Lord, religion, is the perfection of wisdom, how unreasonably does the world charge it with making people mad? There are multitudes that lose their senses by excessive sorrows and anxieties about some temporal affair; many more than by religion; and yet they never fall out with the world on this account. But when any one, that seemed thoughtful about religion, loses his senses, then religion, be sure, must bear all the blame; and sinners are glad to catch at such a handle to expose it. Melancholy persons are wont to derive terrors from everything in their reach; and, among other things, will pour upon all those doctrines of religion that can affright them. But this melancholy, as such, is a bodily disorder, and therefore has no more religion in it than a fever or a consumption. It is indeed very possible that too intense application of the mind to divine things, with a deep concern about our everlasting state, may be the occasion of melancholy: but there is nothing peculiar in this; let the mind be excessively attentive to anything, it will have the same effect. How many disorders do men contract by their eager pursuit of the world! And yet the world is their favorite still. But if one here and there suffers by occasion of religion, oh I they bless themselves from it, and think it is a terrible gloomy thing. Those that are pious, let me tell you, are many of them much superior to the wisest of us in all accomplishments; and they are generally as far from madness as their neighbors. Therefore drop this senseless slander, and be yourselves holy if you would be truly wise.

5. Since men are such fools in matters of religion, since they censure it with so much severity and contempt, how astonishing is it that God should send down that divine, heaven-born thing, religion, into our world, where it

is so much neglected and abused! Where the celestial guest meets with but few hearts that will entertain it; where its professors neglect it, contradict it, and by their practice call it madness; and where even its friends and subjects frequently treat it very unkindly! What astonishing condescension and grace is it, that God has not left our mad world to themselves, since they are so averse to be reclaimed! But lo! He hath sent his Son, he hath instituted the gospel, and a thousand means of grace, to bring them to themselves!

6. And lastly, Hence we may infer, that human nature is exceedingly depraved and disordered. I think this is as plain as any disorder incident to the body. Men are universally indisposed as to religion; and on this account our world is, as a great genius calls it, “the Bedlam of the universe.” The same natural faculties, the same understanding, will, and affections, that render us able to act with prudence in the affairs of this life, are also sufficient for the affairs of religion; but, alas! With regard to this, they are disordered, though they exercise themselves aright about other things. They can acquire the knowledge of languages and sciences; but, alas! They have no disposition to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. They understand how to trade, and carry on schemes for this world; but they will not act wisely for eternity. They have sense enough not to run into the fire, or to drink poison; but they will run on in the ways of sin to everlasting misery. They will ask the way when they have lost themselves; but how hard is it to bring them to inquire, What shall I do to be saved? They will ask help for their bodies from their fellow-creatures, but how hard is it to bring them in the posture of earnest petitioners to ask immortal blessings for their souls from God! In short, they can contrive with prudence, and act with vigor, courage, and perseverance, in the affairs of time; but in the

concerns of religion and eternity they are ignorant, stupid, languid, and careless. And how can we account for this, but by supposing that they are degenerate creatures, and that their nature has suffered a dreadful shock by the first fall, which has deprived them of their senses? Alas! This is a truth too evident to be denied!

# *SERM. XXXIX. REJECTION OF CHRIST A COMMON, BUT MOST UNREASONABLE INIQUITY.*

**M**<sup>ark 12:6.</sup>— *Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.*

There is no sin more common or more pernicious in the Christian world, than an unsuitable reception of Jesus Christ and the gospel. It is not only the sin of professed unbelievers and profane scoffers, but it often hides itself under the cloak of religion, and a profession of faith. It is of so subtle a nature, that it is often unsuspected, even by those who are destroyed by it: and it is of so deadly a nature, that nothing can save a soul under the power of it. A soul that has the offer of Christ and the gospel, and yet neglects him, is certainly in a perishing condition, whatever good works, whatever amiable qualities or appearances of virtue it may be adorned with. “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” 2 Cor. 4:3; John 3:18.

This was the sin of the Jews in Christ's time, and this brought temporal and eternal ruin upon them. To represent this sin in a convictive light, is the primary design of this parable.

The blessed God had chosen the Jews, out of the world, to be his peculiar people, and distinguished them with the gracious privileges of his church. Hence they are represented as his vineyard, enclosed from the wilderness of the world, and furnished with everything necessary to render it fruitful. And hence God is represented as expecting fruit from them, as a man expects it from his vineyard; which intimates the reasonableness of their obedience; it is what any one would expect, who would judge by what is due and reasonable. But it does not intimate that God does properly look for or expect what will never come to pass; for the certainty and universality of his fore-knowledge excludes all possibility of a disappointment. It is speaking to us in our own language, which we are most likely to understand; but it must be explained agreeably to the perfection of the nature of God, and not according to the imperfection of ours. The Scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers of the Jews, who were entrusted with the management of their church and state, are represented by the husbandmen, to whom this vineyard was leased or rented, and they were obliged to make annual payments of a part of the fruit. The succession of servants sent to demand the income of fruit in its season, signifies the prophets and other messengers of God sent to the Jews to call them to bring forth the fruits of holiness.' But, instead of obeying the call, they treated them abusively, persecuted, and killed them, and refused that return of duty which God demanded, and which his distinguishing mercies towards them rendered so due upon the footing of gratitude. After repeated trials, to no purpose, by these servants, the great God resolves to make one trial more,

and that by his own Son, his only Son, his beloved Son. Him he. will send to these rebellious husbandmen. And he presumes that, bad as they are, they would at least reverence his Son, and count themselves highly honored in having such a messenger sent to them. He might justly have sent his army to destroy them, who had murdered his former servants; but instead of this, he sends his Son with proposals of peace once more. He presumes such clemency will melt down the rebels, and make them ashamed of their former conduct. They will reverence my Son; as if he should say, “Though they have wickedly abused and slain my servants, surely they will not dare to treat my Son in the same manner. Surely the very sight of him, must command awe and reverence. This will also make them ashamed of their base ingratitude and cruelty to my former messengers.”

When the omniscient God represents himself as presuming or expecting that they would receive his Son in a friendly manner, it does not intimate, as I just observed in a similar case, that he is defective in knowledge as to things future, or liable to disappointment; but it only expresses, in the strongest manner, the reasonableness of the thing expected. It is so reasonable, that anyone who judges only according to the reasonableness of the thing, and has no view of futurity, would certainly look for it. It is so reasonable, that God himself would expect it, were he not omniscient, and incapable of being deceived by the most plausible appearances. In this view God expected, (that is, he looked upon it as infinitely reasonable) that the Jewish rulers should reverence his Son. But, alas! When they saw him, they were raised to a still higher pitch of rebellion and cruelty. They seized the Son himself, cast him out of his own vineyard, and with wicked hands crucified and slew him. On this account the vineyard was taken from them, and let out to others, who should pay the great Proprietor his fruit in its

season; that is, they were cast out of the church, and the Gentiles received in their stead, who would make a better use of their privileges.

This is the primary sense of the parable, as referring to the Jews of that age. But it will admit of a more extensive application. It reaches us in these ends of the earth, and all the nations of the world, to whom the gospel has been proposed: and in this latitude I would consider the text.

The world had gone on for four thousand years in wickedness, in spite of all the means used for its reformation by lawgivers, prophets, and philosophers, and by the providence of God. Persuasions, warnings, chastisements, mercies, and whatever had a tendency to bring them to repentance, had been used with them. Philosophers had often reasoned; legislators had prescribed; prophets had carefully instructed, allured with promises, and deterred with threatening's, and carried their heavenly credentials in their hands; angels had appeared and conversed with men upon extraordinary occasions; Jesus, the great angel of the covenant, had given frequent preludes of his incarnation; nay, Jehovah himself had ascended, and published his law with Godlike pomp in the ears of his subjects on Mount Sinai. But all this would not do; the world sinned on still, impenitent and incorrigible. And what shall be done in such a desperate case? What expedient remains to be tried? After so many messengers abused, persecuted, and killed, who will go upon so dangerous a message again? There is indeed the Son of God, the great co-equal of the Supreme Divinity; if he would undertake it, perhaps something might be done! But oh! Who can dare to hop for such condescension from one so high! Who can expect such a favor for rebels ripe for vengeance! Who can hope the Father will give him up! My text seems to hint sundry objections against it. He is his Son, his well-beloved Son, and he has but one Son; but

one of his rank, though he has produced so many worlds. And will he part with his Son, his well-beloved, his only Son, and send him upon such a mission; a mission so difficult, so dangerous, in which so many of his servants have lost their lives? Who could believe that even divine love and mercy could go so far, had we not the testimony of God in the gospel for it? Having one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also; he sent even him, dear as he was, as well as his servants of an inferior order. So much had he at heart the salvation of his rebellious creatures!

But observe the time when he sent him: he sent him last. He did not send him till every other method was tried in vain, and the case was found to be desperate without him. He did not send him till it appeared, from many experiments, that there was absolute need of him. Lawgivers, prophets, philosophers, and other real or pretended reformers, had a clear stage; they had the world to themselves for four thousand years; but in all this time they did nothing to the purpose. Hence we are led to make this remark, which is of great importance to the right understanding of the gospel.

That the Son of God was sent into the world as a Savior in a desperate case. It appeared, after a long course of trial, that when he undertook the case, there was no relief from any other quarter. And hence, by the way, it follows, that we can never receive him in that view in which he was sent, until we are deeply sensible that our case is desperate; that is, that we can obtain relief from no other.

But probably his being sent last has a farther meaning. It seems to intimate, that he is the last extraordinary messenger that God will ever send; that the dispensation of the gospel is the last trial that ever he will make with rebellious men, the final effort of divine grace for their salvation; and that such as are not recovered by it will be forever given up as desperate,



and no farther means used with them. What an alarming thought is this to such of you (and no doubt there are such among you) who have enjoyed the gospel, the dispensation of the Son of God, all your days, without receiving any special benefit from it! If these means will not do, you are not to expect better, but must perish as incurables!

If we consider the unworthiness of our guilty world, and the high character of the blessed Jesus, as his Father's only and well-beloved Son, we could have little reason to expect he would come into our world as a Savior. But suppose he should come! Suppose he should leave all the glories of his native heaven, and assume the humble nature of man, converse with mortals, instead of the heavenly courtiers, and conflict with the calamities of life, instead of enjoying the pleasures of paradise! Suppose he should come himself, as a messenger of his Father's grace, and with his own blessed lips assure our guilty race that God is reconcilable! Suppose he should die upon a cross for us, that he might at once purchase redemption, and confirm the tidings of it! Suppose, I say, such wonders as these should happen! What then is to be expected? Oh! May it not reasonably be expected that this divine Messenger will be received with universal welcome? That every heart will glow with his love and every mouth be filled with his praise? May it not be reasonably expected that his appearance among guilty men would cast them all upon the knee as humble penitents, and that now, overcome with his love, they would become his willing subjects for the future, and bitterly lament the baseness and ingratitude of their past disobedience? Is not this the most reasonable expectation that ever was formed? God speaks after the manner of men in my text: and, therefore, when he says, They will reverence my Son, it intimates, that this would be the universal expectation of mankind, and of

all reasonable creatures who consider the reasonableness of the thing. “They will reverence my Son: surely they will. Wicked and ungrateful as they are, the very sight of him must melt them into gratitude and obedience. Though they have rejected, persecuted, and murdered prophets and lawgivers, and all my other servants, yet surely they will reverence my Son.” Oh! Is not this a most reasonable expectation? Who would apprehend the contrary in so plain a case? Who would fear that such a divine Savior, a Savior in so desperate a case, should be received with neglect? Who would fear that sinners, on the brink of everlasting destruction, would be careless about such a Deliverer? We cannot think they would act thus, without supposing them madmen, as well as sinners, and that they have lost their reason and self-love, as well as moral goodness.

But, alas! These are only the presumptions of reason from the reasonableness of the thing, and not matters of fact gathered from observation of the actual conduct of mankind. However likely it be from appearances that the Son of God will universally meet with an affectionate reception from creatures that stand in such absolute need of him, and however improbable it be, in an abstract view, that such creatures should neglect him, yet it is a melancholy, notorious fact, that Jesus Christ has but little of the reverence and love of mankind. The prophetic character given of him long ago by Isaiah still holds true, He whom man despiseth; lie whom the nations abhor, Isaiah 49:7, he is despised and rejected of men. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world are preferred to him. His creatures are loved more than himself. Nay, sin itself, the most hateful thing upon earth, or even in hell, is more beloved. The salvation he purchased with his blood is looked upon as hardly worth seeking. His favor is not earnestly sought, nor his displeasure carefully shunned. In short, he has but

a small place, and is but of little importance in the thoughts, the affections, and conversation of mankind. This is a most melancholy and astonishing thing; it may spread amazement and horror through the whole universe, but, alas! It is a fact; a plain fact, though but few are convinced of it, and a melancholy fact, though few lament it. My chief design at present is to fasten conviction upon the guilty; a very unacceptable design, but not therefore the less necessary or useful.

In prosecuting it, I intend,

I. To show what kind of reception it may justly be expected we should give to the Son of God.

II. To consider the reasonableness of that expectation, And,

III. And lastly, To show how different a reception he generally meets with from what might be reasonably expected.

Hearken, my brethren, hearken attentively, to what you are so nearly concerned in. And to engage your attention the more, let this consideration have weight with you, that your making light of this matter is a strong presumption that you make light of Christ, and do not give, him that reception which he demands. Your being unconcerned in the trial of this case is sufficient to prove you guilty. I am,

I. To show you what kind of reception we may reasonably be expected to give to the Son of God.

In general, we should give him a reception agreeable to the character which he sustains, and agreeable to the designs upon which he was sent into our world, or to those views in which he appears in it. We should treat everyone according to his character: reason expects that we should do so, and God requires it. Therefore we should treat this divine Messenger according to his character.

More particularly does Jesus Christ appear in our world under the character of a Savior in a desperate case, a relief for the remediless, a helper for the helpless? Then it may reasonably be expected that his appearing in our world under this character would immediately flash universal conviction upon mankind, that they are altogether undone and helpless in themselves, and can obtain relief from no other quarter. It may reasonably be expected that they should give up all their proud, self-righteous conceit of themselves, and abandon all trust in their own righteousness and good works; for till they do this, they can never receive him in the character; that is, as a Savior in a desperate case. It may reasonably be expected, they should welcome Christ as the great, the only Deliverer, and give up themselves entirely to him, to be saved by him, who alone is mighty to save. And it may reasonably be expected, that every heart should be transported with admiration, joy and gratitude at his appearance: and a contrary temper towards him can proceed from nothing but stupid ignorance of our sin and danger, and an ungrateful, base disaffection to him.

Does Jesus appear among men as a great High Priest, making atonement for sin? Then it may justly be expected that we should place all our trust upon the virtue of his atonement, and that all hands should be eagerly stretched out to receive those pardons which he offers, in consequence of his propitiatory sacrifice. Does he appear to destroy the works of the devil, and to save men from sin by making them holy, and are the influences of the Holy Spirit, entrusted to his disposal to renew their nature and implant every grace and virtue in their hearts? Then, who would not expect that we would all fall in with his design, all form a noble conspiracy against sin, seek for the sanctification of our hearts, and earnestly apply to him for the influences of divine grace to make us holy! Again, does Christ appear in the

character of a mediatorial King, invested with all power in heaven and earth, and demanding universal homage? Then it may be reasonably expected that we should all bow the knee in humble submission, all make his will the rule of our conduct, and labour after universal obedience. Further, does he appear both as the publisher and the brightest demonstration of the Father's love? And has he discovered his own love by the many labors of his life, and by the agonies and tortures of his cross? Oh! May it not be expected we should return him love for love? The love of worms for the love of a God! An obediential love for his bleeding, dying love! May it not be expected that the sight of a crucified Savior, dying in agonies of love and pain, should melt every heart, and draw the whole world to his arms! He himself had this reasonable expectation: I, says he, if I be lifted from the earth (that is, suspended on the cross) will draw all men unto me. If such love will not draw, what can do? May it not be expected that this strong assurance that their offended Sovereign is reconcilable, and so much in earnest to pardon obnoxious rebels, would at length make them sensible of their base ingratitude, would melt them down into ingenuous generous sorrows for their unnatural rebellion against so good a God, and determine them to cheerful obedience in future? Again, does Christ exhibit himself as able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and as willing as able, as gracious as powerful? Then may it not reasonably be expected that all the unbelieving fears and trembling's of desponding penitents should vanish forever, that they should all fly to his arms with cheerful hope and humble confidence, and do him the honor, and themselves the kindness to believe themselves safe, upon their compliance with his invitation? Further, does Christ appear in the character of a great Prophet sent to publish his Father's will, to reveal the deep things of God,

and to show the way in which guilty sinners may be reconciled to God? A way which all the philosophers and sages of antiquity, after all their perplexing searches, could never discover! May it not then be reasonably expected that we should be all attention to his instructions; that we should resign our understandings to him as our Teacher, and readily believe what he has revealed, and particularly that we should cheerfully comply with the only method of salvation contained in the gospel? Once more, Does Christ assume the august character of supreme Judge of the quick and the dead, and must we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Then it may be expected we should all humbly revere and adore him, fear to offend him and make him our enemy, and prepare for our appearance before him. In short, considering him as the supreme Excellency, it is infinitely reasonable we should love and esteem him as the Physician of sick souls; that we should put ourselves under his all-healing hands, and submit to his prescriptions; as our Advocate, that we should present all our petitions in his name, and depend upon his intercession for acceptance. And as he is all in all in the mediatorial dispensation of religion under «which we live, the only religion for sinners, that he should be all in all to us.

This is a brief view of the reception which we ought to give to the Son of God, upon his appearance in our world. Unless we receive him thus, we can receive no benefit from him; but must incur the aggravated guilt of rejecting him. But to as many as thus receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on his name. John 1:12.

Do not imagine that none are concerned to give him a proper reception but those with whom he conversed in the days of his flesh. We at the distance of 1700 years, and six or seven thousand miles from the time and place of his appearance in human form, are as much concerned with him as

they. He is an ever-present Savior, and he left his gospel on earth in his stead, when he went to heaven. It is with the motion of the mind, and not of the body, that sinners must come to him; and in this sense we may come to him, as properly as those that conversed with him. He demands the reverence, love, and trust of mankind now, as well as seventeen hundred years ago; and we need his righteousness, his influence, and his salvation, as well as the sinners of Judea, among whom he appeared in person. Nay, as his glory has now pierced through the cloud that obscured it in the days of his flesh, and as he is exalted to the height of honor and dignity, it may be expected with still more reason that we should reverence him, and submit to him in his high character. He is not now the object of our bodily senses, we cannot see and handle him; but he is now an object for the acts of the mind with peculiar advantage. That must be a mere lump of flesh, or a beast, and not a man, that can love nothing, but what he can see and feel. Spiritual and intellectual things are the most proper objects for all reasonable creatures. Therefore, though Jesus be not now within reach of our senses, yet reason and faith may reach him, and perceive his glories: and it is reasonably expected we should admire, love, trust, and serve him. This, I say, is reasonable to expect of us. I now proceed:

II. To show the reasonableness of the expectation, that we should give the Son of God a welcome reception.

Here full evidence must strike every mind at first sight. Is there not infinite reason that infinite beauty and excellence should be esteemed and loved? That supreme authority should be obeyed, and the highest character revered? Is it not reasonable that the most amazing display of love and mercy should meet with the most affectionate returns of gratitude from the party obliged? Shall the Creator die for his creatures, the Sovereign for his

rebellious subjects, the great Lawgiver transfer the penalty of his own law upon himself, in order to remove it from obnoxious criminals? Shall he die in extremities of torture, and write his love in characters of blood? Oh shall he do this, and is it not infinitely reasonable that his creatures, that his rebellious subjects, that obnoxious criminals should be transported with wonder, joy, and gratitude; and that such miracles of love should engross their thoughts, their affections, and conversation? If we form our expectations from what we find in fact among mankind in other cases, sure we may expect the Son of God would meet with such a reception in our world; the thousandth part of this kindness would excite gratitude between man and man, and he would be counted a monster that would not be moved with it. And shall kindness from worm to worm, from sinner to sinner, excite love and gratitude? And shall not the infinite mercy of God towards rebellious creatures inflame their love and gratitude? Is this the only species of kindness that must pass unnoticed? Is Jesus the only Benefactor that must be forgotten? Is it not reasonable, and would not any one expect, that the perishing would willingly accept of a Savior? That the guilty would stretch out an eager hand to receive a pardon? That the diseased would apply to the physician? That inexcusable offenders should repent of their causeless offences against the best of beings? And that needy, dependent creatures should embrace the offer of happiness? Can anything be more reasonably expected than this? Is it not as reasonable as to expect that creatures that love themselves, will seek their own happiness, or that the miserable would accept of deliverance? In short, no man can deny the reasonableness of this expectation without denying himself to be a creature: no man can deny its reasonableness, without asserting that the highest excellency should be despised, the highest authority rejected, the richest



goodness contemned, that rebellion and ingratitude is a virtue, and self-destruction a duty; that is, no man can deny this, without commencing a monster, abjuring his reason, and embracing the most extravagant and impious absurdities in its stead. I am afraid I shall not be able to gain the temper and practice of all of you to my side in this affair, but I am sure if you are men, and believe the gospel, I have already brought over your judgment and conscience. Your judgment and conscience declare, that if it be reasonable for a child to reverence a tender, affectionate parent; if it be reasonable you should love your life, or your own happiness, that then certainly it is infinitely reasonable you should give such a reception as has been mentioned to the blessed Jesus. Happy for us, happy for the world, if we could as easily prove that the expectation is as much founded upon actual facts as upon reason. But, alas! Here the evidence turns against us. In such a wicked dis-ordered world as this, it would be a very deceitful method of reasoning, to infer that things are, because they should be. This introduces what comes next under consideration, namely,

III. And lastly, To show how different a reception the Son of God generally meets with in our world, from what might reasonably be expected.

Here a most melancholy scene opens. And oh! That it may please our blessed Spirit to affect our hearts deeply with the survey of it! Forgive me if I make my address as pungent and particular as I can, and speak directly to the conscience of each of you. The case really requires plain dealing, because without it you are not likely to be convinced, and, without conviction, you can never return, nor be reformed.

Let me put you all upon a serious search, what kind of reception you have given to Jesus Christ. You have lived all your days under his gospel; you

profess his religion; you own him as the Author of your hopes: and what kind of treatment have you given him in these circumstances? It is high time for you to inquire into your behavior.

Are not some of you sensible that you have never received him as a Savior in a desperate case? No, you have never seen your case to be indeed desperate. Your proud hearts have not been brought so low. You have not had such an affecting view of your guilt and depravity, and the imperfections of your best works, and of the holiness and justice of God and his law, as to make you sensible you were undone and helpless in yourselves, that your own righteousness could by no means recommend you to God, and that you must perish forever, unless Jesus Christ, out of mere mercy, would undertake to save you: unless you have had an affecting sense of your undone condition, you have certainly never received him as a Savior.

Again, Is it not evident that Jesus Christ has had but little share in your thoughts and affections? Do not the things of this perishing world gain the pre-eminence? Have you not a thousand thoughts of a thousand trifles, for one affectionate thought of Jesus, the darling of his Father? Have you not been generally thoughtless of him all your lives? Take the time that is nearest to you as a specimen, which surely you have not yet forgot. Recollect now how many affectionate thoughts you have had of him the week past, or even upon this sacred morning, when you had this solemn worship immediately in view. May not even this short review convince you that you are guilty of the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the world; a thing which appears so improbable in an abstract view, that one would hardly believe you would venture upon it; I mean neglecting the Son of God, who has visited our world upon such designs of love?

Again, Is Jesus Christ the favorite subject of your conversation? Is his dear name the sweetest sound your lips can pronounce? And do you love to sit with his few friends in our guilty world, and talk over the wonder of his love, till your hearts burn within you, like the disciples in conference on the way to Emmaus? Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh; and were he uppermost in your hearts, he would have a proper share in your conversation. Or if you should mingle in a company (and such company is everywhere to be found) where prudence would not suffer you to dwell upon this darling subject, would the restraint be painful to you, and would his love, like a smothered fire in your hearts, struggle to break out and vent itself—vent itself at least in some retired corner in his presence, if you could not enjoy the pleasure of letting it flame out in the society of his creatures? But, alas! Is not this the reverse of your true character? Are you not disgusted, or struck silent as soon as the conversation takes this turn? With horror I think of it—to converse concerning Jesus Christ is generally deemed needless, impertinent, or ostentatious, by creatures that profess themselves disciples, redeemed by his blood! And does not this horrid guilt fasten upon some of you?

Farther, Are not your hearts destitute of his love? If you deny the charge, and profess that you love him, where are the inseparable fruits and effects of his love? Where are your eager desires and pantings after him? Where is your delight to converse with him in his ordinances? Where your anxiety, your zeal, your earnest endeavors to secure his favor? Where is your conscientious observance of his commandments? For he himself has made this the test of your love to him; Then, says he, are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. John 15:14. And again, If a man love me he will keep my words. John 14:23. Does not the evidence, from this inquiry,

turn against you? Are you not convicted in your consciences, that if these are the inseparable fruits of love, you are entirely destitute of it? Is it not evident to yourselves, that your own pleasure, your own worldly interest, your honor or ease, is the general rule of your conduct, without any regard to his will?

Inquire farther, Have you learned to entrust your souls in his hands, to be saved by him entirely in his own way? Or do you not depend, in part at least, upon your own imaginary goodness? Do you not wonder and start at the doctrine of grace, and secretly disgust it! Does it not appear strange to you, to be told, that after all your good works, God will deal with you entirely as guilty sinners, void of all goodness, and have no regard at all to your supposed merit in the distribution of his mercy, but entirely to the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Are you not utter strangers to that exploit of faith which casts a poor, guilty, depraved soul, void of all goodness, upon the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, who justifies the ungodly? For this purpose the Son of God came into the world; and you do not give him a proper reception, but wickedly reject him as well as the Jews, unless you thus entrust yourselves to him.

The evidence grows upon me as I proceed; and I cannot but wonder you do not perceive it yourselves. Can anything be more plain than that you make light of Christ! That you choose to have as little to do with him as possible! That you have no delight in his service! Do not your own consciences now tell you, there are this and that, and a thousand things, that you have more pleasure in? Do not your hearts fly off from him, whenever they are urged to approach him? When you are a little awakened with a sense of your guilt and danger, and ready with eager eyes to look about for a Savior, alas! How naturally do you relapse into carelessness and security!

How soon do you drop your purpose of seeking after him with unwearied endeavors, till you find him! How ready are you to take up with anything in his stead! A little repentance and reformation are substituted in his place. You would rather get ease to your consciences from any quarter than from him. Like Judas, you sell him for a few pieces of silver; that is, you would rather part with him than give up your over-eager pursuit of earthly things.

A thousand such facts might be easily produced which sadly prove that the blessed Jesus does not meet with that reception from multitudes among us which his character demands. Indeed their not being easily convicted of sin is an evidence they are guilty; for if they had a real regard for him, they would be concerned to inquire how the case stands, or how their hearts are disposed towards him. And a little honest inquiry would soon lead them into the truth.

And now I have a few questions to propose to such of you as are guilty of neglecting the Son of God, or have never given him that reception that might justly be expected of you; questions of the utmost importance, which I beg you would put home to your own hearts.

The first is, Do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jesus, you contract the most aggravated guilt? It is the Son of God, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, that you neglect. And must not the Father resent it? Do you not touch his honor in a very tender point? And will he not muster up all the forces of omnipotence to avenge the affront! Since you neglect him, whom the Father loves; him, whom all the heavenly armies adore; him, whom all good men upon earth treat with the highest honor; since you neglect a person of infinite glory and dignity, your rightful Sovereign and only Savior, how deep is your guilt! What a horrid exploit of wickedness this! Neither heathens nor devils can sin up to such a pitch: devils cannot,

because no Savior was ever provided for them, or offered to them; and heathens cannot, because a Savior was never revealed to them. You stand without a rival by your horrid pre-eminence in guilt. To you may be applied the words of Jesus, as well as to the unbelieving Jews: If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; that is, they would not have had sin of so aggravated a nature; but now they have no cloak for their sin, John 15:22; they are utterly inexcusable; for they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. John 15:24.

The next question I would ask you is, Must not your punishment be peculiarly aggravated, since it will be proportioned to your guilt? To be punished not only for ' sins against the law of nature, but against revelation, against the gospel of grace, against the love of a crucified Savior—how dreadful must this be! He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, says St. Paul: of how much sorer punishment (sorer than dying without mercy! Oh terrible!) suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God. Heb. 10:29. You may make light of this now, but oh! It will not prove light in the issue. Here let me mention a most alarming consideration: The love that God bears to his Son is the great source of all our hopes: it is because he loves him, that he accepts of his atonement for our sins; it is because he loves him, that he forgives and loves believing sinners for his sake; it is because he loves the head, that he shows such favor to the members; but as to such as neglect the Son, even the love which the Father has for him, becomes a source of peculiar terror, and prompts him to signal vengeance. “If he infinitely loves his Son, he must infinitely resent it to see him neglected and slighted by others. If he loves him he will avenge the affront offered him; and the more he loves him, the more severely he must resent and avenge it.” How wretched, then, is their

condition, upon whom even the love of God for his Son calls aloud for vengeance! And how signal will the punishment be, that the Father's love for his Son will inflict upon the despisers of him!

The third question I would propose to you is, How do you expect to escape this signal vengeance, if you still continue to neglect the Lord Jesus? Answer the apostle's question if you can. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Heb. 2:3. You cannot expect Jesus will be a Savior while you treat him thus: and if he refuse, to whom will you turn? What angel or saint can save whom he is determined to destroy? If he be against you, who can be for you? Remember the text: the Father sent his Son last into the world. He comes last, and therefore if you reject him, you need not look for another Savior. You must take him or none: take him or perish forever.

I would further ask you, If your guilt and danger be so great, and if in your present condition you are ready every moment to be engulfed in everlasting destruction, does it become you to be so easy and careless, so gay and merry? If your bodies were sick, you would be pensive and sad, and use means for their recovery; if your estates were in danger, you would be anxious till they were secured; if you were condemned to die for a crime against civil government, you would be solicitous for a pardon. In short, it is natural for man to be pensive, anxious, and sad, in circumstances of danger; and it is shocking to the common sense of mankind, to see one thoughtless and gay in such circumstances. Can you be easy under such a load of guilt? Careless under a sentence of condemnation? And negligent, when the possibility of deliverance is set before you? I would not willingly see you sorrowful and dejected: but when your case calls for it; when your temporal sorrow may be medicinal, and save you from everlasting pain;

when it is as necessary in your circumstances as sickness at the stomach in the operation of physic, then I cannot form a kinder wish for you, than that your hearts may be pierced and broken with penitential sorrows. You have, in your manner, commemorated the birth of a Savior this Christmas; that is, you have danced and caroused, and sinned to his honor. But now I come after, and demand in his name another kind of reception for him: I call you to the sorrowful work of repentance, for your ill treatment of him. Instead of such mirth and extravagance, would it not have been more proper for you to have listened to St. James's advice? "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;" that mighty hand which can crush ten thousand worlds, and which is lifted up against you to revenge the quarrel of his beloved Son. Can you return home this evening as thoughtless and merry as usual? Well, your career will soon be at an end: your vanity and trifling will soon be over. Perhaps, as Jeremiah denounced to the false prophet, this year thou shalt die—Jer. 28:16, and oh! That will engulf you in everlasting sorrows.

Therefore what would you now think of making one honest trial, before it be too late, to obtain an interest in that Savior whom you have hitherto neglected? Oh! Will you not make trial, whether the disaffection of your hearts towards him, inveterate as it is, may yet be subdued by divine grace? Whether he, who prayed with his dying breath, even for his murderers, will not have mercy upon you? Whether the virtue of his blood is not still sufficient to cleanse you from all sin? Oh! Will you give up the matter as desperate, before you make a thorough trial?

Your case is indeed very discouraging, but it is not yet hopeless; if I thought it was, I would not say one word to you about it, to torment you



before the time. But I can assure you upon the best authority, of Jesus Christ himself, that if you now give him that reception which his character requires, he will receive you into favor as though you had never offended him, and make you forever happy. Therefore, come, ye poor, guilty, perishing sinners, fly to the arms of his mercy, which are opened wide to embrace you. Cry for the attractive influence of his grace, which alone can enable you to come to him, and let there be joy in heaven this day over repenting sinners upon earth.

# *SERM. XL. THE DOOM OF THE INCORRIGIBLE SINNER.*

**P**roverbs 29:1.— *He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

A proverb is a system of wisdom in miniature: it is a pertinent, striking observation, expressed in a few words, that it may be the more easily remembered; and often in metaphorical language, that it may be the more entertaining. A collection of proverbs has no connection, but consists of short, independent sentences, each of which makes full sense in itself; and therefore, in explaining them, there is no need of explaining the context; but we may select any particular sentence, and consider it separately by itself.

Such a collection of wise sayings is that book of the sacred Scriptures, which we call the Proverbs of Solomon. Wise men in all ages, and in all languages, have often cast their observations into the concise significant forms of proverbs; but the sages of antiquity, especially, were fond of this method of instruction, and left legacies of wisdom to posterity, wrapped up in a proverbial dress; many of which, particularly of the Greek philosophers, are extant to this day. Solomon chose this method of

recording and communicating his wise observations, as most agreeable to the taste of the age in which he lived. The sacred memoirs of his life inform us that he spake three thousand proverbs.

1 Kings 4:32. Of these the most important and useful were selected probably by himself, and afterwards by the men of Hezekiah; that is, by persons appointed by Hezekiah to copy them off; and they are conveyed down to all ages in this cabinet of precious jewels, the Book of Proverbs.

Among the many significant and weighty sayings of this wisest of men, the solemn monitory proverb in my text deserves peculiar regard: “He that being often reprov’d, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

The request of a friend, and my fears that this proverb may have a dreadful accomplishment upon some of my hearers, have induced me to make it the subject of your meditations for the present hour. And oh! That the event may show I was divinely directed in the choice!

This proverb may be accommodated to all the affairs of life. In whatever course a man blunders on, headstrong, and regardless of advice and admonition; whether in domestic affairs, in trade, in politics, in war, or whatever it be he pursues by wrong measures with incorrigible obstinacy, it will ruin him at last, as far as the matter is capable of working his ruin. To follow the conduct of our own folly, and refuse the advantage we might receive from the wisdom of others, discovers an uncreaturely pride and self-sufficiency; and the career of such a pursuit, whatever be the object, will always end in disappointment and confusion. In this extent, perhaps, this adage was intended by Solomon, who was a good economist and politician, and well skilled in the affairs of common life, as well as those of religion.

But he undoubtedly intended it should be principally referred to matters of religion. It is especially in these matters it holds true in the highest sense; that “he being often reprov’d, hardeneth” himself, “shall suddenly be destroyed. and that without remedy.”

He that being often reprov’d—This is undoubtedly our character. We in this congregation have been often reprov’d, and that in various forms, and by various monitors. We have been reprov’d from heaven and earth, by God, men, and our own consciences; and, I might add, by the irrational creation, and even by infernal spirits.

Men of various classes have reprov’d us. It is the happiness of several of us to live in families where we are often reprov’d and admonish’d with the tender, affecting address of a father and a master, who are deeply concerned that their children and domestics should be their companions in the heavenly road, and be effectually warn’d from the alluring paths of sin and ruin. And have not our affectionate mothers often become our monitors, and gently yet powerfully reprov’d us, with that forcible eloquence which could only proceed from the heart of a woman and a mother;—or if our parents have been cruelly deficient in this noblest office of love, has not God rais’d up unexpected reprovers for us, in a brother, a sister, or perhaps a poor despis’d slave? And who can resist the force of an admonition from such an unexpected quarter? And have not some of us found an affectionate, faithful monitor in the conjugal state; a husband or a wife, that has reprov’d the vices or the negligence and carelessness of the other party; and, by striking example at the least, if not in more explicit language, given the alarm to greater diligence and concern in the affairs of religion and eternity? Such are powerful, though modest and private, assistants to the ministers of the gospel, and oh! That they had but more assistance from this quarter! To

encourage the few among you that improve the intimacy of this near relation for so important and benevolent a purpose, let me remind you of St. Paul's tender excitement to this duty, given one thousand seven hundred years ago. What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? 1 Cor. 7:16. The tender names of husband and wife have so much force in them, as may irresistibly constrain us to perform all the kindest offices in our power to those who bear them. But oh! To save a husband! To save a wife! To save those dear creatures from everlasting misery! How great, how important the kindness! And by so much the more pleasing, by how much the dearer the persons are to whom it is shown! But to return—if we are not so happy as to be agreeably surrounded with such honest reprovers in our own houses; yet, blessed be God! We live in a neighborhood where we may meet with one of them here and there. Has not a pious friend or a neighbor dropped a word now and then in conversation which might have served, and perhaps was intended as a serious admonition to you? Alas! Have you never had a friend in the world, who has sometimes taken occasion to talk solemnly and pungently with you about the neglected concerns of your souls? Or at least, has not his example been a striking lesson to you? Alas! Is it possible one should live in this congregation, without enjoying the benefit of a reprovener? Sure there are still some among us to bear their testimony against sin, and espouse the deserted cause of religion. But if the friends of religion have been silent, (and indeed they are generally too modest in this respect,) yet have you not sometimes received an accidental, undesigned reproof even from the wicked? Just as Caiaphas once prophesied of the death of Christ and its blessed consequences. Not to observe, that their eagerness and indefatigable industry in pursuing their

pleasures, whether they place them in honor, riches, or sensuality, and in serving their guilty lusts, in spite of all restraints, may serve as a pungent reproof of your lukewarmness and carelessness in the pursuit of the pleasures of religion and immortality, so much more noble and interesting. But I say, to take no notice of this, have they not at times rebuked you in more direct terms? Have they not twitted and reproached you to this purpose, “I thought you, that pretend to so much sanctity, would not dare to venture upon such a thing.” Or, “See the saint, the communicant, the presbyterian drunk—see his fraud and villainy—see him as vain and frolicsome as his neighbors; sure, we that make no such profession, may take such liberties, since such saints do so.” Such reflections as these, my brethren, however sarcastical and malignant, blind and bitter, have all the keenness of the sharpest reproof. And oh! That none of us may ever give any occasion for them! But if offences should come to occasion them, may our hearts always feel their force! Thus may we derive good out of evil; be warned from sin by sinners: and restrained in our career to ruin by those who are themselves rushing into it! But though all around you, both saints and sinners, should refuse to be your monitors, how many solemn warnings and reproofs have you had from the pulpit? You have heard many ministers of Christ, who have been your solemn admonishers in the dread name of their Master. And it is now eleven or twelve years since I have begun to discharge the painful and unacceptable office of a reprover of sin and sinners among you. And what kind and liberal assistance have I received in my office, from the other side of the vast ocean, in the many excellent books which British piety and charity have furnished us with! Our friends, whose voice cannot reach you, have sent over reprovers into your houses; reprovers that speak particularly to the poor, especially to the neglected

slaves. In short, I know no spot of America so happy in this important respect, as Hanover.

Thus have you been reproved by men from all quarters. And certainly so loud, so general, so repeated an admonition, even from men, must have great weight. But who can resist an admonition from heaven? Surely, if Jehovah, the great Sovereign of the universe, condescends to be your reprover, you must immediately take the reproof, and set about a reformation. Well, this office he has condescended to sustain. He has himself become your monitor: and that, in various ways, both mediately and immediately: mediately by his word and providence; and immediately, by his blessed Spirit, whose office it is to reprove the world of sin. John 16:9.

The word of God has reproved you; has honestly laid before you the destructive consequences of sin, and denounced the divine displeasure against you on its account. All its commands, prohibitions, and dissuasives of various forms, are so many friendly warnings and admonitions to you. He conveys his reproofs through your eyes and ears, when you read and hear his word; and sometimes, I doubt not, he has made the hardest heart among you feel his rebukes, and tremble under them. In short, you must own yourselves, that if any of you go on obstinately in sin, and perish, it will not be because the word of God did not act a faithful part towards you, but because you presumptuously disregard its most solemn and affectionate warnings.

Again: God has often reproved you by his providence. His providence has kindly chastised you with personal and relative afflictions; with sickness and pains, bereavements, losses, and disappointments. Providence has admonished you with the striking voice of sick-beds, dying groans, ghastly corpses, and gaping graves in your families or neighborhoods, or perhaps in

both. How many among us, in a few years, have been brought down to the gates of the grave, that they might enter into a serious conference with death and eternity, which they were so averse to in the giddy, unthinking hours of health and hurry of business! And what narrow escapes, what signal unexpected deliverances has Providence wrought for you in those seasons of danger and distress, that you might enjoy a longer space of repentance? How many of our friends and neighbors have sickened and died, for the admonition of survivors! Providence has pitched upon one here and there, that was wont to sit among us in our religious assemblies, and made him an example and a warning to the rest. They are gone before, to show us the way, and put us in mind that our turn also will soon come. Sickness and death, expiring agonies, pale corpses,

*The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave,*

*The deep, damp vault, the darkness, and the worm—*

These are very solemn monitors; and that heart is hard, indeed, that does not feel their reproof.

The providence of God has also reproved us, in common with our countrymen, by the public calamities that have hovered over or fallen upon our land and nation; and particularly by the ravages and desolations of war. Providence has commissioned Indian savages and French papists to be our reprovers, and loudly admonished us with the horrid roar of cannons, the clangor of martial trumpets, and all the dread artillery of ruin and death. What ear among us has not heard, what heart has not trembled, at this terrible warning!

Thus, and in a thousand other ways, has Providence concurred with the word, and feelingly reproved us with its fatherly rod. And we should always



remember, that the hand of Providence is the hand of God, whatever instruments he is pleased to use.

But has he not often laid aside all instruments, and reproved you more immediately by his Spirit? Has not his Spirit been long and frequently striving with you; reproving you of sin; alarming you with apprehensions of your danger; exciting in you good resolutions, and serious thoughts of reformation? Has not the blessed Spirit at times borne home the word upon your hearts with unusual power, and roused your conscience to fall upon you with terrible though friendly violence? Which leads me to add,

You have been your own monitors; I mean your consciences have often admonished and warned you; have whispered in your breasts, that “this course of vice and irreligion will not do: this carelessness and indifferency in the concerns of your souls, this stupid neglect of God and eternal things will not end well.” Conscience has often honestly pronounced your doom: “Thou art a guilty, wicked creature, under the displeasure of God. Thou art destitute of true vital religion, and hast no title to the divine favor. If thou die in this condition, thou wilt be undone forever.” Thus has conscience warned you; and you have, no doubt, sometimes sweated and agonized under its chastisements. Though you have preposterously labored to bribe it, or suppress it by violence; yet it has still borne at least a faint testimony for its Master, and against you. Thus you always carry a reprover in your own bosoms wherever you go; and though every mouth around you should be silent, this will speak, if you do but attend, and give it fair play.

I may add, that even the irrational creation is your monitor; and in silent, but forcible language, remonstrates against your conduct. Can you hear the musicians of the air in every bush warbling out grateful anthems to their Maker, without being convicted of your guilty silence in his praise? Can

you see the sun invariably rolling in the path first marked out for him by his Maker and Lord, without feeling yourselves reprov'd for your numberless deviations from the path of duty? Do not the regulated, stated revolutions of the seasons, and of night and day, sensibly reprove your neglect of the returns of your hours of devotion? In short, does not all nature cry out against you? Is not everything you see obedient to its Maker's laws, but man?—man, who should claim the precedence in obedience, as he is appointed lord of the lower creation?

Nay, even infernal spirits, those everlasting enemies of man and goodness, may serve as your reprovers. Can you think of their unwearied roaming over the earth, in quest of souls as their prey, and their industry and toil to do mischief, without blaming your own negligence to save your souls, and do good? And could you but hear the lost ghosts of your own race, who are now shut up in the infernal prison, bursting out into despairing cries, and bitterly accusing themselves for their presumption and security, their lazy delays, misimprovement of time, and neglect of the means of grace, while upon earth; how loud and striking a warning would this be to you, who are now walking in their steps!

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a brief list of your many monitors. And who can stand the united reproofs of such a multitude? Who dare set himself against the admonition of earth, heaven, and hell; of God and all his creatures? Must you not all yield to the warning?

Solomon supposes, in my text, that a man may be often reprov'd, and yet harden his neck; that is, obstinately refuse submission and reformation. A stiff neck is a metaphor often used in Scripture, to signify an unyielding, incorrigible spirit, resolute in disobedience in spite of all restraints; in spite of advice, dissuasives, and reproofs. And to harden the neck, is to confirm

one's self in disobedience, in opposition to admonition; or to refuse to reform, and strengthen one's self in the refusal, in spite of all the means of reformation. It is to cherish obstinacy, to despise reproof, and resolve to follow a headstrong impetuous self-will at all adventures. The metaphor is taken from an unmanageable, sullen ox, that will not bend his neck to the yoke, nor kindly draw under it; but stiffens his neck that it may not bear it; and hardens it, that it may not feel it; and the lash and the goad do not break his obstinate spirit, nor reduce him to willing subjection. Thus, nothing but a sullen and senseless beast can represent the stupid, unreasonable conduct of that man who hardens himself in sin, against the strongest dissuasives and reproofs from God and his creatures.

And is not this the character of some of you? I am very unwilling to presume such bad things of any of you; but I must at least put it to your consciences to determine, whether it be so or not. This you may know by this single inquiry, whether you have reformed of those things for which you have been reproved? Or whether you still obstinately persist in them, in opposition to the most striking admonitions? The profane and profligate among you have often been reproved for your vices; your drunkenness, swearing, lying, contempt of sacred things, and other immoralities: but do you not still obstinately persist in the practice of them? You have often been reproved for the neglect of the worship of God in your families, and the souls of your domestics; what warm remonstrances have you heard upon this head! And yet, have you not prayerless families, prayerless mornings and evenings still? Have you not been solemnly warned of the danger of neglecting, or carelessly attending upon the means of grace? And yet you are negligent and careless still? Have you not been earnestly admonished for your presumption and security, your entertaining high hopes of future

happiness, and that you are genuine Christians, at random, without honest trial and repeated self-examination? And yet do not some of you still persist in this stupid, pernicious conduct? Alas! How ignorant of your own true character! How unwillingly are you dragged to the bar of conscience, there to be tried, and hear your sentence! How ready are you to flatter yourselves with pleasing expectations, though in reality contrary to the declarations of eternal truth! And how secure and thoughtless are you about the great concerns of religion and eternity! How lukewarm and inactive in the duties you owe to God and man, and in your endeavors to work out your salvation! But have you not been solemnly warned of the pernicious consequences of this cause? How often have you been honestly told, that this is not the narrow and rugged road of virtue and religion that leads to heaven! How often have you been warned of the danger of mistaking external formalities for vital religion, and a mere profession of Christianity for the heart-experience and constant practice of it! And yet do not some of you indulge this destructive mistake still? Have you not often been reproved for contenting yourselves with a dead, fruitless faith, an empty speculation, or historical belief; with transient, unwilling fits of servile repentance, that produce no reformation; and the counterfeit appearances of other graces and virtues? I say, have you not often been reproved for contenting yourselves with these, instead of that lively, operative, heart-affecting faith, that kindly, ingenuous, voluntary repentance, and thorough reformation, and those other active, practical graces and virtues, which are required in the gospel, as essential constituents of a true Christian and absolutely necessary prerequisites to everlasting life? And yet you willfully indulge the delusion still, and are unwilling to admit conviction, and discover the truth! How often and how solemnly have you been reproved for your excessive

eagerness and avarice in the pursuit of this vain world, and your stupid neglect to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, and to be rich towards God! And yet, is not this enchanting world your favorite, and the idol of your hearts still? And are you not still careless what will become of you through an everlasting duration, in an infinitely more important world? That one expostulation from Christ himself might have been an irresistible rebuke to you, What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? But, alas! Have you not stood out against this, and a thousand other pungent admonitions? Have you not often had the dreadful guilt and danger of making light of Christ and his precious gospel, of delaying your conversion to some uncertain hereafter, and of presuming upon the mercy and patience of God, exposed to your view in a striking light? And yet you have still persisted in the practice, in spite of reproof and conviction. I might easily multiply instances on this head; but these must serve as specimens at present; and I shall only add this general rule for your farther conviction, that whatever sin you indulge yourselves in, whatever duty you omit, whatever grace or virtue you live destitute of, in opposition to the conviction of your own minds within, and of the reproofs and admonitions of God and man from without, you are then guilty of hardening your neck.

And if this be the case, how many of you are involved in this guilt? Lay your hand now upon your heart, and say, does not conscience whisper, or perhaps clamor, "Guilty! Guilty!" It is strange, it is unaccountable, it is horrible, that there should be such a monster upon earth, on whom the repeated reproofs and warnings of God and his fellow-creatures have been thrown away; and who dares singly to stand it out against the whole universe! But, alas! Are there not many such monsters among us? To

reprove them again is a very unpromising and almost desperate attempt; for they have been so inured to it, that they are hardened against it, and set it at defiance. Yet duty and compassion constrain us to make the attempt once more: for oh! We cannot yet give them up as altogether desperate, nor resign them with willing hands as a tame prey to ruin. I know no other way to bring them out of danger but to make them sensible of it. And this I shall attempt, in illustrating the remaining part of the text, which informs you of the plain truth, that he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, or broken, and that without remedy; or, “and there is no cure.”

The stiff neck that will not bend to the yoke of obedience, must be broken; and its own stiffness renders it the more easily broken; for it is not easy to break what is yielding and pliable; but even the resistance of the stiff neck occasions its own ruin. It may harden itself into insensibility under reproof: but oh! It cannot harden itself into insensibility under divine judgments. It may refuse the easy and gentle yoke of the divine law; but divine justice will forcibly impose its iron yoke upon it, and constrain it to bow till it be broken. This is the doom of the obstinate, incorrigible sinner: thus shall he be destroyed and broken to pieces.

But this is not all: he shall suddenly be destroyed, suddenly broken. Sudden ruin is aggravated, because it strikes a man into a consternation, overtakes him unawares, surprises him at a disadvantage, when unprovided with any methods to escape; and also tears all his pleasing hopes from him: and by how much the higher the hopes from whence he falls, by so much the deeper he is engulfed in misery.

Sudden ruin is the certain and natural consequence of a man's incorrigible obstinacy, in spite of admonition. He must be ruined because he will not be

warned, nor forsake the path that leads to destruction. He will even take his own way at all adventures, and no man can help it: and therefore he must be destroyed. He must also be suddenly destroyed, because he would hope for safety in spite of warning; suddenly broken because he would not foresee the blow. Till he feels the stroke, he would not believe it was coming; and therefore his destruction is sudden, surprising, and confounding. This is the natural end of fool-hardiness and obstinacy, in spite of all constraints and admonitions; and there is no help for it: such obstinacy and presumption is an incurable disease, that excludes all remedy. This is implied in the last part of the text:

He shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy; or, as it might be more literally rendered, “and there is no cure, or medicine, or healing.” There can be no preventive medicine to such a self-willed, head-strong creature; because he will not apply it; and pushes off every friendly hand that would apply it. And there can be no healing or restorative medicine applied; for the breach, when made, is desperate, and admits no cure. The stiff neck is broken in pieces, so that it never can be healed. Then the patient, so obstinate before, would most willingly apply a remedy: but oh! It is too late.

Reproofs and admonitions from God and men, and our own consciences, are the great means to recover sinners: and while these are ineffectual, no other can possibly have any effect. How can he be reclaimed from sin, who will sin in opposition to all restraints! In opposition to the checks of conscience, and the strivings of the holy Spirit within, and the united dissuasives and rebukes of Providence, of the word of God, and of all his friends from without! Neither God nor all his creatures can reform and save such a wretch, while he continues proof against all the means of

reformation and salvation. It is unavoidable, that he should suddenly be destroyed; and there is no help for it; he must be given up as an incurable. The whole universe may look on, and pity him; but, alas! They cannot help him; he has the instrument of self-murder in his own hand: and he will not part with it, but uses it against his own life, without control; and none can take it out of his hand: that is, none can give his free will a new turn, but that God whom he is daily offending, and who is therefore not obliged to obtrude such a favor upon him.

This is the unavoidable doom of the man that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck. And since this is the character of some of you, have you not reason to fear and forbode this tremendous doom? Let me reason a little with you for your farther conviction.

Your danger will appear from these two considerations, that if you always continue in your present condition, proof against all admonition, you must be destroyed without remedy; and that there is dreadful reason to fear, you always will continue in your present condition.

That if you live and die in your present condition, you must be destroyed without remedy, is lamentably evident from what has been said. It is the declaration of the wisest of men, inspired from heaven; he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be broken, and there is no remedy. It is one of the proverbs of this wisest of men. Now a proverb is a wise remark, made after long observation, and frequently exemplified in the world. Therefore when we consider Solomon here not only as speaking an inspired truth, but pronouncing a proverb, it is as if he had said, "This I have collected from long experience, and careful observation of mankind, and the course of Providence; this is daily exemplified in the world without exception; this all ages may regard as a sure and important truth, and I



record it among my immortal proverbs for their warning, that ‘ he that being often reprov’d, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and there is no remedy.” A proverb being a familiar observation upon the common occurrences of the world, it follows farther, that the accomplishment of it is a common thing, that falls under every man’s notice, to his full conviction; and therefore Solomon, by inserting this remark among his Proverbs, intimates, that the sudden and remediless destructions of an incorrigible sinner, is a familiar event that falls under every man’s notice, and which no man can dispute, without disputing the common sense and experience of mankind. Thus certain, irreprovable sinners! Thus common is your doom, if you continue in your present condition: it is certain, it is common, even to a proverb. And if you still go on in your present course, you will at last become a hissing, a by-word, and a proverb to all the world. Your destruction, as I observed, is unavoidable and remediless, according to the nature of things: it is the natural, spontaneous, and inseparable result and effect of incorrigible obstinacy. You resolutely set your free wills, which are not under the control of any creature but yourselves, upon your own ruin: and what then remains but that you must be ruined! To ruin you must go, though attended with the prayers and tears of the saints, and checked by their friendly admonitions, enforced with those of God himself. They cannot help you against your wills. What can keep you from engulfing yourselves in destruction, when you break through all restraints from God and the whole creation? You reject the only means of cure: and must you not die as incurables? If the Spirit of God strives with you in vain; if conscience check and admonish you in vain; if Providence uses its chastising rod in vain; if sickness, and death, and graves preach in vain; if Bibles and good books are put into your hands in vain; if

ministers, and friends, and neighbors, and the dearest relatives, advise, and persuade, and warn, and reprove in vain; if heaven, and earth, and hell, if God and all his creatures admonish in vain; what hopes can yourselves entertain of your salvation? What better means can you desire? What other means can you expect? Can you hope to be reformed and prepared for heaven, when these means, the best, the only means that ever were used with sinful creatures, and which have proved effectual in the most discouraging cases, have no effect upon you? Judge yourselves, whether your destruction is not unavoidable in your present condition.

And that you will always continue in your present condition, is, alas! But too probable. You have continued in it all your life past: and is not this a dreadful presumption that you will continue in it all your life to come? Can you expect better means than you have had? Or are your hearts become more soft and pliable now when hardened by an obstinate course of incorrigible impenitence, that you should hope the same means will have greater efficacy upon them in time to come than formerly? Are you as sure of twenty or thirty years before you, as that you have enjoyed twenty or thirty years in time past? Is God the less provoked, by how much the longer you have offended him, so that you have the more encouragement to expect the assistance of his grace hereafter than formerly? Are you now any more out of danger of being judicially hardened and given up of God, than ten years ago? And are you the more sure of his favor, by how much the more you deserve his wrath? Are the habits of sin grown weaker through inveteracy and long indulgence? Does the work of your salvation grow easier by delays, and by your having fewer days for work? Does conscience gain strength upon you, by your repeated violences; or the spirit of God work the more powerfully, the more you resist and grieve him? Does your

being inured to the gospel, give it greater force upon you? If the happy change of your present condition be probable, the probability must depend, in human view, upon such absurdities as these. But can these be the foundation of probability? No; but of the greatest improbability. The truth of the case is, your condition is growing more and more discouraging every day; and you are approaching fast towards a fixed, unchangeable state of incorrigible obstinacy in wickedness. Ten years ago, it was much more likely, in human view, that you would have been converted ere now, than it now is, that you will be converted in ten years to come. In short, the only ground of hope concerning you, is not at all from the appearance of things in human view, but merely from the free and sovereign grace of God. I may say of your salvation, what Christ said of the salvation of the rich, with men that is impossible: that is, according to the ordinary way of judging among men, who can judge only by appearances, and who count those things likely or unlikely, possible or impossible, which seem to be so in their own nature: according to this rule of judging, there is no reason at all to hope for it; it is quite desperate. But with God all things are possible: he can and sometimes does act contrary to appearances and the natural tendency of things; and astonishes his creatures with unexpected and surprising wonders. Thus, veteran, obstinate sinners! He may yet deal with some of you. Omnipotence may yet take you in hand, disarm all your resistance, and cause you to feel those admonitions you have made light of. This, perhaps, God may do. But oh! It is an anxious, dreadful peradventure; for you must know, though he sometimes singles out a hardened sinner of your class here and there, to make him the illustrious trophy of the power of his grace, yet this is not his usual way: he does not commonly work upon such rough, unsuitable materials. He generally pitches upon the young and pliable, upon those that

have not been long inured to the gospel, nor hardened in sin. Therefore, even this, which is your only ground of hope, can afford you but a trembling, anxious hope. Notwithstanding this, you have reason to fear that you will die as you have hitherto lived, hardy, resolute, incorrigible sinners. And if so, you know your dreadful end; you shall suddenly be destroyed; your stiff neck shall be unexpectedly broken; and there will be no help, no remedy.

And if you are indeed in so much danger, will you not now lay it to heart, and endeavor to escape while you may? Alas! Shall this admonition also, this admonition for your disregarding all past admonition, be lost upon you like the rest? Oh! Will you not at length take warning, before it is too late? Perhaps the voice that now warns you may not long sound in your ears. But oh! Let me find this day, that those whom I have reproved in vain for so many years, regard me at last, and submit, and yield. Then, and not till then, you will be safe from the vengeance denounced in this alarming proverb, “He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

# *SERM. XLI. THE NATURE OF LOOKING TO CHRIST OPENED AND EXPLAINED.*

**I**saiah 45:22— *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

It is the peculiar sin and unhappiness of the Christianized world, that while they profess and speculatively believe Jesus to be the Messiah, the Savior of sinners: and while they harbor some kind of high esteem for him as a Benefactor that appeared upon earth about 1700 years ago, who should be still remembered with gratitude, yet they are not deeply sensible of that intimate, personal concern which degenerate sinners have with him in every age. They do not make that eager, importunate, affectionate application to him, which his character requires as the Savior of guilty men. Divine justice indeed was satisfied, the demands of the law were answered by the obedience and sufferings of our divine Redeemer long before we came into existence, and God became reconcilable to a guilty world. But all this alone does not ensure our salvation. Redemption must not only be purchased, but applied; and though it was purchased without our concurrence, yet all

mankind, in all ages, are concerned in the application of it. There was no need of the gospel and its ordinances to procure it; but all these are necessary, and therefore appointed for our obtaining an actual interest in it. Hence Christ, as an almighty Savior, is exhibited, and the blessings of his purchase are offered in the gospel; and all that hear the gracious proposal are invited to entertain this Savior with suitable dispositions, and to consent to the terms on which these blessings are offered, upon the penalty of everlasting damnation. Our personal consent is required as much in this age as when the gospel was first published to the world; and it is this which is solicited by all the means of grace; it is to gain your consent to this gracious proposal, that the gospel is still continued among you. It is for this we preach: for this you should hear, and perform every other duty; for this the Lord's supper in particular was instituted, and has been to-day administered among you. It is to melt your hearts, and engage your affections to a dying Savior, that he is represented both in words and in speaking actions, in all the agonies of Gethsemane, and in all the tortures of Calvary.

But though these affecting means have been used from age to age, yet, alas! They have not had the intended effect upon multitudes. They act like a sick person infatuated with the imagination that the mere grateful remembrance of Galen or Hippocrates, or some other eminent physician of past ages, will be sufficient for his recovery, without following their prescriptions, or making a speedy application to a living physician now; whereas there is as much reason why we in this age should be pricked to the heart, and cry out, What shall we do to be saved? As there was for St. Peter's hearers. Acts 2:37,38. There is as much reason to exhort unregenerate sinners now to repent and be converted, as there was to exhort the impenitent Jews to it. There is as much cause to direct and persuade

men now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the heathen jailer, who had been an infidel. Acts 16:31. It is true indeed, when we now exhort men to believe in Christ, we cannot include all the ideas in it which were included in this exhortation when addressed to infidel Jews and heathens in the apostolic age; for then it included, that they should renounce their former religion, and assent to this important truth, that Jesus is the Messiah, and take upon them the profession of Christianity; and this is rendered in general, I hope, needless in our land, as we have been initiated into this persuasion by our education and other means. But, my brethren, all this is far short of that consent which we must yield to the gospel, if we expect to be saved by it. This faith is not that living faith which we are called to act upon the Redeemer; and we must give him another kind of reception than multitudes do, who thus believe his divine mission, and profess his religion. We must have those affectionate dispositions and vigorous exercises of heart towards him, which become guilty, perishing sinners towards an almighty and gracious Savior, who deserves and therefore demands our supreme affection, our humble dependence on his merits alone, and our hearty consent to be his servants forever. We must be brought to believe in him with such a faith as will regulate our practices, and render the whole of our life a series of grateful obedience to him, who is an atoning Priest upon a throne of royal authority, enacting laws and demanding the dutiful submission of his subjects. And therefore, though it is needless to call upon you to believe in the same sense in which this exhortation was addressed to infidels by the apostles; yet there is still room enough to urge you to this duty, only leaving out one ingredient then included, viz., a speculative belief and external profession of the Christian religion, and that Christ is the Messiah. There is still reason to persuade sinners to consent to the terms of

life established in the gospel, to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and to place their humble confidence in his alone, to acquiesce with the warmest complacency in the method of salvation through grace, and in the meantime to surrender themselves to his government, to obey his will, with the most cheerful willingness, the most ardent devotion, and the humblest adoration: in short, to entertain the great Redeemer with those affections and dispositions which the nature and design of his mediatorial office demand, and which become our condition as guilty, miserable, helpless creatures; all which are included in that faith in Jesus which the gospel enjoins as the grand condition of salvation.

This faith is one of the principal subjects of sacred Scripture, and is expressed in various forms: sometimes in plain terms, but more frequently in metaphors borrowed from earthly things, and particularly from the actions of the body. This method of expressing spiritual objects and intellectual ideas, in terms that originally and properly are applied to the body, is not only common in Scripture, but intermingled in conversation, and authorized by the best authors in all ages and languages. We speak of the eye of the understanding as well as of our bodily eye: and to see an argument, or a meaning, is almost as common a phrase as to see a man or any other material object. The evidence by which the soul forms its determinations is called light, as well as the medium of proper vision. And as the metaphor is here borrowed from the eye, so it is frequently borrowed from the other organs of the body and their actions. This is owing to the penury of the language of mortals, who, as they are most conversant with material objects, and have the earliest and most frequent occasions of receiving or conveying their ideas of them in sound, are habituated to a dialect proper to these things; and, when they would express their ideas of



immaterial things, they are obliged to transfer these terms, originally applied to material objects, to express those immaterial things; and there is not only necessity but reason for this, as there is a resemblance between those actions of the body from which these metaphors are borrowed, and those actions of the mind to which they are transferred; yea, it is not only reasonable, but a beautiful and moving method of representing divine things: in this principally consists the beauty of poetry, that it clothes intellectual ideas in lively material images, which make deep impressions on our imaginations.

In such metaphorical terms, as I observed, faith is often represented in sacred Scripture. Sometimes the metaphor is borrowed from the feet; and then to believe is to come to Christ; to come to him as one oppressed with a heavy burden to a person that can relieve, Matt. 11:28; to come to him as one perishing with thirst, to a fountain of living water, Isaiah 55:1; Rev. 22:17; or as the manslayer, closely pursued by the avenger of blood, to the city of refuge: hence it is expressed by the most emphatical phrase of fleeing for refuge. Heb. 6:18. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the conduct of a dutiful and loyal people towards their rightful Sovereign upon his entering among them in his own territories. John 1:11,12. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the ears; and faith is expressed by hearing his voice, as an impoverished, dying wretch would hear the offer of plenty and life. Isaiah 55:3; John 5:25. And sometimes, as in the text, the metaphor is taken from the eyes; and faith is represented as looking to Christ. My present design is,

- I. To explain the duty here expressed by the metaphor of looking.
- II. To urge it upon you by sundry important considerations.

I. To explain the duty expressed by the metaphor looking, we are to observe in general, that a man's looks often discover his condition and the frame of his mind. By virtue of the strange union between the soul and the body, the dispositions of the one are often indicated by the emotions and appearances of the other. The eye, in particular, is a mirror in which we may see the various passions of the mind; and it has a kind of silent, and yet significant language, which conveys to others those inward exercises which the tongue does not, and perhaps cannot express. Hence we can understand a look of surprise and consternation, a look of sorrow and compassion, a look of joy, the look of a perishing suppliant, or of a needy, expecting dependent. If an agonizing patient casts an eager look upon his physician, we understand it to be a silent petition for relief. When a dying husband fixes a wishful, tender look upon his surviving half, or those little other selves, his children, they know the melting language, and feel its resistless energy. And when we see a drowning man casting a wild and eager look towards a boat coming to his relief, we understand it to be the language of earnest importunity for speedy help. Hence it follows, that "looking to Christ implies those suitable dispositions and exercises of heart towards him, which are expressed by the earnest and significant looks of persons in a distressed condition towards their deliverer." And in such a case it is natural to conceive a person as expressing by his looks a particular notice and distinct knowledge of his deliverer, an importunate cry for his assistance—a wishful expectation for it—a dependence upon him for it—a universal submission to him—a hearty love and approbation of him—and joy and gratitude for his deliverance. And these dispositions and exercises of mind towards Christ are intended in the text by looking to him.

1. Looking to Christ implies a particular notice and distinct knowledge of him. When we fix an earnest look upon an object, we take particular notice and a distinct survey of it, and so obtain a clear knowledge of it. Thus we are called to fix our intellectual eyes upon Christ, to make him the object of our contemplation, and by these means to obtain the knowledge of him. Mankind are too commonly regardless and ignorant of him. And are not many of you chargeable with this criminal neglect! The blessed Jesus has exhibited himself to your observation in the gospel, but your attention is so engaged by other objects, that you will not allow him an earnest look. He has been set forth evidently crucified before your eyes, but you have, as it were, passed and repassed careless and unconcerned by his cross. You have had a variety of opportunities and means to be instructed in the glorious mysteries of the gospel; to know the person of the Redeemer as Immanuel, God and man; to know the absolute necessity, the gracious design, and the high degree of his sufferings; to know his sufficiency and willingness to pardon and save believing penitents; and, in a word, to obtain a competent acquaintance with the method of salvation. But you have taken but little or no notice of these things; and consequently remained contentedly ignorant of them. It is equally lamentable and astonishing, that in a land like this, abounding in Bibles and other means of instruction, Christianity should be so little known even by those that profess it. How ridiculous a figure would an artist make that knew nothing of his trade! A school-master that could not spell! Or a doctor that knew nothing of physic! And yet men have the impious impudence to call themselves Christians, and resent it when their profession is pronounced a hypocritical pretense, though they are ignorant of the rudiments of Christianity. You are therefore called in the text to pursue the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, John

17:3, to make this the object of your study; for without it you cannot be saved. It is by the knowledge of him you are justified, Isa. 53:11; and if you are a people of no understanding, he that formed you will not have mercy on you, Isa. 27:11, but you shall be destroyed through lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6. Not that a mere speculative knowledge of Christ will suffice; no, it must not be a look of curiosity and speculation, but you must be affected with the object; your eye must affect your heart; and by beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel, you must be changed into the same image, or conformed to him in holiness. 2 Cor. 3:18. A perishing man is not a mere curious spectator of his deliverer; but he views him with the tenderest passions. So you must look upon Christ. Thus the knowledge of him was attended with supreme affection to him in St. Paul. Phil. 3:7,8. But this will be further illustrated under the following particulars.

2. Looking to Christ implies an importunate eagerness for relief from him. See Psalm 25:15. If your child were fallen into the hand of a murderer just ready to dispatch him, and should cast a wishful look upon you, while you was running to his deliverance, you would understand it as a silent cry for help. So we are enjoined to look to Christ with the most eager importunity for deliverance from him as our Savior. And this supposes a deep sense of our need of him. When a guilty creature, that had been involved in the general presumptuous security, is effectually alarmed with just apprehensions of his danger; when he sees his numberless transgressions in all their horrid aggravations, and the dreadful threatening's of the law in full force, and ready to be executed against him: in short, when he sees himself ripe for ruin, and ready every moment to sink into it, with what importunate cries will he betake himself to him for relief! Behold he prayeth! Now he is often on his knees before God in secret, as well as in social prayer; and in

the intervals between his prayers, he is often looking to the hills from whence cometh his aid, Ps. 121:1, and wafting up many an importunate cry to heaven. Sometimes he sinks into an abyss of sorrow, and is overwhelmed with boisterous waves of fears, so that, with Jonah, he is ready to cry out, I am cast out of thy sight, O Lord; yet with him he says, I will look again towards thy holy temple. Jonah 2:4. Happy the souls that are thus looking to Jesus, who is lifted up for the recovery of a dying world, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness! John 3:14. And happy we, should this spirit of pious importunity prevail among us, and banish that spirit of deep sleep which seems poured out upon us! Then would prayer be our employ, not only when we observed the returns of stated prayer in secret, in our families, and in our public assemblies, but our souls would be always in a supplicating posture; every wish, every groan would be a cry for mercy: and then might we expect to obtain the blessings we need; and the aspect of our religious affairs would be happily altered among us. To this duty the text invites us; and oh that we may consult our own interest, as well as regard the authority of God, so far, “as to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near!” Isaiah 55:6.

3. Looking to Christ implies a wishful expectation of deliverance from him. See Psalm 69:3. It may be illustrated by the history of the lame beggar, in Acts 3:4,5. He begged an alms of the apostles Peter and John; they do not immediately relieve him, but give him some ground of encouraging expectation by taking particular notice of him and telling him to fix his eyes upon them. Thereupon the anxious cripple gives heed to them, and wishfully looks upon them, expecting to receive something of them. So a poor sinner, amidst all his anxious fears and despondencies, approaches the throne of grace, and begs for mercy. The Lord Jesus, though his bowels are

yearning over him, does not give him immediate relief; he puts him off for a while, as he did the Syrophoenician, that he may give occasion for him to plead with the more importunity, and more suitably prize the blessings when obtained. Yet, in this melancholy interval, he does not leave him quite hopeless. The invitations of the gospel cry, "Look on me;" and the poor sinner lifts up the eyes of wishful expectation to receive something. "Who knows, but that sovereign and unbounded grace, which has relieved thousands, may also listen to my cries? Blessed Jesus! May I not indulge some trembling hope that thou wilt at length grant me deliverance? Thy free, thine indefinite invitations and absolute promises give me some ground of pleasing expectation; and oh! Shall it be frustrated? No, let me trust in thee for the gracious accomplishment." Such are the soliloquies of such an anxious soul. And though we might be all left in remediless despair, yet, blessed be God, we have encouragement to look to Jesus with humble, joyful hope; and it is to this the text exhorts us.

4. Looking to Jesus implies a humble dependence upon him for salvation. This supposes that we are deeply sensible of our own utter inability to relieve ourselves; and when we are convinced of this, we shall immediately look to another; when we see no ground at all for self-confidence, we shall place our trust in Jesus alone. It was such a look as this that good Jehoshaphat raised to heaven: We have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. 2 Chron. 20:12. So Micah, finding no room for human confidence, resolves, Therefore I will look unto the Lord. Micah 7:7. Thus a humble sinner, sensible of his utter inability, resolves to venture upon Christ, to trust in him, though he should slay him. Job 13:15. And in those happy moments when the sinner has some glimmering hopes of acceptance, with what

pleasure and satisfaction does he rest upon this eternal rock! And how happy we, should we be engaged this day to place our humble dependence there! It is to this the text calls us.

5. Looking to Christ means a universal, cheerful submission to his authority. We must consent to be his servants forever, and wait all the intimations of his will to obey them. We must look and observe the motion of his hand pointing out to us the way of duty. We must look as a servant upon his master, eager to receive his orders. So the phrase seems used in Psalm 123:1,2. “Unto thee I left up mine eyes, oh thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord.” Thus, whoever trusts in Jesus with a saving faith, surrenders himself to an unlimited obedience to all his commandments; and to this the text invites us.

9. Looking to Christ implies a hearty approbation of him as a Savior, and supreme affection to him. Love is often expressed by looks; and when we look affectionately upon an object, it evidences that we are pleased with the survey. So a perishing world is commanded to acquiesce in the method of salvation, through Christ, to love him above all, and to take the fullest and noblest complacence to him; and upon their so doing, they are assured of salvation. We have indeed been influenced by education and the like means to entertain a general good esteem of Christ; but, alas! This is very far short of that endearing affection and hearty complacence which he claims and deserves. Our hearts must be engaged to him; he must be the chief among ten thousand in our eyes. Our thoughts and passions must often ascend to him, and we must rest in him with complacence, as containing all our salvation and all our desire. 2 Sam. 23:5.

7. And lastly, Looking to Christ implies joy and gratitude for his delivering goodness. The passions of joy and gratitude are easily discovered by the looks; and therefore are intended by this phrase, look unto me. And this it not only the duty, but the delightful inclination of one that has been relieved by him from the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the dreadful displeasure of God. Joy is in itself a pleasing passion, and we delight to indulge it: and to a heart that has just felt the mercy of deliverance from everlasting destruction, thanksgiving is a most grateful and pleasing employ; and, in this, much of the happiness of heaven consists.

From this view of the duty intended by looking to Jesus, take occasion, my brethren, to examine, whether ever you have complied with it; for it is a matter of infinite importance, as your eternal state depends upon it. He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life, 1 John 5:12.



# *SERM. XLII. ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE OUR LOOKING TO CHRIST.*

**I**saiah 45:22.— *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

The duty of looking to Christ being explained, I shall,

II. Urge you to look to him by several weighty considerations.

This is the great duty of saints and sinners, and consequently of every one in all ages and places, even to the ends of the earth. It is the duty of sinners to turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, and fix them upon this attractive, but, alas! Neglected Savior; to turn their attention from the trifles of time to the great Antitype of the brazen serpent, who is lifted up that a dying world may open their eyes, just closing in death, and look and live. And saints, whose eyes have been turned to this glorious object, ought to fix them more intensely upon him, to take larger surveys of his glory, and to renew their affectionate trust in him.

I would premise, that when I exhort sinners to look to Jesus, I would not intimate, that they are able to do this of themselves. No; I am very sensible, that all the exhortations, persuasions, invitations, and expostulations that a

feeble mortal, or even the most powerful angel in heaven, can use with them will have no effect, but vanish into air, without the efficacious operation of almighty grace. And yet such exhortations are neither useless, improper, or un scriptural: they tend to convince sinners of their inability to believe, which is necessary to their believing aright; and it is while such arguments are addressed to their understandings, that the Holy Spirit is wont to work upon their hearts. Hence they are so often commanded in Scripture to repent, to believe in Christ, to look to him to make them a new heart, I would add, that when I express the duty enjoined under the metaphor of looking, I hope it will not lead any of you into gross corporeal ideas, since the import of it has been so fully shown.

The arguments to enforce this important evangelical duty can never be exhausted; and therefore I must confine myself to those which this copious text furnishes us with, which, when resolved into particulars, will stand thus:

It is salvation we are called upon to pursue—It may be obtained upon the easiest terms, without any personal merit, viz. by a look—It is Immanual, the incarnate God, that commands and invites us to look—and he is the glorious and affecting object to which we are to look—and our looking shall not be in vain, for he is God, who engages to save those that look to him; and it is in vain to look elsewhere for salvation, and needless to fear his grace should be controlled by another; for as he is God, so there is none else—and we in particular are invited, being especially meant by the ends of the earth.

1. It is salvation that is here offered. Look and be saved. Salvation! Oh most propitious, transporting sound! Amazing! That ever it should be heard by our guilty ears! Sin, my brethren, has exposed us to the curse of the

divine law, to the loss of heaven, and all its joys, yea, and of earth too, and all its entertainments: for death, the consequence of sin, will rend us from them. We have no title to any good to satisfy our eager panting's; and must languish and pine through an endless duration without a drop of bliss, if punished according to our demerit. We are also subject to the torturing agonies of a remorseful conscience, to be cut off from the earth by the sword of justice, and swept away by the besom of destruction into the regions of horror and despair, there to consume away a long, long eternity in inextinguishable flames, in remediless, intolerable torments, in the horrid society of devils and damned ghosts, who shall mutually promote and join in the general roar of torture and desperation. This, sirs, is our just, our unavoidable doom, unless we obtain an interest in the salvation of the Lord. But salvation brings us a complete remedy, equal to our misery. It contains a title to the divine favor, and consequently to all the joys of heaven; it contains a perfect deliverance from all the torments of hell: and shall we not then regard and obey the voice that cries, Look unto me, and be ye saved! Is it not fit those should perish without remedy, who hear the offer of such a salvation with indifference? How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Were we now under a sentence of condemnation to death, by an earthly court, and were going out one after another to the place of execution, and should some welcome messenger, with a general pardon in his hand, come with joyful speed into this assembly, and proclaim salvation; salvation! To all that would accept it on the easiest terms, what a shout of general joy would burst from this assembly! What changed faces, what tears of general joy, would appear among us! In this agreeable character, my brethren, I have the honor and the happiness of appearing among you this day. I proclaim salvation from the Lord to dying men; salvation to all that

will look to him for it. And I would not make the offer to the air, or to the walls of this house, but to rational creatures, capable of consenting and refusing. I therefore request you to look upon it as a proposal made to you; to you men, to you women, to you youth and children, to you negroes, demanding a speedy answer. Will you look to Jesus? Or will you hide your faces from him? Will you not think him and his salvation worth a look? Which leads me to observe,

2. This salvation may be obtained upon low terms. It may be obtained by a look. Look and be saved; and this metaphor implies that no merit is required in us to procure this salvation. It is as cheap a cure as that which the Israelites obtained by looking to a brazen serpent. The salvation is wrought already; Christ would not separate his soul and body, and put an end to his pains, till he could say, It is finished; and all required of us is a cheerful acceptance: and what terms can be easier? It is true we are required to abstain from sin, and be holy, in order to enjoy this salvation; but can this be looked upon as a hard term? It is impossible in the nature of things you should be saved in a course of sin; for one great part of the salvation consists in deliverance from sin. This is the deadly disease which must be healed, in order to your happiness. And how, then, can you expect to be saved while you indulge in it? Would you not think your physician made easy prescriptions to you, if he assured you of recovery, when you were sick, upon condition that you would abstain from poison, and confine yourselves to a wholesome diet? Holiness is as necessary to happiness as temperance to health; and though sinners, like drunkards, think this a hard imposition, yet it cannot be altered, without a change in the immutable Deity. Therefore submit to the terms of salvation: they are as low, as easy as the nature of things will permit. They are not the rigid, arbitrary

impositions of an austere being, but the mild, unavoidable requisitions of an indulgent and wise God, acting according to the reason of things. If salvation was offered to you, upon condition of your making an infinite satisfaction for sin, you might start off from the proposal; for even almighty grace could not enable you to do this: for this you could not do without being advanced above the rank of creatures, and endowed with infinity, which you are physically incapable of. But grace can dispose you to consent to the terms of the gospel; grace can turn your eyes to look to Jesus, for you are only morally incapable of this; that is, you are unwilling, you are sinfully averse to it. Come, then, look and live. The lowness of the terms aggravates the guilt of a non-compliance with them. What do those deserve who do not think a salvation purchased with the blood of a God worth a look? What drudgery do you endure, what hardships do you voluntarily undergo, to procure some of the specious toys of this world? What a difficult regimen will you submit to, what nauseous s potions will you take, for the recovery of the health of your mortal bodies? And will you not take the trouble of a look for the salvation of your immortal souls? How eagerly will you accept the offer of any temporal advantage! And will you neglect this invitation to look and live?

Especially, when,

3. It is Immanuel, our incarnate God, that invites and commands you to look to him, and be saved. You may trifle with the commands of a usurper, and reject the treacherous invitations of an enemy; but dare you trifle with the injunctions, dare you refuse the gracious invitations of our supreme King and heavenly Friend? That it is Christ who here calls us to look to him, is evident from ¶ the application of this context to Christ by the apostle: " "To this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might

be Lord both of the dead and living. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” Rom 14:9-11. Which words, according to the Hebrew, you find in the verse following my text. See also Phil. 2:9-11. Moreover the characters here predicted concerning the Lord Jehovah, most properly belong to Christ, according to the dialect of the New Testament; “Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Now we know that Christ is everywhere represented as our righteousness and strength, “In the Lord shall the seed of Israel be justified,” verse 24,25, which is spoken most properly of Christ, through whom alone we can be justified. It is therefore the voice of our Immanuel that sounds so delightfully in our text. It is his voice which spoke this goodly universe into being out of its original nothing; which said, Let there be light; and there was light; and dare we disobey his voice by whom all things were created? Col. 1:16. He spoke us into being, and we obeyed; and shall we, when blessed with existence, resist his almighty call? It is his voice whom angels obey; Gabriel, and all his flaming ministers, fly at the first hint of his sovereign pleasure. Nay, universal nature hears his awful mandate, and all her laws are observed, or cancelled according to his pleasure. Events natural and supernatural are equally easy to him. And is this the majestic voice which sinners hear sounding in the gospel, and yet disregard? Is this he whom they make so light of, as not to vouchsafe him a look? Amazing presumption! And further, it is his voice which shall pronounce the final sentence upon the assembled universe. He now sits exalted upon a throne of grace, scattering blessings among his subjects, and inviting a dying world to look to him and live; but ere long he will put on majesty and terror, and ascend the throne of judgment. From thence he will speak, and omnipotence will attend his word

to execute it. From thence he will pronounce, Come, ye blessed, on all that hear his call now; and neither earth nor hell can repeal the joyful sentence. And on those that will not now look to him, he will pronounce, Depart from me; “away, away, from my blissful presence, ye cursed creatures, never, never, to see me more.” And though they can now resist the voice of mercy, yet then they must obey the dreadful orders of justice, and shrink confounded from his face, and sink to hell. We, my brethren, must mingle in that vast assembly, and hear our doom from his lips: and can we, in the serious expectation of that day, refuse his call to look to him now? Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and how shall we stand the terror of his face, if we now treat him so contemptuously? These considerations show, that the call in my text is the command of authority, and therefore that our neglect of it is disloyalty and rebellion? But, oh! There is a more melting, a more endearing consideration still. It is the voice of our Beloved, it is the gracious invitation of love: it is his voice who heard the cry of our helpless misery: who, though equal with God, and possessed of infinite, independent happiness, emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant. He often looked up to heaven with strong crying’s and tears in the days of his flesh for us. For us he spoke many a gracious word, still upon record; for us he wrought many a miracle; for us he travelled many a fatiguing journey, and endured hunger and thirst, and all the calamities of poverty. For us he was reproached, belied, persecuted; and oh! For us he sweat and groaned in Gethsemane; for us his back was furrowed with scourging, his face defiled with spitting, his head bruised with buffetings, and pierced with thorns. For us he was nailed to the cross; for us he hung in ignominy and torture; for us he shed his blood, lie breathed out his life; for us his side was pierced; and for us the Lord of life lay in the

dust of death. And oh! Blessed Jesus, after all his love, after all these sufferings, will not the sons of men afford thee one affectionate, believing look when thou exhibitest thyself in the gospel, crying with a loud and loving voice, “Behold me, behold me; look unto me, and be ye saved?” Oh sirs, can you reject the invitation of such a Savior? Are you capable of such horrid ingratitude? He bespeaks your attention with dying groans; his wounds preach from the cross and cry, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. There he was lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; that whosoever believeth in him, though in the agonies of death, should not perish, but have everlasting life; and can we neglect the invitation of such a Savior in such circumstances? Shall a guilty world always find something else to look upon, so that they cannot spare a glance to the blessed Jesus? With what pious horror must angels behold such a sight! And may not the earth shudder to support such impious ingratitude?

4. It is Immanuel we are to look to. Look unto me. He that issues the command is the glorious and attractive object we are called to behold. The adorable glories of a God, and the milder beauties of a perfect man, meet in his person. His glories attract the admiring gaze of angels, and charm the attention of the happy immortals above. The survey of his perfections is the source of all their bliss, and will furnish all their powers with ecstatic employ, through the revolutions of eternal ages. And will not worms look up from the dust to him? Shall every sordid trifle engage their intense contemplation, while they hide their faces from this glorious Immanuel, as though he had no form or comeliness? There is an infinite variety of objects within the compass of the creation which attract our attention. Our eyes are charmed with the splendor of the day, the midnight glories of the starry arch, the verdure of the spring, the majesty of mountains, the beauties of



human faces: nay, there is not a trifling curiosity in nature but engages our observation. But all the glories of the universe are but the faint reflections of his; they are but obscure copies of his underived excellences. And shall we be charmed with the transcript, and take no notice of the original? Does the contemplation of the works of nature afford such exquisite entertainment to philosophic minds, and shall not every mind be transported in the survey of Immanuel's uncreated glories? But if all these considerations fail, sure the love of Christ must constrain you. He has exhibited himself to your view this day in a vesture dipped in blood. He has emblematically passed before you crowned with thorns, and covered with blood; and as Pilate said to the Jews, to melt them in compassion, so say we to you, Behold the man! And will you turn away from him regardless, or view him with as much indifference as though he were a malefactor? What is this but to join the Jewish rabble, Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him! He has virtually said to you as to Thomas, "Look into my hands, and behold the print of the nails; and look into my side, and behold the stab of the spear, which opened a fountain of life for you." And can you deny an affectionate look to such an object? He hangs conspicuous on the cross, his nerves racked, his bones disjointed, his heart melting like wax in the midst of his bowels, while streams of blood run down his sacred body; and it is in this posture we are to look upon him. In this posture, as it were, he issues forth his gracious invitation, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. And is there a mortal so hardy, so ungrateful, as to refuse an affectionate look to him in such circumstances? Shall he complain, with David, his type, "I looked for some to take pity: but there was none." Psalm 69:20. "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; no man cared for my soul." Psalm

142:4. Blessed Jesus! Shalt thou take up this complaint over creatures for whom thou didst bleed and die? Over creatures who owe all their hopes to thee? May not the whole creation be struck with consternation at the complaint? Why are not the miraculous solemnities that attend thy death renewed? Why do not the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the sun put on the livery of a mourner, to see a dying God and a careless world! The Creator, the Savior of men, in agony, in blood; and his creatures, his ransomed, asleep, and not affording him so much as a look of love and compassion! Were ever such horrid incongruities pronounced at a breath, or united in one sentence! But the cross is not the only place where we should look upon him. Lift up your eyes to seats above: there you may behold him who tasted of death, crowned with glory and honor. His head, that was once crowned with thorns, is now adorned with a crown of glory: his face, that was once bruised with blows, and disgraced with spitting, shines brighter than the sun in his meridian glory: his hands, that were once nailed to the cross, now sway the scepter of the universe: and his feet, that were cruelly pierced, now walk the crystal pavement of heaven. He that was insulted by Jews and Gentiles, he at whom they wagged their heads, is now adored by all the heavenly hosts, who congratulate his exaltation, and cry with united voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:11,12. This is the voice of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands in that world where Jesus is best known. And shall we break the harmony of the universal choir? Shall we not echo back their song, and reply, To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (which is more than he did for angels) to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen. Rev. 1:5,6. Shall we not look to him whose glory

attracts the eyes of all the celestial armies, and congratulate his exaltation? We have cause indeed to rejoice in it; for oh! He is exalted, that he may have mercy upon us, Isa. 30:18; he has ascended the throne, that he may thence scatter blessings on a guilty world beneath him. He retains his usual love, and the tenderest bowels of compassion towards the meanest of his people. He is now pleading their cause in the court of heaven, and preparing a place for them. From thence he exhibits himself to our intellectual view, and invites us to look to him. And can we slight such glory and love united? Are our natures capable of such infernal ingratitude? Oh, let us look to him, especially since it shall not be in vain:

For, 5. He is able to save us upon our looking to him. Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God. This is annexed as the reason of the duty enjoined; and what can give us greater security of salvation upon our compliance? “If God be for us, who shall be against us? If God justify, who is he that condemneth?” It is his right to constitute the terms of salvation, and he has almighty power to save all that comply with them. It is that God, who threatens to punish sinners, that here promises to save them upon their looking to him. And what glorious encouragement, what strong consolation does this afford us! Is there a creature here so full of unbelieving despondency, as seriously to think that even Jehovah cannot save him? Surely no; therefore look and be saved, for it is God that undertakes to save you. And he can do exceeding abundantly more for you than you can ask or think. Your sins may be mighty, but not almighty: your guilt may be great, but the blood of God can expiate it: the obstructions in your way may be numerous and insuperable to you, but he can reduce a mountain into a plain before you. You are feeble, helpless things, “but have you not heard, have you not known, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends

of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” Isa. 40:28—31.

6. Look to him; for as he is God, so there is none else. This implies that there is no other Savior, and that this sole Savior is uncontrollable, and therefore able to save.

It is only a God that is able to work our salvation. Men, angels, all creatures are unequal to the task. They cannot satisfy divine justice for our sin; they cannot subdue our corruptions, and sanctify our hearts; nor conduct us safe through all the dangers and temptations that surround us. We in particular are utterly incapable of these things. It is not in the power of our hand to relieve ourselves. And if you will not look to Christ, to whom will you look? “Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints, to which of the angels, wilt thou turn?” You are shut up to the faith, my brethren; you have no alternative but to look to Christ, or sink to hell. There is no salvation in any other. And will you rather be without a Savior than look to him as such? Why, what evil hath he done? Why such strange aversion to your best Friend, who is able to save to the utmost? And as none else can save, so

He is able to save, because beyond control. There is no God besides, to reverse his will; but whom he blesses, is blessed indeed. He is head over all things to his church. He limits the power, controls the rage, and baffles all the politic schemes of the powers of hell; and the hearts of men, of kings, are in his hand; and he turns them whithersoever he pleases. None,

therefore, shall pluck his sheep out of his hand; but he will give unto them eternal life. Look then to him, poor, trembling weaklings, that are daily putting your life in his hand, and often dismally forebode your own destruction, and the victory of your enemies. Trust in the Lord, Jehovah; for in his arm is everlasting strength.

7. And lastly, look to him, for you are particularly invited, being especially meant by those in the ends of the earth. A promiscuous call may not be regarded so much as a particular invitation directed to us, as it were, by name. We dwell in a continent that may be called the ends of the earth with peculiar propriety; and though America was unknown in Isaiah's time, and probably not in his thoughts when he uttered these words, yet no doubt that omniscient Spirit, who inspired his lips, had a reference to it. It is true the words may be taken figuratively, as referring to the Gentiles in general, who might be said to be in the ends of the earth with respect to the favorite land of Judea, which was situated near the middle of the then known world, on the borders of Asia, near where it joins with Europe and Africa. Those in the ends of the earth seem also to suggest to us the ideas of poor outcasts in a helpless condition, as the Gentiles then were, without the knowledge of God and the means of grace. And if we take the text in this sense, it still refers to us who are the posterity of heathens. But methinks there is a particular beauty and propriety in it, taken literally; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, ye that dwell in the remotest ends of the inhabited earth; look unto me, ye Americans, ye Virginians." Oh what a joyful sound! Not many years ago we or our near ancestors came from the old continent of Europe or its adjacent islands; and the Lord has driven out the heathen from before us, and planted us in their stead. We left his church and the favorite lands where his gospel had shined for ages, and came among savages that never heard of

the name of Jesus, but dwelt in darkness and the shadow of death. But lo! He sends his gracious invitation after us to the ends of the earth, Look unto me, and be ye saved. In the days of Isaiah God was mindful of America, he was mindful of Virginia, and treasured up a rich invitation, till it should be inhabited, and in need of it. And shall we not regard it? Shall we not regard his voice crying in this wilderness? Indeed if any other blessings were worthy to be compared with those of the gospel, I might observe that he has not been kind to us in this respect only. He has turned this wilderness into a fruitful field: the residence of savages and wild beasts into a mart of nations. "He hath blessed us also, so that we are multiplied greatly; and he suffereth not our cattle to decrease." See Psalm 107:36-38. We may borrow the words of Moses, in Deut. 32:10-14. But, alas! We have waxed fat, and kicked against God, like well-fed horses against their proprietor. We have turned his blessings into occasions of sinning. We have improved in guilt and impiety in proportion to our improvement in riches and the arts of life. And it is an instance of divine patience that may astonish even heaven itself, that so ungrateful a land has not been visited with some signal judgment. But our iniquities are not yet full, and we hope there are more than ten righteous persons among us, whose prayers stand in the gap, and prevent the irruption of vengeance. But perhaps our day is at hand, and then, though Noah, Daniel and Job, should stand before God, yet his heart will not be turned towards us. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, oh foolish people and unwise! Is not he thy Father, that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deut. 32:6. But to abuse the gospel is the greatest of all crimes. It is this that ripens a people for ruin, and fills up the measure of their iniquity: God will easier bear with the abuse of any mercy

than with the contempt of his Son. Therefore, look unto him, and be ye saved, O ye ends of the earth.

# *SERM. XLIII. THE VESSELS OF MERCY AND THE VESSELS OF WRATH DE LINEATED.*

**R**om. 9:22,23.— *The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and—the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.*

The true notion of the present world is, that it is a state of preparation for another; and, therefore, such as we habitually are here, such shall we be forever. Mankind are now forming, like clay in the potter's hands, some for honor and some for dishonor; some for wrath and some for glory. And as the potter does not put his vessels to their respective uses until they are finished and prepared for them, so neither are men removed from the present state, and fixed in their respective residences in the eternal world, until they are prepared, finished, and completely fitted for them. The vessels of mercy are prepared beforehand for that glory with which they shall be filled. And, on the other hand, the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction, and fit for nothing else, before they are dashed to pieces by the iron rod of divine justice.



It is a criticism worthy to be mentioned, even in this solemn place, where I never choose to make a parade of useless learning, that the apostle uses a different form of expression, when speaking of these different sorts of persons. The preparation of the vessels of mercy for glory, he ascribes to God, as his work. Hence he uses an active verb, προϋπόμιασεν, referring expressly to God as the agent—the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. But the fitting or preparing the vessels of wrath for destruction, he does not ascribe to God, but intimates that it is their own work. Hence he uses a passive particle—χανηρτιμένα, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction—fitted by their own willful sin and impenitence, during the long-suffering of God towards them, which had a tendency to lead them to repentance.

Vessels of wrath.—How terribly emphatical is this phrase! Vessels dreadfully capacious of divine wrath! To be filled to the brim with that burning liquid! But how beautifully significant is the metaphor—vessels of mercy! Vessels formed, prepared, finished, adorned by the gentle and skillful hand of divine mercy! Vessels capacious of mercy, and to be filled, to overflow, with glory!

The gracious and sovereign God, who might justly have dashed these vessels of wrath to pieces as soon as ever they became marred clay in his plastic hands, endures or bears with them with much long-suffering, as well as with vessels of mercy: bears with them, as he has with you, for days, and months, and years, notwithstanding their daring provocations, and ungrateful abuse of his patience; which nothing but divine patience could bear with so long. But all this time, they contracted more and more filth and pollution; they became every day less fit for their Master's use, and

rendered themselves more and more fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else.

And shall these vessels of wrath answer no valuable use in the great house of the universe? Will they serve to furnish out no apartment of this vast building? Will they be of no use in this numerous family of reasonable creatures? Yes, they will furnish out the regions of hell, a place as necessary and useful in the universe, as it is now constituted, as prisons and bedlams upon the earth. They will serve as public and terribly illustrious monuments of the divine power and justice, and the righteous resentments of heaven against sin. They will serve as loud warnings to all worlds, to deter them from that destructive evil. And thus they will answer a valuable, and even a benevolent, end in the creation, and contribute to the public good; as the execution of criminals tends to guard the laws from violation, and so promote the good of society. They will serve, as my text informs you, “to show the wrath and make known the power” of God: Their destruction will illustriously display the glory of these perfections. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright, to reflect a terrible and yet amiable splendor upon them: and it is for this terrible but righteous end, among others, that God now endures them with so much long-suffering: that his perfections and the honor of his government may be the more illustriously displayed in the execution of deserved punishment upon them.

But the vessels of mercy are intended and prepared for nobler uses. On them God intends to display the glory, the riches of the glory of his more gentle attributes, his love and grace. With them he intends to furnish out the many mansions of his heavenly house. By them he intends to let all worlds see what glorious vessels he can form, not only of the dust, but of the

shattered and polluted fragments of human nature, broken and polluted by the fall of Adam, and by their own.

The view in which I now consider my text leads me to confine myself to this practical inquiry:

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitness for destruction, consist?

Some of you, perhaps, when you heard the text, were struck with horror, and ready to bless yourselves at the sound: for “Now,” you thought within yourselves, “we shall have a sermon upon the horrible doctrine of predestination.” But you see I propose to consider the text entirely in a practical view; and therefore your fears are imaginary. Nor do I choose to consider it in this view, to let you see with what dexterity I can evade the genuine sense of it, and make a mental reservation of a doctrine so unpopular; but because whatever else the text in its connection may mean, it does naturally lead me to this grand inquiry; and because my present design is to speak to your hearts, about an affair which you are all concerned and capable to know, and not to perplex your minds with a controversy, of which not many of you are competent judges. I must own, indeed, I am not altogether a skeptic in that doctrine. It is not an entire blank in my creed; nor am I at all ashamed to declare my sentiments in a proper time and place. At present I shall only tell you, that I cannot be persuaded God has made such a world as this, without first drawing the plan of it in his own omniscient mind. I cannot think he would produce such a numerous race of reasonable and immortal creatures, without first determining what to do with them. I cannot think the events of time, or the judicial process of the last day, will furnish him with any new intelligence to enable him to determine the final states of men more justly than he could from eternity.

But away with all controversial thoughts at present; and let an object of more importance engross all your attention: for you will find, I am not now going to plunge and drown you in this unfathomable depth. This you may be sure of, that if you have not made yourselves fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else, by your own willful sin, you shall never be doomed to it by virtue of any decree of God. And, on the other hand, you may be equally sure, that he never decreed to admit you into heaven, unless you are prepared for it; nor to exclude you if you are so. I now proceed to the grand inquiry.

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitness for destruction, consist? This will naturally lead me to inquire into your habitual dispositions and behavior: for it is by comparing these to the nature and quality of the regions of heaven and hell, that you can discover which you are fit for. If your temper and dispositions be heavenly and divine, you may be sure that you shall be admitted into those blessed mansions. But if, on the other hand, your tempers and dispositions be infernal and diabolical; if they be such as are prevalent and universal in hell, you may be equally sure, that, unless they are changed, you will be doomed forever to that dismal region. This must, methinks, appear quite evident to common sense. The righteous Judge of all the earth will always invariably do that which is fit. If you are fit for the enjoyments and services of heaven, you need not fear but he will admit you; never has such a soul been excluded. And what can you reasonably desire more? Would you have heaven encumbered with such as could not be happy, even in the very regions of happiness, for want of a proper relish for the enjoyments there? But, if you are fit only for the infernal prison, is there not a propriety, as well as justice, in your being

confined there? The same propriety, as that madmen should be shut up in bedlam, or notorious criminals in a dungeon. Therefore,

1. Are you fit for heaven? Do you love and delight in God—in a God of infinite purity? If not, the enjoyment of his presence, and the beatific vision of his face, which is the principal ingredient of heavenly happiness, could afford no happiness to you. Do you delight in the service of God, in contemplating his glories, in celebrating his praises, and in the humble forms of worship in his church on earth? Do these afford you the most exalted pleasure? If not, heaven is no place for you; for these are the eternal exercises there: and to such of you as have no pleasure in them, the heavenly state would be an eternal drudgery. Do you delight in holiness? If not, what would you do in the region of holiness? Alas! To you it would be an unnatural element. Are the saints, those whom the world perhaps calls so with a sneer, because they make it their great business to be holy in all manner of conversation, are these your favorite companions? Is their society peculiarly delightful to you? And are they the more agreeable to you, by how much the more holy they are? If not, what would you do among the holy inhabitants of heaven? With what pleasure could you mingle in society with them, while your temper and theirs are so directly contrary? Are your hearts full of ardent love and benevolence to mankind? If not, how would you breathe in the pure element of perfect love? Without such dispositions as these, you are no more fit for heaven than a sick man for a feast, a swine for a palace, or a blind man to view the splendors of the sun, and, therefore, you may be certain, that God, who will never do anything that is unfit, will not admit you there, while you continue such as you now are.

You must also consider, that if you are fit for these pure and blessed regions, it is God that has made you so, by his own almighty power: He that hath wrought you for this self-same thing is God, 2 Cor. 5:5, and you have been deeply sensible that the work was indeed his, was divine and god-like, and beyond the utmost efforts of your degenerate nature. You are able indeed to fit yourselves for destruction; that you can easily do; and that, I am afraid, some of you have effectually done already. But it is God alone that can make you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. And have you ever been the subjects of this divine operation? Have you ever felt the power of almighty grace opening your blinded minds—breaking your stony hearts, and melting them into floods of ingenuous sorrow, under the warm beams of a Savior's love, like snow before the sun? Have you ever felt it subduing your favorite sins, and making them more bitter to you than death, and implanting and cherishing every grace and virtue in your souls? Has the Holy Spirit turned the prevailing bent of your souls towards holiness, so that you esteem it the principle ornament of your nature, and make it the object of your eager desires, and most vigorous pursuit? Does holiness appear to you amiable in itself, and not only a pre-requisite to your happiness, but the principal ingredient of it? And is heaven itself the more endeared to you by this consideration, that it is the region of pure, unmingled holiness, that no unclean thing can enter there, and that even the way that leads to it is holy? If these things are not matters of experience to you, you may be sure you are not afore prepared for glory.

Let us now take a view of the opposite dispositions, and we shall make the same discovery:—Suppose your hearts are set upon the enjoyments of this life, as your principal happiness; suppose you are chiefly solicitous and laborious to heap up riches, or to indulge your sensual lusts and appetites;

supposing this to be the ruling passion of your souls, are you fit for heaven? In heaven there are none of these low and sordid enjoyments: And what pleasure would you have there, who have a taste only for these things? You are indeed fit to dig in the earth, like moles, and steal the serpent's food: you are fit to scrape up riches; fit to wallow in the mire of guilty and debauched pleasures; fit to live in this world could you always make your residence in it: this gross, impure, earthly element suits your depraved constitutions. But can you once imagine you are fit for heaven; fit to breathe in that pure, salubrious air; fit to share in those refined and spiritual enjoyments; fit to join in the exalted employments of seraphs, while this is your prevailing temper? Surely, no. And what then will become of you? The impure and gross region of this world, so agreeable to you, will not always last, and you will not probably live in it as long as it does last; but death, ere long, will tear you away from all that is dear to you under the sun. And, alas! Whither then shall you go? Where, then, shall you take up your eternal residence? I leave you to pause and think upon it.

Suppose the service of God to be a weariness to you, and the thoughts of him unwelcome to your minds; suppose your hearts are full of angry, malignant passions; in short, suppose you love sin more than holiness, can you flatter yourselves you are fit for heaven? Alas! It would be as unnatural an element to you as for a fish to live out of water, or you to live in it. But the farther illustration of this will fall under the next head; therefore,

2. Inquire, Whether your tempers and dispositions be not infernal and diabolical, and such as render you fit for destruction, and for nothing else? Are your hearts destitute of the love of God? "No," you answer; "we thank God we have never been so bad as that comes to." But if you love God, whence is it that you have so few affectionate thoughts of him? That you do

not study to please him in all things, and delight in his service? If you love God, how comes it that you do not keep his commandments, which is the grand decisive test of love? Alas! Instead of loving him, are not your hearts disaffected to him? As evidences of this, may I not produce your dislike to serious thoughts of him, your aversion to his service, your disregard to his will as the rule of your conduct, and your headlong propensity to follow your own pleasure? Do not the murmurings and insurrections of your hearts against him and his dispensations, your uneasy, rebellious spirit under his providence, your aversion to his service, do not these show that you are really disaffected to him? Now this is the very temper of hell; this is the constituent of a devil; the very worst ingredient in that infernal composition; and, therefore, unless this temper be changed, you must dwell with devils forever; it is fit all the enemies of God should be shut up together in one vast prison. It is unfit that rebels and traitors should always run at large, or mingle with loyal subjects. Alas I sirs, a soul without the love of God is devilized already, ripe for destruction, and fit for nothing else.

Again, Are there not some of you who have no pleasure in devotion, no delight in conversing with God in his ordinances? The posture of humble worshippers at the throne of grace is not easy and agreeable to you; and hence that you have prayerless families and prayerless closets; and if you join in public worship once a week, it is a mere customary formality. You cannot bear to wean your thoughts and tongues from temporal affairs in the few hours devoted to the service of God, though they make up but one day in seven; you do not delight in religious conversation, but it strikes you dumb, like the man without the wedding garment. Well, in the infernal regions you will have as little of this exercise as you could wish. The



patient will then be hopeless and incurable, and therefore no farther means will be used with him. Then you will no more be troubled with prayers, bibles, sermons, religious conversation, or the tedious hours of the Lord's day. And, since you have no taste for such exercises, is it not fit you should be sent into those ungodly regions, where you shall never be employed in them?

Again, Are not the minds of some of you defiled with all manner of sin and moral pollutions? And do not those render you fit only for that region of corruption and impurity? Do you not indulge an angry, contentious, unforgiving, malicious temper? Well, that is the very temper of hell, and renders you fit for it! Nay, these outrageous passions, when broke loose from restraint, will create a hell in your own breasts, and not only expose you to punishment, according to justice, but become the ingredients of your punishment, according to the course of nature. Do not some of you indulge yourselves in backbiting, and all the base, malignant arts of defamation, and perhaps are fire-brands in the neighborhood where you live? Well, in hell you shall have enough of this work; and while you indulge this spirit, you are preparing yourselves for that land of universal hostility and revenge. Is not cursing and swearing the familiar language of some of you? Well, this is the language of hell; and you are now practicing the infernal dialect, and preparing to converse with the ghosts below in their own style, in the regions of imprecation and blasphemy. Do not some of you live in the practice of the works of the devil; that is, of those works to which he tempts you, and in which he has persisted, who was a sinner from the beginning? Are you not then fit for that everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Even the gentle lips of Jesus himself would tell you, as he did the Jews, that you are of your father the devil, John 8:44, since you habitually

do his works. And is it not fit you should be doomed to the society of your infernal father?

Do you not find that your hearts are habitually hard and insensible? Or if you have some kind of repentance, it is only a servile horror, extorted remorse, and involuntary pangs of desperate agony. This is the very kind of repentance in hell, where they still love sin, and yet cannot but upbraid and torment themselves, because they have ruined themselves by indulging it. Conscience tortures them with the keenest reflections; but they feel no kindly ingenuous relenting's; no generous sorrows, proceeding from a sense of the intrinsic vileness and baseness of sin, and from a sincere, disinterested love to God and holiness. Hence their repentance is only a punishment, but has no tendency to their reformation. And is not this the very nature of your repentance at present?

But I need not dwell long upon this inquiry. It is enough to tell you, in short, that if you are still in your natural state; if you still retain that temper which is natural to you as the degenerate sons of Adam, without any supernatural change; that estrangement from God; that disaffection to him; that carnality and earthly-mindedness; that blindness and insensibility about divine things; that presumption, security, and love of lawless pleasure: I say, if this be still your prevailing temper, you are not meet for the heavenly inheritance; for in order to be heirs of that, you must be born again of God. But you are fitted for destruction; for by nature you are children of wrath, Eph. 2:3, and while you continue such, you must be vessels of wrath. Therefore bring the matter to a short issue, by this decisive inquiry: "Have I ever been born again? Have I ever experienced such a mighty change in the temper of my mind, as may, with propriety, be called a new birth or a new creation? For 'if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are

passed away; behold, all things are become new.’ 2 Cor. 5:17. Have I thus been renewed in the spirit of my mind? Or am I still the same old man, with my old affections and lusts?” This, my brethren, is the grand, decisive inquiry; for if you have been begotten again, St. Peter tells you it is to “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1:4. But Jesus, the friend of sinners; Jesus, who never pronounced a harsh sentence, and who never will exclude from heaven one soul that is fit for it, nor doom to destruction one soul that is fit for anything else; even Jesus himself has strongly assured you with his own gracious lips, that “except a man be born again,” born of the Spirit, as well as of water, “he cannot see the kingdom of heaven; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” John 3:3,5,6, carnal, corrupt, unholy, and utterly unfit for that spiritual, pure, and holy kingdom.

Here I would enlarge a little upon an observation which I just hinted at before, namely, That these corrupt dispositions are not only criminal, and therefore will bring upon you the penalty of the divine law, according to justice, but that they are, in their own nature, destructive, and therefore, according to the course of nature, will be your ruin. Suppose God had made no positive constitution to exclude you from heaven; yet while you have no relish for the employments and enjoyments of that state, it is impossible, in the nature of things, you should be happy there. As you must have animal senses, to render you capable of animal pleasures, so you must have spiritual senses to render you capable of the pure spiritual pleasures of paradise; and without these you can no more be happy there than a stone can enjoy the pleasures of an animal, or a beast those of reason; you would be miserable wretches in paradise itself. Do but consider in what things the bliss of heaven consists, and methinks you will rather fear, than hope and

desire admission there. Is religion so pleasing a thing to you, that you might expect you should be completely happy if it were but perfected in you? Alas! Are there not a thousand things more agreeable to some of you? But in heaven there are none of these things, and how do you expect to be happy there? There must be another heaven created for you, a Mahometan paradise of sensual pleasures, or else your temper must be changed. The paradise of saints and angels does not suit your vitiated taste.

Farther, Suppose God should not inflict any positive punishment upon you with his own immediate hand, but only suffer the course of nature to run on, and let your corrupt dispositions have full scope and range without restraint, would not these dispositions alone create a hell within you? Anger, malice, envy, and every wicked and turbulent passion against God and his creatures, will break out into outrageous hurricanes, when the kind restraints under which they now lie are taken off, and they will agitate and distract your souls forever, and render you incapable of all peace, serenity, and joy. Then, also, all temporal enjoyments, the objects of your love and desire, and the only things you have now to allay your raging thirst for happiness, will be forever torn from you, and leave you to famish in a dismal void; and then you will pine away with eager, impatient, insatiable desires, which will gnaw your hearts, and prey upon your spirits like hungry vultures. Suppose you were now stripped naked of every enjoyment, and nothing left you but bare being, with your usual capacity of enjoyments; suppose you were deprived of the light of the sun, the products of the earth, the comforts of society, and every imaginable blessing, and doomed to wander, forlorn and hungry, in some dismal desert, how consummately miserable would this privation alone render you! But this will be the doom of the ungodly, as soon as death breaks their connections with this world.

They must leave all their enjoyments behind them, and yet carry their eager desires, their insatiable avarice of happiness, along with them; and these will make them capacious vessels of pain; for a capacity of positive enjoyment, not satisfied, is a dreadful capacity of positive misery. Thus, you see your destruction comes upon you according to the course of nature; and you will die eternally, though the hand of the executioner should never I touch you, as the unavoidable result of your present temper, the deadly disease under which you labor.

And hence you may see, by the way, that it is no act of cruelty or injustice in the Supreme Judge, to shut you up in the prison of hell; for what else should he do with you, when you are fit for no other place? Is it cruel to exclude the sick from entertainments, or persons infected with the plague from the society of the sound and healthy? Is it cruel to confine madmen in bedlam, or criminals in prison? Certainly not. Therefore God and his throne will be guiltless forever.

And now, my dear brethren, have any of you been convinced that this is really your case? That your temper and conduct is such as at once renders and proves you utterly unfit for heaven, and, as it were, naturalizes and seasons you for the infernal regions. Alas! This is a shocking and alarming discovery indeed: but, blessed be ' God, you have made it in time; you have made it while in the land of hope, and in a state of trial; and therefore there is reason to hope, that, if you now take the alarm, † and earnestly use the means of grace, your condition, bad as it is, may be happily altered; and you, who are now fit for nothing but destruction, may yet be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is because there is some, reason for this hope, that I have honestly exposed these alarming and unpopular things to your view. You must know them sooner or later: and if you should not

know them until you fall into destruction, alas! It will then be too late. Believe me, my brethren, these things do not proceed from a morose, malevolent heart, nor are they intended to drive you into despair. I speak to you with melting and affectionate benevolence; and instead of driving you into despair, my design is to save you from it forever, and bring you to have a good hope through grace. And as the evidence of what I have offered is so plain to common sense, do not pretend you cannot understand me, and do not know what I would aim at. I am only inculcating upon you this self-evident truth, that unless you are prepared for heaven, you shall not be admitted; and that, if you are fit for nothing but destruction, you must be destroyed. Can any mathematical demonstration be more plain than this? And are any of you so void of sense, reason, and faith, as not to understand and believe it?

I now presume, that such of you as have made this discovery with regard to yourselves, are also convinced, that you cannot possibly escape destruction, unless your present temper be changed, and quite a new frame of spirit given you.

And who, do you think, can work this happy change in your hearts? If you are so vain and ignorant as to flatter yourselves that you can effect it in your own strength, make the trial, and you will soon be undeceived. It is God alone that can work in you both to will and to do. My text tells you, it is he that prepares the vessels of mercy for glory; it is his Holy Spirit alone that is equal to the arduous work.

But in what way is this influence to be expected? Is it in a course of impenitent sinning? Of presumption and security? Of sloth and negligence? No: to expect it in that way, is to tempt the Lord your God. But such of you as would escape the damnation of hell; such of you as have any desire to be

forever happy, hear me, seriously hear me, and I will tell you in a few plain words what you must do, if you would expect the aids of divine grace to prepare you for glory.

You must immediately think seriously of your condition: you must labor impartially to know the truth of your case: pry into the dreadful secrets of wickedness in your hearts: review your sinful lives: reflect upon the purity and justice of God and his law, and what you have deserved for a whole life of unnatural rebellion against him: read and hear the word of life with solemnity and attention, and use all proper means to furnish your minds with religious knowledge. It may pain you at first to confine your minds to such objects; but it must be done;— and there is no disputing against necessity; besides, the pain is medicinal; it will contribute to the recovery of your dying souls.

Again, You must accustom yourselves to frequent, importunate prayer. If ever you be saved, or prepared for salvation, it will be in answer to prayer: therefore, engage in it, persevere in it, and never give over until you obtain your request.

Further, You must guard against everything that tends to divert your minds from this grand concern; as excessive hurries and cares about earthly things, vain and vicious company, and every avoidable temptation.

Finally, You must persevere in this course, if you hope to succeed; and never rest until you feel the dispositions of heaven wrought in your souls. A pang of remorse, a serious fit, a transient prayer, will not suffice, but you must hold on your way to the last. You may expect difficulties in this new course, and you will probably meet with more than you can now foresee or expect. But you must break through all; for your immortal interest, your all is at stake.

This is the course I would advise you to, if ever you hope to be prepared for glory. I cannot give you any the least encouragement in any other way. If any other can show you a more easy, and yet safe course, and produce sufficient authority for it, you may take it; but, for my part, if I teach you what I learn in my Bible, I can give you no other direction; nor do I expect to be saved in any easier way myself. And, therefore, if you will choose another, you must be answerable for it. Remember, I warn you against it, and would not be accessory to it for ten thousand worlds.

Now, if this course must be taken, I ask, when do you think must it be begun? Will you appoint to-morrow, or next year, or old age, or a sick-bed, for that purpose? Alas! You may never live to see that time. Before then you may drop into destruction, as rotten fruit fall to the ground by their own weight. Therefore now, this present fleeting now, is the only time you are sure of; and, consequently, this is the only proper time to begin this course. Now then, now, while my voice is sounding in your ears, form the resolution, and carry it into immediate execution. Bear it home upon your hearts to your houses, and there let it dwell until the great work is done. Oh! That you did but know its importance and necessity! Then you could not delay it one moment longer.

And now, if you have any regard for the God that made you, for the Lord that bought you, or for your own everlasting happiness, take this course immediately. If you have any need of excitements take the following.

1. Consider your present dangerous situation. You hang over the pit of destruction by the slender thread of life, held up only by the hand of an angry God, as we hold a spider, or some poisonous insect, over a fire, ready to throw in it. You are ripe for destruction, and therefore in danger every day, every hour, every moment, of falling into it. You are as fit for



destruction as a murderer for the gallows, or a mortified limb to be cut off. Such polluted vessels of wrath must be thrown out of the way into some dark corner in hell, that they may no more encumber or disgrace the more honorable apartments of the universe. And is this a situation in which it becomes you to be merry, and gay, and thoughtless, and eager after the trifles of time? Oh does it not become you rather to be on your knees at the throne of grace, and vigorously pressing into the kingdom of God?

2. Reflect with how much long-suffering God has endured you, notwithstanding all your audacious and repeated provocations. One would think one day's sinning against so holy and gracious a God, by a creature so deeply obliged to him, would make your case desperate, and that the evening of such a day would be the hour of your execution. But he has patiently borne with you for days, for months, for years, perhaps for scores of years. And all this time he has followed you with his blessings every moment, and granted you the means of preparation for glory. And yet you have been thoughtless, disobedient, ungrateful, rebellious still. How justly, then, may he inflict punishment upon you! And how industriously will his goodness and severity, his mercy and justice, be displayed in his treatment of you? What could you have desired more, in point of time, opportunity, persuasives, than you have enjoyed? Will it not then appear evident, that your destruction is entirely of yourself, and that, as I have told you before, God and his throne will be guiltless forever?

3. Consider how dreadful will be your punishment, if you should perish at last by your present willful negligence. My text tells you what will be the design of your punishment; it will be to show the wrath of God, and make his power known. Such will be your punishment, as will be fit to show that it is almighty power that inflicts it, and that it is an almighty God who is

angry with you. It will be his professed design to display the dreadful glory of his vindictive attributes upon you, particularly his justice, as the supreme Magistrate of the universe: and even his justice deserves to be displayed; for justice is not that ugly, grim, horrible thing, which criminals imagine. In a ruler, especially in the supreme and universal ruler, justice is not only a majestic and terrible, but it is a lovely, amiable, ingratiating attribute, essential to his character, and to the public good, and so it appears to all competent judges; that is, to all who are not self-flattering criminals, and therefore parties. The display of this attribute, therefore, upon proper objects, is necessary, to give a full view of the Deity to the world; to represent him as he is.

Now, whatever attribute of his he intends to display in any of his works, he always does it in a manner worthy of himself. When his design was to display and glorify his creative power, wisdom, and goodness, see what a stately, well-furnished universe he spoke into being. What a magnificent, God-like building! When his design was to show the riches of his grace towards our guilty race, what wonders did he perform! What inimitable exploits of condescension and love! His only begotten Son must become a man, must struggle with all the calamities of life for three-and-thirty long and painful years, must expire in torture upon an ignominious cross, and redeem the guilty with the blood of his heart. This was Godlike love and grace indeed, beyond all example. Oh who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity? Micah 7:18. He is as much distinguished from all other beings by the wonders of his love and grace, as by the eternity of his existence, or by that wisdom which planned the universe, or that power which produced it out of nothing. When in prosecution of the same design, he intends to give a farther display of the riches of his glorious grace upon

the vessels of mercy, what Godlike provisions hath he made for them. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." He hath prepared for them a city, such a glorious residence, that he is not ashamed to be called their God. He is not ashamed to own the relation, because he has acted up to the character so worthy of himself. Heb. 11:16. And when his design is to show his avenging wrath, and make his punitive power known; when it is to show what Godlike punishments he can inflict, such as may, by their terror, declare him to be their author, and serve as loud warnings to all present, and, perhaps, future creations, to deter them from the breach of his sacred laws; and when the subjects of the punishment are strong, capacious vessels of wrath, fit for nothing but destruction; I say, when this is the case, what Godlike vengeance will he execute, what signal, unexampled punishment will he inflict! The design of punishment, which is not the reformation of the criminal, but the benefit of others, and the display of his perfections, require that he give a loose to all the terrors of his power. And what miracles of misery, what terrible illustrious monuments of vengeance will that perform and erect! As far surpassing all the punishments inflicted by mortals, as the creation of the world out of nothing exceeds all the works of human art.

And are you proof against the energy of such considerations as these? Then you are dreadfully fitted for destruction indeed. For the strongest persuasives to deter you from it, which God himself can reveal, or the human mind conceive, have no weight upon you.

But may I hope that I shall prevail at least with some of you this day to fly from this tremendous destruction, into which you are this moment ready to fall? Alas! It is hard, if even a stranger cannot prevail with so much as one

soul, in so large an assembly, and in a point so reasonable, and so strongly enforced by your own interest. But I must leave this warning with you, and if you do not remember it now, you will remember it millions of ages hence, when the remembrance of it will torment you with intolerable anguish.

There are sundry in this assembly, I doubt not, who, by comparing their dispositions with the nature of heavenly happiness, may make the welcome discovery, that they are, in some measure, prepared for it. To such happy souls I have time only to say, that if this be your character, you may be sure that immense happiness shall be yours: your present heavenly temper is a certain pledge and earnest of it. You may be sure God would never make you fit for it, and then exclude you from it.

And, on the other hand, if you find that the dispositions of hell are subdued in you, assure yourselves God will not doom you to it. Can you think he would gain your hearts and allure your love, and then bid you depart from him, to languish and pine away with the eager, anxious panting's of disappointed, bereaved love? Will he doom you to reside forever among those whose works you detest, and whose society you abhor? No: he will thoroughly prepare you, and make you holy, and then advance you to dwell forever in that presence which you love, in the element of holiness; to breathe in that clear, refined air; to live in that wholesome climate, so agreeable to your constitution; to be employed in those services in which you delight; to enjoy that sublime and delicate happiness which you relish, and to converse in that society which you affect, and which is of the same temper and spirit with you. And for that blessed region may we all be prepared, and there may we all meet at last, to

enjoy that endless felicity which awaits those who firmly put their confidence in God, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

# *SERM. XLIV. THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF TRUE REPENTANCE.*

**A**cts 17:30.— *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*

We here find St. Paul in as learned an assembly as, perhaps, he ever appeared in. We find him in Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city where Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity, lived and taught. We find him in the famous Court of Areopagus, or Mars-Hill, where the wisest men and best philosophers of this wise and philosophical city were met together; in the same court where Socrates, the most likely candidate in all the heathen world for the honors of martyrdom, had been accused and condemned, and for very much the same crime, namely introducing a foreign religion, and bringing the gods of the country into contempt. And how does the apostle conduct himself in these critical circumstances? Why, instead of amusing them with a learned harangue; instead of confirming them in their idolatry, and vindicating himself, by publicly professing, with poor Socrates, that he

worshipped the gods of the country, and sacrificed at the established altars; instead of this, I say, the apostle boldly, though in a very handsome and genteel manner, exposes their superstitions, calls them off from their idols to the worship of the one true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; and, having asserted these fundamental articles of natural religion, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of revelation, and preached Jesus Christ to them as the Savior and Judge of the world.

In my text, he inculcates the great gospel duty of repentance as binding upon all mankind, (philosophers and judges, as well as the illiterate vulgar) in Athens, as well as in the most barbarous countries of the earth.

The times of this ignorance God winked at. By the times of ignorance, he means the times previous to the propagation of the gospel in the heathen world, who for many ages were sunk in the most gross ignorance of the true God, and in the most absurd and impious superstition and idolatry, notwithstanding the loud remonstrances of the light of reason, and the various lessons of the book of creation, so legible to all. When it is said that God winked at these times of ignorance, it may mean, as our translators seem to have understood it, that God seemed to connive at, or not to take notice of this universal ignorance that had overspread the world, so as to send his prophets to them for their reformation. In this view, there is a strong antithesis between the first and last parts of my text. q.d. “God once seemed to connive at the idolatry and superstition of mankind, and to let them go on, without sending his messengers to call them to repentance; and in these dark times their impenitence was the less inexcusable. But now the case is altered; now he has introduced a glorious day, and he plainly and loudly calls and commands' all men everywhere to repent; and therefore, if you now continue impenitent you are utterly inexcusable.” Or the word may

be rendered, God overlooked these times of ignorance: he overlooked them by way of displeasure; he would not favor such guilty times with a gracious glance of his eye: and in righteous displeasure, he did not so much as give them an explicit call to repentance: or he overlooked them by way of forbearance. Ignorant and idolatrous as the world was, he did not destroy it, but bore it from age to age, with a design to publish a more explicit command to repent; and now that time is come; that time, for the sake of which a long-suffering God had borne with a guilty world so long. Now he commands all men everywhere to repent; all men, Gentiles as well as Jews: everywhere in the dark heathen lands, as well as in the enlightened spot of Judea.

Repentance is indeed a duty enjoined by our natural reason, and strongly enforced by the Jewish religion; but it is the gospel that affords the strongest motives and allurements, and the best helps and advantages for repentance. The gospel was first introduced by a loud call to repentance: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, was the united cry of John the Baptist, of Christ, and his disciples. And St. Paul sums up the substance of his preaching in these two articles, “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 20:21.

Repentance is universally acknowledged to be an essential ingredient in the religion of a sinner. They who deny the Christian religion, and particularly the necessity of Christ’s death to make atonement for sin, deny it upon this supposition, that the light of nature teaches us the necessity of repentance, and that alone is a sufficient atonement. Thus, even infidels, Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans, agree in asserting the necessity of repentance. It is this grand, catholic, uncontroverted duty, and not the little



disputable peculiarity of a party, that I am now about to inculcate upon you; and he that hath an ear to hear let him hear.

But here, I hope you are ready to request me, “Pray let us know what repentance is, before you exhort us to it. How may we know what it is to repent, and whether we have truly repented or not?”

If this be your desire, it directly coincides with my main design: and I shall endeavor, with the utmost plainness and faithfulness, to tell you what gospel repentance is, and help you to determine whether ever you have been the subjects of it.

Now it is evident, both from Scripture and common sense, that every pang of sorrow for sin, and every instance of reformation, is not that repentance which we have now under consideration. If horror of conscience and fears of hell could constitute true repentance, then Judas was a true penitent; for his horror and fear were so great that he could not live under it. If sudden pangs of terror and remorse, with some resolutions to amend, could constitute true repentance, then Felix, the heathen governor, was a true penitent; for we are told, that, while Paul reasoned before him, concerning temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, he trembled, Acts 24:25, and seemed resolved to give him another hearing on these subjects. If a reformation in many instances were the same thing with repentance, then Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was a true penitent; for we are told, he heard John gladly, and did many things at his exhortation. Mark 6:20. These knew nothing of repentance unto life; and therefore we may feel what they felt, and yet remain impenitent.

I scarcely think there are any of you so hardy and reprobated of God, as never to have experienced any sort of repentance. It is likely there is not one in this assembly but has sometimes been scared with dreadful

apprehensions of death, hell, and the consequences of sin: and perhaps you have cried and wept to think of your sinful life, and trembled to think what would be the end of it.

You have also prayed to God to forgive you, and resolved and promised you would reform. Nay, it is possible, the terrors of the Lord and a sense of guilt, may have almost overwhelmed and distracted you, haunted you from day to day, and disturbed your nightly slumbers. On these accounts you conclude, perhaps, that you are true penitents: but, alas! After all this, you may be but impenitent sinners. True evangelical repentance has the following distinguishing characteristics; by which I request you to examine yourselves.

I. It extends to the heart as well as to the practice. Every true penitent, indeed, has an affecting sense of the many sins and guilty imperfections of his life; but then his repentance does not stop there, but he looks into the horrid arcana, the secrets of wickedness within. He traces up these corrupt streams to the more corrupt fountain in his heart, from which they flow. A blind mind, a stupid heart, a heart disaffected to God, that could live content for months, for years, without loving God, a heart dead to his service, a heart insensible to eternal things, a heart excessively set upon things below, a secure conscience, a stubborn, ungovernable will; these, to the true penitent, appear the greatest crimes, while, by a thoughtless world, they are hardly noticed as slight imperfections. Hence when his walk in the eyes of men is unblameable, and even imitable, he still finds daily occasion for repentance and humiliation before God. For oh! His heart, or his inward temper, is not such as it should be: he does not love God nor man as he knows he should: he does not delight in the service of God as he should: every thought, every motion of his heart towards forbidden objects alarms

him, like a symptom of the plague, or the stirring of an enemy in ambush; and he is immediately in arms to make resistance. The world in general are very well pleased if the matter of their actions be good, and if they abstain from what is materially evil: but this does not satisfy the true penitent: he narrowly inspects the principles, the motives, and the ends of his actions; and there he finds sufficient cause for mortification and sorrow, even when his actions in themselves are lawful and good. In short, every true penitent is a critic upon his own heart; and there he finds constant cause for repentance while in this imperfect state.

The proof of this is so evident, that I need hardly mention it. Can you suppose it will satisfy a true lover of God and goodness, just to have a clean outside, while his heart is a mere mass of corruption? Will it content such a one, that he performs all the outward duties of religion, if there be no life or spirit in them? Will God account that man truly penitent, who thinks it enough that he is not guilty of open acts of wickedness, though he indulges it, and loves it in his heart? No; such repentance is a shallow, superficial thing, and is good for nothing. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence, in his penitential Psalm (51:) he not only confesses his being guilty of the blood of Uriah, but that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, and earnestly prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:5,6, 10. And he is deeply sensible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts.

Now, my brethren, if this be an essential ingredient in true repentance, do not some of you see, that you are destitute of it, and consequently, that you are still impenitent sinners, and ready to perish as such? A dreadful conviction! But do not shut your eyes against it, for, until you see your error, you cannot correct it.

II. In evangelical repentance, there is a deep sense of the intrinsic evil of sin, and a hearty sorrow for it as done against God.

Many that think they repent of sin have no proper sorrow upon the account of sin against God, but only on account of the punishment it is like to bring upon themselves. It is not sin they hate, but hell. Were it possible for them to enjoy their sins, and yet be happy, they would never think of repenting; and hence repentance is really a hardship in their view. Need I tell you that such a servile, forced repentance is good for nothing? If the criminal is very sorry, not because he has offended, but because he is to be executed for it, would you call him a true penitent? If your slave cries and trembles, not from a sense of his offence against you, but for fear of the lash, do you think he truly repents of it? No; it is self-love, and not the love of duty; it is fear of punishment, and not hatred of the crime, that is the principle of this servile, ungenerous repentance.

Hence you may see you may be very sorry for your sin, because it may fix a scandal upon your character, because it may have injured your temporal estate, or because it may ruin you in the eternal world: I say, you may be very sorry for sin on such servile reasons as these, and yet know nothing of true repentance. True repentance is a more kindly, generous thing; it proceeds from an affecting sense of the baseness and malignity of sin in itself. Sin appears to the true penitent, as some sorts of poison to us; that is, not only hateful because it is deadly and destructive, but hateful and nauseous in itself. I do not mean that the fear of punishment is no ingredient in true repentance: the love of God and self-love are very consistent, if the latter is kept in a due subordination to the former; and therefore the fear of punishment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. But I mean the fear of punishment is not the principal, much less the only spring and

motive of true repentance; the true penitent hates sin, even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. Though it were allowed him to go to heaven in the ways of sin, he would by no means choose it. Heaven itself would be the less acceptable to him, if it were the end of such a course.

He is also deeply sorry. for sin, as against God, or as contrary to him. As rebellion against his authority, as a contrariety to his holiness, as an opposition to his will and pleasure, as a most base, ungrateful return for all his goodness, and as the cause of all the agonies of the blessed Jesus, he hates it; he mourns over it with ingenuous and kindly relenting's of heart. It was sin in this view, as against God, that lay heaviest upon David's heart. He seems to have forgotten the injury he had done to Uriah and his wife, while all his attention was engrossed by the horror of his crime, as against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Psalm 51:4. It was this view of sin that armed Joseph, in the heat of youth, with powers to resist the solicitations of his mistress. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. 39:9. Oh! The thought of sinning against God, against so glorious, so gracious and excellent a Being, pierced him to the heart, and he could not bear it. Thus it is with every true penitent. It wounds him to the heart to think that he should treat so good and holy a God so basely. This thought would break his heart, even though sin should be attended with no danger to himself; and it does in fact grieve him, and melt down his soul into generous sorrows, even when he has not one thought of his own danger.

Nay, of so generous a nature is evangelical repentance, that the penitent soul never melts so freely, nor bursts out into such a flood of ingenuous sorrows, as when it has reason to hope that a gracious God has freely

forgiven it. Then it sees the base ingratitude and complicated vileness of sin, as committed against so gracious a God. God's forgiving the penitent is a reason to him why he should never forgive himself. If God had concealed the glory of his grace, and rendered himself less lovely, he would be less sensible of the evil of sinning against him, and less sorry for it. But oh! That he should sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought cuts him to the heart. Hence the evidences of pardon and the hope of salvation do not put an end to true repentance, but, on the other hand, promote it. This blessed hope, indeed, abates the terrors of a slave, and mixes many sweets in the bitter cup of repentance; but it is so far from putting a stop to the flow of generous, filial sorrows, that it opens new springs for them, and causes them to gush out in larger streams.

How different is this from the general temper of the world! If they repent, it is while hell stands open before them, and the load of guilt oppresses them. But could they believe that God has forgiven their sins, and that they shall notwithstanding be saved, they would be very easy about it; nay, they would most ungenerously, from this very consideration, take encouragement to sin the more boldly. This is more than the secret sentiment: it is the avowed profession of multitudes. Ask them how they can go on impenitent in sin, and be easy in such a course? Their answer is, "God is merciful; and they hope he will forgive and save them after all." What is this but an explicit purpose to sin against God, because he is good, and to abuse his mercy, if he will be merciful? Nothing but the lash can keep such sordid, slavish souls in awe. Their hearts are dead to gratitude and every generous passion. If God will have them to repent, he must give them no hope of pardon and happiness; for as this hope rises, their repentance ceases, and sin appears a harmless, inoffensive thing. But how

different is this from the generous temper of the true penitent! It wounds him more to offend a sin-pardoning than a sin-punishing God. And never does his heart melt so kindly, as when under the warm beams of divine love; never does he repent so heartily as with a pardon in his hand, and with the prospect of heaven open before him. Do not think this an excessive refinement of repentance, for common sense may tell you, that God will never accept of that repentance which has the punishment and not the crime for its object; and this generous temper is assigned to the true penitent in the sacred Scriptures. See Ezek. 16:63. After God has promised many blessings to the Jews, this is mentioned as the consequence, “That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth anymore because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.” So, (Ezek. 36:31,) after many promises of rich blessings, it is said, “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations.” You see this shame and confusion, this penitential remembrance and self-loathing, are the effects of God’s being reconciled. When he is pacified, then they are ashamed, confounded, and loathe themselves.

Brethren, does your repentance stand this test? Examine and see; for if it does not, it is only a repentance to be repented of.

III. True repentance extends to all known sin, without exception.

If sin, considered in itself, or sin, as done against God, be the object of true repentance, then it follows, that whatever is sin in itself, or against God, must be the object of it. Every sin, whether it consists in neglecting what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden: whether it be immediately against God, against our neighbor, or ourselves; whether it be fashionable,

constitutional, pleasing, or painful; every sin, without exception, as far as it is known, is hated and lamented by the true penitent. He should indeed regard them according to their different degrees of aggravation; but he should not except any of them, even the smallest. They are all forbidden by the same divine authority; all contrary to the holy nature of God; all opposite to the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to him; and, therefore, they must be all repented of. This was the character of David, That he hated every false way. Psalm 119:128.

Now, does not this consideration prove some of you impenitent sinners? Do you not except some sins out of your repentance, and plead for an indulgence to them? If so, you may be sure your hearts are not right with God.

#### IV. True repentance always includes reformation.

There are many whose whole life seems to be one continued struggle between the strength of sin and conscience; and they run round in a circle of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning, all their days. Sin is so strong that it will prevail, in spite of all the struggles of conscience; and conscience remains so vigorous, that it still continues to struggle, though without success. They commit sin, then are sorry for it; then commit it again: and in this vicissitude they spend their lives. Nay, the repentance of some is so far from reforming them from sin, that it rather encourages them to return to it; for now, they think, they have cleared off the old score, and they may venture upon a new one; till that also swells very high, and then they have another fit of repentance to clear off this new account.

Alas! Brethren, is this repentance unto life? What does that sorrow for sin avail, which leaves the heart as much in love with it as ever? The only reason why sorrow is a necessary ingredient in repentance is, because we



will not, we cannot, forsake sin, till it be made bitter to us; and, therefore, when our sorrow has not this effect, it is altogether useless. Can that repentance save you, which is so far from being an ingredient of holiness, that it is a preparative to sin? A repentance that answers no other end but to make conscience easy after a debauch, and prepare it for another surfeit?

Is this the nature of true repentance? No; it is the character of every true penitent, that sin has not a habitual dominion over him. Rom. 6:14. Remember that maxim of the wise man, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confessed! And forsaketh them, shall have mercy.” Prov. 28:13. Observe, not only confessing, but also forsaking them, is necessary to the obtaining of mercy. The same thing appears from the various expressions used in Scripture to describe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways; to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts: which expressions signify not only sorrow for sin, but especially reformation from it. In vain, therefore, do you pretend to repent, if you still go on in the sins you repent of. If you indulge yourselves in any one known sin, however small you may think it, you are utter strangers to true repentance. I do not mean by this, that true penitents are perfectly free from sin in this life: alas! Their painful experience makes the best of them sensible of the contrary. But I mean two things, which deserve your notice: the one is, that every true penitent has a habitual dominion over sin: the principles of religion and virtue are prevailingly uppermost in his soul, and habitually regulate his behavior. As for gross, overt acts of sin, he is habitually free from them, and, indeed, generally this is no great difficulty. To him it is no such mighty exploit to abstain from drunkenness, swearing, injustice, or the like. And as to his daily infirmities, they are contrary to the habitual, prevailing bent of

his soul, and are matter of his daily lamentation. And this introduces the other remark I had in view; which is this, that it does not appear a kind of privilege to the true penitent that he cannot be perfect in this life: but it is the daily grief and burden of his soul that he is not. Many seem well pleased that this is an imperfect state, because they think it furnishes them with a plea or an excuse for their neglect of the service of God, and for their sinful indulgences. In short, sin is their delight, and, therefore, freedom from it would be a painful bereavement to them; and they are glad they are in such a state as will admit of their retaining it. Now such persons, as I observed, do really esteem it a privilege to be imperfect, and they rejoice in it as their happiness, that they are able to sin: but it is quite the reverse with the true penitent: perfection in holiness, and an entire freedom from sin, is the object of his eager desire and most vigorous pursuit; and he can never be easy until he enjoys it. If he cannot enjoy the pleasure of serving God as he would in the present state, he must, at least, enjoy the pleasure of grieving over and lamenting his guilty imperfections. If he cannot get free from sin, his old enemy, he will, at least, take a kind of pleasing revenge upon it, by hating and resisting it, and loathing it, and himself upon the account of it. In short, the remains of sin, all things considered, and taking one time with another, afford him more uneasiness, perplexity, and sorrow, than all other things in the world. Oh! If he were but delivered from this body of death, he would be happy, however oppressed with other burdens; but while this lies upon him, all the world cannot render him easy and happy.

From the whole, you see that reformation is an essential ingredient of true repentance; and in vain do you pretend that you repent of sin, if you still indulge yourselves in it. You may try to excuse yourselves from the frailty of your nature, the imperfection of the present state, or the strength of

temptation: but in spite of all your excuses, this is an eternal truth, that unless your repentance reforms you, and turns you from the outward practice or secret indulgence of those sins you are sorry for, it is not repentance unto life.

V. And lastly, Evangelical repentance implies a believing application to God for pardon only through Jesus Christ.

Evangelical repentance does not consist in despairing agonies and hopeless horrors of conscience, but is attended with a humble hope of forgiveness and acceptance; and this hope is founded entirely upon the merits of Jesus, and not of our repentance and reformation.

How opposite to this is the prevailing spirit of the world! If they repent, it is to make amends for their sins, and procure the divine favor by their repentance; and thus, even their repentance becomes a snare to them, and one cause of their destruction. In this sense, a bold saying of one of the Fathers may be true: “That more souls are destroyed by their repentance than by their sin;” that is, sin is evidently evil, and they are in no danger of trusting in it to recommend them to God. But even their superficial, servile repentance has the appearance of goodness, and therefore they make a righteousness of it; and upon this quicksand they build their hopes, until they sink in remediless ruin.

Thus I have endeavored to open to you the great gospel duty of repentance, as distinguished from all counterfeits and delusive appearances. I hope you have all understood me; for I have labored to make myself understood, and spoke as plainly as I could. If you have experienced such a generous, evangelical repentance, as has been described, you may venture your souls upon it, that it is repentance unto life; but if you are strangers to

it, I may leave it to yourselves to determine, whether you can be saved in your present condition.

I have only two or three remarks more to make for the farther illustration of this subject. The first is, that all the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, but that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. Self-love, and the other low and slavish principles of nature, may produce a servile, mercenary repentance, proceeding from the fears of punishment: but only the love of God, and the noble principles of the new nature, can bring you to a kindly, ingenuous repentance, from noble motives; and it is the Holy Spirit alone that can shed abroad the love of God in your hearts, and implant these generous principles of the new nature. The second remark is, that this generous, supernatural repentance, is not the first repentance of an awakened sinner. No; he is first alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehensions of punishment; and all the springs of nature are put in motion before these nobler principles are infused, and he is brought to a genuine, evangelical repentance. Therefore, thirdly, The only way to attain to this supernatural repentance is, to use all proper means to excite the springs of natural repentance, particularly, to reflect upon your sins, upon their number and aggravation, and your dreadful danger. While you are destitute of the love of God, let self-love excite you to be sorry for your sins. While you cannot see the intrinsic evil of sin as against God, see at least the insupportable misery it is like to bring upon you. If you have not such generous souls as to mourn over sin as against a sin-forgiving God, at least mourn over sin as against a sin-punishing God. And while the principles of nature are thus exerted, who knows but God may work in you diviner principles, and give you repentance unto life.

My subject is now ripe for application; and this shall be nothing else but a short illustration of the other parts of my text.

Let me then, in the first place, publish the royal edict of the King of heaven in this assembly: God commandeth all men to repent; he commands you in various ways; commands you with the motions of his Spirit striving with you, and by the voice of your own consciences, which is the voice of God; commands you by his providence, which tends to lead you to repentance, and especially by his gospel, which he has sent to you for this end. He now commands you by my mouth; for while I speak what his word authorizes, it does not lose its efficacy, nor cease to be his word by passing through my lips. Remember, he commands you, he lays his authority upon you, to repent. You are not left to your discretion in the case. Dare you reject the known, express command of the divine Majesty? Should a voice now break from the excellent glory, directed to each of you by name, saying, Repent! Repent! Would it not startle you? Would it not shock you, to set yourselves in opposition to so express and immediate a command of the God that made you? Well, his command to you in the gospel is as real, as authoritative and binding, as an immediate voice from heaven. And dare you disobey it? Dare you go home this day with this additional guilt upon you, of disobeying a known command of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth? Dare you provoke him to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? Can you harden yourselves against him, and yet prosper? I again proclaim it aloud in your hearing. The King of kings, my Master, has issued out his royal mandate, requiring you, by these presents, to repent, upon pain of everlasting damnation. This day it is proclaimed in your ears, therefore this day repent. If you refuse to repent, let this conviction follow you home, and perpetually haunt you, that you have this day, when you were met together

under pretense of worshipping God, knowingly disobeyed the great gospel-command. And to the great God you must answer for your disobedience.

In the next place, my text tells you, he commands all men to repent: all men, of all ranks and characters. This command, therefore, is binding upon you all. The great God cries to you all, Repent! Repent, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, free and bond: Repent, ye young sinners, now, while your hearts are soft and tender, and your passions easily moved, and you are not hardened by a long course of habitual sinning. Repent, ye grey-headed, veteran sinners, now at last repent, when the load of sins, heaped up for so many years lies so heavy upon you, and you are walking every moment on the slippery brink of eternity: Repent, ye rich men; ye are not above this command: Repent, ye poor; ye are not beneath it: Repent, ye poor slaves; your color, or low estate in life, cannot free you from this command: Repent, ye masters, for your sins against your Master, who is in heaven. In short, God commandeth all men, kings and subjects, the highest and the lowest, and all the intermediate ranks, to repent.

To render the call still more pointed and universal, it is added, He commandeth all men, everywhere to repent.

Everywhere, in city and country; in palaces and cottages; in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, wherever the trumpet of the gospel sounds the alarm, to repent; in Virginia, in this very spot, where we now stand. Repentance is not a local duty, but it extends as far as human nature, as far as the utmost boundaries of this guilty world. Wherever there are sinners under a dispensation of grace, there this command reaches. It reaches to the busy merchant in his store, to the laborious planter in the field, and to the tradesman in his shop; to the sailor tossing on the waves, and to the inhabitant of solid ground; to the man of learning in his study, and to the

illiterate peasant; to the judge upon the bench, as well as to the criminal in the dungeon; to the man of sobriety, to the unthinking rake, and to the brutish debauchee; to the minister in the pulpit, and to the people in their pews; to the dissenter in the meeting-house, and to the conformist in church; to husbands and wives; to parents and children; to masters and servants; to all the sons of men, whatever they are, wherever they dwell, whatever they are doing; to all these the command reaches. And do you not find yourselves included in it? If you are men, if you dwell anywhere upon this guilty globe, you are included; for, let me tell you once more, God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.

Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your present duty: For now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Now, when the times of ignorance are over, and the gospel sheds heavenly day among you: Now, when he will no longer wink, or connive at your impenitence, but takes strict notice of it with just indignation: Now, while the day of grace lasts, and there is place left for repentance: Now, before you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and while his spirit is striving with you: Now, while his judgments are in the earth, and your country is surrounded with the terrors of war: Now, while he is publishing his command to a guilty country to repent, by the horrid sound of trumpets and cannons:\* Now, while you have time, which may be taken from you the next year, the next week, or, perhaps, the very next moment: Now, while you enjoy health of body, and the exercise of your reason, and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony: Now, and not to-morrow; not upon a sick bed; not in a dying hour. Now is the time in which God commands you to repent; he does not allow you one hour's delay; and what right have you to allow it to yourselves? Therefore, now, this moment, let us

all repent: all, without exception. Why should there not be one assembly of true penitents upon our guilty globe? And oh! Why should it not be this? Why should not repentance be as universal as sin? And, since we are all sinners, oh! Why should we not all be humble penitents? Repent, you must, either in time or eternity, upon earth, or in hell. You cannot possibly avoid it. The question is not, shall I repent? For that is beyond a doubt. But the question is, “Shall I repent now, when it may reform and save me; or shall I put it off to the eternal world, when my repentance will be my punishment, and can answer no end but to torment me?” And is this a hard question? Does not common sense determine it in favor of the present time? Therefore, let the duty be as extensively observed as it is commanded: Let all men everywhere repent. Blessed God! Pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplications, that there may be a great mourning among us; that we may “mourn, as one that mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born.” Zech. 12:10.

Grant this for Jesus’ sake! Amen.



# *SERM. XLV. THE TENDER ANXIETIES OF MINISTERS FOR THEIR PEOPLE.*

**G**alat. 4:19,20.— *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice: for I stand in doubt of you.*

Nothing could be more agreeable to a generous spirit that loves God and mankind, than to be fully satisfied of the real goodness and happiness of his fellow-creatures: and nothing is more painful than an anxious jealousy and fear in a matter he has so much at heart. Some profess themselves very easy in this respect, and they glory in this easiness as a high pitch of charity and benevolence. They hope well of all—except, perhaps, their personal enemies, who, for that very reason, must be very worthless and execrable creatures. Though Scripture and reason do jointly declare, that men of bad lives who habitually indulge themselves in sin, and neglect the known duties of religion and morality, are no objects of rational charity at all, but must be judged destitute of true piety by all that would judge according to evidence; “yet, God forbid, say they, that they should judge any man. They are not of a censorious spirit, but generous and benevolent in their hopes of

all.” They can venture to hope that the tree is good, even when the fruit is corrupt: that is, that a good man may lead a bad life. But this temper ought not to be honored with the noble name of Charity. Let it be called ignorance, gross ignorance of the nature of true religion; or infidelity and avowed disbelief of what the Scripture determines concerning the character of a good man; or let it be called indifferency, an indifferency whether men be now good or bad, and whether they shall be happy or miserable hereafter. Where there is no love or affectionate concern, there will be no uneasy jealousy. Or let it be called a mere artifice for self-defense. Men are often cautious for condemning others, not from benevolence to them, but out of mercy to themselves, not being willing to involve themselves in the same condemnation; since they are conscious they are as bad as others, they must be sparing to others, in order to spare themselves. These are the true names of what passes current under the name of Charity in the world.

St. Paul, whose heart was capable of the kindest sentiments to mankind, could not enjoy the pleasure of this promiscuous charity. He could not thus conclude well of all, not even of all under the Christian name; not of all whom he once hoped were his spiritual children; no, not of all the members of the once flourishing churches of Galatia, where he met with so friendly a reception, and had so much promising appearance of success. I stand in doubt of you, says he.

The state and character of these churches, we may partly learn from this epistle. A considerable number of Galatians had been converted from heathenism to Christianity by St. Paul’s ministry; and in the transports of their first zeal they made a very promising appearance: hence he puts them in mind that they had begun in the Spirit, (ch. 3:3.) that when they first started in the Christian race, they had run well, (ch. 5:7.) that they suffered

many things in the cause of the gospel; (ch. 3:4.) and as to their affection to him, it was very extraordinary.

“Ye received me,” says he, “as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.” (ch. 4:14,15.) But alas! How naturally do the most flourishing churches tend to decay! How frail and fickle is man! How inconstant popular applause! These promising churches of Galatia soon began to decline, and their favorite St. Paul, their apostle and spiritual father, appeared in quite another light, appeared as their enemy, because he told them the truth. There was a spurious set of preachers in that age, who corrupted the pure gospel of Christ with Jewish mixture. The ceremonies of the law of Moses, and the traditions of their elders, they held as of perpetual and universal obligation; and as such they imposed them even upon the Christian converts from among the Gentiles, who never had anything to do with them. Had they been recommended to their observance as indifferences or prudentials, it would not have had such bad influence upon Christianity. But they continued to impose them as absolutely necessary to salvation, and represented the righteousness revealed in the gospel as insufficient without these additions. Thus they labored to corrupt the great doctrine of a sinner’s justification by faith alone, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that grand article upon which the church stands or falls, according to an old observation of Luther. These judaizing teachers had artfully insinuated themselves into the Galatian churches, and spread the poison of their legal doctrines. This sunk St. Paul in the esteem of his converts, and they exchanged his pure gospel for another, more adapted to their taste. In consequence of this, religion was

declining fast among them; and St. Paul is alarmed lest he should have bestowed labor in vain upon them.

This epistle is an affectionate attempt to recover them. It is for the most part argumentative; for its author was not fond of moving their passions without enlightening their understandings. But sometimes he melts into the most pathetic strains, and gives the most affecting touches to the heart. Such a tender, passionate address is this in my text. “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.” What a tender, moving, parental address is this!

My little children—This is a fond, affectionate appellation; the language of a tender father. It strongly expresses his paternal love and solicitude for the Galatians. The same style he uses to the Thessalonians— “Ye know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,” 1. Thess. 2:11. He may also call them his children, to intimate that he had begotten them by the gospel as spiritual children to God: or rather as the following words suggest, he alludes to the sickness and anxiety of a mother in conception, and the pangs and agonies of child-bearing; and by these he illustrates the pangs and agonies of zeal, and the affectionate solicitude he had felt for them while Christ was forming in them under his ministry, and they were in the critical hour of the new birth. He might well call them his children, because he had suffered all the pains of a mother for them. He adds the epithet little, my little children, because the fond language of a parent affects such diminutives, or perhaps to intimate their small progress in Christianity. They were but little children in grace still.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again—I have just observed this is an allusion to the painful disorders and pangs of conception and

birth; by which the apostle strongly represents the agonies of affectionate zeal, and tender anxieties he felt for the Galatians. But what rendered them doubly painful to him, was, that he was obliged to feel them more than once—I travail of you in birth again. He had cheerful hopes that Christ was indeed formed in them, and that they were born from above, and consequently that he should have no more occasion to feel those agonies and throes he had suffered for them. But alas! He had now reason to fear the contrary, and, therefore, he must again feel the same pangs and agonies; he must travail in birth again.

Until Christ be formed in you; that is, until they are made new creatures after the image of Christ; until the sacred foetus be formed in their hearts; until the heavenly embryo grow and ripen for birth, or until they be conformed to Jesus Christ in heart and practice; till then he can never be easy. Though they should retain the Christian name, though they should make great proficiency in other attainments, though they should become as much attached to him as ever, yet he must still feel the pangs of birth for them, till Christ be really formed in them.

I desire to be present with you now. In his absence they had been corrupted by the judaizing teachers; and he hoped his presence might have some happy influence to recover them. He was impatient of the restraints of a literary correspondence, and longed to pour out all his heart to them in a free address.

I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice. When he left them they were in a flourishing state, and therefore he took his leave of them in the warmest language of affection, approbation, and confidence. “But now,” says he, “I wish to be present with you” that I may alter my address; that I may change my voice into more severe and alarming strains;

and instead of congratulating you upon your happy state, warn you of your danger.” Or his meaning may be, “I find myself obliged to use severe language with you in this epistle, which is by no means agreeable to me. I therefore desire to be present with you, that I may in person use means for your recovery, that thereupon I may change my voice, and speak to you in a soft, approving strain, which is always most pleasing to me, as it would be to you. It is quite contrary to my inclination to use such chiding language to my dear little children.” Or perhaps he may mean, “I desire to be present with you, that I may know the different characters of your members, and that I may be able to change my voice, and address them accordingly; that I may warn, admonish, exhort, or comfort you, as your respective cases may require. I would willingly speak comfortably to you all promiscuously, but this I cannot now do.”

For I stand in doubt of you. When I parted with you last, I had great confidence in you, and hoped that you would persevere: but now I stand in doubt of you, and therefore must alter my voice to you if I were present with you. While I am thus doubtful of you, I cannot speak comfortably to you all promiscuously; but I must honestly tell you my suspicions of you, and, until there appear a change in you, I cannot change my voice into more pleasing strains.

My dear hearers, this charge is entrusted to me by the great Shepherd, for which I must give an account: you and I are too nearly concerned in this text to consider it merely as a piece of history, referring only to St. Paul and the Galatians 1700 years ago: I must bring it nearer home in a particular application. God forbid so vain and proud a thought should ever find a place in my heart, as to set myself upon the footing of equality with St. Paul, the chief of the apostles. I will not tell you how much and how often I

have been mortified, especially of late, at the thoughts of my vast inferiority, not only to him, but to the ordinary ministers of Christ of a lower class. You seldom hear a sermon from me but what fills me with shame and confusion in the review; and I almost cease to wonder that the gospel has so little success among you, while managed by so unskillful a hand. Yet I hope I may truly profess so much sincere affection and concern for you, as to warrant me to borrow the words of the apostle, though in a much lower sense: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice,” according to the variety of your cases; “for I am in doubt of some of you.” And I hope you are disposed to give me a serious hearing, and a serious hearing is justly expected from you; for, remember, the day of death and the day of judgment will come, and that you must die, you must be judged, you must be doomed to your everlasting state.

I stand in doubt of some of you. I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. And if there be no ground for it, you will forgive me; for if it be an error, it is the error of love. Though I was an entire stranger to you all, I might justly harbor this jealousy of some of you, upon this general principle, that there never yet was so pure a church met in one place, as not to have one insincere, hypocritical professor in it. Even the apostles, the most select society that ever was formed, had a Judas among them. And can we expect more than apostolic purity in such a large promiscuous crowd as generally frequents this house? In every church there are, alas! Some suspicious characters; and my present design is to describe such characters, and then leave it to yourselves to judge whether there be not such among you.

Forgive me, if I suppose some of you live in the greatest neglect of family religion. You lie down and rise up, perhaps, for weeks, months, and years, and yet never call your families together morning and evening to worship the great God who has placed you in families. If this be the character of any of you, then I must plainly tell you, I stand in doubt of you. I really doubt you have no relish for the worship of God; for if you had, how could you, as it were, excommunicate yourselves from the precious privilege of drawing near to God with your dear families, and devoting yourselves and them to him? I really doubt you have no deep affecting concern for the salvation of your domestics, nor consequently for your own, otherwise, how could you neglect a duty that has so direct a natural tendency to make religious impressions upon their minds? Can anything more naturally tend to make them sensible of their obligations, their sins, their wants, and mercies, than to hear you solemnly mention these things every day, in the presence of the great God? Your character in this is opposite to that of good men in all ages. You will find in the history of the patriarchs, particularly of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that, wherever they had a dwelling for themselves, they had an altar for God. You find David returning from the solemnities of public worship to bless his house, 2 Sam. 6:20, and saying, Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray. Psalm 55:17. You find Daniel praying, as he was wont, three times a day, even when the penalty was. not only the loss of his place at court, but his being thrown as a prey to hungry lions. You find St. Paul saluting some of the primitive Christians, with the church that was in their house. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Coloss. 4:15; Philem. 2. Which is a strong intimation that they made their families little churches by celebrating the worship of God in them; for a church without the worship of God would be an absurd society indeed. I had almost



forgotten the example of Joshua, who bravely resolved, That whatever others should do, he and his house should serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15. You see, then, your character in this important instance is the opposite to that of the saints in all ages. And have I not reason to stand in doubt of you, especially as you cannot now plead ignorance: since you have been so often instructed in your duty on this head? You may plead your incapacity or hurry of business, or that your neighbors would point at you as ostentatious Pharisees. But this is so far from clearing you, that it renders you still more suspicious. If these be the reasons of your neglect, I greatly doubt you love your reputation and the world more than the honor of God, more than his service, and more than the immortal interest of your children and servants. How would it shock you if God should authoritatively lay that restraint upon you which you voluntarily put upon yourselves? Suppose he should say, "I will allow all the families around you to worship me every day, but I lay your family under an interdict; from them I will receive no worship;" how would this shock you! And will you of your own accord take this curse upon yourselves? Oh! Think of it, and this very evening consecrate your houses to God.

Again, I will suppose some of you generally observe the outward duties of religion: you pray in secret and in your families: you attend upon public worship: you receive the sacrament, and you sometimes fast: but generally this is but a dull round of lifeless formalities. Even a judicious Christian may suspect that your whole hearts are not engaged, that the vigor of your spirits is not exerted, and that there is no spiritual life in your devotions. This man may suspect; and he who searches the heart may see it so in fact. Now, if this be your character, I must tell you, I stand in doubt of you. If you are really lukewarm Laodiceans, the case is quite plain: it is not a

matter of doubt, but of sure belief, that you are the most odious creatures upon earth to Jesus Christ. He could wish you were cold or hot, or anything rather than what you are. And where the appearances of such formality are found, where there is a dull uniformity in all your devotions, without any signs of those divine changes which the gracious presence of God produces, your case looks very suspicious, even to men. I really stand in doubt of you; and you have great need to look to yourselves, lest the suspicion shall be well-grounded.

Some of you perhaps think you can easily clear yourselves from the suspicion of formality, for you have often had your hearts melted, your passion raised, and you find a great change in your dispositions in devotion: sometimes you are cold and dull, and at other times all zeal and ecstasy: but notwithstanding this, there may be great reason to doubt concerning some of you. I doubt these are only warm flights of the passions, under the influence of a heated imagination, and not such rational emotions of the heart as proceed from a well-enlightened mind, that sees the nature, importance, and excellency of divine things. I fear these warm passions have no effectual tendency to make you better, that is, to subdue your favorite sins in heart and life, to make you more watchful against them, and to long and labor after universal holiness. I am afraid they have no tendency to humble you, to degrade you in your own eyes, and make you appear mean and vile to yourselves, but on the other hand, that they tend to set you off to advantage in your own view, and to make you think highly of yourselves. I am afraid they are shallow and superficial, and never reach deep enough to transform the settled temper of the whole soul, and give it a prevailing, habitual bent towards God. I am afraid, among your various exercises of heart, you have none of those humbling, heart-breaking

sensations which a poor believer often feels, when lying helpless before God, and casting his guilty soul upon Jesus Christ. I am afraid your exercises are of a more selfish, haughty, and presumptuous kind. I am afraid of some of you, my dear people, in this respect, because this has been, in fact, the case of multitudes, and therefore it may be yours.

I also stand in doubt of some of you, that you have worn off your religious impressions before they ripened to a right issue. This is a very common case in the world, and therefore it may be yours. I am afraid some of you are farther from the kingdom of God to-day, than you were some months or years ago. Formerly you were serious and thoughtful, but now you are light and vain; formerly you had some clear, affecting convictions of your sin and danger, which made you pensive and uneasy, set you upon the use of the means of grace with unusual earnestness and diligence, and made you more watchful against sin and temptation. Had you but persevered in this course, your case would have been very hopeful; nay, you might ere now have been sincere Christians, happy in the favor of God, and the joyful expectation of a blessed immortality. But, alas! Now you are become more thoughtless and secure, more negligent and careless, more worldly-minded, more bold and venturous as to temptation, and particularly ensnaring company; less sensible of your sin and danger, less afraid of the divine displeasure, less solicitous for a Savior, and less affected with eternal things. I stand in doubt of you that this is the case of some of you; and if it be, it is very dismal: the last state of that man is worse than the first. Perhaps your religious impressions went so far, that yourselves and others too began to number you in the list of sincere converts. But, alas! You have relapsed, and now your case is dismally dark; it is very doubtful whether ever you had one spark of true piety. Like the Galatians you did once run

well; but the corruptions of your own hearts, the cares of the world, the influence of bad company, and the temptations of the devil, have hindered you, and made you turn back, and now you are got into the easy, slippery, descending road of apostacy; from whence, as from a precipice, your feet will, ere long, slide, and let you fall into the fiery gulf below. You are every day running farther and farther from God and heaven, and so much nearer to the chambers of eternal death. Your consciences, by repeated violences, will be stunned into insensibility, your hearts will harden more and more, like moistened clay in the sun. Your corruptions are gaining the victory in repeated conflicts, will grow more strong and insolent, like veteran troops inured to war and conquest. In short, your case grows every day more and more discouraging; and I stand in doubt of you, lest you should never recover your religious impressions, nor enter into the kingdom of God.

I am also in doubt of some of you, that the world has your hearts: your thoughts seem to be engrossed by it, and your affections fixed upon it as your supreme good, and hence your mouth is full of it; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Now if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Covetousness is idolatry; and you know that no idolater has eternal life. I fear this is the character of some of you.

Is there not also reason to doubt of some of you, from the discoveries you give of an unchristian spirit towards mankind? You may perhaps make a specious profession of religion, and punctually attend upon divine ordinances; but do you not discover insufferable pride, and unchristian resentment, and an unforgiving spirit under injuries, a disposition to overreach and take the advantage in your dealings? Such a temper, when predominant, is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and

proves you entirely destitute of it; and the appearances of the prevalence of such a temper render your case very suspicious.

Let me add farther, Suppose that in this day of blood and slaughter, when the Lord of Hosts calls you to weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth; when the wounds of your bleeding country, and the streams of blood that are running by sea and land, call for your sorrowful sympathy; when your everlasting state stands in a dreadful suspense, and you know not whether heaven or hell will be your residence if you should die this night; or, when the evidence lies against you, and you have good proof that you are utterly unprepared for eternity in your present condition, when the Spirit of God seems withdrawn from us; and consequently but few are pressing into the kingdom of God, and general languor and inefficacy run through the ministrations of the gospel; when your conduct may encourage others to run into extravagancies, and forget God and their souls, as well as throw yourselves causelessly into the way of temptation, and cherish that levity of mind which directly tends to wear off your religious impressions; when at a time in which you pretend to commemorate the birth of the holy Jesus, who came to destroy the works of the devil and the flesh, and particularly revellings, and to make you sober and watchful to prayer, and to shun all appearances of evil; when in your transition from the old year to the new, in which you may die, and never see the close of it; and when one would think it would better become you solemnly to recollect how you have spent the year past, and devote yourselves to God for the future with new vows and resolutions; suppose, I say, that at such a time, and in such circumstances, you indulge yourselves in feasting and carousing, that perhaps you prosecute and chase the diversion from house to house, in order to prolong it, and guard against the returns of serious, retired, and thoughtful hours; as

if laughing, dancing, and frolic, were proper expressions of gratitude for the birth of a Savior, and as if there was nothing in time or eternity of sufficient moment to make you serious, and check your growing levity—What shall I say of such a practice? The mildest thing I can say is, that I stand in doubt of you, who promote, or willingly tolerate, or join in such entertainments. I have no business at present to determine, whether music, dancing, and feasting, be lawful in themselves. Granting them to be as lawful as you could wish, I am sure that, at such a time, and in the circumstances that generally attend them, they are utterly unlawful to every Christian, and have a natural tendency to banish all serious religion from among us. You are but little acquainted with me, if you think I say this as a sour ascetic, or an enemy to the lawful pleasures of mankind, or that I place religion in morose, mopish, melancholy austerities. Such of you as are acquainted with me must know the contrary. But after all, I must declare, I shall have very little hopes of the success of the gospel among you, if once I should have a congregation of dancing, frolicking Christians. Alas! They are not like to dance and frolic themselves into heaven. It is with great reluctance I touch upon such a subject, though with a gentle hand; but duty commands, and I must obey: and I wish the admonition may be so effectual, as to prevent all occasion to repeat it in time to come.

Thus I have delineated sundry dubious characters, and now I leave you to judge whether there be not many such among you. Examine yourselves thoroughly, that you may have the judgment of God in your favor; for by that you must stand or fall.

Some of you, perhaps, may think it strange I have omitted so many characters that are frequent among us. I have said nothing of the profane sinner, the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the thief, the knave

confessed: I have said nothing of the infidel and scoffer, who affect to disbelieve the religion of Jesus, and relapse into heathenism; and who openly make a mock of things sacred: I have said nothing of the careless creature, who lives in the general neglect of even the forms of religion: I have said nothing of the stupid, thoughtless creature, who never troubles his head, as he may affect to speak, about religion; and whose heart has hardly ever received any impression from it; but who lives like a brute, merely for the purposes of the present life: I have said nothing of such as these, because they do not come under the class of doubtful characters. I have no doubt at all about such. I am sure they are utterly destitute of all true religion, and must perish forever, if they continue in their present condition. If you would know how I come to be sure as to them, I answer, Because I believe my reason and my Bible; for both put the character and the doom of such beyond all doubt. Common sense is sufficient to convince me, that such are unholy, impenitent sinners; and I am sure, both from reason and revelation, that an unholy, impenitent sinner, while such, can never enter the kingdom of heaven. Let such as harbor a wider charity for them, point out the grounds of it. Indeed there is one thing lamentably doubtful as to such: it is very doubtful whether ever their present condition will be changed for the better. The most promising period of life is over with them, and even in that period they continued impenitent under all the means of grace they enjoyed; and is it not more likely they will continue so in time to come? Oh I that they would take the alarm, and lay their danger to heart in time, that they may use proper means for their deliverance!

Nothing can turn the full evidence against them in their favor, and nothing can render the doubtful case of the former class clear and satisfactory but the formation of Christ within them. This alone can put it beyond all doubt

that they are Christians indeed, and prove their sure title to everlasting happiness. This shall be the subject of the remainder of this discourse.

Here you would ask me, I suppose, What it is to have Christ formed within us?

I have already told you briefly, that it signifies our being made conformable to him in heart and life, or having his holy image stamped upon our hearts. This is essential to the character of every true Christian. Christ dwells in the heart of such by faith, Eph. 3:17, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Rom. 8:9. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked, saith St. John, 1 John 2:6. Let this mind be in you, saith St. Paul, which was also in Christ Jesus. Phil. 2:5. Whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Rom. 8:29. The temper of a Christian has such a resemblance to Christ's, that it was called Christ in embryo, spiritually formed within us. It is indeed infinitely short of the all-perfect original, but yet it is a prevailing temper, and habitually the governing principle of the soul. That filial temper towards God, that humble veneration and submission, that ardent devotion, that strict regard to all the duties of religion, that self-denial, humility, meekness, and patience, that heavenly-mindedness and noble superiority to the world, that generous charity, benevolence, and mercy to mankind, that ardent zeal and diligence to do good, that temperance and sobriety which shone in the blessed Jesus with a divine, incomparable splendor: these and the like graces and virtues shine, though with feebler rays, in all his followers. They have their infirmities indeed, many and great infirmities—but not such as are inconsistent with the habitual prevalency of this Christ-like disposition. You may make what excuses you please, but this is an eternal truth, that unless



you have a real resemblance to the holy Jesus, you are not his genuine disciples. Pray examine critically into this point. Have you a right to take your name Christian from Christ, by reason of your conformity to him?

Again, if Christ be formed in your hearts, he lives there. The heavenly embryo is not yet complete, not yet ripe for birth, into the heavenly world, but it is quickened. I mean, those virtues and graces above mentioned are not dead, inactive principles within you, but they operate, they show themselves alive by action, they are the governing principles of your practice. You are not like him in heart, unless you are like him in life too; and if your life be conformed to his, it will plainly distinguish you from the world, while it continues so wicked. If you are like to him, you will certainly be very unlike to the generality of mankind; and they will acknowledge the difference, and point you out, and hate you, as not belonging to them. They will stare at you as an odd, unfashionable stranger, and wonder you do not copy their example.

“If ye were of the world,” says Christ, “the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” John 15:19.

I hope you now know what it is to have Christ formed within you. And in what heart among you is this holy thing conceived and growing? Where are the followers of Jesus? Surely they are not so like the men of the world, the followers of sin and Satan, as to be undistinguishable. Oh! How many impostors does this inquiry discover, false pretenders to Christianity, who are the very reverse of its great Founder! And as many of you as continue unlike to him now in holiness, must continue unlike to him forever in happiness. All Christ’s heavenly companions are Christ-like; they bear his image and superscription.

Before I dismiss this head, I must observe that the production of this divine infant, if I may so call it, in the heart, is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not the growth of nature, but a creation by divine power. It is the hand of God that draws the lineaments of this image upon the heart, though he makes use of the gospel and a variety of means as his pencil.

But you would inquire farther, “In what manner does this divine agent work; or how is Christ formed in the hearts of his people?”

I answer, The heart of man has a quick sensation. Nothing can be done there without its perceiving it; much less can Christ be formed there, while it is wholly insensible of the operation. There is indeed a great variety in the circumstances, but the substance of the work is the same in all adults. Therefore, if ever you have been the subjects of it, you have been sensible of the following particulars.

1. You have been made deeply sensible of your being entirely destitute of this divine image. Your hearts have appeared to you as a huge, shapeless mass of corruption, without one ingredient of true goodness, amidst all the flattering appearances of it. In confidence of this discovery, your high conceit of yourselves was mortified, your airs of pride and self-consequence lowered, and you saw yourselves utterly unfit for heaven, that region of purity, and ready to fall, as it were, by your own weight, into hell, that sink of all the pollutions of the moral world. This is the first step towards the formation of Christ in the soul. And have you ever gone thus far? If not, you may be sure you have never gone farther.

2. You have hereupon set yourselves in earnest to the use of the means appointed for the renovation of your nature. Prayer, hearing the gospel, and other divine ordinances, were no more lifeless, customary formalities to you; but you exerted all the vigor of your souls in them. You also guarded

against everything that tended to cherish your depraved disposition, and hinder the formation of Christ within you. Then you durst not play with temptation, nor venture within its reach. This is the second step in the process. And have you ever gone thus far? If not, you have never gone farther; and if you have never gone farther, you can never reach the kingdom of God in your present condition.

3. You have been made sensible of your own weakness, and the inefficacy of all the means you could use to produce the divine image upon your hearts; and that nothing but the divine hand could draw it there. When you first begun your endeavors, you had high hopes you would do great things; but, after hard strivings and struggling's, after many prayers and tears, after much reading, hearing, and meditation, you found no great effect followed; nay, the corruption of your hearts appeared more and more, and hence you concluded you were growing worse and worse. Thus the blessed Spirit convinced you of your own weakness, and the necessity of his influence to work this divine change. He cleared away the rubbish of pride and self-righteousness from your hearts, in order to prepare them, as a clean canvas, to receive the image of Christ. And have you ever been thus humbled and mortified? Have you ever been reduced into this medicinal self-despair? It is the humble heart alone that is susceptible of the image of the meek and lowly Jesus. Pride can never receive its lineaments, nor can it be carved on an insensible stone.

4. Hereupon the Holy Spirit enlightened your minds to view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and the method of salvation revealed in the gospel. The bright beams of the divine perfections shining in that way of salvation, the attractive beauties of holiness, and all the wonders of the gospel, struck your minds with delightful astonishment: and you viewed

them in a light unknown before. Hereupon you were enabled to cast your guilty, corrupt, helpless souls upon Jesus Christ, whom you saw to be a glorious, all-sufficient Savior; and with all your hearts you embraced the way of salvation through his mediation. The view of his glory proved transformative: while you were contemplating the object, you received its likeness; the rays of glory beaming upon you, as it were, rendered your hearts transparent, and the beauties of holiness were stamped upon them. Thus St. Paul represents the matter, “We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor. 3:18. Thus your hearts retained the image of his glory, like the face of Moses after he had been conversing with God in the Mount. You contracted the temper of Jesus Christ, and imbibed his spirit: he was formed in your hearts, and began to live and act there. The life you lived in the flesh, you lived by the faith of the Son of God. Now your minds took a new turn, and your life a new cast; and the difference began to appear even to the world. Not knowing the divine original, they knew not whose image you bore. Therefore the world knoweth us not, saith St. John, because it knew him not. 1 John 3:1. This, however, they knew, that you did not resemble them; therefore they looked upon you as odd sort of creatures, whose tempers and manners were as different from theirs as if you were foreigners; you soon became as speckled birds among them, and they were weary of your society, and you of theirs. Brethren, have you ever been the subjects of divine operation? Has Christ ever been thus formed in your hearts? I stand in doubt of some of you, though blessed be God, there are others who give good grounds for a charitable hope concerning them, by their apparent likeness to Christ.

5. If Christ has ever been formed in you, it is your persevering endeavor to improve and perfect this divine image. You long and labor to be fully conformed to him, and, as it were, to catch his air, his manner, and spirit, in every thought, in every word, and in every action. As far as you are unlike to him, so far you appear deformed and loathsome to yourselves. While you feel an unchristian spirit prevail within you, you seem as if you were possessed with the devil. And it is the labor of your life to subdue such a spirit, and to brighten and finish the features of the divine image within you, by repeated touches and re-touches.

By this short view, my brethren, you may be assisted in determining whose image you bear: whether Christ's or Satan's, whether Christ's or the world's, whether Christ's or your own. And let me tell you, if you cannot determine this, you know not but you may be in hell the next hour; for none shall ever find admittance into heaven who are not formed after the image of Christ. The glorious company upon Mount Zion are all followers of the Lamb: they are like him, for they see him as he is. A soul unlike to him would be a monster there; a native of hell broke into heaven; a wolf among lambs; a devil among angels. And can you hope for admission there, while you are unlike him? The two grand apartments of the eternal world are under two opposite heads; the holy Jesus presides in the one—and the Prince of devils, the prime offender and father of sin, in the other. Both apartments are thick settled with colonies from our world; and the inhabitants of both are like their respective heads. Therefore, if ye resemble the Prince of Heaven, with him you shall dwell forever; but if you resemble the tyrant of hell, you must forever be his miserable vassals. Therefore push home the inquiry, Is Christ formed in my heart, or is he not?

If he be, then rejoice in it, as a sure earnest of the heavenly inheritance. None ever went to hell that carried the image of Christ upon their hearts; but the heavenly regions are peopled with such. His image is the grand passport into that country, a passport that was never disputed; and, if you bear it, the celestial gates will be flung wide open for your reception, and your human and angelic brethren, who have the same looks, the same manner, the same spirit, will all hail , your arrival, and shout your welcome; will own you as their kindred, from your visible resemblance to them; and you will immediately and naturally commence a familiarity with them, from the conformity of your dispositions. The Father of all will also own the dear image of his Son, and the blessed Jesus will acknowledge his own image, and confess the relation. Blessed moment! When wilt thou arrive, when all the followers of the Lamb shall appear upon Mount Zion, in his full likeness, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? When no stranger of another countenance and another spirit shall mingle among them, but be all cast in the same mold, and all be clothed in uniform, with the beauties of holiness and the robes of salvation? Oh! My brethren, must not your eager hearts spring forward to meet that day?

But amid all the joy which that transporting prospect affords, it must humble you to think, that though Christ be really formed in your hearts, it is but very imperfectly, as an unfinished embryo. His image as yet is but very faint; you still carry the traces of some infernal features about you. Let this consideration constrain you to put yourselves daily under the operation of the blessed Spirit, till he finish the heavenly picture by repeated touches, and diligently attend upon all the means which he is pleased to use as his pencil. Guard against everything that may deform the divine draught, or delay its perfection. Go on in this way, and the glorious picture will daily

catch more and more the likeness of the divine original, and soon come to complete perfection.

But I must speak a concluding word to such of you in whom Christ has never yet been formed. Pray turn your eyes upon yourselves, and survey your own deformity. Do you not see the image of the devil upon you? Have you not forgotten God, and refused to love him, like a devil? Have you not loved and practiced sin like a devil? Or have you not wallowed in sensual pleasures, and confined all your concern to the present life, like a beast, and thus made yourselves the most horrid monsters, half beast, half devil? And can you love yourselves while this is your character? Can you flatter yourselves such can be admitted into heaven?

Since it is possible your deformed spirits may yet receive the image of Christ, will you not use all possible means for that purpose, while there is hope? This day begin the attempt, resolve and labor to become new men in this new year.

But alas! Exhortation is but feeble breath, that vanishes into air between my lips and your ears; something is wanting to give it force and efficacy. We have the gospel, we have preaching, we have all the means of salvation; but something is wanting to give them life, to make them efficacious, and bear them home upon the hearts of sinners With that almighty energy which they have sometimes had. Something, alas! Is wanting for this purpose: and what is it? It is Thou, eternal Spirit. Thou, the Author of all good in the hearts of the children of men: thou, the only former of Christ within: thou art absent, and without thee neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; they are all nothing together. Come, thou life of souls, thou spirit of the gospel, thou quickener of ordinances, thou assistant of poor ministers, thou opener of their hearers' hearts, Come visit this congregation.

Come today: oh! Come this moment! And Christ shall be formed in us, the hope and the earnest of glory.



# *SERM. XLVI. THE WONDERFUL COMPASSIONS OF CHRIST TO THE GREATEST SINNERS.*

**M**<sup>att, 23:37.</sup>— *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

There is not, perhaps, a chapter in the whole Bible so full of such repeated denunciations of the most tremendous woes as this. Certainly there is none like it, among all the discourses of Christ, left upon record. Here the gentle Jesus, the inoffensive Lamb of God, treats the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees with the most pungent severity. Wo, wo, wo, breaks from his lips like repeated claps of thunder. He exposes them with an asperity and indignation not usual in his mild addresses. He repeatedly calls them hypocrites, fools, and blind, blind guides, whited sepulchers, children of hell, serpents, a generation of vipers, who could not escape the damnation of hell. But in my text he melts into tenderness, even in this vein of terror,

and appears the same compassionate, gentle Savior we are wont to find him. His most terrible denunciations were friendly warnings, calculated to reform, and not to destroy. And while denouncing the most terrible woes against Jerusalem, in an abrupt flow of passion he breaks out in the most moving lamentation over her: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

This is one of those tender cases which requires a familiar and moving, rather than a grand illustration; and that which Jesus has here chosen is one of the most tender, familiar, and moving that could be devised. “How often would I have gathered thee, O Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.” As much as to say, “As the parent-bird, when she sees some bird of prey hovering over her helpless young, gives them the signal, which nature teaches them to understand, and spreads her wings to protect them, resolved to become a prey herself rather than her tender brood; or, as she shelters them from the rain and cold, and cherishes them under her friendly feathers, so, says the compassionate Redeemer; so, O Jerusalem! I see thy children, like heedless chickens, in the most imminent danger; I see the judgments of God hovering over them; I see the Roman eagle ready to seize them as its prey; I see storms of vengeance ready to fall upon them; and how often have I invited them to fly to me for shelter, and gave them the signal of their danger! How often have I spread the wings of my protection to cover them, and keep them warm and safe as in my bosom! But, oh, lamentable! Oh, astonishing! Ye would not! I was willing, but ye would not! The silly chickens, taught by nature, understand the signal of approaching danger, and immediately fly for shelter; but ye, more silly and

presumptuous, would not regard my warnings; would not believe your danger, nor fly to me for protection, though often, oh how often, warned and invited!”

His compassion will appear the more surprising, if we consider the object of it. “Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, though upon the kind design of reforming and saving thee, and who wilt, in a few days, crucify that Savior who now laments thy doom, how often would he have gathered even thy ungrateful children and received them under his protection, with an affection and tenderness, like the instinctive fondness and solicitude of the mother-hen for her brood! Here is divine compassion, indeed, that extends itself even to his enemies, to his murderers! Strange! That such generous benevolence should meet with an ungrateful repulse! That the provoked Sovereign should be willing to receive his rebellious subjects into protection, but that they should be unwilling to fly to him for it!”

The important truths which my text suggests are such as these:—That sinners, while from under the protection of Jesus Christ, are in a very dangerous situation—that they may obtain safety by putting themselves under his protection—that he is willing to receive the greatest sinners under his protection—that he has often used means to prevail upon them to fly to him, that they may be safe —that notwithstanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him, and put themselves under his protection—that this unwillingness of theirs is the real cause of their destruction—that this unwillingness is an instance of the most irrational and brutal stupidity—and that it is very affecting and lamentable.

1. The text implies, that sinners, while from under the protection of Jesus Christ, are in a very dangerous situation. As the hen does not give the signal

of danger, nor spread her wings to shelter her young, except when she sees danger approaching, so the Lord Jesus would not call sinners to fly to him for protection, were they not in real danger. Sinners, you are in danger from the curse of the divine law, which is in full force against you, while you have no interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can answer its demands: you are in danger from the dread arrest of divine justice, which guards the sacred rights of the divine government, and will avenge itself upon you for all the insults you have offered it: you are in danger from the various judgments of God, who is angry with you every day, and whose judgments are hovering over you, and ready to seize you, like hungry birds of prey: you are in danger from your own vile corruption, which may hurry you into such courses as may be inconvenient, or, perhaps, ruinous to you in this world, may harden you in impenitence, and at length destroy you forever: you are in danger from your own conscience, which would be your best friend; but it is now ready to rise up in arms against you, and, like an insatiable vulture, prey upon your hearts forever: you are in danger from the arrest of death, which is ready every moment to stretch out its mortal hand, and seize you: you are in danger from the malice and power of devils, who, like hungry lions, are ready to snatch away your souls, as their helpless prey. In short, you are surrounded with dangers on every hand, and dangers rise still more thick and dreadful before you. You are not sure of an hour's enjoyment of one comfort; nay, you are not sure there is so much as one moment between you and all the miseries of the damned. This minute you are upon earth, thoughtless, secure, and gay; but the next may be—I tremble to tell you where—in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, tormented in flames. Yes, sinners, one flying moment may strip you entirely naked of all the enjoyments of earth, cut you off from all hope of heaven,

and engulf you in remediless despair. Some of you, whose very case this is, will not, probably, believe me, nor take the alarm. But here, alas! Lies your principal danger. If you would take warning in time, you might escape; but you will not believe there is danger until it becomes inevitable. Had Lot's sons-in-law taken warning from him, they might have escaped; but they saw no sensible appearance of the impending judgment, and, therefore, they continued blindly secure, regarded the good old man as a mocker, and therefore perished in Sodom. Had Jerusalem been apprehensive of its danger in time, it might have flourished to this day; but it would not be warned, and therefore became a ruinous heap: and this will be your doom, sinners, unless you be apprehensive of it before it breaks upon you like a whirlwind. Indeed it may make one sad to think how common this danger is, and how little it is apprehended, to see crowds thoughtless and merry on the brink of ruin; secure and careless while hanging over the infernal pit by the frail thread of life. This is sad; but, alas! It is a common case in the world, and, I am afraid, it is too common among you, my hearers. And whither shall you fly for safety? Is the danger inevitable? If so, where is the friendly arm that can guard you? Where the wing that can shelter you from those judgments that are hovering over you, like ravenous birds, to make a prey of you? Blessed be God, I can show you a place of safety; for,

2. The text implies, that if sinners fly to Christ, and put themselves under his protection, they shall obtain safety.

The beautiful allusion to the protection a hen affords her young under the shelter of her wings, implies thus much, as we may learn from the meaning of the same allusion in other places. So in that beautiful passage, Psalm 91:1-4. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge,

and my fortress—Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler —He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; that is, he shall protect thee in safety, and thou shalt trust in his guardian care. This is David’s meaning, when he prays, “Lord, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.” Psalm 17:8. And when he resolves, “yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast;” just as the hen’s helpless brood hide under her wings until the storm be blown over, or the bird of prey has disappeared. Psalm 57:1. “I will trust,” says he, “in the covert of thy wings.” Ps. 61:4. “Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.” Ps. 63:7.

How great and seemingly inevitable your dangers; yet, if you place yourselves under the protection of Jesus Christ, you are safe for ever; safe from the deluges of divine wrath, that are ready to rush down upon you: safe from the sword of justice, and the thunders of Sinai; safe from the intestine insurrections of your own conscience, and from the power and malice of infernal spirits; safe from the oppression of sin; and you shall be gloriously triumphant over death itself, the king of terrors. These may disturb and alarm you, they may give you a slight wound, and put you in great terror; but none of them can do you a lasting, remediless injury; nay, the very injuries you may receive from them in this life, will, in the issue, turn out to your advantage, and become real blessings to you. If ye are Christ’s, then, saith the apostle, “all things are yours, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours,” 1 Cor. 3:21; that is, you have a kind of property in all things that you have any connection with, so that they shall work together for your good, as if they were all your own, by a private right. Brethren, if we are covered with the righteousness of Christ,

the sword of divine justice cannot reach us. All its demands are answered, and justice itself becomes our friend. If we are sheltered under the wings of his guardian care, the most threatening dangers of time or eternity cannot affect us with real injury. How happy, then, how safe are such of you as have put yourselves under his protection! Now every blessing is yours, and nothing can do you a real injury. You shall never fall a prey to your various enemies, but shall at length obtain an illustrious victory over them all, through the blood of the Lamb. To you I may apply those sublime words of Moses, “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings;” so the Lord alone does and will lead you, Deut. 32:11,12; defend you, cherish you, and bear you along to your eternal home. You have, therefore, reason, with David, amidst all the peculiar dangers of this life, to rejoice under the shadow of his wings. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and you have fled to it, and are safe. Amidst all your fears and terrors, have you not some secure and delightful hours, when you, as it were, feel yourselves gathered under the wings of your Redeemer? In such hours, do not even such weaklings as you dare to brave all your enemies, and bid defiance to earth and hell? Oh how happy, how secure is your situation!

But here a grand question arises in the minds of some of you. “How may I know whether I have fled to Jesus for protection? How may I know whether I have placed myself under his guardian wings?” This is a question of the utmost importance: and I must offer a word or two in answer to it. Observe, then, if ever you have fled to Jesus for safety, you have been made deeply sensible of your danger. If ever you have sought shelter under his wings, you have seen your sins, the curses of the law, and the powers of hell, as it were, hovering over you, and ready to seize and devour you as their prey.

You have also been made deeply sensible, that Jesus alone was able to save you. You found you could not shelter yourselves under the covert of your own righteousness, and were constrained to give up all hopes of saving yourselves by anything you could do in your own strength. Hereupon, as perishing, helpless creatures, you have cast yourselves entirely upon the protection of Jesus Christ, and put your souls into his hands, to be saved by him in his own way: and you have also submitted freely to his authority, willing to be ruled and disposed of entirely according to his pleasure. These few things must suffice to determine this grand inquiry; and I hope you will make use of them for that purpose: if they help you to discover that you have fled to Jesus for refuge, rejoice in your happy lot, and let your mouths be filled with praise. But alas! Are there not some of you that have made the contrary discovery, and, consequently, that you are exposed to all the dreadful dangers of a sinner without Christ? And is there no place of safety for you? Yes, under those wings where believers have sheltered themselves. In Jesus Christ there is safety, if you fly to him: but you may perhaps inquire, “What encouragement have I to fly to him? I, who am so vile a sinner; I, who have nothing at all to recommend me? Can I hope that he will stretch out the wings of his mercy, and receive me into protection?” Yes, poor, trembling creature, even you may venture; for remember what my text farther implies, viz:

3. That the compassionate Jesus is willing to receive the very greatest sinner under his protection. Can you question this, after this moving lamentation of his over Jerusalem? Jerusalem, that killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her, though upon messages of grace; Jerusalem, upon whom should come all the righteous blood of the prophets, through a length of near four thousand years, from the blood of Abel to the



blood of Zacharias; Jerusalem, the den of those murderers, who, he well knew, would in a few days imbrue their hands in his own blood; Jerusalem, that had abused so many mercies, been incorrigible under so many chastisements, deaf to so many invitations: yet, of this very city, the compassionate Savior says, How often would I have gathered thy children under the wings of my protection: thy children, obstinate and ungrateful as they are! Oh what gracious encouragement is here to the greatest sinners among us! Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; the same compassionate, all-sufficient Savior. He did not lose his pity for Jerusalem after he had suffered death by their bloody hands; but after his resurrection he orders his apostles to make one trial more with her obstinate children: “Go,” says he, “and preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:47; as much as to say, “Though Jerusalem be the ungrateful city, where so much pains have been taken in vain, and where I have just been crucified with cruel hands, yet do not give them up; try once more to gather them under my wings; yes, let them have the very first offer of grace under this new dispensation: make the first offer of pardon through my blood to the wretches that shed my blood; invite them to me as a Savior, who nailed me to the cross as a malefactor and a slave.” Oh what melting, overpowering mercy! What an overflowing and free grace is here! This exemplifies his own declaration, that “he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;” and sinners of the vilest characters are welcome to him. He took care, at the first introduction of the gospel, to select some of the most daring sinners, and make them the monuments of his grace to all ages, that their history might give the strongest assurance of his grace to sinners of the like character, from that time to the end of the world. Such an instance was the famous St. Paul. This is a faithful saying,

says he; a saying that maybe depended upon, and worthy of all acceptance; worthy to be received as true, and embraced with joy by all the sons of men, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief.” 1 Tim. 1:15. This chieftain, this king of sinners, was made a happy subject of Jesus Christ. And “for this cause,” says he, “I obtained mercy, that in me first, or in me the chief, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him.” Blessed be God, there are many such instances now in heaven, in the glorious company of angels! “There,” as one observes, “is murderous and idolatrous Manasseh among the true worshippers of God; there is oppressing Zaccheus among the spirits of just men made perfect; there is Mary Magdalen, possessed by seven devils, among the saints of the Most High, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. In a word, there are the betrayers and murderers of our blessed Lord and Savior, receiving eternal life and happiness from that precious blood which their own guilty hands had shed.”

And what farther arguments need I produce of the willingness of Jesus Christ to receive the vilest sinner among you, upon your coming to him? I might prove the same joyful truth from his repeated declarations, from his indefinite invitations, and especially from that kind assurance which has kept many a soul from sinking: him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37. But this argument from matters of fact is sufficient. Therefore come, sinners, fly to Jesus, however deep your guilt. Had you been murderers of fathers, or murderers of mothers; nay, had you come hither this day with hands reeking in the blood of the Son of God, yet if you repent and believe, he is willing to receive you under the shadow of his wings. I may therefore invite you in the language of the following lines:

*Outcasts of men, to you I call,*

*Harlots, and publicans, and thieves;  
He spreads his arms to embrace you all;  
Sinners alone his grace receives.  
Come, all ye Magdalens in lust:  
Ye ruffians fell, in murders old,  
Repent and live; despair and trust!  
Jesus for you to death was sold.  
Come, O my guilty brethren, come,  
Groaning beneath your load of sin!  
His bleeding heart shall make you room,  
His wounded side shall take you in.  
He calls you all, invites you home;  
Come, O my guilty brethren, come!*

To encourage you the more, and even to constrain you, consider what my text implies farther, viz.:

4. That the Lord Jesus has often used means to prevail upon you to fly to him for safety. What he says to Jerusalem may be applied to you: how often would I have gathered thy children together! How often has he given you the signal of danger, that you might fly from it! How often has he spread out a friendly wing to shelter you! As often as the law has denounced his curses against you; as often as the gospel has invited and allured you: as often as conscience has checked and warned you, or prompted you to your duty: as often as the Holy Spirit has moved upon your hearts, and excited some serious thoughts and good purposes and inclinations: as often as Providence has allured you with its profusion of blessings, or chastened you with its afflictive rod; as often as you have seen a good example, or heard a pious word dropped in conversation; in short, as often as any means of any

kind have been used with you, that had a tendency to make you sensible of your danger, or your need of Jesus Christ, so often has he used means with you to engage you to fly to the shelter of his wings for protection. Oh! How frequently and by what great variety of means, has he called you in this congregation! This is the very business of one day in seven, when you are called away from the noise and bustle of the world to listen to the voice of his invitation. But this is not the only time when he calls you. While you are at home, or following your business through the rest of the week, you have a Bible, a Providence, a conscience, and the Holy Spirit still with you; and these are still urging you to fly to Jesus, though their voice may be disregarded, and lost in the din and confusion of the world around you. The gracious call of a compassionate Savior has followed you ever since you were capable of hearing it to this day. But, alas! Does not the next remark hold true as to some of you, viz.:

5. That, notwithstanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him for protection? It was not of Jerusalem alone, that he had reason to say, I would have gathered you, but ye would not! I was willing, but ye were unwilling. This is strange indeed, and might seem incredible, were it not a notorious fact. That the Judge should be willing to pardon, but the criminal unwilling to receive pardon—that the offended Sovereign should be ready to take a perishing rebel under his protection, but the rebel should stand off and rather perish than fly to him—this is a most astonishing thing; and it is the hardest thing in the world to convince sinners that this is their conduct towards the Lord Jesus. They are generally more suspicious of his willingness to save them, than of their own to come to him. Were he but as willing to save them as they are to be saved by him, they think there would be no danger of their salvation; but the case is directly the reverse; the

unwillingness lies entirely upon their side. To convince them of this let it be considered, that we are not truly willing to be saved by Christ at all, unless we are willing to be saved by him in his own way, or upon his own terms. We are not willing to be saved, unless the nature of the salvation offered be agreeable to us. Now one principal part of the salvation which we need, and which Christ offers, is deliverance from sin; deliverance from the power, the pleasures, the profits of sin, as well as from the destructive consequences of it in the world to come. And are sinners willing to accept of such a salvation as this from Christ? No, this appears no salvation to them; this seems rather a confinement, a loss, a bereavement. They are willing to indulge themselves in sin, and therefore it is impossible they should, in the meantime, be willing to be restrained from it, or deprived of it. This is the thing they struggle against, and to which all the means used with them cannot bring them. To tear their sins from them is to rob them of their pleasures; and they rise up in arms against the attempt. And are these willing to be saved by Christ, who abhor the salvation he offers them? The truth of the matter is, the conduct of sinners in this case is the greatest absurdity; they are willing to be happy, but they are not willing to be holy, in which alone their happiness consists: they are willing to be saved from hell, but they are not willing to be saved from those dispositions which would create a hell within them, even according to the nature of things: they are willing to go to heaven when they can live no longer in this their favorite world; but they are unwilling to be prepared for it in their temper and disposition. An eternity spent in holy exercises would be an eternal drudgery to them, unless they have a relish for holiness. Freedom from sin would be a painful bereavement to them while they take pleasure in sin, and how then could they be happy, even in the very region of happiness, since

the sordid pleasures of sin never mingle with those pure rivers of living water? In short, they act as absurdly as if they were willing to recover their health, and yet were unwilling to part with their sickness, or to be restrained from those things which are the causes of it. They are willing to go to heaven, but it is in their own way: that is, in the way that leads to hell. The only way of salvation according to the divine appointment, is the way of holiness. Indeed Christ came into the world to save sinners; but these sinners must be made saints before they can enter into his kingdom; and he makes them holy in order to be happy. And this is not an arbitrary appointment, but necessary, in the very nature of things: for, as I observed, till they are made holy, it is impossible in the nature of things they should be happy in heaven, because the happiness of heaven consists in the perfection of holiness. To be saved without holiness is as impossible as to be healthy without health, or saved without salvation. Therefore, for God to gratify the sinner, and gratify him in his own way, that is, in his sins, is an impossibility; as impossible, as for a physician to heal an obstinate patient in his own way; that is, to heal him by letting him retain and cherish his disease; letting him cool a fever with cold water, or drink poison to cure a consumption. God is wise in all his constitution, and therefore the way of salvation through Christ is agreeable to the nature of things; it is in itself consistent and possible: and if sinners are not willing to be saved in this possible way, they are not willing, in reality, to be saved at all.

Again, the way of salvation by Christ is all through grace. It is adapted to stain the glory, and mortify the pride of all flesh, and to advance to the mercy of God, and the honor of Christ, without a rival. Now haughty, self-righteous sinners are unwilling to be saved in this humbling, mortifying way, and therefore they are unwilling to be saved by Christ. If they would

be saved by him, they must be saved entirely upon the footing of his merit, and not their own; they must own that they lie at mercy, they must feel themselves self-condemned, they must utterly renounce all dependence upon their own righteousness, and receive every blessing as the free, unmerited gift of grace. And it is the hardest thing imaginable to bring a proud sinner so low as this; but till he is brought thus low, he cannot be saved upon the gospel plan. Nor is this part of the constitution arbitrary any more than the former. It would be inconsistent with the honor of the great God, the Supreme Magistrate of the universe, and with the dignity of his government, to receive a rebel into favor, on any other footing than that of mere grace. If after sinning so much the sinner still has merit enough to procure a pardon, in whole or in part, or to render it cruel or unjust for God to condemn and punish him, certainly he must be a being of very great importance indeed; and sin against God must be a very small evil. To save a sinner in a way that would give any room for such insinuations as these, would be inconsistent with the honor of God and his government; and therefore the plan he has constituted is a method of grace, of pure rich grace, in all and every part. Now while sinners are not willing to be saved in this way, they are not willing to be saved at all. Here lies their grand mistake; because they have a general willingness that Christ should save them from hell, they, therefore, conclude they are really willing to come to him according to the gospel-constitution, whereas there is nothing in the world to which they are more averse. There are many that think, and perhaps declare, they would give ten thousand worlds for Christ, when, in reality, they are not willing to receive him as a free gift: they are not yet brought to that extremity as to fly to him. No, the sinner is brought low indeed before he is brought to this. He is entirely cut off from all hope from

every other quarter; particularly, he sees that he cannot shelter himself any longer under the covert of his own righteousness, but that he will be overwhelmed with a deluge of divine vengeance, unless he hides himself under the wings of Jesus.

I beg you would examine yourselves impartially on this point, my brethren, for here lies the grand delusion that ruins thousands. If you are really willing to fly to Jesus, and be saved by him in his own way, you may be sure he is infinitely more willing than you are; nay, your willingness is the effect of his, for he first made you so. But if, when you examine the matter to the bottom, you find, that notwithstanding all your pretensions, you are really unwilling to fly to him, consider your dangerous situation; for,

6. The text implies, that this unwillingness of sinners is the real cause of their destruction.

Sinners complain of the want of ability; but what is their inability but their unwillingness? Coming to Christ is an act of the will, and, therefore, to will it heartily is to perform the act. To be unable to come to him is to be so perverse, so disaffected to Jesus Christ, as not to have power to will to come to him. This, by the way, shows the vanity of that popular excuse, “I am not able to fly to Christ, and therefore it is not my fault if I do not.” That is, you are so wicked that you can do no good thing; you are so disaffected to Jesus Christ that you have no will, no inclination, to choose him for your Savior; you are such an obstinate enemy to him, that you would rather perish than take him for your Friend; therefore your not coming to him is no crime. Is this consistent reasoning? Is it not all one, as if a rebel should think to excuse himself by pleading, “I have such an inveterate hatred to my sovereign, that I cannot love him?” Or a robber, “I have such an aversion to



honesty, that I cannot possibly help stealing?” Would not this be an aggravation of the crime rather than an excuse? Is the invincible strength of your disaffection to Christ, a vindication of it? Are you the more excusable, by how much the more you hate him? Sinners, give up this foolish reasoning, for the matter is too important to be trifled with. Your inability in this case is nothing else but your unwillingness; and your unwillingness is the effect of nothing else but your disaffection to Jesus Christ; therefore own that this is the true cause of your destruction.

In short, whatever pleas and excuses you make, you will find at last that your destruction is entirely the effect of your own perverse choice. Ye will not come unto Christ that ye might have life, John 5:40, and therefore you must perish without it. This reflection will forever torment you, that you willfully destroyed yourselves, and were guilty of the most unnatural self-murder. Jesus was willing, but you would not. God has even sworn that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live. To you, therefore, I may properly address that expostulation, Why will ye die? Why will ye? Why do you most willfully destroy yourselves? Why do ye ruin yourselves by your own free choice? Why will you die? You, whom Jesus is willing to save, whom he has so often invited, why will you, above all men in the world, causelessly die by your own act? Are you capable of so much stupidity? It is stupidity that is a dreadful peculiarity of your own, for,

7. Unwillingness to fly to Jesus is the most irrational, and worse than brutal, stupidity.

This is implied in my text. No sooner does the hen give the signal of danger, than her little family, taught by instinct to understand the alarm, immediately fly under her wings. “So,” says Christ, “I gave you the alarm, but you would not regard it; so I spread out the wing of my guardian care to

defend you, but you would not shelter under it.” What more than brutal stupidity is this? In this light, the conduct of sinners is frequently exposed in the sacred writings. “The ox knoweth his owner,” says Isaiah, “and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Isaiah 1:3. “Everyone turneth to his course,” says Jeremiah, “as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people,” more stupid than they, “know not the judgment of the Lord.” Jer. 8:6,7. To refuse the offer of eternal salvation, when proposed upon the most reasonable terms—to rush into hell, rather than be saved by the friendly hands of Jesus Christ—to suffer the most terrible execution, rather than accept a free pardon—to reject all the bliss of heaven, when freely proposed—to choose the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than an eternity of the most exalted happiness—to resist the calls of redeeming love, and all the friendly efforts of divine grace, to save a sinking soul— is this the conduct of a reasonable creature? No: show me the brute, if you can, that would act so stupid a part in things that come within the sphere of his capacity. Would it not be better for you to be a cat or dog (to use the language of the Earl of Rochester) than that animal man, who is so proud of being rational, if you make so irrational a choice? Let me endeavor to make you sensible,

8. And lastly, that this conduct is extremely affecting and lamentable.

It is on this account that Jesus laments over Jerusalem in such pathetic strains in my text. He knew the truth of the case; his all-seeing eye took it in all its extent, and viewed it in all its circumstances and consequences. And since he, who knew it best, deeply laments it, we may be sure it is lamentable indeed, and it cannot but appear so even to us who know so little

of it. An immortal soul lost! Lost forever! Lost by its own obstinacy! Lost amidst the means of salvation! How tragical a case is this!—God dishonored! Jesus rejected! His love defeated! His blood trampled upon! His Spirit grieved! How lamentable is this! And yet are there not some of you in this lamentable condition in this assembly? It was over such as you that Jesus wept and mourned: and shall he weep alone? Shall not our tears keep time with his, since we are so much more nearly concerned? Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep along with the Savior of men! But, alas! Our tears are too much reserved for dying friends, or some less affecting object, while immortal souls perish around us, unpitied, unlamented!

# *SERM. XLVII. THE NATURE OF LOVE TO GOD AND CHRIST OPENED AND ENFORCED.*

**J**ohn 21:17.— *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

There is nothing more essential to religion, or of more importance in it, than divine love. Divine love is the sole spring of all acceptable obedience in this life, and the grand pre-requisite for complete happiness in the enjoyment of God in the world to come; and without it, our religion, all our gifts and improvements, however high and miraculous, are vain.

And as it is of the utmost importance in reality, it is confessed to be so by all mankind, who acknowledge the existence of a Deity. Whatever be the religion, or whatever be the object, still it is universally acknowledged, that love is an essential part of it. And, indeed, the evidence for this is so very

glaring, that it is no wonder mankind have not been able to shut their eyes against it. Religion without love, is as great a contradiction as friendship without love. To worship a God whom we do not love, to adore excellences which we disaffect, to profess a religion founded by an enemy, this is the greatest absurdity imaginable. Such a religion must appear abominable to God and man.

Now divine love is the subject of my text, which I have chosen for your present meditation; and you see I have not chosen a subject that is trifling in itself, or the disputed peculiarity of a party. You need not, therefore, be under apprehensions, that I would proselyte you to anything but the sincere love of God and Jesus Christ. However I would not have you judge of my design by my verbal declarations, but by the apparent tendency of my discourse, of which you will be able to form a judgment when I have done. Therefore entertain no prejudices or suspicions till you see reason, lest you deprive yourselves of that benefit you might otherwise receive from your present attendance.

There is so little solicitous inquiry among men concerning the sincerity of their love to God, that it would seem self-evident, and beyond all dispute. Whatever sins they indulge themselves in, however much they practically neglect God and religion, yet still they insist upon it, they love him sincerely. This piece of merit they all claim, as belonging to them beyond dispute. But is divine love indeed a thing so common, so universal? We read that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Rom. 8:7. And is there no such thing as a carnal mind now to be found upon earth? We are told of some that were haters of God. Rom. 1:30;—enemies in their minds by wicked works. Col. 1:21. And are there none such to be found among us? The heart-searching Jesus, while conversant among mortals, told the Jews, who

made so great a profession of their love to God, and suspected their own sincerity as little as any of us, I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. John 5:42. And were he now to pass sentence upon us, would he not make the same declaration with regard to sundry of us, who, perhaps, are least apprehensive of it? Is it a needless thing for us to enter into a serious conference with our own hearts, and ask them, “Do I indeed love the ever-blessed God, and the only Savior? Will my love stand the test? What are its properties and effects?” Is this, my brethren, a superfluous or impertinent inquiry? I am sure it did not seem so to Christ, who put Peter to the trial upon this point no less than thrice.

Our Lord made a meal with his disciples, to convince them of the reality of his body after his resurrection. When it was finished, he turns to Peter, and asks him a very serious question, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? The very proposal of the question seems to suppose that Peter had given some reason to suspect his love to him, as he had really done, a few days before, by denying him thrice, with shocking aggravations; and with this reference the inquiry was very cutting to Peter, and no doubt made him think thus with himself: “Ah! It is no wonder my Lord should call my love in question, who so lately most ungratefully denied him.” The question is put to him openly, before the whole company, which might perhaps increase his confusion; but it was prudently ordered, that he might declare his love to Jesus as openly as he had denied him, and that his brethren might be satisfied of his sincerity, and recovery from his late fall.

The first form of the question implies a comparison: Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? That is, more than these thy fellow-disciples? “It is not long since, Peter, that thou didst declare, Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I; though all my fellow disciples should

prove treacherous, yet I am determined to adhere to thee, come what will; and art thou still of the same mind?" Peter modestly replies, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee: as much as to say, "Lord, I own that I have fallen more foully than any of my brethren, and I dare not say I love thee more than they do: I dare say nothing of the high degree of my love, in comparison with others; but, Lord, I must assert the sincerity of my love, weak as it is, and I humbly adventure to appeal to thee, who knowest all things, and canst not be deceived with fair pretensions, for the truth of my profession."

Peter, no doubt, hoped this declaration would satisfy his Lord. But Jesus, after a pause, put the question to him again, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? And Peter insists upon his former answer, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

Now he hoped to escape all future questions upon this point. But Jesus, as though he were still suspicious of him, puts it to him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved that this inquiry should be put to him successively no less than thrice; it cut him to the heart with the remembrance of his base denial of his Master as often, and perhaps with a fear that he would not now be convinced of his sincerity, but was about to expose him as a traitor, and discard him. Upon this he grows warm, and replies with the most passionate vehemence, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. As much as to say, "Lord, why dost thou try me so often upon this point? Look only into my heart, which lies all open to thy view, and be thou judge thyself, whether I do not sincerely love thee. I must confess my late conduct looked very suspicious: and I reflect upon it with shame and sorrow: I am unworthy to be ranked by thee among thy friends. But, Lord, unworthy as I am, and base and suspicious as my

conduct was, I must insist upon it, that I do love thee; and it wounds me to the heart that thou shouldst seem so jealous of me. I cannot give up this point; and I appeal to thyself for the truth of it.” Jealousy in love, my brethren, suspicion among friends, is a very painful and anxious passion; and never so much so to a pious heart, as when the sincerity of our love to God is the object of it. Such a person cannot be easy while a matter of so much importance lies under suspicion, but must put it beyond all doubt.

And let me tell you, Sirs, this is a question in which we are all most nearly concerned. Are our conduct and temper towards God so entirely and uniformly friendly and dutiful, as to put it beyond all doubt that we do truly love him? Alas! Are there not many things that look very suspicious in our case? Should Jesus now call each of us by our names, as he did Peter, and ask us, one by one, Lovest thou me? What could we answer? Could we honestly desire him to look into our hearts, that he might see that sacred principle there? And could we produce the genuine evidences of it in our lives? My brethren, if there be an inquiry within the compass of human knowledge that deserves the most solicitous attention, certainly this does. And it is my present design to assist you to come to a determination upon it. I say, we are now going upon this search, “Do I really love the Lord Jesus?” Come, Sirs, let us all join in it; let us all resolve to be determined in this point before we leave this place. For this purpose, I shall point out some plain marks of genuine love, and then, supposing that you will have discovered your real character in this respect, I shall address you as divided into two different classes; the friends, and the enemies of Jesus. And as love to God, and love to Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man, are substantially the same, and cannot be separated, I shall not nicely



distinguish between them, but speak upon the one or the other, as may be most conducive to my design.

1. I am to point out some plain, genuine marks of divine love; and these I shall derive either from plain Scripture, or from the apparent nature and inseparable properties of that passion.

I need hardly tell you, that while there is so much hypocrisy, flattery, and compliment in the world, a man's professing the Christian religion, and a supreme regard to its Founder, is no certain evidence of divine love. Insincerity and treachery, which have done so much mischief in private friendships, and betrayed so many kingdoms, has diffused itself, like a malignant poison, into the affairs of religion; and men dare to compliment and flatter even the heart-searching God. Judas betrayed his Lord with a Hail, Master, and a kiss; and his conduct before that had the appearance of friendship, otherwise the disciples would have suspected him for the traitor upon the first hint. Therefore there must be something more substantial to evidence the truth of our love, than a mere profession, or the external forms of religion.

Nor does true love consist in a speculative, languid esteem, or a careless, unaffected good opinion of Jesus Christ. We may think and speak highly of him, and believe very great things concerning him, while the heart is dead and cold towards him; yea, full of enmity against him. All this may be the effect of education, or cool reasoning, and may hover in the head, without sinking deep into the heart, and becoming a governing principle in practice. It is this speculative good opinion of him which, I am afraid, the generality mistake for divine love. They cannot but know that their hearts are habitually careless and indifferent towards God, that they do not feel those affectionate emotions and strong tendencies of soul towards him, which

they feel towards all other objects of their love. However, when they happen to think of him, it is sometimes with a kind of high esteem; and this they take to be a genuine love to him, though it has no correspondent effects upon their temper or conduct.

I may add farther, that some may love God upon a mistake; that is, they love him upon supposition that he is quite another kind of being than he really is; and did they conceive of him as he is, he would appear to their depraved hearts rather an object of terror and abhorrence, than of love and delight. For example, they may suppose him so soft, easy, and passive a being, as not to resent their rebellious conduct: so merciful as hardly ever to execute justice upon sinners; so careless of the honor of his law and government, as to pass by all their disobedience; and so foolishly fond of his creatures, as to advance them to happiness promiscuously, without any regard to their moral character, or the honor of his perfections. Such a deity as this is formed exactly according to their taste, to encourage them in sin, and relieve them from horrors of conscience and the fears of futurity; and no wonder they should love such a being as this, so like themselves; even criminals would love a judge of this character. But this is not the true God, but the creature of their own foolish imaginations. This is not that God before whom the celestial armies cry, "Holy, holy, holy; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; who is a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he:" who turns the wicked into hell, and all the nations that forget God; and who will not admit one soul into heaven but what is made holy in temper and practice beforehand. And did they view him in this light, they would be so far from loving him, that their carnal minds would rise in enmity against him. Now to love God upon such a supposition, is not to please him, but to reproach and affront him; and he resents it as the highest

indignity. How would you take it, if a rake or a villain should love you upon a mistaken notion, that you were a libertine, a thief, or a liar, like himself? Would you thank him for such a friendship? No; you would esteem it the basest affront. And when you had convinced him of his mistake, his love would be turned into hatred. My brethren, we must love God for what he is, otherwise we do not love him at all. We must, therefore, know him in such measure as he is, before we can rationally love him; and particularly we must know and delight in those perfections which are most unacceptable to guilty and depraved creatures, his justice, holiness, and infinite hatred of sin, before we can truly love him.

Having cautioned you against these plausible and popular mistakes, I now resume my purpose, and shall point out some undoubted marks of genuine and sincere love. And that I may not perplex you with too many particulars, I shall only mention these four: that it is of a divine and supernatural original; and that it produces frequent and affectionate thoughts of its object; a delight in communing with him: and an earnest study and endeavor to please him, by a life of universal obedience.

1. If you would determine this important inquiry, “Do I really love the Lord Jesus Christ?” you must previously inquire how you came by your love; whether it be the mere effect of nature, of education, or of anything within the power of man; or whether it was wrought in your hearts by the almighty power of God, after many rebellious struggles and insurrections, and a full conviction of the innate enmity of your carnal minds against him? If it be the spontaneous production of your own hearts, or of natural causes, if you have always been possessed of it, and never found it difficult to obtain or cherish it? If you have not been sensible of a supernatural power working it in you, you may be sure it is all delusion. For though the passion

of love be innate in our nature, and is easily excited by a thousand created beauties, yet, alas! It has no natural tendency towards God. Human nature in its present state is strangely indisposed and disaffected in this respect, as experience has abundantly convinced us, unless we have been stupidly unobservant with regard to ourselves. A state of nature is uniformly represented in Scripture as a state of enmity against God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, John 3:6; and, therefore, by nature, we are all flesh in the Scripture style. Now, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God,” says St. Paul, “because the carnal mind is enmity against God,” &c. Rom. 8:7,8. The Scriptures everywhere represent us as being saved in the way of reconciliation; now reconciliation supposes a previous variance and enmity. Nay, St. Paul expressly tells us, that “we were enemies, when we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” Rom. 5:10. By nature, we are children of wrath, Eph. 2:3; and surely we cannot be children of wrath and lovers of God at one and the same time! Here, then, you must all plead guilty. Whatever you now are, it is beyond all doubt that you were once enemies to God. It is sufficient conviction against you that you are men, and belong to a race universally disaffected. And now have you ever been brought out of that state? If not, you are enemies to God still. You could not pass from death unto life in a dream, or an entire insensibility; for you must have experienced a great change, and you must have been sensible of, and may now recollect a great many deep and affecting sensations that attended it. You must have seen and been shocked at your disaffection: you must have been brought to cry in the most importunate manner to God to give you a better temper, and to shed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. Rom. 5:5. In short, you are made new creatures; old things are passed away, and all things are become new; and all these new things are of

God, who hath reconciled you to himself. 2 Cor. 5:17,18. Now if these be the test, what would you say to this question, Lovest thou me? Some of you, I trust, could answer; “Lord, I am afraid of the truth of my love; but this I am sure of, a great change has been wrought in my soul. Whether I am now a sincere lover of God or not, I am sure I am not what I once was; not only my outward practice, but the inward temper of my heart towards thee is vastly altered; it is more filial, affectionate, and dutiful.” If any of you can advance thus far in your answer, my brethren, it looks comfortable, though you should still be jealous of yourselves. But, sirs, let conscience now deal honestly with you; are there not many of you who are still in your natural state? All your religion is an earth-born, self-sprung thing. You have never been the subjects of a supernatural work of divine grace, nor felt such a great change in the temper of your minds; and if this is your case, I must pronounce, that, however many amiable qualities you may be possessed of, and however fair a profession you make of religion, you have not the love of God in you; for how should you have it, when it is not natural to you, and when it has not been implanted in you by an operation above nature? Indeed, my brethren, if this be your case, you are plainly convicted this day of being destitute of the very first principle of all religion; and pray admit the conviction: you may as well expect to be men without being born, as to love God without being born again. But,

2. If we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we frequently and affectionately think of him. This you know is the genius and tendency of love in general, to fix our thoughts upon its object; and the Psalmist often mentions this, as an attendant of his love to God. “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake I am still with

thee.” Ps. 139:17,18. “I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.” Ps. 63:6. “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” Ps.104:34. Isaiah represents the whole church as saying, “The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee: with my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.” Isaiah 26:8,9. This you see is the character of the lovers of God. And on the other hand, his enemies are characterized as persons who do not like to retain him in their knowledge, Rom. 1:28, who forget God; Psalm 9:17, and 50:22. God is not in all your thoughts, Ps. 10:5; but they practically say unto the Almighty, depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Job 21:14. The thoughts of an enemy are always ungrateful, especially if he is unable to avenge himself of his adversaries; and the mind will turn every way to avoid them. But thoughts of one we love, how sweet, how welcome, how often do they return! How often does the dear image of an absent friend rise to the mind! And with what affectionate endearments! Unless you are entire strangers to this generous passion, you know, by experience, this is the nature and tendency of love.

And do not these things enable some of you to give a comfortable answer to this question, Lovest thou me? You are often jealous of your love; but if you love him not, why do your thoughts make so many eager sallies to him? Once your thoughts could dwell within the compass of created nature, and fly from vanity to vanity, without attempting a flight to heaven. But now do they not often break through the limits of creation, in eager search after God as that supreme good? And with what affectionate eagerness do they at times dwell there? How do your souls delight to survey and gaze at his perfections, and contemplate the wonders of his works! And how often do your thoughts hover round a crucified Jesus, and, as it were, cling and

cluster to his cross, like the bees round the hive! You do not indeed think of him so frequently, or with such affectionate endearments as you should. But can you not appeal to himself, that the thoughts of him are welcome to your minds; that you do at times dwell with pleasure in the delightful contemplation, even when your hands are busy about other things; and that it is your daily sorrow that your hearts are not more intimate with him, and pay him more frequent visits? Does not your experience tell you, that you cannot always let your thoughts grovel in the dust, or run out in an endless chase of things below, but that, in some happy hours, they rise on the wings of love, and most affectionately cleave to your dear Redeemer? And your thoughts are not the cold speculations of a philosopher, but the warm, passionate, and heart-affecting thoughts of a Christian. If this be your care, my brethren, take courage. You love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you may be sure he loves you, and will treat you as his friends.

But are 'there not many of you who may be convinced by those things, that you have not the love of God in you? For are you not conscious that your affectionate thoughts are prostituted to some trifle in this lower world, and hardly ever aspire to him? Nay, are not the thoughts of God, and things divine and eternal, unwelcome to you? And do you not cast them out of your minds as you would shake a spark of fire from your bosoms? Do you not find yourselves shy of him, and alienated from him? Do not those things give you pain which would turn your thoughts towards him? You do not affect such subjects of meditation or conversation, and you soon grow weary and uneasy when your minds are tied down to them. And what can be the cause of this, but a strong disaffection to God, and a secret consciousness that he is your enemy on this account? O sirs! What can be more astonishing, or what can be a stronger evidence of enmity to God,

than that men should live in such a world as this, and yet hardly ever have one affectionate thought of their great Author, Preserver, and Benefactor? His glory shines upon them from all his works, and meets their eye wherever they look; his word exhibits him to their view in a still more bright and amiable light. It represents the Lord Jesus in all the love and agonies of his crucifixion, and in all the glories of his exaltation; they are receiving mercies from him every moment of their lives; for in him they live, and move, and have their being: their own reason and consciences tell them that he is the most excellent and lovely being, and worthy of supreme and universal love, and they profess to believe it; and yet he cannot, after all, gain so much as their frequent and affectionate thoughts! Their thoughts, those cheap and easy things, are ungratefully denied to him, who gave them a power of thinking! Oh what stupid indifferency about the supreme good, or rather what prevailing enmity is here! Can you pretend to be lovers of Jesus Christ while this is your case? Can you excuse or extenuate this under the soft name of infirmity? No, it is rank, inveterate, sullen enmity: and a righteous God resents it as such. But,

3. If you love God and the Lord Jesus Christ, you delight in communion with them. Friends, you know, delight to converse together, to unbosom themselves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of society. They are fond of interviews, and seize every opportunity for that purpose; and absence is tedious and painful to them. If you are so happy as to have a friend, you know by experience this is the nature of love. Now, though God be a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men, yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual commerce with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives. Hence God is so often said, in



the Scriptures, to draw near to them, and they to him, James 4:8; Heb. 7:19; Psalm 69:18; and 73:28; Heb. 10:22; Lam. 3:57; and St. John, speaking of himself and his fellow-Christians, says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3. This divine fellowship is promised by Jesus Christ to all his friends, John 14:21,23. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him; my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This mystical fellowship is peculiar to the friends of God; and others know nothing of it. They are represented as poor strangers and aliens, that have no communication with God. Eph. 2:12: Col. 1:21. He is shy of them, and they of him: they keep at a distance from one another like persons disaffected. This communion on God's part consists in his communicating to his people the influences of his grace, to quicken them, to inflame their love, to give them filial boldness in drawing near to him, in assuring them of his love to them, and representing himself to them as reconciled and accessible. And on their part it consists in a liberty of heart and speech in pouring out their prayers to him, a delightful freedom of spirit in all exercises of devotion, in returning him love for love, and dedicating themselves to him. Thus there is a kind of interchange of thoughts and affections, mutual freedoms and endearments, between them. And oh! How divinely sweet in some happy hours of sacred intimacy! This indeed is heaven upon earth: and, might it but continue without interruption, the life of a lover of God would be a constant series of pure, unmingled happiness. But, alas I at times their Beloved withdraws himself, and goes from them, and then they languish, and pine away, and mourn, like the mourning turtle that has lost his mate. This intercourse with God may be a strange thing to some of you; and to vindicate the want of it, you may give

it some odious name; enthusiasm, fanaticism, or heated imagination. But I must tell you, if you know nothing of it, your temper and experience is entirely different from all the friends of God, and, therefore, you cannot rank yourselves in that happy number.

Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading or hearing his word, in communicating at his table; it is in these and the like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those that love him; and they enjoy the freedom of children and friends with him: and on this account they delight in those ordinances, and take pleasure in attending upon them. The workings of their hearts in this respect, you may discover in David, when, by the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, he was banished from the stated ordinances of public worship, Ps. 42:1,2,4, and 84. throughout, and 27:4.

And now, my brethren, to come nearer home, have not some of you experienced the sacred joys of communion with God? And were not those the sweetest hours of your life? Have you not found it good for you to draw near to him? And when he has withdrawn his presence, how have you languished and mourned, and could never be easy till he was pleased to return to you? Do you not also find a sacred pleasure in the institutions of the gospel, because there you hope to meet your God, and enjoy communion with him? Is this the principle that prompts you to pray, to hear, and perform every religious duty? Then you may appeal to a heart-searching God, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

But does not this view of the matter give the conscience of some of you reason to condemn you? You have neither known nor desired this

fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Alas! You know nothing of those freedoms of divine friendship: and you have no prevailing pleasure in devotion. You either neglect the duties of religion, or else you perform them from custom, education, constraint of conscience, or some other such principle. Let me point out one instance as a specimen; and that is secret prayer and closet devotion. Nothing can be more expressly commanded than this is by Christ, Matt. 6:6, and is this your daily practice? Is this the most pleasant exercise of your life? Or is it a mere formality, or a weariness to you? My brethren, inquire honestly into this matter.

4. And lastly, If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you earnestly study and endeavor to please him by a life of universal obedience. Love is always desirous to please the person beloved; and it will naturally lead to a conduct that is pleasing. This, then, you may be sure of, that if you love Jesus, it is the labor of your life to please him. The grand inquiry with you is not, Will this or that please men? Will it please myself? Or will it promote my interest? But, Will it please my God and Savior? If not, I will have nothing to do with it. This is the standing rule of your practice: let others consult their own inclinations, or the taste of the age; let them consult their own secular interest, or the applause of mortals; you consult what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:2. See also Eph. 6:6; 1 Pet. 3:17; Heb. 13:21; and if you may but please him, it is enough. But are there not some of you who are hardly ever concerned with this dutiful solicitude? If you can please yourselves, and those whose favor you would court, if you can but promote your own interest, you are not solicitous whether you please God or not. This proves you destitute of his love.

The only way to please God, and the best test of your love to him, is obedience to his commandments. This is made the decisive mark by Christ

himself. “If a man love me, he will keep my words—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.” John 14:23,24. He repeats it over and over in different forms: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,” ver. 21. “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” ver. 15. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” John 15:14. “This is the love of God,” says St. John; that is, it is the surest evidence, and the natural, inseparable effect of our love to God, “that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5:3; that is, they will not seem grievous to one that obeys them from the generous principle of love.

Here, then, you that profess to love the Lord Jesus, here is an infallible test for your love. Do you make it the great study of your life to keep his commandments? Do you honestly endeavor to perform every duty he has enjoined, and that because he has enjoined it? And do you vigorously resist and struggle against every sin, however constitutional, however fashionable, however gainful, because he forbids it? And is the way of obedience pleasant to you? Would you choose this way to heaven rather than any other, if it were left to your election? What does conscience answer to this? Do not some of you stumble and hesitate here? If you should speak the truth, you must say, “I cannot but confess that I do willfully indulge myself in some things which Jesus has forbidden, and leave unattempted some duties which he has commanded.” Alas! Is this the case? Then his love does not dwell in you: you are undeniably his enemies, whatever be your pretensions. But if you can say, “Lord, I own that in many things I offend; and in many things I come short of my duty; but if I know myself, I think I can honestly declare, that it is my sincere and earnest desire to do thy will, and that it is my real endeavor in every instance in

which it is made known to me;” I say, if you can make this declaration, your case looks encouraging; this is the dutiful temper and modest language of genuine love.

And now, my brethren, if Jesus should put this question to each of you, Lovest thou me? Are you prepared to answer him? Can you desire more plain or more certain evidences than have been given? Surely, no; and therefore, if you are still quite undetermined, it is owing to the real obscurity and perplexity of your case, or to your carelessness and inattention, or to your willfully shutting your eyes against conviction. My brethren, if you have these characteristics of love to Jesus, away with your painful jealousies, and believe that your hearts are upright before him. But if you are destitute of them, be assured you are equally destitute of his love. Love can never be separated from its natural fruits and effects; and therefore, without these, it is the greatest absurdity to pretend to it. Can you rise up now, and tell the Lord Jesus to his face, “Lord, it is true, I have not the fruits and evidences of love, but I love thee notwithstanding; I love thee above all, though I have no frequent affectionate thoughts of thee; I love thee, though I hate to think of thee; though I have no pleasure in conversing with thee, nor any concerns to please thee, and keep thy commandments; that is, I love thee, though my temper and conduct towards thee be those of an enemy!” Alas! Sirs, will you presume to impose upon an omniscient God, with such absurd contradictory pretensions as these? Would such a love as this pass current among men? Offer it now to your governor, your father, or your friend, and see if they will accept of it. Tell your friend, “I most sincerely love you, though I do not love to think of you, or converse with you; I love you, though I care not whether I please you;” would he not discard you from his friendship, as an inconsistent pretender, and highly

resent it, that you should think to impose upon him by such absurd pretensions? And shall that pass for sincere, supreme love to God, which would not be accepted as common friendship among men? Shall enmity, disguised under hypocritical pretensions, be offered to him, under the name of friendship? With horror I mention it; and yet I must mention it, that you may be shocked at your conduct! Do you think he wants understanding to be thus imposed upon? It is a plain case you have not the least spark of true love to him: you are enemies to him in your minds, by wicked works, therefore, pass sentence upon yourselves: “Here is a soul so perverse and wicked, that it has never yet loved its divine Parent and the supreme excellency; has never loved the blessed Jesus, the Friend of sinners.” And now, should all the enemies of God in this assembly walk to one side, and crowd together by themselves, how thin would they leave this congregation! How few would be left behind! Well, the day is coming, when you must be separated, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. To the left hand, sinners, to the left hand of your Judge you must go, who continue destitute of his love. Then you will know the truth of your case; but, alas! It will be too late to correct it. But now the discovery of it is the first step towards the amendment of it. And, therefore, let your consciences now anticipate the proceedings of the great judgment day, and draw a line of separation between you, that I may address you according to the classes in which you are found. This leads me, pursuant to my proposed method,

II. To address myself to you who have now discovered that you are sincere lovers of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding your many imperfections. And my time will allow me to offer only two things to you.

The one is, your heaven is sure. I repeat it again, your heaven is sure; as sure as the sincerity of your love. Love is the grand qualification for the enjoyment of God. You can be happy in his presence, because you love him; happy in his service, because you love him; happy in the contemplation of his glories, because you love him. In short, love renders you fit for heaven, and all its employments and fruitions, and therefore you shall certainly be admitted there; for God never will exclude one soul that is fit for it, or that could relish the happiness there. Love is the substance of all religion and obedience; love is the fulfilling of the law; and that love you have in your hearts. Oh happy souls, “rejoice in hope of the glory of God:” for, as the apostle reasons, “your hope will not make you ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.” Rom. 5:4,5. Love is an important principle. Charity, or love, never faileth. 1 Cor. 13:8. It is, therefore, not only your privilege, but your duty, to rejoice: and how can you refrain, when in a few years, at most, you will be with that Jesus whom you love unseen, in all the glories, and in all the felicities, of the heavenly world.

The other thing I would mention to you is, alas! How faint, how imperfect is your love! And what great reason have you to cherish it, and labor to raise it unto a vigorous flame! I need not offer much for your conviction on this head; for, alas! You cannot but be sensible your love bears no suitable proportion to the excellency of the divine nature, the dying love of Jesus, and your obligations to him. Alas! It is but a feeble spark, and sometimes so buried and suffocated under the weight of your corruptions, that you can hardly discern it at all, and fear it is entirely extinguished. Oh then, I beseech you, love your God more: love your dear Redeemer more. Do not affront him with such a languid love: think over his excellences, his

relations to you, his unbounded love and grace to you; and these considerations may fire your hearts, cold as they are. Cry to him to kindle the sacred flame in your breasts, and avoid everything that tends to damp it: guard against the friendship of this world, which is enmity against God, and against all the workings of sin: avoid all causes of variance and distance between God and you, and labor to maintain a settled peace and a constant correspondence. But the other class of my hearers stand in greater need of immediate relief, and therefore,

III. I shall address myself to such of you as may have discovered, by this day's trial, that you are destitute of the love of Christ, and what I have to say to you, my dear fellow-mortals, may be reduced under two heads, your sin and danger; and the most proper means of deliverance.

To convince you of your sin and danger in not loving God and his Son Jesus Christ, consider,

I. It is the supreme excellency that you have refused to love. The most venerable Majesty, the most consummate wisdom, the most rich goodness and grace, the most amiable justice; these are the things you disaffect, while you are disaffected towards God; for these are his very nature. You neglect and disgust faithfulness, candor, veracity, mercy, benevolence, and every moral beauty in the highest perfection. You are enemies to the origin, the sum total of all excellency. Now this may strike you with conviction in various view's—as first, how depraved and corrupt must your souls be, that can be disaffected to such a glorious object! How must your taste be vitiated, that cannot relish the supreme good! You can love the faint shadows of these perfections in your fellow-creatures: you can love generosity, benevolence, mercy, justice, and such virtues, in mortals, and may you not fall down overwhelmed with astonishment, and cry out, “Lord,



what is this that has befallen my soul, that I cannot love thee? That I can love anything else that is lovely, and yet cannot love thee? Oh! What a perverse, depraved, abominable soul is this!” Sirs, must you not be shocked to think you have such souls within you? If your bodies were all overrun with rotten ulcers; if your features were all convulsed and distorted into the most hideous forms; if your limbs were all shattered and dislocated; if your taste were so vitiated that you loathed all healthful food, and you should crawl upon the earth, feeding on its mire and dirt; all this would not render you half so odious and horrible a monster as a soul disaffected towards God. Again, what an aggravated wickedness must this be? Your obligations to love him are just in proportion to his loveliness and excellency; and the wickedness of breaking these obligations is in exact proportion to their strength. And as his excellency and your obligations are infinite, your wickedness in not loving him must be so too. What illustration shall I use to represent this crime in its proper infernal colors? If you should commence an enemy to the whole creation; prosecute men and angels with implacable abhorrence; detest the father that begat you, and the breasts that gave you suck; nay, if you should commence a direct enemy to yourself, be perpetually plotting against your own life, all this would not equal the crime of hating the ever-blessed God; for all these beings together have no excellency compared to him, and your obligation to love him is prior and fundamental to all others. Here your love should begin, here it should center, and then extend its lines to all parts of the circle of creation; therefore, no more plead your innocence. If you had never committed one sin beside in all your life, this one of not loving God is sufficient to condemn you forever to the lowest hell. Further, this sin will appear more aggravated, if you consider, that, by not loving God, you do in the strongest

manner declare, that he has not these excellences, but is a worthless being, undeserving of your love. When you do not love him, after all the discoveries he has made of himself to you, it is plain that this is the habitual sense of your hearts, that he has no excellency worthy of your love. This is the language of your hearts; and this language is much more strong and expressive than that of your lips. You may speak things inadvertently, which your second thoughts would retract; but by being all your life destitute of the love of God, you have all your life been declaring that you look upon him as a worthless being, far inferior to a thousand things upon earth, to which you have given your love. Now you would not dare to utter such blasphemy as this, and how can you dare to declare it, much more strongly, by the temper of your hearts, and stand to it as a truth? Oh! Will you never retract it by becoming a lover of God? My brethren, can you imagine a more shocking, insolent wickedness than this? And what a hateful soul must that be that has been guilty of it all its days! What is this but to say, with the atheistic fool, No God? For he is not God, if he be not supremely excellent and amiable. And if you wish there were no God, what do you do but wish universal desolation, and imprecate destruction to yourself and every other being? For were there no God, there could be nothing else; there would not have been one spark of being through infinite space in any point of duration.

2. Your not loving God is a most unnatural wickedness. He is your Father; and that in a higher sense than your earthly parents can be. He is the author of your bodies, because it was he that first established, and still continues in force, those laws of generation, by which they were produced: and had it not been for this, men could no more produce one another than a stone or a clod of earth. As to your souls, the nobler part of your persons, they are his

immediate offspring, produced by him without the instrumentality of secondary causes, of any pre-existent materials. Thus he is your Father in the highest sense; and yet you have not loved him. You have not loved him who gave you the power of love. You have not loved him from whose creative hands you came a few years ago. What an unnatural wickedness is this! What were you a hundred years ago? You were nothing; and you would have continued so to all eternity, had he not spoke you into being. And yet you have not sincerely loved him to this moment. Most astonishing! Must you not tremble at and abominate yourselves as the vilest and most unnatural monsters? Should the child that received his being from you in a subordinate sense, the child you dandled upon your knees, and for whom you are now laboriously making provision, should he hate the sight of you, shun your company, and do nothing to please you, how would you take it? Would you not think the unnatural miscreant unworthy of life? And yet thus you have treated your heavenly Father, to whom you were under much higher and more endearing obligations. You have treated him as only a despised broken idol, in whom you could take no pleasure. And are you pleased with yourselves notwithstanding? Shall not such a shocking prodigy, at which angels gaze with horror, be struck with horror at itself? Should all the world treat God as you have done, what would be the consequence? Why, there would not be one lover of God to be found among all the numerous race of man. And yet, if you have a right to hate him, they have too. Have you any peculiar indulgence in this case? Can you produce an exemption from that universal law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.? You see, then, whither your conduct leads, and do you not shudder to think of it? And can you imagine yourselves innocent

still? Do you think you have tolerably good hearts for all? I am sure your reason, if it be not entirely lost, will not allow you to think so.

3. This is a most ungrateful wickedness. Think what God has done for you; how many mercies he has given you, as many mercies as moments; think how many deliverances he has wrought for you: see what a well-furnished world he has formed for your accommodation. Think, oh think, of the love and sufferings of Jesus; see the abasement, the labors, the hardships of his life; see the agonies of his crucifixion; see the crown of thorns, the mangled visage, the disjointed limbs, the flowing blood, the bursting heart, the dying pangs of your blessed Redeemer. Oh! Think upon and view these things, and then say, what do you think of your enmity against him after all this? Can ingratitude rise to a higher pitch? Oh! Is this your return for all the kindness of God? For all the love of Jesus? There was something very cutting in his question to the Jews, “Many good works have I done among you.” I have never provoked you by anything but good works; “and for which of these do you stone me?” John 10:32. This may be easily accommodated to you. Many kind actions has he done to you, many grievous sufferings has he undergone for you; and for which of these do you hate him? Oh! Must not such an expostulation wound you to the heart, and melt you down at his feet in the deepest repentance? Oh I can you continue enemies to the very cross of Christ? Must not that disarm your resentment, and dissolve your hearts, hard as they are, into the most tender love?

4. This is a most comprehensive wickedness. You are repeatedly told, that love is the fulfilling of the law. Rom. 13:8,10; James 2:8. The first and great commandment upon which (with a like precept with regard to our neighbor) the whole law and the prophets depend, is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart,” &c., that is, love is the root, the principle, the substance of all obedience, because it constrains a man to a cheerful observance of every divine precept, and naturally disposes him to a dutiful conduct. Now, if love be the fulfilling of the whole law, it follows, that the want of love is the breach of the whole law: it is dashing the two tables of the law in pieces at once. As love is the principle of all obedience, so enmity is the principle of all disobedience; and while this reigns in your hearts, it diffuses a deadly poison through everything you do; and you cannot perform one action acceptable to God. All your endeavors are but the treacherous flattery of an enemy, or the forced homage of a rebel obliged to feign submission. In short, the want of love to God is the want of everything that is morally good: it is the root of all evil; it is a complication of all wickedness; a summary, nay, I may say, the sum total of all disobedience and rebellion. And can you any longer build your hopes on the fewness or smallness of your sins? Alas! While you are possessed of this temper, your hearts are full of every evil. This renders not only your actions, your words, and thoughts of every kind, guilty and vile, but the stated, settled bent and disposition of your minds, most wicked and abominable. And must you not fall on your faces before your injured Sovereign, and cry, Guilty, guilty? But,

5. This is a most inexcusable wickedness. Your mouth must be stopped, and you have no plea left to excuse or extenuate it. You cannot plead here, as you do in some other things, “There are so many different denominations in the world, so many different opinions about religion, that I know not what to choose;” for here, as I told you, all are agreed. They are all unanimous in this, that love to God is essential to religion. Not only all denominations of Christians, but Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, and all that

believe the existence of a God, confess this. And are you of a religion that does not include the love of God in it? It is the religion of devils, or rather it is the most diabolical irreligion. I insist the more boldly upon this point, because it is a catholic truth, free from all suspicion of party. You cannot plead that you have no time for the exercise of love to God; for love is not the work of the hands, but of the heart; and may be performed while you are engaged in other business. Can you not think affectionately of a friend behind a counter, or over a plough? So you might love God, and yet follow your daily employments. Nor can you excuse yourselves from your inability; for God has implanted the passion of love in your nature, and you find it easy to love other things: you can love the world, you can love a child or a friend, and why cannot you love God? The act of love is the same in both cases, and one would think it would be an easier thing for you to love him who is the Supreme Excellence, than imperfect creatures, whose excellency is limited, or mingled with many hateful qualities. Whence then is your inability in this case? It is nothing else but the strength of your enmity; that is, you are so disaffected to the ever-blessed God, that you cannot love him; and does this lessen your crime? Do the inveteracy and rancor of your enmity excuse it? Alas! That is its most dreadful aggravation. Oh! How wicked must you be when you are so disaffected to the God that made you, and the Savior that died for you, that you cannot prevail upon your hearts to love him! Farther, Have you tried what can be done to root out and subdue this enmity by the power of the Holy Spirit? Have you cried to God in earnest prayer, and used all means for that end? If not, it is plain you are an enemy to God, and love to continue so; you hate him, and practically insist upon it you do right. Nor can you pretend ignorance in this case; for your own conscience tells you, it is your duty to love God. In

short, you are entirely inexcusable; you sin against the full conviction of your own minds, and you must join with God, angels, and men, in your own condemnation.

6. This temper, if it continue, will certainly exclude you from the kingdom of heaven. Alas! What would you do with your disaffected hearts? Heaven would be an enemy's country to you. What pleasure could you have in the society or service of that God whom you hate? In those exercises and enjoyments for which you have no relish? Could you be happy in the practice of eternal flattery, bowing and singing insincere complemental praises to an enemy? Could you affect the society there? There is not one like you in all that innumerable assembly: they all love that God whom you disgust. And with what pleasure could you mingle among them? How could you live in a country where the laws, the customs, the employments, the disposition of the inhabitants, are all contrary to your temper? Oh! You need no sentence from your Judge to exclude you, you would exclude yourselves, and choose to mingle with your fellow-devils:—Which leads me to add,

7. This temper, if it continue, will certainly lead you to hell. You are fit for no other place. Where should the enemies of God be, but in an infernal prison? There is the same propriety in it as in shutting up madmen in bedlam, or rebels in a dungeon. Why, you are devilized already; you have the very temper of devils; enmity to God is the grand constituent of a devil: the worst ingredient in that infernal composition; and this you have in your hearts, and, as it were, incorporated with your habitual temper. And what do you think will become of you? Judge yourselves, must you not be doomed to that everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, whom you resemble?

Here I must subjoin, that if ever you are brought to love God it must be in this world. In heaven and hell no new dispositions are planted; but those that are found prevalent in the soul will ripen and grow to perfection. None begin to grow wicked in hell, or to love God in heaven: the seeds are all sown in the present state, which then spring up to maturity. Therefore, if you would ever have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, now, now is the time; now or never.

But, “What means (you will say) shall I use for this purpose?” Here I must be short: but if you are really in earnest, you will easily understand the shortest hints.

1. Labor to be deeply sensible of the aggravated sinfulness and danger of your present state. Deeply impress your minds with this. Check the levity of your minds, and indulge a serious, anxious, sorrowful temper; for your case really requires it.

2. Be deeply sensible of the necessity of divine grace to change your hearts, and inspire you with divine love. The disease is so far gone, you cannot heal yourselves; but, blessed be God, he is able, he is able to make such an enemy as you his hearty friend and dutiful subject. Therefore,

3. Betake yourselves to earnest prayer; and confess your guilt, your vileness, your liableness to divine displeasure: cry for his Spirit to shed abroad his love in your hearts: here let your petitions center; for this is the main thing. Endeavour to devote yourselves to him, to give up your disaffected hearts to him, to bow that rebellious soul at his feet.

4. Meditate upon the glory of God, his kindness to you, the love and sufferings of Christ, and such subjects as tend to beget and inflame your love to him.



5. Be not weary in the use of these means, but persevere, hold on, until you find a thorough change produced in your hearts. Your eternal all is concerned; therefore be not remiss and careless; be not soon tired or discouraged. Never give over until your last breath; and who knows but that hostile spirit of yours may soon become the friend of God, and at length shine among his celestial friends in all their transcendent glories, and ineffable and eternal felicity! Amen.

# *SERM. XLVIII. THE NATURE AND AUTHOR OF REGENERATION.*

**J**ohn 3:7.— *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Those doctrines are not always most absurd in themselves, nor strange to a well-informed mind, which are most wondered at in the world. Ignorance is apt to wonder, where knowledge discovers nothing amazing or unaccountable. To support our observations, proofs must be given; but it is to my present purpose to take notice only of one, one that excited from Nicodemus wonder, about 1700 years ago, and is still wondered at; nay, more, is ridiculed in an ignorant world; I mean the doctrine of Regeneration or the New Birth.

Nicodemus comes to Christ with a conviction of his high character as a Teacher from God, who attested his commission by the strong and popular evidence of miracles. From such a Teacher he expects sublime instructions; and from his own improvements in Jewish learning, he, no doubt, flatters himself he shall be able to comprehend them; but when, instead of gratifying his curiosity by telling him strange and great things of the kingdom of the Messiah, as a secular prince, and a mighty conqueror, as he

and his countrymen expected, or discoursing like a Rabbi on the Jewish law; I say, when, instead of this, Jesus opens the conference by a solemn and authoritative declaration of the necessity of something under the name of another birth, how is Nicodemus surprised! This he cannot understand. This seems strange, new doctrine to him; and he has an objection ready against it, as an absurdity and an impossibility: “How can a man be born when he is old! Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” This objection, which was altogether impertinent, and founded upon a gross mistaken notion of the doctrine, may serve as a specimen of all the objections that have been made against this doctrine ever since; they have all proceeded from ignorance, or from gross mistaken notions of an evident truth; and hence men have imagined, like this master of Israel, that they reasoned strongly against it, when in reality they were saying nothing at all to the purpose, and did not so much as understand the case.

Our condescending Lord took a great deal of pains to give Nicodemus right notions of this doctrine. For this purpose he presents it before him in various views. He tells him, he did not mean a second natural birth, but a birth of water and of the spirit; a birth that renders a man spiritual, and consequently fit for that spiritual kingdom he was about to erect; and that the free and Sovereign Spirit of God, the Author of this new birth, operated like wind, which bloweth where it listeth. Nicodemus still continues gazing at him, and wondering what he should mean. He is puzzled, after all, and asks, How can these things be? Jesus tells him the wonder did not lie in the doctrine, but in his ignorance of it, when he was a teacher of the law; Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?

The connection of my text is this: “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit; therefore, marvel not

that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” That is to say, “The doctrine you are so much surprised at, is not at all absurd, so as to make you wonder to hear it from my mouth. You cannot but know, that all mankind are born of the flesh; that is, propagated in a way that communicates a depraved nature to them; and hence, they are flesh; that is, corrupt and carnal; and therefore wholly unfit to be admitted into my kingdom, which is pure and spiritual. But that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit; that is, spiritual and holy; and therefore fit for that spiritual and holy kingdom, which I am come to set up. Now, if this be the case, you have certainly no need to marvel at this doctrine: can it seem strange to you, that impure, unholy creatures must be changed, before they can be fit members of so holy a society? Can you marvel at this? No; you would have more reason to marvel at the contrary.”

It is one part of my design to-day to inquire, Whether the doctrine of the new birth be indeed such a strange, absurd, or impossible thing in itself, as to deserve that amazement, and indeed contempt, which it generally meets with in the world; or whether it be not rational, necessary, and worthy of universal acceptance? But before I enter upon this, it will be proper to inquire,

What the new birth is? And,

Who is the author of it?

And in what way does he generally produce it?

Remove your prejudices, my hearers, against this doctrine, suspend your disbelief, and cease to wonder at or ridicule it, till these points be explained, lest you be found to speak evil of the things you know not.

1. Let us inquire, What it is to be born again?

To gain your attention to this inquiry, I need only put you in mind, that whatever be meant by the new birth, it is not an insignificant speculation,

not the disputed peculiarity of a party, not the attainment of a few good men of the first class, but it is essential to every good man, and absolutely necessary to salvation. You cannot doubt of this, if you look upon Jesus Christ as a person of common veracity, and worthy of credit in his most solemn declarations; for he has declared, over and over again, with the utmost solemnity, that Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. John 3:3,5, and 7. Attend, then, if you think your eternal salvation worthy of your attention.

The phrase, to be born again, like most other expressions used upon divine subjects, is metaphorical, and brings in natural things with which we are familiarly acquainted, to assist our conceptions of divine things, which might otherwise be above our comprehension. We all know what it is to be born; and our knowledge of this may help us to understand what it is to be born again. As by our first birth we become men, or partake of human nature, so by our second birth, we become Christians, and are made partakers of a divine and spiritual nature. As our first birth introduces us into this world, and into human society, so our second birth introduces us into the church of Christ, and makes us true members of that holy society. As by our first birth we resemble our parents, at least in the principal lineaments of human nature, so by our second birth we are made partakers of the divine nature; that is, we are made to resemble the blessed God in holiness: or, as St. Paul expresses it, we are renewed after his image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10. The effect is like its cause; the child like the parent. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. In our first birth we are endowed with child-like and filial dispositions towards our human parents; and when we are born of God, we are inspired with a child-like and

filial temper towards him, as our heavenly Father. By our natural birth we are placed in an imperfect, but growing state. We have all the powers of human nature, though none of them in perfection; but from that time they grow and improve, till they at length arrive to maturity. In like manner, in our second birth, all the principles of virtue and grace are implanted; but their growth and improvement is the work of the Christian life: and from that time they continue gradually growing, though with many interruptions, till at death they arrive at maturity and perfection. In our natural birth we pass through a very great change. The infant that had lain in darkness, breathless and almost insensible, and with little more than a vegetative life, enters into a new state, feels new sensations, craves a new kind of nourishment, and discovers new powers. In like manner, in the second birth, the sinner passes through a great change: a change as to his view of divine things: as to his temper, his practice, and his state; a change so great, that he may with propriety be denominated another man, or a new creature. As I shall adjust my discourse to the narrow limits of an hour, I must pass over, or but slightly touch upon all the particulars suggested by the metaphor in my text, except the last, which is the most comprehensive and instructive: namely, that the new birth implies a great change in the views, the temper, the practice, and the state of the sinner; and under this head, sundry of the other particulars may be reduced.

The various forms of expression, which the Scripture uses to represent what is here called a second birth, all conspire to teach us, that it consists in a great change. It is represented as a resurrection, or a change from death to life: You hath he quickened, saith St. Paul, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1. It is represented as a new creation: If any man be in Christ, says the same inspired author, he is a new creature: old things are passed

away; behold all things are become new. 2 Cor. 5:17. Put on, says he, the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4:24. These and like expressions signify a very great change, and such forms of speech are very commonly used in the same sense; which shows they are so far from being ridiculous, that they are agreeable to the common sense of mankind. When we see a man that we once knew, look, and speak, and act as he used to do, it is customary to say, "He is the old man still." But if we see a great alteration in his appearance, his temper, or behavior, we are apt to say, "He is a new man" or, "He is quite another creature." When we see a rugged, boisterous man become meek and inoffensive, we are apt to say, "He is become a mere child." These forms of speech are so significant and popular, that they have even passed into proverbs, and that in various countries and languages; and hence they are used in the Scriptures as plain and familiar representations of this great truth. And hence we are bold to use them, in spite of that senseless ridicule and contempt, which some would cast upon them; but which rebounds upon themselves, for censuring modes of expression that are not only sacred, but agreeable to common sense.

Now, since it is evident the new birth signifies a great change; you are impatient, by this time, I hope, to know more particularly what it is. It is the change of a thoughtless, ignorant, hard-hearted, rebellious sinner, into a thoughtful, well-informed tender-hearted, dutiful servant of God. It is the implantation of the seeds or principles of every grace and virtue in a heart that was entirely destitute of them, and full of sin. The sinner that was wont to have no practical affectionate regard for the great God, is now made to revere, admire, and love him as the greatest and best of Beings; to rejoice in him as his supreme happiness, and cheerfully to submit to him as his Ruler.

Formerly his temper and conduct would better agree to the infidelity of an atheist than to the faith of a Christian: but now, he thinks, and speaks, and acts, as one that really believes there is a God; a God who inspects all his ways, and will call him to an account. The heart that was wont to disgust the holiness of the divine law, and murmur at the strictness of its precepts, now loves it; loves it for that very reason for which it was wont to hate it; namely, because it is so holy. This was the temper of the Psalmist: Thy word is very pure; therefore (that is, on that very account) thy servant loveth it. Ps. 119:140; and of St. Paul, the law is holy, and the commandment holy—and what follows? I delight, says he, in the law, after the inward man. And I consent unto the law that it is good. Rom. 7:12,16,22. The haughty, stubborn, deceitful heart, is now made humble, pliable, simple, and honest, like that of a little child. Hence Christ says, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 18:3,4. This was also the temper of David: “Lord, my heart is not haughty; surely I have behaved myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child.” Ps. 131:1,2. The heart that used to have no delight in communion with God, but lived as without God, in the world, now feels a filial desire to draw near to him, and address him with the humble boldness and freedom of a child. “Because ye are sons,” says St. Paul, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,” Gal. 4:6. That is, Father, Father: the repetition of so tender a name intimates the greatest endearment and affectionate freedom. The heart that had no realizing, affecting views of a future state, now feels the energy of that doctrine, and looks upon heaven and hell as indeed the most important



realities; the heart that was once earthly and sensual, eagerly set upon things below, as its vain pursuit, is now taught to aspire to heaven; in heaven is its treasure, and there it will be. The thoughts that were once scattered among a thousand trifles, are now frequently collected, and fixed upon the great concerns of religion. Now also the heart is remarkably altered towards the Lord Jesus: formerly it seemed sufficient to wear his name, to profess his religion, to believe him to be the Savior of the world, to insert his name in a prayer now and then, and to give a formal attendance upon the institutions of his worship; but oh! Now he appears in a more important and interesting light. Now the sinner is deeply sensible that he is indeed the only Savior, and he most eagerly embraces him under that endearing character, and entrusts his eternal all in his hands. Now he appears to him all lovely and glorious, and his heart is forever captivated with his beauty. Now he prays, and longs, and languishes for him, and feels him to be all in all. Oh! Now the very thought of being without Christ, kills him. Thus, God, who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; 2 Cor. 4:6, in that face where it shines with the fairest beams.

Now also the man has very different views of himself: he sees himself to be a guilty, depraved, vile creature, all overrun with sin, and destitute of all goodness, but as it is wrought in him by divine grace; how different is this from the proud, self-righteous estimate he was wont to form of himself! His views of sin are also quite different from what they used to be: he used to look upon it as a slight, excusable evil, except when it broke out into some gross acts. But now he sees it to be unspeakably vile and base, in every instance and degree. An evil thought, a corrupt motion of desire, an indisposed heart towards God, appears to him a shocking evil, such as

nothing but the infinite mercy of God can forgive, and even that mercy, upon no other account but that of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He sees it does most justly deserve everlasting punishment; and he is often lost in wonder that the gospel should open a door of hope even for him, who has been so deeply guilty. It breaks his heart to think that he indulged so base a thing so long; and he can never be fully reconciled to himself, while he feels the remains of it within him. His repentance now takes a new turn. Formerly he was entirely under the influence of self-love, and therefore, when he had any concern for his sin, it entirely proceeded from the servile principle of fear; fear of the punishment, and not hatred of the crime. But now his soul is ennobled with more generous principles: now he can mourn over sin, as a base, ungrateful evil, even when he has no thoughts of the punishment; now he can mourn over sin as against God, and not only as against a sin-punishing, but as against a sin-pardoning God. Now he mourns with generous sorrow over pardoned sin; and God's being so good as to forgive him, is so far from lessening the evil of sin in his view, that this very consideration peculiarly affects him. Oh! That he should be so base as to sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought breaks his heart; and God's forgiving him, is a reason why he can never forgive himself. The heart has also a new temper in the duties of religion; it can no more indulge in habitual coldness or lukewarmness in them, but exerts its powers to the utmost; and when it has a languishing interval, it cannot be easy in that condition, but tries to rouse itself again. Experience teaches that it is good to draw near to God; and the ordinances of the gospel are not tiresome formalities, as they were wont to be, but the means of life and refreshment; and they are its happiest hours which are spent in attending upon them. Now the gospel is not that dull, stale, neglected tale it

once was, but the most joyful tidings that ever came from heaven. As a new-born babe, the regenerate soul desires the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby, 1 Peter 2:2, and it is esteemed more than necessary food. Now the careless, secure soul, that was always cautious of over-doing in religion, and flattering itself there is no need of being so much in earnest, is effectually roused, and strives in earnest to enter in at the strait gate, convinced both of the difficulty and necessity of entering. Now religion is no longer a matter by-the-by, but a serious business; and everything that comes in competition with it must give way to it. The man is resolved to save his soul at all adventures; and this, he is now convinced, is no easy work. To sum up the whole, for I can only give a few specimens of particulars, the regenerate soul is changed universally in every part. I do not mean the change is perfect in any part: alas! No; sin still lives, and sometimes makes violent struggles, though crucified. The old man dies hard, but I mean, the change does really extend to every part. The soul is in no respect the same it was wont to be, as to the concerns of religion. It has new views, new sensations, new joys, new sorrows, new inclinations and aversions, new hopes and fears: in short, as the apostle tells us, all things are become new, 2 Cor. 5:17, and according to his inspired prayer, the whole man, soul, body, and spirit, is sanctified. 1 Thess. 5:23.

By way of confirmation, let me add a few characters of a regenerate man, which are expressly scriptural. Every one that loveth is born of God, saith St. John, 1 John 4:7. That is, every new-born soul is possessed with a generous love to all mankind, which prompts it to observe the whole law in its conduct towards them, (for love is the fulfilling of the whole law,) and restrains it from doing them any injury: (for love worketh no evil to his neighbor,) Rom. 13:10. This love extends not only to friends, but also to

strangers, and even to enemies. It is a friendship to human nature in general; it spreads over the whole earth, and embraces the whole race of man. But as the righteous are the more excellent ones of the earth, it terminates upon them in a peculiar degree: and the reason is obvious; they are, in a peculiar sense, the saints' brethren, the children of the same heavenly Father; and they bear a resemblance to him: and if he loves the Original, he must also love the copy. Thus, says St. John, "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." 1 John 5:1.

Another character of regeneration the same apostle gives you, 1 John 5:4,5, and that is, victory over the world by faith. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." That is, whatever temptations may arise from the riches, honors, or pleasures of the world, or from the society of mankind, the man that is born of God has such believing views of eternal things, as constrains him to conflict with them, and overcome them. He has not such a mean, dastardly soul, as to yield to opposition. He is enabled by divine grace, to brave dangers, and encounter difficulties in so good a cause: he dares to be wise and happy, though all the world should turn against him. Oh what a change is this from his former temper!

Another distinguishing characteristic of the new birth, is, universal holiness of practice, or a conscientious observance of every known duty, and an honest, zealous resistance of every known sin. There is no known duty, however unfashionable, disagreeable, or dangerous, but what the true convert honestly endeavors to perform; and there is no known sin, however customary, pleasing, or gainful, but what he honestly resists, and from which he labors to abstain. This necessarily follows from what has been said; for when the principles of action are changed within, the course of

action will be changed too. When the heart is made holy, it will infallibly produce habitual holiness of practice. A good tree must bring forth good fruit. This St. John asserts in the strongest manner, and in various forms. Ye know, says he, that every one that doeth righteousness; that is, that habitually practiceth righteousness, is born of God, 1 John 2:29. We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; that is, he sinneth not habitually, so as he may be denominated a sinner by way of distinction; but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself; that is, keepeth himself from the infection of sin; and that wicked one toucheth him not. 1 John 5:18. Little children, says he, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous—But he that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, i.e., as I explained it before, he does not habitually sin in the general tenor of his practice, so as to make his sin his distinguishing character; for his seed remaineth in him; that is, the principles of grace, implanted in him in regeneration, are immortal, and will never suffer him to give himself up to sin, as formerly; and he cannot sin because he is born of God: his being born of God happily disables him forever from abandoning himself to sin again. In this the children of God are manifest; and the children of the devil: that is, this is the grand distinguishing characteristic existing between them, Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God. 1 John 3:7-10. You see, then, a holy practice is one of the most certain signs of regeneration; and, therefore, in vain do such pretend to it, or boast of high attainments in inward experimental religion, who are not holy in all manner of conversation, and do not live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world.

By this time, I hope, my brethren, you understand what it is to be born again. And now, upon a review of the subject, there are several things of

importance, which I would submit to your consideration.

First, I leave you now to consider, whether baptism be the same thing with regeneration, or the new birth in the Scripture sense. I grant that baptism is a sacramental sign of regeneration, just as the Lord's Supper is a sacramental sign of the body and blood of Christ; and, therefore, baptism may be called regeneration, by the same figure which Christ uses when he says of the bread, This is my body. In this metonymical sense, this method of speaking has been used by many great and good men: and when they call baptism regeneration, they only mean, that it is an outward sign of it, just as the sacramental bread, for the same reason, is called the body of Christ. Were it always used in this sense, it would hardly be worth while to take notice of it as an impropriety; though I must confess, I cannot find the same form of speech indisputably used concerning baptism in the Bible. But when men are taught that the whole of that regeneration, or new birth, which the Scripture requires as absolutely necessary to salvation, means no more than just being baptized; and when they that have been baptized, begin to think that they have no more to do with the new birth, the error is too dangerous to be passed over in silence. I shall just lead you into a track of thought, by which you may easily make yourselves judges in this controversy. If baptism be regeneration in the Scripture sense, then, whatever the Scripture says concerning persons regenerated, born again, or created anew, will also hold true concerning persons baptized. This is so plain a principle, that it is hard to make it plainer; for if baptism be the same with regeneration, the new birth, or the new creation, then the same things may be said of it. Proceeding upon this obvious principle, let us make the trial in a few instances. It may be truly said of him that is born of God, in the Scripture sense, that he does not habitually sin, &c. Now substitute

baptized, instead of born of God, and consider how it will read, “Every one that is baptized sinneth not; but he that is baptized keepeth himself; and the evil one toucheth him not.” Has this the appearance of truth? Do not all of you know so much of the conduct of many who have been baptized, as to see this is most notoriously false? For where can we find more audacious sinners upon earth, than many who have been baptized! Let us make another trial. Whosoever is born of God, in the Scripture sense, overcometh the world. But will it hold true, that whosoever is baptized, overcometh the world? If any man be in Christ, in the Scripture sense, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. But how will it sound if you read, If any man be baptized, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new? Does baptism universally make such a change in the subject, as that it may, with any tolerable propriety, be called a new creation? I might easily make the same experiment with many other passages of Scripture; but these may suffice as a specimen. And now, must it not be as evident as any mathematical demonstration, that regeneration, or the new birth, in the Scripture sense, is something else, something more divine, more intrinsical, more transformative of the whole man, than baptism? That man must labor to be deceived, who can work up himself to believe, after such a representation of the case, that if he has been baptized, he has all that regeneration which is necessary to his admission into the kingdom of heaven. I know no absurdity parallel to it, except the doctrine of transubstantiation, the characteristic absurdity of the church of Rome. Because Christ, in the distribution of the elements in the Eucharist, said of the bread, This is my body, putting the sign for the thing signified, therefore Papists conclude, the bread is substantially the very same with the body of Christ signified by it, though it

still retains all the sensible properties of bread. Some Protestants have fallen into the same error as to the other sacrament of baptism, and that with less plausibility. I can find no Scripture that says of baptism, “This is regeneration;” and yet they insist upon it that it is the very thing; and make the sign and the thing signified one and the same.

Let me borrow a very plain and popular, and yet substantial, argument from Limborch. “The great design of Christ’s coming into the world was, to renew and regenerate men; this is a work worthy of his own immediate hand.” And yet we are told, Jesus baptized not, but his disciples. John 4:2. A plain evidence that he made a distinction between baptism and regeneration, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, “I thank God that I have baptized none of you, but Crispus and Caius.” 1 Cor. 1:14. But if baptism be regeneration, his meaning must be, I thank God that I regenerated none of you.

But is this cause of thanksgiving? Could he give thanks to God that he had not regenerated any of them? Christ, says he, sent me not to baptize. But can we think Christ did not send the chief of the apostles to promote the great work of regeneration? He elsewhere calls himself their spiritual father, for, says he, in Christ Jesus I have begotten you, through the gospel. 1 Cor. 4:15. But if baptism be the new birth, he could not have been their father, or begotten them, unless he had baptized them. From which it is evident that St. Paul made a great difference between baptism and regeneration.

Therefore, let no man deceive you with vain words. Baptism is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, which you should think highly of; but do not put it out of its place, by substituting it for quite another thing. Believe me, this is not that kind of regeneration which you must be the subjects of, if you would enter into the kingdom of God.



Another thing which I would now leave to your consideration is, whether regeneration, or the new birth, in the sense I have explained it, be not a rational, noble thing? And whether so great a change in a man's temper and conduct may not emphatically be called a new birth? When a man is born again, the ruins of his nature are repaired, and every noble and divine grace and virtue are implanted in his heart. His heart is made capable of generous sensations; his understanding has suitable views of the most interesting and sublime objects; and his temper and behavior are rightly formed towards God and man. In short, the mean, depraved, earth-born creature, is made an infant-angel; nay, St. Peter tells you, he is made partaker of the divine nature. 2 Pet. 1:4. What a glorious and surprising change is this! Should you see a clod of earth rising from under your feet, and brightening into a sun, it would not be so glorious a transformation.

This change gives a man the very temper of heaven, and prepares him for the enjoyments and employments of that sacred region.

Therefore, marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again. Do not gaze and wonder at me, as if I told you some strange, new, absurd thing, when I tell you, you must be regenerated in the manner I have explained, if ever you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Con" suit your own reason and experience, and they will tell you, that as heaven is the region of perfect holiness, and as you are indisputably corrupted, depraved creatures, you must be so changed, as to be made holy; or, in other words, you must be born again, before you can enjoy the happiness of that holy place; or consult the Bible, which you must own to be true, or own yourselves to be the most gross hypocrites in professing the Christian religion; consult your Bible, I say, and you will find the absolute necessity of being born again asserted in the strongest terms. Need I remind you of the solemn

asseveration of Christ in my context, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven!” The same blessed lips have assured us, that, “Except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into his kingdom.” Matt, 18:2. St. Paul speaks in the same strain: If any man be in Christ, as we all must be before we can be saved by him, he is a new creature, &c. We are his workmanship, says he, created in Christ Jesus to good works. Eph. 2:10. “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” All external forms of religion, whether Jewish or Christian, are of no avail, without this new creation. Gal. 6:15. This is also more than intimated in that comprehensive promise of the Old Testament. Ezek. 36:25,26. “A new heart will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you.” &c. And are not these repeated declarations sufficient to convince you of the necessity of this great change? Will you any more marvel, when you are told, you must be born again? No; rather marvel to hear the contrary: it may make you wonder indeed, to be told, that an unholy sinner, without any change, is fit for the presence of a holy God, fit to relish the holy enjoyments of heaven: and capable of being happy in what is directly contrary to his nature. This would be strange, absurd doctrine indeed! And wherever you hear it, you may justly wonder at it, and despise such nonsense.

Now if this be true, that “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” then it will follow, that just as many persons in this assembly as have been born again, just so many are in a state of favor with God, and prepared for the happiness of heaven. And, on the other hand, just as many as are unregenerate, just so many lie dead in sin, under the wrath of God, and liable to everlasting misery. Let each of you particularly admit

this conviction: “If I am not born again, I have not the least ground to hope for happiness in my present state.”

Upon this follows another inquiry, of the utmost importance; and that is, Whether you have ever experienced the blessed change of the new birth? Have your views, your dispositions, and your conduct been changed in the manner described? And can you lay claim to those distinguishing characters of a regenerate soul, which have been mentioned? Pause, and think seriously; recollect your past experiences; look into your own hearts; observe the tenor of your practice; and from the whole, endeavor to gather an honest answer to this grand question, “Have I ever been born again?”

If you can answer this in your favor, St. Peter will tell you the happy consequence; and I shall only desire you to read those most comfortable verses, 1 Pet. 1:3-6: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

But if, on the other hand, you find you have never been born again, what is to be done? Must you lie still in that condition? Or should you try to get out of it? I am sure my design in endeavoring to let you see your condition, is, that you may escape out of it and be happy; and if you are so kind to yourselves as to concur with me in this design, I hope, through divine grace, we shall succeed. This introduces the next inquiry, namely,

II. Who is the author of this divine change, called the new birth?

The change is so great, so noble, and divine, that from thence alone we may infer it can be produced only by divine power. And the nature of man, in its present state, is so corrupt and weak, that it is neither inclined nor able to produce it. It is also uniformly ascribed to God in the sacred writings. The regenerate soul is repeatedly said to be born of God; “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:13. All things are become new, says St. Paul, and all things (that is, all these new things) are of God. 2 Cor. 5:17,18. Every good gift, and every perfect gift, says St. James, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights—of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. James 1:17,18. The Spirit is repeatedly mentioned as the author of the new birth, in the chapter where my text lies. This may suffice for the truth of so plain a point.

Here then, sinners, you see to whom you must look for this blessing. You can no more regenerate yourselves than you could beget yourselves at first. And this you must be deeply sensible of. But he that made you at first is able to new-make you, and to repair his own workmanship, which you have demolished. And it is he who has actually changed many a heart in our guilty world. Here the next inquiry comes in very seasonably, namely,

### III. In what way does this divine agent produce this change?

He is pleased to use such a variety, as to circumstances, that I cannot take time to describe them. But as to the substance of the work, which is the same in all adults, he generally carries it on in the following manner. The first step is, to convince the sinner of his need of this change, by discovering to him his guilt and danger, and particularly the universal corruption of his nature. He is roused out of a state of stupid security by an affecting view of the holiness of God, of the purity of his law, of the terror

of its penalty, of the great evil of sin, and of his own exposedness to the divine displeasure upon the account of it. Upon this he becomes sad and serious, uneasy in his mind, and anxious about his condition. He endeavors to reform his life; he prays, and uses the other means of grace with earnestness unknown before. And when he has gone on in this course for some time, he begins perhaps to flatter himself, that now he is in a safe condition. But alas! He does not yet know the worst of himself.

Therefore the Holy Spirit opens his eyes to see the inward universal corruption of his whole soul, and that a mere outward reformation is far from being a sufficient cure of a disease so inveterate. Hereupon the awakened sinner betakes himself to the use of the means of grace with redoubled vigor and earnestness, and strives to change the principles of action within. But alas! He finds his heart is a stubborn thing, and altogether unmanageable to him; and after repeated strivings to no purpose, he is effectually convinced of his own inability, and the absolute necessity of the exertion of divine power to make him truly good. Therefore he lies at the throne of grace, as a poor, anxious, helpless sinner, entirely at mercy, and unable to relieve himself. It would take up more time than I can allow, to describe the various exercises, the anxious fears, and eager panting's, the strong cries and tears of a soul in this condition. What I have hinted may put such of you in mind of them, as have never been the subjects of them. While the sinner lies in this desponding situation, it pleases God to pity him. Now the important hour is come, when the old man must be crucified; when the divine and immortal principles must be implanted in a heart full of sin; and when the dead sinner must begin to live a holy and divine life. The great God instantaneously changes the whole soul, and gives it a new, a heavenly turn. In short, now is wrought that important change, which I have

already described, which is called the new birth, and denominates the man a new creature.

Here again you may furnish yourselves with materials for self-examination. If you have been born again, you have thus felt the pangs of a new birth, and seen your guilty, sinful, and dangerous condition in a true light. And can you put your hand upon your heart, and say, “Here is the heart that has been the subject of this operation?”

Hence also may be gathered some proper directions for such as are in a state of nature how to attain the new birth.

Endeavour to be thoroughly acquainted with the corruption of your nature: it is from this that the necessity of a new birth proceeds.

Be fully convinced of the indispensable necessity of this change to your salvation.

Break off from and forsake whatever tends to obstruct the new birth; as excessive worldly cares, bad company, and in short, all sin.

Seriously use all the means of grace; as, earnest prayer, attentive hearing of the word, &c.

Persevere in so doing, till your endeavors are crowned with success. And particularly, do not grow impatient of those anxieties and fears that will at first attend your pursuit.

These short hints may suffice by way of direction, if you are sincerely desirous of being directed. And what do you determine to do? Will you not resolve to seek after this important change, upon which your eternal all depends? Oh! Let us part to-day fully determined upon this, that we will implore the power and mercy of God to create in us clean hearts, and renew within us right spirits.

# *SERM. XLIX. THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOULS OF MEN CONSIDERED.*

**G**al. 2:20.— *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

The principal design of St. Paul in this epistle, is to assert his divine mission, in opposition to the insinuations of the Judaizing seducers that had intruded into the Galatian church; and to prove the justification of a sinner to be only through the merit of Christ's righteousness, and the instrumentality of faith. To confirm the latter he argues, Gal. 2:15,16, from the case of the apostles and Jewish Christians in general: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." And Gal. 2:19, he explicitly declares his own case in particular, as agreeing with theirs. "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;" that is, by the knowledge of the perfection of the law, as to its extent and spirituality; I am

utterly unhinged and thrown off from all dependence on the works of the law for justification, and from expecting strength to yield obedience to be conveyed, according to the covenant of works;—and God’s design in bringing me off from this dependence, and mine in relinquishing it, is not that I may turn libertine, and cast off all obligations to obedience, but that I may, by strength derived from Christ, devote myself wholly to him, and make my life a series of obedience to his will.

He goes on relating his own case in the text; in which you may observe these truths:

First, “That believers are endowed with spiritual activity; or, that they are enabled to serve God, and perform good works.” This is intimated by two expressions, I am crucified, and I live; which, though they seem contradictory, do really mean the same thing. I am crucified, signifies the mortification of indwelling sin, the subduction and extirpation of corrupt principles and inclinations; and he calls the mortification of these the crucifixion of himself, (I am crucified} because of their intimate inhesion with his very nature; they were a sort of self to him. We have a like expression used, and explained by himself in Rom. 6:6. “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Now the mortification of sin is a part of the service of God, at least a necessary prerequisite. So the apostle reasons in Rom. 6:2,6, 11, “How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.” The other expression, I live, signifies spiritual activity; a vigorous, persevering serving of God; a living unto God, (as it is explained ver. 19, and Rom. 6:11.) Life, as ascribed to a rational being, imports, not only a continuance in existence, in which sense inanimate things may be said to live, but



especially a power of rational operation frequently exercised;—and when attributed to a morally upright being, as such, it imports more than some kind of power of operation, namely a vital principle of spiritual and holy operation, and the frequent, persevering exercise of it. Such a principle or power is very significantly called life, to denote its intimacy in the soul, its vivacity, and permanency.

Secondly, We may observe, that “the vital principle of holiness in believers, whereby they are enabled to serve God, is communicated to them through Christ only as a Mediator.” This is intimated by that expression, I am crucified with Christ; that is, sin is crucified in me, by virtue of the crucifixion of Christ; from the merits of his death my strength to subdue sin results: and the mortification of it is the certain consequent of his sufferings, because thereby divine grace was purchased and insured for his chosen, to be communicated at the time appointed. To the same purpose he speaks in Gal. 6:14. Far be it from me “that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [or by which] the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” This is also asserted in the emphatical epanorthosis, I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: that is, spiritual life is formally in me, but it is not self-originated; it does not result from my natural principles, (which are so essential to me, that I may represent them under the personal pronoun I) but was first implanted, and is still supported and cherished by the power and grace of God through Christ; and it is in every respect so dependent upon him, and his influence is so intimately diffused through my soul, that I may say, Christ liveth in me. A like expression is used in Col. 3:3,4. Christ is our life.

Thirdly, We may take notice, “that believers receive supplies from Christ for the maintenance and nourishment of their spiritual life.” The life which I

now live, (or, as it might be rendered more significantly, what I now live) in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.

So that the substance of the text is exhausted in these three doctrines, “That all true believers are endowed with an ability to serve God: That this ability was first communicated, and is still maintained through Christ only: and, That it is by faith they derive supplies from him, for the support and nourishment thereof.”

You may observe I here reason from a particular to a universal, and infer, that because these doctrines are true with respect to St. Paul, therefore they are true with respect to believers in general; and the scope of the text warrants this method of reasoning in this instance, which is confessedly fallacious in other cases; for St. Paul here introduces his own case with a design to represent and illustrate the case of believers in common; which he could not reasonably have done, had not theirs been substantially the same with his in these respects. Besides, he declares these things of himself, not upon the account of any circumstances peculiar to himself, which might appropriate them to him; and therefore, though so eminent a saint might have peculiar degrees of them, yet as to their reality and kind, they equally belong to all true Christians.

Nothing can be more profitable, nothing more necessary, than right notions about spiritual life. It is the main business of those that have it not, to seek it, and of those that have it, to cherish it; but how can they do either, if they know not what it is? Without it our religion is vain; we cannot serve the living God here, nor enjoy him hereafter; we are exposed to the eternal agonies of the second death, and our souls are pining under a spiritual decay, that will at length consume our vitals. How necessary, then, is spiritual life! And the necessity of the thing infers the necessity of the

knowledge of it. The profession of it is the source of all vital religion; it is the health of the spirit; the ornament and perfection of the human nature; the grand prerequisite to everlasting happiness; the dawn of celestial glory; is it not, then, incomparably profitable? And must not the right knowledge of it be so too? Yet some are entirely ignorant of it; others, who say they see, are widely mistaken about its nature, the time and manner of its communication, its subjects, the author and meritorious cause of it, and the way in which it is supported and cherished: and therefore, for the instruction of the ignorant, the rectification of wrong sentiments, and the confirmation of our minds in the truth, it may be expedient briefly to attempt the solution of the following inquiries.

I. Wherein spiritual life consists?

II. When it is communicated?

III. Whether it be instantaneously communicated, or gradually acquired by repeated acts?

IV. Who are the subjects of it? Or, in what extent is it communicated?

V. In what sense is it communicated and supported through Christ?

VI. How faith derives supplies from him for its support and nourishment?

I. "Wherein does spiritual life consist?" This inquiry, though necessary both to inform your minds and to repel the charge of unintelligibleness, so frequently alleged against this doctrine, yet is exceeding difficult, both because of the mysteriousness of the thing in itself, and because of the blindness of the minds of those that are not endowed with it. It is mysterious in itself, as every kind of life is. The effects and many of the properties of animal life are plain, but what animal life is in itself is an inquiry too sublime for the most philosophic and soaring mind. Now spiritual life still approaches nearer to the life of the divine Being, that

boundless ocean of incomprehensible mysteries, and consequently exceeds our capacity more than any other. But besides, such is the blindness of unregenerate souls, that they cannot receive or know the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:14, and therefore, what is knowable by enlightened minds concerning spiritual life, cannot be apprehended with suitable clearness by them. The power of understanding it seems to be the effect of the thing understood, and cannot exist separately from it. So it is in other kinds of life. Nothing but reason can inform what is a rational life. Let the faculties of the most sagacious animal be ever so much polished, it can receive no ideas of it. So “he that believeth, hath the witness in himself,” 1 John 5:10, and none but himself can hear its testimony. But suppose we could form clear ideas, we should still be at a loss for clear expressions. I have a clear idea of many of the appetites, passions, and motions of animal life; but words may fail me to express them intelligibly to another, especially if he has no experience of them himself. It need not, therefore, afford you any surprise, if after all that shall be said to illustrate this point, it still remains obscure. To design any more than to give you some faint glimmerings, some half-formed, inadequate conceptions of it would be a piece of arrogant vanity.

Now spiritual life supposes a living spiritual principle, and it implies a disposition and a power to serve God, or of holy operation.

1. It supposes a living spiritual principle. There can be no life, no vital actions, without a vital principle, from whence they flow; e.g., there can be no animal life, no animal sensations and motions, without a principle of animal life. By a vital principle I mean that from which life and its actions and passions immediately proceed: e.g., in the formation of our souls a principle of reason is concreated with them, which is the source, the

immediate cause of their life and rational operations. I call this a principle, because it is the beginning of life. Now spiritual life must suppose a principle of holiness. A principle of life of any kind will not suffice; it must be particularly and formally a holy principle; for life and all its operations will be of the same kind with the principle from which they proceed. Now a holy principle is something distinct from and superadded to the mere natural principle of reason. By virtue of this a man can think and will; but experience assures us, that thinking and willing, abstractedly considered, or under sundry modifications which they are capable of, are very different from thinking and willing in a holy manner, or with those peculiar modifications which spiritual operations bear. I can will an indifferent or evil object, if it appears to me as good; but my willing that which is morally good as such, is a very different act; and the principle from which the former act with its modification proceeds may not be capable of producing the latter so modified. This may be illustrated by the case of the devils and their associates of the human race. They still retain the principle of reason, and are capable of thinking and willing; otherwise they would be incapable of torment, for without consciousness there could be no sense of misery, and consciousness implies thinking; and without willing there can be no desire of happiness, or abhorrence of penal evil; but yet they are utterly incapable of thinking and willing in a manner morally good, and therefore a principle of holiness must be something distinct from a mere rational principle.

It may be urged, "That all the acts of spiritual life may be resolved into the acts of reason, namely, thinking and willing in a holy manner: and therefore the principle of the former is the same with that of the latter." In answer to this, I grant that the principle of reason, when it implies a power

of putting forth such acts, and about such objects, as holiness includes; when it implies a power of knowing and choosing those things which the divine law requires us to know and choose, that then it is the same with a principle of spiritual life; and this is the case of such reasonable beings as still continue in their original uprightness; but the principle of reason may be so maimed as to lose this power, and yet not lose its nature; that is, it may become incapable of that manner of operation which spiritual life produces, and yet continue a principle of reason still. This is evident from the case of infernal spirits, formerly mentioned. Now the principle of spiritual life supplies this moral defect; it adds to reason a capacity of exercising itself suitably about spiritual things. Such a capacity is a separable adjunct of reason, and by the corruption of our natures it is actually separated from it: and consequently till it be superadded to our rational powers, we are incapable of spiritual operation; I mean such a manner of spiritual operation as is morally good and acceptable to God. Our rational powers indeed can still exercise themselves about divine things, but then it is not in a fit manner: and therefore when a sinner is quickened by efficacious grace, a power of acting in a fit manner with respect to these things is superadded to his rational powers; and before this there is nothing in him out of which such a power may be educed.

To illustrate this matter, let us suppose a man deprived of the faculty of memory, and yet to continue rational, (as he might in a low degree;) according to this supposition, he will be always incapable of an act of memory, however strong his powers of perception, volition, &c., may be, till the power of exercising his reason in that particular way which is called remembering, be conferred upon him. So let a sinner's mere natural powers be ever so much refined and polished, yet, if there be no principle of

spiritual life distinct from them infused, he will be everlastingly incapable of living religion. This gracious principle is called the seed of God, 1 John 3:9, to intimate, that as the seed of vegetables is the first principle of the plant, and of its vegetative life, so is this of spiritual life, and all its vital acts.

2. Spiritual life implies a disposition to a holy operation, an inward propensity, a spontaneous inclination towards holiness, a willing that which is good. Rom. 7:18. Every kind of life has some peculiar innate tendencies, sympathies, and antipathies: so animal life implies a natural inclination to food, to move at proper seasons, &c. There is a savor, a relish for divine things, as essential to spiritual life as our natural gusts and relishes are to natural life. Hence gracious desires are often signified in Scripture under the metaphors of hungering and thirsting; and to this St. Peter expressly alludes: “as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” 1 Pet. 2:2. By virtue of this disposition, believers set their affections on things above, Col. 3:2; they relish, they savor, they affect things above. This is the spiritual-mindedness, the savor of the spirit, which is spiritual life; and stands in opposition to the relish and propensities of mere nature. Rom. 8:6. By virtue of this, the strongest bent of their souls is God-ward; they tend, they gravitate towards him as their proper center. Their desire is unto him, and to the remembrance of his name. Isa. 26:8. Their soul follows after him. Psalm 63:8. By virtue of this they incline to keep all God’s commandments; they have an inward tendency to obedience; they love God’s law; they delight in it after the inner man, Psalm 119:97; Rom. 7:22; and their love and delight will habitually sway them to observe it; religion is their element, their choice. It is not in them forced and unnatural, as all those operations are which do not proceed from an intrinsic

principle; and that reluctance and indisposedness which they sometimes unhappily feel in themselves to religious duties, is preternatural with respect to this spiritual disposition; as the loathing of healthful food is to the human body; it proceeds from a disorder, a weakness in their spiritual life, occasioned by the struggling's and transient prevalency of contrary principles: it is owing to the lusting's of the flesh against the spirit. Again, Their obedience is not servile and mercenary, resulting merely from the apprehension of the misery which will ensue upon disobedience; but it is generous and filial, proceeding from a convictive view of the intrinsic reasonableness, congruity, and amiableness of the duties of holiness; from the pleasure and satisfaction which the performance of them, under this view, naturally produces; (so a man is excited to eat, not merely by his apprehension of the necessity of it for the support of his body, but also by the pleasure he finds in the very action,) and from a sense of the divine authority enjoining those duties. By this the genuine acts of spiritual life are infallibly distinguished from that low and ignoble devotion which flows from custom, education, horrors of conscience, and all the principles of mere nature.

It is true, indeed, some persons by nature, and consequently without this supernatural disposition, may incline to and delight in sundry things, that, as to the matter of them, are religious duties. So some are naturally averse to intemperance; and sobriety is inwrought in their very constitutions. Yet still this gracious disposition is distinguished from such a natural inclination by these two marks: the first implies a distinct reference to, and a sense of the authority of, the divine Lawgiver as enjoining those duties, and prompts a person to observe them formally as duties, as acts of obedience; but the latter prompts to the observance of them, considering them as things



agreeable to the person's natural temper, without any distinct reference to God; and so they are rather acts of self-gratification than of obedience to the divine authority; and the person would incline to them if they were not commanded at all. They are duties materially in themselves, but not formally, as performed by him; a regard to the authority of God, which is the constitutive form of obedience, is left out. A generous temper may incline to give alms; for the Lord's sake is omitted. (2.) Spiritual life disposes to all duties of religion and acts of holiness universally. It delights in holiness as such, and regards the authority of the law for itself; and consequently, whatever has the nature of holiness, whatever has the sanction of divine authority, it cannot but affect and relish, even though it should be very contrary to a man's natural inclinations and temporal advantage. But a natural propensity is always partial and limited, and inclines to some duties only, neglecting others of equal or greater importance, which thwart the man's corrupt propensions. In a word, such a one's religion proceeds from the very same disposition that his sins proceed from, namely, a disposition to please himself. Hence it is always a maimed, imperfect, half-formed thing; it has not that amiable symmetry and uniformity, that congruous proportion and connection of parts, which are the ornament and distinguishing characteristic of that religion which flows from a heart universally disposed to holiness.

3. Spiritual life implies a power of holy operation. A heavenly vigor, a divine activity animates the whole soul. It implies more than an inefficacious disposition, a dull, lazy velleity, productive of nothing but languid wishes. So every kind of life implies a power of operation suitable to its nature. Animal life (e.g.) has not only an innate propensity, but also a natural power to move, to receive and digest food, &c. They that wait on

the Lord shall renew their strength, Isa. 40:31; that is, they have strength given them; renewed and increased by repeated acts, in the progress of sanctification. They are strengthened with might, by the Spirit in the inner man. Eph. 3:16. I do not mean that spiritual life is always sensible and equally vigorous; alas! It is subject to many languishments and indispositions: but I mean there is habitually in a spiritual man a power, an ability for serving God which, when all pre-requisites concur, and hindrances are removed, is capable of putting forth acts of holiness, and which does actually exert itself frequently. So animal life is subject to many disorders, which weaken its powers of operation, but yet still retains those powers; and they are in some measure active, even under the greatest indisposition, at least in resisting the disorder, though perhaps with faint struggles. Again, I do not mean an independent power, which is so self-active as to need no quickening energy from the divine Spirit to bring it into act, but a power capable of acting under the animating influences of grace, which, as to their reality, are common to all believers, though they are communicated in different degrees to different persons, There is no need of the infusion of a new power, which the Spirit might actuate; but they have a power already, which needs nothing but the suitable concurrence of other causes to educe it into act. So the power of reason is not independent, so as to be capable of operation without the concurrence of divine Providence, common to mankind, to quicken it into act; yet it is a power of reason still, because it is capable of rational acts, under common providential influence. But should we suppose a beast the object of that influence, it would still continue incapable of rational acts, till a rational power be implanted in it. The illustration itself directs us to the application of it.

Thus I have briefly shown you wherein spiritual life consists; but I am afraid it may be still wrapped in obscurity from the eyes of some. And indeed it would require longer time, larger extent, and greater abilities to reflect sufficient light on so mysterious a point. Before we lose sight of this head, let us improve it to these purposes:

Let us improve it as a caution against this common mistake, viz., that our mere natural powers, under the common aids of divine grace, polished and refined by the institutions of the gospel, are a sufficient principle of holiness, without the addition of any new principle. You see a principle of spiritual life is supernatural; it is a divine, heaven-born thing; it is the seed of God; a plant planted by our heavenly Father. But, alas I how many content themselves with a self-begotten holiness! They have formed to themselves a system of natural, self-sprung religion, (I mean that it is natural originally and subjectively, though it be pretended to be divine objectively, because its patrons acknowledge objective revelation,) in this they acquiesce as sufficient, as though they knew not that that which is born of the flesh is flesh. The cogitiveness of matter appears to me a notion very like this; for I think it might be demonstrated as clearly, that our mere natural powers, in our present lapsed state, without the infusion of any divine supernatural principle, are incapable of living, evangelical holiness; as it can, that mere matter, without the superaddition of a principle entirely distinct from it, is capable of thinking, however much it be polished, or however differently it be modified.

Let us also improve what has been said, to remove another equally common and pernicious error, namely, That gospel-holiness consists merely in a series of acts materially good. Some imagine that all the actions they do, which are materially lawful, and a part of religion, have just so much of

holiness in them: and as they multiply such actions, their sanctification increases in their imagination. But alas! Do they not know, that a principle, a disposition, a power of holy acting must precede, and be the source of all holy acts? That a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit put within us, before we can walk in God's statutes and keep his judgments, and do them! Ezek. 36:26,27. That we must be created in Jesus Christ unto good works, Eph. 2:10, before we can walk in them! That the love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. 5:5, before we can love him! I do not say that they that are void of spiritual life should not attempt to perform religious duties in the best manner they can, by virtue of their natural powers; for this is undoubtedly their duty, both because their sin is less when only the manner of their actions is sinful, than when the matter and manner too are sinful; and because God, who has a right to appoint what methods he pleases, for the collation of his own favors, has constituted this as the way for them to obtain a spiritual life. But I say religious and moral duties, however frequently and perseveringly performed, are not evangelical holiness, when they are not done from a gracious supernatural principle: they are but spurious fruits growing from the wild root of depraved nature; and we had best not please ourselves with the view of them, as though they were the fruits of holiness, lest we be consumed at last as fruitless and noxious briers and thorns.

Further, Let us improve our account of spiritual life, to inform us of a very considerable difference between a mere moral and spiritual life; or evangelical holiness and morality. Spiritual life is of a divine original; evangelical holiness flows from a supernatural principle; but mere morality is natural; it is but the refinement of our natural principles, under the aids of common grace, in the use of proper means; and consequently it is

obtainable by unregenerate men. Hence the same act may be differently denominated, according to the principles from which it proceeds; that may be a piece of mere morality in one, who acts from natural principles only, which is an act of holiness in another, who acts from a principle of spiritual life. So an alms, when given from a gracious principle, and for Christ's sake, is a gracious act; but when given from a principle of natural generosity only, it deserves no higher name than that of mere morality. A mistake in this is a rock we may tremble to look at, and ought anxiously to avoid; for, alas! How many have been dashed to pieces upon it!

Again, We may improve what has been said, to convince us, that a life of formality, listlessness, and inactivity, is far from being a spiritual life. Where these things are habitual and predominant, they are infallible symptoms of spiritual death. It is true (as has been already observed) believers are subject to many sickly qualms and frequent indispositions; yea, at times, their languishments are such, that the operations of the vital principle within them are hardly discernible to themselves or others; and the vigor of their devotion, in their most sprightly hours, is checked and borne down by the body of death under which they groan. Yet still, there is an inextinguishable spark of life within, which scatters a glimmering light in the thickest darkness, and sometimes shines with illustrious brightness. The pulse of the spirit, though weak and irregular, still beats. There is an active power that reluctates and struggles against the counter-strivings of the flesh: that under the greatest languor, put forth some weak efforts, some faint essays, and under the actuating influence of the divine Spirit, invigorates the soul to mount up with wings like an eagle, to run without wearying, and walk without fainting. And oh! The joy, the pleasure of such heavenly activity! We therefore may write Tekel on the dull, inoperative religion of

many; it serves for no other end, but to prove them dead in trespasses and sins. The design of the whole dispensation of God's grace towards fallen sinners, is their vivification to holiness, that they may bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. 7:4; and sure, where that design is not obtained, there can be no true religion. Let us therefore beware lest we should have a name to live, while we are dead.

# *SERM. I. THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOULS OF MEN CONSIDERED.*

**G**al. 2:20.— *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

We proceed to inquire,

II. When spiritual life is communicated? To this the Scriptures direct us to answer, That it is communicated in that change which is generally called Regeneration, or Effectual Calling. This is more than intimated by the expressions used to signify the first communication of it. When spiritual life is infused, then it is that God is said to beget us again to a lively hope, 1 Pet. 1:3; to beget us of his own will, James 1:18; to quicken us who were dead in sin, Eph. 2:5; to give us a new heart, and put a new spirit within us; to take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh, Ezek. 36:25; and we are said to be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. 2:10; born again, John 3:3; born or begotten of God, John 1:13; 1 John 3:9. Now it is evident that these metaphorical expressions signify what is commonly called regeneration, and that they express the first implantation of spiritual life.

Several of them contain a direct allusion to the first communication of animal and human life, as regeneration or begetting, regeneration or being begotten again, creation, &c. And since these, taken literally, signify the first communication of natural life, they must, when used metaphorically and spiritually, signify the first communication of spiritual life. Life before generation, creation, &c., is an absurdity"; and generation, creation, &c., without the communication of life suitable to the nature of the being generated, created, &c., is also an absurdity. The other expressions, as quickening us while dead in trespasses and sins, giving a new heart, and the like, even literally signify this.

Hence, by way of improvement, we may be instructed to avoid a common mistake; namely, "That a power of living to God is universally conferred upon mankind in creation: and therefore that there is no need of a new supernatural principle to be infused, but only of the concurrence of common providence, and the institutes of the gospel, to polish and refine our natural principles." And some say, "That God in creation infuses spiritual life into all, on account of Christ dying for them; and that if it be given without the merit of the recipient, it may as properly be ascribed to divine grace when it is a natural endowment bestowed in creation, as it would be if it were a supernatural gift communicated by an act distinct from and posterior to that of creation."

In order effectually to subvert this notion, consider,

1. If spiritual life were communicated in creation, there would be no propriety or significancy in the expressions used to denote the communication of it. There would be no need of a new, a second birth, if we were spiritually alive by virtue of our first birth. Were we holy by" virtue of our first creation, what necessity of being created in Christ Jesus, or of



being made new creatures? 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15. There could be no opposition between the old man and the new. Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22,24; Col. 3:9,10. The dispositions concreated with us cannot be called a new man. 2. The implantation of spiritual life is not only posterior to creation, but also to corrupt principles, which are innate. We are first dead in sin before we are quickened, Eph. 2:5; we have a stony heart, which must be taken away before a heart of flesh is given, Ezek. 36:26. Such expressions undoubtedly signify an act posterior to, and consequently distinct from, creation. 3. The implantation of a principle of spiritual life is eminently an act of special grace, which the concreation of our natural endowments is never said to be. The washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is an act of mercy and the effect of the kindness and love of God our Saviour. Tit. 3:5. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved.\*)" Eph. 2:4,5. It is according to God's abundant mercy, that we are begotten again unto a lively hope. 1 Pet. 1:3. But why need I multiply instances? The entire tenor of the gospel directs us to ascribe the regeneration and sanctification of sinners to distinguishing and peculiar grace. But though our natural powers are the free communications of divine goodness, yet we are never said to be "created according to the grace and mercy of God." It is not agreeable to the sacred dialect to call the powers of reason, vision, &c., "the gifts of grace," in the same sense that spiritual life is so called; nay, I cannot find that our natural powers are ascribed to mercy, grace, free grace, at all; and it seems more congruous to ascribe them to other perfections of the Deity, as creative wisdom, power, and goodness. To this I may add, that spiritual life is always represented as communicated "through Christ as Mediator, and for his sake;" but our natural endowments

are not said to be given through him. “The Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” Tit. 3:5,6. “We are sanctified through the offering up of the body of Christ once for all.” Heb. 10:10. “It is in Jesus Christ that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings.” Eph. 1:3. He is made sanctification to us, 1 Cor. 1:30; and of his fulness we all receive. John 1:16. But we are never said to be created for Christ’s sake, or to be made rational creatures on the account of his righteousness. And when we are said to be created by him, it signifies by him as an efficient, not as a meritorious cause.

From all which it appears, that spiritual life in a fallen creature is wholly supernatural: it is of a divine extract, and heaven-born in a peculiar sense. The sons of God are born of God, and not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. If therefore any of us continue in our natural estate, we are dead in sin, however strict formalists or refined moralists we may be. Let us inquire,

II. “Whether spiritual life be instantaneously communicated? Or, whether (as some allege) it be gradually acquired by repeated acts?”

Here let it be observed, that we are not inquiring, how spiritual life is nourished and confirmed? For that is undoubtedly done gradually, by repeated acts, correspondent to the nature of spiritual life, and perfective of it in the progress of sanctification, as the power of reason is improved by a series of suitable exercises; but our inquiry is, how it is first obtained? Whether it be communicated in the instant of regeneration, as the power of understanding is in creation? And to this I answer affirmatively, for the following reasons.

1. “It is a contradiction that it should be originally acquired by acting, or a series of acts; for that supposes that it exists, and does not exist, at the same

time: as it acts, it exists; and as it is acquired by acting, it does not exist.” It will perhaps be objected, “That it may be acquired by the repeated acts of another kind of life, namely, rational; or the exercises of our rational powers about spiritual objects.” But this may be answered from what was observed under the first head, namely, that a principle of spiritual life is something distinct from and superadded to our natural powers. Now the acts of one kind of life, however often repeated, will never acquire a life of a quite different kind: e.g., the longest course, and the most frequent repetition of animal acts, will never acquire a principle of reason. Let a blind man hear ever so well, and ever so frequently, that will not acquire a visive faculty. So let our natural principles be exercised about spiritual objects with ever so much frequency and permanency, that will never acquire spiritual life. They are so depraved, that there remains nothing in them out of which it can be educed, without the communication of something supernatural. Be they ever so strong and active, they can contribute no more to our vivification, than the quick sensation of the auditory nerve can contribute to the acquisition of sight. Principles of action may be confirmed, and rendered more prompt to act, by frequent exercise; but can never be originally obtained that way.

2. The terms whereby the communication of spiritual life is signified, as begetting, creating, quickening, or raising the dead, &c., denote an instantaneous communication.

3. Spiritual life is represented as prior to and the source and principle of all acts of evangelical holiness: and consequently it cannot be gradually acquired by such acts, but must be implanted previously to the putting forth of any such acts; as reason is not acquired by reasoning, but is a pre-requisite and principle of all the acts of reason. We are created in Christ

Jesus, to make us capable of good works. Eph. 2:10. We must have a new heart and a new spirit, and the Spirit of God must be put within us, that we may walk in God's statutes, and keep his judgments and do them. Ezek. 36:26,27. We must be drawn of the Father, must hear and learn of him, before we can come to Christ. John 6:44,45. God gives his people one heart, and one way, that they may fear Him forever. He puts his fear in their hearts, before they cease to depart from Him. Jer. 32:39,40. Now if all acts of holiness be the effects of a vital principle of holiness previously infused, then this principle is not acquired by a course of actions, and consequently it is not gradually acquired, but instantaneously infused; for that which is not acquired by acting, is obtained by immediate communication from another, and therefore it does not take up time to obtain it, as a series of acts does. Again, There must be a first act of holiness; for if there be not a first, there cannot be a second, &c. Now since a principle of spiritual life is in the spring and the beginning of all acts of holiness, it must be, in order of nature, prior to the first act of holiness: and consequently it is not gradually acquired by such acts, but precedes them all, and therefore must be instantaneously infused.

Hence we may see the vanity of that religion which is gained in the same manner that a man learns a trade, or an uncultivated mind becomes knowing and learned, namely, by the repeated exercises of our natural powers in use of proper means, and under the aids of common providence. We have seen that a principle of spiritual life is not a good act, nor a series of good acts, nor anything acquirable by them, but the spring and origin of all good acts. Let us then, my brethren, try whether our religion will stand this test.

Hence also we may learn a considerable difference between what is commonly called morality and gospel-holiness. The one is obtained, as

other acquired habits are, by frequent and continued exercises; the other proceeds from a principle divinely implanted.

IV. Our inquiry is, Who are the subjects of spiritual life? Or in what extent is it communicated?

The answer to this is easy, from what has been already offered: for since it is communicated only in regeneration, then the regenerate only are the subjects of it; and since all men are not regenerate, then all men are not the subjects of it. Again, since it is something distinct from and superadded to our rational powers, then it cannot be proved that all that are endowed with rationality are the subjects of it. Again, since it is communicated by an act distinct from and posterior to creation, there is no reason to conclude that it is co-extended with creation, or with the bounds of humanity. And since all these things are so, we may safely conclude, negatively, that it is not communicated to mankind universally and positively; that it is communicated to all the regenerate, and to them only. Hence result two corollaries.

1. That there is no such thing as universal grace sufficient to qualify all men to serve God acceptably, without the supernatural communication of distinguishing grace; for “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24. Those acts which do not proceed from a principle of spiritual life will no more be accounted by him vital, spiritual acts, than the chattering of a parrot, or the seemingly rational pranks of an ape, will pass with a man of sense for human actions: and without a principle of spiritual life there can be no spiritual acts, as there can be no rational acts without a principle of reason. And since, as has been shown, spiritual life is not universally communicated, then there is no

sufficient grace universally communicated; for the latter necessarily implies the former, and cannot be without it.

2. We may observe further, That the “best actions of the unregenerate are not properly and formally good and acceptable to God.” It is true their performing the duties of religion and virtue in the best manner they are capable of, is less displeasing to God than the willful neglect of them, or the commission of the contrary sins, and therefore they should endeavor to perform them; but yet it cannot be said to be positively pleasing to him. It is not the act materially, or in itself, that is sinful, but formally, and as done by them, e.g., they do not sin as far as they pray, but as far as they pray in a sinful manner, without a gracious principle, without faith, and other requisites to acceptable prayer. “They ask and receive not, because they ask amiss.” James 4:3. “So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God. Rom. 8:8. A tremendous thought to the unregenerate! Their whole life is an entire series of provocation; one continued act of rebellion against the great King of heaven.

V. Our next inquiry is, In what sense is spiritual life communicated and supported through Christ?

To explain and illustrate this point, let these three things be considered.

1. That “by the sin of our first parents and representatives, our principle of spiritual life was forfeited, and the forfeiture is continued, and spiritual death brought on us by our personal sin.”

That Adam was constituted the representative of his posterity, and consequently that his sin is imputed to them, I shall take for granted, not having time to prove it. And if this be granted, then we are destitute of spiritual life; for, that disobedience may be punished, consistently with reason and justice, by the judicial privation of our power to obey, cannot be

denied, if these reasonable postulata be conceded: That it is consistent with the justice and goodness of the Deity to suspend the continuance of the powers of upright moral agency conferred upon his creatures, on the condition of their right improvement of them: That when such powers are abused and misimproved, they may justly be withdrawn: And that, when withdrawn in consequence of their being forfeited by a criminal misimprovement, God is not obliged injustice to restore them. Now these postulata imply no contradiction, and, therefore, may have been matters of fact; and they are implied in the Scripture representation of the circumstance of Adam and his posterity, as related to him; and therefore were matters of fact, and consequently Adam and his posterity, on the account of his sin, actually are, at least justly might be, deprived of spiritual life.

As to our personal sin, it contributes two ways to deprive us of spiritual life, morally and physically; morally, in the same sense that Adam's sin does, as it involves us in guilt, and so infers the judicial privation of the imperfect relics of our Maker's moral image; and physically, as every act, and especially a series of acts, naturally tends to strengthen and encourage the principle from whence they flow; to acquire that facility in acting which is called a habit; and to weaken and extirpate all contrary principles, and so indispose for the exertion of contrary acts.

Hence it follows that in order to the restoration of spiritual life, the moral influence of sin must be removed by making a competent satisfaction to divine justice, to redeem the blessing forfeited; and its physical influence obstructed by purchasing and communicating divine influences, to weaken and extirpate the principles of sin, and that fatal promptitude and facility of acting which is contracted by the frequent exercise of them; and to infuse an

opposite principle of holiness, and mature it into a habit. And this introduces the other two things intended; and therefore,

2. The Lord Jesus, by his sufferings, made a “complete satisfaction to divine justice;” and thereby redeemed the blessing forfeited; and by the merit of his obedience, purchased divine influence for the extirpation of the principles of spiritual death which lurk in our natures, and the implantation of holiness. Hence the regeneration and sanctification, as well as the salvation of his people, are ascribed to his merits and death. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ. Heb. 10:10 And the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot, to God, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Heb. 9:14. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:14. Hence our old man is said to be crucified with him', Rom. 6:6; and we to be quickened together with him. Col. 2:13. Therefore it is only on the account of his righteousness that spiritual life is first given and afterwards maintained and cherished. God acts in the whole affair, as the God of grace, with a distinct reference to the mediation of Christ.

3. Christ, the Purchaser, is appointed also “the Communicator of spiritual life” to his people. “The Son quickeneth whom he will.” John 5:21. “He is exalted as a prince to give repentance to Israel.” Acts 5:31. “He is our life,” Col. 3:3,4, “and the Author and Finisher of our faith;” Heb. 12:2. In a word, “all power in heaven and on earth is given to him,” Matt. 28:18; a sovereign empire of grace founded in his own blood, is devolved upon him, and “He is given to be head over all things to his church.” Eph. 1:22; a head not only of government, but of quickening influence: for “from him all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together,



increaseth with the increase of God.” Col. 2:19. It is therefore by his own hands that all the blessings purchased by his blood are communicated.

Hence for the particular improvement of this head, let believers be taught to look to the Lord Jesus, the great Treasurer of heaven, for the supplies of his grace to support and nourish their spiritual life. Poor things! You are weak in yourselves, but his grace is sufficient for you, and his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. Ye are complete in him, therefore be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Come up out of the wilderness, leaning upon your Beloved. Be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart. Do not indulge a dastardly temper, nor harbor diffident and desponding fears: For “have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” If you “compass yourself with sparks of your own kindling,” your devotions will be cold and languid, and a deadly chillness will benumb your spirit. Place yourselves, therefore, under the vivifying beams “of the Sun of righteousness, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.”

And let “the slain of the daughter of my people” apply to him for quickening grace. Behold, sinners! Your Physician; cry after him; plead for him; plead for life. See the great treasury of vivifying influence; stand at the door knocking, begging, and weeping, and never depart till you can say, “I return a living soul.” Here is a fountain of life opened, and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. But I hasten to inquire,

IV. “How faith derives supplies from Christ for the support and nourishment of spiritual life?”

I shall proceed to the solution of this by the following gradation.

1. The communication of grace from Christ to maintain and nourish spiritual life in his people, is a peculiar and distinguishing communication, It is appropriated to them and not promiscuously dispensed to mankind in general. So animal spirits and nervous juices are communicated from the head to that particular body to which it belongs, and to none other. So a vine conveys nutritive and prolific sap to its own branches, exclusive of all others. It may, indeed, be of service to other things, in other respects, as for shade, the entertainment of the sight, &c., but in this respect it supplies its own branches only. Thus Christ sheds his extensive influence on the whole creation: for by him all things consist; but that particular kind and degree of influence whereby believers are quickened and kept alive, is peculiarly appropriated to them.

2. It is fit and necessary there should be a peculiar union between Christ and his people, as the foundation of this peculiar influence.

Spiritual life, as to its infusion and preservation, proceeds from the Lord-Mediator, both morally and physically. Morally, from the merit of his obedience and sufferings, whereby it was purchased; and physically, from his operation, whereby it is effected. And in both these views, it is congruous and necessary that it should suppose a special union with him.

As it results morally from his high merit, it is fit there should be a special legal union, as the foundation of it. Christ and his people must be actually “one in law,” before they can be actually entitled to or receive and enjoy the blessings purchased by his obedience to the law. So a wife must be made legally one with her husband, by a conjugal union, in order to entitle her to

and give her the possession of his estate. An insolvent debtor must be legally one with his surety, that the surety's discharge of the debt may procure his acquittance.

And as the spiritual life proceeds physically from his agency, it is necessary there should be a previous union, as the reason of the termination of that agency upon the believer rather than upon another. This must be a real, though spiritual union, as the communication of vital influences flowing from it is real though spiritual. Wherever there is a special communication of influence, there is always a special union, as the source and foundation of it. So the peculiar influence of the soul upon the body, of the head upon the members, supposes that they are peculiarly united.

Accordingly the Scriptures represent a peculiar union between Christ and his people, which is not between him and the rest of mankind, to whom he does not communicate spiritual life. I am the vine, says he to his disciples, and ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. John 15:5. To the same purport elsewhere, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. John 17:23. This is intimated when the relation between Christ and his people is represented by a conjugal union. They "are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they should be married to one another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Rom. 7:4. "They are members of this body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Eph. 5:28,32. But it is most plainly asserted in those passages where Jesus is represented as the head, the church collectively as his body, and particular believers as the members of his body. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. Now ye are the body of

Christ, and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:12-27. “God gave him to be head over all things to his church which is his body.” Eph. 1:22,23. See also Eph. 4:15,16; Col. 2:19.

3. It is fit that that grace which has a peculiar concurrence or instrumentality in the uniting of the soul to Christ, and in continuing that union, should also have a “peculiar concurrence or instrumentality in deriving supplies of spiritual strength from him;” for since union is the true special ground of the communication, it is fit that that which is the peculiar instrument of this union, should also be the peculiar instrument of receiving, or vehicle of communicating vital influences. Now,

4. Faith has a “peculiar concurrence” or “instrumentality in the first union” of the soul to Christ, and the consequent continuation of the union. It is the grand ligament whereby they are indissolubly conjoined. It is true, the spiritual man, as well as our animal bodies, consists of several essential parts. Repentance, love, and the whole system of evangelical graces and moral virtues are as necessary, in their proper respective places, as faith.

But then faith has a peculiar aptitude, above all other graces and virtues, for performing the part we now appropriate to it. So heart, lungs, bowels, &c., are essential to the human body, as well as nerves and arteries; but the nerves are the peculiar vehicles to carry the vital spirits from the brain: and the arteries are the only conveyancers of the blood from the heart, through many labyrinths, to the whole body.

Faith, in a special manner, implies those things in its very nature, which reason directs us to look upon as suitable pre-requisites or concomitants of deriving vital influence from Christ. For instance, it is fit that all that receive spiritual life as a blessing of the covenant of grace, should submit to and acquiesce in the terms of the covenant. Now such a submission and

acquiescence is faith. It is fit all that derive strength from Christ should be brought to place a humble, self-diffident dependence upon him for it, conscious of their own weakness. Now faith principally consists in such a dependence, and therefore is so often called a trusting in the Lord.

Moreover, the sacred oracles assert the peculiar instrumentality of faith in this matter. Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith, Eph. 3:17; and it is by “believing in his name that we receive power to become the sons of God.” John 1:12. He himself tells us, “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” John 6:56,57. And by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, is undoubtedly meant faith in him; and consequently it is by faith believers are nourished.

For the particular improvement of this head, I shall make these three remarks:

1. That a saving faith is always operative; and what renders it so is its constant dependence on Christ for quickening grace. It is designed by God, and has a peculiar aptitude in its own nature to derive strength for all acts of holiness from Christ; and he will not deny any of the influences it naturally craves. He is a living head, and will not suffer any of its members to languish under perpetual mortal decays, or drudge away their lives in successful toil, or supinely waste them in sloth and inactivity. He will fail none that trust in him; but their dependence on him will be like the leaning of the ivy on the oak, or the radication of a tree in a fruitful soil, an assured method to obtain support and nourishment. So far is a dependence on him from leading to sloth and libertinism, as some slanderously surmise.

2. We infer, that without faith it is impossible to please God. It has been shown, that without union to Christ we cannot have an actual interest in his

righteousness, or be the special objects of that quickening influence, whereby the spiritual life and activity of his people are maintained; and without these, our persons or performances cannot be accepted, unless our own righteousness be sufficient, without an actual interest in his, to procure the pardon of sin, and reinstate us in the divine favor: and unless human nature, laboring under the maladies of its present degeneracy, be capable, without the special aids of divine grace, to yield suitable obedience to the law: neither of which can be asserted, without virtually renouncing the whole gospel. And we have seen, that faith has so important a place in the union of the soul with Christ, and, consequently, in entitling us to his righteousness, and deriving vital influence from him, that without it we cannot be at all united to him, or share in the happy consequences of this union, no more than there can be a circulation of the blood without veins and arteries.

3. We observe that gospel holiness maybe distinguished from all counterfeits, and particularly from what some dignify with the name of morality, by this criterion, that it pre-supposes a special union with Christ, and is cherished in the heart, and exercised in practice, by virtue of the quickening influences flowing from him, as the head of his church, and received by faith; whereas mere morality does not necessarily suppose such a union, but may result from our natural powers, under the common influences of divine Providence.

I shall conclude with a short general improvement of the whole subject, in the following inferences:

1. That the reason why religion is so burdensome to many is because they are “destitute of a principle of spiritual life,” and the “quickenings of divine grace.” Constrained by self-love, they drudge

and toil in religious duties, and cry, “What a weariness is it!” Or impatient of so disagreeable a burden, they neglect them entirely. Religion is not natural to them, for want of a new nature. But to you that believe, “Christ is precious; all his ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.”

2. Let us examine ourselves, whether the evidences of spiritual life, which may be collected from what has been said, give us reason to conclude that we are possessed of it. Let us cast the discourse into a form of interrogation, and propose the following inquiries to our consciences:

Do we feel, or have we felt, a supernatural principle working within? Is our religion heaven-born? Or is it natural and self-sprung? Is the habitual bent of our wills God-ward? Do our hearts propend towards him as their ultimate scope? Do we “delight in his law after the inner man, and will that which is good, even when we cannot do it?” Do we perceive ourselves at times “strengthened with might in the inner man?” And that we can “do all things through Christ strengthening us?” Have we ever experienced the important change of regeneration? Are “old things passed away, and all things become new? Have we put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?”

Is our religion more than a mere acquired habit, originally obtained by our own industry only, and the exercise of our natural powers, excited and assisted by education, custom, the means of grace, &c.? Was it begun in the instantaneous infusion of a gracious principle, immediately by the Holy Spirit?

Do we derive our strength for obedience from Christ by faith? Is he our life? Are we generally crying, “Lord, we have no strength; but our eyes are

unto thee?” Can we say with the apostle, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and what I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God?”

My dear brethren, let us search ourselves with these and the like inquiries; for many are destructively deceived in this matter. Living religion is wrapped in darkness from the eyes of most; they either place it in that in which it does not consist at all, or take the circumstances and appendages for the substance of it. Great is the mystery of godliness, not only objectively as revealed in the Scriptures, but also subjectively, as wrought in the heart of a believer. It ought, therefore, to engage our most serious and intense thoughts.

3. Let those who are made spiritually alive, “acknowledge and admire the distinguishing grace of God, and act as it becomes their character.”

You have seen that spiritual life is not promiscuously dispensed to mankind in general, but only to the regenerate, who are comparatively few. And can you restrain your wonder, that you should be the chosen objects of sovereign grace? Or avoid breaking forth into ecstatic praises at so surprising a dispensation?

Moreover, the design of your vivification, and the natural tendency of the principle of spiritual life is, that you may live to God; and therefore you are peculiarly obliged to make your whole life a series of obedience to him. Indulge the propensions and tendencies of the new nature; obey and cherish all the impulses and motions of the divine principle within you. To offer violence to the new man, to cramp and fetter its powers, to resist its motions, and suffocate its heavenly aspirations, is the most horrid crime. It is to attempt to murder the child of grace in embryo; and sure, this is the worst of murder. “Reckon ye yourselves, then, to be dead indeed unto sin,



but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” And “if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections upon (savor and relish,) things above, not things on earth. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

4. I request and importune those that are dead in sin, to “use all proper means for the obtaining of quickening grace.” The exhortation implies no contradiction or impossibility; for though they are spiritually dead, yet their natural principle of reason is still alive, and capable of exercising itself about spiritual objects; and God has enjoined them to make the best use they can of it, as the only way to obtain a better principle. God deals with us according to our nature and circumstances. We are corrupted creatures, and therefore he exerts his exceeding great and mighty power to work principles of holiness in us: but still we are rational creatures, and therefore he uses the powers of moral suasion with us, and justly requires us to exert our rational faculties in all the institutions of the gospel.

Be persuaded then, sinner, no longer to lie still in security; but, “arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not. Lazarus! Come forth. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light.” Linger not, lest eternal death overtake thee. Methinks I see him just at thy heels, for “thy damnation now of a long time slumbereth not.” Arise, come forth at the call of the gospel; otherwise, how wilt thou stand the shocking terror of that final alarm, “Awake, ye dead, and

come to judgment?” But I must conclude with my hearty wish, “That the hour may come,” and oh! That this may be the hour, “in which the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.” Which gracious prediction may the God of Grace accomplish upon us all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

# *SERM. LI. THE WAYS OF SIN HARD AND DIFFICULT.*

**A**cts 9:5.— *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

You often hear of the narrow and rugged road of religion, which leadeth unto life; and some of you, I am afraid, have not courage enough to venture upon it. You rather choose the smooth, broad, down-hill road to vice and pleasure, though it leads down to the chambers of death. It must be owned, that a religious life is a course of difficulties, a hard struggle, a constant conflict; and it is fit you should be honestly informed of it: but then it is fit you should also know, that the difficulties arise not from the nature of religion, but from the corruption and depravity of the nature of man in its present degenerate state. A course of religion is disagreeable, is hard, is difficult to mankind; just as a course of action is difficult to the sick, though it is easy and affords pleasure to those that are well. There are difficulties in the way of sin, as well as in that of holiness, though the depravity of mankind renders them insensible of it. This is the view of the case I would now lay before you. There is a sense, in which it is true, that it is a hard thing to be a sinner, as well as to be a saint: there are huge

difficulties in the way to hell, as well as in the way to heaven. And if you are insensible of them, it is owing, as I just observed, to the corruption of your nature, and not to the easiness of the thing in itself. It may be easy and pleasing to you to sin, just as it is easy to a dead body to rot, or pleasing to a leper to rub his sores. But to a reasonable creature, in a state of purity, with all his powers uncorrupted, it would indeed be an unpleasing, a hard, a difficult thing, to take that course which is so easy and so delightful to you: as it is hard and painful for a living man to suffer the mortification of his limbs, or for a healthy man to make himself sore. If it be hard, in one sense, to live a life of holiness, it is certainly hard, in another sense, to live a life of sin; namely, to run against conscience, against reason, against honor, against interest, against all the strong and endearing obligations you are under to God, to mankind, and to yourselves: or, in the words of my text, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

This is a proverb, in use among various nations, which has received a sanction from heaven in this text. It is used by Pindar, Euripides, and Aeschylus, among the Greeks, and by Terence among the Latins: and from the sense in which they use it, we are helped to understand it. “To kick against the pricks,” is an allusion to a lazy or unruly plough-horse, or ox, that when pricked with a goad, (an instrument used in ploughing, in sundry places, instead of a whip,) refuses to go on, and spurns and kicks against the goad, and so wounds himself, and not the driver. In such circumstances, it is much harder to kick against the goads, and resist, than to go on: if he goes on, he need not fear the goad; but his resistance only hurts himself. It is to this that the phrase alludes; and it signifies a resistance injurious to the person that makes it, when it would be both easy and advantageous to obey.

Hence we may learn the precise sense in which it is used by the mouth of Christ, in this pungent address to Saul the persecutor, whom we now know under the higher name of Paul the apostle.

Saul, animated with a furious, misguided, though honest zeal, against the disciples of Jesus, was now on his way to Damascus in pursuit of them; and had a commission from the highest court of the Jews to apprehend them: a commission which he was impatient to execute. This, in human view, was a very unpromising hour for his conversion; now it appears more likely that vengeance will arrest him as a criminal, than that grace will prevent him as a vessel of mercy. But oh! What agreeable exploits of grace has Jesus performed! At the first introduction of his religion, it was fit he should single out some great sinner, and make him a monument of his mercy, for the encouragement of future ages. Therefore he surprises his fierce persecutor in his daring career, darts the splendors of his glory around him, and pierces him to the heart with this irresistible expostulation, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul, in a trembling consternation, replies, "Who art thou, Lord?" He thought he was only bringing to justice a parcel of contemptible, blasphemous sectaries, unworthy of toleration; and little did he think that his persecuting zeal reached so high: little did he expect to hear one crying from the throne of heaven, "Why persecutest thou me?" But Jesus feels and resents the injuries done to his people, as done to himself. The head sympathizes with its members; therefore he answers, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." And then follows my text, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." q.d. "Since it is Jesus whom thou persecutest, the injury done to me will only rebound upon thyself; I am infinitely advanced beyond the reach of thy rage; and even my people, who now seem in thy power, can suffer no real or lasting injury from it in the issue; for under my

management, all things shall work for their good; but thy persecuting fury shall prove ruinous to thyself, as the wild ox that spurns and kicks against the goad, hurts himself and not the driver.” Thus, as I told you, this proverb signifies a resistance injurious to the person resisting, and harmless to him against whom it is made. And is not this hard? Is it not an arduous, preposterous exploit, to break through the strong restraints of the innate principle of self-preservation, and ruin one’s self by a blow intended against another, beyond the reach of injury? This, one would think, is a piece of folly and cruelty, of which a being that has the least remains of reason or self-love, would be incapable.

This proverb may signify more: q.d., I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; Jesus, the Lord of glory: Jesus, the Savior of sinners: Jesus, who has died for such sinners as thee; Jesus, who is all love and mercy, excellency and glory; Jesus, who has given thee such sufficient evidence of his divine mission, and the truth of his religion; and canst thou persecute Jesus? Oh! Is this an easy thing to one that has the least reason or gratitude? Art thou able to break through such strong and endearing obligations? Is it not hard for thee to spurn against one so great, so glorious, so gracious and condescending? Must not this be a horrid exploit of wickedness beyond thy power?

That I may the more fully illustrate the striking thought suggested by my text, I shall point out to you some seemingly insuperable obstacles in the way to hell, or some dire exploits, which, one would think, would be too hard for you to perform, which yet you must perform, if you persist in a course of sin.

1. Is it not a hard thing to be an unbeliever, or a deist, in our age and country, while the light of the gospel shines around us with full blaze of

evidence?

Before a man can work up himself to the disbelief of a religion attended with such undeniable evidence, and inspiring such divine dispositions and exalted hopes, what absurdities must he embrace! What strong convictions must he resist! What dark suspicions, what boding fears and misgivings, what shocking peradventures and tremendous doubts must he struggle with! What glorious hopes must he resign! What gloomy and shocking prospects must he reconcile himself to! What violence must be offered to conscience! What care must be used to shut up all the avenues of serious thought, and harden the heart against the terrors of death and the supreme tribunal! How painful a piece of preposterous self-denial to reject the balm the gospel provides to heal a broken heart and a bleeding conscience, and the various helps and advantages it furnishes us with to obtain divine favor and everlasting happiness! How hard to work up the mind to believe that Jesus, who spoke, and acted, and suffered, and did everything, like an incarnate God, was an impostor, or at best a moral philosopher! Or that the religion of the Bible, that contains the most sublime and God-like truths, and the most pure and perfect precepts of piety and morality, is the contrivance of artful and wicked men, or evil spirits! These, brethren, are no easy things. There are many sceptics and smatterers in infidelity, but few, very few, are able to make thorough work of it, or commence staunch unbelievers. The attempt itself is a desperate shift. A man must have reduced himself to a very sad case indeed, before he can have any temptation to set about it. He has, by his willful wickedness, set Christianity against him, before he can have any temptation to set himself against Christianity: and when he proclaims war against it, he finds it hard, yea, impossible, to make good his cause. He may indeed put on the airs of defiance and triumph, and affect to laugh at his

enemy, and at times may be half persuaded he has really got the victory. But such men find the arms of their own reason often against them, and their own conscience forms violent insurrections in favor of religion, which they cannot entirely suppress; so that they are like their father, whatever they pretend, they believe and tremble too. Alas I that there should be so many unhappy companions in this infernal cause, in our country and nation. They find it hard, even now, to kick against the goads: and oh! How much harder they will find it in the issue! Their resistance will prove ruinous to themselves; but neither they nor the gates of hell shall prevail against the cause they oppose. Christianity will live when they are dead and damned, according to its sentence. It is a long-tried bulwark, that has withstood all the assaults of earth and hell for near six thousand years, and has still proved impregnable. Infidels may hurt themselves by opposing it; as an unruly stupid ox, their proper emblem, may hurt himself, but not the goads, by kicking against them.

2. Is it not hard for men to profess themselves believers, and assent to the truth of Christianity, and yet live as if they were infidels?

A professed speculative atheist, or infidel, is a monster that we do not often meet with: but the more absurd and unaccountable phenomenon of a practical atheist; one who is orthodox in principle, but an infidel in practice, we may find wherever we turn: and it would be strange if none such have mingled in this assembly to-day. To such I would particularly address myself.

If you believe Christianity, or even the religion of nature, you believe that there is a God of infinite excellency; the Maker, Preserver, Benefactor, and Ruler of the world, and of you in particular; and consequently, that you are under the strongest and most endearing obligations to love him, and make it



your great study and endeavor to obey his will in all instances. Now is it not strange, that while you believe this, you are able to live as you do? How can you live so thoughtless of this great and glorious God, who bears such august and endearing relations to you? How can you withhold your love from him, and ungratefully refuse obedience? Is not this a hard thing to you? Does it not cost you some labor to reconcile your consciences to it? If this be easy to you, what champions in wickedness are you! How mighty to do evil! This would not be easy to the mightiest archangel: no, it is a dire achievement he would tremble to think of. And if it be easy to you, it is, as I observed before, in the same sense that it is easy to a dead body to rot. Your strength to do evil is your real weakness, or which is the same, the strength of your disease.

Again, If you believe the Christian religion, you believe the glorious doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ; you believe that he, the Father's great co-equal Son, assumed our nature, passed through, the various hardships of life, and died upon a cross for you; and all this out of pure, unmerited love. And is it no difficulty to neglect him, to dishonor him, to slight his love, and disobey his commands? Does this monstrous wickedness never put you to a stand? Degenerate and corrupt as you are, have you not such remains of generous principles within you, as that you cannot, without great violence to your own hearts, reject such a Savior? Does not at least a spark of gratitude sometimes kindle in your hearts, which you find it hard to quench entirely? Does not conscience often take up arms in the cause of its Lord, and do you not find it hard to quell the insurrection? Alas! If you find little or no difficulty in treating the blessed Jesus with neglect, it shows that you are mighty giants in iniquity, and sin with the strength of a devil.

Again: If you believe the Christian religion, you must believe that regeneration, or a thorough change of heart and life, and universal holiness, are essentially necessary to constitute you a real Christian, and prepare you for everlasting happiness. And while you have this conviction, is it not a hard thing for you to be only Christians in name, or self-condemned hypocrites, or to rest contented in any attainments short of real religion? Is it an easy thing to you to keep your eyes always shut against the light, which would show you to yourselves in your true colors? To keep such a close guard, as never to let the mortifying secret pass, that you are indeed but a hypocrite, and to harden yourselves against the portion of hypocrites, which will ere long be distributed to you?

Finally, if you believe Christianity, or even natural religion, you believe a future state of rewards and punishments; rewards and punishments the highest that human nature is capable of. And is it not a hard thing to make light of immortal happiness, or everlasting misery? Since you love yourselves, and have a strong innate desire of pleasure and horror of pain, how can you reconcile yourselves to the thoughts of giving up your portion in heaven, and being ingulfed forever in the infernal pit? Or how can you support your hope of enjoying the one, and escaping the other, while you have no sufficient evidence? Can you venture so important an interest upon an uncertainty, or dare to take your chance, without caring what might be the issue? Are you capable of such dreadful fool-hardiness? Do you not often shrink back aghast from the prospect? Does not the happiness of heaven sometimes so strongly attract you, that you find it hard to resist? And do not the terrors of hell start up before you in the way of sin, and are you not brought to a stand, and ready to turn back? The pit of hell, like a raging volcano, thunders at a distance, that you may not fall thereinto by

surprise. You may perceive its flames, and smoke, and roaring's, in the threatening's of God's law, while you are yet at a distance from it. And is it easy for you to push on your way, when thus warned? Oh! One would think, it would be much more easy and delightful to a creature endowed with reason and self-love, to abandon this dangerous road, and choose the safe and pleasant way of life.

I might multiply instances under this head; but these must suffice at present. And I proceed to ask,

3. Is it not hard for a man to live in a constant conflict with himself? I mean with his conscience.

This obstacle in the way to hell has appeared in all the former particulars: but it is so great, and seemingly insuperable, that it deserves to be pointed out by itself. When the sinner would continue his career to hell, conscience, like the cherubim at the gates of paradise, or the angel in Balaam's road, meets him with his flaming sword, and turns every way, to guard the dreadful entrance into the chambers of death.

When a man goes on in the thoughtless neglect of God, and the concerns of eternity, or indulges himself in vice and irreligion, conscience whispers, "What will be the end of this course? Thou shalt yet suffer for this. Is it fit thou shouldst thus treat the blessed God, and the Savior Jesus Christ? Is it wise to neglect the great work of salvation, and run the risk of eternal ruin?" I may appeal to sinners themselves, whether they do not often hear such remonstrances as these from within? Indeed, in the hurry and bustle of business and company, and the headlong career of pleasure and amusement, the voice of conscience is not heard. But you cannot always avoid retirement; sometimes you must be by yourselves, and then you find it hard to close up and guard all the avenues of serious thought. Then conscience

insists upon a fair hearing, and enters many a solemn protestation against your conduct, warns you of the consequence, and urges you to take another course. Whatever airs of impious bravery you put on in public, and however boldly you bid defiance to these things, yet, in such pensive hours, do you not find that you are cowards at heart? Is not conscience like to get the victory? Are you not obliged to break out into the world, and rally all its forces to your assistance, that you may suppress your conscience? Now, how hard a life is this! The life of the sinner is a warfare, as well as that of the Christian. Conscience is his enemy, always disturbing him; that is, he himself is an enemy to himself, while he continues an enemy to God. Some, indeed, by repeated violences, stun their conscience, and it seems to lie still, like a conquered enemy. But this is a conquest fatal to the conquerors. Oh! Would it not be much easier to let conscience have fair play, to pursue your own happiness, as it urges you, and leave the smooth, down-hill road to ruin, from which it would restrain you? Conscience urges you to your duty and interest with many sharp goads, and will you still kick against them? Oh! Do you not find this hard? I am sure it would be very hard, it would be impossible to a creature under the right conduct of reason and self-love. And before you can be capable of performing this dire exploit with ease, you must have acquired a prodigious, gigantic strength in sinning. This is what the mightiest saint upon earth could not dare to do. No; he owns conscience is his master: long did he resist, but now he must submit: and he would not incur the displeasure of his conscience for all the world. Oh! That we were all weak in this respect! My time will allow me only to add,

4. Is it not a hard piece of self-denial for you to deprive yourselves of the exalted pleasures of religion?

You love yourselves, and you love happiness, and therefore one would reasonably expect you would choose that which will afford you the most solid, refined, and lasting happiness, and abandon whatever is inconsistent with it. Now religion is a source of happiness. Yes; that dull, melancholy thing, religion, which you think, perhaps, would put an end to all your pleasures, and which, for that reason, you have kept at a distance from; religion, which its enemies will tell you has made some intolerably precise and dead to all the joys of life, and turned others mad and melancholy; religion, I say, will afford you a happiness more pure, more noble, and more durable than all the world can give. Religion not only proposes future happiness beyond the comprehension of thought, but will afford you present happiness beyond whatever you have known while strangers to it. The pleasures of a peaceful, approving conscience, of communion with God, the supreme good, of the most noble dispositions and most delightful contemplations; these are the pleasures of religion. And ask those who have enjoyed them, those whom experience has qualified to be judges, and they will tell you with one voice, "There are no pleasures comparable to these." Besides, religion has infinitely the advantage of other things as to futurity. Those pleasures which are inconsistent with it end in shocking prospects, as well as pale reviews. But religion opens the brightest prospects; prospects of everlasting salvation and happiness; prospects that brighten the gloomy shades of death, and the awful world beyond, and run out infinitely beyond our ken through a vast eternal duration. My heart is so full of my subject, that I must borrow the more expressive words of another, to give it vent.

*"Let the proud Witling argue all he can,*

*It is religion still that makes the man;*

*'Tis this, my friends, that streaks our morning bright;*

*'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.  
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;  
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;  
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart;  
Disarms affliction, or repels its dart;  
Within the breast bids purest pleasures rise;  
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies  
When the storm thickens, and the thunder rolls;  
When the earth trembles to th' affrighted poles;  
The pious mind nor doubts nor fears assail,  
For storms are zephyrs, or a gentler gale.  
And when disease obstructs the labouring breath,  
When the heart sickens, and each pulse is death,  
Even then religion shall sustain the just,  
Grace their last moments, nor desert their dust."*

Such, my brethren, is religion; the highest, the most substantial, and most lasting happiness of man. And is it not a painful piece of self-denial to you, to give up all this happiness, when nothing is required to purchase it but only your choice of it! Is not this doing violence to the innate principle of self-love and desire of happiness? Can you be so stupid, as to imagine that the world, or sin, or anything that can come in competition with religion, can be of equal or comparable advantage to you? Sure your own reason must give in its verdict in favor of religion. And is it not a hard thing for you to act against your own reason, against your own interest, your highest, your immortal interest, and against your own innate desire of happiness? Do you never find it any difficulty to live for years in the world, without once tasting the sweets of the love of God, or the pleasures of an applauding

conscience? Is it not hard, that while others around you, in the use of the very means which you enjoy, are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and are animated to endure the calamities of life, and encounter the terrors of death, by the prospect of everlasting glory, while they are now often lost in ecstatic wonder, while surveying the things that God hath laid up for them that love him: I say, is it not hard, that you should be destitute of all these transporting prospects, and have nothing but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, or at best a vain self-flattering hope, which will issue in the more confounding disappointment? Is not this really hard? Must it not be a difficulty to you to live at this rate?

And now, sinners, will you with infernal bravery break through all these obstacles, and force a passage into the flames below? Or will you not give over the preposterous struggle to ruin yourselves, and suffer yourselves to be saved? Oh! Let me arrest you in your dangerous career, as the voice which pronounced my text did St. Paul; and let me prevail upon you for the future to choose the highway of life, and take the course to which God, conscience, duty, and interest urge you. In that indeed you will meet with difficulties; it is a narrow and rugged road; and it will require hard striving to make a progress in it. But then the difficulties you have here to surmount are in the road to happiness, with which therefore it is worth your while to struggle; but those in the other are in the road to destruction; and your striving to surmount them, is but striving to destroy yourselves forever. It may be worth your while to labor and conflict hard to be saved; but is it worthwhile to take so much pains, and strive so hard to be damned? Besides, the difficulties in the heavenly road result from the weak, disordered, and wicked state of human nature, as the difficulty of animal action and enjoyment proceeds from sickness of body; and consequently

every endeavor to surmount these difficulties tends to heal, to rectify, to strengthen, and ennoble our nature, and advance it to perfection. But the difficulties in the way to hell proceed from the contrariety of that course to the best principles of human nature, and to the most strong and rational obligations; and consequently, the more we struggle with these difficulties, the more we labor to suppress and root out the remains of all good principles, and break the most inviolable obligations to God and ourselves. The easier it is for us to sin, the more base and corrupt we are: just as the more rotten a limb is, the easier for it to drop off; the more disordered and stupefied the body is, the more easy to die. To meet with no obstacle in the way to hell, but to run on without restraint, is terrible indeed; it shows a man abandoned of God, and ripe for destruction. Such an ease in sinning is the quality of a devil.

Upon the whole, you see, that though there be difficulties on both sides, yet the way to heaven has infinitely the advantage; and therefore, let me again urge you to choose it. You have walked long enough at variance with God, with your own conscience, with your own interest and duty: come now, be reconciled: make these your antagonists no longer. While you persist in this opposition, you do but kick against the pricks; that is, you make a resistance injurious to yourselves. For the future, declare war against sin, Satan, and all their confederates, and ere long ye shall be made more than conquerors; and for your encouragement remember, “lie that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son, saith the Lord God Almighty.”



*SERM. LII. THE  
CHARACTERS OF THE  
WHOLE AND SICK, IN A  
SPIRITUAL SENSE,  
CONSIDERED AND  
CONTRASTED.*

**M**<sup>att. 9:12.</sup>— *But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

There is no article of faith more certain than that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient and most willing Savior, “able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and that those that come unto him, he will in no wise cast out.” They that entrust their souls in his hands he keeps, and none of them is lost. It is also certain that all the guilty sons of Adam stand in the most absolute need of him: in vain do they look for salvation in any other. Without him, they are undone forever: and without him, their very existence becomes a curse, and their immortality but the duration of their misery. The disease of sin has so deeply infected their souls, that none but this divine Physician can heal them.

Since this is the case, who would not expect that Jesus would be universally the darling of mankind? Who would not expect that as many as are wounded, and just perishing of their wounds, would all earnestly apply to this Physician, and seek relief from him upon any terms? Who would suspect there should be so much as one heart cold and disaffected towards him? Must not all love and desire him, since all need him so extremely, and since he is so completely qualified to be their deliverer?

But, alas! Notwithstanding such favorable presumptions from the nature of the thing, it is a most notorious fact that this divine Physician is but little regarded in our dying world. This all-sufficient and willing Savior is generally neglected by perishing sinners. There are thousands among us that have no affectionate thoughts of him, no eager longings after him, they exert no vigorous endeavors to obtain an interest in him, nor are they tenderly solicitous about it. They indeed profess his religion, and call themselves Christians after his name: they pay him the compliment of a bended knee, and now and then perform the external duties of religion, and thus have high hopes they shall be saved through him: but as to their hearts and affections, he has no share there: these are reserved for the world, which, in practical estimation, they prefer to him, whatever they profess.

Now whence is this strange and shocking phenomenon in the rational world? Whence is it that the dying are careless about a Physician? That a Deliverer is neglected by those that are perishing? The true reason we may find in my text, “They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick;” that is, “they who imagine themselves well, however disordered they are in reality, do not feel their need of a physician, and therefore will not apply to him; but they who feel themselves sick, will eagerly apply to him, and put themselves under his care.”

This is the answer of Christ to the proud caviling Pharisees, who censured his free conversation with publicans and sinners, at an entertainment which Matthew had prepared for him. The publicans were a sort of customhouse officers among the Jews, appointed by the Romans, whose tributaries they then were, to collect the levies or duties imposed by the government. They were generally persons of bad morals, and particularly given to rapine and extortion in raising the taxes. On this account they were particularly hated by the Jews, especially by the strict sect of Pharisees. Their very office would have rendered them odious, even though they had behaved well in it; for it was a public badge of the slavery of the Jews to the Romans; which, to a people so proud and so fond of liberty as the Jews, was a mortification they could not patiently bear. The publicans, therefore, were objects of general contempt and abhorrence, as an abandoned sort of men; and the Jews, particularly the rigid and haughty Pharisees, held no conversation with them, but kept them at a distance, as though they had been excommunicated. Hence, says Christ, concerning one excommunicated by the church for incorrigible wickedness, “Let him be to thee as a heathen man, and a publican,” Matt, 18:17, that is, have no intercourse with him, but treat him as the Jews do the publicans.

The condescending Jesus, who “came to seek and save that which was lost,” did not conduct himself towards those poor outcasts, upon the rigid principles of the Pharisees. They held them in such contempt, that they did not labor to instruct and reform them. But Jesus preached to them, conversed with them freely, used the most condescending, affable, and ingratiating measures to reform them, and called some of them to the honor of being his disciples: of this number was Matthew, the author of this history; once an abandoned publican, afterwards a disciple, an apostle, and

one of the four evangelists, whose immortal writings have diffused the vital savor of the name of Jesus through all ages and countries. Oh. the condescension, the freeness, the efficacy of the grace of Christ! It can make a publican an apostle! An abhorred outcast the favorite of heaven, and the companion of angels! What abundant encouragement does this give to the most abandoned sinner among you to turn unto the Lord! Let publicans and sinners despair of mercy and salvation if they continue in their present condition; but if they arise and follow Jesus at his call, and become his humble, teachable disciples, they need not despair; nay, they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and be assured they shall be admitted into the kingdom of God, when the self-righteous children of the kingdom are shut out.

When Matthew had embraced the call, he made a feast for his new Master, that he might show his respect and gratitude to him, and that he might let his brother publicans and old companions have an opportunity of conversing with him, and receiving his instructions. How natural is it for a sinner, just brought to love Jesus, to use means to allure others to him, especially his former companions! Having seen his own guilt and danger, he is deeply affected with theirs, and would willingly lead them to that Savior who has given him so gracious a reception. Indeed his generous endeavors of this kind, though the most substantial and disinterested evidences of friendship, often excite the contempt and ridicule of his former companions; and the more so, as they are generally attended with the imprudent but well-meant blunders of inexperience, and an honest zeal mingled with wild fire. But at times such a convert is made the instrument of bringing those to be his companions in the way to heaven, who had walked with him in the ways of sin: and this is sufficient encouragement to

such of you as have been called, like Matthew, to use your best endeavors with our fellow-sinners. Who knows but we may “save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins?” And what a noble, beneficent exploit is this?

The blessed Jesus, who was always ready to embrace every opportunity of doing good, whatever popular odium it might expose him to, cheerfully complies with Matthew’s invitation, and mingles with a crowd of publicans at his table. Like a physician he employs himself in a hospital, among the sick and dying, and not among the healthy and gay. The conversation of sinners could not be agreeable to him for itself; but as it gave him opportunity of doing them good, it afforded him a generous pleasure. To converse with his Father and the holy angels in his native heaven, would have been more pleasing in itself to his holy soul; but if by conversing with sinners in our guilty world, he can but save the perishing creatures, he cheerfully submits to self-denial, and even rejoices in it; just as a compassionate physician, though he has no pleasure in the melancholy mansions of sickness, yet frequents them that he may relieve the distressed.

The Pharisees now thought they had a good handle to raise popular clamor against Christ, and therefore cavil at these freedoms, as though they had been profane and inconsistent with the character of the Messiah, or even of a prophet. If he claimed this character, they thought it much more becoming in him to keep company with them, than with profligate publicans. Hence to stumble and perplex his disciples, they come to them, and ask, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” The disciples were not as yet endowed with that mouth and wisdom which all their enemies could not withstand; and therefore Jesus answers them, and takes upon himself his own defense. “The whole,” says he, “have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” Some suppose, that by the whole,

Christ means those who were really whole, or that were not so infected with the disease of sin, as to stand in need of him as a physician. When such persons can be found among the sons of men, this exposition will appear more plausible. But since we know that all have sinned, and stand in need of Christ as a Savior, it is much more reasonable, I think, to suppose that, by the whole, Christ means those that imagined themselves whole, though really languishing with the deadly disease of sin. It seems to me that he here answers the Pharisees upon their own principles, and proves his conduct to be justifiable, even supposing their high opinion of themselves, and their contemptuous idea of the publicans, to be true; as if he had said, "I come into the world under the character of a physician for sick souls. Such, you will grant, these despised publicans are; and therefore, you must also grant, that these are the persons I have to deal with, and these are the most likely to make application to me. But as for yourselves, you think you are righteous; you think you are not so far gone with the disease of sin as to need a physician sent down from heaven to heal you. Now I will not determine at present, whether this high opinion you have of yourselves be just or not. Be it right or wrong, it is certain, that while you entertain it, you cannot consistently find fault with my conduct. If you are such, I have no business with you as a physician. I must, therefore, rather choose to converse with these sinners, who now begin to see themselves such, and to be sensible of their need of a physician."

Thus, as I observed, Jesus here forms an argument *ad hominem*, or vindicates his conduct even upon the principles of the Pharisees themselves. It was not now to his purpose to dispute the high opinion they had of themselves; even that opinion furnished him with a sufficient defense. But,

when it was proper, he faithfully exposes their true character, as proud, self-righteous hypocrites, and denounces the most terrible woes against them.

I might perhaps render the matter plainer by a familiar illustration. Suppose a man of learning in company with two persons: the one really ignorant, but highly conceited of his knowledge, and consequently unteachable; the other ignorant too, but sensible of it, and therefore desirous of instruction: suppose he should turn from the self-conceited creature, and carry on conversation with the other, who was likely to profit by it; and suppose the former should resent it, and say, "If he were indeed a scholar, as he pretends to be, he would not be fond of the society of such an ignorant dunce, but would rather choose me for a companion." How properly might a teacher reply, "Oh! You are a wise man; and have no need of my instruction; and, therefore, as a teacher, I have no business with you; but this poor, ignorant creature is sensible of his want of instruction; and, therefore, it is most fit I should converse with him." Such a reply has a peculiar pungency and mortifying force in it; and such Jesus used in the case before us.

To give a fuller view of this text, and to adapt it to practical purposes, I intend to describe the characters of those that are whole, and of those that are sick, in the senses here intended.

There are none of the sons of men who are really whole. Their souls are all diseased; for all have sinned, and there is none righteous, no, not one. And perhaps there are none upon earth so proud, and so ignorant of themselves, as to affirm in so many words, that they are whole; that is, "perfectly righteous." Therefore, by the whole, cannot be meant either those who are really free from all sin, or those who imagine themselves entirely free from it. It does not appear that even the proud Pharisees were capable

of flattering themselves so far. But by the whole, are meant those who are indeed guilty, depraved sinners, and who are ready to make a superficial confession in words that they are sinners, but continue secure and impenitent, insensible of their guilt, their corruption, their danger, and their need of a Savior; that is, those who are really sick and dangerously ill, and yet are as easy, as unapprehensive of danger, as careless about applying to the physician, as if nothing ailed them. The disease is of a lethargic nature, and stupefies the unhappy creatures, so that they are not sensible of it. It renders them delirious, so that they think themselves well, when the symptoms of death are strong upon them. What multitudes of such may we see in the world! The word of God pronounces them dangerously ill; their friends may see the most deadly symptoms upon them: but alas! They are stupidly insensible of their own case. Jesus, the divine Physician, warns them of their danger, offers them his help, and prescribes to them the infallible means of recovery; but they disregard his warnings, neglect his gracious offer, and refuse to submit to his prescriptions. This is the general character of those that are whole, in the sense of my text.

By the sick, are meant those who, like the former, are really guilty, corrupt sinners, in extreme need of a Savior, and who readily confess they are such; but here lies the difference, they are not only such in reality, and they not only acknowledge that they are such, but they are deeply sensible of it, they are tenderly affected with their case: their temper and conduct, their thoughts of themselves and of Jesus Christ, their designs and endeavors, are such as are natural to a soul sensibly sick of sin, and such as bear a resemblance to those of a person sick in body, and using all means for a recovery. It is the characteristic of this class of sinners; not that they are less holy, or in more danger, than others; but that they are more sensible of their



condition, and more solicitous and laborious about deliverance. They feel themselves disordered; they put themselves under the care of Jesus, the only Physician of souls; they submit to his prescriptions, and use all means for their recovery to soundness of mind, from the deadly disease of sin. This is the general character of the sick, in the sense of my text; but it is necessary I should descend to particulars.

The particular characters of the whole and the sick, in contrast, are such as these:

1. He that is whole has never had a clear affecting sight and sense of sin; but he that is sick is fully convicted, and deeply sensible of it. The one has only a general, superficial, unaffecting conviction, that he is a sinner: that he has not been so good as he should have been; that his heart is somewhat disordered: and especially that he has been guilty of sundry bad actions. But, alas; he neither sees his sinfulness in its full extent, nor is suitably affected with that little of it he sees. He does not clearly see the entire and universal corruption of his heart, and the numberless principles and seeds of sin that are there; the blindness of his mind as to divine things; the secret disaffection of his heart towards God and holiness; the carnality of his mind, and his lukewarmness and formality in the duties of religion. He may have a transient glance, a superficial view of these things; but he has not a deep, settled conviction of them: nor is he suitably affected with what he knows of his own sinfulness. It does not appear to him such a mighty matter to have such a disordered heart towards God, to have dropped a forbidden word now and then, or to have committed a few bad actions; few, I say, for so they appear to him, though repeated times and ways beyond number. Sin appears to him a trifling peccadillo, a small evil, and he has a thousand excuses to make for it. Hence he is as easy, as careless, as presumptuous in

his hopes, as if he believed he did not really deserve punishment from a righteous God, and therefore was in no danger. Though the leprosy of sin spreads ever so wide, and breaks out into ever so many putrid and mortifying sores, yet he is easy and secure, and insensible of the disease. Thus, like a man in health, he is unconcerned, and neither apprehends himself sick, nor uses the least means for his recovery.

Oh! What multitudes of such are among us! They will confess themselves sinners, with as little concern as if they were quite free from sin, or as if they thought there was little or no danger in it.

But is it so with the poor sick sinner! Oh! No: he sees, he feels that his whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint, and that from the crown of the head, even unto the sole of the foot, there are nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. He feels the plague of a hard, senseless heart, and the secret springs of wickedness within him. He feels that sin has enfeebled all his powers, and that he is no more able to exert them in religious endeavors, than a sick man is to employ himself in active life. Oh! Into what a consternation is the sinner struck, when he is awakened out of his lethargic security, and his eyes are opened to see himself in a just light! He had flattered himself that he had a good constitution of soul, and that little or nothing ailed him; but now he is surprised to see the strong symptoms of spiritual death upon him.

Suppose some of you, who have come here to-day vigorous and healthy, should suddenly discover the spots of a plague broken out all over you, how would it strike you with surprise and horror! Such is the surprise and horror of the awakened sinner; thus is he alarmed and amazed. So clear are his views of his entire and universal depravity, and imminent danger, that he is utterly astonished he was so stupid as never to discover it before. Now, also,

he has a deep sense of the evil of sin: he not only sees himself universally disordered, but he sees, he feels the disorder to be deadly: sin now appears to him the greatest evil upon earth, or even in hell. Oh! How worthy of the severest vengeance from a righteous God! How contrary to the divine purity! How base, how ungrateful a violation of the most strong and endearing obligations! How destructive to the soul, not only according to the penalty of the divine law, but in its own native tendency! During the progress of the Christian life, he feels himself recovering a little, though very slowly, while he follows the prescriptions of his divine Physician, and receives healing influences from him. He feels his enfeebled soul gathering a little strength; his vitiated taste gradually corrected; and the welcome symptoms of returning health; but oh! He is sensibly sick still. The cure is not complete in this world; but the remains of his old disorder hang upon him all his life, and he is subject to many dangerous relapses, in which it gathers new strength, and he is afraid it is incurable.

2. They that are whole are generally easy and secure, and unapprehensive of danger; but the sick soul is alarmed and anxious: and cannot be easy, till it perceives some appearances of recovery.

He that is whole, is benumbed with a stupid insensibility; but he that is sick is in pain from the disease of sin, which he sensibly feels. The one can walk about merry and thoughtless, with a hard, depraved heart within him; the other is perpetually uneasy, and, like a sick man, has no taste for anything while he feels such a heart within him. If the one is anxious, it is with some worldly care; if the other is anxious, it is chiefly for the recovery of his dying soul. The one can give himself up to business, or pleasure, or idleness, as a man in health, and at ease; the other is apprehensive that his soul is in great danger; and, like a sick man, gives up his eager pursuits, till

he sees whether he is likely to recover. He is alarmed with the deadly consequences of sin, as it exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of heaven, and all the miseries of the infernal world. But this is not all that distresses him; he considers sin, in itself, as a loathsome disease, and is pained with its present effects upon him. As a sick man is not only alarmed at the consequence of his disease, namely, death, but considers it as a present pain, and as depriving him of the present comforts of life; so the sick soul feels sin as a loathsome, painful disease, that now deprives it of the exalted pleasures of religion, and renders it incapable of serving its God with vigor and life. This indisposition of soul for the exercises of religion, is, in itself, a constant uneasiness to him who is spiritually sick. How strongly does St. Paul represent the case, when he cries out, “Oh! Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!” Rom. 7:24. The image seems to be that of a living man walking about with a rotten, nauseous carcass tied fast to him, which oppresses him, and he cannot, with all his efforts, cast it off; but it lies heavy upon him wherever he goes: which constrains him to cry out, “Oh! Who shall deliver me from this dead body?” This is the character of the soul sick of sin. But he that is whole hath little or no uneasiness upon this account. If he is alarmed at all, it is with the consequence of sin; his slavish soul fears nothing but the punishment. As for the disease itself, it is so far from giving him uneasiness, that he is in love with it. It affords him sensations of pleasure, rather than of pain, and he rather dreads a recovery, than the continuance of the disorder. Sin has intoxicated him to such a degree, that holiness, which is the health of the soul, is disagreeable to him, and he would rather continue languishing than recover.

My brethren, you can easily distinguish between sickness and health of body; and you are very ready to do it. And will you not inquire what state your souls are in? Whether they are sensible of their sickness, and in a way of recovery? Or whether they are stupefied, or made delirious by the disorder, insensible of their danger, and unsolicitous about their recovery? I pray you examine yourselves in these particulars.

3. They that are whole are unwilling to apply to a physician, or to follow his prescriptions; but to the sick a physician is most welcome, and they will submit to his directions, however self-denying and mortifying. This is the point my text has particularly in view, and therefore we must take particular notice of it.

They that are in health have no regard to a physician, as such; they neither send for him, nor will they accept of his help, if offered gratis: they look upon the best of medicines with neglect, as of no use or importance to them: the prescriptions proper to the sick they hear with indifference, as not being concerned. Thus it is with thousands, who imagine themselves whole in spirit. The Lord Jesus exhibits himself to the sons of men under the character of a physician; the gospel makes a free offer of his assistance to all sick souls that will freely accept it. And what reception does he generally meet with? Why, multitudes neglect him, as though they had no need of him. They may indeed pay him the compliment of professing his religion, because it happened to be the religion of their fathers and their country, but they have no eager desires after him; they are not in earnest and laborious to obtain his assistance; they do not invite him with the most affectionate entreaties to undertake their case; they do not beg and cry for relief from him, like blind Bartimeus, Mark 10:47, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on us. In short, whatever regard they may profess for him, they are

not deeply sensible of their absolute need of him: they are not feelingly affected towards him, as towards a being with whom they have the nearest personal concern, a concern of the utmost importance: and the reason is, they are whole in their own apprehensions; or if they feel some qualms of conscience, some fits of painful remorse, they soon heal their own hurt slightly, crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. They make a medicine of their own prayers, tears, repentance, and religious endeavors, and with this they hope to heal themselves. Thus Jesus is neglected; they give him the name of a Savior; but in reality they look to themselves for a cure. How is the gospel that makes the offer of relief from this heavenly Physician, generally received in the world? Alas! It is neglected, as the offer of superfluous help. It is heard with that indifference with which men in health attend to the prescriptions of a physician to the sick, in which they have no immediate concern. Brethren, is this neglected gospel the only effectual mean for healing your dying souls? Then what means the stupidity and inattention with which it is heard? What means the general neglect with which it is treated? Oh! How affecting is it to see a dying world rejecting the only restorative that can heal their disease, and preserve their lives! But alas! Thus it is all around us.

Again, Jesus prescribes to the sons of men the only means of their recovery. Particularly he enjoins them no more to drink poison; that is, no more to indulge themselves in sin, which is, in its own nature, the most deadly poison to the soul. And what can be more reasonable than this? Yet this is what a stupid world principally objects against, and multitudes rather die than submit to it. A disordered, empoisoned constitution of soul is to them the most agreeable. This divine Physician likewise requires them to use the means of grace instituted in the gospel: to meditate upon their

condition, and obtain a deep sense of their disorder; to read and hear the word with solemn attention and self-application; to pray with frequency and importunity. These are his prescriptions to all that would recover under his hands. But how few observe them in earnest! What a general neglect of the means of grace prevails in our country, or what a careless attendance upon them! Which is equally pernicious! Christ also enjoins them to submit to him as their Physician, to flatter themselves no longer that they can heal themselves by means within their own power, but to apply his blood as the only healing balm to their wounded souls. But, alas! They disregard this grand prescription; they will not submit to him; but, like an obstinate patient, will have their own way, though eternal death should be the consequence.

But this is not the case of the sinner spiritually sick: he will do anything, he will submit to anything, if it may but save him from the mortal disease of sin. How ardently does he long after Jesus! With what cheerfulness does he put himself under his care! With what joy and gratitude does he hear the offer of free salvation in the gospel! And how dear is the gospel to his heart on this account! With what eager, wishful eyes does he look upon his Physician! How does he delight to feel himself under the operation of his hand! To feel him probe his wounds, and then apply the balm of his blood! With what anxiety does he observe the symptoms, and inquire whether he is upon the recovery or not! And oh! With what pleasure does he discover the signs of returning health! To feel a little eager appetite for spiritual food! To feel a little spiritual life in religious exercises! To feel himself able to run in the way of God's commandments! To feel the principles of sin weakened within him! How sweet is this! How willingly does he submit to the prescriptions of his Physician, and attend upon the means of grace, however

disagreeable to a carnal mind! He makes the law of God the rule of his regimen, and would not indulge himself in anything which that sacred dispensatory forbids. He guards against relapses, and keeps out of the way of temptation, as far as possible, lest his frail constitution should be hurt. The society of sinners is like the company of persons infected with a contagious disease which he is in danger of catching, and therefore he avoids it as cautiously as he can. Let those that think their souls healthy and vigorous, boast of their strength, and what mighty things they can do in religion: as for him, he feels his weakness; he feels he can do nothing aright, but just as he receives daily strength from Christ. He feels himself every day troubled with some disorder or other, yea, with a complication of them: therefore he is daily sensible of his need of the Physician, and makes daily application to him. He does not begrudge to take time from his other affairs, and, as it were, to keep his chamber a while, that he may use means for the recovery of his soul: for, oh! If he lose his soul, what would the whole world profit him? · In short, the sick sinner is a tender, delicate, frail creature, entirely subject to the prescriptions of Christ, and every day taking means from him; anxious for his recovery, and willing to submit to anything that may promote it. This is the man in our Christ-despising world that gives Jesus a most willing and welcome reception, and embraces his gospel, as containing all his salvation and all his desire. Oh! That there were many such in our world! For this man is in a hopeful way of recovery. This world is a vast hospital, full of dying souls: Jesus descends from heaven, and enters among them, offering them health and eternal life, if they will but submit to his directions, which are as easy as possible. Repentance, indeed, and some other bitter ingredients, are included in a religion for sinners; and how can it be otherwise, since these are necessary for their recovery, in the



very nature of things? Besides, even these are sweet, when taken in the vehicle of a Savior's dying love; and many a soul has found more noble pleasure in generous sorrow for sin, than ever they found in the commission of it.

But after all, the generality die in their sins, amidst the full means of their recovery: and the great reason is, they will not be convinced of their danger, nor be persuaded to apply to the Physician. Oh! How tragical and affecting a case this! And what may render it the more so to us is, that it is the case of some of us. Yes, my brethren, though I am unwilling to harbor one hard thought of any of you, yet I cannot avoid concluding that there are some, I am afraid many, souls in this assembly, who are not sensible of their dangerous disease, and their need of Christ as a Physician, and therefore are in danger of perishing without him. Sin, like a strong dose of opium, has stupefied you, and you feel easy and whole-hearted, as if nothing ailed you, when the symptoms of death are strong upon you. We can weep and lament over the sick-bed of a dying friend, and we even drop our tears after him into the grave: but shall we drop no tears this day over dying souls, that are so numerous among us! What renders the case more affecting is, that they perish by their own willful obstinacy, under the hands of an all-healing Physician:— “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the slain of the daughters of my people!” Ye secure and whole-hearted sinners, must it not shock you to think that Jesus Christ, the only Physician, gives you up? You see, in my text, he looks upon you as persons that he has no business with. He had rather converse with publicans and sinners than with you, as having more hopes of success among them. Let publicans and sinners take the hint, and be encouraged to apply to Jesus. Come, ye profligates and libertines,

drunkards, swearers, whoremongers, come, sinners of the most abandoned characters, apply to this Physician. He is willing to heal you: he offers you healing. Wilt thou be made whole? Is his question to you this day. He is also perfectly able, able to save to the uttermost, however inveterate your disease may be. If the children of the kingdom shut themselves out: if self-righteous Pharisees reject this Physician, and die in their sin, do you come in; put yourselves under his care, submit to his prescriptions, and you shall yet live, and be restored to perfect health and eternal life. Rugged as you are, you are very proper materials for the temple of God. If you are sensibly sick, it should not discourage you from entering yourselves into Christ's hospital, and putting yourselves into his care; nay, this should even encourage you. Your being sick of sin is a necessary qualification to render you his patients: they are such he loves to converse with, and they are only such who are recovered by him. Therefore, this day give yourselves up to him as his willing patients. Cry to him to undertake your case: Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Submit to his prescriptions, and follow his directions, and you shall live forever.

I shall conclude my subject, by giving answers from it to some questions that may arise in your minds on this occasion.

What is the reason that the world lies in such a dead security around us? Whence is it there is so much sin in the world, and so little fear of punishment? Whence is it that men will entertain such hopes of heaven upon such slight evidences, or rather with the full evidence of the word of God against them? Alas! The reason is, they are whole in their own imagination: they think themselves well, and therefore apprehend no danger, but lie in a dead, inactive sleep.

What is the reason why so many neglect the means of grace in public and private? Whence is it that there are so many prayerless families and prayerless closets among us? Why is the Bible thrown by in some families, as a piece of useless lumber? Why is the house of God so thinly frequented in many places, and the table of the Lord almost deserted? Why is Christian conversation so unfashionable? And why do we hear so few inquiries from sinners, what they shall do to be saved? The reason is, they imagine themselves well; they are whole-hearted; and, therefore, it is no wonder they neglect the means of recovery: they think they have no more to do with them than persons in health with physic. The only method to bring them to use those means in earnest, is to make them sensible of their dangerous disease. And oh! That their ministers may use all proper means with them for this end, and that divine grace may render them effectual!

What is the reason that the means of grace are attended upon by others with so much formality and indifference?

Whence is it there are so many lukewarm, spiritless prayers, and solemn mockeries of the great God? So many wandering eyes and wandering hearts in the heavenly exercise of praise, and in hearing the most solemn and affecting truths? Whence is it that all the religion of many is nothing but a dull round of insipid, lifeless formalities? Alas! The same reason returns; they are whole in their own conceit. And how can they, while they flatter themselves with this imagination, use those means in earnest, which are intended for the recovery of the sick? The sick will use them in earnest; but to others they are mere customary formalities.

Would you know what is the reason that the blessed Jesus, the most glorious and benevolent person that ever appeared in our world, is so generally neglected? Oh! Why is his love forgotten by those very creatures

for whom he shed his blood? Why are there not more longings and cries for him? Why is not a Savior, an almighty and complete Savior, more sought after by perishing sinners? Why is his name of so little importance among them? How comes it to pass, that he may continue for months, for years, for scores of years, offering salvation to them, entreating, commanding, and persuading them to accept it, and warning them of the dreadful ruin they will bring upon themselves by rejecting it? Whence is it that, after all, he is despised and rejected of men, and that but very few will give him suitable entertainment? Whence is this shocking conduct in reasonable creatures? Oh! It is the same old reason still; they are whole-hearted, and do not feel themselves dangerously ill; and how, then, can they be solicitous about a physician?

What is the reason that the gospel, which reveals and offers life and salvation to the world, meets with so cold a reception? Why does not the way of salvation therein discovered spread transport and praise over all the earth? Why does not the song of angel's sound from every human tongue, Glory to God in the highest for peace proclaimed on earth, and good will towards men? Why does the Christian world in general practically despise that religion which they profess? Oh! It is because they are whole in their own imaginations, though dying by thousands all over the world. It is because they are not sensible of their need of the gospel and its blessings. Oh! If they were but once sensible how dangerously ill they are, they would soon change their opinion.

Let me bring this matter still nearer home. Whence is it that the gospel, even with all the disadvantages that attend it from my unskillful lips, does not meet with a more affectionate welcome among you? There are many, I am afraid, who statedly or occasionally attend here to hear the gospel, who

yet despise it in their hearts, or do not affectionately embrace it. And what is the reason of this? May I not venture to affirm, that the gospel has been dear to some, who have sat under no better ministry? Must not this be the reason? That there are multitudes of whole-hearted sinners, even among us, that mingle among us in the same assembly, and hear the gospel from the same lips! Multitudes who are insensible of their disease, and consequently of their need of a physician! Oh! Inquire whether this be not the true reason why the gospel meets with such a cold reception among us.

Would you know why so many fools make a mock of sin? Why they can go on impenitent in it, apprehending little or no danger from it? Why they are every day singing, and every day merry, thoughtless, and gay? Why they can love and delight in sin, which God hates, and which he has threatened with such heavy vengeance? Alas! The reason is, they are whole: they do not look upon sin as a deadly disease that requires a cure, but as their health which ought to be cherished. This is the disease under which our body politic now languishes. It is this disease that enfeebles our councils and undertakings; but who suspects that this has any bad influence in the case? Who endeavors the cure of this, as the most effectual cure for a languishing, bleeding country?

What is the reason that men are cautious of coming near a house infected with a contagious sickness, and that duty itself can hardly constrain them to enter, but that they can venture their souls without cause into ensnaring company, and within the sphere of temptation? Whence is it, that, for the recovery of their mortal bodies, they will submit to the most self-denying regimen, take the most nauseous draughts, and be at great pains and expense, while for their souls they will take no pains, use no means, deny themselves in no gratifications? What is the reason of this? Oh! It is the

same reason still; they do not feel the least sickness of their souls, but imagine they have a firm, invulnerable constitution, incapable of infection in the most contagious places, and that it will recover by its native strength, without extrinsic help.

Would you know why there is so much spiritual pride and vanity in the world? Why so many religious Thrasos, vain boasters, who imagine they can turn to God when they please, in their own strength, and who pretend they can perform such great things in religion, when they are disposed to make the attempt? Oh! It is because they do not know they are sick: they do not feel themselves enfeebled by sin and disabled from doing anything truly good. You have seen some in a delirium, who imagined they were well, able to go about, and perform their usual business, when in the meantime they were under the power of a deadly disease, and the symptoms of death perhaps then upon them. Just so it is with these ostentatious boasters; and could you but cure their delirium, and make them sensible of their disorders, they would soon feel and confess themselves poor, weak, languishing creatures, unable to do anything, but just as they receive strength from on high.

Would you know why so many hate faithful preaching, and resent it if any means are used for their recovery? It is because they imagine themselves well; and such do not like to be teased with the importunities of a physician, nor to have disagreeable medicines forced upon them. Oh! Were they but sensible of their condition, they would willingly submit to the prescriptions.

Would you know where you should begin your religion; or what is the grand preparative for your embracing the gospel in such a manner as to be saved by it? To this interesting inquiry you may easily infer an answer from what has been said. Begin your religion in a deep sense of sin; let your

wound be probed to the quick, in order to a thorough cure, otherwise it would be but slightly skinned over, and it will again break out, and prove more dangerous than ever. Labor to get a deep sense of your disease, and then you will so give yourselves up to the physician, that he may apply to you what he thinks proper, and make an effectual cure.

Some of you perhaps have wondered why you see poor mourning creatures here and there, that cannot live as you do, thoughtless, careless, and unaffected. You ascribe it perhaps to melancholy, to preciseness, to hypocrisy, or an affection of singularity. But I will tell you the true reason. They are sick; whereas you imagine yourselves well; and you cannot wonder that the sick and the healthy should behave in a different manner. Why do they not neglect Jesus Christ as you do? Oh! It is because they are sick, heart-sick, and therefore must long and cry for a physician. Why do they not indulge themselves in sin as you do? Is it because they are sick of it? They see it to be a mortal poison, and they cannot be easy while they feel it working through their frame. Why do they use the means with so much earnestness? Why do they pray, and hear, and attend upon every religious ordinance with so much zeal and solicitude? Why can they not, like you, attend upon them in a careless, formal way, or entirely neglect them? Oh! The reason is, they are sick, heart-sick, and they are using these means for their recovery. And did you view yourselves in the same just light, you would use them too: yes, you would be as strict, as earnest, as laborious as any of them. Why do they not, like you, abandon themselves, and devote all their time to some worldly pursuit? Oh! It is because they are sick, and must take time for the use of means for their recovery, whatever be omitted. Why are they so much afraid of temptation, and keep out of its way? It is because they are afraid of a relapse, and that sin, their old

disease, will renew its strength. Whence are they so often filled with doubts, and fears, and anxious perplexities? Oh! It is because the symptoms of the disorder are doubtful, and they know not whether they are in a way of recovery or not. When they are satisfied in this point, then they can rejoice, and that with a joy more noble than you are capable of.

And poor, sick souls, be of good cheer; you shall yet be healed. Yes, there is balm in Gilead; there is a physician there: Jesus can heal you; and, blessed be his name, he is as willing as he is able. Continue steadfast in the use of the means appointed for your recovery, and he will make them efficacious. Yes, these sick souls of yours shall yet be as healthy and vigorous as an angel; and you shall ere long be advanced to the region of immortal health, where the inhabitants no more say, I am sick; where you shall breathe a pure, salubrious air, agreeable to your delicate constitutions, and be vigorous and lively forever.

Do not think much of it, that a disease so inveterate and mortal should be painful and difficult in the cure. The operation will not last long; and if it does but succeed, the pain and self-denial will be infinitely more than compensated.

The deep sense of your disorder is often discouraging to you; Oh! You are afraid it will at last prove mortal. But this very thing ought to encourage you. The persons that I cannot speak one comfortable word to, are not of your character; they are the secure, whole-hearted sinners; but for you there is strong consolation; so strong that it may bear down all your fears before it. The sense of your disorder qualifies you for the Physician, and renders you proper objects of his care. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the broken-hearted, are the character of the persons that he has to do with, and who are recovering under his hands. And are not these your characters?



They are, indeed, humbling and mortifying; but, oh! They are encouraging, as they prepare you for Christ's healing care.

But as for you, whole-hearted sinners, I must pronounce you lost and dead souls. Jesus himself has declared, that he has no business with such as you. And if he casts you off, oh! What other physician can you employ? Alas! You will die in your sins! Die in your sins! Oh! Dreadful! Better to die in a ditch, or a dungeon, than die in your sins! Therefore now labor to be sensible of your disorder, while it is curable; for all that are not healed in this life, are given up as incurable forever. Now apply to Christ as a Physician, for he is willing to undertake your cure.

# *SERM. LIII. A SIGHT OF CHRIST THE DESIRE AND DELIGHT OF SAINTS IN ALL AGES.*

**J**ohn 8:56.— *Your Father Abraham rejoiced [earnestly desired] to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

When we see the crowd, the unthinking majority of mankind in our day, neglecting the Lord Jesus, we see nothing new. This neglect is indeed stupid, ungrateful, criminal, and extremely affecting and lamentable; but in this respect as well as others, there is no new thing under the sun. The blessed Jesus has been despised and rejected of men in every age, ever since sin first entered into the world, and raised enmity against him in the mind of man.

But, blessed be God, such excellency has attracted love and admiration in every age. He has been loved and adored, not only by the angels who knew him best, and are spectators of his glory in his native heaven, where he keeps his court in conspicuous splendor, but also by some poor sinners of the race of man, in every period of time, since his glory first dawned upon the world in that early promise, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the

serpent's head." Gen. 3:15. John and his cotemporary Christians, who lived upon earth when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, beheld his glory, God-like glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14.

In these dregs of time, when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, there are some, nay, there are many scattered here and there through the world, who believe in and love an unseen Savior; and while they believe and love, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 Pet. 1:8. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also, and all the pious patriarchs, who lived in the early dawn of the gospel-light, looked forward with eager eyes to the promised and expected rising of the Sun of righteousness. His beams were but faintly reflected upon them; yet they could distinguish his light from that of every inferior luminary. They foresaw some illustrious personage, superior to themselves, and all the ordinary messengers of God, about to appear in the world; and though it does not appear to me that they distinctly knew who he should be, or what should be the peculiarities of his office, and how he should perform it, yet they expected him under the welcome character of a Deliverer, and that in some way which Divine wisdom would appoint he should bring salvation to penitent sinners. Thus Jesus congratulates his disciples upon their peculiar privilege, above the best men of the preceding times; "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Matt. 13:16,17. Their desiring to hear and see these things, which the gospel reveals, implies that they had some general imperfect knowledge of them; for there can be no desire at all of a thing entirely unknown; but their

knowledge was indistinct and obscure, and not satisfactory to their pious curiosity. Therefore, as St. Peter informs us, the prophets did not fully understand their own prophecies, but inquired and searched diligently concerning the salvation and grace now brought to us; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not they, but we, should fully enjoy the advantage of their own prophecies, or that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things, not only the prophets, but even the angels of heaven, those superior intelligencers, desire to look into and study. 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

To the same purpose St. Paul speaks concerning Abraham, Noah, and other pious patriarchs: These all died in faith, not having received the promises; that is, the accomplishment of them, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; that is, they saw by faith, though afar off, at the distance of thousands of years, the blessings contained in those early promises, particularly that great, all-comprehending blessing, the Messiah; and were persuaded they would be fulfilled in due time, and embraced them with eager affection and confidence, as their highest hope and happiness.

This is the influence which even the faint discovery of a Savior had upon good men many ages ago; but St. Paul tells us, whose privilege it was to live in gospel-day, that “God has provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,” Heb. 11:40: for us he has provided the clear revelation of the gospel; and shall not this have a

proportionable influence upon us? We should at least be as much affected with these things as Abraham, who was far inferior to us in external advantages: and how Abraham was affected, we are told by Jesus himself in the text: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.”

The Jews, in the context, are pleading the cause of their own pride and self-confidence, against some just reflections which Christ had made upon them. When he insinuates that they were slaves to sin, and therefore stood in need of freedom from him, they resent it as a scandalous imputation, intolerable to a people so proud and tenacious of their liberty; and either not understanding in what sense he meant they were slaves, or imagining that they could not be the servants of sin, who were the natural descendants of Abraham, they think to defend themselves by pleading, “We are Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?” I cannot see how they could have made good this assertion; for they had been in bondage to the Babylonians, the Syrians, and the Greeks, and were then in subjection to the Roman empire; but what is there so false or absurd, but men will plead in their own defense, when once they have renounced the gospel? Jesus, in his answer, tells them, that the dispute at present was not, who was their natural father? But, who was their father in a moral sense? And he lays down this principle, upon which to settle their moral genealogy, namely, that they were his children, whom they resembled in temper and practice. Now they did not resemble Abraham, much less God, whom they also called their Father; and therefore they were not the children of Abraham, or of God, in such a sense as to be free from slavery to sin; which was the sense then under consideration; but they resembled the devil in doing his lusts, and particularly in their love of falsehood, and enmity to truth: and therefore, says he, “Ye are of your father the devil.” In

the progress of the debate, the Jews were offended, because Christ insinuated that he was greater than Abraham and the prophets. And my text may be considered as referring both to this and the former argument. As referring to the last, it may be thus understood: "Abraham himself was sensible how much I am superior to him; for he rejoiced at the distant sight of my day, when a much greater person than he should appear upon the stage of the world, from whom himself, as well as his posterity, and all nations of the earth, should receive the most important blessings." As referring to the former, the meaning may be: "You cannot be the genuine children of Abraham, in the sense now under consideration; for you are not at all like him. You live in my day, and yet rejoice not in it; but he earnestly desired a sight of it, and rejoiced in the sight, though faint and afar off. His disposition and yours towards me, are entirely different, and therefore you cannot be his true spiritual children." Thus, in both these views, the text contains a conclusive argument in vindication of Jesus Christ, and in confutation of his enemies.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. The day of Christ primarily signifies the time when he appeared in the flesh, and conversed with men. So the days of John the Baptist, the days of Noah, &c., signify the time when John the Baptist and Noah lived upon earth. Matt. 11:12, and chap. 24:37. But we are to consider the Lord Jesus as coming into the world under a public character; that is, as a Savior of sinners, and as the improver of the Mosaic and patriarchal religion, by the introduction of the gospel dispensation; and therefore the day of Christ, which Abraham desired to see, must signify the time when he should appear upon earth as a great prophet, to make a more perfect revelation of the will of God; the time when he should offer the great propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the

world, of which the sacrifices of former dispensations were but types and shadows; the time when he should receive dominion, glory, and a kingdom from the ancient of days, which should not be confined to the Jews alone, but extend to all people, nations, and languages, Dan. 7:14, or, in other words, the time when the great radical promise to Abraham should be fulfilled, That in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Gen. 22:18. The time when the dispensation of the gospel should be set up in its full glory, the most perfect dispensation of religion on this side heaven; which is not to give way to another, like that of Moses, but to continue to the end of the world. This is the illustrious day here intended: and according to this explication, you see it includes not only the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, but also the whole space from that time to the end of the world, or the whole time of the gospel dispensation. This is a long and glorious day, and in this day it is our happy lot to live. Abraham would have thought himself happy to live in the same age with us: He would rather have lived in Hanover than in Canaan with all his riches; and would rather have been a member of our church, than the great patriarch of the Jewish church.

The time of Christ's appearance upon earth, and of the gospel dispensation introduced by him, may be called a day, not only in conformity to the usual language of Scripture, in which the time of a person's life, the duration of a thing, or the time allotted for any business, is , called a day, though it should contain many hundreds or thousands of natural days; I say, it may be called a day, not only on this account, but also to intimate, that it is a season of light to the moral world, a season when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon this benighted earth, pierces the glooms of ignorance that covered it, and brings the deepest mysteries to light; a

season, when the perfections of the divine nature, the way of pardon and acceptance for obnoxious mankind, the wonders of the unseen world, and the things that belong to our peace, are displayed in full splendor. The night of heathen darkness, and the twilight of the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensation, kindle into day, wherever the gospel shines. Abraham lived in the twilight or early dawn; and therefore, says Christ, he desired to see my day. It is translated, he rejoiced to see my day; and it must be owned, this is the usual sense of the original word; but this cannot be its meaning here, for this would make a needless tautology with the last part of the verse, he was glad. To rejoice and to be glad, is the same thing; but it would hardly be sense to say, Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and rejoiced. Besides, to rejoice that he might see, seems absurd; for his rejoicing could not be to the end that he might see, but because he did see. I therefore conclude the word here must signify a strong transport of desire, and should be rendered, “Your father Abraham earnestly desired that he might see my day; he wished to live in an age when Christ and the gospel should be fully revealed. From the dawn, he looked forward with eager desire to see the sun rising, and the heavenly day shining around him, revealing to his view those lovely prospects which were then wrapped in darkness. He longed to see that illustrious personage springing from his seed,” in whom all nations should be blessed, “and who was his Lord and Savior as well as his Son.”

Nor was his desire in vain: for Jesus adds, he saw it; that is, my day. His desire was granted, and he was favored with the sight he longed for. But here it may be queried, How, or in what sense, could Abraham be said to see Christ’s day, since he died so long before his appearance in the flesh? To this sundry answers have been given, particularly, 1. That he saw Christ’s day by faith in the promises given him, of the accomplishment of which he



was confident: and this confidence inspired him with joy. Faith, says the apostle, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, Heb. 11:1, and such was Abraham's faith in the promise of a Messiah. He saw his day by faith, and was persuaded of his certain appearance, and embraced him, as though he had been then in the reach of his arms. 2. Abraham might be said to see the day of Christ in that strange transaction, the offering up of his own son Isaac. This is the most striking typical representation, I think, which we find in the whole Bible, of the manner in which the world should be redeemed by Jesus Christ; namely, by human sacrifice, and by God's making his own Son a propitiatory sacrifice, as Abraham was commanded to offer up his; and probably this seemingly hard and unnatural trial was imposed upon him, as a peculiar favor, that he might see by a significant action what he so earnestly longed to see, the manner of man's redemption. This welcome sight he probably had upon Mount Moriah, where he went to offer up his only son. And the inscription he, as it were, left upon that mount, may intimate thus much, In the mount of the Lord it (that is, the day of Christ) shall be seen. Gen. 22:14. This may also be St. Paul's meaning, when he says, Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure, or typical representation, which plainly pre-signified to him the resurrection of Christ from the dead, without a figure; that is literally, after he had been actually sacrificed for the sins of men. This appears to me as probable a sense as any. Yet, 3. Perhaps, it may mean, that when Jehovah appeared to Abraham in human form; and familiarly conversed with him, it was a prelude to his incarnation, and gave him a clear idea of the day of Christ's actual appearance in the flesh.

But in whatever sense he saw it, it was a very welcome and joyful sight to him; for Jesus further tells us, he saw it, and was glad. Light is sweet; but

no light was so sweet to Abraham's eyes as that of the day of the Son of Man. He saw him not as Simeon, when he took him in his arms, and wished that he might never take up anything else, but depart in peace from this world of sin and sorrow; but Abraham saw him in such a light, as to fill his heart with joy and gladness, though only through the medium of faith, and not of sense.

These remarks may suffice to explain the text, as it refers to this patriarch: but it is your personal advantage I aim at, and therefore I shall make some reflections upon it, as it may be accommodated to you: and the reflections are such as these:

That the dispensation of the gospel may be called a bright and illustrious day:

That it is a day which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of:

That good men earnestly desire clear discoveries of Jesus Christ, and his gospel:

That these desires shall be accomplished: and,

That the accomplishment of them affords great joy.

1. The dispensation of the gospel may be called a bright and illustrious day,

When John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was born, the morning-star arose, or, as his father Zacharias expresses it, The day-spring from on high visited us. Jesus is the Sun of righteousness, Mal. 4:2; the Light of the world, John 8:12, and chapter 12:46; a light to lighten Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel, Luke 2:32; and when he made his appearance in the world, then we are told, The people that sat in darkness saw great light; and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light sprung up.

Matt 4:16. To carry on the metaphor with uniformity the gospel is called the day of salvation, 2 Cor. 6:2; the light, 2 Cor. 4:4; a marvelous light, 1 Pet. 2:9; a true light shining, when the darkness is past, 1 John 2:8; and Christians are said to be light, Eph. 5:8.—the children of the light and the day. 1 Thess. 5:5.

There is good reason for the use of this significant metaphorical language; for as the day discovers the fair face of nature, and opens her lovely prospects to view, which were unseen while covered with darkness, so the gospel reveals the perfections of God, the wonderful scheme of Providence, the beauties of holiness, the nature of true religion, the duty of man in all its extent, the wonders of the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, and the method in which obnoxious sinners of the race of man may be reconciled to God, the prospects of life and immortality, and the important realities of the eternal world. All these are brought to light by the gospel, after they had long been concealed, or seen but faintly through the glimmering light of reason in the heathen, or the typical, or prophetic revelation of the Mosaic dispensation.

The gospel day, like a light shining in a dark place, pierces the darkness of the human heart, reveals the mysteries of iniquity, and the depths of Satan there, and discovers sin in all its native deformities. This penetrating light, when enforced by his power who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has flashed conviction upon many a secure conscience, and opened the most surprising discoveries to many a blind mind. The gospel, like clear day-light, shows us the way of duty and happiness, for which the world had long groped in darkness, so that now we may walk in it without stumbling; for if any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light. John 11:9,10.

Divine things are not only brought to light by the gospel, but also represented in the most amiable and engaging view; especially when there is not only a clear medium without, but the organ of spiritual vision, the mind, is rectified so as to be able to perceive those objects in this medium. If we should suppose a man had spent twenty years of his life in darkness, and never seen nature about him in that lovely and magnificent view in which it appears through the medium of light, and should he be suddenly brought into the light, how would he be overwhelmed with delightful astonishment at the first sight of the universe! What amazing prospects, what new and glorious wonders would open to his eyes! How different would the face of nature appear from the view he had of it while an inhabitant of darkness! Thus is the sinner surprised, when not only the gospel shines round him, but his mind is also enlightened to view divine things in that heavenly light. Then, as St. Peter expresses it, he is brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, 1 Pet. 2:9; a light that represents the most marvelous things to his astonished sight. Then in what a new and glorious light does the great God appear, and all the truths revealed in the gospel! What new and surprising views has he of himself, of sin, and of the eternal world! All is real, interesting, and affecting! Oh! My brethren, have you ever been introduced into this marvelous light? Or are you, like the birds of night, lovers and inhabitants of darkness still?

Again, In that darkness which overspread the world before the introduction of Christianity, the wicked spirits of hell, like beasts of prey, roamed this wilderness and discovered great power in their oracles, in possessing the bodies of men, &c. But when the gospel shone upon the world in its meridian glory, then these terrors of the night fled to their den, and could no more roam at large as they had done.

The day is the time for work and action; so the gospel day is the season to work out our salvation. It is not a time for sleep and sloth, but for labor and action. But this is the accepted time; this is the day of salvation.

This, my brethren, is the glorious and blessed day in which we live. Let us therefore inquire, Are we the children of the light and of the day? For this purpose inquire, whether it is day within, as well as without? That is, whether your minds have been divinely enlightened within, as the light of the gospel shines round you without? Is not that sacred light to some of you like the sun to a blind man? That is, it makes day without him, but all is dark to him, and he sees nothing. Are there not some of you blind to the glory of God in the gospel, to the evil of sin, and the great realities of the eternal world? The light shines indeed, but it shines in a thick malignant darkness, that comprehends it not; a darkness impenetrable even to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Is not your heart a dungeon of darkness, where the vilest lusts crawl, like toads and serpents? Do you not hate the light, and refuse to come into the light, lest your evil deeds should be reproved? Do you not practice the works of darkness, works that will not bear the public view, much less the examination of the supreme tribunal? Have you ever beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of the word made flesh, and dwelling among men, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth? Oh! Have you ever seen how lovely, how suitable, and how glorious that Savior is, who is revealed in the gospel? I beg you would put these questions home to your hearts, that you may know whether you are the children of the light, or whether you are in darkness even until now.

If you have hitherto chosen darkness rather than light, remember, the gospel, which has lightened many a pilgrim to heaven, will only show you

the way to hell, and bring you, as it were, to a more horrible precipice, from whence you will fall with a greater violence into the pit. If you perish from under the gospel, it will be with a peculiarly aggravated destruction. Tophet has been prepared of old; and, like a furnace, always supplied, it has been heating more and more for thousands of years, and now, under the gospel, it is heated more than ever; and the hottest place there is reserved for you, if you still resist the light, and continue in darkness. Oh! Remember who it was that made that awful declaration, This is the condemnation; that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. John 3:19. If the gospel be hid, it is only to them that are lost. 2 Cor. 4:3.

But I doubt not but sundry of you not only have day without, but within you: God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed are your eyes, for they see. And oh! What affecting sights have they seen? What vileness and deformity in sin! And what beauty in holiness! What corruption and depravity in yourselves, and what glory and excellency in God! What meanness and unworthiness in yourselves, and what loveliness, what all-perfect righteousness, with attractive glory in Jesus Christ! What vanity in this world, and what reality and importance in the world to come! Well, this day is but the dawn of immortal day, which you shall enjoy in heaven. You are children of light, and you are hastening to that world, where God himself shall be your light, and there shall be no more night. Therefore, walk as the children of light, and let your light so shine before men, that they, by seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Bless God that the gospel shines around you, and opens such discoveries to your view. To-day it shows you a feast of fat things for hungry souls; it shows you that strange sight, which struck all nature with horror, when it first appeared; I mean the Son of God hanging on a cross, and expiring there for guilty men. This ordinance is a bright ray of evangelical light; and it helps you to see the love and agonies of Jesus, the great atonement he made for sin, and the method of your pardon and salvation. Come then, ye children of light, come and gaze, and wonder at these astonishing sights!

Again, Since it is day-time with us, let us shake off slumber, and rise to work. Awake to righteousness, sinners! Awake, and call upon God, and betake yourselves to work: to the important, but long delayed and neglected work of salvation. The night of death is coming, when no man can work: then the Sun of righteousness will be set, and the day of the gospel be over, as to you; and the Lord will cause darkness, and your feet will stumble on the dark mountains, and the shadows of the everlasting night shall be stretched out over your heads. Now, therefore, rise and do the work of life: do it now, in this your day; or it must remain forever undone. And ye, who are children of the light, abound in the work of the Lord, while your day lasts. Never let him find you idle, but always busy in doing good. Do not you sleep, as do others; but watch and be sober. God has distinguished you with his grace, above thousands of his eminent servants; and this lays you under peculiar obligations of duty to him:—Which leads me to add,

II. That the dispensation of the gospel is a day, which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of.

The most that they generally know was, that religion should be much improved, and the world receive great advantage, by some illustrious persons that should arise; and they desired themselves to share in that

improvement and advantage. They had a general persuasion that God was reconcilable; but, oh! To know the person by whom, and the manner in which this reconciliation was to be brought about! They had many intimations that it was to be brought about by sacrifice, or the offering up the innocent for the guilty; but they wanted nearer views of this great mystery. They had ordinances of worship divinely instituted: but these were so expensive, burdensome, and comparatively carnal, that it is no wonder they looked forward with eager eyes to the time of reformation, when a more easy, spiritual and noble method of worship would be introduced: they hoped for happiness beyond the grave, and believed a future state of rewards and punishments; but the sanctions of the dispensations under which they lived, consisted so much in temporal rewards and punishments, as to render those of the world to come less clear and affecting. No wonder, then, they longed for gospel day, by which life alone and immortality are brought fully to light, and all doubts and suspicions entirely removed. In short, so much darkness, uncertainty and perplexity, attended many things of great importance, that are now clearly revealed, that it was natural and unavoidable for every good man that was concerned to please God, and enjoy his favor, to desire farther satisfaction, and look forward with eager eyes to the rising Sun, which should cast a divine light upon these interesting secrets.

Now this happiness, which they so ardently desired, we enjoy: and shall we make light of it, and neglect to improve our particular privileges? How would Abraham have rejoiced to hear what we hear this day, and sit down at the sacred table, which is now prepared for us! And shall we dare to neglect it, or attend upon it in a languid, careless, irreverent manner! Abraham would have willingly exchanged his personal converse with Jehovah, and



all his privileges as the patriarch of the Jewish church, for the privilege of the meanest Christian among us. And shall not we esteem and improve what he esteemed so very highly, and longed for so ardently! Brethren, if we do not all crowd into heaven in a body, it is our own fault in a peculiar degree. Our external advantages for religion are greater than those of Abraham, the friend of God: than those of Moses, who “conversed with him face to face, as a man with his friend;” of David, the man after God’s own heart: and of the many thousands that entered the gates of heaven, before Jesus left it to make his appearance in our world. And did they obtain salvation by a Redeemer so little known, and shall any of us perish, when he is so clearly revealed to us, and so explicitly proposed to our acceptance? God forbid! Whatever became of sinners in Canaan, or Greece, or Rome, where they had prophets or philosophers, but no Jesus to show them the path of life, oh! Let sinners in Hanover press into the kingdom of heaven. For shame, let them seek salvation, lest Jews and heathens, and all the world, rise up in judgment against them. But I observed from the text,

III. That good men earnestly desire clear discoveries of Christ and his gospel.

This was not peculiar to Abraham and the Old Testament saints, but it is common to all good men in all ages and countries: and if you belong to their number, this is your disposition. Oh! How you long to know more of Jesus, and dive deeper into the mysteries of his gospel! How are you mortified and grieved for your ignorance! And how sweet is every beam of heavenly light that breaks in upon your minds and discovers more of the glory of Christ to you, and the wonders of his gospel! This was your end (was it not?) in coming hither to-day; and for this end you intend to sit down at his table, even that you may see the Lord Jesus in an advantageous

point of view by faith, and be more charmed with his glories? Is not this what you desire and long for? Well, for your comfort, I can assure you,

IV. That these desires shall be accomplished.

Abraham desired to see Christ's day, and he saw it: his desires were fulfilled. And he was not the only one to whom divine veracity performed its promise, and divine goodness bestowed its bounties. No, the same blessing has been conferred upon every soul, in every age and country, that, like him, earnestly desired Jesus Christ. This desire pre-supposes a deep sense of our guilt and depravity, and of our inability to make atonement for our sins, or to sanctify our nature, and prepare ourselves for heaven, that region of perfect holiness: and it also implies a general conviction of the glory and excellency of Jesus Christ, and his suitableness to our case. Desires proceeding from such a sense of conviction, are lively and operative, and will set us in action to obtain the thing desired. They are not lazy, inactive desires, which persons profess, and yet remain all the day idle, and never exert their utmost strength in earnest endeavors to obtain an interest in Christ, as their supreme good and highest happiness. Such active desires are connected with the promises of eternal veracity, which almighty power will certainly perform. Therefore, fear not, ye that seek Jesus who was crucified. You shall not always pine away with hungry, eager desires and pantings for him, but your utmost wishes shall be accomplished, in the enjoyment of the good you desire. And if ever you have had any experience in this case, I need hardly tell you,

V. That the accomplishment of these desires affords great joy.

Abraham had his desire of seeing Christ's day fulfilled; and it inspired him with joy: he saw it and was glad. How transporting, to view the glory of God shining in the gospel! To contemplate the love, the grace, and all-

sufficient fulness of Jesus! To feel the lively emotions of proper affections towards him, and all those heavenly exercises of mind, which attend the sight of Jesus Christ in the gospel! What is heaven but the day of Christ; a brighter day indeed, but enlightened by the same sun that shines in the gospel; the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Rev. 21:23. Therefore as much as you enjoy of this sacred light, so much of heaven do you enjoy on earth.

And now, to conclude. You have heard of Jesus Christ, and of the disposition of Abraham, and all good men towards him. But is not this all mystery and unintelligible talk to some of you? You never have experienced anything like it. And can you expect salvation from a neglected, unknown Savior! Or are you able to save yourselves without him! Alas! Both are impossible. Therefore, my brethren, this day admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, be thoroughly convinced of your own unworthiness of salvation by natural means, or the guidance of your own wisdom, pray earnestly for spiritual help from above, in and through a glorious and all-powerful Mediator, and never be easy till you get out of darkness into day.

As for the children of light, let them surround the table of their Lord, and there place themselves under the warm, enlivening beams of the Sun of righteousness.

# *SERM. LIV. THE LAW AND GOSPEL.*

**G**al. 3:23.— *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

In such a time of general deadness and security as this, it may really afford me painful perplexity what subject to choose. Now this and now that occurs to my mind, and engages my thoughts to pursue it for a while; but after many fluctuations and perplexities, I have at length fixed upon this text, and determined to open to you the nature of the law and gospel, and your concern with each of them: and I have this encouragement, that this may be styled an Apostolic subject, by way of eminence, and is that very doctrine which did such mighty execution among the Jews and Gentiles, and converted thousands to the faith of Christ, upon the first publication of Christianity. The law and the gospel were the grand topics of St. Paul's preaching, if we may judge of his sermons by his Epistles; for in his Epistles, particularly those to the Romans and Galatians, he insists at large upon these subjects. These may also properly be called the doctrine of the reformation from Popery; for no sooner did that sacred light dawn, than it

began immediately to clear up the nature and the difference between the law and the gospel, and the condition of mankind as under the one or the other of these constitutions. Luther, in particular, made this the great scope of his preaching and writings; and he wrote an excellent commentary upon this epistle to the Galatians for this very purpose. And who knows but such a subject as this, which has been the ancient weapon for demolishing the kingdom of Satan, and wounding impenitent hearts, may do some execution, through the divine blessing, even when managed by my unskillful hand? Be the event what it will, in the name of the Lord, I would make the attempt.

I shall be the shorter at present, in explaining the text, because the whole of the following discourse will tend to reflect light upon it.

Faith, in my text, and in sundry places in this epistle, seems to have a complex signification: it signifies the object of faith, revealed in the gospel, or the method of salvation through faith in the righteousness of Christ; and it also signifies the grace of faith in the soul, or a hearty compliance with this way of salvation, so that this expression, before faith came, refers to the time before the doctrine of faith was revealed in the gospel to the Galatians, and before the grace of faith was wrought in their hearts. Here it may be proper to observe, that the members of the primitive church in general, and particularly that in Galatia, were brought under the gospel dispensation, and embraced the doctrine of the gospel by faith at one and the same time. But they were not, like us, educated under the gospel dispensation; for part of them had been Jews, educated under the Mosaic dispensation, which by way of eminence is frequently called the law; and, as they were under the legal dispensation, they were generally under the influence of a legal spirit;

that is, they sought for justification by their own works of obedience to that law.

Another part of them had been educated heathens, and were destitute at once of the revelation of the gospel, and of faith in it. Of this sort the generality of the Galatians had been. And yet St. Paul represents them also as having been under the law, not the Jewish or Mosaic law, which the Gentiles had no concern with, but the law of nature, which is universally binding upon all mankind. And as they were under this law, they were also possessed of a legal spirit; that is, they sought salvation by their own obedience to it, as the only way which they knew, and which was natural to them. But, when the gospel dispensation was set up in the world, and the doctrine of faith preached to them, they immediately believed, and so were freed from the outward dispensation of the law, and from a legal spirit at once; and they heard the doctrine, and received the outward dispensation of the gospel, and savingly believed, “at one and the same time.” Hence the apostle speaks of their being delivered from the dispensation of the law, and from a legal spirit, and of their being brought under the gospel dispensation, and cordially believing the gospel doctrine, in the same language “as one and the same thing;” and what he says is sometimes equally applicable to the outward dispensation and the inward temper denominated from it, and sometimes more pertinent to the one than to the other. So in my text, the time before faith came, is applicable to the state of the Galatians, while under the dispensation of the law, and under a legal or self-righteous temper; and while they had neither heard the doctrine of faith, nor received the grace of faith. And when in opposition to this (5:25) he observes, “after that faith is come, we are no longer under the law as a schoolmaster:” he means both after the preaching of the gospel, and after it was received by

faith. Many more instances of this might be given; particularly chap. 4:3,5; Rom. 7:1,7.

From hence we may infer, that what St. Paul says concerning the state of those that were under the law, as that “they are in bondage, shut up under sin, under the curse, that the law is their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ,” &c., is not to be confined to the Jews, or to persons in that age, but may in part, at least, be applied to us, though we have been educated under the gospel, and never were under the Jewish law; for we may be possessed of a legal spirit, though we live under the gospel, and never were subject to the Mosaic economy. Our observation also supported from hence, that the apostle represents the Galatians (the main body of whom were Gentiles, and had no more connection with the law of Moses than we) as under the law, under the curse of the law, &c., in this sense; and as freed from the law by their faith. Therefore, though the outward dispensation of faith came into our parts of the world before we were born, yet we may apply the text to ourselves and say, before faith came; that is, before faith came into our hearts; before the evangelical grace was wrought in us by the power of God, we were kept under the law; the original word is very emphatical, “we were prisoners under close confinement, we were held in custody by the law, as by a strong guard, to prevent all escape. We were shut up to the faith. Here again the original word is very emphatical, we were enclosed all round; every way of escape was stopped, but only that of faith; we were shut up to this way; in this way we were obliged to fly, or to continue forever bound fast under condemnation; shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed. This also may be accommodated to us, and signify the clear discovery of the gospel to our minds, as an object of faith, by that illumination of the Spirit, which is the cause of it. But it is more properly

and peculiarly applicable to the Galatians, while as yet the doctrine of faith in the gospel was not revealed to them. They were held in custody by the law till that happy time came, and then, upon their believing the gospel, they were set at liberty.

My present design is to lay down some propositions for the explication of the apostolic doctrine concerning the law and the gospel, that you may see in what sense mankind are kept prisoners by the law, under condemnation, and shut up to the faith; or to the method of justification, through the righteousness of Christ, as the only way of escape.

The propositions I would lay down are these: That all mankind in all ages are under a law to God: That this law was first given to man, in a state of innocence, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he was to obtain happiness: That it has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications in different ages: That this law requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience: That it is impossible for any of the sons of men to be justified and saved by this constitution: That therefore God has graciously made another constitution, namely, the gospel, by which sinners may be justified and saved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ: That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forsake it, and fly to the gospel for refuge by faith in Christ: And consequently, that they are shut up by the law to this method of salvation, as the only way of escape.

I. "All mankind, in all ages, are under a law to God." This can be denied by none who grant there is such a thing as sin or duty; for where there is no law, there can be no duty or transgression. If murder or blasphemy are universally evil with regard to all mankind, in all ages, it must be because they are forbidden by a law universally and perpetually binding. If the love



of God, or justice towards men, be a duty binding upon all mankind, in all ages, it must be because it is enjoined by some law of universal and perpetual obligation. This cannot be disputed with regard to the Jews, the subjects of the Mosaic law, who are said, by way of eminence, to be under the law: and the apostle infers, that those who lived between Adam and Moses were also under a law, from the punishment of death inflicted upon them; for as where there is no law, there can be no transgression, so where there is no law, there can be no punishment: for punishment is the execution of the penalty of the law upon an offender, for transgressing the precept. Thus St. Paul reasons, (Rom. 5:13,14,) until the law; that is, all the time from Adam's fall till the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, (about 2536 years,) sin was in the world; and consequently there was a law then in force; for sin is not imputed where there is no law. But sin was evidently imputed in that period; for though the Sinai law was not then published, "nevertheless death," the penalty of the law, "reigned with dreadful uncontrolled power, from Adam to Moses." Thus you see the patriarchal age was under a law to God. And as to the Gentiles, though they had not the revealed law, yet they were not lawless, but bound by the law of nature: of the contents of which their own reason and conscience informed them in the most important particulars. Thus St. Paul tells us, "that the Gentiles who have not the revealed law," perform by nature the part of a law, and therefore "are a law to themselves, the works of the law being written in their hearts." Rom. 2:14,15. As to us, who live under the gospel, "we are not," as the apostle observes, "without law to God, but under the law to Christ;" (1 Cor. 9:21,) that is, we are still under a law to God, with all those endearing obligations superadded, which result from the gracious gospel of Christ. And we cannot suppose the contrary, without supposing that the

gospel has put an end to all religion and morality, and set us at liberty to all manner of vice and impiety; for if we are still obliged to religion and virtue, it must be by some constitution that has the general nature of a law. St. Paul rejects the thought with horror, that the law is made void by the gospel. “Do we then make void the law by faith? Far be the thought, nay, we establish the law.” Rom. 3:31. This first proposition, therefore, is sufficiently evident, “That all mankind, in all ages, and under every dispensation of religion, are under a law to God.” Let us now advance a step farther:

II. This law was first of all given to man in a state of innocence, under the model of a covenant of works; that is, it was the constitution, by obedience to which he was to secure the favor of God, and to obtain everlasting felicity. It was his duty to observe it with a view to obtain immortality and happiness by it; and these blessings he was to secure by his own works of obedience. That the law was first published to man with this view, is evident from many passages of Scripture, particularly from that often repeated maxim of the apostle, “The man that doth these things shall live by them;” (Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12; see also Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ezek. 20:11,13,21;) nay, he tells us expressly “that the commandment was ordained unto life;” (Rom. 7:10,) that is, it was appointed as a plan by which man was to obtain life. Hence Christ assures the lawyer, who had repeated the substance of the law to him, “This do, and thou shalt live,” Luke 10:28. This implies, that if he fully obeyed the law, we would certainly obtain life by it, according to the original design of that constitution. And when St. Paul says, That the salvation of sinners was a thing which the law could not do, in that it was “weak through the flesh,” Rom. 7:3; it is implied, that it was not weak in itself, but fully sufficient to give life; only by the weakness of our flesh, we were not able to obey it,

and on this account it was not able to save us. This proposition also is sufficiently evident, that the law was first given to man in innocence, as a covenant of works, or as a constitution according to which he was to obtain life by his own works. I now proceed to the next proposition, and to show you,

III. That this law has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications, adapted to the various circumstances of mankind, and the designs of heaven towards them.

That you may more fully understand this, I would observe, by the way, that the law is either moral or positive. By the moral law, I mean that law which is founded upon the eternal reason of things, and that enjoins those duties which creatures under such and such circumstances owe to God, and to one another, and which necessarily flow from their relation to one another. Thus, love to God, and justice to mankind, are moral duties universally binding upon mankind in all circumstances, whether in a state of innocence, or in a state of sin; whether under the revealed law, or the law of nature. There can be no possible circumstances in which mankind are free from the obligation of such duties, and at liberty to commit the contrary sins. These are more properly the materials of a moral law. But there is another set of duties agreeable to the circumstances of fallen creatures under a dispensation of grace, which I may call evangelical morals; I mean repentance and reformation, and the utmost solicitude to re-obtain the forfeited favor of our Maker. These are universally binding upon mankind in their present state, and result from their circumstances, and consequently partake of the general nature of a moral law. By a positive law, I mean a law not necessarily resulting from the reason of things, and our relations and circumstances, but founded upon the will of the lawgiver, and adapted to

some particular occasion. Such was the appendage to the first covenant, “Thou shalt not eat of the tree of knowledge.” Such were the institution of sacrifices immediately after the fall, the ordinance of circumcision given to Abraham, and the various ceremonies of the law of Moses; and such are baptism and the Lord’s supper, and the institution of the first day of the week for the Christian Sabbath under the gospel. These ordinances are not binding in their own nature, and consequently they are not of universal or perpetual obligation, but they are in force when and where the lawgiver is pleased to appoint. And the moral law, under every dispensation, has had some of these institutions annexed to it; though in the state of innocence, and under the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, they are but few and easy.

I now resume the proposition, “That the law has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications.” With regard to Adam in his original state, it only required of him the duties naturally binding upon him, and adapted to his condition as an innocent creature, with this one positive precept added, that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge. This was its model while a covenant of works. But when man fell, it received several additions and modifications adapted to his circumstances, and subservient to the gospel, the new plan of life, which was immediately introduced, as I shall have occasion to observe more fully hereafter. Such was the early institution of sacrifices, to prefigure the grand atonement of Christ, which then took its rise, and thence spread through all nations, though they soon forgot its original design and evangelical reference. Thus the law continued for many hundred of years, from Adam’s fall to the deluge.’ After the deluge, it was given to Noah, with the institution of sacrifices continued, and the addition of some new laws, particularly the allowance of animal food, with the exception of blood. And

it is this addition of the law that was most strictly universal with regard to all mankind, who were the posterity of Noah, the second root of human nature, and who received it from him; though it was soon forgotten or adulterated with superstitions. After some time, when the knowledge and worship of the true God was lost in the world, he was pleased to separate Abraham from the idolatrous world, to set up his church in his family, and to continue the former edition of the law, with the addition of the sacred rite of circumcision, as a token of initiation in the church, and of the purification of the heart, and as a seal of the righteousness of faith. And this constitution continued in the posterity of Abraham for about four hundred and thirty years; when it was new-modelled and improved by a more full edition. A summary of the moral law was published with the utmost majesty and terror on Mount Sinai, and written by God himself on two tables of stone. But besides this moral law, and besides the positive institutions given to Adam, Noah, and Abraham, God was pleased to add a great variety of positive laws, concerning the manner of sacrificing, and the system of worship, concerning ceremonial pollutions, concerning the Jewish policy, or civil government of that people, and many other things: of all which we have a full account in the law of Moses.

This dispensation continued in force from that time for about 1525 years, till the ascension of Christ, and the day of Pentecost, when the more glorious dispensation of the gospel was introduced. It is often called the law, by way of eminence; and it is to this most perfect dispensation of the law that the apostle particularly refers, when disproving the possibility of a sinner's justification by the law. And it was to his purpose to have this particularly in view: for if a sinner could not be justified by this edition of the law, which was the most complete, and that in which the Jews peculiarly

gloried and trusted, it is evident that he cannot be justified by the law at all, under any form whatsoever. Now, though the gospel, or the covenant of grace, as I shall observe presently, was interwoven with this dispensation, as well as every other, and it was the great design of the law to be subservient to it, yet there was much of a covenant of works in this dispensation, and that in two respects. 1. In the dreadful majesty and terror of the publication from amidst the thunders and lightnings, and darkness of Sinai, which spread such a horror through the whole camp of Israel, and made even Moses confess, I exceedingly fear and quake. This had not the aspect of friendship: it did not appear as if God was amicably conversing with an innocent people, and setting up a constitution of mere grace among them. It rather appeared like a dispensation of a provoked God towards a guilty people, intended to strike terror into their impenitent hearts, to make them sensible of his awful majesty and justice, of the terror of his law, and of their aggravated breaches of it. There were indeed gracious designs at the bottom of all this: but they were such designs as could not be accomplished till sinners were made deeply sensible of their dreadful guilt, and the terrors of God and his holy law, which they had broken; and therefore to accomplish them, God puts on all these dreadful forms of wrath. Thus the Sinai dispensation was intended to prepare men for the method of salvation through Christ, by making them sensible of their miserable condition by the breach of the covenant of works; and hence, it had so much of the terrible aspect of the covenant of works in its promulgation. This is one thing the apostle means, when he says, the law worketh wrath, Rom. 4:15, that is, it is adapted to impress a sense of divine wrath upon the minds of the guilty. Hence he calls that dispensation the ministration of death and condemnation, 2 Cor. 3:7,9; that is, it had a tendency to excite a sense of

death and condemnation: and he makes Hagar, the bond-woman, an allegorical representation of this Sinai covenant, Gal. 4:24,25, because it was calculated to excite in sinners a spirit of bondage, or to strike them with a sense of slavery, terror, and condemnation. This view also clears up the meaning of several things which he says of the Jewish law as that it was added because of transgression, Gal. 3:19; that is, it was annexed to the covenant of grace, because it was necessary that sinners should be made deeply sensible of their guilt and condemnation by the breach of the law, in order to their seeking salvation in the way of grace through Christ. And hence, says he, the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, ver. 24; that is, the painful discipline and smarting rod of the law were necessary and conducive to constrain us to fly to Christ as the only Savior, without whom we were shut up under irreversible condemnation. And again, Rom. 5:20, the law entered, that the offence might abound; that is, that it might appear that the offence had abounded, and overspread the world; and, therefore, that they stood in the utmost need of a Savior.

Thus you see, the dispensation of the law at Sinai had the appearance of a broken covenant of works, and in this view was subservient to the gospel. But this was not all; for, 2. If we consider that covenant as the constitution of the Jewish church and state, and the model by which they were to govern themselves in the land of Canaan, it was properly a covenant of works. As a visible national church and civil society, God would reward or punish them in temporal things, according to and for their works. While they continued obedient to the external forms and institutions of this law, they were to hold their possessions in the land of Canaan; and, when they publicly violated this covenant, they were cast out of their possessions, and brought into slavery. These temporal possessions they held upon the footing of a

covenant of works; though such of them as were good men, were saved by quite a different constitution, even in the way of grace, and faith in Christ, as we are now, as I may have occasion to observe hereafter.

This remark will explain such places in the law and in the prophets, where we meet with such declarations as this, “If a man observe my statutes, he shall live in them;” of which you have more instances than one in the 18th chapter of Ezekiel. They are said to be “just,” &c., as members of the Jewish church and state, because they had observed the externals of that law, which was the constitution of their republic, and which in that view only, required an external obedience, which it was in their power to yield; and therefore they were entitled to life and its blessings, in the land of Canaan, according to that constitution. Indeed God seems to have governed not only the Jews, but all the kingdoms of the earth, considering them as civil societies, very much in this manner, upon the footing of a covenant of works. Spiritual and immortal blessings are bestowed upon individuals in every age in a way of grace, without regard to their personal works; and the holiness necessary to the enjoyment of them, is not merely outward, but in the whole soul; and it is God only that can work in them. But nations, as such, are under a kind of covenant of works, the condition of which is an external observance of the laws of God, which is in their power, without any special assistance from him; and as they perform or break this condition, temporal rewards and punishments are distributed to them by divine Providence. This thought brings me in mind of thee, O Virginia! O my country! For if God deal with thee upon this plan, how dreadful must be thy doom! But to return. This suggests to us another reason why the apostle so often speaks of the Mosaic law as a covenant of works; namely, because, considering it as the constitution of the Jewish republic in temporal



respects, it was really such; but it was never intended that the Jews should seek or obtain spiritual or immortal blessings by it under this notion. I have been so much longer than I expected on this proposition, that I must be the shorter on those that follow. The next proposition is,

IV. That the law of God requires perfect, perpetual and personal obedience. This holds true with regard to every law of God, whatever it be. If it requires purely moral duties, it requires that they be performed exactly according to its prescriptions. If it requires evangelical duties as repentance or sincerity, it requires perfect repentance, perfect sincerity. If it requires the observance of any ceremonial or sacramental institutions, as sacrifice, circumcision, baptism, or the Lord's Supper, it requires a perfect observance of them. Men have got the notion into their heads of a divine law that does not require perfect obedience, or that makes allowance for imperfection. But this is bad sense, as well as bad divinity. It is the greatest absurdity imaginable; for to say that a law does not require perfect obedience, is the same thing as to say, that it does not require what it does require: to do all that the law requires, is perfect obedience; and since it requires us to do all that it does require, it certainly does require perfect obedience; and if it does not require perfect obedience, it does not require all that it does require: which is a direct contradiction. In short, it is plain to common sense, that there never was, nor ever can be, any law, moral or positive, divine or human, that does not require perfect, absolute obedience. Farther, Is not every sin forbidden? Is not every duty enjoined? Undoubtedly it is: you are not at liberty to commit one sin, or to omit one duty, not even the least. Indeed the very notion of sin and duty supposes a law forbidding the one and enjoining the other; and they are just commensurate with the prohibitions and injunctions of the law. This is also the voice of Scripture.

That perfect obedience is required, appears from the dreadful curse pronounced upon every transgression for the least offence: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." Gal. 3:10. Not some subjects, but every one, of every rank and character, must not only resolve or endeavor, but must do, not some things, or many things, but all things written in the law; not for a time, or for the most part, but he must always continue to do them. And if he fail in one thing, in one moment of his existence, the penalty of the law is in full force against him, and he falls under the curse. His obedience must be universal, perpetual, and uninterrupted. There is the same reason for his obeying all in all things, and at all times, as for his obeying in anything, or at any time. And all this obedience the law requires of him in his own person: the law allows of no imputation of the righteousness of another; no obedience by proxy or substitute; it is the covenant of grace alone that allows of this, and the law must be so far dispensed with in order to make room for such a constitution.

This, my brethren, is the nature of the law, of every law that God ever made under every dispensation of religion, before the fall, and after the fall, before the law of Moses, under it, and under the gospel. In all ages, in all circumstances, and from all persons, it requires perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience: to the performance of this, it promises eternal life: but the sinner, by every the least failure, falls under its dreadful curse, and is cut off from all the promised blessings. And hence it most evidently follows,

V. That it is absolutely impossible for any of the fallen sons of men to be justified and saved by the constitution of the law. Take what dispensation of the law you please, the law of innocence, the law of Moses, or the moral part of the gospel, it is impossible for one of the fallen posterity of Adam to

be saved by it in any of these views; and the reason is plain, there is not one of them but what has broken it: there is not one of them that has yielded perfect obedience to it: and, therefore, there is not one of them but what is condemned by it, to suffer its dreadful penalty. This is so extremely plain from what has been said, that I need not insist upon the proof of it. I shall only subjoin the repeated declaration of the apostle, that “by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified.” Rom. 3:20. Gal. 2:16. And that “as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.” Gal. 3:10. Come, “ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law.” Gal. 4:21. Hark! How the thunders of Sinai roar against you as guilty sinners. Can you pretend that you have always perfectly obeyed the law? That you have never committed one sin, or neglected one duty?

Alas! You must hang down the head, and cry, guilty, guilty; for in many things you have all offended. Then, be it known unto you, there is no life by the law for you. Set about obedience with ever so much earnestness; repent, till you shed rivers of tears; fast, till you have reduced yourselves to skeletons; alas! All this will not do, if you expect life by your own obedience to the law; for all this is not that perfect obedience which it absolutely requires of all the sons of men; and whatever is short of this is nothing, and leaves you under its curse. You may make excuses to men, and to your own consciences, but the law will admit of none. Perfect obedience! Perfect obedience! Is its eternal cry; and till you can produce that, it condemns you to everlasting misery; and all your cries, and tears, and reformation, are to no purpose. Thus you are held in close custody by the law; you are shut up under condemnation by it. And is there no way of escape? No; there is no possible way of escape— but one; and that shall be the matter of the next proposition.

VI. That God has made another constitution, namely, the gospel, or the covenant of grace, by which even guilty sinners, condemned by the law, may be justified and saved by faith, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

According to this constitution there is encouragement for sinners to repent and use the means of grace; and all who are saved by it, are not only obliged to yield obedience to the law, but also enabled to do so with sincerity, though not to perfection. They are effectually taught by it “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly and godly in the world;” and, in short, holiness of heart and life is as effectually secured in this way as in any other. But then, here lies the difference; that all our obedience to the law, all our endeavors, all our repentance, prayers, and reformation; in short, all our good works, all our virtues and graces, are not at all the ground of our justification; they do not, in whole or in part, more or less, constitute our justifying righteousness; so that in justification we are considered as guilty, law-condemned sinners, entirely destitute of all personal righteousness; and we are pardoned and accepted, only and entirely upon account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to us, and accepted of God for us, as though it were our own. I say, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, or his yielding the most perfect obedience to the precept of the law, and suffering its dreadful penalty for us, or in our stead, is the only ground of our justification. This is a righteousness as perfect as the law of God requires. And consequently the law is not repealed when we are justified in this way; it is still in full force; and all its demands are answered by this righteousness, which is equal to the severest requisitions of the covenant of works; only it is dispensed with in one particular; namely, that whereas the law properly requires personal

obedience from every man for himself, now it accepts of the obedience of Christ as a surety in our stead, and is satisfied by his righteousness imputed to us, as though it were originally our own. But how do we obtain an interest in this righteousness? I answer, it is only obtained by a vigorous pursuit, and in the earnest use of the means of grace; but then all these endeavors of ours do not in the least entitle us to it, or it is not at all bestowed upon us on account of these endeavors; but the grand prerequisite, and that which has a peculiar concurrence in obtaining it, is an humble faith; that is, when a sinner, deeply sensible of his guilt, of his condemnation by the law, and of his own utter inability to do anything at all for his own justification; I say, when such an humble sinner, despairing of relief from himself, renounces all his own righteousness, and trusts only and entirely in the free grace of God in Jesus Christ; when he places all his dependence upon his righteousness only, and most earnestly desires that God would deal with him entirely upon that footing, then he believes; and then, and thus, this righteousness is made over to him, and accepted for him, and God no more views him as a law-condemned sinner, but as one that has a righteousness equal to all the demands of the law, and therefore he deals with him accordingly: he pronounces him just, and gives him a title to life and every blessing, as though he deserved it upon his own account, or had a claim to it upon the footing of his own obedience to the covenant of works.

My brethren, I am bold to pronounce this the gospel method of salvation; and, whatever skepticism and uncertainty I feel about many other things, I have not the least scruple to venture my soul, with all its guilt, and with all its immortal interest, upon this plan. If I have thoroughly searched the Scriptures for myself in any one point, it is in this. And could I but lay

before you all the evidence which has occurred to me in the search, I cannot but persuade myself it would be fully satisfactory to you all; but at present I can only point out to you a few passages. Acts 13:39. By Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, which was the most complete dispensation of the law. Rom. 3:21-38. Now the righteousness of God without the law (that is, the righteousness which does not at all consist in the works of the law, but is quite a different thing from it,) is manifested—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ. This you see is the way in which it comes unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference of Jew or Gentile here: all being freely justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law: so Rom. 4: To him that worketh, and on that account is considered as righteous, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt: he is not at all dealt with in the gospel method, which is entirely a plan of grace (ver. 4;) but to him that worketh not, with a view to his justification, and is not considered as entitled to it upon the account of his works, but believeth, humbly trusteth and dependeth upon him that justifieth the ungodly, upon him that considers the sinner, whatever previous endeavors he may have used, ungodly, and destitute of all personal righteousness, to such an humble believer, his faith is counted for righteousness; (ver. 5.) Even as David describeth the blessedness of that man, to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, &c., (ver. 6.) Gal. 2:15. We, says St. Paul, who are Jews by nature, (and therefore stand most fair for justification by the law, if it were possible) and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the [aw, but by the faith of Christ, even we have believed in

Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, (ver. 16.) These, my brethren, are but specimens of the many plain and express Scriptures that support this doctrine; and I think it plain, upon the whole, that if we can understand anything contained in that sacred book, we may safely conclude that this truth is contained in it.

Here I would hint, what I intended to enlarge upon, had the time allowed, that this is the only way in which any of the sons of Adam have been saved since the fall; and that this gracious scheme has run through all the dispensations of religion from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ; and that now, by the gospel, it is more fully and illustriously revealed, the object of a more distinct, particular, and explicit faith. Rom. 1:17. It was first published immediately after the first breach of the covenant of works, in that gracious promise, “The seed of the woman shall break the serpent’s head.” Gen. 3:15. It was communicated to Abraham in that promise. In thy seed; that is, as St. Paul teaches us to understand it, in Christ, who shall spring from thee according to the flesh, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16. Hence St. Paul tells us, that the Scripture, “foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham.” Gal. 3:8. This was, as it were, the substratum of all the ceremonies and institutions of the law of Moses; and, as was observed, the whole of this law, and the solemn and dreadful manner of its publication, were intended to subserve this scheme, by making men more sensible of their need of it, and constraining them to fly to it for refuge. The prophets also received this evangelical light, and continued to diffuse it around them, till the Sun of Righteousness arose; but all these discoveries

were but dark, when compared to the clearer revelation we have of it in the New Testament, particularly in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, which designedly treat upon it. However, they that lived under former dispensations, had light enough to direct them to place their trust in the mercy of God, and to look out with eager eyes for the Messiah, through whom alone they were justified, though they might not have distinct ideas of the way. Hence Abraham and David are mentioned by St. Paul as instances of the gospel-method of justification by faith in Christ. Rom. 4:1-7. I now proceed to another proposition.

VII. That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forsake it, and fly to the gospel for refuge by faith in Christ.

There are but two constitutions that God has set up in our world, by which mankind can obtain life, namely, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, or the law and gospel; and all mankind are under the one or the other. They are all either under the constitution which demands perfect obedience as the only title to life, and threatens death, eternal death, to the least failure; or under that which does indeed both require and enable them to yield sincere obedience, but does not insist upon our obedience at all as the ground of our acceptance and justification, but confers that honor entirely upon the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by the humble faith of a guilty, self-condemned, helpless, broken-hearted sinner. We are all of us, my brethren, under one or other of these constitutions; for to be from under both of them is the same thing as to be lawless, and to be under no plan of life at all. Now, we are under the law while we are under the government of a legal spirit; and we cannot be freed from it till we are brought off\* from all dependence upon the law, and constrained to choose the gospel-method of salvation as helpless, law-condemned sinners, by our



own personal act. We live under the gospel dispensation indeed, and were never under the law of Moses: and yet we may be under the law notwithstanding, as the Romans and Galatians were till they were set free by faith, though they had been heathens, and were never under the Mosaic dispensation. An outward dispensation is not the thing that makes the difference in this case. Many who lived under the dispensation of the law had an evangelical spirit, or faith in Christ, and therefore they were upon the gospel plan, and obtained salvation in the way of grace. And multitudes that live in the New Testament age, under the gospel administration of the covenant of grace, and who profess the Christian religion, and were never subjects to the law of Moses, are under the influence of a legal, self-righteous spirit, and therefore are not under grace, but under the law as a covenant of works; upon this footing they stand before God, and they can enter no claim to life upon any other plan. As for the righteousness of Christ, and the grace of the gospel, they have nothing to do with it, because they have not chosen it, and made it theirs by their own personal act.

And would you know whether you are set free from the law, and placed under the covenant of grace? St. Paul, who knew it both by his own experience, and by inspiration from heaven, will inform you. (1.) You have been made deeply sensible of sin and condemnation by the law. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20. I had not known sin but by the law, says St. Paul, personating a convinced sinner under the law, without the law. Rom. 8:7; that is, while I was ignorant of the extent and spirituality of the law, sin was dead, as to my sense and apprehension of it; but when the commandment came, with power and conviction to my conscience, sin revived, and I died; that is, I saw sin to be alive in me, and myself to be dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and condemned to death by the law, verse

9; the law also worketh wrath; that is, a sense of the wrath of God, and the dreadful punishment of sin; Rom. 4:14. And has the law ever had these effects upon you, my brethren? Have you ever had such a conviction of sin and condemnation by it? If not, you are still under it. (2.) If you have been delivered from the law, you have been cut off from all hopes of obtaining justification by your own obedience to it; you have given up this point as altogether desperate; or in the strong language of the apostle, you have been slain by the law. "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Rom. 8:9. My brethren, says the apostle to the Christians at Rome, ye are become dead to the law, verse 4, that is, ye are become dead to all endeavors, all hopes and desires of justification by the works of the law; you see nothing but death for you in that constitution. And he tells you how this death was brought about; "I through the law am dead to the law," Gal. 2:19; that is, the law itself became the executioner of all my hopes of life by it, and for ever put an end to all my endeavors to seek justification in that way: it was a view of the extensive demands of the law that discovered to me my own inability to comply with them, and so deadened me entirely to all expectations of life by my obedience to it.

And have you ever, my brethren, been thus slain by the law to the law? Have you ever been made sensible of the absolute impossibility of working out a justifying righteousness for yourselves by your own endeavors, and thereupon given up the point, as hopeless and desperate? If not, you are still under the law, and your hearts eagerly cling to it, and will not be divorced from it. Here you will hold and hang, till you drop into the bottomless pit, unless God deliver you from this legal spirit.

(3.) If you have been set at liberty from the law, and brought under the covenant of grace, you have believed in Christ, and fled to the gospel, as the

only way of escape from the bondage and condemnation of the law. It is the uniform doctrine of the apostle, that it is by faith only that this happy change is brought about in our condition.

“We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.” Gal. 2:16. But after faith is come, we are at liberty, and no longer under the law, as a schoolmaster. Gal. 4:25. “Righteousness shall be imputed to us also, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” Rom. 4:24. Faith, you see, is the turning point. And so it is represented by Christ himself. “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already,” John 3:18; he has sinned, and therefore the sentence of condemnation is already passed upon him by the law. And have you, my brethren, ever been brought thus to believe? Have you found yourselves shut up to the faith, as the only way of escape? And have you fled to the mercy of God in Christ in that way, with all the vigor of your souls?

(4.) If you are under the covenant of grace, then you are not willing slaves to sin, but make it your great business to live to God. This is represented as the privilege and constant endeavor of all that are delivered from the law. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, which requires obedience, but furnishes no strength to perform it, but under grace, which will enable you to resist sin, and live to God. Rom. 6:14. Ye are dead to the law, that ye might be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you might bring forth fruit unto God. This is the great design of your divorce from the law, and your marriage to Christ, Rom. 8:4. “I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” Gal. 2:19. And do you thus live to God, sirs? Is this the great business and constant endeavor of your whole life? If not, you are not under grace, but

under the law, the Egyptian task-master, who demands perfect obedience, but gives no ability to perform it; and now, you that are under the law, take a serious view of your condition. “They that are of faith are blessed,” Gal. 6:9; but faith has never entered your hearts, and therefore you have nothing to do with the blessing. But you may read your doom in the next verse: “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,” (verse 10,) for, “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Thus you lie under the ministration of death and condemnation, and you can never get free from its curse till you can perform impossibilities; till you can annihilate all your past sins, till you can transform your sinful life into an uninterrupted course of perfect obedience. Do this, and you shall live, even according to that constitution under which you are. But till you can do this, till you can yield perfect, perpetual obedience, in your own persons, you can never get free from the curse, or obtain life, while you affect this way of justification. I tell you again, all your prayers and tears, all your repentance and reformation; in short, everything that comes short of perfect obedience, will avail you nothing at all upon this constitution: they are but fig-leaves that cannot hide your nakedness. And do not imagine that the righteousness of Christ will supply your defects, and procure you acceptance; for his righteousness belongs only to the covenant of grace, and is imputed only to such as have received it by faith; but while you are under the law, you have nothing to do with it. St. Paul himself will tell you, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you would be justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace,” Gal. 5:4; you stand entirely upon your own bottom; and God will deal with you just as he finds you in yourselves, without any relation to Christ at all.

And now, my dear brethren, do you now begin to find yourselves pinched closely, and in a sore strait? Do you not feel yourselves imprisoned and shut up under the law? And are not you casting about, and looking out for some way of escape? Well, I will show you the only way left, and that is by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The gospel! The gospel! Oh that my voice could publish the joyful sound in every corner of this globe inhabited by guilty sinners! The gospel of grace is the only relief for you. Fly thither, ye helpless, law-condemned, self-condemned sinners; fly thither, and you are safe. As depraved and guilty, as ungodly and destitute of all righteousness, accept of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Cast all your dependence upon it, and make it the only ground of all your hopes. Regard the law always as a rule of life, and labor to form your practice upon that sacred model: but as a covenant of works, by' which you should obtain life, fly from it, abandon it, give up all your hopes and expectations from it: and betake yourselves to the covenant of grace, of pure, free, unmingled grace, without the least ingredient of merit. In this way, I offer you pardon, justification, and eternal salvation; and such of you as have chosen this way may be assured of these blessings, notwithstanding all your sins and imperfections. Oh! That this representation of your condition may recommend Jesus Christ and his righteousness to you! Oh! That it may effectually draw off sinners from all their vain, self-righteous schemes, which, like cobwebs, they would form out of their own bowels, and constrain them to stoop and submit to the righteousness of God, and the method of grace! If after all, they refuse, they will leave this house condemned and under the curse. But such of you as comply, like the penitent publican, you will return to your own house justified, however

guilty you came here this morning. I shall conclude with a stanza or two from that evangelical writer, Dr. Watts:

*Go, ye that rest upon the law,  
And toil, and seek salvation there;  
Look to the flames that Moses saw,  
And shrink, and tremble, and despair:  
But I'll retire beneath the cross;  
Jesus, at thy dear feet I lie;  
And the keen sword that justice draws,  
Flaming and red, shall pass me by.*

# SERM. LV. THE GOSPEL INVITATION.

**L**uke 14:21-24.— *Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.*

## A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

So vast and various are the blessings proposed to our acceptance in the gospel, that they can never be fully represented, though the utmost force of language be exhausted for that purpose in the sacred writings. Among other lively images, this is one in my context, where the gospel is compared to a feast, a marriage-feast of royal magnificence. The propriety and significancy of this representation are obvious at first sight; for what is

more rich and elegant, and what more agreeable to mankind, than such an entertainment!

Though it is my principle design to consider this parable in its general secondary sense, as applicable to the evangelized world, yet I shall hint a few words upon its particular primary sense, as immediately applicable to the Jews at the time it was spoken.

Jesus was ready to improve every occurrence for profitable conversation; and when one of the guests made this remark, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,” or in the reign of the Messiah; he takes occasion to let him and the rest of the company know, that the kingdom of God under the Messiah would not be so acceptable to the world, particularly to the Jews, as might be expected; but that they would generally reject it, though they pretended so eagerly to expect and desire it.

“He said unto him, A certain man made a great supper;” that is, the great God has made rich provisions through Jesus Christ of all blessings necessary for the complete salvation and happiness of a guilty world: “and he bade many;” that is, he invited the whole nation of the Jews to a participation of these blessings, when they should be revealed; invited them beforehand, by Moses and the prophets, and by John the Baptist. “And he sent his servant at supper time;” that is, he sent Christ and his apostles, when the gospel dispensation was introduced, and those blessings fully revealed, “to say to them that were bidden,” that is, to the Jews, who had been invited by his former messengers; alluding to the custom of those times, when, besides the general invitation to nuptial entertainments given some time before, it was usual to send a particular invitation when the feast was ready, and the attendance of the guests was immediately expected; “Come, for all things are now ready.” Embrace the long-expected Messiah,



who has now made his appearance among you, and accept the blessings he offers you now, when they are fully revealed. “But they all, with one consent, began to make excuse;” that is, the Jews in general rejected the Messiah, and the blessings he proposed to their acceptance. The true reason was, their natural aversion to one who taught so holy a religion, and proposed only a spiritual deliverance. But they cover over their conduct with plausible excuses; as if the guests, invited to a banquet, should say, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it;” or, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and go to prove them;” or, “I have married a wife, and cannot come; therefore, pray excuse me.” These excuses, you see, are all drawn from the affairs of life; which perhaps was intended to intimate, that the pleasures and cares of this world are the reason why the Jews and sinners in all ages reject the invitations of the gospel. It is also observable, that the excuses here made are very trifling and not plausible. What necessity for viewing a piece of ground, or proving oxen, after the purchase? That ought to have been done before the purchase. Could a man’s being newly married be a reason against his going with his bride to a place of feasting and pleasure? No; these excuses are silly and impertinent; and Christ may have represented them in this light, on purpose to intimate, that all the objections and excuses which sinners plead for their non-compliance with the gospel, are trifling, and not so much as plausible.

Then the Master of the house being angry; that is, “the great God resenting the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and determining to reject them for it, said to his servant;” that is, gave the commission to his apostles, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city,” where beggars sit to ask charity, “and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Perhaps this may refer to the sending of the gospel to the Jews that

were dispersed in heathen countries, and their proselytes, when their countrymen in the Holy Land had rejected it. They were not in the highways and hedges, like the poor Gentiles, nor yet settled in the houses in Jerusalem, but are very properly represented as beggars in the streets and alleys of the city; not in such abandoned circumstances as the Gentiles, nor yet so advantageously situated as the Jews in their own land, under the immediate ministry of the apostles. The first invitation is represented as given to persons of fashion, to intimate the superior advantages of the Jews, resident in Judea, to whom the gospel was first preached. And those dispersed among the Gentiles are represented as lying in the streets and lanes, as poor, maimed, halt, and blind beggars, to signify their miserable condition in common with all mankind, without the blessings of the gospel; and their disadvantageous situation, compared with the Jews in and about Jerusalem. Or perhaps sending the invitation to those poor creatures, when they first had rejected it, may signify the first preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, upon the Jews rejecting it. And then the servant being ordered to go out again, not into the streets and lanes of the city, as before, but into the highways and hedges, may signify the farther preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, who were far off from the church, the city of God, and like poor country beggars, lying as outcasts upon the public roads. But if we understand the former passage in the first sense, as signifying the publication of the gospel to the Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, and to their proselytes, then this second mission of the servant must signify the sending of the gospel for the first time to the Gentiles, after both the Jews resident in their own country, and those scattered in other nations had rejected it. The parable concludes with a terrible denunciation against those who had refused the invitation: “None of those men which were bidden

shall taste of my supper;” that is, “The infidel Jews, though first invited, shall never enjoy the blessings of the gospel; but my church shall be furnished with members from among the poor outcast heathens, rather than such should continue in it.”

These things must suffice to show you the primary meaning of this parable, as applicable to the Jews of that age; and the reception of the Gentiles into the church in their stead. But I intend to consider it in a more extensive sense as applicable to us in these latter times.

Before I enter upon the consideration of this passage, it is necessary I should clear up an inquiry or two, which may reflect light upon the whole.

What are those blessings of the gospel which are here represented by a marriage feast? And, What is meant by the duty here represented by a compliance with an invitation to such a feast?

These blessings, here represented by a marriage-feast, are infinitely rich and numerous. Pardon of sin; a free and full pardon for thousands, millions of the most aggravated sins; the influences of the Holy Spirit to sanctify our depraved natures, to subdue our sins, and implant and cherish in our hearts every grace and virtue; freedom from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and favorable access to the blessed God, and sweet communion with him, through Jesus Christ, even in this world; the reviving communications of divine love, to sweeten the affections of life; and the constant assistance of divine grace to bear us up under every burden, and to enable us to persevere in the midst of many temptations to apostacy, deliverance from hell, and all the consequences of sin; and a title to heaven, and all its inconceivable joys; in short, complete salvation in due time, and everlasting happiness equal to the largest capacities of our nature. This is a short view of the blessings of the gospel. But the riches of Christ are unsearchable; and human language

can never represent them fully to view. But from the little that we know of them, do they not appear perfectly suited to our necessities; and such as we would ask of God, should he give us leave to ask what we please?

These blessings are represented to us in a striking and sensible manner in the Lord's Supper; and hence you see with what propriety it is called a feast. It is a rich entertainment for hungry souls; and the blessings which it signifies, and the conveyance of which it seals to believers, satisfy the most eager desires, and fully support and cherish the spiritual life. This, indeed, is not the feast primarily intended in this parable; for the Lord's Supper was not instituted when this parable was spoken; yet most of the things contained in it may very properly be accommodated to this ordinance.

You see the feast to which we are invited, namely the rich blessings of the gospel. And now let us inquire, What is meant by the duty here represented by a compliance with an invitation to a marriage-feast?

It supposes a deep, affecting sense of our want of these blessings, and of our perishing condition without them; It supposes eager desires after them, and vigorous endeavors to obtain them. It supposes a willingness to abandon everything inconsistent with them; and it implies a cordial willingness to accept of them as they were offered; for to pretend to be willing to receive them, and yet refuse the terms upon which they are offered, is the greatest absurdity. And how are they offered? They are offered freely; and therefore freely we must receive them, if we receive them at all. We must not offer our own imaginary merit to purchase them; but take them as free gifts to us, purchased entirely by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They are offered conjunctly; that is, in an inseparable conjunction with one another. Pardon and sanctifying grace, holiness and happiness, deliverance from the power, the pleasures, and the profits of sin,

as well as from hell and the punishment of sin, the cross and the crown, self-denial and the most noble self-possession, are proposed to our choice in conjunction, and they cannot be separated; and, therefore, in conjunction we must receive them, or not at all; we must receive them all or none. To accept the pardon, and reject sanctifying grace; to accept the rewards, and refuse the work of holiness; to accept deliverance from the punishment of sin, and yet refuse deliverance from sin itself, as though it were a painful confinement, or bereavement; to accept of Christ as our Savior, and reject him as our Ruler; this is the wildest absurdity, and absolute impossibility. To pretend to accept God's offer, and in the meantime to make our own terms, is to insult and mock him. What God and the nature of things have joined, let no man put asunder.

Hence you may see, that the duty represented by complying with an invitation to a marriage feast, in this parable, implies our embracing the gospel as true, which is opposed to the unbelief of the Jews; our accepting the blessings of the gospel freely, as the gracious gift of God for the sake of Christ, renouncing all our own imaginary merit; and our voluntary dedication of ourselves to the service of God, or consenting to be holy in heart and in all manner of conversation. Whoever complies with the invitations to the gospel in this manner, shall be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb at the consummation of all things, and be happy for ever.

Now, I hope you will know what I mean, when, in the progress of this discourse, I shall exhort you in the language of my text, to come to this feast, or to comply with the invitation; I mean, that you should freely and heartily accept of the blessings of the gospel, as they are offered to you by the blessed God, who alone has a right to appoint the terms.

After these preliminaries, I proceed to the immediate consideration of my text.

The first thing that occurs, is a lively representation of the wretched state of mankind, previous to their being enriched with the blessings of the gospel. They are poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind, lying as beggars and outcasts in the streets and lanes of the city, and by the highways and hedges in the country. What can represent a more pitiable condition, with regard to this world? To be poor, maimed, halt and blind, in a palace, in the midst of all the necessities and comforts of life, is a most melancholy situation; but to be poor, maimed, halt and blind, in the streets and lanes, or scattered about in the highways and hedges, as forlorn outcasts, without any covering but the inclement sky, without any bed but the cold ground, without any sustenance but the charity of passengers; this is the most melancholy situation that can be imagined: and this is the situation in which all mankind are represented, with regard to the eternal world, by one that perfectly knew their case, and who could not but give the most impartial account of it. This is your condition, my brethren, till you accept the rich blessings of the gospel. You are poor, poor as the most helpless beggar on the highway; destitute of pardon; destitute of all real goodness in the sight of God, whatever splendid appearance of virtue you may have in the sight of men: destitute of all qualifications for heaven, as well as of a title to it; destitute of all happiness suited to the spiritual nature, immortal duration, and large capacities of your souls: destitute of the favor of God, which is better than life, and without which life itself will be a curse; destitute of an interest in the righteousness and intercession of Christ the only Savior of sinners; destitute of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make you truly holy. And what a poor, destitute condition is this? You

are maimed and defective, in a moral sense; defective in those graces and virtues which are essential members of the new man. Your souls are incomplete, unfinished things. Your understandings without divine knowledge; your wills without a divine bias towards God and holiness; your affections without a proper tendency towards suitable objects; and these are as monstrous defects in a moral sense, as a body without limbs, or a head without eyes in a natural sense. You are halt or lame: without power of spiritual motion, or tendency towards it; without strength or inclination to walk in the ways of God's commandments. You are blind as to spiritual and eternal things; that is, ignorant of the glory of God, and the excellency of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him; ignorant of the evil and deformity of sin; and blind to the beauties of holiness. You may indeed have fine speculative notions about these things; but your notions are faint and unaffecting, and have no proper influence upon your heart and practice, and therefore, as to all the useful and practical purposes of knowledge, you are stupidly blind and ignorant. Oh! What an affecting, miserable situation is this! And what renders it still the worse is, that you are not sensible of it. The poor, blind, impotent beggar in the streets, or on the high-road, is sensible of his condition, longs for deliverance, and begs and cries for relief from day to day. But, alas! You are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, in your imagination; when you are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. And hence you are so far from crying importunately for relief, like blind Bartimeus by the wayside, "Jesus thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" that you will not accept relief when it is freely offered to you.

And are not you very unlikely guests to furnish out a nuptial feast? May not the great God justly leave you out in the invitation of the gospel, and

refuse you the offer of its invaluable blessings? But, oh! The astonishing condescension and grace! To you is the word of salvation sent. Hear the commission first given to the apostles, and still continued to ministers of the gospel of a lower rank, Go out—go out quickly, the case is too dangerous to admit of delay. Without immediate provision the poor outcasts will perish, therefore make haste to find them out wherever they lie, and think it no hardship or indignity to you to go to the meanest places in quest of them. Go through the streets and alleys of the city, and search the hedges and highways in the country; and bring them in; urge them to come; insist upon their compliance: take no denial. Bring them in hither—hither, into the arms of my favor;—hither, into my church, the grand apartment appointed for the celebration of this magnificent entertainment;—hither, into the society of the most honorable guests, and into a participation of the richest blessings. Bring them in hither, poor, and blind, and lame, and halt, and maimed, as they are. They are all welcome. Him that cometh unto me, though clothed in rags, and destitute of all things, I will in no wise cast out.

To discharge this benevolent commission, I appear among you this day; and shall I find none among you that will comply with the invitation? Where are the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind? In quest of you I am sent; and I am ordered to bring you in. And will ye refuse? Come, ye poor! Accept the unsearchable riches of Christ. Come, ye blind! Admit the healing light of the Sun of Righteousness. Ye halt and maimed! Submit yourselves to him, who, as a Physician, can heal what is disordered, and as a Creator, can add what is wanting. Come, ye hungry, starving souls! Come to this feast of fat things: that is, (to speak without a metaphor,) accept the blessings of the gospel now freely offered to you. “Ho! Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy



wine and milk, without money, and without price.” Will ye rather sit still in the streets and hedges, than be guests at this divine feast? Will ye refuse the invitation, when without these blessings you must famish forever?

However, if ye refuse, I hope I shall be able to make my report to my Master, like the servant in my text, “Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.” “Lord, I have published thy gracious invitations, and persuaded them, in the best manner I could, to come in; and if they still refuse, themselves must be accountable for it, and bear the consequence.”

But I must indulge the pleasing hope, that some of you will this day accept this gracious invitation; and such of you may be sure you shall be admitted. Nay, if all this assembly should unanimously consent, they would find the blessings of the gospel more than sufficient to supply all their wants. For after the servant had brought in a numerous company of guests from the streets and lanes, he tells his Lord, yet there is room; there is room for many more guests. There are many seats still vacant; the room is large, and will contain many more; and the provision is sufficient, more than sufficient, for thousands, for millions more. Yes, my dear brethren, be not discouraged from coming, as if there was no room left for you. The virtue of that blood which streamed upon Mount Calvary about 1700 years ago, which has washed away many millions of sins, from the fall of Adam to this day, through the space of near 6000 years; I say, the virtue of that blood is still as powerful and sufficient as ever; as powerful and sufficient as when it first flowed warm from the wounded veins of the blessed Jesus.

The mercy of God endureth forever. It is an inexhaustible ocean, sufficient to overwhelm and drown a world of the most mountainous sins, and supply the most numerous and desperate necessities. The church of Christ is sufficiently large for the reception of all the inhabitants of the

earth, and it is a growing structure, which never will be complete, till all nations are incorporated in it as living stones. In heaven are many mansions, prepared for the reception of many guests to the marriage-supper of the Lamb: and many of them are as yet empty; and may they be filled up by multitudes from this place! There, I hope, are seats provided for some of you, who are now strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise. I do not mean that you can be admitted there in your present condition: neither you nor I have any reason to hope for this; but I hope that divine grace may yet prepare you for those mansions of purity and glory. This hope gives a new spring to my endeavors, and therefore I invite the worst of you, the most impenitent and audacious, the most profligate and debauched among you, to come in. Come, O my guilty brethren! Come, publicans and sinners, drunkards, harlots, and thieves; come, sinners of the vilest characters, repent and believe the gospel, you shall be admitted to this celestial feast. Oh! Must it not break the heart of the hardest sinner among you, to hear, that, after all your aggravated and long-continued provocations, and notwithstanding your enormous guilt, that great God whom you have offended, though he stand in no need of you, and might easily glorify himself by inflicting righteous punishment upon you, yet is ready to wash away all your sins in the blood of his own Son, and to bestow upon you all the immortal blessings of his favor? Oh! Is there a heart among you proof against such a melting consideration as this? Then all the principles of generosity and gratitude are lost and extinct within you!

I proclaim to all in this assembly this day, “all things are now ready; come unto the marriage.” And why should you not all comply? Why should any one of you exclude yourselves? Let everyone resolve for himself, “for my part, I will not make myself that shocking exception.” How do you know

but this resolution is now forming in the person that sits or stands next to you? And shall you be left behind? Will you, as it were, shut the door of heaven against yourselves with your own hand? I once more assure you, there is yet room, room for you all. There are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the patriarchs, and yet there is room. There are many from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and yet there is room. There are persecuting Manasseh and Paul; there are Mary Magdalene, the demoniac, and Zaccheus, the publican, and yet there is room. There is the once incestuous and excommunicated, but afterwards penitent, Corinthian; nay, there are several of the Corinthians; who, as St. Paul tells us, were once fornicators, idolaters, effeminate, Sodomites, covetous, thieves, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, yet there they now are, “washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;” and there may you also be, though vile as they, if, with them, you come in at the call of the gospel: for yet there is room. There is, says St. John, Rev. 7:9, a “great multitude, which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation,” multitudes from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; and yet there is room. There is room for you, poor negroes! And for you, I hope, some vacant seats in heaven, are reserved. Therefore, “I turn to the Gentiles; for to you also is the word of this salvation sent.” You may, with peculiar propriety, be represented by the poor, the blind, the halt, and maimed, in the highways and hedges. To you, therefore, I am sent with the offer of all the rich blessings of the gospel: and let me tell you, you are in extreme need of them, whether you feel your want or not; you need them more than liberty, than food, than health, than life itself; and without them you must perish forever. Come then, let this feast be adorned with your sable countenances, and furnished with guests from the savage wilds of

Africa. Do not mistake me, as if I was just now inviting you to sit down at the Lord's table: alas! Many have sat there who are now banished forever from that Savior, whom they professed to commemorate; and shut up in the prison of hell. But I am inviting you to accept of the blessings of the gospel, which I have briefly explained to you. A hearty consent to this, and nothing short of it, will save you. Come then, ye poor Africans, come add yourselves to the guests at this divine entertainment; for yet there is room for you, and you are as welcome as kings and princes.

There being so much room left unoccupied in the spacious apartment, is represented as an excitement to the Master of the feast to send out his servant to invite more guests: for when the servant had made this report, the Master immediately orders him to "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his house might be filled." He could not bear it, that the seats about his table should be empty, or his provisions be lost for want of guests. So the blessed God will not suffer the death of his Son to be in vain, nor the mansions he has prepared to be empty. That Jesus may see his spiritual seed, and the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and that the heavenly mansions he has prepared may be furnished with guests, God has appointed the ministry of the gospel, and the means of grace, to be continued from age to age; for this end he exercises a providential government over the world, and manages all its affairs in subserviency to the grand scheme of redemption, for peopling the heavenly world with colonies transplanted from our guilty globe. For this he has continued our sinful world, so ripe for destruction, through the space of near six thousand years; and he will not be defeated in his purpose. If you and thousands more should refuse, yet his feast shall be furnished with guests. He will send it, where thousands of perishing sinners will eagerly embrace it, and obtain

eternal salvation by it. But oh! How deplorable will be your loss! Since his house shall and must be filled, oh! Why should it not be filled from Virginia, and particularly from among you, my dear people? Will you not make trial, whether there be not seats prepared in heaven for you? Whether there be not room in the arms of divine mercy for you? Whether the blood of Christ has not efficacy to procure pardon and life even for you, great sinners as you are? We meet together in the house of God on earth; and many of us sit down together at his table. And oh! Why should we not all meet together at the great supper of the Lamb in heaven?

Compel them to come in. Overcome them with arguments, subdue them with persuasions and entreaties, take no denial; never give over till you prevail. This is the commission of gospel-ministers: and oh! That one of the meanest of them may be enabled to act according to it!

The patrons of persecution, those common enemies of liberty, religion, and human nature, have tortured this text to speak in their favor: and it has been their misfortune to be confirmed in their savage sentiment by the opinion of good St. Augustine, who understood it as authorizing and even requiring the propagation of Christianity, and the suppression of erroneous opinions, by the terrors of the secular power. In answer to this, I might observe, that we often find the word here rendered compel used in such a mild sense, as to signify only a compulsion by argument and entreaty. But it is sufficient to observe, that it is evident Christ never commissioned his apostles, nor did they ever pretend to propagate his religion, like Mahomet, with a sword in their hand, but by dint of evidence, and the power of the Holy Spirit:—and, indeed, no other arms were fit to propagate a rational religion. The terrors of the secular arm may scare men into the profession of a religion, but they have no tendency to enlighten the understanding, or

produce a real faith; and therefore they are fitted only to make hypocrites, but can never make one genuine, rational Christian. The weapons of the apostolic warfare, which were so mighty through God, were miracles, reasoning, entreaty, and the love of a crucified Savior; and these were adapted to the nature of the human mind, to subdue it without violence, and sweetly captivate every thought into obedience to Christ.

These weapons, as far as they may be used in our age, I would try upon you. I would compel you to come in, by considerations so weighty and affecting, that they must prevail, unless reason, gratitude, and every generous principle be entirely lost within you. By the consideration of your own extreme, perishing necessity; by the consideration of the freeness, the fulness, and sufficiency of the blessings offered; by the dread authority, by the mercy and love of the God that made you, and who is your constant Benefactor; by the meekness and gentleness of Christ; by the labors and toils of his life; by the agonies of his death; by his repeated injunctions, and by his melting invitations; by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon your hearts, and by the warnings of your own consciences; by the eternal joys of heaven, and the eternal pains of hell; by these considerations, and by everything sacred, important, and dear to you, I exhort, I entreat, I charge, I adjure you, I would compel you to come in. Come in, that these rich provisions may not be lost for want of partakers, and that God's house may be completely furnished with guests. As yet there is room; as yet the guests are invited; as yet the door is not shut. The number of those who shall enjoy this great salvation is not yet made up. But, ere long, the ministry of the gospel will be withdrawn, the servants be recalled, and no longer be sent to search for you. The door of heaven will be shut against all the workers of iniquity. Therefore, now is the time to come in.

I shall only urge, as another persuasive, the awful denunciation that concludes my text; I say unto you, none of those men who were bidden, and refused the invitation, shall so much as taste of my supper; that is, none who now refuse to receive the blessings of the gospel, as they are offered, shall ever enjoy any of them; but must consume away a miserable eternity in the want of all that is good and happy.

# SERM. LVI. THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION, AND THE NATURE AND CONCERN OF FAITH IN IT.

**R**om. 1:16,17.— *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. [Or, therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed to faith.]*

However little the gospel of Christ is esteemed in the world, it is certainly the most gracious and important dispensation of God towards the sons of men, or else our Bible is mere extravagance and fable; for the Bible speaks of it with the highest encomiums, and the sacred writers are often in transports when they mention it. It is called the gospel of the grace of God, Acts 20:24; the gospel of salvation, Eph. 1:13; the glorious gospel, or, the gospel of the glory of Christ, 2 Cor. 4:4; the gospel of peace, Eph. 6:15; nay, its very name has something endearing in the sound, [Εὐαγγέλιον,] good tidings, joyful news. It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, 1 Cor. 2:7;



the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations, Col. 1:26; the ministration of the Spirit, and of righteousness, which far exceeds all former dispensations in glory. 2 Cor. 3:8,9. And it is represented as the only scheme for the salvation of sinners. When the wisdom of the world had used its utmost efforts in vain, it pleased God, by the despised preaching of this humble gospel, to save them that believe. 1 Cor. 1:21. In my text it is called “the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.” St. Paul, though the humblest man that ever lived, declares he would not be ashamed of professing and preaching the gospel of Christ, even in Rome, the metropolis of the world, the seat of learning, politeness, and grandeur. He represents it as a catholicon, a universal remedy, equally adapted to Jews and Greeks, to the posterity of Abraham, and to the numerous Gentile nations, and equally needed by them all.

Now this must be all extravagance and ostentatious parade, unless there be something peculiarly glorious and endearing in the gospel. It must certainly give the most illustrious display of the divine perfections; it must be the most grand contrivance of infinite wisdom; the most rich and amazing exertion of unbounded goodness; and particularly, it must bear the most favorable aspect upon the guilty sons of men, and be the best, nay, the only scheme for their salvation. And what are the glorious peculiarities, what are the endearing recommendations of this gospel? One of them, in which we are nearly interested, strikes our eyes in my text, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” Here let us inquire into the meaning of the expressions, and point out the connection.

The righteousness of God has generally one uniform signification in the writings of St. Paul; and by it he means that righteousness, upon the account of which a sinner is justified; that righteousness for the sake of which his

sins are forgiven, and he is restored to the divine favor: in short, it is our only justifying righteousness. It may be called the righteousness of God, to distinguish it from our own personal righteousness; it is the righteousness of God, a complete, perfect, divine, and God-like righteousness, and not the mean, imperfect, scanty righteousness of sinful, guilty men. So it seems to be taken, Rom. 10:3. “Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God;” where the righteousness of God is directly opposed to, and distinguished from, their own righteousness.

The various descriptions of this righteousness, and of justification by it, which we find in the apostolic writings, may assist us to understand the nature of it; and, therefore, it may be proper for me to lay them before you in one view. It is frequently called the righteousness of Christ; and it is said to consist in his obedience; by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, Rom. 5:19. Now obedience consists in the strict observance of a law; and, consequently, the obedience of Christ, which is our justifying righteousness, consists in his obedience to the law of God. Hence he is said to be “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Rom. 10:4,5. To be justified by his righteousness is the same thing as to be justified by his blood, Rom. 5:9; to be reconciled to God by his death, &c., ver. 10. From whence we may learn, that the sufferings of Christ are a principal part of this righteousness; or, that he not only obeyed the precept, but also endured the penalty of the divine law in our stead; and that it is only on this account we can be justified.

This righteousness is called the righteousness of God without the law, Rom. 3:21; an imputed righteousness without works, Rom. 4:6. And it is plain, from the whole tenor of this epistle, and that to the Galatians, that the

righteousness by which we are justified, is entirely different from our own obedience to the law: and hence we may learn, that our own merit or good works do not in whole or in part constitute our justifying righteousness; but that it is wholly, entirely, and exclusively the merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings.

This righteousness is often called the righteousness of faith. Thus, according to some, it is denominated in my text, which may be thus rendered, "For in it the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith;" and this is most agreeable to the phraseology of this epistle. Others, following our translation—or the apparent order of the original, understand it in another sense; yet still so as to assign faith a peculiar concern in the affair. "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;" that is, according to some, it is entirely and all through by faith; or, from one degree of faith to another; or from faith to faith, from believer to believer, all the world over, among the Jews and Gentiles; or from the faithfulness of God in the word, to the grace of faith in the heart. You see that whatever sense you put upon this difficult phrase, it still coincides with or countenances the translation, which I would rather choose. "The righteousness of faith is revealed to faith." So it is expressly called in Romans 3:22, "The righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ." See chap. 4:11,13,10:6; Phil. 3:9. "Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." From whence we may infer, that faith has a peculiar concurrence of instrumentality in our justification by the righteousness of Christ.

My text further observes that in the gospel this justifying righteousness is revealed to faith; that is, in the gospel it is clearly discovered, proposed, and

offered as an object of faith. The light of nature is all darkness and uncertainty on this important point; it can only offer obscure and mistaken conjectures concerning the method of pardon and acceptance for a guilty sinner; it leaves the anxious conscience still unsatisfied and perplexed with the grand inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? How shall such a guilty creature as I reobtain the favor of my provoked Sovereign?" It may suggest some plausible things in favor of repentance, as the only method of pardon; it may flatter the sinner, that a God of infinite goodness will not rigorously execute his law; and it may draw a veil over the attribute of his justice; and thus it may build the hopes of the sinner upon the ruin of the divine government, and the dishonor of the divine perfections. But a method of justification by the righteousness of another, by the obedience and death of an incarnate God; by his perfect obedience to the law, and complete satisfaction to justice, instead of the sinner; a method in which sin may be pardoned, and in the meantime, the honors of the divine government advanced, and the divine perfections gloriously illustrated; this is a mystery, which was hid from ages and generations; this was a grand secret, which all the sages and philosophers, and all the sons of men, who had nothing but the light of nature for their guide, could not discover, nor indeed so much as guess at. This scheme was as far above their thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. Nothing but infinite wisdom could contrive it: nothing but omniscience could reveal it. In the writings of Moses and the prophets, indeed, we meet with some glimmerings of it; some few rays of gospel-light were reflected back from the Sun of Righteousness, through the dark medium of three or four thousand years, and shone upon the minds of the Jews, in the sacrifices, and other significant types of the law, and in the prophecies of the Old Testament writers; and hence the apostle says, that

“the righteousness of God is witnessed by the law and the prophets,” Rom. 3:21; but it is in the gospel alone that it is explicitly and fully revealed: in the gospel alone it is proposed in full glory, as a proper object for a distinct, particular, and explicit faith.

And hence we may easily see the strong and striking connection of the text. You may connect this sentence, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,” with the first part of a foregoing text, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;” and then the sense will be, “No wonder I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ among Jews or Gentiles, and even in Rome itself; for it makes a most glorious and important discovery, in which they are all concerned; a discovery which the Jews, with all the advantages of the law and the prophets, could not clearly make: a discovery which the Greeks with all their learning and philosophy, and the Romans with all their power and improvements, could not so much as guess at; and that is the discovery of a complete God-like righteousness, by which the guilty sons of men, of every nation under heaven, may obtain justification from all their sins; a righteousness which is a sufficient foundation for the hopes of sinners, and gives the most majestic and amiable view of the great God: a righteousness, without which Jews and Gentiles, and even the Romans, in the height of their empire, must unavoidably, irreparably, universally, and eternally perish, in promiscuous ruin.” Such a glorious and divine righteousness does the neglected and despised gospel reveal; such a benevolent, gracious, and reviving discovery does it make; and who would be ashamed of such a gospel? “For my part,” says St. Paul, “I am not ashamed of it, but would boldly publish it unto kings and emperors, to sages and philosophers; and whatever sufferings I

endure for its sake, still I glory in so good a cause, and would spend and be spent in its service.”

Or we may join this clause, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,” with the last part of the preceding verse, For it is the power of God unto salvation, &c., and then the connection will run thus: “The gospel of Christ, so destitute of all carnal and secular recommendations, is sufficiently recommended to universal acceptance by this, that it is the only powerful and efficacious expedient for the salvation of all such as believe it, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. And no wonder it is attended with this divine power and efficacy, for in it, and in it only, the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to the faith and acceptance of a guilty world. No religion but that of a Mediator can provide or propose such a righteousness; and yet without such a righteousness, no sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, can be saved: and, on the other hand, the revelation of such a righteousness directly tends to promote the important work of salvation, as it encourages the despairing sinner, and inspires him with vigor: and as it lays a foundation for the honorable communication of the influences of the Holy Spirit, without which this work can never be effected.”

I hope these things are sufficient to give you a view of the sense and connection of the text. And there is only one thing I would repeat and illustrate before I proceed to a methodical prosecution of my subject; and that is, that the righteousness of God, or the righteousness of Christ, on account of which we are justified, signifies the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ, to answer the demands of the law, which we had broken; or, as it is usually expressed, “his active and passive obedience.” He obeyed the law, and endured its penalty, as the surety or substitute of sinners: that is, he did all this, not for himself, but for them, or in their stead. This is a matter

of so much importance, that you should by all means rightly understand it; and I hope it is now sufficiently plain without enlarging upon it, though I thought it necessary to repeat it.

My thoughts on this interesting subject I intend to dispose in the following order:

I. I shall briefly explain to you the nature of justifying faith, and show you the place it has in our justification.

II. I shall show, that no righteousness but that which the gospel reveals is sufficient for the justification of a sinner: And,

III. I shall evince that it is the gospel only which reveals such a righteousness.

I. I am to explain to you the nature of justifying faith, and show you the place it has in our justification.

You see I do not propose to explain the general nature of faith, as it has for its object the word of God in general; but only under that formal notion, as it has a peculiar instrumentality in our justification. When I mentioned the term justification, it occurs to my mind that some of you may not understand it; and for the sake of such, I would explain it. You cannot but know what it is to be pardoned, or forgiven, after you have offended: and it must be equally plain to you what it is to be loved, and received into favor, by a person whom you have offended; and these two things are meant by justification; when you are justified, God pardons or forgives you all your sins; and he receives you again into his love and favor, and gives you a title to everlasting happiness. I hope this important point is now sufficiently plain to you all; and I return to observe, that I intend to consider faith at present, only under that formal notion, as we are justified by it; and in that view it is evident that the Lord Jesus, as a Savior who died for sinners, is its

peculiar object. Hence a justifying faith is so often described in Scripture in such terms as these; “Believing in Christ, faith in his blood,” &c.; and the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified, is called “the righteousness of faith, the righteousness which is of God by faith,” &c. Therefore a justifying faith in Christ includes these two things—a full persuasion of the truth of that method of salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the gospel reveals—and a hearty approbation of and consent to that method of salvation.

1. A justifying faith includes a full persuasion of the truth of that method of salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ which the gospel reveals.

Faith, in its general nature, is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of another. A divine faith is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of God; and consequently faith in Christ must be the belief of the testimony of God concerning him in the gospel. Hence faith is said to be a receiving the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son; and unbelief, on the other hand, is the not believing the record which God gave of his Son. 1 John 5:9,10. Now St. John tells us, that the substance of the record or testimony, which God hath given of his Son, is this: That God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son, verse 11; that is, “God in the gospel testifies, that he has established and revealed a method of bestowing immortal life and blessedness upon guilty sinners, who were justly condemned to everlasting death.” And he farther testifies, that it is only in and through his Son Jesus Christ that this life and blessedness can be obtained; it is only through him that it can be hoped for; and nothing appears but horror and despair from every other quarter. Now faith is a firm, affecting persuasion of the truth of this gracious and important testimony.



And as the foundation of all is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah, promised as the Savior of sinners; hence it is, that believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, &c., is so frequently the definition of faith.

The scheme of salvation through Jesus Christ, supposes that all are sinners, exposed to condemnation, and unable to make satisfaction for their offences, or merit the divine favor by anything they can do or suffer; and represents the Lord Jesus as substituting himself in the place of the guilty, bearing the punishment due to their sin, and obeying the law of God in their stead; and it represents our injured Sovereign as willing to be reconciled to such of his guilty creatures, on this account; but then that, in order to enjoy the blessings of righteousness, they must, as guilty, helpless sinners, place their whole dependence upon it, and plead it as the only ground of their justification; and that, though they must abound in good works, yet they must not make these in the least the ground of their hopes of pardon and acceptance. This is the substance of the testimony of God in the gospel; this testimony has been repeatedly published in your ears; and if you have believed with a justifying faith, you have yielded a full assent to this testimony; you are thoroughly convinced, and deeply sensible that these things are true, and you can cheerfully venture your eternal all upon the truth of them. You are convinced that this Jesus is indeed the only Savior; that his righteousness is alone sufficient, and to the entire exclusion of every other righteousness in point of justification. Such a faith may appear a very easy thing to a careless, impenitent sinner, who has imbibed this belief from his earliest days, and found no more difficulty in it, than in learning his creed, or assenting to a piece of history. But a person of this character is not at all the subject of a saving faith; it is the poor self-condemned

penitent, broken-hearted sinner, that is capable of such a faith; and truly it is no easy matter to him; for one that sees his sins in all their aggravations, the divine law, and the righteous severity of divine justice: one that finds the lusts and prejudices of his heart rising against this method of salvation as foolishness, and as giving an intolerable mortification to his pride and vanity; for such a one to believe, is not an easy matter; it is the working of God's mighty power. Eph. 1:19, But,

2. A justifying faith more peculiarly includes a hearty approbation of and consent to this method of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To believe the gospel as a true history; to believe it as a true theory or speculation, with a languor, an indifferency, or a disaffection of heart, this indeed is the common popular faith of our country, and it generally prevails where the profession of Christianity is become fashionable; but, alas! It is not that faith by which we can be justified and saved. A hearty approbation of the way of salvation through Christ; a willing, delightful dependence of the whole soul upon his righteousness; a free, vigorous choice of it, and a cheerful consent to all the terms of the gospel; this is essential to such a faith. It is the greatest incongruity to suppose that it is sufficient to believe the gospel with a lukewarm indifferency, or a careless, unaffecting assent; or that our faith in Christ should be merely the act of a constrained, necessitated soul. He is the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleased; and we must be well pleased with him too, before we can expect salvation by him. To receive a scheme which God has so much at heart, a scheme, for the accomplishment of which Jesus bled and died; a scheme on which our everlasting life depends, and without which we are undone forever; to receive such a scheme with a languid assent, what profaneness! What impiety!

If you have ever truly believed in Jesus Christ, my brethren, it has not been the languid act of a cold, impenitent, unwilling heart, but your whole souls have exerted their utmost vigor in it, and it has been the most cheerful, animated act of your whole lives. It is true, necessity had no small influence in the case. You saw, you felt yourselves lost forever without this righteousness; you saw no other way of escape or safety; you found yourselves shut up to the faith; and it was this sense of your necessity that first set you upon seeking after Christ, and turned your thoughts towards this method of salvation. But when God shined into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, when you received the first glances of his glorious righteousness, and heard, as with new ears, the offer of it in the gospel, stand, and pause, and recollect what were your sentiments, and the temper of your heart in that important and memorable hour. Was not their language, “Blessed Jesus! Till now I have been blindly seeking after thee from a servile principle, not from the agreeable constraint of love, but from the painful compulsion of fear, horror, and necessity; not because I desired thee on account of thine own excellency, but because I was desirous to be saved from hell, though it should be by an unacceptable hand. I have been striving to work up my reluctant heart to a compliance with thy gospel, not because I saw thy glory, but merely because I must perish forever if I rejected it. But now, when I see thy glory, O thou lovely Savior, I most cheerfully consent to the method of salvation revealed in the gospel, not only because I must, but because I choose to do so. I see it is a scheme well-ordered in all things, and sure, and therefore it is all my salvation and all my desire. I would not only be saved, but I would be saved by thee, blessed Jesus! I am willing, I am desirous, that thou, and not I, should have the glory of it. Pardon is sweet to a guilty

criminal; salvation is sweet to a perishing soul; but oh! Pardon by thy righteousness, salvation through thy grace, this is doubly sweet.” Such, my brethren, has been, and such still is the language of your hearts, if you have ever received the righteousness of Christ through faith.

And hence it follows, that faith supposes the supernatural illumination of the mind and renovation of the heart, by the power of divine grace. Alas! While nature is left in its original darkness and depravity, it has no such views of the way of salvation through Christ, nor any such delight in it. There are many, I am afraid, that secretly wonder what peculiar wisdom and grace there should be in the gospel, and why God should commend it so highly, and saints should be in raptures when they speak of it; for as for their part, they can discover no such great matters in it. Their hearts are cold and careless about it, or form insurrections against it. The way of salvation through the righteousness of Christ is something quite unnatural and mortifying to the sinful sons of men; they have no relish for it, nor aptitude or inclination to seek salvation, in this way; it is much more natural for them to choose some other, though it should be much more painful. They will submit to the heaviest penances and bodily austerities; they will afflict themselves with fasting; they will drudge at the duties of religion, in order to work out a righteousness of their own; and they are as fond of the covenant of works to obtain life, as if it had never been broken, but tell them of a free salvation, purchased by Jesus Christ, and offered in the gospel; tell them that it is only on account of his righteousness they can be pardoned, and that all their personal good works, however necessary for other purposes, must all stand for nothing in this affair; they are amazed, and wonder what you mean: it is strange, unintelligible doctrine to them, and their hearts rise against it. Hence many a believer has found that it was

easier for him to work up his heart to anything than to believe in Jesus Christ, and that God alone could enable him to do this. But, when God works in him the work of faith with power, he opens his understanding to see a surprising glory in the mediatorial scheme of salvation, and gives him a heart to relish it: and without this, no external recommendations of this scheme, no speculative conviction in its favor, can gain the cordial approbation of the sinner.

I shall now endeavor, in a few words, to show you the peculiar place which faith has in our justification. You may observe, then, that as the righteousness of Christ is the peculiar ground of our justification, so the grace of faith has a peculiar reference to that righteousness; it is, as it were, the bent of the soul towards that particular object. Repentance has sin for its object; love, the intrinsic glory and communicated goodness of the divine nature; charity and justice have a reference to man; and none of these objects are the proper grounds of our justification; and consequently none of these graces which terminate upon them can have any direct concurrence in it. But our justifying righteousness is the immediate, direct object of faith; and therefore faith must have a special instrumentality in our justification.

And if we recollect what has been said about the nature of faith, there will appear a peculiar propriety in conferring this honor upon it. It is certainly fit we should believe in him who is our Savior; and it would be absurd to apply to him in that character, while we suspect him for an impostor. It is fit we should approve of the righteousness by which we are justified, and heartily consent to that scheme by which we are saved. And, on the other hand, it would be highly preposterous that we should be justified and saved by a Savior, and in a way we despise or disgust. These considerations show not

only the wisdom but the grace of the constitution. Approve of the Savior, and you shall be saved; trust in his righteousness, and you shall be justified; consent to the covenant of grace, and you shall inherit all its blessings; and could you desire lower or easier terms? This approbation, this trust, this consent, is faith: and now, I hope, you see the peculiar place it has in our justification. Let us now proceed,

II. To show you that no righteousness but that which the gospel reveals is sufficient for the justification of a sinner.

In order to form a right judgment of this matter, we must place ourselves in a proper situation and view it in an advantageous point of light. Is a blind, self-flattering sinner, who does not see the strictness of the law and justice of God, or who secretly murmurs at it as too precise and rigid, and who does not see the infinite evil of sin, but loves it, indulges it, and is expert in making excuses for it, and diminishing its aggravations, who forms his maxims of the divine government from the procedure of weak and partial mortals in human governments, who compares himself with his fellow-sinners, and not with the divine purity, and the holy law of God, whose conscience is secure, who places the tribunal of his supreme Judge far out of sight, and who forms his notions of his government not from his word, but from the flattering suggestions of his own deceitful heart: I say, is such a blind, partial, careless sinner a competent judge in this matter?

But let him be awakened to see himself and his sins in a proper light, and let him see the purity and extent of the divine law, and make that the only test of his good works, let him realize the divine tribunal, and place himself in the immediate presence of his Judge, and then the controversy will soon be at an end: then all his high thoughts of his own righteousness are mortified; all his excuses for his sins are silenced; and then he sees his

absolute need of a perfect and divine righteousness, and the utter insufficiency of his own. O sirs! If you have ever placed yourselves in this posture, you have done for ever with all disputes on this point. What could ease your consciences then but the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ? Oh! “none but Christ, none but Christ,” then appeared sufficient.

Here I beg leave to translate a very animated and striking passage, written about two hundred years ago, by that great and good man, Calvin, who had long groped for salvation among the doctrines of merit in the church of Rome, but could find no relief, till the gospel discovered this righteousness to him. “It is a very easy thing,” says he, “to amuse ourselves with arguments for the sufficiency of good works for justification, while we are ingeniously trifling in schools and colleges of learning; but when we come into the presence of God, we have done with all such amusements: for there it is a very serious affair, and not a ludicrous logomachy, or an idle dispute about words. There, there we must place ourselves, if we would profitably inquire after the true righteousness, and how we shall answer our celestial Judge when he shall call us to an account. Let us represent this Judge to ourselves, and not such as our fancies would imagine him to be, but such as he is really represented in the Scriptures; as one by whose brightness the stars are turned into darkness; by whose power the mountains are melted; at whose anger the earth trembles; by whose wisdom the wise are caught in their own craftiness; before whose purity all things are turned into pollution: whose justice even angels are not sufficient to bear; who will by no means clear the guilty; whose vengeance, when once it is kindled, burns and penetrates to the lowest hell: let him, I say, sit Judge on the actions of men, and who can securely place himself before his throne of judgment?” Lord, if thou mark iniquity, who, O Lord, shall stand! “All must be

condemned, and unavoidably perish.” “Shall mortal man be” justified before God? Or “be purer than his Maker? Behold he putteth no trust in his servants; and his angels he chargeth with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!” Job. 4:17, &c. “Behold he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much more abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water!” Job. 15:15, &c. Eliphaz is struck silent; for he sees that God cannot be appeased even with angelic holiness, if their works should be brought to the impartial scale of justice—and certainly if our lives should be compared to the standard of the divine law, we must be stupid indeed, unless we are struck with the terror of its curses, and particularly of that, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” And all the disputes we may have about the method of justification, are vain and insipid, unless we place ourselves as guilty before our heavenly Judge, and, solicitous for a pardon, voluntarily prostrate and empty ourselves before him.

“To this great tribunal, sinners, you must lift your eyes, that, instead of vainly exalting yourselves, you may learn to tremble before him. While the comparison is between man and man, it is easy for every man to think he has something which others should not despise; but when we place ourselves before God, all that confidence falls and perishes in an instant.”

I might go on with my quotation from this excellent author; but this is sufficient to show you a grand pre-requisite to the impartial determination of this point. And now, with a deep impression of this, with a deep sense of our sins, and of the strictness of the law and justice, and placing ourselves,



as in the presence of our righteous Judge, let us inquire what righteousness is sufficient for our justification before him.

It may be of service to observe, that there is something singular in the phraseology of Scripture on this point, and different from what is used in other cases of the same general nature. To receive a pardon is a very different thing, in common language, from being justified. When a man is pardoned, it supposes that he has broken the law, but that the law is dispensed with, and the threatened penalty not executed; but when he is justified, it supposes that he has a righteousness equal to the demands of the law, and therefore that he may be acquitted according to justice. These, you see, are very different things; but in the affair before us, they are happily united. The sinner is said to be pardoned and justified at once; and the reason of this unusual dialect is this: The sinner has broken the divine law, and has no obedience to answer its demands; and therefore, his being freed from the guilt of sin and the threatened punishment, is, in this respect, a gracious, unmerited pardon. But by faith he has received the righteousness of Christ; and God imputes it to him, as though it were his own; and this righteousness answers all the requisitions of the law, and it has no charges against him: so that, in this respect, he is justified, or pronounced righteous according to law and justice.

Hence it follows, from the very meaning of the terms used in this case, that no righteousness can justify us in the sight of God but that which is equal to all the demands of the divine law. It must be perfect, and conformed throughout to that standard; for if it be not, we cannot be pronounced righteous in the eye of the law; but the law charges and condemns us as transgressors, and its sentence lies in full force against us. And now, if any of you have such a perfect righteousness, produce it, glory

in it, and carry it with you to the divine tribunal, and demand acquittance there. But if you have not, (as, if you know yourselves, you must own you have not) then fall down as guilty sinners before your righteous Judge, confess that you dare not appear in his presence in your own righteousness, but lay hold of and plead the righteousness of Jesus alone; otherwise the law thunders out its terrors against you, and justice will seize you as obnoxious criminals.

It was from such premises as these, that the apostle reasoned, when he drew this conclusion, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified, Rom. 3:20,28; and that we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. He grants, that if any can produce a perfect righteousness of their own they shall obtain life by the law; the law, says he, is not of faith: but the man that doeth these things, shall live in them. Gal. 3:12. But then he proves, that all the sons of men, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and consequently have no righteousness agreeable to the law: he stops every mouth, and brings in the whole world, as guilty, before God: and hence, he infers the impossibility of justification by the works of the law: and then he naturally introduces another righteousness equal to all the demands of the law. “But now,” says he, “the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested,—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe:—being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins:—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Rom. 3:21-26. O glorious scheme of salvation! O complete, divine righteousness! A righteousness by which Jew and Gentile, the greatest sinner as well as the least, may be made divinely righteous, and completely justified, even at the

bar of a holy and just God. Here, ye guilty sinners, ye condemned criminals, ye bleeding consciences, here is the only righteousness for you. Put forth the hand of faith, and humbly lay hold upon it.

It would be easy to collect a great variety of arguments to support this important truth; but if you carefully read over the apostolic writings, particularly this epistle to the Romans, and that to the Galatians, you cannot but be satisfied for yourselves. And this brings me in mind of a frank declaration of that true free-thinker, and impartial inquirer after truth, Dr. Watts. "If I may be permitted to speak of myself," says he, "I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience, I resolved to seek a determination of my doubts from the Epistles of St. Paul, especially in that weighty doctrine of Justification. I perused his letter to the Romans with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God, for several months together. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind: I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones. I met with some expressions of the apostle that swayed me to one opinion, and others that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way; but I bless the Divine Goodness that enabled me at last to surmount all these difficulties, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteousness, which is not originally his own." This was the practice of this excellent man; and you see the result of his search. Go you and do likewise; and I doubt not but you will make the same discovery. I am,

III. And lastly, To show that it is the gospel only that reveals such a righteousness as is sufficient for the justification of a sinner.

The Jewish religion, as I observed before, gave several intimations of this method of justification by the righteousness of another. There were many prophecies and types of this import; and this was undoubtedly the original design of sacrifices; for it is quite unaccountable, that ever men should imagine that they could appease the wrath of God, and procure the pardon of sin, by offering to him sacrifices of brutes in their stead, unless we suppose that God did at first institute this method to signify that the way in which he would be reconciled to sinners was by the sufferings and death of another, as a sacrifice substituted in their room. This institution seems to have been immediately after the fall of man, when the first beam of gospel-light blessed our world in that promise, the seed of the woman, &c.; for we are told that God made coats of skins, and with them covered our first parents. Gen. 3:21. Now animal food was not allowed to man till after the flood: and consequently those beasts, whose skins were used for this purpose, were not killed for that use: and we cannot suppose they died naturally so soon after their creation. It is therefore most probable that Adam had killed them for sacrifices; and that God had commanded him to do this, immediately upon the promulgation of that promise, to typify the manner of its accomplishment, namely, by the sacrifice of Christ in the fulness of time. This practice we find continued by Cain and Abel: and thus Noah consecrated the new world after the flood. Gen. 8:20.

But though the patriarchs and Jews had these intimations of the method of pardon and acceptance, they were very dark and perplexing to them, and just as much as they had of this light, just so much they had of the gospel;

and therefore the gospel, taking the word in its full extent, claims the honor of this discovery.

Now, if we except the patriarchal and Jewish religion, which had a mixture of the gospel in it, there is none that pretends to discover a complete and perfect righteousness and atonement for the justification of a sinner. The religion of Mahomet is silent on this head; and the Socrateses and Platos of heathen antiquity, who had only the light of nature for their guide, knew nothing about it; much less did the ignorant populace, who are always the greater part of mankind. The custom of sacrifice was indeed universal: but, as it was received by a very remote tradition, mankind had quite lost its original design; and they corrupted it into the most absurd and cruel superstition. They offered their sacrifices to imaginary deities, or (as the apostle tells us) to devils. 1 Cor. 10:20. They were so unnatural and barbarous, that they offered human sacrifices, and even their own children, to propitiate their angry gods. And, if we may believe some of their best authors, this was often practiced by the express command of their oracles:—a sufficient evidence that it was not the true God that gave answers by them. Alas! How were the poor creatures bewildered and perplexed about the method of expiating their sins! They knew nothing of the great atonement which was to be made by the High Priest of the Christian profession, which the gospel reveals to us. Nay, the Jews themselves are often reprov'd by the prophets for their self-righteous trust in their sacrifices, to the neglect of their morals, and the grand atonement which they prefigured. The light of nature might teach the heathen world, that if they perfectly obeyed the law of God, they might be assured of his favor, or at least that they should not be punished; but it informed them, that they had not done so, but on the other hand, had repeatedly broken the law of God;

and they had no notion at all of the possibility of their being justified by the righteousness of another.

This alone determines the point I am now proving. I have shown already, that a sinner cannot be justified but by a perfect righteousness; and it is evident that none of the sons of men can pretend to such a righteousness. Where, then, can it be found? Consult the light of nature; ask the multitude in the heathen world; nay, ask their most improved sages and philosophers, and you will find all silent, all bewildered and perplexed: nothing was ever farther from their thoughts than a complete atonement for sin by the death of an innocent and divine person. I appeal to such of the negroes as came from Africa, as the best judges in this case. Did you ever hear, in your own country, of a righteousness equal to all the requisitions of the law of God, by which you could be justified? Was there no thoughtful person among you whose conscience was uneasy about his sins against a holy God, and who was concerned how he should obtain a pardon? And what way did he take to ease his mind? Alas! He knew nothing of the righteousness of God by faith. This happy discovery, poor creatures, you have met with in the land of your bondage; and oh! If you make a proper use of it, it will make your slavery the greatest blessing to you.

The light of nature might surmise a great many things upon this head; but, alas I all was uncertain. It might intimate, “that God is the compassionate Father of mankind, and therefore would dispense with the threatening’s of his law, and not execute them rigorously upon his own creatures.” This we often hear urged by sinners among ourselves, who, notwithstanding their profession of Christianity, will form a system of religion, and a scheme of reconciliation with God, according to their own selfish and flattering prejudices; and it seems to them incredible that God should inflict eternal

punishment on his own creatures for the sins of a few years. But to this it might be replied, that since God is the Father of mankind, it is a more unnatural and aggravated wickedness to sin against him: that he is not only the Parent but also the Lawgiver and Judge of the world, and that he must sustain both these characters with honor. He must maintain the honor of his law, and preserve his government from contempt; and therefore the communications of his goodness must be consistent with justice. He must also execute his laws upon sinners, in order to warn and deter others; and therefore every sinner must tremble for fear of the execution of the divine threatening's upon him. To all this I may add, that the miseries that are inflicted by divine Providence in this world, and that very often upon the best of men, must leave the sinner in a dreadful suspense.

If God does not suffer the sins even of the best of men always to escape unpunished in this world, but afflicts them with pains, sickness, and an endless variety of calamities, how can our reason, that knows so little of the counsels of heaven, assure us that he will not punish them also, and that with greater severity, in the world to come? Nothing but a revelation from himself could ease an anxious mind from this dread suspicion.

The light of nature may also perhaps surmise, "That repentance and reformation are sufficient to procure the pardon of sin;" and mankind seem naturally inclined to look for pardon in this way. Hence sinners among ourselves, notwithstanding the clearer discoveries of the gospel, fly to repentance and reformation, not only as a pre-requisite to their salvation, but as sufficient ground of acceptance; and they gaze and wonder at a man if he intimates the contrary. It must be granted that repentance and reformation are necessary; but the question is, are repentance and reformation alone sufficient? And this is easily answered, if what has been

proved before be true, viz.: That no righteousness but that which is perfect, and fully conformed to the divine law, can be sufficient for our justification. Now repentance, at best, is but a reformation from a wrong course, and a return to obedience; which should never have been interrupted. If the reformation were perfect, it would be but doing what we are obliged to do for the present time; and consequently it can be no atonement or satisfaction to the law for past offences; but, alas! The sinner, in the midst of all his repentance and reformation, is sinning still; there are guilty imperfections in his best duties; and can these atone for his past sins? So that repentance and reformation cannot be a sufficient justifying righteousness. Again, what kind of government would that be among men, in which all crimes were pardoned upon repentance? What encouragement would this give to offenders! How soon would such a government fall into contempt! And what a low idea would it give of the wisdom and justice of the ruler, and of the evil of sin! And shall the Supreme Ruler imitate so weak a conduct, and thus obscure his perfections, depreciate his laws, and encourage vice?

It is a virtue in a private man to forgive an injury; and it may be a piece of generosity in such a one to give up some of his rights; but, as I have told you, God is not to be considered, in this case, as a private person, but as a supreme Ruler, at the head of the universe: and sin as an offence against him in that capacity; and therefore for reasons of state, it is not fit he should remit it merely upon the sinner's repentance. He must maintain the dignity of law and government, and consult the public good; not the good of this man and that, nor even of the whole race of men, but of men through all their generations; of angels through all their various ranks and orders, and in short, of the whole universe of reasonable creatures? And the interest of individuals must be subservient to the more general good of the whole. An



error in such an extensive government, through an excessive lenity towards offenders, would have a most extensive ill influence, and injure more worlds than we know of. If the magistrate in one particular government be lax in the execution of the laws, he may injure a whole nation. But what would be the consequence, if the Ruler of heaven and earth and the whole creation, should relax his law, and suffer sin to go unpunished, upon so cheap a retaliation as repentance? No human government could be supported upon this principle, much less the divine.

Further: it should be considered, that, in order to encourage offenders to repent, it is necessary it should be made a fixed constitution, and openly published, that whosoever, in all time coming, should be guilty of any offence against the laws of God, he shall be forgiven if he does but repent. Now, what encouragement would such a declaration give to sin! It would also be unprecedented in human governments. It is true, civil rulers do forgive some offenders: but then they do not declare beforehand that they will do so, or who the objects of their clemency shall be. To make a previous declaration of this, would be to give license to men to break the law. Let it also be considered, that when civil rulers forgive criminals, there is no necessity they should receive them into special favor; but in the divine government these two things are inseparable: there is no medium between high favor and misery. When God forgives, he receives the sinner into complete happiness and intimacy with himself, as well as rescues him from punishment. And is it fit he should do this merely upon his repentance? How would such a conduct look in human governments?

Finally, the pardon of a crime, is a matter of sovereignty, and only has place in governments where the royal prerogative is above law, and has a power to dispense with it. Whether such a prerogative belongs to the divine

government (that is, whether it would be a perfection upon the whole in such a government) I shall not now dispute: but suppose it be, still it is a matter of sovereignty; that is, it lies entirely in the breast of the Supreme Ruler, whether he will pardon penitents or not; and they can know his pleasure no other way but by his declaring it. This consideration shows the necessity of a revelation from God, to give a sinner assurance that he will pardon him upon any terms. The light of nature leaves a sinner awfully uncertain whether ever he can reobtain the favor of his offended sovereign. Now, this revelation we have in the gospel, with the additional discovery of the way in which forgiveness and acceptance can be obtained. And it appears, from this short survey, that it is in the gospel alone we can find this discovery.

I. I shall now conclude with two reflections.

I. Let this subject lead us to a strict examination of the ground of our hopes, whether they be founded on the righteousness of God alone, or partly at least upon our own. To speak freely, I am afraid that some of you, my dear people, have built upon this sandy foundation. This may be the case of some of you who have very fair characters; for it is such sort of persons, and not those who make little or no pretensions to good works, that are most in danger of the extreme of self-righteousness. I therefore beg you would inquire after this sly, lurking delusion; a delusion which perverts the best things into the worst, and makes your good works the occasion of your destruction, instead of means of salvation. I beg you would inquire, whether ever you have been deeply sensible of the aggravated evil of sin, the perfection of God's law, the strictness of his justice, and the guilty imperfections of your own best works; whether ever you have seen the glory of God in the gospel, and the excellency and sufficiency of the

righteousness of Christ? Have you cheerfully embraced it with your whole souls? And do you lay the whole dependence of your salvation upon it? Do you find it is the only relief for your wounded consciences, the only cordial for your sinking hearts? Do your whole souls embrace it with the tenderest endearment, and tenaciously cling to it as the only plank to keep you from sinking, after the general wreck of human nature? Do you relish its doctrines, even those that are the most mortifying to your pride and vanity, and love to hear them honestly preached? Are the humble, despised doctrines of the cross sweet to you, and the very life of your souls? If you can give a comfortable answer to these inquiries, then,

II. This subject affords you abundant encouragement, and strong consolation. It is true, you can never think too humbly of yourselves. You are as sinful as you can possibly suppose yourselves to be; your righteousness is as insufficient and imperfect, and you are as undeserving of the favor of God, as you can possibly imagine. But it is not to yourselves that you look for a righteousness, which will bear you out at the bar of your Judge; you have been obliged to give up that point for ever; you tried to stand upon your own footing as long as you could, but you found it would not do. And now your only refuge is the righteousness of Christ by faith; here you rest, and you look for salvation in no other way. My brethren, I would fain do honor to this righteousness; but, alas! The highest thing I can say of it is quite too low. It is indeed a righteousness sufficient for all the purposes for which you want it; it is a sure, a tried foundation. Thousands have built their hopes upon it, and it has never failed one of them yet; you may make the experiment with the same safety. There is not a charge which the law or justice, your own conscience, or Satan, the accuser of the brethren, can bring against you but what it can fully answer. Here, then, is

safe footing, and let nothing drive you from it; and oh, give glory to God for so great a blessing!

# *SERM. LVII. THE SUCCESS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL, OWING TO A DIVINE INFLUENCE.*

**1** Cor. 3:7.— *So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

The design of God in all his works of creation, providence, and grace, is to advance and secure the glory of his own name; and, therefore, though he makes use of secondary causes as the instruments of his operations, yet their efficacy depends upon his superintending influence. It is his hand that sustains the great chain of causes and effects, and his agency pervades and animates the worlds of nature and of grace.

In the natural world, he makes use of the instrumentality of the husbandman to till the ground, to sow the seed, and water it. But it is he that commands the clouds to drop down fatness upon it, and the sun to diffuse its vital influence. It is he that continues to the earth, and the other principles of vegetation, their respective virtues; and without this influence of his the husbandman's planting and watering would be in vain; and after all his labor, he must acknowledge, that it is God that giveth the increase.

So, in the world of grace, God uses a variety of suitable means to form degenerate sinners into his image, and fit them for a happy eternity. All the institutions of the gospel are intended for this purpose, and particularly the ministry of it. Ministers are sowers sent out into the wild field of the world, with the precious seed of the word. It is the grand business of their life to cultivate this barren soil, to plant trees of righteousness, and water them that they may bring forth the fruits of holiness. It is by the use of painful industry, that they can expect to improve this wilderness into a fruitful field; and the Lord is pleased to pour out his Spirit from on high, at times, to render their labors successful; so that they who went forth bearing precious seed with sorrow and tears, return, bringing their sheaves with joy. But alas, they meet with disappointments enough to convince them that all their labors will be in vain, if a sovereign God deny the influence of his grace. The agency of his holy Spirit is as necessary to fructify the word, and make it the seed of conversion, as the influences of heaven are to fructify the earth and promote vegetation. A zealous Paul may plant the word, and an eloquent Apollos may water it; one may attempt to convert sinners to Christianity, and the other to build them up in faith, but they are both nothing, as to the success of their labors, unless God gives the increase: that is, unless he affords the influence of his grace to render their attempts successful in begetting and cherishing living religion in the hearts of men. This is the great truth contained in my text: “Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

The Corinthians had been blest with the labors of several ministers, particularly of the Apostle Paul, who had been the happy instrument of turning them from their native heathenism, and planting the gospel among them, and of Apollos, who succeeded him, and watered the good seed he

had planted among them. But the Corinthians, instead of peaceably and thankfully improving the different gifts of different ministers for their spiritual and everlasting benefit, fell into factions, through a partial admiration of the one, in opposition to the other. Some of them were for Paul, as a universal scholar, and a strong reasoner; others were all for Apollos, as an accomplished orator. And thus they considered these ministers of Christ, rather as the ringleaders of factions than as unanimous promoters of the same catholic Christianity. To suppress this party spirit, the apostle asks them, “Who, then, is Paul, or who is Apollos?” “What mighty beings would you make us in your idolatrous attachment to us? Alas! What are we more than feeble ministers of Christ, by whom ye believed? We were not the authors of your faith, but the humble instruments of it in the divine hand; and the success that either of us has had has not been from our own power, but just as God hath been pleased to give to every man, (verse 5.) I first planted the gospel among you; Apollos afterwards watered it: this was all we could do: but we could not make it bear the fruits of holiness in one soul. It was God alone that gave the increase, and made our respective labors successful, (verse 6.) Therefore turn your regard to him alone:—Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of? Isa. 2:22. Do not idolatrously share the honor of your conversion between God the efficient, and us, the humble instruments of it; but ascribe it to him alone: for neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; but God that gave the increase; he is all in all.”

When we see a people enjoy the frequent cultivations of the gospel, and the means of spiritual fruitfulness, and yet few new trees of righteousness planted, and those that have been planted seemingly withering and unfruitful, we cannot but conclude that something is wanting: without

which all the means they enjoy will be of no service. We should naturally turn our thoughts to an inquiry, what was wanting, had we tilled our lands from year to year without a crop. And since we find at present, that notwithstanding all the labors bestowed upon us, we lie in a deep sleep, and hardly know what it is of late to be animated with the news of some careless sinner here and there awakened to serious concern about his eternal state, it is high time to inquire what is wanting? There is certainly something wanting, which is of greater consequence than anything we have. Here are the gospel, and its ordinances, which at times have done great things, and sinners have yielded to their resistless energy; here is a minister, who, however weak, has sometimes been the happy instrument of giving a sinner an alarm, and speaking a word in season to those that were weary; here are hearers that crowd our sanctuary, hearers of the same kind with those whom we have seen ere now fall under the power of the word. And what, then, is wanting? Why God, that alone can give the increase, is not here by the influences of his grace: and in his absence, “neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth;” they are all nothing together; and may labor till dooms-day, and never convert one soul. “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” Where is he that can do more execution with one feeble sentence, than we can with a thousand of our most powerful sermons? Why, he hath hid his face; and hence there is none that calleth upon his name, and stirreth up himself to take hold of him. Isa. 64:7. And till the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, nothing but briers and thorns will come up among us. Chap, 32:13,15.

Let your thoughts, therefore, with eager attention now pursue me, while I am proving, illustrating, and making remarks pertinent to our case, from this affecting truth contained in the text; that the success of the ministry of



the gospel with respect to saints and sinners, entirely depends upon the concurring influences of divine grace; or, that without the divine agency to render the gospel successful, all the labors of its ministers will be in vain.

This truth can give us no surprise as a new discovery, if we have any acquaintance with the present degeneracy of human nature—with the declarations and promises of the word of God—with the accounts of the different success of the means of grace in various periods of the church—or with matters that might have come within the compass of our own experience and observation.

I. Such is the present degeneracy of human nature, that all the ministrations of the gospel cannot remedy it, without the concurring efficacy of divine grace.

So barren is the soil, that the seed of the word falls upon it and dies, and never grow's up; as though it had never been sown there, till it be fructified by divine grace. It is a soil fruitful of briers and thorns, which grow up, and choke the word; so that it becometh unfruitful till divine grace root them up. Or it may be represented by a rocky or stony soil, where the word of God can take no deep root, and therefore withers, till it be modified by influences from heaven. Thus our Lord represents the matter in the famous parable of the sowers. Matt. 13:3, &c., 18, &c.

The metaphors used in sacred Scripture to illustrate this case, sufficiently prove the degeneracy of mankind, and their entire opposition to the gospel. They are represented as spiritually dead, Eph. 2:1; John 5:25; that is, though they are still capable of the exercises of reason and animal actions, yet they are really destitute of a super natural principle of spiritual life, and incapable of suitable exercises towards God. And can a Paul or an Apollos quicken the dead with convictive arguments, with strong persuasions, or

tender and passionate expostulations? No; none but he can do it whose Almighty voice bade Lazarus come forth. Sinners are also represented as blind. 2. Cor. 4:4. Now what can feeble mortals do to such? We can exhibit divine things before them; we can expose the horrid deformity of sin, and its tremendous consequences; we can display the glories of God, the beauty of holiness, and the allurements of redeeming love: but, alas! All this is but like exposing colors to the blind. We cannot open their eyes; we cannot communicate such views of things to their minds as are in any measure adequate to the things themselves. What can tender arguments avail to break hearts of stone? What signifies reasoning to govern headstrong obstinacy, which regards it no more than a whirlwind? What can persuasions do to extirpate inveterate, implacable enmity? Rom. 8:7. What can the charms of eloquence do to charm deaf adders that stop their ears? Psalm 58:4. The Israelites might as well pretend to overthrow the walls of Jericho with the sound of rams' horns, as we with our feeble breath to overthrow the strongholds of Satan in the hearts of sinners! It is the divine agency alone that gives the success in both cases. Clay cannot open the eyes of the blind, except in his Almighty hands, who could form a world out of nothing, and who can work without or against means as easily as with them.

The Scripture representations of the degeneracy of mankind are confirmed by universal experience. If we form any observations of ourselves or others, we find that the whole bent of our souls by nature is contrary to the gospel. The gospel is designed to reclaim men from sin; but they are obstinately set upon it; it is designed to make sin bitter to them, and to dissolve their hearts into tender sorrows for it; but we naturally delight in sin, and our hearts are hard as the nether millstone; it is intended to bring apostate rebels back to God, and the universal practice of holiness; but we love estrangement from

him, and have no inclination to return. We abhor the ways of strict holiness, and choose to walk in the imaginations of our own hearts. The gospel is calculated to advance the divine glory, and abash the pride of all flesh, in the scheme of salvation it reveals; but this is directly contrary to the disposition of the sinner, who is all for his own glory. This requires no tedious arguments to prove it. Look in upon your own hearts; look back on your own Conduct; look round you on the world; and there the evidences of it will glare upon you.

Now, since the innate dispositions of men are thus averse to the gospel, it is evident that nothing but divine power can make it effectual for their sanctification. Instructions may furnish the head with notions and correct speculative mistakes, but they have no power to sway the will and sweetly allure it to holiness. Persuasions may bring men to practice what they had omitted through mistake, carelessness, or a transient dislike: but they will have no effect where the heart is full of innate enmity against the things recommended. In this case, he that planteth, and he that watereth, are nothing; it is God alone that can give the increase; as is more than intimated by,

II. The promises and declarations of the word, which appropriate all the success of the gospel to God alone.

Jehovah is not fond of ostentation and parade, nor wasteful in throwing away his blessings where they are not needed; and therefore if the means of grace were sufficient of themselves to convert sinners and edify believers, he would not make such magnificent promises of the supernatural aids of his grace, nor claim the efficacy of them as his own. He would not assert the insufficiency of them without his influence, nor assign the

withdrawment of his grace as one cause of their unsuccessfulness. But all this he does in his word.

Notwithstanding all the miraculous as well as ordinary means of grace which the Israelites enjoyed, there was need of this divine promise. “The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.” Deut. 30:6. And this promise was not peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation of the covenant of grace, which was less clear and efficacious; but we find that one superior excellency of the gospel dispensation is, that it is more abundant in such promises. It is to the gospel church that this promise is more particularly made; “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, &c., not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, &c.,—but this shall be the covenant that I will make with them; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Jer. 31:31,33; Heb. 8:8, &c.

This is a promise of so much importance, that it is frequently repeated with some circumstantial alteration, as the very life of the New Testament church. “I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” Jer. 32:39,40. Ezekiel echoes back the same language by the inspiration of the same Spirit, “I will give them one heart; and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh; and I will give them a heart of flesh; and they shall walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.” Ezek. 11:19,20. See also chap, 36:26,27.

What was the success of St. Peter’s sermon (Acts 2.) in the conversion of 3000 but the accomplishment of those promises in Joel and Zechariah? “I

will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” (Joel 2:28,29.) “I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look,” &c. Zech. 12:10. These promises were substantially renewed by Christ, to encourage the drooping apostles, John 16:8,9,10. “I will send the Spirit; and when he is come, he will convince the world,” &c. All their miraculous powers were not sufficient for the conviction of mankind, without the agency of the divine Spirit; but by this, that promise of the Father to his Son was accomplished: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” Psalm 110:3.

I might subjoin many other promises of the same kind; but these are sufficient to show the absolute necessity of divine influence, or the utter insufficiency of the best means without it. And what further time might be allotted to this particular, I shall lay out upon this pertinent and useful remark, which, if rightly attended to, would rectify mistakes, and remove many scruples and controversies upon this point. The remark is this, That the promises of God to bestow blessings upon us, do not render needless our most vigorous endeavors to obtain them; and, on the other hand, that our most vigorous endeavors do not supersede the influences of the Spirit to work in us the dispositions we are laboring after: or, that that may be consistently enjoined upon us as a duty, which is promised by God’s free favor; and vice, versa. This may be illustrated by various instances. God commands us as strictly to circumcise the foreskins of our hearts, to make ourselves new hearts and new spirits, (Jer. 4:4,) and to cleanse ourselves from moral pollution, (Isa. 1:16,) as if this were wholly our work, and he had no efficiency in it. In the meantime, he promises as absolutely to circumcise our hearts to love him, to give us new hearts, and to purge us from all our filthiness, and from all our abominations, as though he

performed all the work without our using means. Now we are sure these things are consistent; for the sacred oracles are not a heap of contradictions. And how does their consistency appear? Why, thus: it is our duty to use the most vigorous endeavors to obtain those graces promised, because it is only in the use of vigorous endeavors that we have reason to expect divine influences. And yet these endeavors of ours do not in the least work those graces in us, and therefore there is certainly as much need of the promised agency of divine grace to effect the work, as if we should do nothing at all. Our utmost endeavors fall entirely short of it, and do not entitle us to divine assistance; and this we must have a humble sense of, before we can receive the accomplishments of such promises as the effect of free grace alone. But we should continue in these endeavors, because we have no reason to hope for the accomplishment of the promises in a course of sloth and negligence.

This point may be illustrated by the consistency of the use of the means and the agency of providence in the natural world. God has peremptorily promised, “that while earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease,” Gen. 8:22. But this promise does not render it needless for us to cultivate the earth; nor does all our cultivation render this promise needless: for all our labor would be in vain without the influence of divine providence: and this influence is to be expected only in the use of labor. Thus, in the moral world, the efficacy belongs to God, as much as if we made no use of means at all; and the most vigorous endeavors are as much our duty, as if we could effect the work ourselves, and he had no special hand in it. Were this remark attended to, it would guard us against the pernicious extremes of turning the grace of God into wantonness, and pleading it as an excuse for our idleness: and of self-righteousness, and depending upon our own endeavors. In this guarded manner does St. Paul

handle this point: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Phil. 2:12,13. But to return: As we may infer the necessity of divine influences from the promises of God, so

We may infer the same thing from the many passages of sacred Writ ascribing the success of the gospel upon sinners, and even upon believers, to the agency of divine grace. If even a well-disposed Lydia gives a believing attention to the things spoken by St. Paul, it is because the Lord hath opened her heart. Acts 16:14. Thus the Philippians believed, because, says the apostle, to you it is given on the behalf of Christ, to believe, Phil. 1:29. Thus the Ephesians were spiritually alive, because, says he, “you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Eph. 2:1. Faith is not of ourselves; but is expressly said to be the gift of God, Eph. 2:8. Nay the implantation of faith is represented as an exploit of Omnipotence, like that of the resurrection of Christ. Hence the apostle prays, Eph. 1:19,20, that the Ephesians might be made deeply sensible of the “exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.” Repentance is also the gift of God: Christ is exalted to bestow it. Acts 5:31. When the Jewish Christians heard of the success of the gospel among the Gentiles, they unanimously ascribed it to God: “then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,” Acts 11:18; and it is upon this encouragement that St. Paul recommends the use of the proper means to reclaim the obstinate: “if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” 2 Tim. 2:25. Regeneration also, in which faith and repentance, and other graces are implanted, is always ascribed to God. If all things are made new, all these things are of God. 2 Cor. 5:17,18.

If, while others reject Christ, some receive him, and so are honored with the privilege of becoming the sons of God, it is not owing to themselves, but to him. “They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.” John 1:11,12,13. He begets such of his own sovereign will by the word of truth, James 1:18; and every good and perfect gift with which they are endowed is not from themselves, but from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, who is the great origin of all moral excellency, as the sun is of light, ver. 17. Hence this change is expressed by such terms as denote the divine agency, and exclude that of the creature; as a new birth, John 3:3; a new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:10; the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus, Eph. 2:10; a resurrection from the dead, John 5:25; Eph. 2:1; Col. 3:1. Now it is the greatest absurdity to speak of a man’s begetting or creating himself, or raising himself from the dead. Thus we find that the first implantation of grace in the heart of a sinner is entirely the work of God; and, lest we should suppose that, when it is once implanted, it can flourish and grow without the influence of heaven, we find that the progress of sanctification in believers is ascribed to God, as well as their first conversion. David was sensible after all his attainments, that he could not run the way of God’s commandments unless God should enlarge his heart. Ps. 119:32. All the hopes of Paul concerning his promising converts at Philippi depended upon his persuasion, that “he that had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Christ.” Phil. 1:6. Nay, it was upon this he placed his own entire dependence. “We are not sufficient of ourselves,” says he, “to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” 2 Cor. 3:5. If I am faithful, it is “because I have obtained mercy of the Lord to make me so.” 1 Cor. 7:25. “By the grace of God I am what I am; and if I have labored more



abundantly than others, it is not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” 1 Cor. 15:10. “I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.” Phil. 4:13. He was relieved under his despondencies by this answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Cor. 12:9. This is more than intimated in his prayers for himself and others: for example, “The God of peace make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ!” Heb. 13:21. And indeed all the prayers of the saints for the aids of divine grace, imply the necessity of them; for they would not pray for superfluities, or for what they already have in a sufficient measure. It is the Spirit that helps our infirmities in prayer, and other exercises of devotion, Rom. 8:24, and all our preparation for the heavenly state and aspirations after it, are of God. “He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.” 2 Cor. 5:5. In a word, “it is God that worketh all our works in us,” Isa. 26:12; “it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.” Phil. 2:13. Now the actual communication of divine influence, implies their necessity.

Accordingly we find,

The necessity of divine influences is stated in the plainest terms in Scripture. No man, says Christ, can come unto me, except the Father draw him, John 6:44. He that hath heard and learned of the Father, and he only, will come to him, ver. 45; and this influence is not purchased by our endeavors, but it is the free gift of grace. Hence Christ varies his former declarations into this form; no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father, ver. 65; and the agency of divine grace is necessary, not only to draw sinners to Christ at first, but also to make them fruitful afterwards. Hence Christ represents even the apostles as dependent upon

him as the branch upon the vine; and tells them plainly, that “without him they can do nothing.” John 15:4,5. Through all the stages of the Christian life, we depend entirely upon him; and without his influences, we should wither and die like a blasted flower, however blooming and fruitful we were before. Hence says God to his people, in me is thy fruit found, Hos. 14:8. Since then this is the case, it will follow that when God is pleased to withhold his influences, all the means of grace will be unsuccessful.

Accordingly we find,

The unsuccessfulness of the gospel is often resolved into the withholding or withdrawing of the influences of grace, as one cause of it. Thus Moses resolves the obstinacy of the Israelites under all the profusion of wonders that had attended them, into this, as one cause of it: “The Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” Deut. 29:2,3, 4. If none believe the report of the gospel, it is because the arm of the Lord is not revealed, Isa. 53:1. If the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are hidden from the wise and prudent, while they are revealed to babes; it is because God in his righteous judgment and sovereign pleasure, hides them from the one, and reveals them to the other. Matt. 11:25,26. Nay, the evangelist speaks in yet more forcible terms, when speaking of the unbelief of the Jews, who were witnesses of Christ’s convictive miracles and discourses; “therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts,” John 12:39,40; and in the same strain St. Paul speaks: “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” Rom. 9:16, &c. These passages are so opposite to the prevailing divinity of the age, that they are dangerous weapons to meddle

with; and it is well they are the very words of Scripture, otherwise we should be charged with blasphemy for mentioning the truth contained in them. We must indeed be cautious that we do not infer from the Scriptures any such horrid doctrine as this, that men are compelled to sin, and pushed on to ruin, by a necessitating decree, or the resistless impulse of Providence; or that, though they were disposed to turn to God, they are judicially kept back and hindered by the divine hand. This would be contrary to the whole current of Scripture, which charges the sin and ruin of sinners upon themselves; but these passages mean, that God denies to obstinate sinners those influences of his grace which are necessary to convert them, and which, if communicated, would have subdued their utmost obstinacy; and that in consequence of this denial, they will rush on in sin and irreclaimable impenitence, and perish; but yet that God, in denying them his grace, does not act merely as an arbitrary sovereign, but as a just judge, punishing them for their sin in abusing the blessings he has bestowed upon them, by judicially withdrawing the aids of his grace, and withholding farther influences. And surely he may punish obstinate sinners with privative as well as positive punishment; he may as justly withhold or withdraw forfeited blessings, as inflict positive misery. This we all own he may do with respect to temporal blessings, he may justly deny them to such as have forfeited them; and why he may not exercise the same sovereignty and justice with regard to spiritual blessings, is hard to say. His hardening the heart, blinding the eyes, &c., of sinners, signify his withdrawing the influences of grace which they have abused, his withholding those additional influences which might irresistibly subdue their obstinacy, and his suffering them to fall into circumstances of temptation. These passages do but strongly and emphatically express thus much: thus much they may

mean, without casting any injurious reflections upon God; and less than this they cannot mean, unless we would explain away their meaning.

From the whole, then, we find that the doctrine of the reality and necessity of divine influences to render the administrations of the gospel effectual for saving purposes, is a doctrine familiar to the sacred oracles. This will receive additional confirmation if we find it agreeable to matter of fact; which leads me to observe,

III. That the different success of the same means of grace in different periods of the church, sufficiently shows the necessity of gracious assistances to render them efficacious. The various states of the church in various ages are but comments upon the sacred pages, and accomplishments of Scripture.

Now we find that religion has flourished or declined, not so much according to external means, as according to the degree of divine influence. Alas! What could Noah, that zealous preacher of righteousness, do, during the one hundred and twenty years of his ministry? He might warn, he might persuade, he might weep over a secure world in vain; they would rush upon destruction before his eyes; and he could only persuade his own family; and even among them there was a cursed Ham. How little could Moses, the favorite messenger and intimate of God, prevail to make his people dutiful? Alas! After all the astonishing wonders he wrought before their eyes, they continued obstinate and rebellious; for the Lord had not given them a heart to understand, &c., Deut. 29:4. This Moses mentions, as what was beyond his power, and could be effected by Omnipotence only. What inconsiderable success had that zealous prophet Elijah, the eloquent Isaiah, or that tender-hearted, mourning, weeping prophet Jeremiah! Surely, many feeble servants of Christ, in all respects inferior to them, have been crowned with more

extensive success! Nay, when the Son of God descended from heaven, a teacher to the world, who spake as never man spake, who carried omnipotence along with him to attest his doctrine by the most astonishing miracles, how few, during his life, were brought seriously to regard his doctrine? He was pleased to defer the remarkable effusion of his Spirit till his return to his native heaven. And when it was poured out, what a glorious alteration followed! Then Peter, a poor fisherman, is the happy instrument of converting three thousand with one short sermon; which is more, perhaps, than his divine Master had done by a hundred. Then, in spite of the united opposition of earth and hell, the humble doctrines of the cross triumphed over the nations, and subdued millions to the obedience of faith. Then the doctrines of Jesus, who was crucified at Jerusalem like an infamous malefactor, between two thieves, became the mighty, all-conquering weapons, through God, to demolish the strongholds of Satan. 2 Cor. 2:4. And whence this strange alteration? It was from the more abundant effusion of the Spirit upon the minds of men; upon their minds, I say, for, as to the external evidences from miracles, prophecies, &c., they were sufficiently clear before this happy season. But there was not the same degree of internal illumination by the Spirit. It is often intimated by Christ, in his last discourses with his disciples, that the Holy Spirit was not yet given; and hence it was that he and they labored so much in vain. But upon his ascension, he performed the promise he had so often repeated, and sent the Spirit both upon them and their hearers; and then the aspect of affairs was happily altered; then the word had free course, and was glorified. Then the world was convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

This point might be illustrated farther, by a history of the various periods of the church, from the apostolic age to the present time; but it would be too

tedious; and what has been offered is sufficient to convince us that it is not by power, nor by might, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts, that the interests of religion are carried on. Zech. 4:6. Especially if we add,

IV. Our own experience and observation, which furnish us with many instances in which this great truth has been exemplified.

Our observation furnishes us with such instances as these: Sometimes a minister, who is a universal scholar, a masterly reasoner, and an accomplished orator, and withal, sincerely engaged for the conversion of sinners, labors in vain, and all his excellent discourses seem to have no effect; while another of much inferior accomplishments, is the successful instrument of turning many to righteousness. This cannot be accounted for without ascribing the distinction to the peculiar concurrence of divine grace; for if it depended upon the instruments, it would be quite the reverse. Sometimes a clear, convictive, and withal, solemn and warm discourse, has no effect; while, at another time, the same doctrines, delivered in a weak, incoherent manner, have strange efficacy and reach the heart. Sometimes the reading of a sermon has been the means of awakening careless sinners, when, at other times, the most solemn and argumentative preaching has been in vain. Sometimes we have seen a number of sinners thoroughly awakened, and brought to seek the Lord in earnest; while another number, under the very same sermon, and who seemed as open to conviction as the former, or perhaps more so, have remained secure and thoughtless, as usual. And whence could this difference arise but from special grace? We have seen persons struck to the heart with those doctrines which they had heard a hundred times without any effect. And indeed there is something in the manner of persons being affected with the word, which shows that the impression is not made by the word itself, or by any other power than

divine. The truths that make such deep impressions upon their hearts, are no new discoveries; they are the old common repeated truths of the gospel, which they had heard before a thousand times; and the manner in which they are represented by the minister, may not be clearer than usual. But, to their surprise, these familiar doctrines flash upon them as new discoveries; they appear to them in a quite different light, as though they had never heard them before; and they reach the conscience, and pierce the heart with such amazing energy, that the sinner is cast into a consternation at his own stupidity, that he never had such apprehensions of things before. He was wont to regard the word as a speculation, or a pleasing song, but now he finds it living and powerful, &c.; the secrets of his heart are laid open by it, and he is obliged to own that God is with it of a truth. Thus a believer also discerns the doctrines of the gospel in a quite different light at one time than at another: he sees new glories in them. Hence one sermon leaves him cold and hard-hearted, while another, no better in itself, sets him all on fire. Hence also, one receives advantage from a discourse, which had no effect upon another: and from this proceeds the difference in judgment about the excellency of sermons, which we may observe among Christians. Every one forms a judgment according to his own sensations, and not according to the discourse in itself. And indeed when we hear an exercised Christian expatiate in praise of a discourse, it is a happy sign that it was made of special service to him.

Many such instances as these familiarly occur in the sphere of our observation; which prove, by matters of fact, that the success of the gospel depends upon the influence of divine grace. But we need not look about us to observe others. Turn your eyes inward upon what has passed in your own minds, and you shall find, that your own experience proves the same thing.

Have you not found that the very same things have very different effects upon you at different times? Those truths, which at one time leave you dull and sleepy, at other times quicken all your powers to the most vigorous exercise? Sinners, do you not return from the house of God in very different frames, though the service there has been substantially the same? At one time you sweat and agonize under a sense of guilt, and make many resolutions to change your course of life; and at another time, there is a stupid calm within, and you matter not all the concerns of eternity. Some indeed have lain so long under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, that they are hardened like clay, and hardly susceptible of any deep impressions at any time, after they have murdered their conscience, and silenced all its first remonstrances. These may go on serene and placid, till the flames of hell give them sensation; and this is most likely to be their doom; though it is not impossible but that this gospel, this stale, neglected gospel, which now makes no impression on their stony hearts, may yet be endowed with almighty power to break them into the tenderest contrition: and I pray God this may be the happy event. I pray God, oh sinner, that thou mayest yet fall under the resistless energy of those important things which now appear but trifles to thee. But till persons are thus become proof against the gospel, they generally feel a variety of dispositions under the ministry of it: and this variety is to be principally ascribed to the various degrees of divine influence upon them at different seasons. And you, saints, you also experience a like vicissitude. Sometimes, oh how divinely sweet, oh how nourishing is the sincere milk of the word! How does the word enlighten, quicken, and comfort you! How exactly it suits your very case! At other times it is tasteless; it is a dead letter, and has no effect upon you. At times a sentence seems almighty, and carries all before it: and you feel it to be the



word of God; at other times you perceive only your feeble fellow-mortal speaking to you, and all his words are but feeble breath; as different from the former as chaff from wheat. See Jer. 23:28,29. Your own memories can supply my deficiency under this head, by recollecting such instances as these perhaps during your whole life; and the time urges me to make some remarks upon what has been said. These are so numerous and copious, that though I had them principally in view, and chose this subject for the sake of them, yet I can but superficially touch upon them.

Hence we learn,

1. How essential and important the doctrine of divine influence is to the church of God. The very life, and the whole success of the gospel depend upon it. And since this necessarily supposes the utter depravity and spiritual impotence of human nature in its fallen state, that doctrine also must be frequently and plainly inculcated.

Alas! The great defect of the system of divinity too fashionable in our days, and one great cause of the languishing state of religion in our age, and of the prevalence of vice and impiety! Since it has been the mode to compliment mankind as able to do something very considerable in religion, religion has died away. Since it has been the fashion to press a reformation of men's lives, without inculcating the absolute necessity of divine grace to renew their nature, there is hardly such a thing as a thorough reformation to be seen; but mankind are evidently growing worse and worse. Since men think they can do something, and scorn to be wholly dependent on divine grace, the Lord, as it were, looks on and suffers them to make the experiment; and, alas! It is likely to be a costly experiment to multitudes. God withholds his influence in just displeasure, and lets them try what mighty things the boasted powers of degenerate nature can do without it;

and hence, alas! They lie all secure and asleep in sin together. Sermons are preached; the house of God is frequented; the ordinances of the gospel administered; yet vice is triumphant; carnal security almost universal; and so few are earnestly seeking after religion, that one would hardly suspect from the success, that these are intended as means to bring them to this. Thus, alas! It is around us if we believe our senses: and thus it will continue to be, till ministers and people are brought to the dust before God, to acknowledge their own weakness and entire dependence upon him. Therefore, hence we learn

2. That when we enjoy the ministrations of the gospel in the greatest purity and plenty, we should not place our trust upon them, but wholly depend on the influence of divine grace for the success. We are apt to think, if we had but such a minister among us, how much good would be done! It is true, that faithful and accomplished ministers are singular blessings to the places where they labor, because it is by their instrumentality that the Lord is wont to work: but still let us remember, that even a Paul or an Apollos is nothing, unless the Lord give the increase. One text of Scripture, one sentence, will do more execution, when enforced by divine energy, than all the labors of the ablest ministers upon earth without it. For this divine energy therefore let us look; for this let us cry, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, When we depend upon the instruments, we provoke the Spirit of God to leave us. If we are fond of taking ministers in his stead, we shall make the trial, till they and we wither away for want of divine influences. This provokes the blessed Spirit to blast the gifts of his ministers, to suffer them to fall, or to remove them out of the way, when they are set up as his rivals, that their idolaters may see they are but men. This provokes him to leave the hearers fruitless under the best cultivations,

till experience sadly convinces them that they can do nothing without him. Therefore let not ministers trust in their own abilities, nor people in their labors; but all in the Lord.

That we should ascribe all the success of the gospel to God alone, and not sacrilegiously divide the honor of it between him and the instruments of it, or between him and ourselves, the ministers of Christ are ready to answer you, in the language of Peter, If we be examined of the good deed done to impotent sinners, by what means they are made whole; be it known unto you, that by the name of Jesus do they stand whole before you. Acts 4:9,10. Why do ye look so earnestly upon us, as if by our own power or holiness we have done this? Chap. 3:12. It is a very shocking compliment to them to be accounted the authors of your faith. Good ministers love to be humble, to lie in their proper sphere, and would have God to have all the glory, as the great efficient; and when we ascribe the work of God to the instrument, we provoke him to withdraw his influence, that we may be convinced of the mistake. Let us also take care that we do not assume the honor of the work to ourselves. Alas! We had no hand in it, but opposed it with all our might; and, therefore, not unto us, &c., Ps. 115:1. The Lord hath done great things for us in this place, for which we are glad. One can name one, and another, as his spiritual father, or the helper of his faith; but still remember, these only planted or watered; but it was God that gave the increase; and therefore to him alone ascribe his own work.

3. Hence also we may learn, whither we should look for grace to render the gospel successful among us. Let us look up to God. Saints, apply to him for his influences to quicken your graces, and animate you in your Christian course. Sinners, cry to him for his grace to renew your nature and sanctify you. Not all the men, nor all the means upon earth, can be of any service to

you without him. Carefully attend upon the gospel, and all its institutions; but still be sensible, that these alone will not do; more is necessary; even the supernatural agency of divine grace.

How dangerous a thing it is to grieve the Spirit, and cause him to withdraw! In that cursed moment when a sinner has quenched the Spirit, all the means of grace become useless to him. Our salvation depends entirely upon the divine agency; and therefore to forfeit this, is to cut ourselves off from all hope. Let us then indulge every good motion, entertain every solemn thought, cherish every pious resolution, and so, as it were, invite the blessed agent to accomplish his work, instead of provoking him to leave us. Alas! How natural is it for mankind to resist him! How averse are they to indulge his motions, and submit to his operations! And are not some of you guilty in this respect?

4. We observe that whatever excellent outward means and privileges a church enjoys, it is in a most miserable condition, if the Lord has withdrawn his influences from it; and whether this be not too much our own condition, I leave you to judge. Some of you, I doubt not, are even now, when others are withering around you, flourishing in the courts of the Lord, and feel the dews of heaven upon you; such I heartily congratulate. But in general, it is evident that a contagious lukewarmness and carnal security have spread themselves among us. Matters would not be thus still and quiet, if there was any considerable number of sinners among us anxiously seeking after salvation. The violence of their concern would constrain them to unbosom themselves to their minister, and to Christians around them. Our public assemblies would not wear so stupid and unconcerned an aspect, were they generally pricked to the heart. And what is the cause of this declension? Why, the Lord denies the increase; the Lord withholds his influence. This

complaint is become fashionable among us, and often upon our lips; but, pray consider what you say when you utter this complaint. And is the Lord indeed withdrawn from us? Then all is gone; then saints may languish, and sinners may perish; and there is no remedy. We may indeed have preaching, sacraments, societies, &c., but, alas! What will all these avail, if God deny the increase? They will not save one soul; nay they will but aggravate our condemnation. Let sinners take the alarm, and consider how sad their case is, who have outlived the season of remarkable divine influences! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved; and what do you think will become of you? How poor a chance, if I may so speak, have you for life, when the Spirit is thus restrained! You hardly know one careless sinner, in the compass of your knowledge, that has been made seriously religious, within these two or three years. If men were pressing into the kingdom of heaven, you might be helped forward, as it were, in the crowd; but now all lies as a dead weight against you, and is it not time for you to cry mightily to God that he would pour out his Spirit upon you?

# *SERM. LVIII. THE REJECTION OF GOSPEL- LIGHT THE CONDEMNATION OF MEN.*

**J**ohn 3:19.— *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because [or for] their deeds were evil.*

What a strange, alarming declaration is this! Light is come into the world: the Sun of Righteousness is risen upon this region of darkness; therefore it is enlightened; therefore it is bright intellectual day with all its rational inhabitants: therefore they will no longer grope and stumble in darkness, but all find their way into the world of eternal light and glory. These would be natural inferences: this event we would be apt to expect from the entrance of light into the world. But hear and tremble, ye inhabitants of the enlightened parts of the earth! Hear and tremble, ye sons of Nassau Hall, and inhabitants of Princeton! The benevolent Jesus, the Friend of human nature, the Savior of men, whose lips never dropped an over-severe word,

or gave a false alarm: Jesus himself proclaims, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,” &c.

This is the condemnation; that is, this is the great occasion of more aggravated condemnation at the final judgment, and of more severe and terrible punishments in the eternal world; or, this is the cause of men’s condemning themselves even now at the bar of their own consciences.

That light is come into the world—Jesus, the Sun of the moral world, is risen, and darts his beams around him in the gospel. And this furnishes guilty minds with materials for self-condemnation; and their obstinate resistance of the light enhances their guilt, and will render their condemnation the more aggravated; and the reason is, that

Men love darkness rather than light. They choose ignorance rather than knowledge! The Sun of Righteousness is not agreeable to them, but shines as a baleful, ill-boding luminary. If they did but love the light, its entrance into the world would be their salvation; but now it is their condemnation. But why do they hate the light? Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to the eyes to see the sun: and no light so sweet as this from heaven: no sun so bright and reviving as the Sun of Righteousness; and why then do they not love it? Alas! There is no reason for it but this wretched one,

Because their deeds are evil. And evil deeds always excite uneasiness in the light, and afford the conscience matter of self-accusation, therefore they wrap themselves up in darkness, and avoid the painful discoveries of the light

The text directs us to the following inquiries:

What is that light which is come into the world? What is the darkness that is opposed to it? What are the evidences of men’s loving darkness rather than light? What is the reason of it? And in what respects the light’s coming

into the world, and men's loving darkness rather than light, is their condemnation?

1. What is that light which is come into the world?

The answer to this and the other questions I shall endeavor to accommodate to our own times and circumstances, that we may the more readily apply it to ourselves.

The light of reason entered our world as soon as the soul of man was created; and, though it is greatly obscured by the grand apostacy, yet some sparks of it still remain.

To supply its defects, the light of revelation soon darted its beams through the clouds of ignorance, which involved the human mind, on its flying off to so great a distance from the Father of lights. This heavenly day began feebly to dawn upon the first pair of sinners, in that early promise concerning the seed of the woman: and it grew brighter and brighter in the successive revelations made to the patriarchs, to Moses, and the prophets, till at length the Messiah appeared, as an illustrious sun after a gradual, tedious twilight of the opening dawn.

The light of human literature has also come into the world, and shines with unusual splendors upon our age and nation; and lo! It illuminates this little village, and extends its beams through the land.

But it is not light in any of these senses that our Lord principally intends, but himself and his blessed gospel; a more clear and divine light than any of the former.

He often represents himself under the strong and agreeable metaphor of light. "I am the light of the world," says he: "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness," John 8:12. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." John 12:46.



Light is a strong and beautiful metaphor for knowledge, prosperity, comfort, and happiness; and these are the rays which the blessed Jesus diffuses around him:—but wherever he does not shine, all is sullen and dismal darkness. Hell is the blackness of darkness forever, because he does not extend to it the light of his countenance. That country where he does not shine is the land of darkness and the shadow of death; and that heart which is not illuminated with the light of the knowledge of his glory, is the gloomy dungeon of infernal spirits; but wherever he shines, there is intellectual day, the bright meridian of glory and blessedness.

His gospel also is frequently represented as a great light; and no metaphor was ever used with more emphasis and propriety. It is the medium through which we discover the glory of the Deity, the beauties of holiness, the evil of sin, and the reality and infinite importance of eternal, invisible things. This is the light that reveals the secrets of the heart, and discovers ourselves to ourselves. It is this that gives us a just and full view of our duty to God and man, which is but imperfectly or falsely represented in every other system of religion and morality in the world. It is this that discovers and ascertains a method in which rebels may be reconciled to their offended Sovereign, and exhibits a Savior in full view to perishing sinners. Hail! Sacred, heaven-born light! Welcome to our eyes, thou brightest and fairest effulgence of the divine perfections! May this day-spring from on high visit all the regions of this benighted world, and overwhelm it as with a deluge of celestial light! Blessed be God, its vital rays have reached to us in these ends of the earth; and if any of us remain ignorant of the important discoveries it makes, it is because we love darkness rather than light! Which leads me to inquire,

II. What is that darkness that is opposed to this heavenly light?

Darkness is a word of gloomy import; and there is hardly anything dismal or destructive, but what is expressed by it in sacred language. But the precise sense of the word in my text is, a state of ignorance, and the absence of the means of conviction. Men love darkness rather than light; that is, they choose to be ignorant, rather than well-informed; ignorant particularly of such things as will give them uneasiness to know; as their sin, and the danger to which it exposes them. They are willfully ignorant: and hence they hate the means that would alarm them with the mortifying discovery. They would rather be flattered than told the honest truth, and know their own character and condition; and hence they shut their eyes against the light of the gospel, that would flash the painful conviction upon them. Though the light of the gospel shines round you, yet are not some of you involved in this darkness? This you may know by the next inquiry.

### III. What are the evidences of men's loving darkness rather than light?

The general evidence which comprehends all the rest, is their avoiding the means of conviction, and using all the artifices in their power to render them ineffectual.

It is not impossible to characterize such of you as love darkness rather than light, though you may be so much upon your guard against the discovery, as not to perceive your own character.

Though you may have a turn for speculation, and perhaps delight in every other branch of knowledge, yet the knowledge of yourselves, the knowledge of disagreeable duties, the discovery of your sin and danger, of your miserable condition as under the condemnation of the divine law, this kind of self-knowledge you carefully shun; and, when it irresistibly flashes upon you, you endeavor to shut up all the avenues of your mind, through

which it might break upon you, and you avoid those means of conviction from which it proceeds.

You set yourselves upon an attempt very preposterous and absurd in a rational being, and that is, Not to think.

When the ill-boding surmise rises within, “All is not well: I am not prepared for the eternal world: if I should die in this condition, I am undone forever.” I say, when conscience thus whispers your doom, it may make you sad and pensive for a minute or two, but you soon forget it: you designedly labor to cast it out of your thoughts, and to recover your former negligent serenity. The light of conviction is a painful glare to a guilty eye: and you wrap yourselves up in darkness, lest it should break in upon you.

When your thoughts are like to fix upon this ungrateful subject, do you not labor to divert them into another channel? You immerse yourselves in business, you mingle in company, you indulge and cherish a thoughtless levity of mind, you break out of retirement into the wide world, that theatre of folly, trifling, and dissipation; and all this to scatter the gloom of conviction that hangs over your ill-boding minds, and silence the clamors of an exasperated conscience! You laugh, or talk, or work, or study away these fits of seriousness! You endeavor to prejudice yourselves against them, by giving them ill names; as melancholy, spleen, and I know not what; whereas they are indeed the honest struggles of an oppressed conscience to obtain a fair hearing, and give you faithful warning of approaching ruin: they are the benevolent efforts of the Spirit of grace to save a lost soul. And oh! It would be happy for you if you had yielded to them, and cherished the serious hour!

For the same reason, also, you love a soft representation of Christianity, as an easy, indolent, inactive thing; requiring no vigorous exertion, and

attended with no dubious conflict, but encouraging your hopes of heaven in a course of sloth, carelessness, and indulgence. Those are the favorite sermons and favorite books which flatter you with smooth things, putting the most favorable construction upon your wickedness, and representing the way to heaven as smooth and easy.

Or if you have an unaccountable fondness for faithful and alarming preaching, as it must be owned some self-flatterers have, it is not with a view to apply it to yourselves, but to others. If you love the light, it is not that you may see yourselves, but other objects: and whenever it forces upon you a glance of yourselves, you immediately turn from it and hate it.

Hatred of the light, perhaps, is the reason why so many among us are so impatient of public worship; so fond of their own homes on the sacred hours consecrated to divine service: and so reluctant, so late, or so inconstant in their attendance. It is darkness, perhaps, at home; but the house of God is filled with light, which they do not love.

This also is one reason why the conversation of zealous communicative Christians, who are not ashamed to talk of what lies nearest their hearts, I mean their religion, their Savior, and their God, and to express an abhorrence of what they so sincerely hate, I mean the vices of mankind, and every appearance of evil; I say, this is one reason why their conversation is such a heavy burden, such a painful restraint to many. Such men reflect the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and the beauties of holiness all around them; they carry light with them whithersoever they go, and strike conviction to the guilty. The strictness, the warm devotion and spirituality of their lives, pass a sentence of condemnation upon sinners; a sentence which they cannot but feel, and which, therefore, renders them uneasy. Hence it is that such lively and circumspect Christians are not at all popular

in the world; but the favorites of the world are your pliable, temporizing, complaisant Christians, that never carry their religion with them into polite company, but conform themselves to the taste of those they converse with. These give no man's conscience uneasiness, they reflect no heavenly light, but thicken the darkness of every company in which they appear; therefore, they are acceptable to the lovers of darkness.

Another expedient that has often been used, and which some of you perhaps have attempted, to avoid the light, is, to endeavor to work up yourselves to a disbelief of the Christian revelation. If you could banish that heavenly light out of the world, or substitute darkness in its place, then you might perpetrate the works of darkness with more confidence and licentiousness. Therefore you eagerly listen to the laughs, the jeers, the railleries, and sophisms of loose wits against it; and you are afraid to give a fair hearing to the many satisfactory evidences in its favor. Thus you cherish that hideous monster, Infidelity; your own offspring, not Satan's, though the father of lies; for he believes and trembles. James 2:19.

These artifices and the like, are the effects, and consequently the evidences and indications of men's loving darkness rather than light. And instead of a larger illustration, I shall conclude this head with a plain, honest appeal to my hearers.

As in the presence of the heart-searching God, I solemnly appeal to your consciences, whether you do not deal partially with yourselves, and refuse pursuing those hints of your dangerous condition, till you make a full discovery? Do not your hearts smite you, because you have suppressed evidence, when it was against you, and shut your eyes against conviction? When the glass of the divine law has been held up before you, and shown you your own hideous image, have you not gone away, and soon forgot

what manner of men you were? Do you not know in your consciences, that the hopes you entertain of future happiness are not the result of severe, repeated trial, but on the other hand, owe their strength and even their being to a superficial examination, or none at all, to blind self-flattery and excessive self-love, which tempt you to believe things as you would have them? Is it censoriousness, or is it evidence and faithfulness, that constrains me to cry out, Oh! How rare are well-grounded, well-attested hopes among us? Hopes that have not been slightly entertained, nor retained without good evidence, after impartial, repeated trials; hopes that have risen and fallen, gathered strength or languished, been embraced or abandoned, perhaps a thousand times, according to the various degrees of evidence; and after a series of such vicissitudes, attended with a variety of correspondent passions, of joys and fears, of discouraging anxieties and transporting prospects, have at length arrived at a settled, confirmed state, supported by that only sufficient proof, conspicuous holiness of heart and life. For the decision of this important doubt, I appeal from my own judgment, from the judgment of a censorious spirit and a blind charity, from every judgment but that of your own hearts: at that tribunal I lodge the appeal; and there I insist the matter should be tried. And remember this, if your hearts condemn you, much more does God, the Supreme Judge: for he is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things; knoweth many causes of condemnation and perhaps unsuspected by you. But, brethren, if your hearts condemn you not, then you have confidence towards God. 1 John 3:20,21. I proceed to inquire,

IV. What is the reason of this absurd preference, that men love darkness rather than light I

The melancholy reason of this is easily discovered, and has been partly anticipated; and it is this, that men love ease and security of mind, rather

than fear and anxiety. They are really obnoxious sinners, under the terrible displeasure of almighty God, and on the slippery brink of everlasting destruction. Now to have a full conviction of this would alarm their fears, embitter their pleasures, damp their eager pursuits, and cast their minds into a ferment of anxiety and terror. But to be blind to all these miserable prospects, to be elated with sanguine expectations of the contrary, to have all serene and calm within, to be charmed with all the fine chimeras of a flattering imagination; to be fearless of danger, and pleased with themselves; this is a state they naturally delight in: in this state they will lull themselves asleep at all adventures, regardless of the consequence; and as darkness is the most proper attendant of sleep, therefore they choose it. But the light of the gospel let into the conscience would give them quite another view of things, would overturn all their towering hopes, and set the terrors of the Lord in array against them; would open such shocking prospects in the ways of sin, that they could no longer dare to walk in them; would constrain them to indulge the sorrows of a broken heart, and to long, and pant, and look, and cry for a Savior. This would be a very painful exercise to them; and therefore they hate and shun the light, which would force the unwelcome conviction upon them.

This is the reason which Christ himself assigns for some men's loving darkness rather than light. "He that doeth truth cometh unto the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Such a one is willing to be searched: the presumption is in his favor, and the trial will turn out to his honor. "But every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his evil deeds should be reproofed." John 3:20,21. It is the fear of this reproof that makes him afraid of the light; for he cannot

but be conscious that his evil deeds deserve it: and to be thus reproved will yield him pain.

“But since they have such favorable thoughts of themselves, and entertain such high hopes, why are they afraid of the light? Must they not rather presume its discoveries will be in their favor? And if so, why do they hate it?” I answer, that notwithstanding all their high sentiments of themselves, they have often a secret suspicion they are not well grounded, and that the light would make some terrible discoveries concerning them; and hence they will not venture to trust themselves in the light, lest their secret suspicion should be confirmed, and rise into a full conviction. It is really so evident that they are guilty, unholy creatures, unfit for heaven, and their consciences sometimes give them such hints of this alarming secret, that they cannot keep themselves altogether ignorant of it. They, therefore, try to evade the trial, lest the sentence should go against them. I appeal to your own breasts, my brethren, whether this be not the true reason why you are so unwilling to examine yourselves, and submit to the severe scrutiny of the light of revelation? Why you are averse to self-knowledge, and the means that would obtrude it upon you? Is it not because you cannot but pre-judge the matter even against yourselves, in spite of all the arts of self-flattery? And if there are such strong presumptions against you, that even yourselves cannot but dread a trial at the tribunal of your consciences, is it not evident, that chosen darkness is your only guard against conviction, and that your case is really bad? And if so, how sorry a relief is it to avoid the discovery, since all your preposterous care to avoid it will but aggravate your condemnation. Which naturally introduces the last inquiry:

V. In what respects the light’s coming into the world, and men’s loving darkness rather than light, is their condemnation.



Here I have only to illustrate two particulars already hinted; that this furnishes them with matter for self-condemnation now, and will be the occasion of their more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world.

I. This furnishes them with matter of self-condemnation in the present state. It is hard, perhaps impossible, for sinners under the meridian light of the gospel, to avoid all conviction of their guilt and danger. That light is very penetrating, and will dart its rays through the thickest glooms of ignorance: it is vital and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword; piercing and dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb. 4:12. Such of you, my brethren, as are resolved to shun the mortification of self-knowledge, live in a situation very unfavorable to your design. You have had “burning and shining lights” among you; who, I doubt not, shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever; but, when they are translated to a higher sphere, the gospel has not left you, but still shines around you; and you will find it very difficult, I hope impossible, to wrap up yourselves in Egyptian darkness in such a Goshen, such a land of vision. In Tartary or Japan, or some savage region of darkness, you might have lived in contented ignorance, and avoided those unacceptable glares of light which will now break in upon you, in spite of all your vigilance; for under the faithful and solemn preaching of the gospel, your consciences will often be disturbed, and you will find yourselves unable to go on in sin bold and intrepid. And though in the thoughtless gaiety of health, and the hurry and din of business, you may drown the clamors of conscience, yet in a retired hour, upon a sick-bed, and in the near views of death and eternity, conscience will speak, and constrain you to hear: and thus you will live

unhappy, self-condemned creatures in this world, till you are condemned by the righteous sentence of God in the world to come. Therefore consider,

II. Your loving darkness rather than light, will occasion your more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world. It was in your power to receive warning, and discover your danger in time; nay, it cost you some pains to avoid the discovery, and make light of the warning. And what a fruitful source of self-tormenting reflections will this be! How will you fret, and vex, and accuse, and condemn yourselves, for acting so foolish a part! How will you exhaust and spend yourselves in eager, fruitless wishes, that you had admitted conviction while the danger was avoidable! But, oh! It will then be too late. Hell is a region of darkness too, but not of that soothing, peaceful darkness of ignorance, which you now prefer to the light of the gospel, but a lowering, tremendous, tormenting darkness, that will forever hide every bright and pleasing prospect from your eyes, and yet be the proper medium for discovering sights of wo and terror: a thick darkness, occasioned by the everlasting eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness and the light of God's countenance, who will never dart one ray of comfort or of hope through the sullen gloom. In this blackness of darkness you must dwell forever, who now love darkness rather than light. And oh! How will your consciences haunt and terrify you, in that cheerless and stormy night! Your guilt will also appear great in the sight of God, as well as to your own consciences, and therefore he will inflict the greater punishment upon you. You have despised the richest blessings that even infinite goodness could bestow upon the children of men; I mean, his gospel and his Son: you have made light of his authority in the most open and audacious manner. He knows you were even afraid to discover your duty towards him; he knows you would not regard your own consciences when they were his advocates,

and that you were unwilling to admit so much conviction as would render you sorry for your offences against him. Nay, he knows that your being convinced that this or that was an offence against Him, was no restraint to you from the commission of it. In short, he knows you spent your lives either in sinning against knowledge, or in avoiding that knowledge which would have prevented your sinning. And while he views you in this light, what obstinate, willful, daring offenders must you appear in his eyes? And what aggravated punishment must he judge your due! He also knows you reluctated and struggled against your own salvation, and hated that light which would have shown you the way to everlasting life. And must he not think you worthy of that destruction you have voluntarily chosen, and refuse you admittance to that happiness which you willfully refused?

This is the representation which the Scriptures uniformly give us of such as love darkness rather than light. If I had not come and spoken to them, says the blessed Jesus, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. John 15:22. It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, though most notorious for all manner of wickedness and debauchery, than for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in which Christ's mighty works were done, and the light of his gospel shone so bright, Matt. 11:21,24. And this is agreeable to the eternal rules of righteousness, that much should be required where much has been given; and that the degree of guilt should be estimated by the degrees of obligation and advantages for obedience.

And now, my dear hearers, upon a review of this subject, you see your own circumstances; the light is come among you; it shines all around you; and, I doubt not, but at times it finds some openings through which it forces its way even into unwilling minds. You have light to distinguish between

truth and error; between sin and duty; between the way to heaven, and the way to hell; you are warned, admonished, and instructed; you have the strongest inducements to a life of religion, and the strongest dissuasives from a course of sin. I leave you, therefore to determine what your guilt and punishment must be if you choose darkness rather than light; light so clear, so reviving, so salutary, so divine! This alarming subject is very pertinent to us all, and we should all apply it to ourselves; but it is so peculiarly adapted to the residents of this house, that I cannot but direct my address particularly to you, my dear pupils, who are the children of the light in more respects than one.

There is not one in a thousand of the sons of men that enjoys your advantages. Light, human and divine, natural and supernatural, ancient and modern; that is, knowledge of every kind shines upon you, and you are every day basking under its rays. You have nothing to do but to polish your minds, and, as it were, render them luminous. But let me put you in mind, that unless you admit the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine in your hearts, you will still be the children of darkness, and confined in the blackness of darkness forever. This is intolerably shocking, even in supposition. Suppose any of you should be surrounded with more light than others, for no other purpose but that you may have a stronger conflict with conviction, and that your consciences may with greater force raise tumults and insurrections within you; suppose your sins should be the sins of men of learning and knowledge, the most daring and gigantic sins on this side hell; suppose you should turn out sinners of great parts, fine geniuses, like the fallen angels, those vast intellects; wise but wicked; wise to do evil, but without knowledge to do good; suppose it should be your highest character that you can harangue well, that you know a few dead languages, that you

have passed through a course of philosophy; but as to that knowledge which sanctifies all the rest, and renders them useful to yourselves or others; that knowledge which alone can make you wise to salvation, and guide you to avoid the paths of destruction, you shun it, you hate it, and choose to remain contentedly ignorant in this important respect; suppose your parents, who have been at the expense of your education; your friends, who have entertained such high and pleasing expectations concerning you; church and state, that look to you for help, and depend upon you to fill stations of importance in the world, and your careful instructors, who observe your growing improvements with proportional pleasure;—suppose that, after all this generous labor, and all these pleasing prospects, they should see you at last doomed to everlasting darkness, for your voluntary abuse of the light you now enjoy;—suppose these things, and but the consequences of these suppositions are so terrible, that I am not hardy enough to mention them. And oh! Shall they ever become matters of fact?

Therefore, my dear youth, admit the light, love it, and pursue it, though at first it should make such discoveries as may be painful to you; for the pain will prove medicinal. By discovering your danger in time, you may be able to escape it; but never expect to remove it by the silly expedient of shutting your eyes. Be impartial inquirers after truth as to yourselves, as well as other things, and no longer attempt to put a cheat upon yourselves. Alas! How childish and foolish, as well as wicked and ruinous, would such an imposture be! The gospel, in this particular, only requires you to be honest men; and surely this is a most moderate and reasonable demand. Therefore, be ye children of the light and of the day, and walk as such, and then it will be a blessing to the world and to yourselves, that ever you were born.

Finally, let us all remember the terror of this friendly warning, That this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

# *SERM. LIX. A NEW YEAR'S GIFT.*

**R**om. 13:11.— *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

Time, like an ever-running stream, is perpetually gliding on, and hurrying us and all the sons of men into the boundless ocean of eternity. We are now entering upon one of those imaginary lines of division, which men have drawn to measure out time for their own conveniency; and, while we stand upon the threshold of a new year, it becomes us to make a solemn contemplative pause; though time can make no pause, but rushes on with its usual velocity. Let us take some suitable reviews and prospects of time past and future, and indulge such reflections as our transition from year to year naturally tends to suggest.

The grand and leading reflection is that in the text, with which I present you as a New-Year's Gift: Knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of sleep.

The connection of our text is this:—The apostle, having enjoined sundry duties of religion and morality, subjoins this consideration, namely, that the time remarkably required them, as if he should say, Be subject to magistrates, and love one another, and that the rather, knowing the time, that it is now high time, or the proper hour, to awake out of sleep. A sleepy negligence as to these things is peculiarly unreasonable at such a time as this.

The Romans, to whom this epistle was written, were Christians indeed, in the judgment of charity; they were such, whose salvation the apostle could point at as near approaching: Now, says he, is your salvation nearer than when you believed: and yet he calls even upon such to awake out of sleep. Even sincere Christians are too often apt to fall into negligence and security; they contract an indolent, dull, lazy temper, as to the duties of religion and divine things: sometimes their love languishes, their zeal cools, and they become remiss or formal in their devotions. Now such a state of dullness and inactivity is often represented by the metaphor Sleep; because as sleep disables us from natural actions, and blunts our animal senses, so this spiritual sleep indisposes the soul for the service of God and spiritual sensations.

Hence it follows, that to awake out of sleep, signifies to rouse out of carnal security, to shake off spiritual sloth, and to engage in the concerns of religion with vigor and full exertion, like men awake.

And as even Christians are too often liable to fall into some degrees of spiritual sleep, as they often nod and slumber over the great concerns of religion, which demand the utmost exertion of all their powers, notwithstanding the principle of divine life implanted in them, there is great need to call even upon them to awake. Thus the apostle rouses the Roman



Christians, including himself among them, as standing in need of the same excitement. It is high time for us, says he, that is, for you and me, to awake out of sleep.

This is a duty proper at all times. There is not one moment of time in which a Christian may lawfully and safely be secure and negligent. Yet the apostle intimates, that some particular times call for particular vigilance and activity; and that to sleep at such times is a sin peculiarly aggravated. Now, says he, it is high time for us, to awake out of sleep: this is not a time for us to sleep: this time calls upon us to rouse and exert ourselves: this is the hour for action: we have slept too long already: now let us rouse and rise.

The apostle also intimates, that the serious consideration and right knowledge of time, is a strong excitement to awake out of sleep. “Knowing the time,” says he, “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep,” that is, your knowing and seriously considering the importance, the uncertainty, and the shortness of time in general, and the peculiar circumstances of the present time in particular, may be sufficient to rouse you. Natural sleep should be in its season: “They that sleep, sleep in the night.”

But, says he, “we are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. We are brought out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel;” therefore let not us sleep, as do others. Consider the time, that is it day-light with you; and you cannot but be sensible, that it is now high time for us to awake out of sleep: this is the hour to rise. Therefore let us awake to righteousness.

The reason the apostle urges upon the Roman Christians to awake at that time is very strong and moving: it is this: “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Salvation is hastening quick towards us upon the wings of time. As many years as are past since we first believed in Christ, by so

many years nearer is our salvation: Or, as he expresses it in the next verse, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” The gloomy, turbulent night of the present state is near over; the dawn of eternal day is just ready to open upon us; and can we sleep at such a time? What! Sleep on the very threshold of heaven! Sleep, when salvation is just ready to embrace us! Sleep, when the dawn of celestial day is just about shining around us! Is it possible we should sleep at such a time? Must not the prospect of everlasting salvation so near us, the thought that in a very little time we shall be in heaven, rouse us, and fix us in a posture of eager expectation and constant watchfulness?

The text implies, that Christians should always be growing in grace; and that the nearer their salvation is, the more lively and zealous should they be; and since it is nearer this year than the last, they ought to be more holy this year than the last. The nearer they are to heaven, the more heavenly they should be. The approach of salvation is a strong motive to holiness; and the stronger by how much the nearer it is.

My chief design, at present, is, to lead you to know the time, and to make such reflections upon it, as its nature and circumstances require, and as are suited to our respective conditions.

The first thing I would set you upon as a necessary introduction to all the rest, is the important but neglected duty of self-examination. Methinks it may shock a man to enter upon a new year, without knowing whether he shall be in heaven or hell before the end of it: and that man can give but a very poor account of the last year, and perhaps twenty or thirty years .before it, that cannot yet give any satisfactory answer to this grand question. Time is given us to determine this interesting point, and to u\*e proper means to determine it in our favor. Let us therefore resolve, this day, that we will not

live another year strangers to ourselves, and utterly uncertain what will become of us through an endless duration. This day let us put this question to our hearts: “What am I? Am I a humble, dutiful servant of God? Or am I a disobedient, impenitent sinner? Am I a disciple of Christ in reality? Or do I only wear his name, and make an empty profession of his religion? Whither am I bound? For heaven or for hell? Which am I most fit for in temper? For the region of perfect holiness, or for that of sin and impurity? Is it not time this inquiry should be determined? Shall I stupidly delay the determination, till it be passed by the irrevocable sentence of the Supreme Judge, before whom I may stand before this year is at a close? Alas, if it should then be against me my doom will be remediless. But if I should now discover my case to be bad, blessed be God, it is not too late to alter it. I may yet obtain a good hope, through grace, though my present hope should be found to be that of the hypocrite.”

If I should push home this inquiry, it will probably discover two sorts of persons among us, to whom my text leads me particularly to address myself; the one, entirely destitute of true religion, and consequently altogether unprepared for a happy eternity, and yet careless and secure in that dangerous situation; the other, Christians indeed, and consequently habitually prepared for their latter end; but criminally remiss or formal in the concerns of religion, and in the duties they owe to God and man. The one, sunk in a deep sleep in sin; the other, nodding and slumbering, though upon the slippery brink of eternity. Now, as to both these sorts of persons, it is high time for them to awake out of sleep. And this exhortation I would press upon them, first, by some general considerations common to both; and then, by some particular considerations proper to each respectively.

The general considerations are such as these:

I. Consider the uncertainty of time as to you. You may die the next year, the next month, the next week, the next hour, or the next moment. And I once knew a minister\* who, while he was making this observation, was made a striking example of it, and instantly dropped down dead in the pulpit. When you look forward through the year now begun, you see what may never be your own. No, you cannot call one day of it your own. Before that day comes, you may have done with time, and be entered upon eternity. Men presume upon time, as if it was entailed upon them for so many years; and this is the delusion that ruins multitudes. How many are now in eternity, who begun the last year with as little expectation of death, and as sanguine hopes of long life, as you have at the beginning of the present? And this may be your doom. Should a prophet, instructed in the secret, open to you the book of the divine decrees, as Jeremiah did to Hananiah, some of you would no doubt see it written there, This year thou shalt die. Jer. 28:16. Some unexpected moment in this year will put an end to all the labors and enjoyments of the present state, and all the duties and opportunities peculiar to it.

Therefore, if sinners would repent and believe; if they would obtain the favor of God and preparation for the heavenly state; and if saints would make high improvements in religion; if they would make their calling and election sure, that they may not stumble over doubts and fears into the presence of their Judge; if they would do anything for the honor of God, and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; if they would be of service to their families, their friends, their country, and mankind in general; now is the time for them to awake out of sleep, and set about their respective work. Now is the time, because this is the only time they are certain of. Sinners, you may be in hell before this year finishes its round, if

you delay the great business of religion any longer. And saints, if you neglect to improve the present time, you may be compelled to shoot the gulf of eternity, and launch away to unknown coasts, full of fears and perplexities; you may be cut off from all opportunities of doing service to God and mankind, of endeavoring to instill the principles of religious knowledge and practice into the minds of your dear children, and those under your care, unless you catch the present hour. For remember, time is uncertain. Youth, health, strength, business, riches, power, wisdom, and whatever this world contains, cannot insure it. No, the thread of life is held by the divine hand alone; and God can snap it asunder, without warning, in whatever moment he pleases.

II. Consider the shortness of time as to you. Time in its utmost extent, including what is past from the creation, and what is future to the conflagration, is nothing to eternity. But the time of your life is vastly shorter. That part of time which is parceled out to you, is not only uncertain, but extremely short: it is uncertain when it will end, but it is absolutely certain it will end very soon. You cannot hope to surpass the common standard of long lives: and that is but seventy or eighty years. Nay, you have but very little reason to hope you shall arrive to this. There are at least ten that die on this side of seventy or eighty, for one that lives to that period: it is therefore far more likely that you will never spend seventy or eighty years upon earth. A shorter space than that will probably convey you from this world to heaven or hell. And is it not high time then for you to awake out of sleep? Your work is great; your time is short: none to spare; none to trifle away; it is all little enough for the work you have to do.

III. Consider how much of your time has been lost and misspent already.

Some of you that are now the sincere servants of God may recollect how late in life you engaged in his service; how long you stood idle in his vineyard, when his work was before you, and his wages in your offer. How many guilty days and years have you spent in the drudgery of sin, and in a base neglect of God and your immortal souls! Others of you, who have the noble pleasure of reflecting that you devoted yourselves to God early, in comparison of others, are yet sensible how many days and years were lost before you made so wise a choice, lost in the sins and follies of childhood and youth. And the best of you have reason to lament how much of precious time you have misspent, even since you heartily engaged in the service of God; how many opportunities, both of doing good to others and receiving good yourselves, you have lost by your own carelessness. How many seasons for devotion have you neglected or misimproved! Oh! How little of your time has been devoted to God and the service of your souls! How much of it has been wasted upon trifles, or in an over-eager pursuit of this vain world? Does not the loss, upon the whole, amount to many days, and even years? And a day is no small loss to a creature, who has so few days at most to prepare for eternity.

And to many of you, is it not sadly evident you have lost all the days and years that have rolled over your heads? You have perhaps managed time well, as to the purposes of the present life; but that is but the lowest and most insignificant use of it. Time is given as a space for repentance and preparation for eternity; but have you not entirely lost it, as to this grand use of it? Nay, are not your hearts more hard, and you less prepared for eternity now, than you were some years ago? Have you not been heaping up the mountain of sin higher and higher every day, and estranging yourselves from God more and more? To heighten the loss, you should consider it as

irrecoverable. Nothing is more impossible than to recall past time. It is gone! It is gone forever! Yesterday can no more return, than the years before the flood. Power, wisdom, tears, entreaties, all the united efforts of the whole universe of creatures, can never cause it to return.

And is there so much of your time lost? Lost beyond all possibility of recovery? And is it not high time to awake out of sleep? Have you any more precious time to throw away? Shall the time to come be abused and lost, like the past? Or will you not endeavor to redeem the time you have lost, in the only way in which it can be redeemed; that is, by doubling your industry in time to come? Much must now be done in a little time, since you have now but little left. You have indeed had ten, twenty, thirty, or forty precious years; but, alas! They are irrecoverably lost. And may not this thought startle you, and cause you to awake out of sleep? The loss of the same number of kingdoms would not be half so great. To a candidate for eternity, whose everlasting state depends upon the improvement of time, a year is of infinitely greater importance than a kingdom can be to any of the sons of men.

IV. Consider, the great purposes of the present life can be answered only in time; for there are certain important duties peculiar to this world, which, if unperformed here, must remain so for ever, because eternity is not the season for them.

Both worlds have their proper business allotted them; and the proper business of the one cannot be done in the other. Eternity and time are intended for quite different purposes. The one is seed-time; the other, harvest: the one is the season for working; the other, for receiving the wages: and if we would invert the unchangeable order of things, and defer the business of life till after death, we shall find ourselves miserably

mistaken. Therefore, if saints would make progress in the religion of sinners, I mean that religion which becomes our present sinful state; that religion which is a course of discipline to prepare and educate us for heaven; which is a painful process for our refinement, to qualify us for that pure region; if they would cherish a noble ambition, and not only ensure happiness, but high degrees of it; if they would be of service to mankind, as members of civil or religious society; and particularly, if they would be instrumental to form others for a blessed immortality, and save souls from death, by converting sinners from the errors of their way: if they would do these things, the present life is the only time. In heaven they will have more noble employ. These things must now be done, or never. And oh! What pious heart can bear the thought of leaving the world while these are undone? Would you not desire to enter into heaven ripe for it? To be completely formed by your education, before you enter upon a state of maturity? Oh! Does not your heart burn to do something for that gracious God and Savior, that has done and suffered so much for you? To be an instrument of some service to the world, while you are passing through it? If this be your desire, now is the time. When once death has laid his cold hand upon you, you are forever disabled from such services as these. Then farewell to all opportunities of usefulness, in the manner of the present life. Then, even your children and dearest friends may run on in sin, and perish, while it is not in your power so much as to speak one word to dissuade them. Therefore, enter upon this new year with hearty resolutions to be more zealous and laborious in these respects than you have ever yet been.

Again, if sinners, who are now in a state of condemnation, would escape out of it; if they who are at present slaves to sin, would become sincere converts to righteousness; if they would use the means of grace for that



purpose, now is the time. There is none of this work in hell: they no sooner enter into the eternal world, than their state will be unchangeably and eternally fixed. The present life is the only state of trial; and if we do not turn out well in this trial, we shall never have another. All are ripe for eternity, before they are removed into it; the good ripe for heaven, and the wicked ripe for hell; the one, vessels of mercy afore-prepared for glory; and the other, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and for nothing else: and therefore they must remain forever in their respective mansions. In hell indeed sinners repent; but their repentance is their punishment, and has no tendency to amend or save them. They mourn and weep; but their tears are but oil to increase the flame. They cry, and perhaps pray; but the hour of audience and acceptance is past—past forever! The means of grace are all gone: the sanctifying influences of the Spirit are all withdrawn forever. And hence they will corrupt and putrefy into mere masses of pure unmingled wickedness and misery. Sinners, realize this thought, and sure it must rouse you out of sleep. Trifle on a little longer, and it is over with you: spend a few days more as you have spent your time past, and you will be ingulfed in as hopeless misery as any devil in hell. Another year now meets you, and invites you to improve it to prepare for eternity; and if you waste it like the past, you may be undone forever. Therefore take Solomon's warning, Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. Eccl. 9:10.

These considerations, methinks, must have some weight, both upon slumbering Christians and impenitent sinners, to persuade them to awake out of sleep. I now proceed to a few considerations peculiar to each.

Upon slumbering saints I would again try the force of the apostolic consideration in my text: “awake, for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” Heaven may be only at the distance of a year or an hour from you: it is, however, certainly nearer to-day than ever it was before. As many days as are past, so much the less time have you to groan away in the present life. And shall you indeed, in so short a time, be imparadised in the bosom of your God? Shall you so soon have done with all the sins and sorrows that now oppress you? Are your days of warfare with temptation so near a close? Shall you so soon be advanced to all the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state, and be as happy as your nature can bear? Is this indeed the case? And must not the prospect rouse you, and fire your hearts? Is not salvation the thing you have been longing and laboring for? And now, can you slumber when it is so near? Can you sleep when the night of life is so far spent, and the dawn of eternal day is ready to shine around you? Can you sleep on the brink of eternity, on the threshold of heaven?

The apostle here intimates, that the approach of salvation is great cause of joy to believers—cause of joy though death lies between, and salvation cannot reach us till we pass through the gloomy vale. Therefore, believers, I may wish you joy, in prospect that you shall soon die. This wretched world shall not be your residence always. Your worst enemies upon earth or in hell will not be able to confine you here the length of Methuselah’s age, much less forever. You may rejoice in the prospect of your speedy dissolution, because death is not nearer to you than your salvation. Before your cooling clay is shrouded, your enlarged souls will be in heaven. You will be striking instances of the truth of Solomon’s remark, that “the day of one’s death is better than the day of his birth.” Eccl. 7:1. Your death will be your birth-

day, which will introduce you into a better world. Mortals in their language will pronounce you dead; but angels will shout an immortal born: born to an everlasting life! Born to a crown! Born to “an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away.” And must not the prospect of this glorious day so near rouse you out of sleep? Can you not watch one hour, or one year? Shall salvation surprise you asleep?

Some of you perhaps are now thinking, “Oh! If I were certain my salvation is so near, it would even transport me, and inspire me with flaming zeal and unwearied activity. But alas! I am afraid of a disappointment. It is true, I cannot but entertain some humble hope, which the severest trial cannot overthrow. But oh! What if I should be mistaken? This jealousy makes me tremble, and shrink back from the prospect.”

This may be the case of many an honest soul. But can this be pleaded as a reason or excuse for security? Alas! Can you sleep in such a dreadful suspense? Sleep, while you are uncertain what shall become of you through an endless duration? If you have not the sure prospect of salvation to awaken you, methinks the fear of damnation must effectually do it; for it is certain, one or the other is near you: therefore endeavor by severe self-examination, to push the matter to some certain issue. Resolve that you will not spend another day, much less another year, in a state of such dangerous, alarming uncertainty. If this point is not yet determined, it is certainly high time for you to awake out of sleep.

Consider farther how far your religious improvements have come short of your own resolutions and expectations, as well as your obligations. Ye happy souls, who now enjoy a good hope through grace, recollect the time when you were in a very different and more melancholy condition; the time when your spirits bled with a thousand wounds; when the terrors of the

Lord set themselves in array against you, and the thunders of Sinai rung the most alarming peals in your astonished ears; when the arrows of God stuck fast in you, and the poison of them drank up your spirits; when guilt lay heavy upon your consciences, and sunk you down into the depth of despondency; when you were haunted with alarming apprehensions of divine vengeance night and day; when you went about crying for a Savior — “Oh for a Savior!”—but your cries seem to be in vain: oh! What were then your vows and resolutions, if it should please God to deliver you! Did you then expect you would fall asleep so soon after your deliverance? Recollect also the happy hour, when the face of a reconciled God first smiled upon you, when Jesus appeared to your minds in all the attractive glories of a Savior, an all-sufficient Savior in a desperate case; when he “delivered your soul from death, your feet from falling, and your eyes from tears;” when he inspired your desponding hearts with hope, and revived you with the heavenly cordials of his love: oh! What then were your thoughts and resolutions? How strongly were you bent to make him returns of gratitude! How firmly did you bind yourselves to be his servants forever! But how soon, alas! Did you begin to slumber! How far short have you fallen of your vows and promises! Recollect also what were your expectations at that memorable time. Oh! Would you then have believed it, that in the space of ten or twenty years, you would have made such small progress in your heavenly course, as you have in fact done? Had you not better hope? But, alas! How are you disappointed! What sorry servants have you been to so good a master, in comparison of what you expected! And can you bear the thought of slumbering on still? Oh! Shall this year pass by like the former? Sure you cannot bear the thought. Therefore awake out of sleep; rise and work for your God.

Let me conclude my address to you, with this advice: Begin this new year by dedicating yourselves afresh to God, and solemnly renewing your covenant with him. Take some hour of retirement, this evening, or as soon as you can redeem time. Call yourselves to account for the year past, and all your life. Recollect your various infirmities, mourn over them, and resolve, in the strength of divine grace, you will guard against them for the time to come. Examine yourselves both as to the reality of your religion, and as to your proficiency in it. Conclude the whole by casting yourselves anew upon Jesus Christ, and devoting yourselves for this new year entirely to him; resolved to live more to him than you have hitherto done, and depending upon him to conduct you safe through whatever this year may bring forth, whether prosperity or adversity, whether life or death. This is the true and only means whereby we can attain that happiness we ought all to be in pursuit of: that pleasure which will never end.

Let me now address a few considerations to impenitent sinners, peculiarly adapted to them.

Consider what a dreadful risk you run by neglecting the present time. The longer you indulge yourselves in sin, the harder it will be to break off from it; and do you not then run the risk of cementing an eternal union with that deadly evil? The longer you cherish a wicked temper, the stronger the habits of sin will grow. And are you not in danger of becoming eternal slaves to it? The longer you continue impenitent, the harder your hearts will grow; the oftener you do violence to your consciences, the more insensible they will become. And are you not taking direct ways to confirm yourselves in impenetrable hardness of heart, and contracting a reprobate mind? The more you sin against God, and grieve his Spirit, the more you provoke him to withhold the influences of his grace, and in righteous judgment to give

you up. And dare you run so dreadful a risk as this? The more time you waste, the greater is your work, and the less your time to perform it. By how much the longer you waste your time, by so much the shorter you make your day of grace. Alas! The day of your visitation may be drawing fast towards evening, when the things that belong to your peace will be eternally hid from your eyes. Is it not then high time for you to awake out of sleep? Will you rather run such a dreadful risk than rouse out of your stupid security? Oh! What will be the end of such a course?

Let me deal plainly and without reserve with you, on a point too dangerous to allow of flattery. If you do not now awake, and turn your attention to the concerns of your souls, it is but too probable you will still go on in carnal security, and at last perish forever. Blessed be God, this is not certain, and therefore you have no reason to despair; but it is really too probable, and therefore you have great reason to fear. This alarming probability, methinks, must force its evidence upon your own minds, upon principles you cannot reasonably dispute. You have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years, or more in the world. In this time you have enjoyed the same means of grace which you can expect in time to come. You had done less to provoke the great God to cast you off; your sinful habits were not so strong, nor your hearts so much hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; you were not so much inured to the gospel, nor were your consciences so stunned by repeated violences, as you may expect in time to come; and the longer you live in this condition, the more and more discouraging it will grow. I will by no means limit a sovereign God in the exercise of his free grace. But this is evident, that in human view, and according to appearances, it was much more likely you would have been converted in time past, than that you will be converted in time to come. The most

hopeful part of life is over with you; and yet even in that, you were not brought to repentance. How much less likely is it, then, that you will be converted in time to come?

Suffer me to tell you plainly (for it is benevolence that makes the declaration) that I cannot but tremble for some of you. I am really afraid some of you will perish forever; and the ground of my fear is this: The most generous charity cannot but conclude, that some of you are impenitent sinners; your temper and conduct proclaim it aloud; and it is very unlikely, all things considered, that you will be ever otherwise. Since you have not repented in the most promising season of life, it is much to be feared you will not repent in the less promising part of it. And since no impenitent, unholy sinner can enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is much to be feared you will perish forever; not because the mercy of God, or the merit of Christ, is insufficient to save you, if you apply to him for it, according to the terms of the gospel; not because our case is in itself hopeless, if you would awake out of sleep, and seek the Lord in earnest; nor because you have not sufficient encouragement for laborious endeavors; but because it is too likely you will go on careless and secure, as you have done, and persist in it, till all your time is gone, and then your case will be desperate. I honestly warn you of your danger, which is too great to be concealed. And yet I give you sufficient encouragement to fly from it, while I assure you, that if you now lay your condition to heart, and earnestly use all proper means for your conversion, you have the utmost reason to hope for success; as much reason as the saints now in heaven once had, when in your condition; and in your condition they once were.

Therefore, now, sinners, awake out of sleep. Instead of entering upon this new year with carousals and extravagances, consecrate it to the great

purpose for which it is given you, by engaging in earnest in the great work of your salvation. What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be he will think upon thee, that thou perish not. Jonah 1:6. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5:14.

Consider, this year may lay you low in the dust of death. How many are now in the grave, who saw the last new year's day! And though I cannot point out the persons, yet, without a spirit of prophecy, I may venture to foretell, that some of us will be in heaven or hell before this year performs its round; some gray head or some sprightly youth; perhaps you, or perhaps I. And since none of us know who it shall be, none of us are exempted from the necessity of immediate preparation. Oh! That we may all be so wise, as to consider our latter end!

I beg leave of my promiscuous auditory to employ a few minutes in addressing myself to my important family, whom my paternal affection would always single out from the rest, even when I am speaking in general terms to a mixed crowd. Therefore, my dear charge, my pupils, my children, and every tender and endearing name! Ye young immortals, ye embryo-angels or infant-fiends, ye blooming, lovely, fading flowers of human nature, the hope of your parents and friends, of church and state, the hope, joy and glory of your teachers! Hear one that loves you; one that has nothing to do in the world but to promote your best interest; one that would account this the greatest blessing he could enjoy in his pilgrimage, and whose nights and days are sometimes made almost equally restless by his affectionate anxieties for you; hear him upon a subject in which you are most intimately interested; a subject the most important that even an apostle or an angel could address you upon; and that is, the right improvement of



time, the present time, and preparation for eternity. It is necessary that you in particular, you above all others, should know the time, that it is now high time for you to awake out of sleep. I make no doubt but you all look upon religion as an object worthy of your notice. You all as certainly believe there is a God, as that there is a creature, or that yourselves exist: you all believe heaven and hell are not majestic chimeras, or fairy lands, but the most important realities; and that you must in a little time be the residents of the one or the other. It cannot, therefore, be a question with any of you, whether you shall mind religion at all! On that you are all determined. But the question is, what is the most proper time for it? Whether the present, or some uncertain hereafter? And in what order you should attend to it, whether in the first place, and above all, even in your early days? Or whether you should not rather indulge yourselves in the pleasures of youth for some time, and then make religion the dull business of old age. If any of you hesitate upon this point, it may be easily solved. This is the most convenient, promising season for this purpose that you are likely to see; never will you live more free from care, or more remote from temptation. When you launch out into the noise, and bustle, and hurry, and company, and business, and vice of the world, you will soon find the scene changed for the worse. He must be a tempter to himself, who can find a temptation, while immured under this roof, and immersed in books. Never will you see the time, in your natural state, when your sins will be so conquerable, and your hearts so tender, and susceptible of good impressions; though even now, if you know yourselves, you find your sins are invincibly strong to you, and your hearts impenetrably hard. Therefore now, my dear youth, now is the inviting season, awake out of sleep; awake to righteousness and sin not. I beg you would not now commit sin with a design to repent of it

afterwards; for can you be so foolish as knowingly and deliberately to do that which you explicitly intend to repent of? That is, to do that which you intend to wish undone, and to lament with broken hearts that ever you did it. Can Bedlam itself parallel the folly of this? Oh take warning from the fate of your wretched predecessors in this course. Could you ask the crowds of lost ghosts who are now suffering the punishment of their sin, whether they intended to persist impenitent in it, and perish? They would all answer, that they either vainly flattered themselves they had repented already, or intended to repent before they died; but death seized them unawares, and put an end to all their sanguine hopes. Young sinners among them imagined they should not die till old age; and old age itself thought it might hold out a few days longer, and that it was time enough to repent. But oh! They have now discovered their error, when it is too late to correct it. Therefore do not harbor one thought of putting off repentance to a sick-bed, or to old age; that is the most inconvenient and desperate season in your whole life; and if you fix upon this, one would think you had viewed your whole life on purpose to find the most unfit and discouraging period of it for the most necessary, difficult, and important work in the world. Come, then, now devote yourselves to God, and away with all excuses and delays. Remember, that upon the principles I have laid down, principles that must gain your assent by the force of their own evidence; I say, remember, that upon these principles it is extremely likely you will always persist impenitent in sin, and perish forever, if you waste away the present season of youth, destitute of vital religion. You may every day have less and less hope of yourselves; and can you bear the thought of perishing forever? Are your hearts so soon arrived to such a pitch of hardness, as to be proof against the terrors of the prospect? It cannot be; for “who among us can

dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. 33:14. As for such of you as have not the great work to begin, I have only this to say, "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

# *SERM. LX. ON THE DEATH OF HIS LATE MAJESTY, KING GEORGE II.*

2 Sam. 1:19.— *How are the mighty fallen!*

George is no more! George, the mighty, the just, the gentle, and the wise; George, the father of Britain and her Colonies, the guardian of laws and liberty, the protector of the oppressed, the arbiter of Europe, the terror of tyrants and France; George, the friend of man, the benefactor of millions, is no more!—millions tremble at the alarm. Britain expresses her sorrow in national groans. Europe re-echoes to the melancholy sound. The melancholy sound circulates far and wide. This remote American continent shares in the loyal sympathy. The wide intermediate Atlantic rolls the tide of grief to these distant shores; and even the recluse sons of Nassau Hall feel the immense bereavement, with all the sensibility of a filial heart; and must mourn with their country, with Britain, with Europe, with the world—George was our Father too. In his reign, a reign so auspicious to literature, and all the improvements of human nature, was this foundation laid; and the College of New Jersey received its existence. And though, like the sun, he

shone in a distant sphere, we felt, most sensibly felt, his benign influences cherishing Science and her votaries in this her newbuilt temple.

In doing this humble honor to the memory of our late sovereign, we cannot incur the suspicion of mercenary mourners, paying homage to the rising sun. But we indulge and give vent to the spontaneous, disinterested sorrows of sincere loyalty and gratitude, and drop our honest tears over his sacred dust, who can be our benefactor no more; too distant, too obscure and undeserving, to hope for the favorable notice of his illustrious successor. Let ambition put on the face of mourning, and all the parade of affected grief, within the reach of the royal eye; and make her court to a living prince, with all the ceremonial forms of lamentation for the deceased; but let our tears flow down unnoticed into our own bosoms. Let our grief, which is always fond of retirement, cherish and vent itself without ostentation, and free from the restraint of the public eye. It will at least afford us the generous pleasure of reflecting, that we voluntarily discharge our duty unbribed and disinterested; and it will give relief to our bursting hearts, impatient of the suppression of our sorrows.

How is the mighty fallen!—fallen under the superior power of death! Death, the king of terrors, the conqueror of conquerors; whom riches cannot bribe, nor power resist; whom goodness cannot soften, nor dignity and loyalty deter, or awe to a reverential distance. Death intrudes into palaces as well as cottages; and arrests the monarch as well as the slave. The robes of majesty and the rags of beggary are equal preludes to the shroud; and a throne is only a precipice, from whence to fall with greater noise and more extensive ruin into the grave. Since death has climbed the British throne, and thence precipitated George the Mighty, who can hope to escape? If temperance, that best preservative of health and life; if extensive utility to

half the world; if the united prayers of nations; if the collected virtues of the man and the king, could secure an earthly immortality— never, O lamented George, never should thy fall have added fresh honors to the trophies of death. But since this king of Britain is no more, let the inhabitants of courts look out for mansions in the dust. Let those gods on earth prepare to die like men; and sink down to a level with beggars, worms, and clay. Let subjects be wise and consider their latter end, when the alarm of mortality is sounded from the throne; and he who lived for their benefit, dies for their benefit too;—dies to remind them, that they also must die.

But how astonishing and lamentable is the stupidity of mankind! Can the natural or the moral world exhibit another phenomenon so shocking and unaccountable? Death sweeps off thousands of our fellow-subjects every year. Our neighbors, like leaves in autumn, drop into the grave, in a thick succession; and our attendance upon funerals is almost as frequent and formal as our visits of friendship or complaisance. Nay, sometimes death enters in at our windows, and ravages our families before our eyes. The air, the ocean, the earth, and all the elements are armed with the powers of death; and have their pestilential vapors and inclemency's, their tempests and inundations, their eruptions and volcanoes, to destroy the life of man. A thousand dangers lie in ambush for us. Nay, the principles of mortality lurk in our own constitutions: and sickness, the herald of the last enemy, often warns us to prepare. Yet how few realize the thought, that they must die! How few familiarize to their minds that all-important hour, pregnant with consequences of great, of incomparable, of infinite moment! How many forget they must die, till they feel it; and stand fearless, unapprehensive, and insolent, upon the slippery brink of eternity, till they unexpectedly fall, and are engulfed forever in the boundless ocean! The sons of Adam the sinner,

those fleeting phantoms of a day, put on the air of immortality upon earth; and make no provision for their subsistence in the proper regions of immortals beyond the grave. Pilgrims and strangers imagine themselves everlasting residents; and make this transitory life their all, as if earth was to be their eternal home; as if eternity was but a fairy land, and heaven and hell but majestic chimeras. But shall not this loud alarm, that spreads over half the globe, awaken us out of our vain dream of an earthly immortality? When the mighty is fallen, shall not the feeble tremble? If the father of a people must cease to live, shall not the people expect to die? If vulgar deaths are so frequent or insignificant, that they have lost their monitory force, and are viewed with as much indifference as the setting of the sun, or the fading of a flower, shall not the death of a king, the death of the king of Britain, constrain his subjects to realize the prospect of their own mortality, and diffuse that universal seriousness among them which that prospect inspires? If thus improved, this public loss would be a public blessing; and the reformation of a kingdom would be a greater happiness than the life of the best of princes. Thus improved, how easy and how glorious would the death of George the Second render the reign of George the Third, who now sways the scepter, and in whom the hopes of kingdoms center! To govern subjects on earth, who are prepared for the hierarchy of heaven, would be a province worthy of an angel.

Since the mighty is fallen, since George is no more, how vain are all things beneath the sun! Vanity of vanities; all is vanity! How unworthy the hopes, how inferior to the desires, how unequal to the duration of human nature! Can the riches of Britain, or the honors of a crown; can the extent of dominion, or the laurels of victory, now afford the least pleasure to the royal corpse that lies senseless in the dust; or to the royal spirit which has winged

its flight to its own region, to the world of kindred spirits! No; all these are now as insignificant as mere nothings to him, as the conquests of Alexander, or the riches and honors of the Henries and Edwards, who filled the same throne centuries ago.

“Who then art thou who settest thine affections on things below? Art thou greater than the deceased? Dost thou value thyself on thy birth? The most highly descended is no more! Dost thou value thyself on thy riches? The king of Britain is no more! Dost thou value thyself on thy power? The master of the seas, the arbiter of Europe, is no more! Dost thou glory in thy constancy, humanity, affection to thy friend; justice, veracity, popularity, universal love?” But I forbear. Human vanity cannot swell so high as to presume upon the comparison.

“How lately were the eyes of all Europe,” and America, “thrown upon this great man?” For man let me call him now, nor contradict the declaration which his mortality has made. They that find him now, must seek for him, and seek for him in the dust! What on earth but must tell us this world is vain, if thrones declare it? If kings, if British kings, are demonstrations of it?

*Oh, how wretched,*

*Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors!*

“A throne is the shutting period, the golden termination of the worldly man's prospect. His passions affect, his understanding conceives, nothing beyond it, or the favors it can bestow. The sun, the expanse of heaven, or what lies higher, have no luster in his sight; no room in his pre-engaged imagination: it is all a superfluous waste. When, therefore, his monarch dies, he is left in darkness: his sun is set: it is the night of ambition with



him; which naturally damps him into reflection; and fills that reflection with awful thoughts.”

“With reverence then be it spoken, what can God, in his ordinary means, do more to turn his affections into their right channel, and send them forward to their proper end? Providence, by his king’s decease, takes away the very ground on which his delusion rose: it sinks before him: his error is supplanted, nor has his folly whereon to stand, but must return, like the dove in the deluge, to his own bosom again. By this he is convinced that his ultimate point of view is not only vain in its nature, but vain in fact: it not only may, but has actually failed him. What then is he under the necessity of doing, this boundary of his sight being removed? Either he must look forward, (and what is beyond it but God?) or he must close his eyes in darkness, and still repose his trust in things which he has experienced to be vain. Such accidents, therefore, however fatal to his secular, are the mercy of God to his eternal interest; and say, with the sacred text, ‘Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.’”

If even kings cannot extract perfect happiness from things below; if the gross, unsubstantial, and fleeting enjoyments of life are in their own nature incapable of affording pure, solid, and lasting felicity, must we not all despair of it? Yet such a happiness we desire; such we need; nay, such we must have; or our very existence will become our curse, and all our powers of enjoyment but capacities of pain. And where shall we seek for it? Where, but in the supreme Good? Let us “lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and be rich towards God;” and then we shall live in state affluence and consummate felicity, when crowns, and thrones, and kings, nay, when stars, and suns, and worlds, are sunk into promiscuous ruin.

But though crowns, and thrones, and kings, though stars, and suns, and worlds, sink into promiscuous ruin, there is one gift of heaven to mankind which shall survive; which shall flourish and reign forever; a gift little esteemed or solicited, and which makes no brilliant figure in mortal eyes; I mean religion. Religion! Thou brightest ornament of human nature! Thou fairest image of the divine! Thou sacred spark of celestial fire, which now glimmers with but a feeble luster, but will shine bright in the night of affliction; will irradiate the thick gloom of death, and blaze out into immortality in its native element! This will be an unfailing source of happiness, through the revolutions of eternal ages. May I be the man to whom Heaven shall bestow this most precious gift of divine bounty! And let crowns and kingdoms be scattered with an undistinguishing hand to the worthless and the brave, to the wise man and the fool; I will not murmur, envy, nor despond. These majestic trifles are not the tests of real worth, nor the badges of heaven's favorites; it is religion that marks out the happy man; that distinguishes the heir of an unfading crown; who, when the dubious conflict of life is over, shall inherit all things? And sit in triumph for ever with the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

If majesty has any charms to a mind truly noble; if dominion has any attractive influence upon a benevolent spirit; it must be as it affords a more extensive sphere of beneficence, and yields the generous, disinterested, godlike pleasure of making multitudes happy. This may reconcile a mind intrinsically great to the self-denial of a court, to the cares of government, and render the burden of a crown tolerable. And in this respect, how happy find illustrious was our late king! It was an honor which could fall to the lot of but few of his subjects, to have such intimate access to the royal presence, as to furnish materials for a panegyric upon his personal and

private virtues! But his public and regal virtues diffused their beams to every territory of his vast dominions, and shone with efficacious though gentle force, even upon us, in these remote ends of the earth. His public virtues as a king, thousands attest and celebrate in every region of the world. These we know, of these we have had a long and delightful experience of four-and-thirty years. These, therefore, we can justly celebrate; and to these I shall confine myself; though I am not altogether uninformed of some amiable anecdotes of his majesty's personal virtues and private life.

Can the British annals, in the compass of seventeen hundred years, produce a period more favorable to liberty, peace, prosperity, commerce, and religion? In this happy reign, the prerogative meditated no invasions upon the rights of the people; nor attempted to exalt itself above the law. George, the great, but unambitious, consulted the rights of the people as well as of the crown; and claimed no powers but such as were granted to him by the constitution; and what is the constitution but the voluntary compact of sovereign and subject? And is not this the foundation of their mutual obligations? The commons who, from their situation in the various parts of the kingdom, are presumed to be best acquainted with its state, always found his majesty condescending to leave the interests of the country to their deliberations; and ready to assent to all their salutary proposals. The times when parliaments were a troublesome restraint are forgotten, or remembered with patriotic indignation. The monarch himself frowned upon the principles of arbitrary power; and was an advocate for the liberties of the people. His parliament were his faithful counsellors; to whom he communicated his measures, with all the frankness and confidence natural to conscious integrity. In an aristocracy the House of

Lords could hardly enjoy more authority and independence, nor the House of Commons in a democracy more freedom of speech and determination, but far less dignity and unanimity than under the monarchy of George the Second. In his were united the advantages of all forms of government; free from the inconveniences peculiar to each in a state of separation. Happy! Thrice happy, to live under a reign so gentle and auspicious! How different would have been our situation under the baleful influence of the ill-boding name of Stuart.

Fond of peace, and tender of the life and blood of man, our late most gracious sovereign never engaged in war, but with compassionate reluctance, and with the unanimous approbation of his people. He drew the sword, not to gratify his own ambition or avarice, or to revenge a personal injury; but to defend the rights of his subjects, to relieve the oppressed, and to restrain and chastise the disturbers and tyrants of the world. He always aimed the thunder of Britain against the guilty head: but innocence had nothing to fear from the terrors of his hands. French perfidy and Austrian ingratitude roused his generous sentiment: but the merit of Frederic, the Prussian hero, the second champion of liberty and the protestant religion, when oppressed by confederate kingdoms and empires, erased the memory of past differences, and made him his friend and ally.

What a vigilant, fatherly care did he extend to the infant colonies of Britain, exposed in this savage wilderness! Hence the safety our once defenseless frontiers now enjoy. Hence the reduction of that mongrel race of French and Indian savages, who would have been the eternal enemies of humanity, peace, religion, and Britons. And hence the glory of Amherst and Wolfe; and the addition of Canada to the British empire in America. Surely the name of George the Second must be dear in these rescued provinces,

and particularly in Nassau Hall, while peace and safety are esteemed blessings, while the terrors of a barbarous war are shocking to humanity, and while gratitude lives in an American breast. And George the Third will be dearer to us, as he bears the ever-memorable name of our great deliverer.

He never usurped the prerogative of Heaven, by assuming the sovereignty of conscience, or the conduct of the human understanding, in matters of faith and religious speculation. He had deeply imbibed the principles of liberty; and could well distinguish between the civil rights of society and the sacred rights of religion. He knew the nature of man and of Christianity too well, to imagine that the determination of human authority, or the sanctions of penal laws, could convince the mind of one divine truth or duty; or that the imposition of uniformity in minute points of faith, or in the forms of worship and ecclesiastical government, was consistent with free inquiry and the rights of private judgment; without which genuine Christianity cannot, though the external grandeur of the church may, flourish. In his reign the state was not the dupe of aspiring churchmen, but the guardian of Christians in general; nor was the secular arm the engine of ecclesiastical vengeance, but the defense of the Dissenter as well as the Conformist; of the toleration, as well as the establishment. His reign was not stained with blood, shed by the ferocious hand of blind bigotry: but the thoughts, the tongue, and the pen were free; and truth was armed only with her own gentle and harmless weapons; those weapons with which she has always spread her conquests, in opposition to fires and racks, to the tortures of death, and to the powers of earth and hell. Long may Britons continue free in a world of slaves! And long may George adorn the throne, and guard the sacred rights of conscience.

Was ever king more beloved by his people? Was ever government more deeply founded in the hearts of his subjects? Whatever factions have embroiled the nation; whatever clamors have been raised against the ministry; whatever popular suspicions of the abilities or integrity of his servants; still the king was the favorite of all; he was the center in which all parties were united.

Rebellion indeed, (to the horror and surprise of posterity let it be known!) the most unnatural, unprovoked rebellion, presumed to lift up its head even under his gracious reign, and attempted to transfer to a despicable pretender the crown conferred upon him by a free people. But how gently, and yet how effectually, was the monster quelled! And how happy have been the consequences to thousands; particularly to the brave, misguided Highlanders, who, by the munificence of that very king they risked their lives to depose, now taste the sweets of liberty and property; and need no farther argument in favor of the illustrious house of Hanover.

The evening of his life was the meridian of his glory; and death seized him on the summit of human greatness. What illustrious victories have attended his arms in every quarter of the globe! Asia and Africa, as well as Europe and America, have trembled at his name; and felt the force of British revenge, executed by his righteous hand. What a shining figure will the three last years, the era of British glory, make in the history of the world! And how will they at once eternize and endear the name of George the Second!

How bloody and extensive has been the present war! And how important the interests at stake! It has spread over both the old and new continent, like an all-devouring conflagration. Nations have bled in a thousand veins; and the precious blood of man has streamed by sea and land, shed by the savage

hand of man. The balance of power, the liberty, the peace, and religion of Europe, as well as the independency, the freedom, the commerce, and the territories of Britain and her colonies, have been the prize in dispute; a prize equal to the whole world to us. And how gloomy and ill-boding was the aspect of our affairs in the first years of this war! The people factious, clamorous, and exasperated! The ministry divided, improvident, and dilatory! Commanders imprudently brave and foolhardy, or weak and dastardly! What abortive schemes and blasted expeditions! What sanguine hopes and mortifying disappointments! What pompous undertakings and inglorious results! What British, un-British gasconade and cowardice, boasting and timidity! And what Gallic bravery and success! (Proh curia! Inversique mores!)

What depredations and barbarities, what desertion and consternation, upon our frontiers, through a length of above a thousand miles! What downcast airs on every countenance! What trembling expectations in every heart! But in that anxious, dubious crisis, George was alive! (Let both sides the Atlantic resound with praises, let every British heart glow with gratitude to the Sovereign of the universe, who prolonged the royal life, and preserved his capacities unimpaired in the decline of nature!— George was alive!) And with a steady, skillful hand, managed the helm in the threatening storm, and conducted the sinking state, in which our all was embarked, within sight of the harbor of peace, safety, and glory, before he resigned the charge. His gracious ear was open to the voice of the people, when he received the illustrious Pitt to so great a share of the administration. And what a happy and glorious revolution have we since seen in the schemes of policy and the events of war! Had heaven punished a guilty nation, by removing their guardian in that period of discord, languor,

dejection, and mortification, while the heir of the crown was in his minority, how dismal might have been the consequences! Indeed, we could have sincerely paid to so good a king that eastern compliment, O king, live forever! For never, O lamented George! Never could thy subjects be weary of thee. But since the mighty must fall, as well as the feeble; since George, the august and well-beloved, must die, how great the mercy, that the melancholy period was so long delayed! It would be ingratitude, it would be impiety, it would be atheism, not to acknowledge the agency of Providence in so important an event.

George, our father, is no more! No more, I mean the ornament of the British throne; no more the benefactor of mortals: no more the inhabitant of earth. His precious dust is ere now deposited with his royal predecessors, where majesty lies in ruins: and we doubt not but the last honors have been performed to his venerable remains, agreeable to the gratitude and generosity of the nation, and the munificent prince who inherits his crown and kingdom.

And is this senseless dust all that is left of the greatest of kings? Has he suffered a total extinction of being? Is he entirely dead to himself, to the universe, and to God? No, he lives! He greatly lives the life of immortals! He lives in the immense region of spirits, where monarchs and kings are private men: where all the superficial distinctions of birth, riches, power, and majesty, are lost forever: and all the distinction that remains, arises from virtue and vice—from our having acted our part well or ill in the station where we are fixed; whether on the throne of majesty, in the chains of slavery, or in the intermediate classes of life: there royalty appears disrobed and uncrowned before him, who regardeth not the rich more than the poor: there triumphant tyranny, that bade defiance to human power, is



blasted and degraded by the frown of Omnipotence: and there, those rulers of men, who were the servants of God, are advanced to a higher sphere of dominion and beneficence; and the badges of earthly majesty are superfluous to their dignity, and would but conceal their real worth. There they are clothed with the robes of salvation, and the garments of praise, and wear crowns of unfading glory, infinitely brighter than those which the gold, and gems, and glittering trifles of earth can compose. There our charity would place our departed sovereign in a station as much superior to that of king of Great Britain, as an angel to a man. But it is not for mortals to pry into the inviolable secrets of the invisible world.

When we view him in this light, the medium in which persons and things appear in eternity, we no longer revere the king. The crown, the scepter, and all the regalia of earthly majesty, vanish. But we behold something more venerable, more majestic, more divine—the immortal! The great spirit stripped of all the empty parade and pageantry of outward show, and clothed with all the Godlike regalia of its own nature? Illustrious in its own intrinsic dignity! This view of kings and emperors does not diminish, but heighten and brighten their majesty. This is the most venerable and striking attitude in which kings and emperors themselves can appear; though in this view peasants and slaves claim an equality with them. All equally immortal! And what renders the nature of man, or even of angels, so important, so noble, so divine, as immortality? This makes the man infinitely superior to the monarch; and advances the offspring of the dust to a kind of equality with the natives of heaven.

But though George still lives to himself, to the universe, and to God, (for all live to him) yet to his once-loved kingdoms he is no more. Here, again, I must retract the melancholy thought—he still lives, he still adorns the

throne, he still blesses the world, in the person of his royal descendant and successor. And if the early appearance of genius, humanity, condescension, the spirit of liberty and love of his people; if British birth, education, and connections; if the favorable prepossessions and high expectations of the nation; if the present glory and terror of the British arms; if the wishes and prayers of every lover of his country, signify anything, or have any efficacy, George the Third will reign like George the Second.

What, then, remains, but that we transfer to him the loyalty, duty, and affection, we were wont to pay to his amiable predecessor? He ascends the throne in the prime of life and vigor, at a juncture more honorable and glorious, than Britain, perhaps, or America, has ever seen. He had early the example of the best of kings before his eyes, as a finished model of government, upon principles truly British. And this has received a powerful sanction from the example and instructions of his royal mother, the honor of her sex; who has made so shining and amiable a figure in the British court, ever since her first appearance. He has able generals in the field; able admirals in the navy; a navy perhaps equal to the united fleets of the universe; and able counsellors in the cabinet. His subjects numerous, rich, free, brave, loyal, and affectionate: his enemies defeated, dispirited, exhausted, disappointed in their last efforts, and baffled in their forlorn hope: the commerce of Britain, as extensive as the globe, and collecting the riches of the world from every soil and climate. In this promising situation of affairs, what a long, happy; and glorious reign have we in prospect! How may we congratulate the contemporaries of our young king, who enter into life as he ascends the throne, and are likely to share in the honors and felicities of his administration! And with what ardent gratitude and devotion should we bow the knee to him, by whom kings reign and princes decree

justice, who opens so bright and glorious a prospect! If the agency of the Most High, who ruleth the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he pleaseth, be ungratefully overlooked, our loyalty is no longer a virtue: it loses its worth, and degenerates into a mere compliment to the creature, at the expense of the Creator's honor. It is acknowledging the deputy, but rejecting the constituent.

But notwithstanding this favorable and promising posture of affairs, methinks we cannot make a transition from reign to reign without some suspense. We are passing into a new state of political existence; entering upon a strange, untried period; and it is natural to be a little damped at our first entrance. The changes of life are so frequent and unexpected, and the course of human affairs so seldom runs on in a steady, uniform tenor for a length of years, that we can be certain of almost nothing but what is past. The most promising posture of affairs may put on another form; and all the honors and acquisitions of a well conducted and successful war, may be ingloriously lost by the intrigues of negotiation and a dishonorable peace. The best of kings (with all due deference to majesty be it spoken) may have evil counsellors, and evil counsellors may have the most mischievous influence, notwithstanding the wisdom and goodness of the sovereign.

But may not even this anxious contingency be productive of good, .by exciting us more powerfully to the duty of Christians and good subjects?

Are the kingdoms of men forlorn, outcast orphans, discarded by their heavenly Father; or independent, self-sufficient sovereignties, capable of managing themselves by their own power and policy? Or, are they not rather little provinces or districts of Jehovah's immense empire, in which he presides, and manages all their affairs? Are kings absolute and self-supported? Or are they not sustained by him who is the support of

archangels? Does the prayer of a righteous man avail much? Or is it but empty breath of no efficacy? A light much more obscure than that of Christianity has enabled heathens to answer such questions as these. Since, “then, the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;” and since prayer is invested with (shall I dare assert it?) a kind of almighty importunity, shall we not often appear in the posture of petitioners at the throne of grace for our young king? In praying for this one great personage, we intercede not only for him, but for ourselves, and millions on both sides the Atlantic; not only for individuals, but for nations, for Europe and America, for the world! And may petitions of such immense import never languish into spiritless, complemental formalities! May they exhaust all the vigor of our souls, and be always animated with the united ardors of devotion, patriotism, and loyalty!

As good subjects, whatever our present or future stations may be in society, or in whatever territory of his majesty’s dominions we may act our part on the stage of life, let the principles of loyalty and liberty, let cheerful obedience to our king, and a disinterested love to our country, let that generous virtue, public spirit, inspire our hearts, and appear in all our conduct. Let us be subject, not for wrath, but for conscience’s sake. Let our obedience be, not a servile artifice to escape punishment; not the mercenary cringing of ambition or avarice; not the fulsome, affected complaisance of flattery; but the voluntary offering of an honest and sincere heart. Let this always be an essential part of our virtue, our religion, and whatever we esteem most sacred.

To you, my dear pupils, the hope, the joy, and the ornament of your country; who, if the wishes and expectations of your parents, your friends, your tutors, and the public, be accomplished, will yet make an important

figure in life; to you I must particularly address myself on this melancholy occasion, with all the affectionate solicitude and earnestness of a father's heart; and while only my voice sounds in your ears, imagine you hear the voice of your other tutors, of the trustees of this institution, of your country and your God, inculcating upon you the same exhortation.

While I invite you to drop your filial tears over the sacred dust of our common father, who has hitherto cherished your tender years, I cannot but congratulate you once more upon your being coevals with George the Third; and that you will date your entrance upon public life so near the time of his accession to the royal seats of his ancestors. The happy subjects of George the Second will soon give place to you, and visit their beloved king in the mansions of the dead. But long may your king and you live, and many happy days may you see together.

You have a king, who has already taught you how to live, and recommended piety and virtue to you from the throne. Let this, therefore, be your first care. This will qualify you for both worlds, and render you at once good subjects to your earthly sovereign, and to his Master and yours in heaven. The Christian cannot but be a patriot. He, who loves all mankind, even his enemies, must certainly love his country. The Christian cannot but be a good subject. He who loves his neighbor as himself, must certainly love his sovereign: and he who fears God, will not fail to honor the king.

Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. This, my dear youth, this is the great precept of Christianity, which this day demands your attention. From this day cherish a public spirit, and dedicate yourselves to the service of your king and country. Whatever character you may hereafter sustain, you will not be so insignificant as to be incapable of any service to your sovereign and fellow-subjects. Whether the health, the liberty and property,

or spiritual interests of mankind, be the object of your future profession; whether you choose the peaceful vale of retirement, or the busy scenes of active life, remember, you will still have connections with the throne. You are parts of that great community over which his majesty presides; and the good of the whole, as well as the ease, honor, and prosperity of his government, will, in some measure, depend upon your performing your parts well. Civil society is so complicated a system, and concludes so many remote, as well as intimate connections, references, and mutual dependencies, that the least irregularity or defect in the minutest spring, may disorder and weaken the whole machine. Therefore, it becomes you to know your own importance to your king and country, that you may exert your influences in your respective spheres, to execute all his patriot designs. Let your literary acquisitions, your fortunes, and even your lives, be sacred to him, when his royal pleasure demands them for the service of your country. This you must do, or turn rebels against your own hearts and consciences. I well know you cannot be disaffected, or even useless subjects from principle. Your education, both at home and in Nassau Hall, has invincibly pre-engaged your inclination, your reason, and your conscience in favor of our incomparable constitution, and the succession in the Hanover family: of liberty, the Protestant religion, and George the Third, which are inseparably united. Therefore act up to your principles, practice according to your political creed, and then my most benevolent wishes, nay, the highest wishes of your king and fellow-subjects, will be amply accomplished in you. Then you will give the world an honorable and just specimen of the morals and politics inculcated in the College of New Jersey; and convince them that it is a seminary of loyalty, as well as

learning and piety; a nursery for the state, as well as the church. Such may it always continue! You all concur in your cordial. Amen.

# *SERM. LXI. RELIGION AND PATRIOTISM THE CONSTITUENTS OF GOOD SOLDIERS.*

**2** Sam. 10:12.— *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.*

A hundred years of peace and liberty in such a world as this, is a very unusual thing; and yet our country has been the happy spot that has been distinguished with such a long series of blessings, with little or no interruption. Our situation in the middle of the British Colonies, and our separation from the French, those eternal enemies of liberty and Britons, on the one side by the vast Atlantic, and on the other by a long ridge of mountains, and a wide extended wilderness, have for many years been a barrier to us; and while other nations have been involved in war, we have not been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet, nor seen garments rolled in blood.

But now the scene is changed: now we begin to experience in our turn the fate of the nations of the earth. Our territories are invaded by the power and



perfidy of France; our frontiers ravaged by merciless savages, and our fellow-subjects there murdered with all the horrid arts of Indian and Popish torture. Our general, unfortunately brave, is fallen; an army of thirteen hundred choice men routed, our fine train of artillery taken, and all this, (O mortifying thought!) all this by four or five hundred dastardly, insidious barbarians!

These calamities have not come upon us without warning. We were long ago apprised of the ambitious schemes of our enemies, and their motions to carry them into execution: and had we taken timely measures, they might have been crushed before they could have arrived at such a formidable height. But how have we generally behaved in such a critical time? Alas! Our country has been sunk in a deep sleep: a stupid security has unmanned the inhabitants; they could not realize a danger at the distance of two or three hundred miles: they would not be persuaded that even French Papists could seriously design us an injury: and hence little or nothing has been done for the defense of our country, in time, except by the compulsion of authority. And now, when the cloud thickens over our heads, and alarms every thoughtful mind with its near approach, multitudes, I am afraid, are still dissolved in careless security, or enervated with an effeminate, cowardly spirit.

When the melancholy news first reached us, concerning the fate of our army, then we saw how natural it is for the presumptuous to fall into the opposite extreme of unmanly despondence and consternation; and how little men could do, in such a panic, for their own defense. We have also suffered our poor fellow-subjects, in the frontier counties, to fall a helpless prey to blood-thirsty savages, without affording them proper assistance, which, as members of the same body politic, they had a right to expect. They might as

well have continued in a state of nature, as be united in a society, if, in such an article of extreme danger, they are left to shift for themselves. The bloody barbarians have exercised on some of them the most unnatural and leisurely tortures; and others they have butchered in their beds, or in some unguarded hour. Can human nature bear the horror of the sight? See yonder! The hairy scalps clotted with gore! The mangled limbs! Women ripped up! The heart and bowels still palpitating with life, and smoking on the ground! See the savages swilling their blood, and imbibing a more outrageous fury with the inhuman draught! Sure these are not men: they are not beasts of prey; they are something worse; they must be infernal furies in human shape. And have we tamely looked on, and suffered them to exercise these hellish barbarities upon our fellow-men, our fellow-subjects, our brethren? Alas! With what horror must we look upon ourselves, as being little better than accessories to their blood!

And shall these ravages go unchecked? Shall Virginia incur the guilt, and the everlasting shame, of tamely exchanging her liberty, her religion, and her all, for arbitrary Gallic power, and for Popish slavery, tyranny, and massacre? Alas! Are there none of her children, that enjoyed all the blessings of her peace, that will espouse her cause, and befriend her now in the time of her danger? Are Britons utterly degenerated by so short a remove from the mother country? Is the spirit of patriotism entirely extinguished among us? And must I give thee up for lost, O my country! And all that is included in that important word? Must I look upon thee as a conquered, enslaved province of France, and the range of Indian savages? My heart breaks at the thought. And must ye, our unhappy brethren on our frontiers, must ye stand the single barriers of a ravaged country, unassisted, unbefriended, unpitied? Alas! Must I draw these shocking conclusions?

No; I am agreeably checked by the happy, encouraging prospect now before me. Is it a pleasing dream? Or do I really see a number of brave men, without the compulsion of authority, without the prospect of gain, voluntarily associated in a company, to march over trackless mountains, the haunts of wild beasts, or fiercer savages, into a hideous wilderness, to succor their helpless fellow-subjects, and guard their country? Yes, gentlemen, I see you here upon this design; and were you all united to my heart by the most endearing ties of nature or friendship, I could not wish to see you engaged in a nobler cause; and whatever the fondness of passion might carry me to, I am sure my judgment would never suffer me to persuade you to desert it. You all generously put your lives in your hands: and sundry of you have nobly disengaged yourselves from the strong and tender ties that twine about the heart of a father, or a husband, to confine you at home in inglorious ease, and sneaking retirement from danger, when your country calls for your assistance. While I have you before me, I have high thoughts of a Virginian; and I entertain the pleasing hope that my country will yet emerge out of her distress, and flourish with her usual blessings. I am gratefully sensible of the honor you have done me, in making choice of me to address you upon so singular and important an occasion: and I am sure I bring with me a heart ardent to serve you and my country, though I am afraid my inability, and the hurry of my preparations, may give you reason to repent your choice. I cannot begin my address to you with more proper words than those of a great general, which I have read to you: “Be of good courage, and play the men for your people, and for the cities of your God: and the Lord do what seemeth him good.”

My present design is, to illustrate and improve the sundry parts of my text, as they lie in order; which you will find rich in sundry important

instructions, adapted to this occasion.

The words were spoken just before a very threatening engagement by Joab, who had long served under that pious hero, King David, as the general of his forces, and had shown himself an officer of true courage, conducted with prudence. The Ammonites, a neighboring nation who had frequent hostilities with the Jews, had ungratefully offered indignities to some of David's courtiers whom he had sent to condole their king upon the death of his father, and congratulate his accession to the crown. Our holy religion teaches us to bear personal injuries without private revenge: but national insults and indignities ought to excite the public resentment. Accordingly, King David, when he heard that the Ammonites, with their allies, were preparing to invade his territories, and carry their injuries still farther, sent Joab his general, with his army, to repel them, and revenge the affronts they had offered his subjects. It seems the army of the enemy were much more numerous than David's: their mercenaries from other nations were no less than thirty-one thousand men; and no doubt the Ammonites themselves were a still greater number. These numerous forces were disposed in the most advantageous manner, and surrounded Joab's men, that they might attack them both in flank and front at once, and cut them all off, leaving no way for them to escape. Prudence is of the utmost importance in the conduct of an army: and Joab, in this critical situation, gives a proof of how much he was a master of it, and discovers the steady composure of his mind while thus surrounded with danger. He divides his army and gives one party to his brother Abishai, who commanded next to him, and the other he kept the command of himself, and resolves to attack the Syrian mercenaries, who seemed the most formidable; he gives orders to his brother in the meantime to fall upon the Ammonites; and he animates him with this noble

advice: Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people and the cities of our God, which are now at stake: and the Lord do what seemeth him good.

“Be of good courage, and let us play the men.” Courage is an essential character of a good soldier—not a savage, ferocious violence; not a fool-hardy insensibility of danger, or headstrong rashness to rush into it; not the fury of inflamed passions, broke loose from the government of reason; but calm, deliberate, rational courage; a steady, judicious, thoughtful fortitude; the courage of a man, and not of a tiger; such a temperas Addison ascribes with so much justice to the famous Marlborough and Eugene:—

*Whose courage dwelt not in a troubled flood  
Of mounting spirits and fermenting blood;  
But Lodged in the soul, with virtue over-ruled,  
Inflamed by reason, and by reason cooled.* —The Campaign.

This is true courage, and such as we ought all to cherish in the present dangerous conjuncture. This will render men vigilant and cautious against surprise, prudent and deliberate in concerting their measures, and steady and resolute in executing them. But without this they will fall into unsuspected dangers, which will strike them with wild consternation; they will meanly shun dangers that are surmountable, or precipitantly rush into those that are causeless, or evidently fatal, and throw away their lives in vain.

There are some men who naturally have this heroic turn of mind. The wise Creator has adapted the natural genius of mankind with a surprising and beautiful variety to the state in which they are placed in this world. To some he has given a turn for intellectual improvement, and the liberal arts and sciences; to others a genius for trade; to others a dexterity in mechanics,

and the ruder arts, necessary for the support of human life: the generality of mankind may be capable of tolerable improvements in any of these; but it is only they whom the God of nature has formed for them, that will shine in them; every man in his own province. And as God well knew what a world of degenerate, ambitious, and revengeful creatures this is; as he knew that innocence could not be protected, property and liberty secured, nor the lives of mankind preserved from the lawless hands of ambition, avarice, and tyranny, without the use of the sword; as he knew this would be the only method to preserve mankind from universal slavery; he has formed some men for this dreadful work, and fired them with a martial spirit, and a glorious love of danger. Such a spirit, though most pernicious when ungoverned by the rules of justice and benevolence to mankind, is a public blessing when rightly directed: such a spirit, under God, has often mortified the insolence of tyrants, checked the encroachments of arbitrary power, and delivered enslaved and ruined nations: it is as necessary in its place for our subsistence in such a world as this, as any of the gentler geniuses among mankind; and it is derived from the same divine original. He that winged the imagination of a Homer or a Milton; he that gave penetration to the mind of Newton; he that made Tubal-Cain an instructor of artificers in brass and iron, and gave skill to Bezaleel and Aholiab in curious works; t nay, he that sent out Paul and his brethren to conquer the nations with the gentler weapons of plain truth, miracles, and the love of a crucified Savior; he, even that same gracious power, has formed and raised up an Alexander, a Julius Caesar, a William, and a Marlborough, and inspired them with this enterprising, intrepid spirit; the two first to scourge a guilty world, and the two last to save nations on the brink of ruin. There is something glorious

and inviting in danger to such noble minds; and their breasts beat with a generous ardor when it appears.

Our continent is like to become the seat of war; and we, for the future, (till the sundry European nations that have planted colonies in it, have fixed their boundaries by the sword,) have no other way left to defend our rights and privileges. And has God been pleased to diffuse some sparks of this martial fire through our country? I hope he has; and though it has been almost extinguished by so long a peace, and a deluge of luxury and pleasure, now I hope it begins to kindle; and may I not produce you, my brethren, who are engaged in this expedition, as instances of it? Well, cherish it as a sacred heaven-born fire; and let the injuries done to your country administer fuel to it; and kindle it in those breasts where it has been hitherto smothered or inactive.

Though nature be the true origin of military courage, and it can never be kindled to a high degree where there is but a feeble spark of it innate; yet there are sundry things that may improve it even in minds full of natural bravery, and animate those who are naturally of an effeminate spirit to behave with a tolerable degree of resolution and fortitude in the defense of their country, I need not tell you that it is of great importance for this end that you should be at peace with God and your own conscience, and prepared for your future state. Guilt is naturally timorous, and often struck into a panic even with imaginary dangers; and an infidel courage, proceeding from a want of thought, or a stupid carelessness about our welfare through an immortal duration beyond the grave, is very unbecoming a man, or a Christian. The most important periods of our existence, my brethren, lie beyond the grave; and it is a matter of much more concern to us what will be our doom in the world to come, than what

becomes of us in this. We are obliged to defend our country; and that is a sneaking, sordid soul indeed that can desert it at such a time as this; but this is not all; we are also obliged to take care of an immortal soul; a soul that must exist, and be happy or miserable through all the revolutions of eternal ages. This should be our first care; and when this is secured, death in its most shocking form, is but a release from a world of sin and sorrows, and an introduction into everlasting life and glory. But how can this be secured? Not by a course of impenitent sinning; not by a course of stupid carelessness and inaction; but by a vigorous and resolute striving; by serious and affectionate thoughtfulness about our condition, and by a conscientious and earnest attendance upon the means that God has graciously appointed for our recovery. But “we are sinners, heinous sinners against a God of infinite purity, and inexorable justice.” Yes, we are so; and does not the posture of penitents then become us? Is not repentance, deep, broken-hearted repentance, a duty suitable to persons of our character? Undoubtedly it is; and therefore, O my countrymen, and particularly you brave men that are the occasion of this meeting, repent; fall down upon your knees before the provoked sovereign of heaven and earth, against whom you have rebelled. Dissolve and melt in penitential sorrow at his feet; and he will tell you, Arise, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. “But will repentance make atonement for our sins? Will our tears wash away their guilt? Will our sorrows merit forgiveness? No, my brethren, after you have done all, you are but unprofitable servants; after all your sorrows, and prayers, and tears, you deserve to be punished as obnoxious criminals; that would be a sorry government indeed, where repentance, perhaps extorted by the servile fear of punishment, would make atonement for every offence. But “I bring you glad tidings of great joy; to you is born a Savior,”



a Savior of no mean character; he is Christ the Lord. And have you never heard that he has “made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness; that he suffered, the just for the unjust; that God is well-pleased for his righteousness sake,” and declares himself willing to be reconciled to all that believe in him, and cheerfully accept him as their Savior and Lord? Have you never heard these joyful tidings, oh guilty, self-condemned sinners? Sure you have. Then away to Jesus, away to Jesus, ye whose consciences are loaded with guilt; ye whose hearts fail within you at the thoughts of death, and the tribunal of divine justice; ye who are destitute of all personal righteousness to procure you a pardon, and recommend you to the divine favor; fly to Jesus on the wings of faith, all of you, of every age and character; for you all stand in the most absolute need of him; and without him you must perish, every soul of you. But alas! We find ourselves utterly unable to repent and fly to Jesus; our hearts are hard and unbelieving; and if the work depend upon us, it will forever remain undone. True, my brethren, so the case is: but do you not know that this guilty earth is under the distilling’s of divine grace, and Jesus is entrusted with the influences of the Spirit, which can work in you both to will and to do; and that he is willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? If you know this, you know where to go for strength; therefore, cry mightily to God for it. This I earnestly recommend to all my hearers, and especially to you, gentlemen, and others, that are now about generously to risk your lives for your country. Account this the best preparative to encounter danger and death; the best incentive to true, rational courage. What can do you a lasting injury while you have a reconciled God smiling upon you from on high, a peaceful conscience animating you from within, and a happy immortality just before you? Sure you may bid defiance to dangers and death in their

most shocking forms. You have answered the end of this life already by preparing for another; and how can you depart off this mortal stage more honorably, than in the cause of liberty, of religion, and your country? But if any of you are perplexed with gloomy fears about this important affair, or conscious you are entirely unprepared for eternity, what must you do? Must you seek to prolong your life, and your time for preparation, by mean or unlawful ways, by a cowardly desertion of the cause of your country, and shifting for your little selves, as though you had no connection with society? Alas! This would but aggravate your guilt, and render your condition still more perplexed and discouraging. Follow the path of duty wherever it leads you, for it will be always the safest in the issue. Diligently improve the time you have to make your calling and election sure, and you have reason to hope for mercy, and grace to help in such a time of need. You will forgive me, if I have enlarged upon this point, even to a digression; for I thought it of great consequence to you all. I shall now proceed with more haste.

It is also of great importance to excite and keep up your courage in such an expedition, that we should be fully satisfied we engage in a righteous cause—and in a cause of great moment; for we cannot prosecute a suspected, or a wicked scheme which our own minds condemn, but with hesitation and timorous apprehensions; and we cannot engage with spirit and resolution in a trifling scheme, from which we can expect no consequences worth our vigorous pursuit. This Joab might have in view in his heroic advice to his brother: “Be of good courage,” says he, “and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God.” q.d. We are engaged in a righteous cause; we are not urged on by an unbounded lust of power or riches, to encroach upon the rights and properties of others, and

disturb our quiet neighbors; we act entirely upon the defensive, repel unjust violence, and avenge national injuries; we are fighting “for our people and for the cities of our God.” We are also engaged in a cause of the utmost importance. We fight for our people; and what endearments are included in that significant word! Our liberty, our estates, our lives! Our king, our fellow-subjects, our venerable fathers, our tender children, the wives of our bosom, our friends, the sharers of our souls, our posterity to the latest ages! And who would not use his sword with an exerted arm when these lie at stake? But even these are not all; we fight for the cities of our God. God has distinguished us with a religion from heaven; and hitherto we have enjoyed the quiet and unrestrained exercise of it; he has condescended to be a God to our nation, and to honor our cities with his gracious presence, and the institutions of his worship, the means to make us wise, good, and happy; but now these most invaluable blessings lie at stake; these are the prizes for which we contend; and must it not excite all our active powers to the highest pitch of exertion? Shall we tamely submit to idolatry and religious tyranny? No, God forbid; let us play the men, since we take up arms for our people, and the cities of our God.

I need not tell you how applicable this advice, thus paraphrased, is to the design of the present associated company. The equity of our cause is most evident. The Indian savages have certainly no right to murder our fellow-subjects, living quiet and inoffensive in their habitations; nor have the French any power to hound them out upon us, nor to invade the territories belonging to the British crown, and secured to it by the faith of treaties. This is a clear case: and it is equally clear that you are engaged in a cause of the utmost importance. To protect your brethren from the most bloody barbarities—to defend the territories of the best of kings against the

oppression and tyranny of arbitrary power—to secure the inestimable blessings of liberty, British liberty, from the chains of French slavery—to preserve your estates, for which you have sweat and toiled, from falling a prey to greedy vultures, Indians, priests, friars, and hungry Gallic slaves, or not more devouring flames—to guard your religion, the pure religion of Jesus, streaming uncorrupted from the sacred fountain of the Scriptures; the most excellent, rational, and divine religion that ever was made known to the sons of men; guard so dear, so precious a religion, (my heart grows warm while I mention it,) against ignorance, superstition, idolatry, tyranny over conscience, massacre, and fire, and sword, and all the mischiefs beyond expression, with which Popery is pregnant—to keep from the cruel hands of barbarians and Papists your wives, your children, your parents, your friends—to secure the liberties conveyed to you by your brave forefathers, and bought with their blood, that you may transmit them uncurtailed to your posterity. These are the blessings you contend for; all these will be torn from your eager grasp, if this colony should become a province of France. And Virginians! Britons! Christians! Protestants! If these names have any import or energy, will you not strike home in such a cause? Yes, this view of the matter must fire you into men; methinks the cowardly soul must tremble, lest the imprecation of the prophet fall upon him, “Cursed be the man that keepeth back his sword from blood.” To this shocking, but necessary work, the Lord now calls you, and “cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully”—that will not put his hand to it when it is in his power, or that will not perform it with all his might. Jer. 48:10. The people of Meroz lay at home in ease, while their brethren were in the field, delivering their country from slavery. And what was their doom? “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the

inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Judges 5:23. I count myself happy that I see so many of you generously engaged in such a cause; but when I view it in this light, I cannot but be concerned that there are so few to join you. Are there but fifty or sixty persons in this large and populous country that can be spared from home for a few weeks upon so necessary a design, or that are able to bear the fatigues of it? Where are the friends of human nature? Where the lovers of liberty and religion? Now is the time for you to come forth and show yourselves. Nay, where is the miser? Let him arise and defend his Mammon, or he may soon have reason to cry out with Micah, “They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?” Where is the tender soul, on whom the passions of a husband, a father, or a son, have a peculiar energy? Arise, and march away; you had better be absent from those you love for a little while, than see them butchered before your eyes, or doomed to eternal poverty and slavery. The association now forming is not yet complete; and if it were, it would be a glorious thing to form another. Therefore, as an advocate for your king, your fellow-subjects, your country, your relatives, your earthly all, I do invite and entreat all of you, who have not some very sufficient reason against it, voluntarily to enlist, and go out with those brave souls, who have set you so noble an example. It will be more advantageous to you to go out in time, and more honorable to go out as volunteers, than be compelled to it by authority, when perhaps it may be too late.

The consideration of the justice and importance of the cause may also encourage you to hope that the Lord of Hosts will espouse it, and render its guardians successful, and return them in safety to the arms of their longing friends. The event, however, is in his hands; and it is much better there than

if it were in yours. This thought is suggested with beautiful simplicity in the remaining part of my text: “The Lord do that which seemeth him good.” This may be looked upon in various views; as,

1. It may be understood as the language of uncertainty and modesty; q. d., Let us do all we can; but after all, the issue is uncertain; we know not, as yet, to what side God will incline the victory. Such language as this, my brethren, becomes us in all our undertakings; it sounds creature-like, and God approves of such self-diffident humility. But to indulge sanguine and confident expectations of victory, to boast when we put on our armor, as though we were putting it off, and to derive our high hopes from our own power and good management, without any regard to the providence of God, this is too lordly and assuming for such feeble mortals; such insolence is generally mortified; and such a haughty spirit is the forerunner of a fall. Therefore, though I do not apprehend your lives will be in any great danger in your present expedition to range the frontiers, and clear them of the skulking Indians; yet I would not flatter you, my brethren, with too high hopes either of victory or safety. I cannot but entertain the pleasing prospect of congratulating you, with many of your friends, upon your successful expedition and safe return: and yet it is very possible our next interview may be in that strange, untried world beyond the grave. You are, however, in the hands of God, and he will deal with you as it seemeth him good: and I am persuaded you would not wish it were otherwise; you would not now practically retract the petition you have so often offered up, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

2. This language, the Lord do as seemeth him good, may be looked upon as expressive of a firm persuasion that the event of war entirely depends upon the providence of God; q.d., Let us do our best; but after all, let us be

sensible, that the success does not depend on us; that it is entirely in the hands of an all-ruling God. That God governs the world is a fundamental article of natural as well as revealed religion: it is no great exploit of faith to believe this: it is but a small advance beyond atheism and downright infidelity. I know no country upon earth where I should be put to the expense of argument to prove this. The heathens gave striking proofs of their belief of it, by their prayers, their sacrifices, their consulting oracles, before they engaged in war; and by their costly offerings and solemn thanksgivings after victory. And shall such a plain principle as this be disputed in a Christian land? No; we all speculatively believe it; but that is not enough; let our spirits be deeply impressed with it, and our lives influenced by it: let us live in the world as in a territory of Jehovah's empire. Carry this impression upon your hearts into the wilderness, whither you are going. Often let such thoughts as these recur to your minds: I am the feeble creature of God; and blessed be his name, I am not cast off his hand as a disregarded orphan to shift for myself. My life is under his care; the success of this expedition is at his disposal. Therefore, O thou all-ruling God, I implore thy protection; I confide in thy care; I cheerfully resign myself, and the event of this undertaking, to thee. Which leads me to observe,

3. That these words, the Lord do what seemeth him good, may express a humble submission to the disposal of Providence, let the event turn out as it would; q.d., We have not the disposal of the event, nor do we know what it will be: but Jehovah knows, and that is enough: we are sure he will do what is best, upon the whole; and it becomes us to acquiesce. Thus, my friends, do you resign and submit yourselves to the Ruler of the world in the present enterprise: he will order matters as he pleases; oh! Let him do so by your

cheerful consent. Let success or disappointment, let life or death, be the issue, still say, "Good is the will of the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good:" or if nature biases your wishes and desires to the favorable side, as no doubt it will, still keep them within bounds, and restrain them in time, saying, after the example of Christ, not my will, but thine be done. You may wish, you may pray, you may strive, you may hope, for a happy issue; but you must submit; be still, and, know that he is God, and will not be prescribed to, or suffer a rival in the government of the world he has made. Such a temper will be of unspeakable service to you, and you may hope God will honor it with a remarkable blessing: for submission to his will is the readiest way to the accomplishment of our own.

4. These words, in their connection, may intimate, that let the event be what it will, it will afford us satisfaction to think that we have done the best we could, q.d., We cannot command success; but let us do all in our power to obtain it, and we have reason to hope that in this way we shall not be disappointed: but if it should please God to render all our endeavors vain, still we shall have the generous pleasure to reflect, that we have not been accessory to the ruin of our country, but have done all we could for its deliverance.

So you, my brethren, have generously engaged in a disinterested scheme for your king and country: God does generally crown such noble undertakings with success, and you have encouragement to hope for it: but the cause you have espoused is the cause of a sinful, impenitent country; and if God, in righteous displeasure, should, on this account, blast your attempt, still you will have the pleasure of reflecting upon your generous views and vigorous endeavors, and that you have done your part conscientiously.



Having thus made some cursory remarks upon the sundry parts of the text, I shall now conclude with an address, first, to you all in general, and then to you, gentlemen, and others, who have been pleased to invite me to this service. I hope you will forgive my prolixity; my heart is full, the text is copious, and the occasion singular and important. I cannot, therefore, dismiss you with a short, hurrying discourse.

It concerns you all seriously to reflect upon your own sins, and the sins of your land, which have brought all these calamities upon us. If you believe that God governs the world, if you do not abjure him from being the Ruler of your country, you must acknowledge that all the calamities of war, and the threatening appearances of famine, are ordered by his Providence: there is no evil in a city or country but the Lord hath done it. And if you believe that he is a just and righteous Ruler, you must also believe that he would not thus punish a righteous or a penitent people.

We and our countrymen are sinners, aggravated sinners: God proclaims that we are such by his judgments now upon us, by withering fields and scanty harvests, by the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war. Our consciences must also bear witness to the same melancholy truth. And if my heart were properly affected, I would concur with these undoubted witnesses; I would cry aloud and not spare; I would lift up my voice like a trumpet, to show you your transgressions and your sins. O my country, is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite? Where is there a more sinful spot to be found upon our guilty globe? Pass over the land, take a survey of the inhabitants, inspect into their conduct, and what do you see? What do you hear? You see the gigantic forms of vice braving the skies, and bidding defiance to heaven and earth, while religion and virtue are obliged to retire, to avoid public contempt and insult: you see herds of drunkards

swilling down their cups, and drowning all the man within them: you hear the swearer venting his fury against God and man, trifling with that name which prostrate angels adore, and imprecating that damnation, under which the hardest devil in hell trembles and groans: you see Avarice hoarding up her useless treasures, dishonest Craft planning her schemes of unlawful gain, and Oppression unmercifully grinding the face of the poor. you see Prodigality squandering her stores, Luxury spreading her table, and unmanning her guests; Vanity laughing aloud and dissolving in empty, unthinking mirth, regardless of God and our country, of time and eternity; Sensuality wallowing in brutal pleasures, and aspiring, with inverted ambition, to sink as low as her four-footed brethren to the stall: you see cards more in use than the Bible, the backgammon table more frequented than the table of the Lord, plays and romances more read than the history of the blessed Jesus. You see trifling and even criminal diversions become a serious business; the issue of a horse-race or a cock-fight more anxiously attended to than the fate of our country; or where these grosser forms of vice do not shock your senses, even there you often meet with the appearances of more refined impiety, which is equally dangerous; you hear the conversation of reasonable creatures, of candidates for eternity, engrossed by trifles, or vainly wasted on the affairs of time: these are the eternal subjects of conversation, even at the threshold of the house of God, and on the sacred hours devoted to his service: you see swarms of prayerless families all over our land; ignorant, vicious children, unrestrained and untaught by those to whom God and nature have entrusted their souls: you see thousands of poor slaves in a Christian country, the property of Christian masters, as they will be called, almost as ignorant of Christianity as when they left the wilds of Africa: you see the best religion

in all the world abused, neglected, disobeyed, and dishonored by its professors; and you hear Infidelity scattering her ambiguous hints and suspicions, or openly attacking the Christian cause with pretended argument, with insult and ridicule: you see crowds of professed believers, that are practical Atheists; nominal Christians, that are real heathens; many abandoned slaves of sin, that yet pretended to be the servants of the holy Jesus: you see the ordinances of the gospel neglected by some, profaned by others, and attended upon by the generality with a trifling irreverence, and studied unconcernedness. Alas! Who would think that those thoughtless assemblies we often see in our places of worship are met for such solemn purposes as to implore the pardon of their sins from an injured God, and to prepare for an all-important eternity? Alas! Is that religion, for the propagation of which the Son of God labored, and bled, and died; for which his apostles and thousands of martyrs have spent their strength, and shed their blood, and on which our eternal life depends—is that religion become such a trifle in our days, that men are hardly serious and in earnest when they attend upon its most solemn institutions? What multitudes lie in a deep sleep in sin all around us! You see them eager in the pursuits of the vanities of time, but stupidly unconcerned about the important realities of the eternal world just before them: few solicitous what shall become of them when all their connections with earth and flesh must be broken, and they must take their flight into strange, unknown regions: few lamenting their sins: few crying for mercy and a new heart: few flying to Jesus, or justly sensible of the importance of a Mediator in a religion for sinners.

You may indeed see some degree of civility and benevolence towards men, and more than enough of cringing complaisance of worms to worms, of clay to clay, of guilt to guilt: but oh! How little sincere homage, how

little affectionate veneration for the great Lord of heaven and earth! You may see something of duty to parents, of gratitude to benefactors, and obedience to superiors: but if God be a Father, where is his honor? If he be a Master, where is his fear? If he be our Benefactor, where is our gratitude to him? You may see here and there some instances of proud, self-righteous virtue, some appearances of morality: but oh! How rare is vital, evangelical religion, and true Christian morality, animated with the love of God, proceeding from a new heart, and a regard to the divine authority, full of Jesus, full of regard to him as a Mediator, on whose account alone our duties can find acceptance! O blessed Redeemer! What little necessity, what little use do the sinners of our country find for thee in their religion! How many discourses are delivered, how many prayers offered, how many good works are performed, in which there is scarce anything of Christ! And this defect renders them all but shining sins, glittering crimes. How few pant and languish for thee, blessed Jesus! And can never be contented with their reformation, with their morality, with their good works, till they obtain an interest in thy righteousness, to sanctify all, to render all acceptable! You may see children sensible of their dependence on their parents for their subsistence; you see multitudes sensible of their dependence on clouds, and sun, and earth, for provision for man and beast: but how few sensible of their dependence upon God, as the great Original, the primum mobile of natural causes, and the various wheels of the universe? You see even the dull ox knows his owner, and the stupid ass his master's crib; you see the workings of gratitude even in your dog, which welcomes you home with a thousand fondling motions; but how is Jehovah's government and agency practically denied in his own territories! How few receive the blessings of life as from his hand, and make him proper returns of gratitude! You see a

withered, ravaged country around you, languishing under the frowns of an angry God; but how few earnest prayers, how few penitential groans do you hear! Pass over the land, and bring me intelligence, is not this the general character of our country? I know there are some happy exceptions; and I hope sundry such might be produced from among you: but is not this the prevailing character of a great majority? Does not one part or other of it belong to the generality? The most generous charity cannot hope the contrary, if under any scriptural or rational limitations. May it not be said of the men of Virginia, as well as those of Sodom, they are wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly? And thus, alas! It has been for a long time: our country has sinned on securely for above one hundred and fifty years; and one age has improved upon the vices of another. And can a land always bear up under such a load of accumulated wickedness? Can God always suffer such a race of sinners to go unpunished from generation to generation? May we not fear that our iniquities are now just full, and that he is about to thunder out his awful mandate to the executioners of his vengeance, “Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down, for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.”

And is there no relief for a sinking country? Or is it too late to administer it? Is our wound incurable that refuseth to be healed? No, blessed be God; if you now turn every one of you from your evil ways, if you mourn over your sins, and turn to the Lord with your whole hearts, then your country will yet recover. God will appear for us, and give a prosperous turn to our affairs; he has assured us of this in his own word, “At what instant,” says he, “I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do

unto them.” Jer. 18:7,8. Therefore, my brethren, as we have all rebelled, let us all join in unanimous repentance and a thorough reformation. Not only your eternal salvation requires it, but also the preservation of your country, that is now bleeding with the wounds you have given it by your sins. The safety of these our friends, who are now engaged in so generous a design, requires it: for an army of saints, or of heroes, cannot defend a guilty, impenitent people, ripe for the judgments of God. If you would be everlastingly happy, and escape the vengeance of eternal fire, or (to mention what may perhaps have more weight with some of you,) if you would preserve yourselves, your families, your posterity, from poverty, from slavery, ignorance, idolatry, torture, and death; if you would save yourselves and them from all the infernal horrors of popery, and the savage tyranny of a mongrel race of French and Indian conquerors: in short, if you would avoid all that is terrible, and enjoy everything that is dear and valuable, repent and turn to the Lord. This is the only cure for our wounded country; and if you refuse to administer it in time, prepare to perish in its ruins. If you go on impenitent in sin, you may expect not only to be damned forever, but (what is more terrible to some of you) to fall into the most extreme outward distress. You will have reason to fear not only the loss of heaven, which some of you perhaps think little of, but the loss of your estates, that lie so near your hearts. And will you not repent when you are pressed to it from so many quarters at once?

And now, my brethren, in the last place, I have a few parting words to offer to you who are more particularly concerned on this occasion; and I am sure I shall address you with as much affectionate benevolence as you could wish.

My first and leading advice to you is, Labor to conduct this expedition in a religious manner. Methinks this should not seem strange counsel to creatures entirely dependent upon God, and at his disposal. As you are an independent company of volunteers, under officers of your own choosing, you may manage your affairs more according to your own inclination than if you had enlisted upon the ordinary footing: and I hope you will improve this advantage for the purposes of religion. Let prayer to the God of your life be your daily exercise. When retirement is safe, pour out your hearts to him in secret; and when it is practicable, join in prayer together morning and evening in your camp. How acceptable to Heaven must such an unusual offering be, from that desert wilderness! Maintain a sense of divine Providence upon your hearts, and resign yourselves and all your affairs into the hands of God. You are engaged in a good cause, the cause of your people, and the cities of your God; and therefore you may the more boldly commit it to him, and pray and hope for his blessing. I would fain hope there is no necessity to take precautions against vice among such a select company: but lest there should, I would humbly recommend it to you to make this one of the articles of your association, before you set out: That every form of vice shall be severely discountenanced j and if you think proper, expose the offender to some pecuniary or corporeal punishment. It would be shocking indeed, and I cannot bear the thought, that a company, formed upon such generous principles, should commit or tolerate open wickedness among them: and I hope this caution is needless to you all, as I am sure it is to sundry of you.

And now, my dear friends, and the friends of your neglected country, In the name of the Lord lift up your banners; be of good courage, and play the men for the people, and the cities of your God: and the Lord do what

seemeth him good. Should I now give vent to the passions of my heart, and become a speaker for my country, methinks I should even overwhelm you with a torrent of good wishes, and prayers from the hearts of thousands. May the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, go forth along with you! May he teach your hands to war, and gird you with strength to battle! May he bless you with a safe return, and long life, or a glorious death in the bed of honor, and a happy immortality! May he guard and support your anxious families and friends at home, and return you victorious to their longing arms! May all the blessings your hearts can wish attend you wherever you go! These are wishes and prayers of my heart, and thousands concur in them: and we cannot but cheerfully hope they will be granted, through Jesus Christ. Amen.



# *SERM. LXII. THE CRISIS, OR THE UNCERTAIN DOOM OF KINGDOMS AT PARTICULAR TIMES.*

**J**onah 3:9.— *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from, his fierce anger that we perish not?*

A state of uncertainty, a suspense between hope and fear, about a matter of importance, is a very painful and anxious state. And by how much the more important and interesting the matter, by so much the more distressing is the uncertainty. Now what can be more important, what more interesting, than our country? Our country is a word of the highest and most endearing import: it includes our friends and relatives, our liberty, our property, our religion; in short, it includes our earthly all. And when the fate of our country, and all that it includes, is dreadfully doubtful; when we are tossed and agitated between the alternate waves of hope and fear; when, upon taking a view of the present posture of our affairs, we can only ask with painful solicitude, what will be the end of these things? And when even the consideration of the divine mercy upon our repentance cannot give us any assurance of deliverance in a political capacity, but only a peradventure,

who can tell but God will turn and repent! When this, I say, is our situation, every mind that has the least thought, must be agitated with many eager, dubious expectations. This is the present situation of our country; and this was the state of that populous and magnificent city of Nineveh, when the words of my text were first spoken.

Nineveh was the metropolis of the Assyrian empire: and how prodigiously populous it was, you may calculate from hence, that it contained more than six score thousand children, that were so young that they could not distinguish the right hand from the left: and the number of adults, in proportion to these, must be vast indeed. Its extent was no less than three days' journey. Profane authors tell us, it was forty-seven miles in circumference; and that, notwithstanding its vast extent, it was surrounded with lofty walls and towers: the walls two hundred feet high, and so very wide, that three chariots might drive on them abreast: and the towers two hundred feet in height, and fifteen hundred in number. But what became of this mighty Nineveh at last? Alas! It was turned into a heap of rubbish. Divine patience was at length wearied out; and though the vengeance denounced by Jonah was suspended, yet that foretold by Nahum was dreadfully executed.

And what was the cause of this execution, and that denunciation? The cause of both was sin; national, epidemical sin, against an unknown God, the God of Israel; I say, against an unknown God; for Nineveh was a heathen city, not favored with the knowledge of the true God by supernatural revelation; much less with the gospel, that most perfect dispensation of divine grace towards the sons of men. The Ninevites could not sin with such horrid aggravations as we: and yet even they could sin to such a degree, as to become utterly intolerable. They sinned against the

light of nature, and that sufficed to bring down remediless destruction upon them. This is mentioned as the cause of the divine displeasure in Jonah's commission. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it: for their wickedness is come up before me. Jonah 1:2. Their wickedness has reached to heaven; and can no longer be endured. But before the fatal blow falls, let them have one warning more—Oh! How astonishing are the grace and patience of God towards a guilty people! Even when their wickedness has scaled the heavens, and come up before him, he condescends to give them another warning, and suspends the blow for at least forty days longer, to see if they will at length repent.

Jonah, having tried in vain to disengage himself from the message, is at length constrained to undertake it; and with the solemn and awful gait of a prophet, he walks from street to street, making this alarming proclamation: Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Jonah 3:4. This was the substance of his sermon: but no doubt he spoke much more than is, here recorded. No doubt, he produced his credentials from the God of Israel, and gave them the history of his reluctance to accept the commission; of the storm that pursued him, while attempting to make his escape; of his miraculous preservation in the belly of a fish, and his deliverance thence. No doubt, he also let them know what was the cause of the divine displeasure against them, viz.; their national vices and irreligion; and he perhaps intimated, that repentance was the only possible method of escaping the threatened destruction. It is plain, however, they understood him in this sense; for they actually did repent; but whether it was from the light of nature, or from Jonah's preaching, they received this direction, does not appear."

And now, while the prophet is delivering his message, their consciences tell them how ripe they are for this dreadful doom; and the Spirit of God no doubt concurs, and impresses the conviction upon their hearts. Now, methinks, I see eager, gazing crowds following the prophet from street to street; paleness in every countenance, and horror in every heart. Now the man of business remits his eager pursuits: the man of pleasure is struck with a damp in his thoughtless career: pride and grandeur lower their haughty airs; and a general horror spreads from the cottage to the throne. The people agree upon a public fast: and when the emperor hears of the awful message, he issues forth his royal edict, requiring a universal abstinence from food, and a deep repentance and reformation. He enjoins all to put on sackcloth, the habit of mourners and penitents in those ages and countries; and laying aside his royal robes, and descending from his throne, he puts on the mortifying dress himself, and lies in the dust. That the humiliation might be the more moving and affecting, he orders, according to the custom of the time upon such occasions, that even the beasts, the flocks, and herds, should be restrained from food, and compelled to join, as it were, with more guilty men, in the general humiliation, and in deprecating that vengeance which was about to fall upon man and beast.

We have now a very moving sight before us; a gay magnificent city in mourning; thousands mourning in every street: king and subjects, high and low, old and young, all covered in sackcloth and rolling in ashes. And their repentance does not wholly consist in these ceremonies: the royal proclamation further requires them to cry mightily unto God; and turn everyone from, his evil way. They are sensible of the propriety and necessity of prayer, earnest prayer to God, and a reformation of life, as well as of afflicting themselves with fasting. The light of nature directed them to

this as the only method of deliverance, if deliverance was possible. The case of such a people looks hopeful. That so many thousands should be brought to repentance by one warning, the first and only warning they had ever received from a prophet of the true God; a prophet that was a contemptible stranger from the despised nation of the Jews; this certainly appears promising.

Alas! Brethren, our countrymen are not so easily brought to repentance: no, this is not an easy thing among us. Ten thousand warnings, not only from conscience, from divine providence, from this very Jonah, and the other prophets of the Old Testament, but also from the gospel, that clear and perfect revelation; I say, ten thousand warnings, thus peculiarly enforced, have not so much effect upon our country, this Christian, this Protestant country, as one short warning from the mouth of Jonah had upon a city of heathens and idolators. All along as I have been considering this case, I could not cast out of my mind that dreadful declaration of Christ, “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here.” Matt. 12:41. Nineveh never had such loud calls to repentance, and such a rich plenty of all the means of grace, as Virginia. The meanest in the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the meanest Christian under the full revelation of the gospel, is greater in spiritual knowledge, not only than Jonah, but than John the Baptist, the greatest prophet that ever was born of a woman. And therefore, I may accommodate these words to us, Behold, a greater than Jonas is here. Here are clearer discoveries of the will of God, and stronger motives and encouragements to repentance, than ever Jonah could afford the men of Nineveh. But alas! Where is our repentance! Where are our humiliation and reformation! Shall the light of nature, and one

warning from a prophet, bring the heathens to the knee before God; and shall not the gospel, and all its loud calls, have that effect upon a Christian land! Shall Nineveh repent in sackcloth and ashes; and shall Virginia sin on still, impenitent, thoughtless, luxurious and gay? Alas! What will be the end of this?

The case of the Ninevites, who were brought to repentance so readily, and so generally, looks hopeful, and seems to promise them an exemption from the threatened vengeance. And yet, so sensible was the king of Nineveh of their demerit, and the insufficiency of their repentance to make atonement for their sins, that he is doubtful, after all, what would be the consequence. Who can tell, says he; who knoweth, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not! Q.d., Let us humble ourselves ever so low, we are not assured we shall escape; vengeance may, after all, seize us; and we may be made monuments to all the world of the justice of the King of kings, and the dreadful consequences of national impiety and vice. His uncertainty in this matter might proceed from the just sense he had of the intolerable height to which the national wickedness had arrived, and of the strictness of the divine justice. He knew, that even in his own government, it would have very bad consequences, if all crimes should be forgiven, or pass unpunished, upon the repentance of the offender; and he forms the same judgment concerning the divine government. Indeed, it is natural to a penitent, while he has a full view of his sins, in all their aggravations, and of the justice of God, to question whether such sins can be forgiven by so holy a God. He is apt even to fall into an extreme in this respect. It does not now appear so easy a thing to him to obtain a pardon, as it once did, when he had no just views of his guilt. Now it appears a great thing indeed; so great, that he can hardly think

it possible. Or the uncertainty of the king of Nineveh, in this point, might proceed from Jonah's being so reserved upon it. He might have had no commission from God to promise them deliverance upon their repentance; but he was to warn them, and then leave them in the hands of a gracious and righteous God, to deal with them according to his pleasure. This tended to make them more sensible that they lay at mercy, and that he might justly do what he pleased with them. The event indeed showed there was a condition implied in the threatening; and that God did secretly intend to spare them, upon their repentance. But this was wisely concealed, and it was sufficient that the event should make it known. It is certain that national as well as personal repentance, may sometimes come too late; and that sometimes the punishment may fall by way of chastisement, even when the repentance is sincere, and the sin is forgiven, so that it shall not bring on the destruction of the sinner in the eternal world.

But we may well suppose a heathen monarch, who probably had no instruction but from Jonah's short warning, would be much at a loss about these things. From this uncertainty of his about the fate of his empire, we may infer this truth which I intend to illustrate with regard to ourselves, viz.:

That sometimes a nation may be in such a situation, that no man can tell what will be the issue; or whether it shall be delivered from the threatened vengeance, or destroyed.

But though the king of Ninevah was uncertain about this; yet, there was one thing that he was very certain of, viz., That if there was any possibility of escape, it was to be hoped for only in the way of earnest prayer to God, general humiliation and reformation. This is evident from the connection of the context. "Let man and beast," says he, "be covered with sackcloth, and

cry mightily to God, yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way; who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not!” i.e., Who can tell but he may turn away from his fierce anger, in case we turn from our evil ways, and humble ourselves before him? If we do not reform and humble ourselves, the case is dreadfully plain; any one can tell that we cannot escape; there is not so much as a peradventure for it; unavoidable destruction will be our doom, beyond all question. But if we repent, who knows what that may do? “Who knows but God may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his wrath!” If there be any hope at all, it is in this way. This he learned from the light of nature, if not from Jonah’s preaching. And this suggests another seasonable truth, which, if my time will allow, I shall also illustrate, viz.:

That when a nation is in such a state, that no man can certainly determine what will be its doom, if there be any possible hope, it is only in the way of general humiliation, earnest prayer, and public reformation.

To prevent mistakes I have one thing more to observe upon the text; and that is, that when God is said to repent, it only signifies that the visible conduct of divine Providence has some resemblance to the conduct of men when they repent; and not that he is capable of repentance in a proper sense, or of that changeableness, imperfect knowledge, sorrow, and self-accusation, which repentance among men implies. When men repent that they have made a thing, they destroy it; and therefore, when God destroyed man by a deluge, he is said to repent that he made him; and when he deposed Saul, it is said, he repented that he had made him king. When men do not execute their threatening’s, it is supposed they repent of them; and hence, when God does not inflict the threatened evil, he is supposed to repent of the evil; i.e., he acts as men do when they repent of their purposes;



though when he made the denunciation, he well knew the event, and determined not to execute it, upon the repentance of the offenders. So with regard to Nineveh, there was no proper repentance in God, but an uniform, consistent purpose. He purposed to denounce his vengeance against that city; and he did so: he purposed and foresaw their repentance; and it accordingly came to pass: he purposed to spare them upon their repentance; and he did so. All this is very consistent, and implies no proper repentance in God; for in this sense, “God is not a man that he should repent,” Numb, 23:19; but “he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.” Job 23:13.

I now enter upon the illustration of the first reference upon the text, viz.:

I. That sometimes a nation may be in such a situation, that no man can tell what will be their doom; whether the threatened vengeance will fall upon them, or whether they shall escape.

This, we have seen, was the situation of Nineveh, though now lying in deep repentance, and not in danger, as far as appears from any visible cause. Thousands were now mourning, praying, and reforming; and we have no account of an enemy preparing to invade them. And if Nineveh, in this situation, which seems so promising, was, notwithstanding, in such danger that no man could determine what would be their doom, alas! What shall we say of Virginia and the kingdoms to which we belong, when they are neither penitent before God, nor safe from the arms of a powerful and victorious enemy? If the repentance of the Ninevites gave them no assurance of escape, but only a peradventure, Who can tell if God will turn from his fierce anger? Certainly our doom must, at best, be equally uncertain, when, instead of repentance, reformation, and mighty crying to God, we see the generality impenitent, unreformed, and prayerless still. I would not damp

you with unmanly fears, but I cannot help saying that our doom is dismally uncertain. I know not what a provoked God intends to do with us and our nation. I have my hopes indeed; but they are balanced, and sometimes over-balanced, with fearful and gloomy apprehensions. But,

1. The issue of the present war will appear dreadfully uncertain, if we consider the present posture of affairs.

We are engaged in war with a powerful, exasperated enemy: and blood is streaming by sea and land. Some decisive blow will probably be struck ere long: but on what party it will fall, and what will be the issue of this struggle and commotion among the nations, is an anxious uncertainty. It seems but too likely, though it strikes me with horror to admit the thought, that a provoked God intends to scourge us with the rod of France, and therefore gives surprising success to her arms. Who can tell, but the king of France may have the same commission given him by that God whom we and our mother country have so grievously offended, as was given to the Assyrian monarch, in Isaiah's time, when God speaks of him as his rod, to chastise his own people, and as acting by a commission from him, though he neither knew or designed it, but only intended to gratify his own ambition? "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so; neither doth his heart think so: but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few." But at the same time it is foretold, that "When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." Isa. 10:5,6,7,12. And if the same

commission be given to the king of France, I doubt not but his end will be the same. When God has finished his work of correction with this rod, he will break it, or burn it in the fire. The like commission was given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and when he, and his son, and his son's son, had served as the executioners of God's wrath upon his people, and the neighboring nations, they and the Babylonian empire were destroyed together. "Thus, saith the Lord of hosts, because ye have not heard my words, behold I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, (my servant, to execute this my work of correction and of vengeance,) and I will bring them against this land and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. But it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, (the space of time allotted for his power, and the correction of God's people,) that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." Jer. 25:8,12,14. Thus you see it is no uncommon thing for God, when transgressions are come to the full, to raise up some power to perform his work of chastisement and vengeance, and render it victorious and irresistible, till that work is done, and then to crush it in its turn. And whether divine Providence is now about to employ the power of France for this purpose, is a dreadful uncertainty. We hope, indeed, matters will take a more favorable turn; but the present posture of affairs, and particularly the rapid conquests of that power, which is now become so formidable even in America, give us reason to fear this may be the event, and that matters are now ripening fast for this terrible result.

I may add, that we have reason to fear from this disposition and conduct of many among ourselves, some in high places have been suspected of treachery or cowardice, or at least bad conduct. A spirit of security, sloth, and cowardice, evidently prevails; nothing great is so much as attempted, much less executed. We have also many black foreigners among ourselves, as may justly alarm our fears. Now if the French should invade our frontiers; if the Indians that are now neuter, or in the British interests, should join with them, and with those tribes that are already so active upon their side; and if their united forces should pour down upon us, and meet with welcome reception and assistance from so powerful an enemy among themselves; I say, should this be the case, I need not tell you what unexampled scenes of blood, cruelty, and devastation would open in our country. This may not be the event; and I hope and pray it may not: but it is not so improbable as we could wish; much less is it impossible. Who knows but this may actually be the consequence!

And if the natural allies of France should form a confederacy against our mother country, and attack her with their united strength, how terrible would be the consequence probably be, both to her and to us, especially if the protestant powers should not vigorously concur with us against them! This event may not happen; and I hope and pray it may not: but it is not so unlikely as one could wish. But,

2. The event of the present war will appear dismally doubtful, if we consider some Scripture prophecies, particularly in Daniel and the Revelation.

I cannot pretend to enter deeply into this subject at present; a subject that has filled so many volumes, and employed the thoughts and pens of so many great men. It will be sufficient to my present purpose to observe,

(1.) That the idolatrous persecuting power of Popery, seated at Rome, is undoubtedly meant by the little horn in Daniel, (Dan. 7:8,) that rose up out of the Roman empire, when it was divided into ten kingdoms by the barbarous nations that broke in upon it: a horn which had a mouth, speaking great things; which made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; a horn which speaks great things against the Most High, and wears out the saints of the Most High; and thinks to change times and laws; i.e., to alter and corrupt the ordinances of God, ver. 24,25. The same idolatrous, persecuting power, is also intended in Revelation (Rev. 13:) by the beast with seven heads and ten horns, that had a mouth given him, speaking great things and blasphemies; and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, &c., and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. The same idolatrous and persecuting power is intended likewise by the woman (Rev. 17:) sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, having seven heads and ten horns; full of names of blasphemy, and drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Protestant commentators generally agree in this application of these prophecies to the Papal power; but I cannot take time to lay before you the full evidence upon which they proceed. However, I cannot but just observe, that the angel-interpreter expressly tells St. John, that this woman was that great city which then reigned over the kings of the earth, (ver. 18,) which undoubtedly means the city of Rome, that was then the seat of universal empire. But,

(2.) The time of the reign of this idolatrous and persecuting power is determined in prophetic numbers, both in Daniel and the Revelation. In

Daniel, it is said, the saints shall be given into the hand of the horns until a time, times, and the dividing of time, Dan. 7:25; and that he shall scatter the power of the holy people for a time, times, and half a time. Dan. 12:7. In the Revelation, we are told that the church of Christ, represented by a woman, shall continue in the wilderness, i.e., in a state of oppression and persecution, under the Popish power, for a time, times, and half a time; Rev. 12:14; that the outer court of the temple and the holy city, another emblem of the true church of Christ, shall be given to the Gentiles, i.e., subjected to a power no better than heathen, and by them trodden under foot forty-two months; that the church should be fed in the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty days, Rev. 12:6; and that the two witnesses, i.e., the small remnant of the faithful who shall retain the purity of the gospel, and witness against the corruptions of the church of Rome, shall prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days in sackcloth. These are but different representations of the same period: and in order to understand them, you are to observe, that, in this calculation, a day signifies a year; and therefore twelve hundred and sixty days are twelve hundred and sixty years. A month consists of thirty such days, i.e., thirty years; for the months among the ancients were invariably made up of but thirty days, as their year consisted only of three hundred and sixty days. Now forty-two months, multiplied by thirty, just make twelve hundred and sixty years. So time signifies one year, times two years, and half a time, or the dividing of time, half a year: now one year and two years, making three years, and the half year added to them, make three years and a half. These three years and a half contain thrice three hundred and sixty years, and the half of three hundred and sixty, (viz., one hundred and eighty,) which make exactly twelve hundred and sixty years. So that all these calculations amount to the same thing, viz., twelve hundred and sixty

years. This is undoubtedly the duration of the Popish tyranny, and of the oppression of the saints, and the cause of truth. Now, if we could find out when it began, whether when the Pope usurped and exercised the substance of ecclesiastical authority, as universal bishop, which was in the fifth century; or when he was formally invested with that authority by the Emperor Phocas, A. D. 606; or when he was made a secular prince, and had a civil authority added to his ecclesiastical, by Pipin, king of France, A. D. 756; I say, if we could find out when this space of twelve hundred and sixty years began, we could easily find out when it will end: and this would help us to determine what will be the event of the present war, whether the oppression of the Protestant cause, or the downfall of the bloody power of Popery, that has undoubtedly held the world in ignorance, idolatry, and slavery, for above a thousand years. But after all the searches I can make, I am not able to form a certain determination upon the point; and commentators differ so widely among themselves, that I have received but little light from them. I must therefore leave you in that uncertainty in which I am myself; and consequently destitute of light from these predictions concerning the event of the present war. But,

(3.) Though this period of twelve hundred and sixty years is to be, all through, a series of tyranny and persecution; and the cause of truth and its advocates are continually under oppression; yet there is a short space in this period, I suppose, from the calculation in the Revelation, (Rev. 11:9,) about three years and a half, in which the cause of truth shall seem entirely suppressed, and its friends utterly extinct; so that there will be no human probability of their revival, any more than of a human body that has lain dead three days and a half. And upon this the Popish powers shall exult and triumph, as if they had obtained an entire and lasting victory. This is

probably the time referred to in Daniel, (chap. 12:1,) as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time.” During the rest of the twelve hundred and sixty days, the witnesses prophesied in sackcloth, in a state of mourning and persecution: but in this period they are killed; and their dead bodies lie unburied and insulted, in the street of the great city, i.e., in the Roman territories: “and they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another.” Rev. 11:7—10. This is a melancholy time indeed for the few servants of Jesus Christ. And who can tell whether it be past, or whether it be future, and the issue of the present war? I could easily lay before you the opinions of good and great men on this point; but they are so various, that they could not bring you to any certain conclusion upon it. Some suppose it past; and that it was either a little before the reformation, when the Albigenses and Waldenses, who had been witnesses for a long time against the corruptions of Popery, were, in appearance, utterly extirpated by a series of bloody persecutions, at the Pope’s instigation: and if this was the period, then the resurrection of the witnesses, and their being caught up into heaven, must signify the revival of their cause at the Reformation, and the raising up of Luther, Calvin, and other reformers, in the same spirit. Or, as others suppose, this melancholy time was about the year 1550, when the persecution raged in England, under Queen Mary, and the civil wars in France, Germany, and the Low Countries, on account of religion, seemed to threaten the utter extinction of the Protestant cause. Those that suppose this time is past, have sundry arguments, that are at least plausible, to support their opinion; and if I have any opinion at all, in so doubtful a matter, I incline to this.



There are others of no small judgment in such matters, that apprehend this melancholy period is yet to come; and they too have their reasons which I cannot now mention. And if this be the case, who can tell but the melancholy time is now at hand, and that the present commotions in Europe are working up to it? This is certain, it will be introduced by war; for we are expressly told, that when the two witnesses have finished their testimony, “the beast shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them,” Rev. 11:7; and that just before the pouring out of the seventh vial, which shall utterly destroy the popish powers, and introduce the kingdom of Christ, the kings of the earth, by popish instigation, shall gather themselves together to the battle of the great day of God almighty, in a place called Armageddon, (Rev. 16:13,14,16,) or Megiddo, where good Josiah, the great reformer of the Jewish religion, was slain. “I saw the beast,” says St. John, “and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse,” i.e., against Jesus Christ and his army. Rev. 19:19. Popery will die hard, and its last struggles will be very violent. It will collect all its forces, and make a bold push to recover its lost authority; and this will undoubtedly be attended with much slaughter. But whether it will be victorious in the first attack, and at this time slay the witnesses, or whether the Lamb and his army shall immediately prevail, as he certainly will at last, this seems uncertain. Now who can tell, but the present war is the commencement of this grand decisive conflict between the Lamb and the beast, i.e., between the Protestant and the Popish powers? The Pope first received his principality and secular authority from Pipin, one of the kings of France; and there seems to be something congruous in it, that France should also take the lead, and be, as it were, the general of his forces in this last decisive conflict for the support of that authority. This is

also remarkable, and almost peculiar to the present war, viz., That Protestants and papists are not blended together in it by promiscuous alliances; but France and her allies are all Papists; and Britain and her allies are all Protestants; and consequently whatever party fall, the religion of that party is like to fall too. If France and her allies should prove victorious, then we may conclude the period for slaying the witnesses is just coming. But if Britain and her allies should be victorious, then we may conclude that time is past, and the time is just come, when it shall be proclaimed, Babylon is fallen! Is fallen! But all this is uncertain, at least to me, till the event make it plain; and for that we must wait with anxious suspense.

But here I cannot help mentioning one thing to mitigate your anxieties; and that is, that however bloody and desolating this last conflict may be, it will bring about the most glorious and happy revolution that ever was in the world. It will change the face of things, introduce “a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell;” and it will new-model the kingdoms of the world, “and they shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever,” Rev. 11:15; then Satan shall be bound and Christ shall reign in the hearts of men, a thousand years. How remarkable upon this head are the prophecies of Daniel, above two thousand years ago! “I beheld,” says he, “and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them until the Ancient of days came;” i.e., came to give dominion, and glory, and a kingdom to the Son of man; Dan. 7:21,22: and then judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom, ver. 13,14. They shall be uppermost in their turn, and be finally triumphant. All the other empires and kingdoms of the world have been subject to revolutions, passed from hand to hand, and at length fallen to pieces; but this, says Daniel, is a

kingdom which shall never be destroyed; a kingdom that shall not be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms that were before it, and it shall stand for ever. Dan. 2:44. Hail, happy period! How long wilt thou delay 'T Lord Jesus, let thy kingdom come; let it come, though to make way for it, many thrones must totter that are now the supporters of Antichrist: let it come, though many kingdoms should be overturned, and many countries stream with blood; though we and millions more should be crushed in the grand revolution. See, brethren, the happy result of all the commotions that are or have been on this restless globe: see to what a glorious end they all tend! And who would not willingly live a while longer in this world of sin and sorrow, and share in calamities of war, and all the plagues reserved for the latter times, if he may but see this blessed period? But if we should not be so happy as to see it with mortal eyes, such of us as die in the Lord shall receive the welcome intelligence of it in heaven, and rejoice in it as much as its proper subjects on earth. You will forgive me if I have dwelt too long upon this new and curious subject. I shall now proceed with more haste. Therefore,

3. The event of the present war, and the doom of our country and nation, will appear dreadfully uncertain if we consider our national guilt and impenitence.

Let Atheists and Epicureans say what they please, it is an eternal truth, which all the world will be made to know at last, that Jehovah is the Ruler of the universe; that the fate of kingdoms is in his hands; that he is the sovereign Arbiter of war, and determines victory as he pleases. It is also certain that rewards and punishments are as essential to his government, as they are to all other governments. In the world to come he will reward or punish individuals, according to their personal works; and in the present

world he will reward or punish nations, according to their national work; in the present world I say, because it is only in the present world they subsist in a national capacity, and are capable of national rewards and punishments. Now there is a time, when the transgressors are come to the full., Dan. 8:23; when the measure of a people's iniquity is filled up, and they are ripe for vengeance. And then the executioners of divine vengeance, the sword, famine, pestilential diseases, earthquakes and the like, are turned loose among them; then the dread commission is issued out, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down; for the press is full; the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great." Joel 3:13. Then all the undertakings of such a people are blasted; and even the worst of the heathen (Ezek. 7:24) succeed against them. That nation is thrown off\* from the hinge on which empire turns, and therefore must fall. The Lord of armies is against them; and by a secret but irresistible hand, brings on their destruction.

Now whether that fatal period be arrived, with respect to us and our nation, I will not determine, nor indeed am I capable: but I am sure it is not evident that it is not come; I am sure our land is full of sin against the Holy One of Israel. On this subject I have often enlarged; and now I am afraid it is a trite, disregarded tale. The sins of our land lie heavy upon it; the sins of all ranks and denominations: the sins of past and present generations: sins against the law and against the gospel; sins against mercies and against judgments; sins in heart, in language, in practice; sins of all kinds and degrees, and against all sorts of obligations: Oh! What a huge heap, what an intolerable burden do all these sins make! The sins of many millions on both sides the Atlantic! Our body politic is a huge mass of corruption! The whole head is sick; and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot unto

the head there is no soundness in it, but all full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. Isa. 1:6. And does not this leave our doom in a dreadful suspense? Who can tell what will be the fate of so guilty a people? Can we indulge high hopes with such a load of guilt upon us? Sin lies like a dead weight upon our counsels, our designs, and expeditions; and crushes all of them. What though our enemies be as wicked as ourselves, with only this exception, that they have not our advantages, and therefore cannot sin with our aggravations? But what if they were in all respects as bad? It has been no unusual thing for God to employ one guilty nation to execute his vengeance upon another; and when that drudgery is done, (which, by the by, is more properly devolved upon a hated nation than upon his people; he has more beneficent and agreeable work for them,) I say when that drudgery is done, he executes the executioner: just as one among a number of criminals may be appointed to execute the rest; and then he is executed himself by some other hand. Thus God employed the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish his people, the Jews; and when they had, though undesignedly, done him that service, he punishes them in a yet severer manner. And thus he threatens the Jews by Ezekiel, that he would bring the worst of the Heathen against them: they were good enough to be executioners. So he employs devils, the worst of beings, to execute his vengeance upon sinners in hell. And so in human governments, the refuse of mankind are appointed hangmen.

But though our land be so full of sin, yet there would be some ground to hope, could we see any appearances of a general repentance and reformation. But alas! Where shall we find it? I have not been a heedless observer of the effects of the corrective and vindictive providences of God towards our land, the sword, a threatened famine, and a deadly, raging

distemper. But I have been really shocked to observe the issue. I am afraid that even the people of God are not so effectually roused by these warnings as they should be. One would think they would be all life and vigor at such a time as this: but, alas! I am afraid it is otherwise. I am especially afraid that impenitent sinners, instead of being melted into repentance, are hardening more and more like clay in the sun. Alas! I see and hear no more of serious concern about eternal things among us, than if we lived in a healthy neighborhood, and a peaceful, unmolested country. I am afraid the case of some bears a dismal resemblance to that described in Rev. 16:10,11. “They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds;” no, they are sullenly obstinate to wickedness still.

Brethren, what are we doing? Are we asleep at such a time as this, when the judgments of heaven are around us, and the fate of our country is so terribly doubtful? For God’s sake, for our soul’s sake, for our country’s sake, let us rouse ourselves from our security; and let us humble ourselves before God, “and cry mightily to him; and who can tell but he may turn away from his fierce anger?” Which leaves me to the second inference from my text, viz.,

II. That when a nation is in such a doubtful situation that no man can know its doom, if there be any hope, it is only in the way of repentance, reformation, and earnest prayer.

This appears the only way of hope on two accounts:

1. National sin has a direct tendency, in its own nature, to weaken and destroy a nation. It is the deadly disease of a body politic which will destroy it, without the hand of an executioner. It spreads corruption, injustice, treachery, discord, confusion, cowardice, through a nation; and it destroys

public spirit, the love of our country, unanimity, courage, and all the social and heroic virtues which naturally tend to strengthen, defend, and advance a people. Now, repentance, reformation, and prayer, is the proper cure for this disease; it purges out these internal principles of death, and implants and cherishes the opposite principles of virtue and life. But this is not all; for,

2. Repentance, reformation, and prayer, is the only method to turn away the displeasure of God, and obtain his favor and protection. Sin brings on a people the curse of a provoked God; and under this they fade and wither away, like a blasted flower, or a tree struck by lightning from heaven. But if it be possible to remove it, and obtain the divine favor, it is only by deep humiliation before him, by a thorough reformation from those sins that provoke him, and by earnest cries for mercy. The light of nature taught the men of Nineveh that this was the only way of hope; and revelation assures us of the very same thing. It is only to the penitent that the promises of deliverance are made; and without repentance, we have no possible claim to them. Deliverances are generally answers to prayer; and therefore without earnest prayer we cannot expect them. National judgments are inflicted for national sins, and therefore reformation from national sins is the only hopeful way to escape them.

Therefore, my brethren, let us betake ourselves to this only method of hope. Let us deeply humble ourselves before God; “let us cry mightily to him—and let us turn everyone from our evil ways;” and then, “who can tell but God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”

But in all my exhortations of this kind, I remember that repentance and reformation is the duty of fallen creatures; of creatures so depraved and feeble, that they are not able, of themselves, so much as to apply the

remedy. If you attempt this work with the pride of imaginary self-sufficiency, you may be sure disappointment will be the consequence. Therefore remember, that it is the Holy Spirit of God alone that is the author of a thorough repentance and effectual reformation. It is he alone that can effectually convince the world of sin. If he be absent, legislators may make laws against vice, philosophers may reason, ministers may preach, nay, conscience may remonstrate, the divine law may prescribe and threaten, the gospel may invite and allure; but all will be in vain; all will not produce one true penitent. The strongest arguments, the most melting entreaties, the most alarming denunciations, from God and man, enforced by the highest authority, or by the most compassionate tears, all will have no effect; all will not effectually reclaim one sinner, nor gain one sincere proselyte to righteousness; Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, with all their apostolical abilities, can do nothing to the purpose without the Spirit. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God alone can give the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; they are both nothing together; but God who giveth the increase (1 Cor. 3:7) is all in all. Till the Spirit be poured forth from on high, says Isaiah, briers and thorns shall come up upon the land of my people; i.e., that their country shall be laid waste, and be made a mere wilderness of briers and thorns, by the ravages of war; or the people themselves shall be like briers and thorns, fruitless, noxious, and troublesome. In this language the prophet Micah describes the same people; the best of them is as a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge. (Micah 7:4.) Such shall they continue, until the Holy Spirit be poured forth upon them from on high. But when the happy time comes, “then the wilderness shall be a fruitful field; then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field.” This



effusion of the Spirit shall put an end to the desolation of war, and establish them in the possession of lasting and extensive peace; for, as it is there added, the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the native effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever; and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (Isaiah 32:13,18.) You see, my brethren, of how much importance and necessity the Spirit is to produce a reformation, and that blessed peace and security, both personal and national, both within and without, which is the effect of it!

And how are we to expect his sacred influences? Or in what way may we hope to attain them? The answer is, Pray for them: pray frequently, pray fervently. “Lord, thy Spirit! Oh give thy Spirit! That is the blessing I want; the blessing which families, and nations, and the whole human race want.” Pray in your retirements; pray in your families; pray in societies appointed for that purpose; pray in warm ejaculations; pray without ceasing, for this grand fundamental blessing. Hear what encouragement Christ has given to prayer in this particular, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him!” Luke 11:9-13. Endeavour to repent in this humble, self-diffident manner, and you may hope it will at least avail to your eternal salvation; and who knows but it may avail also to turn away the fierce anger of God from your country and nation?

# *SERM. LXIII. THE CURSE OF COWARDICE.*

**J**er. 48:10.— *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.*

Nothing can be more agreeable to the God of Peace, than to see universal harmony and benevolence prevail among his creatures, and he has laid them under the strongest obligations to cultivate a pacific temper towards one another, both as individuals and as nations. Follow peace with all men, is one of the principal precepts of our holy religion. And the great Prince of Peace has solemnly pronounced, Blessed are the peacemakers.

But when, in this corrupt, disordered state of things, where the lusts of men are perpetually embroiling the world with wars and fighting's, throwing all into confusion; when ambition and avarice would rob us of our property, for which we have toiled, and on which we subsist; when they would enslave the free-born mind, and compel us meanly to cringe to usurpation and arbitrary power; when they would tear from our eager grasp the most valuable blessing of heaven, I mean our religion; when they invade our country, formerly the region of tranquility, ravage our frontiers, butcher

our fellow-subjects, or confine them in a barbarous captivity in the dens of savages; when our earthly all is ready to be seized by rapacious hands, and even our eternal all is in danger by the loss of our religion: when this is the case, what is, then, the will of God? Must peace then be maintained, maintained with our perfidious and cruel invaders? Maintained at the expense of property, liberty, life, and everything dear and valuable? Maintained, when it is in our power to vindicate our right, and do ourselves justice? Is the work of peace then our only business? No: in such a time, even the God of Peace proclaims by his providence, “To arms!” Then the sword is, as it were, consecrated to God; and the art of war becomes a part of our religion. Then happy is he that shall reward our enemies as they have served us. Psalm 137:8. Blessed is the brave soldier: blessed is the defender of his country, and the destroyer of its enemies. Blessed are they who offer themselves willingly in this service, and who faithfully discharge it. But on the other hand, “Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed is he that keepeth back his sword from blood.”

As to the original reference and meaning of these words, it is sufficient to my purpose to observe, that the Moabites, against whom this prophecy was immediately denounced, were a troublesome and restless nation in the neighborhood of the Jews, who, though often subdued by them, yet upon every occasion struggled to recover their power, and renewed their hostilities. By this, and various other steps, they were arrived to the highest pitch of national guilt, and ripe for execution. The Babylonians were commissioned for this work of vengeance: and they were bound to execute the commission faithfully, under penalty of a curse. To them this denunciation was immediately directed, Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, or negligently; and cursed be he that keepeth back his

sword from blood. This is expressly in the form of an imprecation, or an authoritative denunciation of a curse: and in this form it might be used consistently with benevolence, by a prophet speaking as the mouth of God. But this is not a pattern for our imitation, who are peculiarly obliged, under the gospel, to bless, and curse not, and to pray for all men. However, it may be pronounced even by our lips as a declaration of the righteous curse of God against a dastardly refusal to engage in war, when it is our duty; or a deceitful, negligent discharge of that duty, after we have engaged in it. These are the crimes that seem intended in my text; and against each of these the tremendous curse of Jehovah is still in full force in all ages, even under the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Cowardice and treachery are now as execrable as ever.

Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood. This denunciation, like the artillery of heaven, is levelled against the coward, who, when God, in the course of his providence, calls him to arms, refuses to obey, and consults his own ease and safety more than his duty to God and his country.

Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully. This seems to be levelled against another species of cowards; sly, hypocritical cowards, who undertake the work of the Lord; that is, take up arms; but they do the work of the Lord deceitfully; that is, they do not faithfully use their arms for the purposes they were taken up. They commence soldiers, not that they may serve their country, and do their duty to God, but that they may live in ease, idleness, and pleasure, and enrich themselves at the public expense. Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and serves himself under pretense of serving his country.

You, gentlemen, and others, whom I this day behold with peculiar pleasure engaged in the cause of your neglected country, and who have

done me the honor of inviting me to this service; a service which I am sure I should perform to your satisfaction if my preparations and abilities were proportioned to my benevolence for you, and my concern for your success: you are peculiarly interested in the remarks I have made upon the text. And that I may contribute all in my power both to increase your number, and direct you to a proper conduct in the honorable character you sustain, I shall lay before you a brief view of the present circumstances of our country: from which it will appear, that the war in which we are engaged, is a duty, or the work of the Lord; and consequently, that we are all obliged, according to our respective characters, to carry it on with vigor, under penalty of falling under the curse of God. And then I shall show you what is the deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unseasonably keeping back of the sword from blood, which exposes to the curse.

I. I am to lay before you a brief view of the present circumstances of our country, which render the war in which we are engaged the work of the Lord, which consecrate swords as instruments of righteousness, and call us to the dreadful but important duty of shedding human blood, upon penalty of falling under the tremendous curse of God.

Need I inform you what barbarities and depredations a mongrel race of Indian savages and French Papists have perpetrated upon our frontiers? How many deserted or demolished houses and plantations? How wide an extent of country abandoned? How many poor families obliged to fly in consternation, and leave their all behind them? What breaches and separations between the nearest relations? What painful ruptures of heart from heart? What shocking dispersions of those once united by the strongest and most endearing ties? Some lie dead, mangled with savage wounds, consumed to ashes with outrageous flames, or torn and devoured

by the beasts of the wilderness, while their bones lie whitening in the sun, and serve as tragical memorials of the fatal spot where they fell. Others have been dragged away captives, and made the slaves of imperious and cruel savages; others have made their escape, and live to lament their butchered or captivated friends and relations. In short, our frontiers have been drenched with the blood of our fellow-subjects, through the length of a thousand miles; and new wounds are still opening. We, in these inland parts of the country, are as yet unmolested, through the unmerited mercy of Heaven. But let us only glance a thought to the western extremities of our body politic; and what melancholy scenes open to our view! Now, perhaps, while I am speaking; now, while you are secure and unmolested, our fellow-subjects there may be feeling the calamities I am describing. Now, perhaps, the savage shouts and whoops of Indians, and the screams and groans of some butchered family, may be mingling their horrors, and circulating their tremendous echoes through the wilderness of rocks and mountains! Now, perhaps, some tender, delicate creature may be suffering an involuntary prostitution to savage lust; and perhaps debauched and murdered by the same hand! Now, perhaps, some miserable Briton or Virginian may be passing through a tedious process of experiments in the infernal art of torture! Now, some helpless children may be torn from the arms of their murdered parents, and dragged away, weeping, and wringing their hands, to receive their education among barbarians, and to be formed upon the model of a ferocious Indian soul!

And will these violences cease without a vigorous and timely resistance from us? Can Indian revenge and thirst for blood be glutted? Or can French ambition and avarice be satisfied? No, we have no method left, but to repel force with force, and to give them blood to drink in their turn, who have

drank ours. If we sit still and do nothing, or content ourselves, as, alas! We have hitherto, with feeble, dilatory efforts, we may expect these barbarities will not only continue, but that the Indians, headed by the French, will carry their inroads still farther into the country, and reach even unto us. By the desertion of our remote settlements, the frontiers are approaching every day nearer and nearer to us; and if we cannot stand our ground now, when we have above a hundred miles of a thick-settled country between us and the enemy, much less shall we be able, when our strength is weakened by so vast a loss of men, arms, and riches, and we lie exposed to their immediate incursions. Some cry, "Let the enemy come down to us, and then we will fight them." But this is the trifling excuse of cowardice or security, and not the language of prudence and fortitude. Those who make this plea, if the enemy should take them at their word, and make them so near a visit, would be as forward in flight as they are now backward to take up arms.

Such, my brethren, such, alas! Is the present state of our country; it bleeds in a thousand veins; and without timely remedy, the wound will prove mortal. And in such circumstances is it not our duty in the sight of God; is it not a work to which the Lord loudly calls us, to take up arms for the defense of our country? Certainly it is; and cursed is he who, having no ties sufficiently strong to confine him at home, keepeth his sword from blood. The man that can desert the cause of his country in such an exigency; his country, in the blessings of which he shared while in peace and prosperity; and which is therefore entitled to his sympathy and assistance in the day of its distress; that cowardly, ungrateful man sins against God and his country, and deserves the curse of both. Such a conduct in such a conjuncture, is a moral evil, a gross wickedness; and exposes the wretch to the heavy curse of God both in this and the eternal world.

And here I cannot but observe, that among the various and numberless sins under which the country groans, and which must be looked upon as the cause of our public calamities, by every one that believes a divine Providence: a doctrine so comfortable, and so essential both in natural and revealed religion; an article in the creed of heathens and Mahometans, (as well as Jews and Christians;) I say, among these various sins, cowardice and security are none of the least. He that hath determined the bounds of our habitations, hath planted us in a land of liberty and plenty; a land, till lately, unalarmed with the terrors of war, and unstained with human blood; indeed, all things considered, there are but few such happy spots on our globe. And must it not highly provoke our divine Benefactor, to see a people, thus distinguished with blessings, so insensible of their worth, so ungrateful for them, and so unacquainted with their own unworthiness to receive them? What can be more evidential of their undue apprehensions of the worth of these blessings, than their being so little concerned to secure and recover them? The generality among us have acted as if their interests at stake were so trifling, that it would not be worthwhile to take pains, or encounter dangers, to preserve them. What greater evidence can be given of ingratitude than a supine neglect of these blessings, and such a stupidly tame and irresisting resignation of them into bloody and rapacious hands? And what can be more evidential of a proud insensibility of our unworthiness of such blessings, than our being so inapprehensive of losing them, even in the most threatening and dangerous circumstances? Our countrymen in general have acted, as if beings of their importance and merit might certainly rest in the quiet, unmolested possession of their liberty and property, without any one daring to disturb them, and without their doing anything for their own defense; or as if neither God nor man could strip



them of their enjoyments. What vain, self-confident presumption, what intolerable insolence is this, in a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, who have forfeited every blessing, even the ground they tread upon, and the air they breathe in; and who live merely by the immerited grace and bounty of God! Is not cowardice and security, or an unwillingness to engage with all our might in defense of our country, in such a situation, an enormous wickedness in the sight of God, and worthy of his curse, as well as a scandalous meanness in the sight of men, and worthy of public shame and indignation? Is it not fit that those who so contemptuously depreciate the rich and undeserved bounties of Heaven, and who swell so insolently with a vain conceit of their own importance and worth, should be punished with the loss of these blessings! What discipline can be more seasonable or congruous? May we not suppose, that divine Providence has permitted our body politic to suffer wound after wound, and baffled all our languid efforts, in order to give it sensibility, and rouse us to exert our strength in more vigorous efforts? Has not the curse of God lain heavy upon our country, because we have “done the work of the Lord deceitfully, and kept back our swords from blood?”

And shall this guilt increase from year to year, till we are entirely crushed with the enormous load? Shall neither the fear of Jehovah’s curse, nor the love of our country, nor even the love of ourselves, and our own personal interest, constrain us at length to relieve our ravaged country, and defend the blessings which God has entrusted to our custody, as well as lent us to enjoy? Blessed be God, and thanks to you, brave soldiers, for what I now see. I see you engaged in this good cause: and may the effectual blessing of Heaven be upon you, instead of the curse entailed upon cowardice and treachery! But are there no more to join with you? What! None more in this

crowd? None more in Hanover? Which I think should show itself worthy of precedence, and exhibit a brave example to other counties: this is what may reasonably be expected, from the number of our militia, the high price of our staple commodity, the frequency and variety of our religious instructions; and, I may add, from our own former good conduct in such an emergency. Hanover had the honor of sending out the first company of volunteers that were raised in the colony.’ And are we degenerated so soon? Or is our danger less now than immediately after Braddock’s defeat? Or are we now inured and hardened to bad news, so that the calamities of our frontiers, which have been growing every year, have now ceased to be objects of our compassion?

I am sorry to tell you, that the company now forming is not yet completed, though under officers from among yourselves, from whom you may expect good usage; and the encouragement is so unusually great, and the time of service is so short. May I not reasonably insist upon it, that the company be made up this very day before we leave this place? Methinks your king, your country, nay, your own interests, command me: and therefore I must insist upon it. Oh! For the all-prevailing force of Demosthenes’ oratory—but I recall my wish that I may correct it. Oh! For the influence of the Lord of armies, the God of battles, the Author of true courage, and every heroic virtue, to fire you into patriots and soldiers this moment! Ye young and hardy men, whose very faces seem to speak that God and nature formed you for soldiers, who are free from the incumbrance of families depending upon you for subsistence, and who perhaps are of but little service to society while at home, may I not speak for you and declare as your mouth, “Here we are, all ready to abandon our ease, and rush into the glorious dangers of the field, in defense of our country?” Ye that love

your country, enlist; for honor will follow you in life or death in such a cause. You that love your religion, enlist; for your religion is in danger. Can Protestant Christianity expect quarters from heathen savages and French papists? Sure, in such an alliance, the powers of hell make a third party. Ye that love your friends and relations, enlist; lest ye see them enslaved or butchered before your eyes. Ye that would catch at money, here is a proper bait for you: ten pounds for a few month's service, besides the usual pay of soldiers. I seriously make the proposal to you, not only as a subject of the best of kings, and a friend to your country, but as a servant of the Most High God: for I am fully persuaded, what I am recommending is his will; and disobedience to it may expose you to his curse.

This proposal is not liable to the objections that have been urged against former measures for raising men. You cannot any longer object, "that you are dragged away like slaves against your wills, while others are without reason exempted:" for now it is left to your own honor, and you may act as free men. Nor can you object "that you are arbitrarily thrust under the command of foreign, unknown, or disagreeable officers;" for the gentleman that has the immediate command of this company, and his subordinate officers, are of yourselves, your neighbors, children, and perhaps your old companions. And I hope I may add, you need not object, that you shall be badly used: for, Gentlemen-Officers, may I not promise for you, that not one man in your company shall be treated with cruelty or injustice as far as your authority or influence can prevent? May I not be your security, that none but the guilty shall be punished, and they only according to the nature of the offence? Perhaps some may object, that should they enter the army, their morals would be in danger of infection, and their virtue would be perpetually shocked with horrid scenes of vice. This may also be a

discouragement to parents to consent to their children's engaging in so good a cause. I am glad to hear this objection, when it is sincere, and not an empty excuse: and I wish I could remove it, by giving you a universal assurance that the army is a school of religion; and that soldiers, as they are more exposed to death than other men, are proportionably better prepared for it than others. But alas! The reverse of this is too true; and the contagion of vice and irreligion is perhaps nowhere stronger than in the army; where one would think the supreme tribunal should be always in view, and it should be their chief care to prepare for eternity, on the slippery brink of which they stand every moment. But, Gentlemen-Officers, I must again appeal to you, that as for this company, you will not willingly allow any form of vice to be practiced in it with impunity: but will always endeavor to recommend and enforce religion and good morals by your example and authority, and to suppress the contrary. May I not give the public the satisfaction of such an assurance concerning you, that whatever others do, as for you and your company you will serve the Lord? Do you not own yourselves bound to this in honor and duty? Such a conduct, I can assure you, will render you popular among the wise and good; though perhaps it may expose you to the senseless contempt of fools, who make a mock at sin, and who esteem it bravery to insult that God, "in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways." Such a conduct will afford you pleasure in the review, when the terrors of the bloody field are spread around you, and death starts up before you in a thousand shocking forms. Such a conduct will be a source of true courage, and render you nobly indifferent about life or death in a good cause. And let me honestly warn you, that if you do not maintain such a conduct, you will bitterly repent it, either in time or eternity.

But I return to invite others to join with you in this important expedition. What a crowd of important arguments press you on every hand! What can our legislature do more than they have done to engage you? If such an unusual encouragement does not prevail upon you to enlist as volunteers, what remains but that you must be forced to it by authority? For our country must be defended: and if nothing but force can constrain you to take up arms in its defense, then force must be used: persons of such a sordid, unmanly spirit, are not to expect the usage of freemen. Think what the paternal care of our sovereign has done for us: and how many millions of money, and thousands of men, our mother country has furnished for our defense. And shall we do nothing for ourselves? Great Britain, I own, is interested in our protection: but can she be as much interested as ourselves? Consider what the brave New England men have done, after so many mortifications and disappointments, and their treasury so much exhausted. By the best accounts I have had, the little colony of Massachusetts Bay has raised no less than seven thousand men, though not larger perhaps than fifteen or twenty of those fifty-three counties contained in Virginia. And since we have the same interests at stake, shall we not cheerfully furnish our quota for the public service? We all admire the bravery and success of the King of Prussia: but his success must be greatly owing to the bravery of his subjects, as well as his own: he has almost as many soldiers as subjects. And while he has almost miraculously stood his ground against such superior numbers, shall we, with the advantage of numbers on our side, be perpetually flying before a pitiful enemy, and tamely give up our country to their ravages? Let us strenuously exert that superior force which a gracious Providence has put into our hands: and we may soon expect, through the concurrence of Heaven, that we shall again enjoy the blessings of peace.

Whatever intelligence our artful enemies may send, or the cowardly among ourselves may believe, there is no reason to conclude that the French regulars upon this continent are half so many as ours: and as to the coloni, or country-militia, we are certainly twenty, perhaps forty, to one. Let us, then, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, let us collect our whole strength, and give one decisive blow; and we may humbly hope victory will be ours.

Everyone can complain of the bad management of our public undertakings, and lament the general security and inactivity that prevails: everyone can wish that something were effectually done, and that this and that person would enlist: everyone can tell what great achievements he would perform, were it not for this or that, a hundred obstructions in his way. But all this idle complaining, wishing, lamenting, and boasting, will answer no end. Something must be done! Must be done by you! Therefore, instead of assuming the state of patriots and heroes at home—to arms! Away to the field, and prove your pretensions sincere. Let the thunder of this imprecation rouse you out of your ease and security, “Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” God sent an angel from heaven to curse the dastardly inhabitants of Meroz, who refused to take up arms for defense of their country. (Judges 5:23.) “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” And shall this curse fall upon Virginia? No, fly from it by venturing your lives for your country: for this curse is far more terrible than anything that can befall you in the field of battle. But it is not enough for you to undertake this work: you are

also obliged faithfully to perform it, as the work of the Lord. And this leads me,

II. To show you what is that deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unseasonably keeping back the sword from blood, which exposes to his curse.

If soldiers, instead of abandoning their ease and pleasure, and risking their lives in defense of their country, should unman themselves with sensual pleasures and debauchery; if, instead of searching out the enemy, they keep out of their way, lest they should search out and find them; if they lie sleeping or rioting in forts and places of safety, while their country is ravaged, perhaps in their very neighborhood: when they waste their courage in broils and duels among themselves, or in tyrannizing over those that are under their command: when they lay themselves open to false alarms, by being credulous to every account that magnifies the force of the enemy: when they are tedious or divided in their consultations, and slow and faint in the execution: when they consult rather what may be most safe for themselves than most beneficial for their country: when they keep skirmishing at a distance, instead of making a bold push, and bringing the war to a speedy issue by a decisive stroke: when they are fond of prolonging the war, that they may live and riot the longer at the public expense: when they sell themselves and their country to the enemy for a bribe: in short, when they do not conscientiously exert all their power to repel the enemy, and protect the state that employs them, but only seek to serve themselves, then they do the work of the Lord deceitfully; and his curse lights upon them as their heavy doom. I leave others to judge, whether the original of this ugly picture is to be found anywhere in the universe. But as for you of this company, may I not presume that you will behave in a

nobler manner? Shall not sobriety, public spirit, courage, fidelity, and good discipline, be maintained among you? This I humbly recommend to you; and may God enable you to act accordingly!

Thus far have I addressed you as soldiers, or at least as persons concerned in your stations to do all in your power to save your country. But we must not part thus. It is possible we may never meet more, till we mingle with the assembled universe before the supreme tribunal: therefore, before I dismiss you, I must address myself to you as sinners, and as candidates for eternity. You are concerned to save your souls, as well as your country; and should you save or gain a kingdom, or even the whole world, and lose your souls, your loss will be irreparable.

None of you, I hope, will reply, “I am now a soldier, and have nothing more to do with religion.” What! Has a soldier nothing to do with religion? Is a soldier under no obligations to the God that made him, and that furnishes him with every blessing? Is not a soldier as much exposed to death as other men? May not a soldier be damned for sin as well as other sinners? And will he be able to dwell with devouring fire and everlasting burnings? Are these things so? Can any of you be so stupid as to think them so? If not, you must own that even a soldier has as much concern with religion as another. Therefore, hear me seriously upon this head.

You are about entering into the school of vice: for such the army has generally been. And are any of you already initiated into any of the mysteries of iniquity there practiced? Must I so much as suppose that some of you, who have bravely espoused the cause of your country, are addicted to drunkenness, swearing, whoredom, or any gross vice? I cannot now take time to reason with you for your conviction: it may suffice to appeal to your own reason and conscience, Do you act well in indulging these vices? Will



you approve of it in the honest hour of death? Will this conduct prove a source of courage to you when the arrows of death are flying thick around you, and scores are falling on every side? No, you are self-condemned; and may I not reasonably hope you will endeavor to reform what you cannot but condemn? Soldiers, indeed, are too commonly addicted to such immoralities; but are they the better soldiers on that account? Can an oath or a debauch inspire them with a rational fortitude against the fears of death? Would not prayer and a life of holiness better answer this purpose? Their courage, if they have any, must be the effect, not of thought, but of the want of thought; it must be a brutal stupidity, or ferocity; but not the rational courage of a man or a Christian.

Some of you, I doubt not, are happily free from these gross vices: and long may you continue so! But I must tell you, this negative goodness is not enough to prepare you for death, or to constitute you true Christians. The temper of your minds must be changed by the power of divine grace: and you must be turned from the love and practice of all sin, to the love and practice of universal holiness. You must become humble, broken-hearted penitents and true believers in Jesus Christ. You must be enabled to live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present evil world. This is religion: this is religion that will keep you uncorrupted in the midst of vice and debauchery: this is religion, that will befriend you when cannons roar, and swords gleam around you, and you are every moment expecting the deadly wound: this is religion that will support you in the agonies of death, and assure you of a happy immortality.

But are not some of you conscious that you are destitute of such a religion as this? Then it is high time for you to think on your condition in sober sadness. Pray to that powerful and gracious Being, who can form your

hearts and lives after this sacred model. Oh! Pray earnestly, pray frequently, for this blessing: and use all the means of grace in that manner which your circumstances will permit. Remember, also, that if you try to prolong your life by a dastardly conduct, your life will lie under the curse of heaven: and you have little reason to hope you will ever improve it as a space for repentance. Remember also to put your confidence in God; who keeps the thread of your life, and the event of war, in his own hand. Devoutly acknowledge his providence in all your ways, and be sensible of your dependence upon it.

And now, to conclude my address to you, as the mouth of this multitude, and of you, countrymen in general, I heartily bid you farewell. Farewell, my dear friends, my brave fellow-subjects, the guardians of your ravaged country. God grant you may return in safety and honor, and that we may yet welcome you home, crowned with laurels of victory! Or if any of you should lose your lives in so good a cause, may you enjoy a glorious and blessed immortality in the region of everlasting peace and tranquility! Methinks I may take upon me to promise you the prayers and good wishes of thousands. Thousands, whom you leave behind, will think of you with affectionate anxiety, will wish you success, and congratulate your return, or lament your death. Once more I pour out all my heart in another affectionate farewell. May the Lord preserve your going out, and your coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore. Amen.

Here I thought to have concluded. But I must take up a few minutes more to ask this crowd, Is there nothing to be done by us who stay at home, towards the defense of our country, and to promote the success of the expedition now in hand? Shall we sin on still impenitent and incorrigible? Shall we live as if we and our country were self-dependent, and had nothing

to do with the Supreme Ruler of the universe? Can an army of saints or of heroes defend an obnoxious people, ripe for destruction, from the righteous judgment of God? The cause in which these brave men, and our army in general, are engaged, is not so much their own as ours: divine Providence considers them not so much in their private personal character, as in their public character, as the representatives and guardians of their country; and therefore they will stand or fall, not so much according to their own personal character, as according to the public character of the people, whose cause they have undertaken. Be it known to you, then, their success depends upon us, even more than upon themselves. Therefore let us all turn everyone from his evil ways. Let the wicked forsake his way, &c. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, which is lifted up over our guilty heads, that we may be exalted in due time. I could venture the reputation of my judgment and veracity, that it will never be well with our country till there be more of the fear and love of God in it, and till the name of Jesus be of more importance among us. I could prescribe a method for our deliverance, which is at once infallible, and also cheap and safe, and so far from endangering the life of any, that it would secure the everlasting life of all that comply with it. Ye that complain of the burden of our public taxes; ye that love ease, and shrink from the dangers of war; ye that wish to see peace restored once more; ye that would be happy beyond the grave, and live forever, attend to my proposal: it is this, a thorough, national reformation. This will do what millions of money, and thousands of men, with guns and swords, and all the dreadful artillery of death, could not do; it will procure us peace again; a lasting, well-established peace. We have tried other expedients without this long enough: let us now try this new expedient, the success of which I dare to warrant. And do not object that

such a general reformation is beyond your power; for a general reformation must begin with individuals: therefore do you, through the grace of God, act your part; begin at home, and endeavor to reform yourselves, and those under your influence.

It is a natural inference from what has been said, that if the defense of our country, in which we can stay but a few years at most, and from which we must ere long take our flight, be so important a duty, then how much more are we obliged to seek a better country, i.e., a “heavenly;” and to carry on a vigorous war against our spiritual enemies, that would rob us of our heavenly inheritance! Therefore, in the name of Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, I invite you all to enlist in the spiritual warfare. Now proclaim eternal war against all sin. Now “take to you the whole armor of God; quit you like men, be strong:” and, for your encouragement, remember, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things;” he shall enter into a kingdom that cannot be shaken—cannot be shaken with those storms of public calamities which toss and agitate this restless ocean of a world. In that blessed harbor may we all rest at last!

## *SERM. LXIV. THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.*

**L**uke 21:10,11-25,26.— *Then he said unto them, Nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights: and great signs shall there be from heaven.—And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and. for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*

All the works of God are worthy of our admiring notice; and to overlook or disregard them, is at once an instance of stupidity and wickedness. It was a heavy charge against the ancient Jews, that they were sunk in luxury and pleasure, while the signals of divine vengeance should have cast them into the posture of anxious expectation. “The harp and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.” Isaiah 5:12. And if all the works of God, even those that are ordinary and according to the

known course of nature, are worthy of observation and wonder; certainly much more so are those which are extraordinary —those which are done by the immediate hand of God, above the course of nature; or which are accomplished according to such laws of nature as are unusual, and intended to be carried into execution only in extraordinary' periods, and for purposes of uncommon importance. To disregard these, is the more stupid and inexcusable, as they have a natural and direct tendency to engage and fix our attention by their new and strange appearances: for things common and familiar to us, cease to be objects of our admiration and wonder, however great and surprising in themselves: whereas, things new and strange, attract the gaze of mankind, though not more astonishing or important than the former. And if these unusual works of God are also prognosticative; if these extraordinary appearances in the natural world are signals and premonitions of some important revolutions in the moral world, for which our duty and our interest require us to prepare; I say, if this be the case, then, to disregard them is still more stupid, and aggravatedly wicked; it is highly ungrateful to God, who is kindly pleased to give us warning of the impending events, that we may put ourselves into a proper posture to meet with them: and it may be highly injurious to ourselves, who may feel, to our cost, the unhappy want of that preparation, which we might have obtained by timely notice of these monitory signs.

Now my present intention is to inquire, Whether unusual phenomena, or appearances, in the natural world, may not be really intended, by the great Ruler of nature, as prognostics or fore-tokens of some grand events in the kingdoms of the earth, and in the churchy for which it becomes us to prepare; and to prepare us for which, these monitory passages may be given us?

I own it has been with hesitation, that I have ventured to devote an hour of your sacred time to so unusual an inquiry. But after much thought, that which determined my fluctuating mind, was this consideration: That if these unusual commotions and appearances are intended by divine Providence to be premonitions and signs of some grand and interesting revolutions among mankind, they would miss their end entirely upon us, unless we should regard them in that view; and we should be guilty of hardening ourselves against warnings kindly given us from heaven. But if we should be mistaken in looking upon these things in this prognosticative view, still it would be a harmless, and even a profitable mistake, if it might render us more thoughtful and serious, and set us upon preparing for all events, whether presignified or not.

That which has turned my mind to this inquiry has been the late unusual and strange commotions and appearances in heaven and earth, which have been felt and seen in various parts of the world, particularly in Europe and America. An earthquake of prodigious extent and violence has shaken half the globe, buried cities in ruins, split the earth into hideous chasms, which have swallowed many thousands of mankind in Europe and Africa, and tossed the ocean into an unusual ferment for thousands of miles. Great Britain has trembled from shore to shore, and some parts of America seemed to sympathize with it. “Solid rocks have split to pieces, and huge unwieldy mountainous fragments have been hurled to some distance, while the ground a little way off was not affected; particularly a well-known ledge of rocks, called Whiston Cliffs, in Yorkshire, in England, where a horrid rumbling noise was heard for some days; and at length, sundry large pieces of rock were torn off and hurled through the air into a valley, one of which was about thirty yards high, and between sixty and seventy broad; and there

did not appear to be any cavities in the rock, where air might be imprisoned to cause the rupture. But (says one that saw it) one part of the solid stone is cleft from the rest in a perpendicular line, and smooth as if cut with instruments.” Near this, two pieces of ground, thirty or forty yards in diameter, have been removed entire, without cracks, with all their load of rocks; “some of which (says the same relater) are as large as the hull of a small ship, and a tree growing out of one of them.” In various parts of Europe a strange and unaccountable motion has been observed in the waters, not only that of the sea and the rivers communicating therewith, but even that in canals, ponds, cisterns, and all other large or smaller collections of water; and that without the least motion of the earth around, or of the vessels which contained the water. Strange meteors and appearances have also been seen in the aerial regions; a fiery, bloody-colored sky—the modern phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis, or a midnight brightness in the north— three unusual circles, intersecting the sun and each other, which some of us have seen not many years ago—unusual rains, hail, thunder, and lightning, in England, in the winter season—a severe drought last summer in our country, that threatened many parts of it with famine—irregular tides, and inundations of seas and rivers,’ by which much loss has been sustained, and many lives perished. Besides these strange phenomena, which have already appeared, if we regard the calculation of that great philosopher, Doctor Halley, and of some others, we are to expect a visit from that portentous stranger, a comet, in about two years hence; a huge globe, heated, according to Sir Isaac Newton’s calculation, two thousand times hotter than red-hot iron. And doctor Halley observes, that the last time it revolved, it moved in the same line in which the earth performs her annual course round the sun; but then the earth was on the other side of her orbit;



whereas, in this revolution, it will move not only in the same line, but in the very same part of that line in which the earth moves. And will not this, upon the principles of philosophy, occasion a collision of those two bodies, or such a near approach as would prove fatal to our earth? For such an enormous body of solid fire would burn it to a coal, and cause a universal conflagration; and we have no reason, that I know of, to hope the contrary but from revelation, in which we find many prophecies not yet fulfilled. But upon the principles of infidel-philosophy, this dreadful consequence seems unavoidable.

These are certainly very uncommon things: it is not in every year, nor in every century, that they appear. Some of them, particularly earthquakes, inundations, et cetera, are evidently the judgments of a righteous God upon our guilty globe: and in this view they undoubtedly demand a serious regard; but is this the only view we should have of them? May we not look upon these and the other harmless phenomena as signs and forerunners of some revolutions in the world of mankind, as strange and extraordinary as these are in the material world? May not the convulsions of the globe be an omen of the agitations and confusions of the kingdoms of men that are to follow? May not a fiery, bloody-colored sky be a signal to the world below to prepare for scenes of blood and slaughter? And as to comets, may we not use the words of a good philosopher, as well as a divine poet?

*“Lord of the armies of the sky;*

*He marshals all the stars;*

*Red comets lift his banners high,*

*And wide proclaim his wars!”—Watts.*

Are there not some strange events in the womb of Providence? And are not these the struggles and pangs of nature laboring with the prodigious

birth? I will not be peremptory in determining this point. Nor am I about to assume the airs of a prophet, or the low character of a fortune-teller: but I shall humbly offer my opinion with the reasons of it, and then allow you to judge for yourselves. Nor shall I inquire into the philosophy of these things. Perhaps they are all the effects of natural causes, as some of them undoubtedly are. We are not on the one hand to feign needless miracles; and, on the other hand, I see no reason why we should be so scrupulous, as some seem to be, of supposing the immediate agency of the Divine hand in some unusual appearances above or contrary to the laws of nature. By forming servants to do his work, the Lord of nature has not rendered himself dependent upon them, so that he cannot work without them; and he has nowhere informed us that he has so tied himself down to them, that he will never work without them; or that, because miracles were more frequent in those ages in which the true religion was introduced and confirmed, therefore they shall not be wrought in other ages at all. Such immediate interpositions of the Divine hand can afford the Almighty no trouble; for it is as easy for him to manage the universe without instruments as with them. Upon the whole, I can see no sufficient reason to suppose that he never works but by secondary causes, and according to the established laws of nature, even in the ordinary ages of the world. Even in such ages there may be some events to be accomplished which it may be most proper for him to take into his own hands, and order his servants to suspend their agency—to stand still and see the works of God: but to determine this point is by no means necessary to my present design. These commotions and appearances in nature may be ominous or prognosticative, and yet be the effects of the established laws of nature; for, besides the usual laws established at the creation for the regulation of the world in ordinary times, and which are

every day carried into execution, and obvious to common observation; besides these, I say, why may there not be, as I hinted, other laws equally fixed and regular, but not carried into execution, except in extraordinary seasons, and as signals and premonitions of some important events, of which it is proper mankind should have some previous intimations, that they may prepare for them? May not the wise Contriver of the machine of nature have placed in it certain hidden springs, which, like the stroke of a clock at the hour, will move and operate at the appointed period, and rouse the attention and admiration of a stupid world? Besides the causes of the daily familiar phenomena of nature, may there not be causes in reserve for some grand purposes to produce some strange, unusual phenomena, adapted to the exigencies of some extraordinary periods? All the exigencies of such periods were known to the omniscient Creator when he first formed this vast machine, when he wound it up and put all its wheels in motion; and there he could easily adjust those latent springs in such a manner, as that they should operate exactly in the appointed period, when it should be fit, that for extraordinary reasons, extraordinary appearances should be produced, whether at the distance of twenty, a hundred, or a thousand years: there he might place certain powers, for this end, to give an alarm to the world when he should be about to accomplish some important revolution. Thus, you see, it is not necessary to the present inquiry to determine whether these unusual appearances are miraculous or agreeable to the stated course of nature; for whether you suppose them the one or the other, they may be portentous, and forebode some great revolutions.

This is certain, that such strange appearances have been prognosticative in times past, particularly in that period to which my text primarily refers; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem and the church and state of the Jews. It

is to that dreadful, unparalleled calamity, the predictions in this chapter primarily refer; though, it must be owned, it is described in such language, and under such majestic images, as naturally carry our minds forward to the still more dreadful destruction of this guilty globe at the final judgment. And indeed, it is a very usual thing for the prophets to have two events in view in the same description, the one more immediately, and the other more remotely: and that part of the description which is not fully accomplished in one, has its final and complete accomplishment in the other; particularly, it is common for them to make the judgments of God inflicted upon guilty nations in this world, and the overthrow of cities and empires, a representation of his still more glorious and terrible appearance in the character of universal Judge at the last day, to inflict everlasting punishments, of a more terrible kind, upon the world of the ungodly; and of the universal overthrow and conflagration of the earth and all that it contains. This is certainly a wise method of instruction, as it makes the events of this life so many hints and mementos of the more important scenes before us at the end of this world, and in that awful eternity which is to follow. Thus, the ruins of cities, the fall of kingdoms, and unusual commotions in the natural and moral world, are made warnings to us to flee from the wrath to come, and provide for our safety in the wrecks of dissolving worlds. In this double view, we should consider the chapter where my text lies; though the most, if not all, the strange signs and prodigies here foretold, did actually appear before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Then the kingdoms of the earth were in a ferment and perturbation, and rumors of wars spread their terrors from country to country. "Nation rose up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." This may have a particular

reference to the insurrection of the Jews, at that time, in various places, particularly at Jerusalem, upon the Roman emperor's ordering his image to be set up in the temple:" and at Alexandria, and about Babylon, where they flew to arms, and many of them were slain.<sup>t</sup> As the revolutions and destruction of kingdoms are generally brought about by the force of arms; rumors of wars, and insurrections of nations against nations, are the usual forerunners of such melancholy events; and to look upon these as a presage, is but to infer the effect from the cause. I need not tell you that this is the present posture of affairs in those parts of the world in which we are most concerned. Armies marching, arms brightening, magazines filling, forts and castles besieged, countries ravaged and deserted, blood streaming by sea and land, and the world of spirits peopling fast: and this ferment is not likely to subside till some important revolution be brought about. Some decisive blow is likely to be given, that may be fatal to one or other of the contending parties, and on whom the blow will fall is as yet an anxious uncertainty, and holds our minds in a painful suspense. May heaven determine it in favor of religion, liberty, and justice!

The convulsions of the earth were also an omen of the destruction of the Jews. "There shall be earthquakes in divers places," says our divine prophet. Accordingly, history informs us, that in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, there were frequent earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Samos, Laodicea, and other places; in all which the Jews were settled, and consequently had their share in the common calamity. Now, if, as Grotius judges, earthquakes are not only severe judgments in themselves, but also signs of divine vengeance, which either causes them, or does not hinder them by restraining their natural causes; if, I say, they forbode future calamities and revolutions, as well as produce present, certainly our age

may stand in the posture of eager expectation, “looking after those things that are coming upon the earth;” for perhaps there never was a more terrible and extensive earthquake than that which happened about ten months ago, since the universal one which broke upon the fountains of the great deep at the deluge.

The word rendered earthquakes, in my text, properly signifies shakings or concussions, without determining in what element; and therefore may be taken in a larger latitude, to signify unusual tremors and motions, not only in the earth, but in the sea and air. And accordingly the Jewish historian, Josephus, informs us, that at that time there were prodigious storms of the sea, tempestuous winds, vehement rains, terrible lightnings, and roaring’s of the trembling earth. And if these wonders have a prognosticative signification, we and our mother country may forebode unusual things; for there they have all been perceived.

Another presage of the destruction of Jerusalem, here foretold, was a famine. This was the famine foretold also by Agabus, Acts 11:28, which gave occasion for that collection for the poor saints in Judea, which St. Paul so often and so warmly recommends to the Gentile churches: Josephus also mentions the same famine. This calamity, which is at once a severe judgment and an omen, we have not yet felt in all its extremity; but we have been terribly threatened with it, both in Great Britain and Virginia: there, by the deadly plague that has raged so long among the cattle, and here, by the severe drought of the last season, which actually reduced many poor families to great straits.

As to the pestilence, another presage of the destruction of the Jews, and which raged with such unexampled violence during the siege of their metropolis; through the kindness of Providence, Europe and America have

not been lately visited with it: but how soon the deadly contagion may break out among us is unknown. This is obvious in the history of the world, that earthquakes, famines, and pestilences, have generally been companions, or followed close upon one another. And our cold climate, and pure air are no security against the infection: for, two or three years before the first English settlers arrived in New England, there had been a plague among the Indian natives which had swept off some tribes entirely, and diminished others so much, that the English found the wilderness in some places covered with skulls and bones; for in some tribes none survived to bury the dead." Thus were the heathen cast out to make room for these pious puritans, as the Canaanites were before the children of Israel. Now, what was justly inflicted upon the savages, who could not sin with our aggravations, we certainly cannot claim exemption from upon the footing of innocence, nor, I am afraid, of superior goodness; and we see we cannot promise ourselves exemption from our climate.

The remaining signs of this desolation I shall mention together. Fearful sights, and great signs from heaven— signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars—the sea and waves roaring. The mere simple relations of these portentous appearances strike us with horror: and Josephus, who has left us a full history of these times, informs us that they all actually happened at that tragical period. When he enters upon the subject, he uses some of the very words of this chapter, proposing to speak of the signs and prodigies] which pre-signified the approaching desolation; and mentions the following horrendous prognostications: A star, in the shape of a sword, or a comet, pointing down upon the city, was seen to hang over it for a whole year. There were other strange and unaccountable meteors seen in the aerial regions: armies in battle-array, and chariots surrounding the country and

investing their cities; and this before sunset. The great gate of the temple, which twenty men could scarcely shut, and which was made fast with bolts and bars, opened of its own accord to let in their enemies: “for so,” says Josephus, “our wise men understood the omen.” At the ninth hour of the night a great light shone upon the temple and the altar, as if it had been noon-day; and at the feast of Pentecost, when the Priests went at midnight into the temple to attend their service, they first heard a kind of noise as of persons removing from a place, and then a voice, “LET US AWAY FROM HENCE.”

Tacitus, a Roman historian of the same age, confirms this, by relating the same things; and as he had no connections with the Jews, his testimony is liable to no suspicion. Josephus further adds, what he counts more terrible than all this, that a certain person began, at the feast of Tabernacles, to cry, “A voice against Jerusalem and the temple! A voice against all the people! Wo, wo to them!” And that he continued crying, “Wo! Wo!” incessantly for seven years, notwithstanding all the barbarities the Jews exercised upon him to silence him; of which he seemed entirely regardless. Josephus also mentions, as I observed, uncommon perturbations and inundations of the sea; hurricanes, thunder and lightning, and subterranean rumblings and bellowing’s of the trembling globe. Thus exactly does history agree with this prophecy, and prove it true and divine.

I need not tell you that some of these, or the like horrendous portents, have appeared in our age; and we shall presently see, whether they do not probably forebode some grand event to us also, as they did to the Jews.

It is evident, that, at least, some of the Jews and other nations did then consider them as tokens of some dreadful approaching judgments; for we are told in the text, that, as the effects of these appearances, “Men’s hearts



should fail them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth.” The posture of eager, anxious expectation seemed natural, at such a time, when heaven and earth were struggling and travailing, to bring forth some astonishing revolution. And may not the late extraordinary phenomena of nature cast us into the same posture, and set us upon preparation for some new astonishing scenes? Certainly they may, and ought, if these phenomena are indeed prefigurative, or portend something future. And that they are really so; that they are intended for that purpose by the supreme Manager of the world, and ought to be looked upon in that view by us, will, I think, appear at least probable from the following considerations:

1. There seems to be a correspondence and propriety in it, that there should be a kind of sympathy between the natural and moral world; that when the kingdoms of the earth are tossed and agitated, the earth itself should totter and tremble under them;—that when the light of the rational world, the splendor of courts and kingdoms, is about to be extinguished or obscured, the sun and moon, and other lights of the material world, should abate their glory too, and, as it were, appear in mourning; that when some grand event is hastening to the birth, that terribly illustrious stranger, a comet, should make us a visit, as its harbinger, and shake its horrendous tail over the astonished world: that when peace is broke among the nations, the harmony of the elements should likewise be broken, and they should fall into transient animosities and conflicts, like the restless beings, for whose use they were formed. There is an apparent congruity and propriety in these things; and therefore the argument is at least plausible; but as it is drawn only from analogy, which does not universally hold, I shall not lay much stress upon it. And yet, on the other hand, as there is an obvious analogy,

which does unquestionably hold in many instances, between the natural and moral world, the argument is not to be utterly disregarded.

2. These unusual appearances are peculiarly adapted to raise the attention of mankind, and prepare them for important revolutions.

There is a propriety and advantage, if not a necessity, especially with regard to that part of mankind, (and there are always many such upon earth) whose benefit is intended by these extraordinary events and revolutions, that they be prepared for them. And they cannot prepare for them without some general expectation of them; and they can have no expectation of them without some warning or premonition of them. Now the ordinary appearances in nature cannot answer this end, because they are ordinary, and therefore not adapted to rouse and fix the attention; and because they really have no such premonitory signification. And as to the word of God, it may have no direct perceivable reference to such extraordinary periods; and, therefore, can give us no previous warning of their approach.

But these unusual phenomena are peculiarly adapted to this end: their novelty and terror catch the attention of the gazing world.! They stare and shudder, and pause and think, and naturally bode something important impending. They tremble at the power which hangs out these tremendous ensigns of his wrath. They reflect upon their guilt, which makes them timorous, and fear the worst. They view the frame of nature with horror, sensible of its frailty and liableness to disorder, and that they may be buried in its ruins. They begin to reflect upon the necessity of preparation for all events in this fluctuating state of things, and seek the favor and protection of the great Ruler of the universe. These prodigies have this natural tendency: and upon some, who were unaffected and unreformed by all the ordinary works of God and means of grace, they have actually had this

happy effect. Thus some are prepared for the events which these things forebode; and others have had timely warning, and therefore are inexcusable. Now, if these things have naturally a tendency to promote this benevolent end, is it not a strong presumption, that they are intended for this end by a wise and gracious Providence; that is, that they are intended to answer an end, which they have a natural fitness and tendency to answer? This seems, at least, highly probable. Our stupid and senseless world, which is proof against the energy of the usual means of reformation, seems to need such extraordinary, alarming monitors. And as it is a maxim of the divine government to consult the advantage of his dutiful subjects, to reform those that are corrigible, and at once to punish and leave inexcusable those that continue obstinate; and, as he acts upon this maxim in all the judgments he inflicts upon the earth, it seems agreeable to the goodness and justice of God, to give such previous warnings when the dreadful period is at hand, in order to alarm a secure world, and set them upon preparation. This, I say, is agreeable to his perfections; and, therefore, there is some apparent reason to expect it. He may hang out a comet, like a blazing ensign over the nations, to rouse them out of their slumbers. He may cause half the globe to tremble under the inhabitants, in order to strike terror to their impenitent hearts. He may preach to them by the voice of thunder, and roaring oceans, that they may hear who were deaf to the gentle voice of his gospel. Such premonitions would be striking illustrations of the goodness and equity of his administration, who does not usually let the blow fall without previous warning, and they would contribute to the right improvement of such dispensations. This, therefore, I think, we may look upon, at least, as a probable argument; especially if we add, that, as these unusual appearances are, in their own nature, fit to be premonitions, so,

3. It seems natural to mankind to view them in that light; and they have been universally looked upon in that light in all ages and countries. As to the Jews, the matter is clear; for Josephus tells us, that their wise men actually put this construction upon those alarming appearances, which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. And as they had been accustomed to miracles for the confirmation of their religion, they were even extravagant in their demands of this sort of evidence upon every occasion; as we find in the history of the Evangelists. As to the Gentiles, this was the general sentiment of all ranks among them, not only of the vulgar, but of their poets and philosophers. This I could prove from their best authors: but I can now only select a few testimonies. That accurate naturalist, Pliny, says, "An earthquake is not a simple evil; it is at once a present calamity, and a foretoken of an equal or greater calamity to come." And he gives this instance of it: "The city of Rome (says he) was never yet shaken with an earthquake but it portended some future event." Cicero, the greatest philosopher, perhaps, as well as the greatest orator, among the Romans, repeatedly speaks of these things as portentous. "The world has been so formed from the beginning," says he, "that certain signs do precede certain events; some in the lightning, some in strange appearances, some in the stars," &c. "How often," says he in another place, "has the senate ordered the prophetic books of the Sybils to be consulted, when two suns or three moons have appeared; when blazing meteors have been seen in the night; when a strange noise has been heard in the air? When the earth in the Privernian fields sunk to a prodigious depth, and Apulia was shaken with most violent earthquakes; which things," says he, "were portentous, and foreboded terrible wars and pernicious seditions to the people of Rome." In another place, he mentions as striking evidences of a Supreme Being, and

as omens of some grand futurities, unusual “thunders, hurricanes, storms, snows, hail, devastation, pestilence, the quaking’s and roaring’s, and sudden clefts or openings of the earth and rocks; blazing meteors in the heavens, and comets; which lately,” says he, “in the wars of Octavianus, were predictions of dreadful calamities; and a double sun foreboded the extinction of that other sun, Publius Africanus.”

To these testimonies I might add those of Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, Homer, Virgil, Horace, and many others of the best authors of the heathen world. But my time will not allow me; and besides, it is needless to descend to particulars; for any one that has the least acquaintance with these authors, cannot but know that they are full of omens, prodigies, prognostics, &c. And they hardly relate any important event, without mentioning some strange thing or other that foreboded it; and this is sufficient to show that this was the common sentiment of mankind in the heathen world. Indeed, they carried it to an extravagant degree of superstition, and made an omen of almost everything they met with. Even the flight of birds, the feeding of chickens, the entrails of beasts, and a thousand such things, were, with them, significant tokens of some important events. But though this shows their superstition, yet it also seems to show that it is natural to mankind to look upon some things as ominous, and that some extraordinary things are really so. From mankind’s generally looking for miracles to prove a religion divine, and from impostors pretending to them, we justly infer that God has so formed our nature, that it is natural to us to expect and regard this sort of evidence in this case; and that God does adapt himself to this innate tendency, and has actually wrought true miracles to attest the true religion; and we may with equal reason, infer from the superstitions of mankind, with regard to omens and prodigies, that God has given a natural bent to our

minds to look for them; and that in extraordinary periods he really does give such previous signs of future events. The consent of mankind is always counted a strong argument, and therefore ought to have its weight in this case.

We ought to guard against superstition in such things; but we should not extravagantly affect the philosopher, so as to look upon everything as unmeaning, and a thing of course; and differ from the rest of mankind without any good reason for it.

4. History informs us, that such unusual commotions and appearances in the natural world, have, with a surprising regularity, generally preceded unusual commotions and revolutions in the moral world, or among the nations of the earth.

When a hypothesis is supported by experiments and matters of fact, it ought to be received as true. And this argument will appear decisive, if we find, in fact, that such commotions and revolutions in the world have been uniformly preceded by some prodigies: for such an uniformity of such extraordinary periods, cannot be the effect of chance, or of blind natural causes, unadjusted and undirected by an intelligent superior power; but it must be the effect of design, a wise and good design, to alarm the world, and put them in a proper posture to meet these grand occurrences. Such prodigies seem by the time, manner, and other circumstances of their appearance, to be particularly adapted to be significant and monitory; and we can give no plausible account of their appearing in such periods, in such circumstances, and with so much regularity, but upon this supposition.

Now, I could make it abundantly evident from the history of the world, that such strange commotions and phenomena have been the usual forerunners, and consequently the prognostications and tokens, of great

changes and revolutions in the kingdoms of the world; and that not only in the age of miracles, and in the country of Judea, which was under an immediate providence, but (which deserves special notice) in all ages, and in all countries, as far as we can receive intelligence. Of this I shall give a few instances:

Not to mention the dreadful premonitions of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the preternatural darkness, the tremor of the earth, the rending of the rocks, &c., at the death of Christ; the assassination of Julius Caesar, the first Roman Emperor, in the senate-house, was an event of the utmost importance, and produced the most terrible consequences to the world. It divided the vast Roman empire into two grand factions, which carried on a most bloody civil war for some years, in which many of the greatest men of Rome, and many thousands of others, lost their lives. Now, almost all authors that write of these times, agree that this event was portended by the most terrible prodigies: such as a preternatural darkness of the sun for a year, tremors and openings of the earth, unusual ferments of the sea, inundations of the Tiber, the river that ran by Rome, and the great river Eridanus; unusual thundering's, and eruptions of Mount Etna; quaking's of the Alpine mountains, the clash of arms in the air, strange meteors, and lightnings, and blazing comets.

The subversion and destruction of the vast Roman empire by the Goths, Vandals, and other savage nations, after it had ruled the world so long, was a revolution of the most awful importance to the nations of the earth; and this, we find in history, was preceded and prognosticated by strange commotions and disorders in the natural world, by frequent and extensive earthquakes, felt for many days successively, in most provinces of the empire: the sky appearing all in a flame over the city of Constantinople, the

then seat of the empire, which so terrified the inhabitants, and the Emperor himself, that they abandoned the city, and fled into the fields; terrible overflowing's of the sea, which laid whole countries under water; unusual rains, thunder, and lightning, and many other prodigies. Thus the conflicts and dying struggles of this dissolving empire, struck all nature, as it were, into sympathetic emotions and agonies.

There is nothing more natural, nothing which astronomers can compute with more exactness, than eclipses of the sun and moon; and yet these have so regularly and uniformly preceded the first grand breaches, and the total overthrow of kingdoms and nations, that we cannot but think they were intended to signify such revolutions; and thus mankind generally interpreted them. A total eclipse of the sun happened before the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians; before the captivity of the Jews in Babylon; at the death of Christ, about thirty-seven years and a half before the last destruction of Jerusalem; and about the same number of years before the slaughter of six hundred thousand Jews under Adrian; before the conquest of the Babylonians by the Medes; and before the fall of the Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. Mr. Whiston supposes a total eclipse of the sun to precede the first grand breach upon these empires; and a total eclipse of the moon to precede their total overthrow; and that upon a mean, they precede these revolutions about thirty-eight years. Thus, a total eclipse of the sun happened before the first grand breach upon the Assyrian empire, by the miraculous destruction of one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians, in the days of Hezekiah; before the second grand breach in the destruction of Nineveh: and a total eclipse of the moon before the total overthrow of the Assyrian empire removed to Babylon, by Cyrus: a total eclipse of the sun before the first grand breach upon the Persian empire, by



the defeat of Xerxes in Greece; a total eclipse of the moon before its final overthrow by Alexander the Great; a total eclipse of the sun before the first grand breach upon the Grecian empire; a total eclipse of the moon the night before its total overthrow by the Romans: a total eclipse of the sun, visible from Scotland to the Euphrates, before the destruction of the Roman empire, under Augustulus, &c., as Mr. Whiston relates.’ On all which, that learned writer makes this remark: “That such a regular correspondence of eclipses, total eclipses of the sun, just before the grand breaches upon every one of the four monarchies, and those all visible through those monarchies; as also that such a regular correspondence of eclipses, total eclipses of the moon, just before the ends of every one of the same four monarchies, and those all visible through those monarchies; should be all by chance, and without design, is plainly incredible: and if that be incredible, this correspondence can be no other than directly supernatural and providential. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.”

These instances may suffice as a specimen of the evidence from facts which history affords us in this case. And I must remind you, that these portentous facts are not confined to the age and country of miracles: but are found in various ages, and in various parts of the world, which were not the seats of miraculous operations; and hence, it is probable, these prognostications are intended to be common warnings to mankind in general, in all ages and countries, whensoever some important and extraordinary period is approaching; and they appear, just when these grand exigencies render it expedient.

Upon the whole, I think we may, without superstition or enthusiasm, reflect with awe upon the late strange appearances in nature, as forerunners of some grand events which may nearly affect us in common with the

kingdoms of the earth. There is, at least, a great probability for it; and probability is our guide in most of our actions, and may safely be followed in this case.

But what those grand events, what those important revolutions are; whether the works of vengeance or of mercy; whether the blow will fall upon this nation or that; these things I will not pretend to determine, nor hardly venture to conjecture. This is certain, we are now come to a very dark time; a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy, 2 Kings 19:3; and every day seems to grow darker and darker. Our expeditions hitherto have been surprisingly unsuccessful. Our country has been ravaged with impunity. We tremble for the fate of the important island of Minorca, and for the event of the naval engagement in the Mediterranean, which, at best, has not been much in our favor. Oswego, the most important fort on the frontiers of British America, is now in the hands of our enemies; and the slow motions of our northern army afford us but little reason to hope for reprisals. The power of France, especially by land, is formidable; and the more so, because thoroughly exasperated. In short, we are alarmed from the highest authority among us, that the dispute between the two crowns grows near to a crisis, whether these colonies are still to remain under the happy constitution of Great Britain, or become subject to the arbitrary power of a despotic prince. Our religion, our liberty, our property, our lives, and everything dear and valuable are at stake; and the die spins dreadfully doubtful: and, which is still more discouraging, the holy Spirit of God is withdrawn from us. We frequent the house of God time after time, and yet see but little appearances of his being at work among us. The work of conversion and reformation goes on but slowly, if at all. Both the inflicted and threatened chastisements of the divine hand, have little or no effect

upon the generality; they are hardy enough to sin on still, in the midst of a sickly neighborhood and a bleeding country. The horrid sound of war ringing in their ears cannot rouse them from their sinful security. And are not these moral prognostics very alarming, as well as the former natural ones? May not our hearts fail for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth?

What if God be now about to arise and punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquities; and particularly us, whose sins have been attended with peculiar aggravations, by reason of our peculiar advantages. What if the measure of our iniquity, and that of our mother country, be just full? It has been filling fast for a long season.

We have for a long time sinned on with impunity: but can we expect the reins will always be laid upon our necks, without any check? Is there indeed a God that governs the world, and is he displeased with our sin; and will he not let us know it? The British isle has long been the favorite of Providence: and it is really astonishing to read in history how remarkably Providence has appeared in its favor when on the very brink of ruin; but it has been an ungrateful, guilty spot, of this guilty globe: it has forgot its God in its prosperity; abused his mercies, and despised his threatening's: and what if the rod that has been so long held over it be now about to smite? What if the commission be now issued forth to the executioners of divine vengeance, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down, for the press is full; the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great?" Joel 3:13. What if the liberty and plenty we have ungratefully abused, be about to be taken from us? What if the holy religion which we have at once professed and profaned, be about to be exchanged for popish tyranny and superstition? What if the last and most violent struggle of antichrist, or the

powers of popery, be yet to come, and now beginning? What if, before the glorious victory which shall at length be obtained over him by the followers of the Lamb, power be given him to make war with the saints and overcome; to wear out the saints of the Most High, and scatter the power of the holy people, according to the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation? Dan. 7:25,12:2; Rev. 13:7. What if God visit the Protestant churches, which are an huge mass of corruption, with a few grains of salt in it, notwithstanding their peculiar advantages, with severe judgments, to purify them, before the happy period of the entire downfall of popery, and the universal conversion of Jews and Gentiles? What if the time be come when judgments must begin at the house of God, his Protestant churches; 1 Pet. 4:17; and the executioners of his vengeance must begin to slay at the sanctuary of the Lord? Ezek. 9:6. "The signs of the times" look threatening and gloomy; and who knows but such dread events may be at hand?

And if so, what will become of those crowds of sinners among us, who have sinned away the days of liberty, plenty, and gospel light? With what horror must they enter upon those dark tremendous scenes? Alas! They are unprepared for dismal days; unprepared for death; unprepared for eternity! In the midst of terror and desolation, conscience follows them with its horrid, portentous alarms: God frowns upon them from above; and all nature musters up its terrors against them around.

Is it not, therefore, the highest wisdom to prepare in time for such dreadful days? Now, sinners, now be reconciled to God; fly to the arms of his grace, which are expanded wide to embrace you: fly to Jesus the only Savior, who can protect you in all the disorders of this fluctuating world, and in all the terrors of the final judgment. Make your own conscience your friend, that it may smile upon you within, though the face of nature should

frown upon you without. Now become sincere Christians; and you are safe. And now is the most proper time for it. Therefore, "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near." Isaiah 55:6. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Jer. 13:16,17.

But, on the other hand, what if the great God be now about to take to him his great power, and reign? What if the kingdoms of the earth are now about to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, Rev. 11:15, and the long-expected period of the conversion of the Jews, and the fulness of the Gentiles, be just come? This would be a grand revolution indeed: and we cannot expect it will be brought about without much blood and desolation. Many thrones must totter and fall; many kingdoms must be overturned, which are now the supports of Popery, Mahometanism, and heathenism. In this sense, the gentle Savior came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword. And who knows but the ferment that is now begun, may work up this grand revolution? Who knows but the mystery of God is about to be finished, in the days of the voice of the seventh angel; and that the sixth vial is running, and the seventh about to be poured out upon the persecuting powers of Rome? What if great Babylon is come into remembrance before God; and we shall ere long hear the proclamation, "Babylon is fallen! Is fallen!" Isa. 21:9. If so, "rejoice over her, ye heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." What if the signal be now given for the grand decisive conflict between the followers of the Lamb and

the followers of the beast? It may be sharp and bloody; and you and I and millions more, may fall in it. But victory shall soon be determined in favor of the oppressed servants of Jesus. What if he who is called Faithful and True, and who maketh war in righteousness, be about to ascend the white horse of victory and triumph, followed by the armies of heaven, that is, by his faithful servants? And what if, according to the vision of St. John, the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, were about to gather together to make war with Him that sits on the horse, and his army? Rev. 19:19. The issue of the battle is represented in the same vision: "The beast and the false prophet were taken; and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse. And an angel standing in the sun," says St. John, "cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." Rev. 19:17,18. Accordingly they were all sated with a dreadful meal. This period, we have reason to expect, though we may not exactly calculate the time of its commencement. The time indeed is determined in prophetic computation, both in Daniel and the Revelation. This grand conflict is to be in the close of three years and a half; time, times, and a half a time; forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days: all which computations exactly amount to the same sum, viz., twelve hundred and sixty years. But at what time this period commenced is not fully agreed upon; and, consequently, it is uncertain when it will end. However, it is generally agreed, that we are not far from the end of it; and, consequently, matters must be ripening fast for that grand result. If this glorious day be so near, let

us bless God and rejoice, though we should be overwhelmed in those commotions that may introduce it. And let it be the matter of our daily prayer that it may be hastened.

Upon the whole, let us endeavor to put ourselves in a posture of readiness to meet with all events that may be approaching. Though I know not these futurities, yet I know it shall be well with them that fear God: but it will not be well with the wicked: neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God. Eccl. 8:12,13. It shall, however, be well with the righteous. Isa. 3:10,11. Their heaven is sure; and while they have a place to go to there, it is little matter to them what becomes of this earth, and all their mortal interests. The Ruler of the universe is their patron, their tutelary Deity; and under his protection they are safe, come what will. Therefore put on courage, and show the world you have a God to go to, in the greatest difficulty; and that you can confidently trust him. But at all adventures, I must say on the other hand, “Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Isa. 3:10,11. Suppose these uncommon appearances in nature were wholly insignificant; suppose there were no such thing as war in the world, and you were in no danger of being involved in the ruins of your country: yet, you have death, the king of terrors; you have an angry conscience, and, which is worse, an angry God, to encounter with; you have the terrors of a dissolving world, and of a final judgment, to pass through: you have the pains of hell to endure. And are you hardy enough to encounter these without horror? Oh! That you would be so wise as to be reconciled to God, and make him your friend, whose protection you so much need.

Finally, I would recommend it to you all, to make this a praying time among you; often appear in the posture of petitioners at the throne of grace,

in secret, in your families, and in those societies" which I desired you to set up for this end. Pray for the continuance of your religion and liberty: pray for the establishment of the British throne, and the preservation of the royal life, which is of so much importance at this critical juncture. Pray for the success of our arms by sea and land, and the restraint and confusion of our enemies. Pray that you and others may be prepared for all occurrences. But, above all, pray that the Holy Spirit of God may be poured out upon us, to work a general reformation. Though all these natural prodigies should be unmeaning, alas! We have moral prognostics enough to make our hearts meditate terror, and forebode some impending judgments; I mean, the general wickedness and impiety that prevail in our country. Alas! I am afraid the voice of this prodigy, though more terrible and more certainly ominous than earthquakes or blazing stars, will not be heard till it be too late. But I must repeat the declaration I have often made in your hearing, that it will never be well with our country, till there be more of the fear and love of God, more sincere practical religion, among us: and that all our military forces will not save us in the issue, without a general repentance and reformation. Could I once convince my countrymen that there is something in this proposal, I should begin to entertain some hopes of a speedy deliverance. But, alas! While it is disregarded as a\* chimerical project, my heart cannot but forebode some fearful things coming upon us; which may God, of his infinite mercy, prevent, for his name's sake. Amen.



# *SERM. LXV. THE HAPPY EFFECTS OF THE POURING OUT OF THE SPIRIT.*

**I**saiah 32:13-19.— *Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city; because the palaces shall be forsaken, the multitude of the city shall be left, the forts and towers shall be for dens forever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks: until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail, coming down upon the forest.*

It is our lot to be born in an age of blood and slaughter; an age, in which mankind remarkably exemplify the character given of them long ago by an inspired pen, “Hateful, and hating one another;” an age, which has seen a strange revolution in that Britain that about three hundred years ago had

crushed the power of France, and had the crown of that kingdom made over to her by treaty —now everywhere defeated by that very power; an age, in which the cause of liberty and the Protestant religion is in the most alarming danger, from the formidable confederacy of Popish tyrants and their vassals; an age, in which our liberty, our property, our lives, and our religion, which should be dearer to us than all, are no longer insured to us with the usual firmness of the British constitution, but disputed with a powerful invader; and the issue of the contest is dreadfully uncertain. And in such an age can there be so stupid a soul among us, as to be thoughtless and unconcerned? Sure, if we have anything of the man, the patriot, the Christian, within us, we must be deeply solicitous about these important interests, and anxious for a remedy to our bleeding country and nation.

I need not detain you with a particular account of the present mortifying and alarming situation of our public affairs. I need not tell you of slaughtered families, mangled corpses, men, women, and children, held in barbarous captivity in the dens of savages; routed garrisons, demolished fortifications, deserted, desolated settlements, upon our frontiers. I need not remind you of defeated armies, blasted expeditions, and abortive schemes—of divided, dilatory counsels on both sides the ocean—a jangling, unsettled ministry, and an uneasy, murmuring, clamorous people. I need not tell you that our enemies have pushed their conquests with surprising rapidity, and executed all their schemes; while all our attempts to stop their progress have issued in disappointment and mortification; and that they are now become formidable, even in America, where, a few years ago, they were so contemptible. I need not tell you that our hopes are lowered as to our brave ally, the king of Prussia, who has lately been routed, and obliged to break up the siege of Prague; and who has almost the half of the powers of Europe

for his enemies. He stands the single champion of the Protestant cause upon the continent; and should he be crushed, that important cause would probably fall with him, especially in Germany. I need not tell you how gloomy and discouraging the prospect is before us, from the growing power of the French—from their great influence with the Indian savages—from the naked and defenseless state of our country—from the dastardly, secure spirit that prevails among the generality, and from many causes that I need not name. These things are too public and notorious for me to enlarge upon them. Alas! Who is ignorant of them? Though but few lay them properly to heart.

The great inquiry I would now employ your time and thoughts about, is, What is the best remedy in this melancholy case? This, I think, we may clearly discover in the verses I have read to you.

At the time to which this prophecy seems principally to refer, namely, at the destruction of the Jews by the Babylonians, their iniquities were come to the full. It was inconsistent with the maxims of the divine government to delay their punishment any longer. Therefore the Babylonians were commissioned as the executioners of divine vengeance to ravage their land, destroy their city and temple, and carry away the inhabitants by three successive captivities, till the land was left uninhabited, untilled, and desolate for seventy years. In this time was fulfilled the prophecy in my text: “Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, in all the houses of joy in the joyous city.” The epithet joyous is added with design to aggravate the calamity. “The houses of joy” are turned into heaps of rubbish. “The joyous city” is made a melancholy waste, overrun with briers and thorns. The men of sensuality and luxury, who were wont to riot in these houses of joy, and to spend their time in pleasure, are now stripped

of all their possessions, and feel the reverse of their usual delights in a servile, dismal captivity; and to such, the calamities of war, poverty, and thralldom, are peculiarly painful and mortifying. These effeminate souls were never inured to hardships and self-denial, and therefore must sink the lower under their weight. I leave you, my brethren, to judge, whether the calamities we fear, should they fall upon us, would not fall the heavier upon multitudes of our countrymen on this account, who have been accustomed to live in luxury and pleasure, and are by these means enervated and unmanned. The epithet joyous may also intimate, that the extravagant luxury and love of pleasure that prevailed among the Jews, was one cause of the destruction of their country and nation. Their houses are laid in ruins, because they have been houses of guilty Joy. Their city is made desolate, because it had been unseasonably and excessively a joyous city. So the words may be rendered; “Upon the land of my people shall come up briers and thorns, because of the houses of joy in the joyous city.” These houses of joy brought destruction upon the inhabitants. Their luxury and pleasure had a natural tendency to destroy them, according to the course of things. They produced thoughtless security and presumption. They turned the attention of the court and ministry from the concerns of their country, to sensual gratifications and amusements. They softened and unmanned the populace, and rendered them impatient of the generous dangers and hardships of soldiers in the field. They tempted them to lay out that substance in diversions and extravagant pleasures which should have been expended in the defense of their country; and luxury and pleasure provoked the God of heaven, who holds the scale of empire in his hand, and lets it rise or fall according to his pleasure. The unseasonable joy of this people at a time when the tokens of the Almighty’s anger were upon them; their taste for

mirth and pleasure, when he called them to repentance, brought his heavy vengeance upon them, and he determined to destroy a people that would not be amended by chastisement. Here also I leave you to judge, whether we and our nation be not in danger from the same quarter. Has not a deluge of luxury and pleasure almost overwhelmed all ranks, from the highest to the lowest? To eat and drink delicately and freely: to feast, and dance, and riot; to pamper cocks or horses; to observe the anxious, important, interesting event—which of two horses can run fastest; or which of two cocks can flutter and spur most dexterously:—these are the grand affairs that almost engross the attention of some of our great men. And little, low-lived sinners imitate them to the utmost of their power. The low-born sinner can leave a needy family to starve at home, and add one to the rabble at a horse-race or a cock-fight. He can get drunk and turn himself into a beast with the lowest, as well as his betters with more delicate liquors. On this account, I am afraid this fruitful year, with which a gracious God has blessed our guilty country, will prove a curse to many, who add to their guilt by ungratefully abusing the additional mercies of God towards them. How unseasonable is this taste for pleasure and diversions, at such a time as this! A time, when “the Lord of Hosts calls to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth;” i.e., to all the solemn and public evidences of repentance. Now, if ever, these things are seasonable; they are a kind of decencies in our present circumstances. But, alas! Instead of these, “Behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine;” that is, all the furniture of luxury and festivity, as if they acted upon the epicurean maxim, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” And I wish the secret revealed to the prophet with regard to such, may not be equally applicable to our age and country: “It was revealed in mine ears by

the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.” Isaiah 22:12-14.

The prophet goes on to describe the desolation of Judea and Jerusalem, and to assign the reason why the land should be overrun with briers and thorns during the captivity; namely, “Because the palaces shall be forsaken, the multitude of the city shall be left, and the noise of it shall cease; the forts of the towers shall be for dens forever:” that is, for a long time, which is sometimes all the meaning of this word. These places of strength and beauty shall be “a joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks;” where they shall graze to the full, and lie down unmolested.

When the prophet has thus described the utter desolation of the Holy Land, he fixes the time of its continuance, or informs the Jews how long it should last; and that is, “UNTIL THE SPIRIT BE POURED UPON US FROM ON HIGH.” The Holy Spirit of God is represented in the Scriptures as the original fountain of all the real goodness and virtue which is to be found in our degenerate world; the only author of reformation, conversion, sanctification, and every grace included in the character of a saint, or a good man. The pouring out of the Spirit is a Scripture phrase, which signifies a plentiful communication of his influence to effect a thorough reformation. It is not a distilling, or falling in gentle drops, like the dew; but a copious effusion, or pouring out, like a mighty shower, or torrent that carries all before it. Now, as the communication of the Spirit is necessary to produce a reformation, so a large communication, or outpouring of the Spirit, is necessary to produce a public, general reformation; such as may save a country on the brink of ruin, or recover one already laid desolate. Without this remedy, all other applications will be ineffectual; and the distempered body politic will languish more and more, till it is at length dissolved. Until

this outpouring of the Spirit, says the prophet, “briers and thorns shall come upon the land; and the houses of joy, the palaces, and towers, shall be heaps of ruins, dens for wild beasts, and pastures for flocks.” Until that blessed time come, no means can effectually repair a broken state, or repeople a desolate country.

But when that blessed time comes, then what a glorious revolution—what a happy alteration follows! Then says the prophet, “The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field: and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever; and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting--places, when it shall hail, coming down upon the forest.” These are the blessed pacific effects of the outpouring of the Spirit; and these effectually cure all the ravages of war, and ensure a lasting peace, with all its blessings.

“The wilderness shall be a fruitful field;” that is, the country that had been reduced into a mere wilderness by the ravages of war, and the captivity of the inhabitants, shall again be tilled and improved, and become as a fruitful field, or a Carmel.

“And the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest that is, upon this happy turn of affairs, the country of the enemy, which had been a fruitful field, a mere Carmel, shall be laid waste in its turn, and made a mere forest, a wild uninhabited wood: it shall suffer itself what it had inflicted, and be made a wilderness, as it had made other countries so. This was remarkably accomplished upon Babylon, which had spread desolation through the country of the Jews, according to the prediction of Jeremiah: “When seventy years are accomplished, (in the captivity of the Jews) I will punish

the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.” And this is the usual procedure of Providence, to make use of one guilty nation to execute his judgments upon another, and then to execute the executioner. From hence we may prognosticate the future fall of France, though she should now be used as a rod in the Divine hand to chastise rebellious Britons.

“Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.” Judgment sometimes signifies punishment from the hand of God, and sometimes the same with justice or righteousness. If we take it to signify punishment from the Divine hand, then the meaning is “The heavy judgments of God shall dwell (that is, long remain) upon the country of the enemy, which, though once a fruitful Carmel, is now turned into a wilderness.” In this sense, the prophecy has been literally accomplished upon Babylon, which remains a wilderness unto this day. If by judgment we understand righteousness, then the meaning is, “Righteousness shall dwell in the land of Judea, which was once made a wilderness, but is now improved into a fruitful field, since the pouring out of the Spirit.” And so it designs the same with the following sentence: “Righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field.” That is, “Righteousness, which in the Scripture sense often signifies all goodness, or the whole of true religion, or a proper temper and conduct towards God and man; righteousness, in this extensive sense, shall remain in the fruitful field—it shall possess the hearts and govern the practices of the inhabitants; and this shall turn their country into a Carmel, a paradise, a fruitful field.”

“And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever.” When righteousness thus



becomes the universal principle and rule of action, it will produce peace, quietness, and assurance, or security from danger.” And in consequence of this, “my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation,” &c. They shall remain undisturbed in their possessions, and enjoy the blessings of peace, free from factions at home, and invasions from abroad. In this unmolested and happy situation shall they continue, even “when it shall hail, coming down upon the forest;” or when storms of public calamities break upon other countries, and lay them waste.

You may now have a full view of the regular gradation from truth to truth in my text. Desolation overspreads the country, until the Spirit is poured out; the Spirit poured out produces righteousness, or true religion; righteousness produces peace, quietness, and assurance; and under its influence the inhabitants live in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, even when storms and tempest toss and desolate other nations.

Thus, you see, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the great and only remedy for a ruined country; the only effectual preventive of national calamities and desolations, and the only sure cause of a lasting and well-established peace. This is the truth I now intend chiefly to illustrate.

And this is the more necessary to be illustrated and inculcated as it is but very little regarded. We all complain that our country cannot be defended, nor an advantageous peace obtained without better regulations; without timely and vigorous measures, unanimity, courage, and public spirit among all ranks. There are some also who complain, that our country cannot be safe or prosperous without a general reformation; that it cannot be expected the undertakings of a guilty, impenitent people, ripe for the judgments of God, can succeed, till their repentance be in some measure as signal and

public as their sin. Thus far we look: but, unless we look farther, we do not go to the bottom of things. As all our measures are not likely to be successful without a reformation; so we may despair of ever seeing a thorough, general reformation, unless the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. I may illustrate this by the piece of history to which my text refers, and in which it had its accomplishment. The Jews were a numerous and powerful people: their cities were all fortified, especially Jerusalem, their capital; and yet their impenitent sinning, without reformation, rendered them an easy prey to their enemies. But why did they continue impenitent? Why were they not reformed? Was it because they did not enjoy proper means? No: they had the law of Moses; they had the ministry of the prophets, who loudly called them to repentance through a succession of ages, and in the most explicit manner denounced the judgments of God against them, if they should continue impenitent; they enjoyed all the advantages of an extraordinary immediate providence; in short, they had better helps and excitements for reformation than all mankind beside, except such as we, who have the happiness of living under the more complete and glorious dispensation of the gospel. And yet they sinned on still, impenitent and unreformed: no general reformation was carried on by all these means; and even under the hardships of captivity, they still continued the same incorrigible sinners. Hence God complains of them, “When they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name,” as they had done before in their own land. Ezek. 36:20. And what was wanting all this time for their effectual reformation? Why, the Spirit was not yet poured upon them from on high; and while he was absent, they continued unreformed, and their country desolate. But when the time for their restoration came, then the Spirit was poured out. Thus their

restoration and the effusion of the Spirit are connected in the divine promise: “I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land; then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, (the usual emblem of Divine influences, John 7:38,39,) and ye shall be clean; and I will put my Spirit within you.” Ezek. 36:24—27. And when this promise was fulfilled, what was the consequence? Why a glorious public reformation followed, of which you see an account in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. They returned to their own land as weeping penitents, according to Jeremiah’s prediction, which seems to have had its primary accomplishment in this event. “The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: (this is a description of the march of the captives in their return to their own country,) they shall go and seek the Lord their God: they shall ask the way to Zion, (Zion, the place where the house of God once stood, which they are eager to rebuild) with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Jer. 1:4,5. And when they were thus brought to repentance, what a happy revolution followed! The scattered captives were collected; they restored their ruined church and state, and again became a free and flourishing people. And what happened to them will also happen to us, and all nations of the earth in all ages, in like circumstances.

In illustrating the subject I have principally in view, I intend only to offer a few arguments to prove the absolute necessity of a general outpouring of the Spirit, to effect a general reformation.

The arguments for this truth, with which the holy Scriptures furnish us, are so many, that I can only select a few; and they shall be chiefly such as refer to nations, or bodies politic, and not to individuals, or private persons;

asserting the Holy Spirit to be the only author of public national reformation, as well as of the conversion of particular persons.

The temporal prosperity of the Jews, who were under a Theocracy, or an immediate Providence, depended in a special manner upon their continued obedience: and their restoration upon their return to obedience, or their reformation. Hence, among the many promises of prosperity and restoration which Moses makes them in the name of God, this is one: “The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live;” that is, that thou mayest be a prosperous people. “And the Lord will put all these curses upon thine enemies; and he will make thee plenteous in every work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land for good.” Deut. 30:6-9. In Jeremiah 31: you have many promises made to the Jews, both of temporal and spiritual prosperity, upon their conversion to God: and as the life of all, this is inserted, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Deut. 30:31,33. This is substantially repeated, with an express reference to national deliverance, in the next chapter. “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them and their children after them,” Deut. 30:37-41, &c. Ezekiel speaks in the same strain with regard to the same event: “Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things, and all the abominations thereof from thence;” that is,

they shall promote a general reformation in their country: and from whence shall this proceed? You find the cause of it in the following promise: “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh—that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.” Zerubbabel was the great restorer of the Jewish church and state, after the Babylonish captivity: and Zechariah informs us that this was the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, for his encouragement, “Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” The reformation of the Jews, and their consequent restoration to a flourishing state, is not effected by any human power or means, but by my Spirit alone. Zech. 4:6. And this will hold equally true in every age, especially under the gospel, which is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, are virtues which have the most happy influence upon human society; and were they universally prevalent, they would effectually prevent all the calamities of war, and ensure all the blessings of peace: and these, St. Paul tells us, are the fruits, or effects, of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22,23. And, therefore, “till the Spirit be poured out from on high,” they will never grow and flourish. Faith, repentance, and every grace are the free gift of God, wrought by the Holy Spirit. Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29; Acts 5:31, and 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Cor. 5:17,18. In short, not one soul, much less a whole nation, can be effectually reformed without the power of God. If even a well-disposed Lydia gave a believing attention to the things spoken by Paul, it was because the Lord opened her heart. Acts 16:14. “No man can come unto Christ, except the Father draw him.” John 6:44. The Holy Spirit is uniformly represented, through the whole Scriptures, as the spring of all the goodness that is in the

world —the sacred fire, from whence proceeds every spark of true religion that is to be found in the breasts of any of the sons of men.

And the doctrine of the Scriptures, in this respect, is confirmed by history, and matters of fact, in all ages. When the Spirit is withdrawn, it has been found a truth, that nations and particular persons have degenerated; vice and luxury have gained ground, and religion has declined, and died away; and that, too, in the midst of the most proper means to promote reformation, and to strengthen the things that remain. Then the most solemn preaching, and the most alarming providences have no effect; but men continue blind and stupid under the clearest instructions, and the loudest warnings; and grow harder and harder, instead of being refined in the furnace of affliction. But on the other hand, when the Spirit is poured out from on high, then the cause of religion and virtue is promoted, almost without means; then sinners are awakened by a word: religion catches and circulates from heart to heart, and bears down all opposition before it. Peter had preached many a sermon before that which we find recorded in Acts the second, and his Lord and master had preached many a one; but with very little success. But now by one short discourse, no fewer than three thousand are converted in a few minutes among a promiscuous, prejudiced multitude, some of whom had been accessory to the death of Jesus Christ but a few days before. And whence this happy turn? St. Peter himself will tell you, it was because then was fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Joel, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Acts 2:16,17; Joel 2:8. Then, too, was fulfilled the promise of the blessed Jesus to his disciples; “I will send the Spirit unto you; and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” John 16:7,8. It was this that rendered the progress of the gospel so rapid and irresistible through the world, in spite of the most powerful

opposition from all quarters in that age; which, in times seemingly more favorable, has languished and lost ground.

It is my happiness to be able to furnish you with an instance of the like nature, in the review of my own short life. About sixteen years ago, in the northern colonies, when all religious concern was much out of fashion, and the generality lay in a dead sleep in sin, having at best but the form of godliness, but nothing of the power; when the country was in peace and prosperity, free from the calamities of war, and epidemical sickness; when, in short, there were no extraordinary calls to repentance; suddenly, a deep, general concern about eternal things spread through the country; sinners started out of their slumbers, broke off from their vices, began to cry out, What shall I do to be saved? And made it the great business of their life to prepare for the world to come. Then the gospel seemed almighty, and carried all before it. It pierced the very hearts of men with an irresistible power. I have seen thousands at once melted down under it; all eager to hear as for life, and hardly a dry eye to be seen among them. Many have since backslidden, and all their religion is come to nothing, or dwindled away into mere formality. But, blessed be God, thousands still remain shining monuments of the power of divine grace in that glorious day. That harvest did not continue very long: and now, in the very same places, and under the same ministry, or a better, there are hardly any appearances of it; though Providence has given them so many alarms of late, and such loud calls to repentance. And what can be the reason of such a surprising difference but this, that formerly the Spirit was poured out from on high, but now he is withdrawn; and hence the gospel and the means of grace, which were once so powerful, have now lost their general efficacy, and have either no effect or a terrible one, that is, to harden men more and more.

Now if this be so indeed, that is, if the Holy Spirit be the sole author of that reformation, which is necessary to preserve or restore public tranquility and happiness; then we may be enabled by this to form some estimate of the present situation of our country and nation. By feeling this pulse, we may learn the state of our political body.

On the one hand, we may discover that God has not as yet abandoned guilty Britons, nor entirely withdrawn his Spirit from this world of sinners. If the Spirit has not been poured out in a copious shower of late, he has at least distilled like the dew, and caused some spots of the wilderness here and there to flourish. I have very agreeable accounts from my English correspondents, that many of the clergy there have been roused out of their long sleep; have abandoned the modish, new-fangled divinity of the age, gone back to the forsaken truths of their own articles and the reformation, and preach Christ crucified, and the unfashionable doctrines of grace, with indefatigable zeal and extensive success. This is the more unexpected, and the more promising as it has appeared in a church where religion has been declining for some time, and the things that remained were ready to die. We, I hope, have Catholicism enough to rejoice in her recovery, though under another name. Some drops of divine influences have also fallen upon certain spots in America of late. I have, some time ago, given you an account of the promising religious impressions among the students in the college of New Jersey: and my worthy correspondent, Mr. Bellamy, informs me, "As at New Jersey College, so in several places in New England, there have been awakenings, and some hopeful conversions of late: but whether these are to be looked upon as bees flying to the hive before a storm, or as some drops of mercy before a general shower, I cannot tell, but fear the former: for our land, in general, is in profound security, and the cry of our



sins has reached to heaven.” I have several accounts of the same agreeable import from other hands. And I hope even Virginia is not left a mere barren wilderness, without one fruitful spot in it. Here and there a poor, thoughtless sinner has been alarmed, and turned to the Lord; and even some of Africa’s gloomy sons have become, we hope, the Lord’s freemen, and the genuine children of Abraham by faith. These things bear a promising aspect; and we would fain hope, that the Lord has reserved such a remnant among us, that we shall not be made like unto Sodom, and desolate like unto Gomorrah: nor have we reason to complain, with desponding Elijah, that we only are left to serve the Lord.

But, on the other hand, it is lamentably evident, there has not been of late any such general outpouring of the Spirit, as is necessary to produce a public national reformation: which is the only cure for a body politic so far gone as ours. We have lost ground indeed before our enemies, and been almost everywhere worsted: but I am afraid vice has stood its ground against the artillery of the gospel; or if it has lost in one place, it has gained in another. By all accounts from Great Britain, and the neighboring colonies, and by our own observations in this, it appears that the generality lie in a deep sleep, presumptuous and prayerless, even when the bloody sword is unsheathed and brandished over them, and their country bleeds by a thousand wounds. They hardly ever reflect upon their sins as the cause of these public calamities; nor humble themselves under these judgments, as indications of the righteous displeasure of God. Nay, some are arrived to such a daring height of infidelity, as virtually to abjure the divine government, and to avow that they do not think the God of heaven has anything to do with such affairs; but the potsherds of the earth dash themselves together of themselves, and the arm of flesh fights it out. Our

country and nation have had the trial of the gospel a long time—the gospel, which is the most effectual expedient to reform the world, which has subdued so many obstinate sinners, and which has peopled heaven with so large a colony from our guilty globe. We have also of late had the trial of the calamities of war—a bloody and savage war with a powerful, exasperated enemy, and their barbarous allies. But, alas! It appears, upon trial, that these means will not do. After all the trial that has been made, alas! It appears that infidelity, irreligion, immorality, and luxury, still stand their ground. Yes, by all accounts, they stand their ground even among the soldiery, and among the inhabitants of our frontiers, whose lives are in danger every hour. In short, a spirit of deep sleep seems to be poured out, instead of a spirit of reformation.

I wish it were evident, that we, in this congregation, have escaped this heavy judgment. And I cannot but hope, some drops of divine influence are distilling here and there among us. But, alas! My brethren, I greatly fear, that even we have reason to lament and cry after the departed Spirit of God. I am greatly afraid we may be named Ichabod, because the glory is departed. 1 Sam. 4:21,22. For what has now become of that inquiry,

What shall I do to be saved?” Where, now, are the tears, the sighs, and groans of broken-hearted sinners? Here their eager searches and crying’s for Jesus? When do we now see attentive crowds in the house of God, hearing as for their lives, with all the natural signs of raised passions in their countenances? Alas! These are rare things now-a-days. In some, vice appears impudent and barefaced, without a veil. Others indulge themselves in a stupid carelessness about religion, and think it enough if they observe some of its fashionable outward forms, while they know nothing of the vigorous, heart-exercises of genuine Christians. In short, if we make our

observations upon high and low, and all ranks, on both sides of the Atlantic, alas! We find they go on still in the same old way, as in the time of peace and prosperity. The danger of their country and their own, is no reason with them, why they should repent.

Now this is a sufficient evidence, that the Spirit has not been poured upon us from on high, in a plentiful shower. And this gives us reason to fear, that the furnace which God has kindled among us is not intended to refine, but to consume: or, in other words, that the calamities which we have felt, or which we fear, are rather intended to destroy, than to reform. For you must observe such dispensations, and the means of grace in general, are intended for two very different ends; sometimes to reform and save, and sometimes to harden and destroy. Even Jesus Christ the Savior came into our world for judgment, as well as for mercy; and is set for the fall as well as rise, of many in Israel. The ministry of the gospel is a savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life. Isaiah was sent as a prophet to the Jews, when their sins were ripening fast, and their national desolation was approaching. And what was he sent for? Not to reform them; that was hopeless: but you may read his commission. Isa. 6:9-11. "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not;" that is, you shall enjoy all proper means of instruction, but receive no advantage from them. "Then, said I, Lord, how long?" Isaiah inquired how long the means of grace should be unprofitable to them, and tend to harden them: the answer is, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." I have some better hopes concerning our country: and yet I must say, I have my fears that this awful passage may be fulfilled even upon it. I have my fears that briers and thorns will grow up in our land, or, which is much the same, that it may become the range of

French and Indian savages. “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” And when that period will arrive, whether sooner or later, is among the secrets of the divine counsels.

From what has been said, you may see what we principally want. We want arms, and artillery, and fortifications; we want more unanimity, judgment, dispatch, and frugality in projecting and executing our undertakings: we want more public spirit, courage, and resolution among the populace. But, oh! These are not our only nor our principal wants: we want an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all ranks; and till this want be supplied, nothing is like to go on well with us. We want a general public reformation: and we shall always want it, “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” Alas! This want is little thought of; but it is by so much the more dangerous and lamentable. Never will our country and nation be safe, never will Britain or Virginia be out of the reach of some executioner of divine vengeance, till there be a public general reformation: and never will there be such a reformation, “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.”

Here I must not forget a consideration of still greater weight; unless the Spirit be poured out upon us, thousands of Britons, thousands of Virginians, must perish forever; perish not in their own country, but in hell; not by the sword of the French, or Indian instruments of destruction, but by the sword of divine justice, and the horrid instruments and torture in the infernal regions. This is a much more melancholy consideration than the ruin of our country. The ruin of souls, immortal souls, forever!— without any hope of deliverance!—from among the means of salvation!—oh! What horrid ruin is this! Yet this will be the doom of thousands, unless the Spirit be poured out, to turn and sanctify them. Thousands declare by their conduct whither they are going; they proclaim aloud they are bound for hell; and nothing but

the Almighty Spirit can stop them in their mad career. Some of these unhappy mortals may be our friends and relatives; at least they share with us in the same human nature, and therefore should be dear to us. Nay, are not some of ourselves of that number? Even the suspicion of this may strike us aghast, and put us upon thoughtful inquiries into the matter.

Hence it appears, the Spirit of God is the most important blessing, both to our country and our souls, both with regard to time and eternity; and without it, both our country and our souls will be lost in the issue.

Hence, therefore, you may be directed what to make the principal matter of your prayers to God. Pray for our king, for the ministry, for the parliament, for our governors, councilors, and all our officers, civil and military: pray for the Protestant churches, for our allies, and especially for the king of Prussia; pray for our army and navy, and for our poor exposed fellow-subjects on the frontiers: pray for good regulations among ourselves, for the weakening of our enemies, and for the speedy return of a well-established peace: pray for our own reformation, and for the conversion even of our enemies, whether French papists, or heathen savages: but above all, pray for an outpouring of the Spirit. This is the grand, radical, all-comprehensive blessing: and if this be granted, everything else will go well with us.

To conclude, let me recommend a prudential to you, which you generally observe in temporal affairs; and that is, to prepare for the worst. Perhaps our religion may not be that cheap thing to us in time to come, which it has been hitherto: perhaps it may yet cost us our blood and lives. This we may expect will be our doom, if we should fall under a Popish government. And where is the glorious company of martyrs to be found among us? Who of you is willing to embrace a stake, and ascend to heaven in flames, for the

sake of Jesus? Jesus, who died for you, will expect that some in this place will die for him, if they should ever be brought to the trial. And who of you is prepared to give this painful, this last evidence of your love and fidelity to him? Now you have time to deliberate upon it, and put yourselves in readiness: and it is prudence, as well as duty, to improve your time for this end, lest you be surprised unprepared.

Alas! What shall impenitent sinners do, if matters should come to this pass? If they part with Christ, rather than with their lives, they are undone, unless they retract the ruinous choice. And if they should die martyrs in his cause, even this would not save them. An unholy soul cannot ascend to heaven, even from a stake. “If I should give my body to be burnt,” saith St. Paul, “and have not charity,” love, he means, “it profiteth me nothing.” 1 Cor. 13:3. What then remains, oh sinners, but that while you enjoy a few days of peace and liberty, you lay them out in earnest endeavors to obtain sincere religion— a religion that will stand the severest test! And then you are safe, come what will.

I will not take upon me to determine, what will be the issue of this war. But I am afraid, it will issue much to the disadvantage and mortification of Great Britain and her colonies. From the rapid conquests of France, and our own disappointments and defeats, we have reason to fear, either that a desperate war will be continued, till we are undone; till Britain is stripped of some or all her colonies, and perhaps herself become a conquered province of France: or that she will be obliged humbly to petition for peace; which we may be sure will not be granted, but on terms very disadvantageous; and which will therefore tend to weaken her more and more, and allow her enemies time to increase their strength, and enable them to finish with greater ease the conquests they have begun. The

Protestant religion is also in very threatening danger; for wherever the arms of France or Austria prevail, there, we may be sure, it will be oppressed. The Popish powers threaten that small part of Europe and America that is free, with the yoke of civil and religious tyranny; while Sweden, Denmark, the seven United Provinces, and other Protestant states, lie asleep, and do not exert themselves to ward off the blow. Perhaps we are born to see such tragical revolutions as these: and if so, what awaits us but poverty and slavery, and the loss of all that is dear to us: and are we prepared for such trials as these? Or are we so stupid, as not to be alarmed, and excited to prepare, even by the peradventure of such things coming upon us? Nothing but real vital religion, which will stand the trial of fire and fagot, and the tortures of the inquisition, will be an effectual preparative for such a time. Let us, therefore, examine whether our religion be such. If it be, we may bravely bid defiance to all the powers of earth and hell, to work our final ruin, and be secure and triumphant in Him that loved us, who will make us more than conquerors. But if not, alas! We have no room for one hour's ease and security; but should be anxiously laboring to flee from the wrath to come, whether in this world, or the next. Let us now "seek the Lord, while he may be found; and call upon him while he is near," Isa. 55:6; and in this way we may yet escape into the chambers of divine protection, before the gloomy storm breaks upon us.

In the midst of these gloomy views, methinks a ray of dubious hope darts through the threatening cloud, and bids us take a little courage, and mingle some cheerful expectations with our fears. Who knows but the Lord will yet turn, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him? Who knows but he may yet surprise us with an effusion of his Spirit, to purify us, instead of pouring upon us the vials of his displeasure, which we deserve? His ways are

unsearchable; the turns of his providence often surprising and unaccountable; and his mercy above all our thoughts. Perhaps he may suffer the power of France to rise to such a formidable height, and us to be broken and reduced to a helpless extremity, that his hand may be the more manifest in her overthrow, and in our deliverance. Perhaps the extremity of calamity may bring us to the knee, as humble penitents before our offended Sovereign, and turn us to him: and then he may appear as our deliverer, when we are sensible of our dependence upon him, and that the help of man is in vain. I am encouraged to hope for deliverance in such an extremity, from a remarkable passage in Deuteronomy, the thirty-second chapter, “The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left.” Our strength is not yet gone: we have still a powerful army and navy: and therefore are full of self-confidence. But when this atheistical confidence is mortified, and we are brought to acknowledge our need of the alliance of Heaven, then God may rise for our deliverance.

There is need of preparation for deliverance, as well as for trials and calamities; and to deliver us before we are prepared for it, would not prove a blessing in the issue. To deliver a thoughtless, presumptuous, impenitent people, while they continue such, would be to encourage their presumption and impenitence, and to make them more daring in sin, and in the neglect of God and religion. To this purpose St. Peter exhorts us, to “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that we may be exalted in due time.” 1 Pet. 5:6. There is a due time for exaltation or deliverance; and if we should be exalted before the time, we should only be exalted upon a precipice, where we should soon turn giddy, and fall again with greater violence. Let us therefore long and pray not only for deliverance, but that we may be



prepared for it, so that it may be a real blessing to us in the issue—such a deliverance may God grant us in due time through Jesus Christ. Amen.

A HYMN.

*While in a thousand open'd veins  
Contending nations bleed;  
While briers and thorns in blooming plains  
And fruitful fields succeed:  
While desolation rages around,  
Like an o'erwhelming flood,  
Where can a remedy be found  
To stop the streams of blood?  
Eternal Spirit! Source of good!  
The Author of all peace!  
Pour down thine influence, like a flood,  
On this wide wilderness.  
Oh grant us one reviving show'r,  
And let it spread afar,  
Thine influence alone can cure  
The bleeding wounds of war.  
Come, Thou, and then the wilderness  
Shall bloom a paradise:  
And heav'nly plants of righteousness  
O'er this wide waste shall rise!  
Then peace shall in large rivers flow,  
Where streams of blood have run:  
Then universal love shall glow,  
And melt the world in one.*

*Then num'rous colonies shall rise  
From this wide world of sin  
To people regions in the skies,  
And with bright angels shine.*

# *SERM. LXVI. A TIME OF UNUSUAL SICKNESS AND MORTALITY IMPROVED.*

**J**eremiah 5:3.— *O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: They have made their faces harder than a rock: they have refused to return.*

My fellow-mortals! So I call you, because mortality is the certain doom of us all. This is a truth at all times evident; but now, methinks, it is more striking than usual, when death has made such ravages among us; when it has made breaches upon sundry of our families, and swept off some of them almost entirely: and when we who survive are in daily expectation of a visit from this tremendous conqueror. Therefore, my dear fellow-mortals! Under this character would I address you this day—as a mortal, whose breath may be stopped the next day, or the next hour; I would speak with more seriousness than, alas! Is usual to me, to you, mortals, about the great concerns of immortality! If I would do anything to save myself and them that hear me, I see I must do it quickly. I have for some time been

languishing and indisposed myself, and the contagious disease made its entrance into my family; but through the amazing and distinguishing kindness of God, which I desire publicly to celebrate, and, I hope, in answer to prayer, its progress has been stopped. And what better return can I make to my gracious Deliverer, than to devote that life, which he has spared, to his glory, and the service of your souls, with increasing zeal and industry? The blind and secure world has accused me of making too great ado about religion: and when my mind is impressed with realizing view's of death and the supreme tribunal, I cannot but accuse myself: but, oh! It is upon a very different account. I never feel one uneasy thought from the excess of my zeal, or from the review of those few solemn hours, when I have delivered the messages of God to you with such pathos and earnestness that the world may have thought me mad. But I accuse myself, and would lament my many infirmities, particularly my frequent languor and coldness in the care of your souls. Indeed, I have been made sensible of my defects in this respect: and oh! That I may be enabled to be more faithful and laborious for the future. I am more sensible than usual that I must work while the day of life lasts: for oh! It is short and uncertain; and the night of death is coming, when I cannot work. I have but little time to labor for my divine Master—but little time to warn, instruct, and edify my dear hearers. Therefore, now, while my mouth is not silent in the dust, I would address you with the utmost earnestness and solemnity.

But this is not the only reason for improving the present time. As I am mortal myself, so are my dear people: they are dying fast around me, and dropping into the grave from between my hands. Above twenty that were wont to mingle with us in this assembly, and to hear the word from my lips, have been hurried into the eternal world in a few days. They have now

passed the grand decisive trial: their state of probation is over, and an irrevocable sentence has fixed their eternal state in the mansions of glory or misery! These I have done with forever. No more can I labor to warn and convince them—no more can I comfort and edify them— no more can I denounce the terrors of the Lord against their sin, nor offer the blessings of the gospel to their acceptance! The most ignorant of them are now wiser than their teacher, and know more of the great realities of the eternal world than the wisest man upon earth. Farewell, then, to these our friends and neighbors—farewell, till we all meet in one vast assembly before the supreme tribunal!

But, blessed be God, all my dear people are not yet swept off from the land of the living! Here is still a goodly number, as yet in a state of trial for that strange world, whither our brethren have taken their flight. Here is a goodly number who can still hear the gospel of peace, and who are still interested to hear it; and who, unless they hear it in time, must soon be miserable forever! And why, then, should you not all hear it with the most solemn attention and seriousness? Why, brethren, should you not all hear it so that your souls may live! Alas! Is it possible there should be one vain, trifling, thoughtless mind, in a religious assembly in such circumstances! Methinks horror must set him a-trembling, and mark out the monster to the whole congregation, as a magor-missabib—a terror to himself and all around him!

Certainly, if ever there was a time for serious thoughtfulness, this is such a time. Our nation, our country, our neighborhood, and some of our families, are in very alarming circumstances. Our nation is in danger from the victorious power of France, and the formidable conspiracy of her allies, that seem zealous to erase the name of Britons from the face of the earth. Our

country has been ravaged, and bled in a thousand veins; and the posture of our affairs threatens still more gloomy times. Our neighborhood has been turned into a graveyard, and some of us are the remains of families that have been thinned by death; and we are escaped, like brands plucked out of the burning. And what improvement should we make of these calamities? What is the will and pleasure of God in this case? Suppose you knew what the will of your Maker and Lord is, what he desires, commands, and expects you should do, in such circumstances —suppose you knew this certainly and infallibly, must I not have so much charity for you all as to presume you would pay a serious regard to it? Is it possible you should be capable of such daring wickedness, as to contemn his royal pleasure, when you knew it beyond all doubt? Well, brethren, I am just going to put this matter to a trial; for I can assure you as certainly as if you heard it proclaimed with an immediate voice from heaven, what the will of God is in this case. It is this: that you should repent, reform, and turn to the Lord, under these threatening's and chastisements. This is undoubtedly the pleasure and the command of God; and the issue will show how much weight it will have with you.

Some of you, I doubt not, have been roused by these calamities to more earnestness and zeal in the great work of your salvation. You have re-examined your past experiences, to see if you can venture upon them into eternity. You have renewed your hold of Jesus Christ, that he may be your sure support, when nature is sinking in death. You have been trimming your lamps, and putting yourselves in a proper habit to meet the bridegroom of your souls. You have been setting things in order for your last remove: and though you may have been tossed between the alternate billows of hope and fear, yet you cannot but conclude, upon the whole, that you have not

delayed the grand work of life to such a time as this; but have been so wise as to make it your main business in the time of health and prosperity. Well, my dear brethren, go on in this course, and you shall be safe, come what will; and these threatening and afflictive dispensations of Providence will, in the issue, prove most blessed and beneficial dispensations to you. Yes: all things, even the heaviest calamities, shall work together for your greatest good.

May I not also allow myself the pleasure of hoping that some of you, who have formerly lived thoughtless about the concerns of eternity, have been awakened by these alarming providences to some proper sense of your danger, and to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? You begin to see that your former course will never do: that you are unprepared for eternity, and in the utmost need of a Savior; and you are now determined to seek him with all your might. Well, my brethren, hold on in this course, and you have reason to hope it will issue well: only I must caution you against the danger of apostacy. Alas, you have reason to fear, lest, when the fright is over, all your religion come to nothing! And if so, your last state is worse than the first.

This, sirs, is a very proper time for repentance and reformation, and I am unusually desirous that it may be improved for that purpose. The calamities we have felt, and those we feel, have a direct tendency to drive us to it. This is an effectual method to make up our loss, and turn our afflictions into blessings, and our bereavements into enjoyments; and this will be the best preparative for days of distress, and the best support in them. God has also frequently set in by his Spirit at such a time, and carried on an extensive work of grace; and it is a dismal symptom, indeed, if he withdraw his Spirit from a people in such circumstances, and leave them to groan and perish

under unsanctified afflictions; or deliver their bodies from the outward calamity, without delivering their souls from the slavery of sin.

This is a melancholy case indeed; and yet I am afraid this is the case of many, perhaps of most, in this congregation. You may, perhaps, be a little damped while living, as it were, among so many graves; you may have been struck into a panic, and in a serious fit poured out a few prayers. But, alas! This is but a small part of the work to be done! And unless it be carried farther, you must perish forever. You may flatter yourselves, and make fair pretensions to others. But, “Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?” And dost not thou, who seest through all their designs, and knowest the reality of their case—dost not thou see that though “thou hast stricken them, they have not grieved” with deep, ingenuous sorrows, and the kindly relenting’s of true repentance? “Thou hast consumed them, but they refuse to receive correction” they are not made sensible of their sin, and reduced to their duty, by all thy chastisements, though various and heavy; they are stiff and unyielding under thy rod, and will not be made wise by it; instead of being dissolved into repentance, and purified, they grow harder and harder in the furnace of affliction. “They have made their faces harder than a rock;” they can no more blush at their base conduct towards thee, than a senseless stone; they can no more wet their faces with penitential tears than a flinty rock. “They refuse to return.” Not that they refuse in words—not that they expressly say in so many syllables, “We will not return;” but they refuse it practically. They refuse to return by not actually returning; for not to return, in fact, is to refuse to return. They refuse to return, by not using the means necessary for their return, and by continuing their career in their old course. They refuse to return by the habitual temper of their hearts, which reluctate, struggle, and draw back, and will not return. This was the character of the



Jews, under all their calamities, in Jeremiah's time. And is not this, brethren, the character of sundry of you? Are there not blind minds, hard hearts, and profane lips, among us still? Are there not prayerless persons and prayerless families among us? Are there not some that neglect the plainest duties to God and man? Some thoughtless, careless creatures, that feel no deep impressions from eternal things? Some worldly-minded, groveling creatures, perpetually digging in the earth for riches? Some vain, light, trifling sinners, who go on frolicking and carousing, even when the Lord of Hosts calls to "weeping, and mourning, and girding with sackcloth?" Isa. 22:12. Some that have never experienced a thorough conversion, and know not what it is to repent and believe? Some obstinate, incorrigible sinners, that bid defiance to all the judgments of God? Or, if they are afraid of his judgments, they are not afraid of sin, the cause of them. In a dastardly and, perhaps, unnatural manner, they keep off or fly from the contagious disorder; and helpless families may die around them, unassisted, for them; but they are not so shy of the more fatal contagion of sin, nor so solicitous to keep out of the way of temptation. If they can but live, it is enough for them; but they care not whether they live to God or not. Alas! Are there not many such among us? Does not conscience witness that this is the real character of some of you? Chastisement is thrown away upon you; you are made no better by it. You will receive no correction or warning from the death of a neighbor, or even of a parent or a child.

This, indeed, is not a singular case, which renders it still the more melancholy. It seems the general curse of the present generation, that the chastisements of the divine hand do not work kindly upon them, nor bring them to repentance. Thus it generally is in England, Scotland, and the northern colonies, though in such an alarming situation. Mr. Bellamy, of

New England, whom some of you know and highly esteem for his excellent writings, has these words, in a letter I lately received from him: “A dark cloud seems to be gathering over a sinful land. We have had a day of great grace: that is past and gone, and a day of great wrath seems to be at hand! Our northern army is sickly and likely to do nothing; our treasury is exhausted; people’s spirits low; great murmurings, but no reformation. For all these things we feel and fear we do not return unto the Lord.” Thus discouraging is the prospect in New England, where religion has so long flourished. Mr. Blair, of Pennsylvania, with whose excellent character most of you are perfectly acquainted, and whose congregation has been the scene of the Indian ravages and murders, complains in these moving terms: “Alas! I have not enjoyed the sweet supports of success in my ministry. Under all this heavy scene of judgment, our people are manifestly more and more hardened; and that, notwithstanding a gracious God has stooped to assist me remarkably in preaching, frequently this summer. A dreadful omen this!” says he. My British correspondents send me the same accounts. Mr. Erskine, a worthy minister in Scotland, writes, “I hear of no such thing as a revival of religion in Scotland: a spirit of deep slumber seems to have seized us.” Mr. Adams, the excellent minister of Falkirk, writes in the same strain: “What is wanting,” says he, “to encourage our hopes, is a spirit of repentance and reformation, in this age of distinguished inattention to the works, the word, and ways of God. Is it not the general case, ‘Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see?’ How loud are the alarms which awful Providence is sounding in our dull and heavy ears! The Lord’s judgments are visibly in the earth; but where does it appear that the inhabitants are learning righteousness? In this country, infidelity and immorality of all kinds make the most provoking progress. The cup of our

iniquity appears to be brim-full, and the cup of God's wrath now ready to be poured out upon the despisers of the riches of his goodness and long-suffering?" You hear a great deal of bad news, my brethren, of the political and war-like kind; but here is bad news of a still more alarming kind. This not only endangers our country, but threatens the everlasting ruin of immortal souls: and this deprives us of that good which we might extract out of those evils, and make them pure, unmingled evils to us. But shall not this congregation be an exception from this general complaint? The Lord's voice crieth unto Hanover; and will ye not hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it? Micah 6:9. To promote this design, in my little sphere, is the great end I now have in view; and, for that purpose,

I shall endeavor to show you what good effects afflictions have upon us, especially on impenitent sinners. This my text naturally leads me to: for though, in express terms, it only contains a complaint of the misimprovement of afflictions, or incorrigibleness under them, yet this very plainly points out the right improvement of them. When it is said, "Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they were not grieved;" this implies that they should have been grieved; grieved for their undutiful conduct towards God, which has exposed them to the scourges of his rod; grieved with a godly sorrow, with kindly, generous relenting's for sin, as against God, and not merely as tending to ruin themselves. When the prophet complains, "Thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive correction," it is implied that they should have received correction, that they should have submitted to the rod, as to the chastisement of a provoked, and yet indulgent father, without sullen murmuring against it, or fainting under it; that they should be made sensible of their sin, and reduced to their duty. When the prophet complains, "They have made their faces harder than a rock," it implies that

their faces should have been flushed with ingenuous shame and blushing, and washed with streams of penitential tears. And when he complains, “They have refused to return,” it implies that they ought immediately to have returned to him that smote them. And hence it follows that ingenuous sorrow, shame, and repentance; a submissive, corrigible temper, and a sincere conversion to God, are the effects which afflictions should have upon us, according to my text. Indeed I know no more convictive method of showing what it is to misimprove afflictions, and be incorrigible under them, than to show positively what it is to make a right use of them, or what are their proper effects when sanctified: for if you find they have not had such effects upon you, you may be sure you have refused to receive correction.

To bring sinners to repentance, God has instituted the gospel and its ordinances, and for this end they are dispensed among you; for this end also he rouses your consciences within you, and communicates his Holy Spirit to work upon your hearts. Now afflictions are so many auxiliaries to assist these forces, to reduce you into captivity to the obedience of Christ. When the persuasions of his word are disregarded; when the warnings of your own consciences are slighted, and the motions of the Holy Spirit resisted, then our heavenly Father takes his rod, and either shakes it over your heads, to see if the threatening will answer the end, without the infliction; or he actually scourges you to make you sensible of your duty. The great design of all this, as I told you, is to bring you to repentance, or to turn you to him. This is the sum, the result of sanctified afflictions. Let us, then, inquire what this is. And that I may be the more concise, and use a uniform language on this subject, I shall include all that I have to say concerning the right

improvement of afflictions under this one inquiry: What is it to turn to the Lord? To which the other expression contained in my text may be reduced.

First, turning to God presupposes a deep conviction that you have gone astray, both from the way of duty and the way of safety. You never will leave your present course, till you plainly see that it leads you down to the chambers of death. You never will turn to the Lord, till you are certain you are under the most pressing, absolute necessity to do so, both from duty and interest.

Oh, sirs, if it should please God to open the eyes of unconverted sinners among you this day, what strange, unsuspected, and astonishing views would open to you, concerning your past and present course and condition! Then, to your surprise, you would see that you have lived so many years in the world, without so much as earnestly attempting that work, which is the great business of your life. You would see that your hopes of heaven, in your present condition, are but a delusive dream; and that you are in every moment in the utmost danger of sinking into the depth of misery, under the heavy wrath of Almighty God. You would see what plain, reasonable, and important duties you have carelessly neglected, both towards God and man; and what a long train of known, willful sin, you have obstinately persisted in. You would see how criminally deficient you have been, even in those duties which, as to the matter of them, you have performed; that even your good actions have not proceeded from good principles and ends; the love of God, a regard to his authority, and a view to his glory; but from some low, mercenary, selfish principles and views; and that the reason why you abstained from any act of sin, was not your love to God, and regard to his will, but because you had no temptation to it, or because you apprehended it might injure your character or temporal interests, or perhaps render you

eternally miserable. You would see that you have not such good hearts as you once flattered yourselves you had; but that they are deceitfully and desperately wicked. You would see that they are and have always been destitute of the reality of all the Christian graces, and have imposed upon you hitherto with counterfeits and deceitful appearances; destitute of true repentance, faith, and love towards God and Jesus Christ; and full of pride, hypocrisy, ignorance, hardness of heart, disaffection to God and his government, unbelief, earthly-mindedness, sensuality, sordid and wicked lusts and passions, and an endless variety of evils too numerous to be mentioned. In short, you would see yourselves a mere mass of corruption; and you would wonder you have not sunk into hell long ago, as rotten fruits fall to the ground. This would, no doubt, be a surprising, unexpected discovery to some of you: you have no such thoughts of yourselves, but quite the contrary. But the reason why you do not see this to be your case, in fact, is because the god of this world has blinded your minds, and because your treacherous hearts flatter you. This is, indeed, the truth of your case, while unconverted, if you believe the plainest declarations of the word of God, or the unanimous testimony of all, in all ages, who have had their eyes open to see themselves, and have been taught that important and useful, though mortifying science, of self-knowledge: and if ever God enlighten your blind minds, you would yourselves see that this is really your case. But oh! The astonishing ignorance and self-flattery of the heart of man! Here, alas! Lies the difficulty in dealing with unconverted sinners. We cannot open their eyes to see their guilt and danger. Could we do this, a grand point would be gained, and the work would be well begun. But alas! They will not believe they are so guilty, so vile and corrupt; and hence the gospel, which is a religion for self-condemned, brokenhearted sinners, is

but an idle tale, or a vain speculation to them: and to invite them to come to Christ, is but to invite the whole to a physician.

Farther, if it should please God to bring you out of darkness this day, into his marvelous light, then you would see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. You would see, it is not that harmless, innocent thing, or that slight, excusable foible, you once took it to be: but that it is indeed the most abominable thing, the most terrible, base, and malignant evil, upon earth, or in hell. Then, instead of wondering that such a thing should be punished with everlasting destruction by a gracious God, the parent of mankind; and instead of disputing yourselves into doubts about it, or caviling at it, as cruel and unjust; instead of this, I say, you would rather wonder that so dreadful an evil could be pardoned at all, upon any consideration whatsoever; and you would be “more apt to question the possibility of forgiveness, than the justice of your punishment.”

As the foundation of these discoveries, you would see the majesty, the excellency, the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; the purity and strictness of his law, and the equity and terror of its penalty. You would see your obligations to him; your numerous, strong, endearing, and sacred obligations to him, as your Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; and the aggravated baseness, ingratitude, rebellion, and impiety of having lived all your days in the willful breach of such obligations. These things, and the like, you would see as in a new medium, and with other eyes than you were wont to look upon them. And you would see them with such glaring light and evidence, that you would be utterly astonished at your own sottish ignorance, that had never discovered them before. They would now appear as plain, as ever they were dark and doubtful. In consequence of this, you would be struck with wonder and horror at your former security and stupor,

in so dangerous a condition. I really want words to express the views and apprehensions you would then have of things. Oh that experience may be your teacher! Blessed be God, I have seen and conversed with many a sinner formerly, upon their first receiving this conviction: formerly, I say; for, alas! Now-a-days I hardly meet with one to converse with me upon this subject: No; the generality have no such alarming views of themselves: like the Laodiceans, they are rich in their own conceit; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Rev. 3:17. But formerly it has been my happy employ to instruct such convinced sinners; and I can still remember, it was a very affecting conversation. Their language still seems to sound in my ears; and methinks I hear them complaining in a flood of tears, "Oh what shall I do to be saved? I see I am upon the very brink of destruction: I see I have been all my life a poor, deceived, self-flattering sinner. Oh! I never thought I was such a monster of wickedness, and upon the slippery brink of eternal ruin: but now I see it; now it is so evident to me, that I am amazed I never discovered it before. Oh! Is there any possibility of escape, for such a wretch as I? Let me but know what is necessary, and I will attempt anything; I will deny myself in anything, if I may but get my perishing soul for a prey." Jer. 21:9. These are the affecting strains of awakened sinners. This must be your language, sinners, or at least the thoughts of your heart, before you can turn to the Lord. But oh! When shall we hear it from you? To teach you this lesson, God has sent the sword to ravage your country and a deadly disease to spread desolation in your neighborhood. To teach you this, your neighbors, or perhaps your parent, your children, or some of your relatives have died: and shall they die in vain? Oh! Hear them as it were crying to you from the dust. Some of you have lost pious friends, who during their life labored to



awaken you out of your security. And when you view their grave, methinks you may recollect the epitaph which a minister wrote for his own tombstone:

*“If all my life I tried in vain to save,  
Hear me, oh! Hear me crying from the grave.”*

But, alas! I know that even this alarming voice will not awaken impenitent sinners, unless God bear it home to their hearts by his almighty power. And oh! That that divine Agent would begin to work among us! Then, sinners, you would soon see, that the account I have been giving you of your guilt and danger is not at all aggravated. But,

Secondly, Turning to God supposes a full conviction of the necessity of turning to him immediately, without delay. Brethren, if God should begin this work upon your hearts this day, you would no longer stand hesitating and loitering. We should no more hear from you that there is no need of so much ado, or that it is time enough as yet. You would have such clear views of your own vileness, and the disaffection of your souls to God, and holiness, that nothing could be more evident to you than that you are utterly unfit for heaven, in your present condition, and that you are fitted for destruction, and for nothing else. You would not stand disputing, and hoping, and flattering yourselves in the matter, but you would come to this peremptory conclusion, “If I continue in my present condition, I am as certainly lost forever, as ever I was born: I shall as surely be in hell in a little time, as I am now upon earth. The matter will admit of no debate. It is as plain as that a beast cannot enjoy the pleasures of reason; or a sick man the pleasures of a feast.” This, sirs, is a very alarming conclusion; and you may be very unwilling to admit it: but terrible as it is, you will be forced to believe it, if ever you be converted. It is indeed one of the first steps

towards your conversion: for can it be supposed you will turn to God, while you think it unnecessary, or while you are not convinced that you are turned from him, and going the opposite road? No, it is impossible. And therefore, such of you as have never been convinced of this, may be assured you are so far from being converted, that you have not taken the first steps towards it.

But this is not all: you will be not only convinced of the absolute necessity of turning to God in general, but of turning to him immediately without delay. You will see, that you are so far from having time to delay, that it will wound your heart to think this work was not done many years ago. You will see, that your having delayed it so long already, was the most desperate madness in the world: and that if you put it off any longer, you may be lost beyond recovery: for oh! You will see, you stand in slippery places, ready to be cast down into destruction every moment. You will apprehend yourselves held over the pit of hell, in the hand of an angry God, by the slender thread of life; just as we hold a spider, or some poisonous insect over the fire, ready to throw it in immediately. Now, while I am speaking to you, you would immediately set about this great work: you would pray and hear at once. And upon your returning home, instead of trifling and chattering about the world, you would retire to cry for mercy, and meditate upon your miserable condition— you would fly to your Bibles, and other good books for direction: and I should expect the pleasure once more of seeing you come to your poor minister, anxiously inquiring what you shall do to be saved? Oh! When will the crowds of unconverted sinners among us be brought to this? When will they give over their delays; and see they must engage in this great business immediately! I am sure the sickness and mortality among us have a tendency to bring them to this. Can

you imagine, that conversion may be put off to some future time, when you see so many in health and youth around you seized with sickness, and hurried into the grave in a few days? This has been the doom of sundry vigorous youth, and even of little children among us: and my dear surviving youth and children, shall this be no warning to you? Alas! Will you dare to sin on still as thoughtless as ever? Will you any more pretend that you may safely delay your conversion to a sick-bed or dying hour? But ask those that have made the trial, and what do they say? Do any of them tell you that that is the most proper time for this work? What do sinners say when the time comes? “Oh, (they cry out,) what a fool was I to put it off till now! Oh, how bitterly do I now repent that I did not attempt it sooner!” What do those say who made it their business in health and prosperity? Do they repent of it as premature? No: they all cry out, “I should be in a sad case, indeed, if it were left undone till now: now I have enough to do to struggle with my pains. But blessed be God, that work is not now to be done!” And dare any of you loiter and delay still, in opposition to the joint testimony of those who have arrived at and made trial of that period which you allot for turning to God? If the declaration of dying men have any weight of credibility, the present time is the most fit season: therefore, oh, improve it while you have it. But,

Thirdly, If afflictions should prove the happy means of turning you to God, they will rouse you to the most earnest persevering endeavors. You would immediately set about the work, and use all the means God has instituted for that purpose. You would pray without ceasing: you would pray in secret places: and if you have hitherto had prayerless families, they should be so no more: you would consecrate them to God with prayer this very evening. Nay, you would keep your souls always in a praying posture: you would waft up your desires to God while you are in business or at

leisure, in solitude or in society, at home or abroad; and your prayers would not now be a dull, spiritless form: you would cry as for your life, and exert all the vigor of your souls. You would find frequent errands to the throne of grace; and you would cry there, like a condemned criminal pleading for a pardon, or a drowning man calling for help. When Paul was awakened, Christ himself remarks upon him, “Behold, he prayeth!” He had prayed many a time before; but no notice is taken of it, because there was no life in it. But now he puts life and spirit into his prayers, like one in earnest to be heard; therefore they are taken notice of in heaven. Thus, my brethren, will you also pray, if ever you turn to God. You will accustom yourselves to deep and solemn meditation. You will seriously attend to the gospel and its ordinances. Your Bibles will no longer gather dust by you; but you will find use for them—there you will eagerly search for the words of eternal life. You will also love and frequent the society of those who, you hope, have experienced that happy change you are seeking after; and you will catch all the instruction you can from their conversation. In short, you will leave no means untried; you will set yourselves in earnest about the work; with as much earnestness as ever a miser pursued the world, or a sensualist his pleasures. Oh! Sirs, if such a concern to turn to the Lord should spread among us, how would it change the aspect of things? How different would be the desires, the labors, the pursuits, and conversation of mankind! Believe me, sirs, there is need for such an alteration among us: and wo, wo to many of us, if things run on as they have done—if the world continue to usurp the pre-eminence of God and eternal things—if you are still more solicitous to lay up earthly treasure, than to lay up treasure in heaven—if you abandon yourselves to business or pleasure, to the neglect of religion and the concerns of eternity; I say, wo unto you, if things still continue in

this course! Believe me also that it is better worth your while to labor to turn to God, and secure a happy immortality, than to lay out your labor on anything else. Need I tell you that you shall not live here always, to enjoy the things of this world? Go, and learn this truth at the graves of your friends and neighbors. Need you be told that the enjoyments of this life are no suitable happiness for your immortal souls? Do you not learn it from the uncertain, transitory, unsatisfying nature of these enjoyments? You can carry none of them with you to your eternal home; and what then will you have to make you happy there?

Farther: As you will zealously use all endeavors to promote your conversion, so you will carefully guard against everything that tends to hinder it. You will immediately drop your wicked courses—you will have done for ever with drinking, swearing, and all the vices you were wont to practice—you will moderate your pursuit of the world, and endeavor to disengage yourselves from excessive hurries, which allow you neither leisure nor composure to mind the great business of your salvation—that business, which, whether you regard it or not, is of an infinitely greater importance than all the affairs of life, and for which alone it is worth your while to live—you will shun the company of the wicked, the vain, and secure, as much as possible; yes, you will shun them as much as you now do the families that are infected with the epidemical disorder, and with much better reason; for they are infected with a much more fatal disease—the disease of sin, which is so deadly, and which your souls are so apt to catch. In short, you will avoid every obstacle to your conversion, as far as you can; and till you are brought to this, it is in vain to pretend that you have any real inclination to turn to God: and such of you as have never been brought to it, may be sure you have never been converted.

Oh! When shall we see such earnest endeavors among us? When shall we see sinners thus vigorously striving to enter in at the strait gate? When will their dead sleep be over? When will the delusive dream of their false hopes vanish? When will they begin to conclude that they have sinned long enough—that they have delayed turning to God long enough—that they have been secure and careless, on the slippery brink of destruction, long enough? When will they begin to think it is high time to work out their salvation with fear and trembling? My dear people, I long to see such a time among you once more! And unless such a time come, I expect sundry of you, even as many as are unconverted, will perish forever! Yes, unless such a rousing time come, and that speedily too, I fully expect that some of you will burn in hell forever! Oh! The shocking thought. What shall be done to avoid so dreadful a doom? Come, Holy Spirit—come and work upon the hearts of these impenitent sinners; for thou only canst perform the work. Oh! Come speedily, or they will be removed out of the sphere of thy sanctifying influences—out of the region of vitality, into the territories of eternal death! Brethren, till the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high, the work of conversion will never go on prosperously among us! We have had sufficient trial to convince us of this. We have had preaching, and all the means of grace, long enough to make us sensible that all will not do, without the Holy Spirit: therefore, let us earnestly cry for this blessing. For,

Fourthly, If afflictions are followed with so blessed an effect upon you as to turn you to God, you will be made deeply sensible of your own inability to turn to him, by the best endeavors you can use; and of the absolute necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit, or the power of divine grace. While you are ignorant of yourselves, and have not put the matter to trial, you may flatter yourselves that you are able to turn to God when you

please: but when you make the experiment in earnest, you will soon be undeceived. You can indeed abstain from outward acts of gross sin—you can attend upon the means of grace, and perform the outward duties of religion; and this is your duty: but, alas! This is far short of true conversion. All this you may do, and yet the heart be so far from being turned to God, that it may be strongly set against him. You will find, when you attempt the work in earnest, that, beside the drawbacks from the world, and the temptations of Satan, your own hearts will refuse to return; they will struggle, and draw back, as if you were rushing into flames, or upon the point of a sword. They will cling fast to sin and the world, and will not let go their hold. They are disaffected to strict holiness, and all you can do cannot bring them in love with it. They are hard as the nether mill-stone, and no human means can break them. In short, you will be sensible that you are so far gone with the disease of sin, so indisposed, weakened, and corrupted, that nothing but the power of divine grace can recover you, and inspire you with spiritual life and vigor. Therefore, you will lie moaning and groaning before the Lord, waiting for his assistance, as helpless creatures, in the greatest danger, and unable to deliver yourselves. Then you will understand the meaning of that inspired prayer, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,” Jer. 31:18. “Draw me, we will run after thee.” Solomon’s Song 1:4. Then you will be convinced, by experience, of the truth of that declaration you had before heard from the mouth of Christ, and perhaps labored to explain away: “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” John 6:44.

Oh! When shall we see the vanity and self-confidence of sinners mortified? When shall we see them deeply sensible of their weakness and helplessness? It may seem strange, but it is undoubtedly true, that they will

never strive in earnest till they are sensible that all their strivings are not sufficient, but that God must perform the work in them. It is the high idea they have of their own power that keeps them easy and careless. When they see that it is God alone who must work in them both to will and to do, then, and not till then, they will earnestly cry to him for his assistance, and use all means to obtain it. It is not the awakened sinner that feels himself weak and helpless, that lives in the careless neglect of the means of grace. No; it is the proud, presumptuous sinner, that thinks he can do great things in religion when he sets about it. It is indeed a strange sight to see those that complain they can do nothing without Christ, laboring hard; and those that boast they can do great things, standing idle!—to see those that renounce all dependence upon their good works, abounding in good works; and those that expect to be saved by their good works, living in the neglect of good works, and doing the works of the devil! This, I say, is a strange sight; but so it generally is found to be, in fact, in the world. And the reasons of it are, that they who feel their own weakness will earnestly seek for help from God; and God will help those that are sensible they need it. Whereas, others are not earnestly seeking that grace, the want of which they do not feel; and God lets them alone, to try what the vain fools can do; and will not throw away his assistance upon those who do not want nor ask it. But,

Fifthly, If ever you return to the Lord, you will be made deeply sensible that Christ is the only way of access to God. You will be sensible, that it is only for his sake that you can expect acceptance with God; and that all your transactions with heaven must be carried on through him, as mediator. If ever you return, you will come in as obnoxious criminals, upon the footing of grace, and not of merit; and you will see that it is only through Christ that grace can be communicated to you. You will renounce all your own



righteousness. You will lie at mercy, and own that you deserve hell as justly as ever a malefactor deserved the gallows. Some of you, perhaps, will say, “I will never believe this concerning myself; I will never believe that I am such a guilty, obnoxious criminal!” But pray do not be too positive; do not say you never will believe it; for you may believe it yet. Yes, you certainly will believe it, if ever you be converted and saved; and I hope God has not given you up. If ever you return to the Lord, you will come in as a poor, broken-hearted, penitent rebel; and unless you come in upon this footing, you have nothing to do with Jesus, nor he with you; for he came to save sinners and to heal the sick; and till you feel yourselves such, you will never comply with the gospel, which is a method of salvation through a Mediator. Oh! That many sinners among us might thus be mortified, humbled, and brought down to the foot of their injured Sovereign, this day! Oh! That they may be made sensible that they lie at mercy, and that they have not the least possible ground of hope, but only through the righteousness of Christ! But,

Sixthly, If ever you are turned to God, you will experience a great change in your temper and conduct. Your hearts and lives will take a new bias; your thoughts and affections will be directed towards God and holiness; your hearts will be turned to the holy law of God, like wax to the seal, and receive the stamp of his image. They will then aspire towards heaven—thither they will tend, as naturally as a stone gravitates to the earth. You will contract an evangelical turn; that is, you will delight and acquiesce in the method of salvation revealed in the gospel. Jesus will be infinitely dear to you; and you will rejoice and glory in him, and put no confidence in the flesh. You will be turned to the ordinances of the gospel, and delight to converse with God in them. In short, your whole soul will receive a heavenly disposition—a new divine bent, or bias, towards God and divine

things. Your thoughts will run in a new channel; your will and affections will fix upon new objects, and you will become new creatures; old things will pass away, and all things will become new. 2 Cor. 5:17. You will become fit for heaven by having heavenly dispositions wrought in you; and thence you may infer you shall be admitted there. Believe me, sirs, when you are turned to God, religion will not be such a dull, insipid thing to you, as it now is. The gospel will not be such an idle story; nor the law of God such a leaden rule, that you may bend it as you please to your own obliquities. Heaven and hell will not be such dreams and trifles; but you will be habitually affected with these things, as the most important realities, and your hearts will be deeply impressed with their influence.

As you will be turned to God and holiness, so you will be turned from sin and all its pleasures. Yes, brethren, that pride, hypocrisy, sensuality, worldly-mindedness, and all the various forms of sin which you now indulge, will become forever hateful to you: you will abhor them, resist them, make war against them, and never allow them a peaceable harbor in your hearts more. You will see their intrinsic vileness and baseness, and their contrariety to the holy nature of God; and on this account you will hate them and fly from them, as well as because they may bring ruin upon yourselves. Oh! How will it then break your hearts to think that ever you should have lived as you now do! How bitter will your present pleasures and pursuits then be to you; and how will you bless God, that he opened your eyes and gave your minds a new turn, before it was too late!

Farther; when your minds thus receive a new and heavenly turn, your practices will be turned too. The practice follows the inward principle of action; and when this is set right, that will be agreeable to it. Conversion, sirs, would be an effectual restraint from those vices which you now

practice, and an effectual constraint to those duties you now omit. It will cure you of your swearing, drunkenness, defrauding, contentions, and quarrelling's, and other vices; and it would bring you to pray, to hear, to meditate, to communicate at the Lord's table, and to endeavor to perform every duty you owe to God; and it would bring you to observe the laws of justice and charity, and all the duties you owe to man: and pray observe, that these things always go together. Conversion will teach you not only to pray, and perform the other duties of religion; but it will make you just, charitable, meek, compassionate, and conscientious in all the duties of morality. It will make you better members of society, better neighbors, better masters, better servants, better parents, better children; in short, better in every relation. Never pretend you are converted, unless it have this effect upon you—without this, all your religion is not worth a straw.

From hence you may see what a blessed thing it would be, even for this world, if we should all turn to the Lord. Then, what happy families should we have! What a happy neighborhood—what a happy congregation—what a happy country! Then every man would fill up his place, and make conscience of the duties of his relation; and then Heaven would smile, and rain down blessings upon so dutiful a people.

Seventhly: If ever you are turned to the Lord, your minds will habitually retain that turn. I mean, your religion will not be a transient fit; a fleeting evanid thing; but it will be permanent and persevering. You will never more relapse into your former voluntary slavery to sin— never more indulge from day to day your old disaffection to God, and your habitual allowed indisposition to the exercises of religion. Then, farewell forever to the smooth, enchanting paths of sin; and welcome forever to the ways of holiness. From the happy moment of your return to God, to the end of your

days, it will be habitually the great concern of your life to make progress in religion, and live to God; to carry on a war against all sin and temptation, and root out every evil principle from your souls. I do not mean, that you will be perfectly free from all sin, or that you will never relapse into some degree of lukewarmness, and indisposition of spirit towards God. But I mean, you never will be entirely and all-through what you once were, in your unconverted state; you never will relapse into that indulged and willful love of sin and the world—that prevailing indifferency or disaffection towards God and his service, and that stupid, habitual carelessness about eternal things, which now has the dominion over you. No, never more will you be able to offend your God and neglect your Savior and your souls as you now do—never more will you be able to rest secure and thoughtless, while your eternal state is awfully uncertain, and your hearts are out of temper for devotion. The bent of your minds towards God may be weakened; but you can never lose it entirely. Your aversion to sin may be lessened; but you will never give up yourselves to the love and practice of it. Something within will make you perpetually uneasy while your graces are languishing and sin gathering strength. There is a secret bias upon your souls, that inclines them heavenward; even while they are carried downward to the earth, by the remaining tendencies of your innate corruption. The seed of God which remaineth in you, will never suffer you to sin as you now do. Your new nature will be searching after God by a kind of spiritual instinct, like a child for the breast, and you can never more peaceably take the world in his stead.

This, I hope, sundry of you know by experience. Since the moment of your conversion, though you have had many sad relapses and backslidings, yet you can never heartily return to sin again; and all the world cannot make

you let go your hold of God. You tend towards him with a propension which, though it be weak, yet neither earth nor hell, neither sin within, nor temptations without, can entirely overcome.

And hence such of you who once fancied you were converted, but are now habitually careless, earthly-minded, and luke-warm towards God—hence, you may see, you never did, in reality, turn to him. No: it was all a dream; for if you had once been turned to him with all your hearts, you would never again have turned entirely from him. Your conversion would have had some lasting good effects upon you; and having once turned to God, you would never again have bid him farewell, and forsaken him entirely. Such, therefore, should still rank themselves among the unconverted.

And now, my dear hearers, I have endeavored, with the utmost plainness, to describe to you that turning to God which should be the result of your afflictions as well as of the means of grace, and which you must experience before you can enter into the kingdom of heaven. I have had something more important at heart than to embellish my style, and set myself off as a fine speaker.

I have endeavored to speak, not to an itching ear, or a curious fancy, but to your understanding and your heart; that you may both know and feel what I say: and, indeed, if I should aim at anything else, I should be at once an egregious trifler, and a profane mocker of God.

Now I have one serious question to put to you, upon a careful review of what I have said; and that is, Do you really hope in your consciences, after you have impartially tried yourselves as in the sight of God, that you have been converted or turned to God? Here is the work: I have plainly described it. But where is the heart in which it has been wrought? Can you put your

hand upon your breast and say, “Oh! If I know myself, here is the heart that has been the subject of it?” Pause and think upon this inquiry, and never be easy till you can give, at least, a probable answer.

I hope this will confirm the wavering hopes of some of you, and enable you to draw the happy conclusion: “Well, if this be conversion, I think I may venture to pronounce myself a converted soul.” Then happy are ye indeed. I have not time to say many comfortable things to you at present; but go to your Bibles; there you will find precious promises enough for you. Live and feast upon them, and ere long they will be all fulfilled to you, and you shall live and feast with your Savior in paradise.

But my main business to-day lies with the unconverted: and have not some of you discovered yourselves this day to be such? Well, what is to be done now? Can you go on careless and secure still under this tremendous conviction? I hardly think any of you are arrived to such a pitch of presumption and fool-hardiness as this. Must you despair and give up all hopes of salvation? No, unless you choose it—I mean, unless you choose to neglect the means appointed for your conversion, and harden yourselves in sin. If you are determined on this course, then you may despair indeed; there is not the least ground of hope for you. But should you now rouse out of your security, and seek the Lord in earnest, you have the same encouragement to hope which any one of the many millions of converts in heaven or upon earth had, while in your condition: therefore let me persuade you to take this course immediately.

But when I begin to persuade, I am in Jeremiah’s perplexity: “To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear?” Jer. 6:10. Shall I speak to you, men of business and hurry? Alas! You have no leisure to mind such a trifle as your soul. Shall I speak to you, men of wealth and character?

Alas! This is a business beneath your notice, What, a gentleman cry for converting grace! That would be a strange sight indeed. Shall I speak to you, old men: my venerable fathers in age? Alas! You are so hardened by a long course of sinning, that you are not likely to hear. Shall I speak to you, ye relics of those families where death has lately made such havoc? Sure you must be disposed to hear me—sure you cannot put me off so soon. I hope sickness and death have been sent among you as my assistants: that is, to enforce what I say, and be the means of your conversion. Shall I speak to you, young people? Alas! You are too merry and gay to listen to such serious things: and you, perhaps, think it is time enough as yet. Thus I am afraid you will put me off: and if you put me off, I shall hardly know where to turn; for of all the unconverted among us, I have most hopes of you. Old sinners are so confirmed in their estrangement from God, that there is but little hope of such veterans: but the habits of sin are not so strong in you, and God is wont to work upon persons of your age. If yow, then, put me off, where shall I turn? Behold, I turn to the Gentiles. Poor negroes! Shall I find one among you that is willing to turn to God? Many of you are willing to be baptized: but that is not the thing. Are you willing to turn to God with all your hearts, in the manner I have explained to you? This is the grand question; and what do your hearts answer to it? If you also refuse—if you all refuse, then what remains for your poor minister to do, but to return home and make this complaint to him that sent him: “Lord, there were unconverted sinners among my hearers; and in my poor manner, I made an honest trial to turn them to thee; but, Lord, it was in vain—they refused to return; and therefore I must leave them to thee: to do what thou pleasest with them!” Oh! Will you constrain me to make this complaint upon any of you to my divine Master? Oh! Free me from the disagreeable necessity.

Come, come all, rich and poor, young and old, bond and free: come, and let us return unto the Lord; for “he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up, and we shall live in his sight.” Hosea 6:1.  
Amen.



# *SERM. LXVII. THE RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE LATE EARTHQUAKES.*

**I**saiah 24:18,19,20.— *The foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved; the earth is moved exceedingly; the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall lie heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.*

The works of Creation and Providence were undoubtedly intended for the notice and contemplation of mankind, especially when God comes out of his place, that is, departs from the usual and stated course of his providence to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities; then it becomes us to observe the operation of his hands with fear and reverence. To this the Psalmist repeatedly calls us: “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation he hath made in the earth.” Ps. 46:8. “Come, and see the works of God; he is terrible in his doing towards the children of men.” Ps. 66:5. To assist you in this, I shall cheerfully devote an hour today.

This world is a state of discipline for another; and therefore chastisements of various kinds and degrees are to be enumerated among the ordinary works of Providence. Pain, sickness, losses, bereavements, disappointments; these are the usual scourges of the divine hand, which our heavenly father uses every day, to chastise some or other of his undutiful children. But when these are found too weak and ineffectual for their reformation; or when, from their being so frequent and common, men begin to think them things of course, and not to acknowledge the divine hand in them; then the universal Ruler departs from his usual methods of chastisements, and uses such signal and extraordinary executioners of his vengeance, as cannot but rouse a slumbering world, and render it sensible of his agency. At such times, he throws the world into a ferment; and either controls its established laws, or carries such into execution, as were formed only for extraordinary occasions. These extraordinary ministers of his vengeance, are generally these four: the Famine, Sword, Pestilence, and Earthquakes. A famine in this land of plenty, would be an unusual judgment indeed; and yet sundry parts of our country have been reduced to the borders of it, by the severity of last year's drought. The sword has been a harmless weapon to us, till of late; but now it is brandished over our heads, and pierces our country in a thousand veins. The pestilence is a mischief that has not spread desolation among us; though there is not perhaps one year, in which it is not walking through some country or other upon our globe. As for earthquakes, we have had such shakes, as may convince us, we are not beyond the reach of that desolating judgment, even on this solid continent; though they have not as yet done us any injury. But perhaps there never was, since the earthquake at the deluge, that broke up the fountains of the great deep, so extensive a desolation of this kind, as has lately happened

in Europe and Africa. And though, blessed be God, it did not immediately affect us; yet the very fame of so dreadful a judgment ought to be improved for our advantage. To this event I may accommodate the words of my text, “The foundations of the earth do shake; the earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved; the earth reels to and fro like a drunkard: it is removed like a cottage,” or a tent, that was set up only for a night’s lodging; and the reason of all is, “The transgression thereof lies heavy upon it.” Such of you as have read the public papers, need not be informed of that wide-spreading earthquake, which begun on the first of November last, and has since been felt at different times, through most parts of Europe. For the sake of those that have only had some imperfect hints of it, I would give you this short history. The city of Lisbon, that in a little spot contained about as many souls as this wide-extended colony, is now no more! Its vast riches, and by all accounts, between fifty and a hundred thousand persons, have been buried or burnt in its ruins. Sundry other towns in Portugal, Spain, and along the European coasts of the Mediterranean, have been damaged, overthrown, or sunk, like Sodom and Gomorrah. The earthquake also extended across that sea, and has ruined a great part of Africa, particularly in the empire of Morocco, where the large and populous cities of Mequinez, Fez, and the port of Sallee, have been demolished, with many thousands of the inhabitants. It has likewise been felt in sundry parts of Italy, Germany, France, Bohemia, and even in Great Britain and Ireland. Nay, the tremor has reached our continent; and has been very sensibly felt in Boston and other parts of New England. Though much mischief has not been done in those parts, yet a loud warning has been given; and oh! That it may not be given in vain. It would certainly be an instance of inexcusable stupidity, for us to take no notice of so dreadful a dispensation. Such devastations are at

once judgments upon the places where they happen, and warnings to others. For what end were the Israelites punished with so many miraculous judgments? St. Paul will tell you, it was not only for their sins, but “all these things happened to them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1 Cor. 10:11. For what end were the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah turned into ashes? St. Peter will tell you: God “made them an ensample unto those who should after live ungodly.” 2 Peter 2:6. And shall not we regard such examples, even in our own age? Shall others perish for our admonition? And shall we receive no profit by their destruction? This would be stupid and inexcusable indeed. Therefore my present design is, to direct you to such meditations as this alarming event naturally suggests; and which may be sufficient to the right improvement of it.

But before I enter upon this design, I would once more inculcate upon you a doctrine, which I have often proved in your hearing; and that is, that this world is a little territory of Jehovah’s government; under the management of his providence: and particularly, that all the blessings of life are the gifts of his bounty; and all its calamities, the chastisements or judgments of his hand. This I would have you to apply to the event now under consideration. It is the providence of God that has impregnated the bowels of the earth with these dreadful materials, that tear and shatter its frame. It is his providence that strikes the spark, which sets this dreadful train in a flame, and causes the terrible explosion. There is a set of little, conceited, smattering philosophers risen among us, who think they disprove all this, by alleging that earthquakes proceed from natural causes; and therefore, it is superstitious to ascribe them to the agency of Providence. But there is no more reason or philosophy in this, than if they should deny that a man

writes, because he makes use of a pen; or that kings exercise government, because they employ servants under them. I grant, that natural causes concur toward the production of earthquakes: but what are these natural causes? Are they independent, self-moved causes? No: they were first formed, and are still directed, by the Divine hand. The shortest and plainest view I can give of the case is this: When God formed this globe, he saw what would be the conduct of its inhabitants, in all the periods of time; and particularly, he knew at what particular time a kingdom or city would be ripe for his judgments; and he adjusted matters accordingly. He set the train with so much exactness, that it will spring just in the critical moment, when everything is ripe for it. And thus, by a preconcerted plan, he answers all the occasional exigencies of the world, and suits himself to particular cases, without a miracle, or controlling the laws of nature; or, perhaps, he may sometimes think it necessary to work with his own immediate hand, and to suspend or counteract the usual and stated laws of creation, that his interference may be more conspicuous. Let this truth, then, my brethren, be laid deep in your minds, as a foundation, that earthquakes are the effects of divine Providence, and produced to answer some of its important ends in the world. And hence I naturally proceed, according to promise, to direct you to such meditations as are suitable to this shocking event.

Now you may hence take occasion to reflect upon the majesty and power of God, and the dreadfulfulness of his anger; the sinfulness of our world; the distinguishing kindness of Providence towards us; and the destruction of this globe at the final judgment.

First, Let the majestic and terrible phenomenon of earthquakes put you in mind of the majesty and power of God, and the dreadfulfulness of his displeasure. He can toss and convulse this huge globe, and shake its

foundations down to the center. Trembling continents, burning or sinking mountains, wide-yawning gulfs in solid ground, explosions of subterranean mines sufficient to shiver a world, are but hints of his indignation. But my language does but sink this exalted subject; I shall therefore' give you the inimitable descriptions of the sacred writers. "He is wise in heart," says Job, "and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger: which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble." Job 9:4,5. "A fire is kindled in mine anger," says the Lord himself, in his own language, "and shall burn into the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." Deut. 32:22. "The mountains saw thee," O God, "and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high." Hab. 3:10. "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." Psalm 114:5-7. But the most striking and lively description, methinks, which the language of inspiration itself has given us, is in the prophecy of Nahum, "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth: the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies; the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is burnt at his presence; yea, the world, and they that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

Naham. 1:2-7. And is this the Being that is so little thought of in our world? Is this he, whose name passes for the veriest trifle? Whose word can hardly keep men awake, or engage their attention? Whose authority is less regarded, and whose resentment is less feared, than that of an earthly king—whose laws are audaciously violated, and his threatening's despised? Is this he, who is complimented with empty, spiritless formalities under the name of religion? Oh! Is this he, whom we are met this day to worship? What! And shall there be no more attention and solemnity among us? Can anything be more unnatural, more impious, or more shocking? Indeed, sirs, it strikes me with horror to think how contemptuously this glorious, almighty, and terrible God is treated in our world. Angels do not treat him so—nay, even devils, in the height of their malice, dare not thus trifle with him—they tremble at his very name. Oh! “Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God?” Psalm 10:13. See here is your antagonist: and can you make good your cause against him? Can you harden yourselves against him and prosper? Job 9:4. This earth is as nothing in his hands. “He taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” Isa. 40:15. He that can shake this huge globe to the center; he that can bury proud cities, with all their inhabitants, in the bowels of the earth; he that can toss the ocean into a ferment, and cause it to overwhelm the guilty land; he that can hurl the tallest mountains from their everlasting foundations into the sea, or sink them into the valleys, or pools of water; he that has stored the bowels of the earth, as with magazines of gunpowder, and can set it all in blaze, or burst it into ten thousand fragments; he that can arm the meanest creature, a gnat or a worm, to be your executioner, and has an absolute power over the most mighty and ungovernable elements: oh! What will he make of you, when he takes you in hand? Can you rest easy one moment, while you have reason to fear the

supreme Lord of nature is your enemy. For your willful provocations? In his name (if his glorious and fearful name has any weight with you) I charge you to seek his favor; make him your friend, and dare to rebel against him no more. Dare you continue a rebel against him, or careless about pleasing him, while you walk on his ground, breathe in his air, feed upon his provisions, and live in his territories, and within the reach of his arm? Why, he can make that earth you pollute with your sins open its dreadful jaws and swallow you up alive, like Korah and his company. Numb. 16:32. Oh! My brethren, it may break our hearts to think there should be any of the sons of men so mad as to incur his displeasure, and be careless about his favor. But, alas! Are there not some such among us? Well; they will soon find “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. 10:31, unless they speedily repent.

Secondly, This desolating judgment may justly lead you to reflect upon the sinfulness of our world. Alas! We live upon a guilty globe; and much has it suffered for the sins of its inhabitants. Once it was all drowned in a universal deluge; and many parts of it have since sunk under the load of guilt. If sin had never defiled it, it would never have been thus torn and shattered. We have seen, these judgments are at the disposal of Providence: and we are sure, a righteous Providence would never inflict them for nothing. It is sin, my brethren, that is the source of all the calamities that oppress our world from age to age: it is sin that has so often convulsed it with earthquakes. Do but observe the language of my text on this head. “The transgression of the earth shall lie heavy upon it.” This, sirs, this, is the burden under which it totters; this is the evil, at which it trembles; this is a load, which men, which the earth itself, nay, which angels, and the whole creation, cannot bear up under. Why was the old world destroyed by a



deluge? It was because all flesh had corrupted their way: because “the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, and that continually.” Gen. 6:5. Why was Sodom consumed with lightning from heaven, and sunk into a dead sea by an earthquake? It was because “The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” Gen. 13:13. In short, sin is the cause of all the calamities under which our world has groaned, from the fall of Adam to this day. Heaven has been testifying its displeasure against the sins of men by the most terrible judgments, from age to age, for near six thousand years. The destruction of one nation is intended not only for their punishment, but for a warning to others, that they may hear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Deut. 13:11. But men will still obstinately persist, unalarmed by the loudest warnings, and unreformed by the severest chastisements. Let the sword of war slay its thousands; let the pestilence walk about in all its desolating terrors; let the earth shake and tremble under its guilty inhabitants; let these judgments be repeated from generation to generation, from country to country; still they will sin on; and the chastisements of six thousand years have not been able to reform them. Oh! What a rebellious province of Jehovah’s empire is this! And probably it has been seldom more so than in the present age; and therefore it is no wonder that the judgments of God are in the earth. The greatest part of it is overrun with all the idolatry and ignorance, vice and barbarity of heathenism. A great part of it worships the impostor Mahomet, instead of the Son of God, and groan under his yoke. This is the character of the empire of Morocco, and those African territories that have been ravaged by the late earthquake. They are either superstitious heathens or deluded Mahometans, and the knowledge of God is not to be found among them. The greatest part of

Europe is corrupted with the idolatry, superstition, and debaucheries of the church of Rome, and groans under its tyranny. There the most foolish theatrical farces are devoutly performed under the name of religion; there the freeborn mind is enslaved, and dare not think for itself in matters in which it must answer for itself; there the homage due to the true God, and the only Mediator, is sacrilegiously given to senseless idols, and a rabble of imaginary saints; there the infernal court of the inquisition imitates the tortures of hell, and makes the man that would discover the truth a miracle of misery; there a market for indulgences and pardons is held; and men, for a little money, may buy a license to commit the most atrocious crimes, or they make atonement for them by the penance of bodily austerities. And can pure and undefiled religion, can good morals grow and flourish in such a soil? No: religion must degenerate into priestcraft and a mercenary superstition, and the most enormous vices and debaucheries must abound. Such, alas! Was Lisbon, by universal character.

And though I would not repeat the censorious sins of the Jews, with regard to the Galileans, nor suppose that this city was more deeply guilty than all the cities upon the face of the earth; yet this I dare pronounce, that it was a very guilty spot of the globe, and that it was for this it was so severely punished. If we take a survey of Protestant countries, where religion is to be found, if anywhere at all, alas! How melancholy is the prospect! The good old doctrines of the reformation, which were adapted to advance the honors of divine grace and mortify the pride of man, have been too generally abandoned; and a more easy system, agreeable to the vanity and self-flattery of depraved hearts, has been dressed up in their stead. Nay, Christianity itself has been rejected, ridiculed, and exposed to public scorn, by the increasing club of deists; and where the Christian name and

profession are retained, the life and spirit are too generally lost; and the practice, an open opposition to their professed faith. How are the ordinances of the gospel neglected or profaned? What a shocking variety of crimes are to be found everywhere, even in countries that profess to have renounced Popery for its corruptions? Drunkenness, swearing, perjury, lying, fraud, and injustice; pride, luxury, various forms of lewdness, and all manner of extravagances; and all these expressly forbidden, under the severest penalties, by that religion which themselves profess and acknowledge divine; and thus they continue, in spite of warnings and chastisements; in spite of mercies and instructions. They have sinned on, impenitent and incorrigible, for a length of years. God is but little regarded in the world, which owes its existence and all its blessings to his power and goodness. Jesus is but little regarded, even in those countries that profess his name; and is it any wonder the earth trembles, when the iniquity thereof lies so heavy upon it? Is it not rather a wonder that it has not burst to pieces long ago, and buried its guilty inhabitants in its ruins? Is there a supreme Ruler over the kingdoms of men, and shall he not testify his displeasure against their rebellion? Shall he always tamely submit to such contemptuous treatment? And shall he always look on, and see his government insulted, and his vengeance defied? No; at proper seasons he will come forth out of his place; he will depart from the stated course of his providence, to punish them for their iniquities. The convulsions of the earth, the inundations of the sea, and the sword of war shall at once proclaim and execute his displeasure. If our country have escaped the devastations of the earthquake, it is not owing to our innocence, but to the distinguishing mercy and patience of God. And, therefore,

Thirdly, This melancholy event may carry your minds gratefully to reflect upon the peculiar kindness of Heaven towards our country, in that it was not involved in the same destruction.

I need not tell you that we are a guilty, obnoxious people; you may be convinced of it by more authentic evidence. The lives of the generality proclaim it aloud; the terrors of war that now surround us proclaim it; and do not your own consciences whisper the same thing? And why have we been spared? How has even this solid continent borne up under the load of guilt that burdens it? It has been owing entirely to the grace and patience of that God, who is so little regarded among us. And shall we not gratefully celebrate his praises? Shall not his goodness lead us to repentance? Or shall all his kindness be thrown away upon us, and will we constrain him to pour out his judgments upon us also, at last? Methinks I hear him expostulating over Virginia, in that compassionate language: “How shall I give thee up, Virginia? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?” Cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. “My heart is turned within me; my repenting’s are kindled together.” Hosea 11:8. Oh! Must not such moving language melt us down at his feet, in the most ingenuous repentance, and engage us to his service for the future? Without a spirit of prophecy, I may safely pronounce, it will never be well with our country till we are brought to this. But,

Fourthly, That which I would particularly suggest to your thoughts from the devastations of the late earthquake, is the last universal destruction of our world at the final judgment. Of this, an earthquake is both a confirmation to human reason and a lively representation.

It is a confirmation even to human reason, drawn from the constitution of our globe, that such a destruction is possible, and even probable, according

to the course of nature. Our globe is stored with subterranean magazines of combustible materials, which need but a spark to produce a violent explosion, and rend and burst it to pieces. What huge quantities of these sulphureous and nitrous mines must there be, when one discharge can spread a tremor over half the world, bury islands and cities, and shatter wide-extended continents! What an inexhaustible store of fire and brimstone has supplied Etna, Vesuvius, and other burning mountains, that have been belching out torrents of liquid fire for some thousands of years, and now rage as furiously as ever? Let but the subterranean magazines, in every cave and cranny of the globe, be set in a blaze; let the central fire but break loose; let all the combustible materials near or upon the surface of the earth, be once enflamed—turf, coal, trees, cities, houses, and all their furniture; this would produce a general conflagration, which nothing could resist. In short, we may conjecture, from the construction of our world, that it was not intended for a perpetual existence in its present form, but to be dissolved by the dreadful element of fire. And Revelation assures us of this universal desolation, when the heavens shall be shriveled up, like a parched scroll, and pass away with a great noise; and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up. 2 Peter 3:10.

An earthquake is also a lively representation of the universal ruins of that day, and the horror and consternation of mankind. Let imagination form a lively idea of the destruction of Lisbon—the ground trembling, and heaving, and roaring with subterranean thunders—towers, palaces, and churches tottering and falling—the flames bursting from the ruins, and setting all in a blaze—the sea roaring, and rushing over its banks with resistless impetuosity—the inhabitants running from place to place in wild

consternation, in search of safety; or falling on their knees, and rending the air with their wild shrieks and cries—flying to the strongest buildings for shelter, but crushed in their ruins; or to the sea, and there swept away by the rushing waves. Walls falling upon thousands in their flight; or the earth opening her jaws, and swallowing them up. Can human imagination represent anything more shocking? In other calamities, whatever else we lose, we have still the earth to support us: but when that is gone, we are helpless indeed, and must sink into immediate destruction.

Such, my brethren, but infinitely more dreadful, will be the terrors of that last, that universal earthquake, which we shall all see.

Stars drop, rush lawless through the air, and dash one another to pieces. The sun is extinguished, and looks like a huge globe of solid darkness. The moon is turned into blood, and reflects a portentous, sanguinary light upon the earth. The clouds flash and blaze with sheets of lightning; and are rent with the horrid crash of thunder. This is echoed back by the subterranean thunders that murmur, rumble, and roar underground. The earth is tossed like a ball, and bursts asunder like a moldering clod. See, the yawning gulfs open! The flames bursting forth from the center; and a horrid confusion of fire and smoke rolling through the arch of heaven! See the works of nature and art perishing in one promiscuous ruin! Mountains sinking and bursting out into so many volcanoes, vomiting up seas of liquid fire! Rocks dissolving, and pouring their melted mass into the channels of the rivers! Pyramids, towers, palaces, cities, woods, and plains, burning in one prodigious, undistinguishing blaze! The seas evaporating, and vanishing away, through the intenseness of the heat! A mixed, confused heap of sea and land! Floods of water, and torrents of melted rocks! Now the earth is turned upside-down, inside-out, and reduced into a mere chaos.

*“See all the formidable sons of fire.  
Eruptions, earthquakes, comets, lightnings play  
Their various engines; all at once disgorge  
Their blazing magazine; and take by storm,  
This poor, terrestrial citadel of man.  
Amazing period! When each mountain-top  
Out-burns Vesuvius, rocks eternal pour  
Their melted mass, as rivers once they pour’d:  
Stars rush; and final ruin fiercely drives  
Her ploughshare o’er creation  
I see! I feel it!  
All nature, like an earthquake, trembling round!  
All deities, like summer’s swarms, on wing!  
I see the Judge enthron’d! The flaming guard!  
The volume open’d! Open’d every heart!  
A sun-beam pointing out each secret thought!  
No patron! Intercessor none! Now past  
The sweet, the clement, mediatorial hour!  
For guilt no plea! To pain, no pause, no bound!  
Inexorable all! And all extreme!” -- Young’s Night Thoughts, No.9.*

And where, ye hardy, presumptuous sinners, that can now despise the terrors of the Lord, oh! Where will ye appear in this tremendous day? What shall support you when the ground on which you stood is gone? What rock or mountain shall you procure to shelter you, when rocks and mountains are sinking and disappearing, or melting away, like snow before the sun? How can you expect to escape hell, when the earth itself is turned into a lake of fire and brimstone? Oh! How can you bear the thought of rolling and

weltering there? What is now become of your lands and possessions on which you once set your hearts? Nay, where is the country, where the continent, in which you once dwelt? Alas! They are all reduced into ashes, or calcinated into glass, a mere caput mortuum.

And is there no safety in this wreck of nature? Are all mankind involved in this general ruin? No: blessed be God, there are some who shall be safe and unhurt, while the frame of nature is dissolving around them. Those happy souls, who choose the Lord for their portion, and Jesus for their Savior, and who in this tottering world looked for a city that has foundations, firm, unshaken foundations, they shall be safe beyond the reach of this general desolation; their happiness lies secure in a “kingdom which cannot be moved.” Heb. 12:28. There is a new heaven and a new earth prepared for them.

Then, my brethren, you will see the advantage of that despised, neglected thing, religion, and the difference between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth the Lord, and him that serveth him not. Mal. 3:18. Then, those that are now so unfashionable as to make religion a serious business, will smile secure at a dissolving world. Then they will find the happy fruits of those hours they spent on their knees at the throne of grace; of those cries and tears they poured out after Jesus; of their honest struggles with sin and temptation; and in short, of a life devoted to God. Therefore, let such of you, (for I trust there are such among you,) rejoice in the prospect of that glorious, dreadful day; and let it be more and more your serious business to prepare for it. You shall rest for ever in a country that shall never be shaken with earthquakes, nor be subject to any of the calamities of this mortal state. Therefore, since this shall be your portion, be not much disturbed with any of the judgments that may befall this land of



your pilgrimage and exile. The sooner it is destroyed, the sooner you will get home to the region of eternal rest. Borrow the language of the triumphant Psalmist, “We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled: though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Psalm 46:2,3.

But, oh! Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Oh, where shall some of you, my dear people, appear in that dreadful day? I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, and am really afraid for some of you. Do you not know in your own consciences, that you are generally thoughtless and careless about the great concerns of your eternal state? Your hearts have never been thoroughly changed by divine grace; nor do you know by experience what it is to believe, to repent, and to love God with all your hearts. You do not make conscience of every duty; I mean, you neglect the worship of God, in your families, though under the strongest obligations to perform it, perhaps from your own solemn vows and promises. You indulge yourselves in some known sin or other; and if you feel some pangs of repentance, your repentance does not issue in reformation. Alas! My brethren, is this the character of one soul within the hearing of my voice? Then I must tell you, that if you continue such, you will be fuel for the last universal fire: and must perish in the ruins of the world you have loved so well.

But who knows, that if you begin immediately, you may not yet have time enough to work out your salvation? Therefore, now begin the work. There is no safety but in Jesus Christ. Away to him therefore; let me lay the hand of friendly violence upon you, and hurry you out of your present condition, as the angel did Lot out of Sodom. “Up, get ye out of this condition; for the

Lord will destroy all that continue in it—escape for thy life, look not behind thee—escape to Jesus Christ, lest thou be consumed.” Gen. 19:14-17.

I must tell you frankly, I studied this part of my discourse with an anxious heart; and I was almost discouraged from adding this exhortation to it. “For,” thought I, “I have given such exhortations over and over: but they seem generally in vain. There is indeed a happy number among my hearers, who, I doubt not, have regarded the gospel preached by my lips. But, alas! As to the rest, I have been so often disappointed that I now hardly hope to succeed.” These, my dear brethren, are my discouragements in my retirements, when no eye sees me but God. And oh! Sinners, will your future conduct prove, that there was good reason for my fears? Alas! Is the ministry of the gospel a useless institution with regard to you? Have such exhortations as these no weight with you? Will you resist my benevolent hand, when I would stretch it forth to pluck you out of the burning?

Well, my friends, I cannot help it. If you will perish, if you are obstinately set upon it, I have only this to say, that your poor minister will weep in secret for you, and drop his tears upon you as you are falling into ruin from between his hands.

Yes, sinners, God forbid that I should cease to pray for you and pity you. While my tongue is capable of pronouncing a word, and you think it worth your while to hear me, I will send the calls of the gospel after you; and if you perish after all, you shall drop into hell with the offers of heaven in your ears. Fain would I clear myself and say, “Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean.” Acts 18:6. But, alas! My heart recoils and fails. I have no doubt at all, but the gospel I have preached to you is indeed the gospel of Christ, and I cheerfully venture my own soul upon it. But in dispensing it among you, I am conscious of so much weakness, coldness,

and unskillfulness, that I am at times shocked at myself, lest I should be accessory to your ruin. However, this is certain, great guilt will fall somewhere. I desire to take my own share of shame and guilt upon myself, and to humble myself for it before God. And I pray you do the same. Oh, humble yourselves before God, for your past conduct; and prepare, prepare to meet him, in the midst of a burning world.

Or, if you continue obstinately impenitent still, prepare to make your defense against your poor minister there, when he will be obliged to appear as a swift witness against you, and say, “Lord, I can appeal to thyself, that I warned them to prepare for this day, though with so many guilty infirmities, as nothing but thy mercies can forgive. But they would not regard my warnings, though given in thine awful Name, and sometimes enforced with my own compassionate tears.” There, sirs, at the supreme tribunal, prepare to meet me; and thither I dare appeal for the truth and importance of the things I have inculcated upon you.

A HYMN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE PRECEDING DISCOURSE,

*How great, how terrible that God,  
Who shakes creation with his nod!  
He frowns, and earth's foundations quake,  
And all the wheels of nature break!  
Crushed under guilt's oppressive weight,  
This globe now totters to its fate:  
Trembles beneath her guilty sons,  
And for deliverance heaves and groans!  
And see I the glorious, dreadful day,  
That takes the enormous load away!*

*See skies, and stars, and earth, and seas,  
Sink in one universal blaze!  
Where, now—ah! Where shall sinners seek  
For shelter in the general wreck?  
Can falling rocks conceal them now,  
When rocks dissolve like melting snow?  
In vain for pity now the cry:  
In lakes of liquid fire they lie:  
There on the burning billows tossed,  
For ever, ever, ever, lost!  
But saints, undaunted and serene,  
Your eyes shall view the dreadful scene!  
Your Saviour lives, though worlds expire,  
And earth and skies dissolve in fire!  
JESUS! The helpless creature's friend!  
To thee my all I dare commend:  
Thou canst preserve my feeble soul,  
When lightnings blaze from pole to pole!*

# *SERM. LXVIII. SERIOUS REFLECTIONS ON WAR.*

**J**ames 4:1.— *From whence come wars and fighting's among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

The years that now roll over our heads are not likely to be passed over slightly in the annals of our country; they are big with very important events, in which our own welfare and that of our posterity is nearly interested. This happy country has been for a long time the region of peace; and our years have run on in one uniform tenor of undisturbed tranquility: but for some time past the scene has been changed. We have seen years of terror and alarm, of desolation and slaughter; and the prospect through future years is equally gloomy. We are as yet, blessed be God, a free and happy people! We enjoy peace in the midst of a ravaged, bleeding country: but how long we shall enjoy this distinguished happiness is a dreadful uncertainty! The fate of our country, and all that it contains, hangs in an anxious suspense. Whether the present year will leave us as it found us, is only known to Omniscience.

The religious improvement of such interesting events, whether prosperous or afflictive, is the best use we can make of them. And now, while we stand upon the threshold of a new year, it is proper we should pause, and look back to the events which the past year has brought forth, and forward to those with which the coming year is pregnant. The review of the one furnishes us with occasion both for praise and humiliation, and with materials to sing of mercy and of judgment; and the prospect of the other calls for prayer and repentance, to avert those judgments with which we are threatened, and to obtain a favorable issue to the expeditions in which we may engage. That must be a thoughtless mind indeed, that can learn no Useful lessons from the present posture of our affairs, even without a teacher. And that must be an atheistical mind indeed, that is not led, by the present appearances of things, to those exercises of devotion, which such a season so loudly calls for.

The presbytery, therefore, has thought proper to appoint this day to be observed as a religious fast, through all the congregations under their care, on account of the present state of our public affairs: that we may leave the old year and our old guilt, at once, behind us—that we may enter upon the new year as new creatures—that, as we bid adieu to the old year, we may drop a tear, and vent a groan, over the sins we committed in it—that we may not carry with us into this year the heavy load of last year's guilt, but may enter it with earnest prayers, that God would be with us through it, and afford the same safe conduct to our country and nation.

The better to answer the design of this day, I shall briefly recapitulate the affairs of the year past; and offer some conjectures, from the present appearances of things, concerning the events that may be before us in the year upon which we are now entering.

The last seasonable and plentiful summer, after a year of drought and scarcity, ought always to be remembered as a surprising instance of divine bounty. How kind is our heavenly Father, even to the disobedient and unthankful!—how rich in mercy, even to the ungrateful abusers of that mercy! With how much long-suffering does he endure even the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction! And oh! The stupid ingratitude of the sons of men! They sin on still, unmoved by the riches of his grace, as well as incorrigible under his rod. What return has God received for rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and a whole country full of blessings? Alas! Not the gratitude of the dull ox to his owner, or the stupid ass to his master: for “the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” Isaiah 1:3; but how few among us know or consider? How few acknowledge their obligations to God for these blessings?

Last year, as well as that before it, our frontiers have streamed with British blood. There you might see flourishing plantations deserted; families scattered or butchered; some mangled and scalped; some escaped in horror and consternation, with the loss of their earthly all; some captivated by the savages, dragged through woods, and swamps, and mountains, to their towns, and there prostituted to barbarous lust, or condemned to lingering tortures, which, I believe, have hardly ever been equaled on this side hell. This has been the fate of some hundreds of families on the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania; a fate so melancholy, that words cannot describe it, nor are our tenderest compassions equal to it.

Last year also saw the surprising loss of the important harbors and fortresses of Minorca and Oswego; a loss not likely to be soon repaired; a loss occasioned, not by the superior force of the enemy, but it is to be

feared, by the cowardice or mismanagement of our own men; which renders it the more mortifying.

The last year was also sadly memorable for disappointed schemes and blasted expeditions. Our expedition against the Shawnese most unaccountably miscarried. The northern expedition against Crown Point, and the other French forts in those parts, which has been so expensive, and from which we entertained such sanguine expectations, has proved abortive last summer, as it did the preceding: and whether ever it can be carried into execution, is dreadfully uncertain. The scheme for increasing our little regiment, by drafting the young men in the militia, did not answer the end; and, instead of fifteen hundred men, we had hardly half that number. In short, there is no scheme that I can think of, that has been successful but the expedition of Colonel Armstrong against an Indian town. I know that in this world, which is now under an indiscriminate Providence, success is not peculiar to the pious; but victory and defeats happen promiscuously to the good and bad. And yet, I cannot but look upon it as very remarkable, that amidst so many disappointments and defeats, one of the most hazardous expeditions, conducted by one that fears God, and depended upon his strength, should be successful. Such is Colonel Armstrong; a Christian, as well as a soldier. I have known him seeking after Jesus, as a broken-hearted penitent, with cries and tears, for some years. Had we many officers thus prepared to serve their country, we might expect more service from them. Faith made heroes in ancient times; and I am persuaded religion is the best source of courage still. But alas! How few Christian heroes have we to boast!

Last year we had a treaty with the Catawba Indians, and with the more powerful nation of the Cherokees.



We have complied with our engagements, and had high hopes of powerful assistance from them; but we have been disappointed; and as to the latter, we fear they will not even observe a neutrality, but may be seduced to the French interest.

Last year has also heard the declaration of war between Great Britain and France: but what year will see the end of it, or what the issue will be, is utterly unknown. The commencement of war must always appear a very solemn period to a thoughtful mind. It is the commencement of scenes of blood and desolation as to thousands. Many will lose their lives in it, many their relations, many their estates, and many their liberty: and whether we may not be of the number, is all uncertain. Now the sword is drawn, and begins to maim and mangle our fellow-men. Now cannons begin to roar, and tear hundreds to pieces; now multitudes sink in the ocean, and multitudes welter in their blood on the field of battle. Now cities blaze, and are turned into ruinous heaps. Now the fate of empire, the cause of religion and liberty, is disputed; and who knows what will be the decision? Now death devours thousands at a meal; and multitudes of thoughtless immortals are hurried into the eternal world unprepared, without thought in the destroyed, whither they are going; or in the destroyers, whither they are sending them. These are the dire effects of war; and are not these very tragical and affecting? And must they not render the commencement of a war very solemn and terrible?

Last year has been remarkable for very grand alliances. The empress queen, who is indebted to Great Britain for the preservation of her dominions, and for the advancement of her husband to be emperor of Germany, and for whom our king bravely fought in person, has perfidiously and ungratefully deserted us, and entered into a confederacy with France.

The empress of Russia has acted the same perfidious part, and acceded to that alliance, though bound by treaty to furnish us with no fewer than fifty-five thousand men, upon demand. The Dutch, intimidated by the French, have refused to fulfil their obligations to us. The brave king of Prussia has entered into an alliance with Britain; and is, indeed, the only important and active ally we have in the world. He has distinguished the last year with one illustrious victory over the Austrians. And may the same success still attend him in every good cause!

To sum up this review, the last year has been a very important period in the history of our country. Terror and devastation have stalked through the earth; and streams of human blood have been running by sea and land.

To all which I may add, that God has visited a part of this congregation with a deadly contagious flux, which has thinned the neighborhood, and swept off some families almost entirely. Blessed be God; it is now stopped: but, certainly, it becomes us always to remember that gloomy time, and reap instruction from the graves of our friends and neighbors, which are now so thick among us.

And now, may we not learn from this recapitulation, that we and our nation are a guilty people, and that a provoked God has, by this succession of calamitous events, loudly proclaimed his displeasure against us? Have our undertakings prospered, like those of a people in favor with Heaven? Far from it. And hence, we may also learn that we are now loudly called to repentance, humiliation, and prayer. Let us repent of those sins, that have brought these calamities upon us; let us “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time;” 1 Pet. 5:6; and let us cry mightily to God, that he would “turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not,” Jonah 3:9.

Let us now look forward to the year before us. Blessed be God, we are blind to future events; and therefore incapable of anticipating the pain they might afford us, if known. But we may, at least, venture to form conjectures, from the present appearances of things. Who knows but still darker times are before us? Who knows but the measure of our iniquities is at length full, and God is about to call a guilty people to account? There may be a winnowing time at hand, to try and purge the Protestant churches. Popery may die hard; and its last Struggles may throw the Christian world into confusion, in which thousands may be overwhelmed, and we among others.

The continent of Europe is likely to be the seat of war; and whether our brave ally, the king of Prussia, will be able to stand his ground against the formidable confederacy formed against him, is dismally uncertain. The preservation of the Protestant religion, and turning the scale of war in our favor, depends upon his success; and, therefore, though at this vast distance, we should earnestly pray, that a gracious Providence would still guard and prosper him.

Great Britain is in anxious expectation of an invasion from France; and what may be the consequence, is all unknown; though thus much may be very probably expected, that should it be so much as attempted, it will cost much blood and the lives of thousands.

Many captures will probably be made at sea this year, by which great numbers will be reduced to poverty; and, it is not unlikely, many naval engagements will happen, in which multitudes of human limbs and lives will be lost. We may also expect that this year, like the last, will produce frequent skirmishes between our men and the French and Indian savages; and that these will continue their desolating and bloody inroads upon our

frontiers, and probably penetrate farther into the country than they have hitherto done.

It is also likely, the expedition against Crown Point, and other French forts and settlements, will be again set on foot; but the issue is dreadfully uncertain.

It is likewise probable, that some grand decisive blow may be struck, in a general engagement, which may determine our fate; but what the determination will be, is not likely to be known till it happen.

Who knows but the Indian savages may generally desert us, and, in conjunction with the French, pour down upon us like a torrent? And if they should meet with assistance from some of our own slaves, how inconceivably terrible would be the consequence! What unexampled scenes of blood and slaughter, of desolation and torture, would fill our land! This, alas! Is not so unlikely as we could wish.

In short, this year, like the last, is likely to be a turbulent, bloody season. The potsherds of the earth are dashing together, and thousands are broke to pieces in the conflict. Alas! What a world do we live in! What a restless, troubled ocean! What an aceldema, a field of blood! What savages are the sons of men, biting and devouring one another!

Now, in the present state of things, the question in my text is very proper; “Whence come wars and fighting’s among us?” What infernal cause is it that sets the world in arms? That sets reasonable creatures of the same race, upon disturbing and destroying one another? Whence is it that the art of war, that is, the art of killing one another with the greatest skill, is a necessary science? Whence is it that a great warrior, that is, a great destroyer of mankind, should be an honorable and celebrated character? Whence is it that swords and guns, and other instruments of death, are

become necessary utensils in life, and a piece of furniture for kingdoms? To such questions my text gives the true answer: “Wars and fighting’s among you, come from hence, even from your lusts, which war in your members.” This holds true with regard to lesser societies, and particular churches: contentions, quarrels, schisms, envying, and strife, proceed from this turbulent source. Families, neighborhoods, and particular churches, would be circles of peace and tranquility, were it not for the ungovernable lusts of some of their members. It was probably to these lesser societies that the apostle immediately referred; but this assertion will also hold true in a more extensive sense; for wars and fighting’s among nations proceed from the same source, even from their lusts. The lust of dominion, the lust of riches, the lust of vain glory and applause, have set the world in arms from age to age; and the quarrel still continues and is never likely to be ended, while those restless lusts, from whence it springs, remain predominant in the hearts of men. One man has no right to superiority over others, except it was originally derived from their consent. What, then, but the lawless lust of power, could prompt a man to risk his own life, to embroil nations, to lay countries waste, and to destroy the lives of thousands of his fellow-men, that he may exercise dominion over the survivors? The wants of nature are few, and easily satisfied; and every country produces the necessaries for the support of its inhabitants. What, then, but the lawless lust of riches, or an insatiable avarice for the possessions of others, can cause nations to burst through their bounds, and make inroads upon the property of their neighbors? How peaceably did we live, till France began to fancy that she needed more plantations— that she needed a tobacco colony—that she needed the whole of the fur trade, and so forth? But now this unbounded covetousness has set her in arms; has brought upon us and upon herself all

the calamities of war; and who knows what will be the consequence? Man is not really a being of such mighty importance, as that he should set the present and future generations a talking about him, and admiring his exploits. Nor is the breath of popular applause such a substantial good, as to deserve the eager pursuit of a reasonable being. And yet, the lust of praise can carry a man through a life of fatigues and dangers to drench countries in blood, and throw away the lives of their inhabitants, merely to get a name—the name of a great destroyer, a public robber, and a murderer of his species: for that is generally the import of the names of heroes and great warriors—of the Alexanders and Caesars of the world. What a blind, infatuated, and yet powerful lust is this! Matters of justice and property between nations, are not so intricate in themselves, but that they might be amicably decided, were it not for the strength of lust. But that they should immediately fly to arms, and shed each other's blood—that matters of property should not be determined, but by taking away the lives of the proprietors; how astonishing is this! How shocking an evidence of the horrid power of lust over them.

These lusts, says the apostle, which produce wars in the world without, war in your members. There the war begins, and thence it circulates through the world. These mutinous and rebellious lusts raise an intestine war in the man's own breast. There they commit ravages upon his own soul, and throw all into a ferment. There they produce confusion and every evil work. They set the man at variance with himself and all about him. He and his conscience are often engaged in conflict; nay, he dares to resist even the Holy Spirit himself; the Spirit of all grace and benignity. His selfish, proud, and avaricious lusts set him at variance also with others. Hence proceed broils, animosities, and quarrels in neighborhoods and families which turn

them into a little hell. Were the fire of lust within but quenched, these flames would immediately go out. But a depraved heart, like an unruly tongue, “setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.” Jam. 3:6. When these lusts inflame the hearts of public persons, of kings and their ministers, they set the world in a blaze around them; and their subjects, fired with the same passions, add fuel to augment the flame.

You see the proper original source of war, that it is the lusts of men; and my present design is, to make some reflections upon war as proceeding from this source, which may assist us in the business of this day, and in a profitable improvement of the present posture of our public affairs.

First, This subject naturally leads us to reflect upon the fallen, degenerate state of human nature. Cannons and trumpets, and all the horrid noise of war, proclaim aloud this melancholy truth, that we are a race of apostate creatures, that have fallen from our original rectitude, and become the slaves of imperious and savage passions.

What is this world but a field of battle? What are soldiers but destroyers of mankind by profession? What are heroes and conquerors but the most bold and successful butchers of the human race? What is the history of nations, from their first rise to the present day but a tragical story of contests, struggles for dominion, encroachments upon the possessions of others, bloody battles and sieges; ravaged countries, ruined cities, and heaps of slain? How many hundred thousand souls has the sword of war cut off, in Europe only, within these sixty years past? And thus it generally is, and has been, all the world over. The earth is peopled with Ishmaelites; their hand against every man, and every man’s hand against them. Twenty years of peace is a rare thing among the nations. The ocean of mankind has but few and short calms; and it is soon tossed into a tumult, and the outrageous

waves dash, and foam, and break against one another. Human blood is streaming almost incessantly by sea and land; and now the tide is likely to swell unusually high—a spring tide of human blood! Swords and guns, the instruments of death, are become necessary utensils, like the instruments of husbandry or architecture. Men are tearing one another to pieces about the trifles of time, which a few years at most will tear from all their hands. A thousand swords are dividing this atom earth, among a thousand lords; and yet, strange! They cannot agree after all. What burning resentment! What sullen enmity! What envenomed rancor! What barbarities, and tortures, and eager thirst of blood! What public authorized murders! Murders, I say; for if the man who takes away his neighbor's life unjustly be guilty of murder, certainly they who commence an unjust war, and thus take away the lives of thousands, perhaps at a blow, are still more deeply guilty of murder. This is a sketch of the history of the world. But is this the history of mankind in their paradisaical state? Would innocent creatures thus tear one another to pieces? Would innocent creatures be thus actuated with malignant passions? Did human nature first come out of the hands of its Creator thus inflamed with the passions of hell? Is it not plain, that the great fundamental law of all morality is not now deeply impressed upon the hearts of men, namely, that we should “love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves.” Luke 10:27. The love of God, and the love of man, if they were the ruling passions of the human soul, would soon put an end to these confusions and blood-shedding's—would turn this earth into a heaven, a region of perfect peace and universal benevolence. And does not the strength, the inveteracy, and the universality of such infernal passions, prove that they are innate—that we are all born corrupt; and are, from the womb, in a state of universal degeneracy? “O fallen, fallen man! In what



mournful strains shall we lament over thee! The offspring of God degenerated —the most curious and noble piece of Divine workmanship in our world, shattered, broken, and lying in ruins!” Who can repair these ruins, and raise the noble frame again? None but he who formed it at first. There is need of a new creation; and consequently of a new creating powers. This, and this only, is the effectual cure of war and all its bleeding wounds. This is the only inviolable bond of peace; the only firm cement of divided nations.

Brethren, while we are surrounded with the terrors of war, let us learn our own degeneracy, mourn over it, and cry for the exertion of that power which alone can form us anew, and repair these wastes and desolations. The present war, indeed, on our side, is just, is unavoidable; and consequently our duty. But how corrupt must this world be, when it is even our duty to weaken and destroy our fellow-men as much as we can? How corrupt must the world be, when peace itself, the sweetest of all blessings, is become an evil, and war is to be chosen before it? When it is become our duty to shed blood—when martial valor, or courage to destroy man, who was made in the image of God, is become a virtue? When it is become glorious to kill men? And when we are obliged to treat a whole nation as a gang of robbers and murderers, and bring them to punishment? This certainly shows that they are degenerated creatures; and as they share in the same natures with us, we must draw the same conclusion concerning ourselves. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves, and mourn in dust and ashes before the Lord; and let us lament the general depravity of the world. But,

Secondly, This subject may naturally lead us to reflect upon the just resentments of God against the sin of man.

War is not only the natural result of the depraved passions of mankind, but a just punishment from God for that depravity. It is at once the natural effect, and the judicial punishment of their lusts. As innocent creatures, under the influence of universal benevolence, would not injure one another, or fly to war, so God would not suffer the calamities of war to fall upon them, because they would not deserve it. But alas! Mankind have revolted from God, and incurred his displeasure; and he employs them to avenge his quarrel and do the part of executioners upon one another. They are fighting his quarrel, even when they least design it. The sword of war is his sword; he designs by it to chastise his children; to punish his enemies: and in both, to testify his resentments against sin. It is sin that sets the Omnipotent in arms against this rebellious province of his dominions, and constrains him to let war loose among us, as the executioner of his vengeance. God is angry with the wicked every day; and hence it is that, according to that striking piece of imagery, he calls for the sword, and says, "Sword, go through the land, cut off man and beast from it." Ezek. 45:17. If, therefore, we expostulate and pray with Jeremiah, "Oh thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard; rest and be still;" we have the same answer, "How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge?" a charge against his enemies; "there hath he appointed it." Jer. 47:6,7.

Now if this be the case, is it any wonder that the sword hath received a commission against our country and nation, seeing our land is full of sin against the holy One of Israel? The transgressors are come to the full among us; and almost all flesh have corrupted their way. "There is none righteous; no, not one." Rom. 3:10. The fear and love of God are almost lost among

his own creatures, in his own world. This is a subject I have often enlarged upon; but, alas! How much in vain, as to multitudes!

They will sin on still in spite of warnings and remonstrances. And all the most solemn and serious addresses to them on this head, seem but idle harangues, or the fashionable cant of the pulpit. But I must tell you once more, in serious sadness, whether you hear, or whether you forbear, that our country and nation are likely to sink under the burden of guilt, accumulated from so many quarters, and for so many ages; that without a reformation, we are likely to be an enslaved, ruined people; and that the present calamities of war are the punishments of the divine hand upon an ungrateful, rebellious nation. Indeed, sirs, we shall find it an evil thing and a bitter, that we have forsaken the Lord our God. Sin will be found in the issue to be the bane of society in this world, as well as of souls in the world to come. And unless we learn this by gentler instructions, we are likely to learn it by the painful lessons of experience. And, oh! How just and fit is it, that creatures in rebellion against God, should be left to avenge his quarrel upon one another; that a world of sin should be made a field of blood? Indeed, this unavoidably follows according to the course of nature. The love of God, and the love of our fellow-creatures, are the grand cements of the moral world, and the bonds of social union. And when these are broken, what must follow but mutual enmity and hostilities? Then the character of mankind is “hateful, and hating one another.” Titus 3:3.

Brethren, God is proclaiming by the sound of cannons and the martial trumpet, what he has often proclaimed unheard by the gentler voice of his word, namely, that he has a just controversy with our world for its rebellion. And shall not this make us solicitous to be reconciled to him? Blessed be his name, the quarrel may yet be made up. “God was in Christ reconciling

the world to himself.” 2 Cor. 5:19. And if we accept of reconciliation in this way, we shall again be received into favor. We shall be justified by his grace, and so “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1. Sinners, what do you think of this proposal? I seriously propose it to you; and it demands your most solemn attention. What do you think of being reconciled to God this day, through Jesus Christ; that he may no longer have any ground of controversy with you, nor with your country on your account. I honestly warn you, that if you still persist in your rebellion, “he will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for you the instruments of death: he hath ordained his arrows against you.” Ps. 7:12,13. “He hath for a long time been silent, and refrained himself.” But he will not always bear with you. “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; he shall stir up jealousy, like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar: he shall prevail against his enemies: he will destroy and devour at once.” Isa. 42:13,14. O sinners, are you able to engage the Omnipotent in battle? Will you not rather fall at his feet, and submit? Methinks the terror of such declarations as these from his own lips, may confound and overwhelm you. “If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me; I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh.” Deut. 32:41,42. Oh bring not this intolerable doom upon yourselves; but submit to the overtures of grace now, while you may; while God is reconcilable, and even entreats and prays you to be reconciled to him. Then this almighty Enemy will be your almighty Friend; and his protection will render you secure in all the calamities of life, and through all eternity. How happy would it be, if war among the nations

might be the occasion of peace with God! I am sure it is a loud call to this; and oh! That we may listen to it and obey. But,

Thirdly, The consideration of war as proceeding from the lusts of men, may excite us to the most zealous endeavors, in our respective characters, to promote a reformation.

A thorough reformation would be the most effectual expedient for a lasting peace among mankind, and to put an end to the ravages and devastations of war. Were their tempers formed upon the model of Christianity, that humane, gentle, benevolent religion of the harmless Lamb of God, they would then live like brethren, in the bonds of love; they would observe the rules of justice towards each other; they would naturally care for each other's welfare, and promote it, as that of another self. Therefore, if we would contribute to the peace of the world, let us labor to reform it. It is but little indeed, that you and I can do, in so narrow a sphere, for a general reformation: but let not that little be undone: at least, let it not be unattempted. Let us first begin at our own hearts. Let it be our next care to reform our families; then let us extend our endeavors to our neighborhood, and to our country, as far as our influence can reach. Small and unpromising beginnings have sometimes, under the divine blessing, ripened into a very grand and happy result. Twelve fishermen, with the power of God along with them, did more to reform and save the world, than was ever done before or since. And who knows what happy effects might follow, if even this small, contemptible company, should resolutely set themselves upon promoting a reformation in our country, with a humble dependence upon God for success, and exhibiting an example of it in our own practice. In the name of God, let us unanimously make the attempt. The attempt is glorious and God-like; and if it should fail of success, it will not fail of its reward.

Let our lives be a loud testimony against the wickedness of the times; and a living recommendation of despised religion. Let our children, our servants, and slaves, be instructed in the knowledge of Christ; and let us labor to make them sincere, practical Christians; let us exhort each other daily, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. 3:13; let us by our conversation and advices endeavor to bring our friends and neighbors in love with religion, and to be solicitous about the concerns of eternity. Let us zealously concur in every scheme that is likely to have a good influence upon our country. And oh! Let us earnestly pray for our country; for we can never be sufficiently sensible, that the Holy Spirit is the only effectual reformer of the world. And, blessed be God, we are encouraged to hope that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke 11:13; which leads me to add,

Fourthly, that the consideration of war as proceeding from the lusts of men, may make us sensible of our need of an outpouring of the divine Spirit.

I must repeat it again, that the Holy Spirit is the only efficacious reformer of the world. It is he alone who can effectually “reprove the world of sin.” If he be absent, legislators may make laws against vice, philosophers may reason, ministers may preach; nay, conscience may remonstrate, the divine law may prescribe and threaten, the gospel may invite and allure; but all will be in vain. The strongest arguments, the most melting entreaties, the most alarming denunciations from God and man, enforced with the highest authority, or the most compassionate tears, all will have no effect—all will not effectually reclaim one sinner, nor gain one sincere proselyte to righteousness. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, with all their apostolical abilities, can do nothing, without the Holy Spirit. Paul may plant, and Apollos water;

but God alone can give the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; they are both nothing together: “but God that giveth the increase,” 1 Cor. 3:6,7; he is all in all. “Until the Spirit be poured forth from on high,” says Isaiah, “briers and thorns shall come up upon the land of my people,” Isa. 32:13; that is, their country shall be laid waste, and made a mere wilderness of briers and thorns, by the ravages of war: or the people themselves shall be like briers and thorns, fruitless, noxious, and troublesome. In this language the prophet Micah describes the same people: “the best of them is as a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge.” Micah 7:4. Such shall they continue, “until the Spirit be poured upon them from on high.” But when the happy time comes, “then the wilderness shall be a fruitful field. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.” Isa. 32:13-18. This effusion of the Spirit shall put an end to the desolations of war, and extinguish those flaming passions, from which it proceeds. This shall introduce the blessing of lasting and extensive peace: for, as it is there added, “the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the native effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.” This is the blessed effect of the outpouring of the Spirit; and never will harmony be established in this jangling world, until this divine agent take the work in hand. It is he alone, that can melt down the obstinate hearts of men into love and peace—it is he alone, that can soften their rugged and savage tempers, and transform them into mutual benevolence—it is he alone that can quench those lusts that set the world on fire, and implant the opposite virtues and graces. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, are mentioned by St. Paul, as the fruit of the Spirit,

Gal. 5:22, because the Spirit alone is the author of them. And if these dispositions were predominant in the world, what a serene, calm, pacific region would it be, undisturbed with the hurricanes of human passions? “If ye bite and devour one another,” says the apostle, “take heed that ye be not consumed one of another: this I say then,” as the best preservative from this evil, “walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” Gal. 5:15,16. O brethren! Did we all walk in the Spirit, what peace and harmony would reign in families and in neighborhoods! Were the Spirit of God poured out upon the nations, we should no more hear the sound of the trumpet, nor see garments rolled in blood; but peace would spring up in every country as its native growth, and allure contending kingdoms into friendship with its fragrance. Oh how much do we need the influence of this blessed Spirit to calm the tumult of the world, to restrain the ambition and avarice of princes and their ministers, and to quench the savage thirst of blood? How much do we need him for a purpose more important still; that is, to make this gospel, this neglected, inefficacious gospel, which sinners are now hardy enough to trifle with, to make it powerful to their salvation—to make the weapons of our warfare mighty to the pulling down the strongholds of Satan, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? How much do we need him to break the heart of stone, to enlighten the dark mind, and to comfort the desponding soul? This kind office, alas! We cannot perform to a dear child or friend. But oh! The joyful thought! He is able.

And how are we to expect this blessing? In what way is it to be obtained? The answer is, Pray for it. Pray frequently, pray fervently, “Lord, thy Spirit! Oh give thy Spirit! That is the blessing I need; that is the blessing families, and nations, and the whole race of man, need.” Pray in your retirements,



pray in your families, pray in warm ejaculations, pray without ceasing, for this great fundamental blessing. O brethren! Had many among us done this, the Spirit would not be so much withdrawn; and should many now do this, he would not be long absent. Hear what encouragement Christ has given to prayer, in this particular: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke 11:9-13. Therefore, brethren, let us earnestly cry to God for his Spirit. Would you beg for bread, when famishing? Would you beg for life, if condemned to die? Oh then beg for the Spirit: for this gift is of more importance to you and the world, than daily bread, or life itself. I shall only add,

Fifthly, The consideration of the present commotions and tumults among the kingdoms of the world, may carry our thoughts forward to that happy period which our religion teaches us to hope for, when the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of Peace, shall be extended over the world, and his benign, pacific religion shall be propagated among all nations.

Blessed be God, vice shall not always be triumphant in the world. The cause of truth and righteousness shall not always be kept under. Heathenism, Mahometanism, and Popery, though now supported by the powers of the earth, and seemingly invincible, shall yet fall before this gospel, and rise no more. Jews and Gentiles, whites and blacks, shall all submit to Jesus, and own him as their Savior and Lord. Of this grand and happy revolution in the world of mankind, we have abundant evidence. The apostle tells us, “blindness is but in part happened to Israel,” that is, to the Jews, “until the fulness of the Gentiles,” the whole body of the Gentile nations, “be come in,”—come into the faith of Christ; “and then,” says he,

“all Isreal shall be saved; and the receiving them again into covenant with God, shall be as life from the dead,” Rom. 11:15,25,26; to them, and to the rest of the world. God himself has promised that the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea. Isa. 11:9. That from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to his name, and a pure offering. Malachi 1:11. This universal empire of grace is nowhere revealed so clearly, as in the visions of Daniel and St. John. “There was given unto the Son of man,” says Daniel, “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him;” 7:14. In prophetic vision, he saw “the time come when the saints possessed the kingdom.” “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high God, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” Dan. 7:27. And when the seventh angel sounded, St. John heard “great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Rev. 11:15. This happy period is represented as the reign of Christ for a thousand years, when Satan shall be bound, and no more tempt the nations. Oh blessed period! How long wilt thou delay, blessed Jesus! Thy kingdom come! Oh hasten it, that we may live no more in this turbulent ocean, but enjoy the blessings of perfect peace.

Perfect peace is mentioned by the prophets as the distinguishing blessing of this period. Then war and all its dismal attendants shall cease; and all the instruments of destruction shall become useless. “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,” says Isaiah, “neither shall they learn war any more.

They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.” Isaiah 2:4. Then peace shall extend itself like a river, chap. 66:12; and the officers and rulers of the world shall then be peace, who are now the firebrands of contention, and the thunderbolts of war; Isaiah 60:17; then great shall be the peace of Zion’s children; chap. 54:13; and of the increase of this peace there shall be no end. Chap. 9:6.

Now the grand cause of this blessed peace shall be, that the pacific religion of the Prince of Peace shall not only be professed, but have a powerful efficacy upon the hearts of men to transform them into its own mild and benevolent spirit. Christianized nations, at present, are, alas! As much ravaged with war as perhaps heathen and Mahometan countries: but the reason is, they generally have but the name of Christianity, while their prevailing temper is directly opposite to it. Lions and savages will profess themselves the disciples of the inoffensive Lamb of God; and pretend to believe his religion, without imbibing its gentle, pacific genius; but whatever they are who call themselves Christians, Christianity itself is a humane, benevolent religion. It tends to inspire that universal love, that meekness and forbearance, that regard to justice and equity, which would establish universal harmony in the world; and it tends to subdue those turbulent lusts and passions which are the source of war and fighting’s. In short, it transforms men into quite other creatures, where it exerts its native influence in full force. Christianity would make a wild Indian savage as meek and harmless as a lamb. Now this will be the case in fact, in that blessed period. The Holy Spirit, by means of the gospel, will transform the savage temper of the world into the very genius of that religion which they will then profess. This glorious change is expressed by the strongest and most beautiful images by Isaiah. The, wolf shall dwell inoffensively with

the lamb; and the furious leopard shall lie down amicably with the defenseless kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fading together; and they shall be so tame and harmless, that a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, without enmity or injury; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking child, without hurt, shall play on the hole of the venomous asp; and the weaned child shall put his hand with safety on the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. Isaiah 11:6-9. What a glorious change is this! And what a happy revolution will it produce in this restless world! Let us look, and long, and pray for this blessed time. Who knows but some of our guilty eyes may see the dawning's of it? The schemes of Providence seem to be now ripening fast to their final result. The prophecies are fulfilling; and who knows but the time of the restitution of all things is just at hand? Many thrones must totter, many kingdoms must fall, which are now the supports of idolatry, imposture, and tyranny, in order to introduce it; and who knows but the present ferment and commotions may work up to this grand revolution? If so, welcome blood and slaughter, and all the terrors of war, though we should be involved in the ruin! Welcome, whatever may introduce a season which shall bring so much glory to God and the Redeemer, and so many blessings to mankind!

I shall conclude with two advices:—

The one is, “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” 1 Pet. 5:6. You have seen that war is both an evidence and effect of the corruption of our nature, and of the righteous indignation of God against us on this account; and in both these views, it loudly calls upon you to humble yourselves.

The other advice is but a repetition of what I have already recommended to you, namely: “Pray without ceasing.” 1 Thess. 5:17. No sign could be more encouraging than to see the praying spirit spreading among us; to see those who have any influence in heaven through their divine Mediator, using their interest in behalf of their country. The efficacy of believing prayer is very great. The encouragements to this duty are many; and I am sure our need of it is peculiarly urgent; therefore, “continue instant in prayer.” Rom. 12:12. To engage you the more, I have the pleasure to inform you, that the synod of New York, and the ministers in Connecticut, have appointed, that on the last Thursday in every month, during these troublesome times, the congregations under their care, should meet together in little societies, and spend a few hours in united prayer to God for our country and nation. And I earnestly recommend it to you, my dear people, to join with your brethren in various parts, upon that day, in so seasonable and important a duty; and who knows what extensive advantage thousands may receive from the prayers of a few? They will, at least, return with blessings into your own bosoms.

# *SERM. LXIX. ON THE DEFEAT OF GENERAL BRADDOCK, GOING TO FORT DUQUESNE.*

**I**saiah 22:12-14.— *And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.*

The heavy burden of this tragical prophecy falls upon the valley of vision, that is, upon Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jews. It was called the valley of vision because it was enlightened by the visions of the prophets, enjoyed the advantages of revelation, and the privileges of the church of God. But though it was thus graciously distinguished by Heaven, it was not safe from danger. The Assyrians were preparing a powerful army to invade the holy land, and the holy city, because it was degenerated into a land of guilt and a city full of wickedness.

The prophet Isaiah, at the foresight of this, feels all the generous and mournful passions of a patriot, a lover of his country, of liberty, and religion. However others were sunk into a stupid security all around him, and indulged themselves in mirth and luxury; he is alarmed and mourns for his country. Look away from me, says he, do not put my bursting grief under the restraints of modesty by your presence: I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me; for the case requires the full indulgence of sorrow; and it is remediless “because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.” Isa. 22:4. Thus was Isaiah affected with the danger of Jerusalem, and his native country.

And, O Virginia! O my country! Shall I not lament for thee? Thou art a valley of vision, favored with the light of revelation from heaven, and the gospel of Jesus: thou hast long been the region of peace and tranquility; the land of ease, plenty, and liberty. But what do I now see? What do I now hear? I see thy brazen skies, thy parched soil, thy withering fields, thy hopeless springs, and thy scanty harvests. Methinks I also hear the sound of the trumpet, and see garments rolled in blood; thy frontiers ravaged by revengeful savages; thy territories invaded by French perfidy and violence. Methinks I see slaughtered families, the hairy scalps clotted with gore; the horrid arts of Indian and popish torture. And, alas! In the midst of all these alarms, I see thy inhabitants generally asleep, and careless of thy fate. I see vice braving the skies; religion neglected and insulted; mirth and folly have still their places of rendezvous. Let our country, let religion, liberty, property, and all be lost: yet still they will have their diversions; luxury spreads her feast, and unmans her effeminate guests. In spite of laws, in spite of proclamations, in spite of the principle of self-preservation, thy officers are generally inactive, thy militia neglected and undisciplined, thy

inhabitants unprovided with arms; everything in a defenseless posture: but few Abrahams to intercede for thee; but few to stand in the gap, and make up the breach, to prevent the irruption of vengeance; but few mourning for the sins of the land! “The Lord God of hosts, and everything around thee, call thee to weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth: but instead of this, behold joy and gladness, eating of flesh and drinking of wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” And shall I not weep for thee, O my country? Yes; when I forget thee, O Virginia, “let my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.” Ps. 137:5. “My bowels! My bowels! I am pained at the very heart; I cannot hold my peace; because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.” Jer. 4:19. And now to whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken—“I hearkened and heard; but they spoke not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord,” Jer. 8:6,7, nor discern the signs of the times. What, then, can I do for thee, O my country? What but weep over thee, pray for thee, and warn thy careless children? To give this seasonable warning is my present design.

There are two things mentioned in this chapter, as glaringly absurd, and highly provoking to God. The one is, that in the military preparations which the Jews made, they had no proper regard to the Supreme Ruler of the world. The other is, that instead of making proper preparations for their own defense, and humbling themselves before God, they were sunk into security, luxury, and wickedness.



They had made some military preparations. Thus far had I studied my discourse, before I was alarmed with the melancholy news that struck my ears last Thursday. Now every heart may meditate terror indeed: now every face may gather blackness; now I may mingle darker horrors in the picture I intended to draw of the state of my country. For what do I now hear? I hear our army is defeated; our general killed; our sole defense demolished; and what shall we now do? Whence shall we derive our hope? Our militia has hitherto been a mere farce, and most of the inhabitants know little or nothing of the art of war: they are generally unfurnished with arms. What effect the present alarm will have upon them, I cannot yet determine; but I am afraid they are proof against even this, and will still dream on in security." They seem to have this brand upon them, of a people given up to destruction; they cannot realize a danger at the distance of two or three hundred miles, though it be making quick approaches towards them; or, if they be alarmed at length, it will be apt to throw them into an inactive kind of consternation and terror; for it is natural to the presumptuous and secure to fall into this opposite extreme, when the danger they would not fear comes upon them, and this throws them into such hurry and confusion, that they can neither contrive nor prosecute measures for their own defense; so that we have little ground to hope for relief from ourselves—as for the neighboring colonies, they can do no more at best than provide for themselves. Our mother-country is at a great distance, and before we can receive help from thence, our country may be overrun, and fall a helpless prey to our enemies. Our mother-country may also be engaged in war at home; and consequently unable to spare us much assistance so far. abroad. To all this, I may add, that we are prodigiously weakened, and our enemies strengthened, by the loss of our fine train of artillery; and the Indians will

probably break off their alliance with the English and join the victorious party; and what barbarities we may expect from these treacherous and revengeful savages, I cannot think of without horror. Now what shall we do in these dangerous circumstances? May we not address the throne of grace in the language of Jehoshaphat: “We have no might against this multitude; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee?” 2 Chron. 20:12. A guilty, obnoxious people cry to thee in helpless distress, O thou Ruler of heaven and earth! Spare us a little longer, and surround us with thy salvation as with walls and bulwarks. We ought not indeed to content ourselves with lazy prayers; it is our duty also to take all the measures in our power to prevent or escape the impending ruin of our country; but it is certainly our duty to humble ourselves before that God whom we have offended, and to cry mightily to him, if peradventure, he may yet have mercy upon us that we perish not. After this digression, occasioned by so melancholy a report, I shall return to, and prosecute, my intended method.

I was observing, that the Jews had made some preparations for their own defense. They had furnished themselves with weapons out of the armory called the house of the forest. Isaiah 22:8. They had broken down the houses of Jerusalem, that with their materials they might fortify the wall, and stop its breaches. Isaiah 22:10. They had made ditches to convey the waters of two pools into the city, to furnish them with drink in the siege. Isa. 22:9,11. These preparations they made; and on these they depended, and not on the Lord God of hosts. “Thou didst look in that day to the armor of the house of the forest; but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.” Isaiah 22:8,11. And hence all their preparations were in vain.

I leave it to be considered, whether we and our country have not been guilty of this piece of practical atheism— whether we have not incurred the curse of the man that trusteth in man, and maketh the arm of flesh his confidence —whether we have not boasted and vaped of our experienced officers, our veteran soldiers, and our fine train of artillery, and had little or no regard to the Lord of hosts. It is he, my brethren, that manages the affairs of men. This world is a territory of Jehovah’s universal empire; and not a sparrow can fall to the ground in it without him. He does what he pleases among the inhabitants of the earth; and they shall all know it, sooner or later—they shall know it to their cost, if they cannot be made sensible of it by gentler measures.

Another sin charged upon the Jews was this, that, instead of making proper preparations for their own defense, and humbling themselves before God, they were sunk in security, luxury, and wickedness. Weeping, mourning, baldness, and girding with sackcloth, were the usual signs and ceremonies of fasting and deep humiliation under the law of Moses, and they are naturally expressive of great distress, sorrow, and lamentation. To such humiliation, repentance, and sorrow, God called them by his prophets, and by the threatening posture of their affairs. But, alas! Instead of this, you see what we have been grieved to see in our country, nothing but feasting and diversion, luxury, and pleasure. “Behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine.” What audacious conduct is this? What is it but to insult Jehovah, and defy all his threatening’s? They acted upon that epicurean maxim, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die;” let us take our pleasure while we may, for there will soon be an end of us! This may be looked upon either as the language of despair— let us be merry now, for we expect shortly to be cut

off by our enemies; or as a sneer upon the threatening's of God by his prophet, as if they had said, "We are to die, it seems, to-morrow, according to the denunciation of this precise fellow; let us then enjoy life when we can, regardless of the consequence. Shall this melancholy, timorous creature frighten us out of our pleasures? No, let him say what he will, we will eat, and drink, and be merry."

What effect the present near approach of danger may have upon the inhabitants of our guilty land, I have not yet had time to know; but I am sure, (and it has often sunk my spirits, and alarmed my fears,) this has been the general conduct through our country under all the past threatening's of divine providence; and if this still continue, I shall give thee up, O my beloved land! I must give thee up for lost! Heaven cannot always bear with such daring impiety in us, any more than in the Jews. It was revealed in mine ear by the Lord of hosts, saith the prophet,—this dreadful secret was communicated to me: Surely, this iniquity of despising my threatening's, and refusing to humble yourselves before me, shall not be purged from you until ye die, until ye be cut off by your enemies, saith the Lord of hosts. Isaiah 22:14. How much reason we have to fear such a doom, I need not tell you—your own hearts suggest it to you from the present aspect of your affairs.

My design in the prosecution and improvement of this subject is, to point out the causes of the present danger, and the most promising methods to prevent or escape it.

I shall mention but two causes of the present danger— the sins of the land, and our security and inactivity in times past.

I must begin with mentioning the sins of the land, as the first and principal cause of our calamity and danger.

Of this I have often warned you with weeping eyes and an aching heart. Some of you, I hope, have regarded the warning, and forsaken your sins; but to many I have seemed as one that mocketh, or an officious disturber of their security and pleasure. But now, when they are likely to have such dreadful confirmations of this melancholy truth; now, when God seems about to make good the charge against you by the terrors of his judgments, now I hope for a solemn hearing without contempt or ridicule.

The Lord of hosts (I repeat it again) is the supreme Ruler of the kingdoms of the earth, and by an irresistible, though invisible hand, he manages them according to his righteous pleasure. It belongs to him in that character to punish guilty, impenitent nations in this life; I say in this life; for in the world to come, men do not subsist in a civil capacity as societies or nations, but are rewarded or punished as individuals according to their personal works. But in this world there are various connections and relations between them as members of civil society; and when, in that capacity, they become ripe for temporal punishment, and their iniquities are full, it is the usual method of Providence to chastise them severely, or entirely cut them off.

And where is there a more sinful, obnoxious spot upon our guilty globe than our country? It is the remark of strangers, and of those who have an extensive knowledge of Virginia, that this county is distinguished from the rest by the appearance of religion and good morals. But, ah! What ground have we of complaint and lamentation. And if this is the best part of our country, alas! What shall we say of the rest?

Recollect what you have known of your own, and the conduct of the generality, and take a survey of the practice of the inhabitants; and what a dismal scene opens to your eyes! What numbers of drunkards, swearers,

liars, unclean wretches, and such like burden our land! Nay, how few comparatively are they who do not, at least occasionally, fall into one or other of these gross vices? What vanity, luxury, and extravagance, in gaming and other foolish or criminal diversions and pleasures, appear among people of high life and affluent fortunes? And is it not fit they should now feel the want of these mercies which they squandered away? What carelessness and unfaithfulness; what ignorance and laziness; nay, what gross vice and impiety, in sundry of the clergy, whose office it is to teach and reform the world! I must speak out in the present situation of my country, however unwilling I am to touch the sacred character. O Virginia! Thy prophets, thy ministers have ruined thee. I speak not of all; some of them, I hope, are an ornament to their character, and a blessing to their country. But can the most generous charity, can even a party spirit pretend they are all such? And they who are not such, are the lumber, or rather the pests of society. Can religion flourish, when inculcated by such unclean lips? Can the world be reformed by such as so much want reformation themselves? There are some, indeed, who make it the great business of their lives to make men virtuous and good; but alas! We have all been too cold and inactive in this noble work; and we desire to join in the general repentance on this account. How is the house of God forsaken! And what carelessness, vanity, and worldly conversation appear in those that attend! Alas! Are these assemblies met to worship the great God, and prepare themselves for their everlasting state? Who would suspect it from their conduct? How is the table of the Lord, the memorial of our dear dying Redeemer, neglected by multitudes, or profaned by daring, profligate sinners? What a general neglect of family-religion prevails through our country? How few are the houses that devoutly call upon God! But, alas! I

cannot enumerate particulars. I may say all in a word. “There is but little, very little, practical religion to be seen in our land.” Do but form an idea of Christianity from your Bible, and compare with that rule the professors of that religion; and how few can you pronounce real Christians? I speak this in the anguish of my heart; and you may be sure it is extorted from me; for in the whole course of my ministry among you, you have never heard so much of this kind from me before.

Deism and infidelity have also of late made inroads upon us. Men do not like such a holy religion as that which Christ has instituted, and therefore they cavil at it, and go about to patch up another of their own, more favorable to their lusts and pleasures. Perhaps it may be put to trial in the general ruin of our country, whether any religion can support a sinking soul like the religion of Jesus. Then it may appear that “their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” Deut. 32:31. Then ye that are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, ye that make mammon your God, ye that adore the glimmering light of reason instead of the Sun of Righteousness, then “go and cry to the gods ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.” Judges 10:14.

Now, if the outward conduct of men be generally so bad, alas! What shall we think of their hearts, the secret springs of action within? Oh! What lusts make their dens there! How many cold, hard, disloyal hearts towards God and his Son are to be found in our land! How many impenitent souls, that never have been broken into deep repentance! How many worldly, sensual minds, that grovel in the earth, and have little or no thought of God, of divine things, or of their everlasting state! How many secret neglecters of Christ and salvation through him! Alas! How few hearts long and languish for him! How few are acquainted with the experiences of true, vital

Christianity! How few are earnestly striving to enter in at the strait gate, and laboring to be holy in all manner of conversation! How few are mourning for their own sins, and those of the land, and pouring out their prayers night and day in behalf of their country! What practical atheism prevails among us as to the dispensations of Providence! Multitudes do not live in the world as though it were under the Divine government. They seem not “to regard the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands,” Psalm 28:5, in drought and rains, in war and peace, or in any of the blessings or calamities of life; but they look to secondary causes only and the instruments of divine Providence; and what is this but practically to abjure and renounce Jehovah from being the ruler of the world he has made? And can he tolerate such rebellion in his subjects? Is it not fit that he should convince them of his supreme government by terrible things in righteousness, and make them know that he is the Lord, and that they are but men? But I am weary of this melancholy history; and I own I am not able to paint it in colors gloomy enough. “We are a sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters.” Isaiah 1:4. We are abusers of mercy, and despisers of chastisements; we are transgressors of the law of God, and neglecters of the gospel of Christ; we have all sinned from the highest to the lowest. This is the fruitful source of all our calamities, and the most threatening circumstance that attends us; though there is another very discouraging, and that is,—

Secondly, Our security and inactivity in times past. Our enemies have not come upon us unawares. We had time enough to learn the art of war, and to furnish ourselves with arms, but we would not realize the danger! And now when we begin to be apprehensive of it, the hurry and the consternation will not allow us to make such preparations as we otherwise might. God has also



given us space for repentance; and this is certainly an important preparative; but, alas! How has it been neglected! What a thoughtless, impenitent people have we been! And how justly may God give us up to the common fate of the presumptuous and secure: “for when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.” 1 Thess. 5:3.

The rumor of war, and the call of Heaven to repentance, have been the more alarming, as we have been punished with so severe a drought, which alone is no small calamity; and the next year, which will feel its consequences, will make us sensible of it.

I might mention sundry other causes of our present danger: as the unhappy factions about trifles between the branches of the legislature—the disunited state of the sundry British colonies—our criminal neglect of proper measures to Christianize the Indians, and conciliate them to us in that surest bond—our suffering abandoned traders to intoxicate them with strong drink, and defraud them of their property—our neglecting to keep garrisons on our frontiers, &c. But I must hasten to our second general head—to point out the most promising measure to prevent or escape the danger and ruin of our country.

And my first advice, (and oh! That my voice could sound it to the remotest parts of the country) is this: Repent! O my countrymen, Repent! Sin is the cause of our danger; sin is the bane of our land; and this cause cannot be removed but by repentance. “Search and try your ways, and turn unto the Lord.” Lam. 3:40. Recollect your own sins in heart and life; and mourn over them, hate them, forsake them, proclaim eternal war against these enemies of your country and of your souls. As much sin as every one of you have been guilty of, so much has every one of you contributed to the

destruction of your country. Therefore, let there be a great mourning among you; let every one of you mourn “apart, and your wives apart.” Zech. 12:12. Down on your knees before your injured Sovereign; confess you have been ungrateful rebels; acknowledge the justice of the punishment, even though he should cut you off. Vow, and resolve, if you have done iniquity, to do it no more. Take a survey also of the sins of your country, and lament over them as your own. And to your repentance, join fasting, as a proper expression of it. I cannot give you a more proper direction than what I shall read to you out of the prophecy of Joel, which was addressed to a people in the like dangerous circumstances; and see what encouragement is given to such humiliation: “Therefore, also, now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat-offering, and a drink-offering unto the Lord your God.” Joel 2:12-14. Join earnest prayer to your repentance and fasting. Cry aloud to God for your country; for your liberty, your property, your religion, your lives, your all—cry to God in secret, in your families, in public; and form yourselves into little societies here and there for prayer. Ye prayerless families, now begin to worship the God that preserves you, lest he “pour out his fury upon you with the heathen, and the families that call not upon his name.” Jer. 10:25. In this way the weak and timorous, even women and children, may fight for their country; and from this assistance, which you may give in a peaceful corner, our army may derive their victory; for the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16.

If the present threatening circumstances of our country should take this happy turn; oh! If it should bring the thoughtless inhabitants to repentance and reformation, I should count it the most blessed event mine eyes have ever seen. Let each of us labor to promote so happy an effect.

Secondly, Let me earnestly recommend it to you to furnish yourselves with arms, and to put yourselves in a posture of defense. I hope your officers will not omit their duty; and were any of them present, I should humbly address them, “Gentlemen, I presume you look upon your commissions, not as empty titles of honor, but as peculiar obligations upon you to defend your country. Upon your activity, zeal, and good management, much depends. You may teach your respective companies the art of war; you may require them to furnish themselves with arms: you may and ought to put the laws in execution against the careless and disobedient; you may endeavor to make them sensible of their danger, and the necessity of such preparations. These things, gentlemen, are incumbent upon you; and, I hope, I may take upon me to speak as the mouth of this congregation, that we are willing to observe your orders.” But, my brethren, if your officers should be negligent in their part, let your conscience prompt you to do your duty; show that it is a regard to your country, and not a servile fear of the law, that has most influence upon you. Christians should be patriots. What is that religion good for that leaves men cowards upon the appearance of danger? And permit me to say, that I am particularly solicitous that you, my brethren of the dissenters, should act with honor and spirit in this juncture as it becomes loyal subjects, lovers of your country, and courageous Christians. That is a mean, sordid, cowardly soul, that would abandon his country, and shift for his own little self, when there is any probability of defending it. To give the greater weight to what I say, I may

take the liberty to tell you I have as little personal interest—as little to lose in this colony as most of you. If I consulted either my safety or my temporal interest, I should soon remove my family to Great Britain or the northern colonies, where I have had very inviting offers. Nature has not formed me for a military life, nor furnished me with any great degree of fortitude and courage; and yet I must declare, that after the most calm and impartial deliberation, I am determined not to leave my country, while there is any prospect of defending it. But, should the case appear desperate, I would advise every man to shift for himself; and I would rather fly to the utmost ends of the earth, than submit to French tyranny and Popish superstition. Certainly he does not deserve a place in any country, who is ready to run from it upon every appearance of danger. Let us then, my brethren, show ourselves men, Britains, and Christians on this trying occasion. What! Shall we resign so extensive and flourishing a country—a land of plenty and liberty— shall we tamely resign it to a parcel of perfidious French, and savage Indians? Shall slavery here clank her chain, or tyranny rage with lawless fury? Shall the house of God be turned into a temple of idols? No, sirs; let us make a noble stand for the blessings we enjoy. What though we dissenters have been so unhappy as to lie under some restraints, which we apprehend unkind as well as illegal; let us balance these with the many privileges we enjoy, and they sink into nothing. I also hope, that our rulers will find something else to do, in the present state of our country, than to harass and oppress a number of harmless dissenters, whose only crime it is to follow their conscience and not the direction of their superiors in matters of religion. Nay, I am persuaded that many of them, upon farther acquaintance with us, will be disposed to more moderate measures by their own innate candor and a spirit of liberty. Let us therefore show ourselves

worthy of protection and encouragement, by our conduct on this occasion. The event of war is yet uncertain; but let us determine, that if the case should require it, we will courageously leave house and home, and take the field. I pity you, my friends of the softer sex, under the distressing passions which these alarms must excite in you; and indeed, I am not without apprehensions of danger from you. Your soft entreaties and flowing tears may unman the stronger sex, and restrain them from exerting themselves in so good a cause. But, pray let reason, let conscience, let religion, let a regard to yourselves and your children, prevail over your fond and foolish passions; otherwise, you may be accessory to the ruin of your country.

I would also address myself to you, negroes; and I hope you will regard what I say, as you cannot but believe I am your friend. You know I have shown a tender concern for your welfare, ever since I have been in the colony; and you may ask my own negroes whether I treat them kindly or not. Let not any of you think that it is all one whether the French take the country or not, for you will, at worst, be slaves still. You do not know what sort of people the French and Indians are; but I will honestly tell you. They are a cruel, barbarous people; and if you should disobey them, they would torment you, or put you to death in the most shocking manner. It will have weight with such of you as have any concern about religion, to be told, that if you should fall into the hands of the French, you must either give up your religion, or be tied to a stake, and burnt to ashes for it. Then you must pray in Latin, a language that you do not understand one word of; you must not look into your Bible, or try to read; and instead of worshipping God through Jesus Christ, you must worship images and pictures made of stone, wood, or canvas—you must pray to men and women that were once sinners like yourselves; and instead of taking bread and wine in remembrance of Christ,

you must believe that the bread is the real body of Christ, a piece of true flesh, and that the wine is changed into the real blood of Christ, by a priest muttering a few words over it—and they would allow you only the use of the bread, but the wine is all the priest's. Now, is not your nature shocked at such a thing as this, under the notion of religion? Do you think such a thing as this would please God, or carry you to heaven? It becomes you, therefore, to do all you can to keep yourselves and our country out of the hands of these fierce and cruel creatures. But to return.

If any of you are frightened and intimidated from venturing your lives for your country, because you are full of fears about your everlasting state, and you would desire to live longer, to make all sure—to such of you I would say, now you find the bad effects of your former negligence—had you given all diligence to make your calling and election sure, you would not have been left in such perplexity in the hour of difficulty. You have no other way now, but diligently to improve the time you have; and if, after trial, you have even trembling hopes of your safe state for eternity, you may courageously venture, and leave the event to God; and your cowardly deserting the cause of your country, and seeking to prolong your lives by that means, will not be a likely way to remove your doubts and fears; you would always be haunted with a consciousness of guilt, and that will cast a gloom over your minds, and obscure the evidences of your hopes. Follow the path of duty wherever it leads; for that will always be found the safest in the issue.

As for such of you as are really unprepared for your latter end, and justly conscious of it; I have sundry things to say to you, and oh! That they may sink deep into your hearts.

First, How may it shock you to think, that you who have lived so long in the world, should now want more time to turn to God, and prepare for eternity? Alas! What have you done with the ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years that God has given you for this purpose? Ah! Are they all gone, without doing any of the great work you were sent into the world for? Have they all been wasted upon sin, the flesh, and the world, and sacrificed to the devil? Have you been destroying yourselves all this time? Oh! Sirs, have I not told you of this, but in vain? Have I not often warned you of the danger of delays in turning to God? Will you now, at length, believe me? Will you now conclude it is high time for you to regard the things that belong to your peace?

Secondly, If the reason why you desire to preserve your lives longer, be that you may have time to turn to God, and prepare for eternity, then you are carefully improving the time you now have. It is a vain pretense that you want more time for this, if you do not use the time you have. And are you doing so? Are you seeking the Lord in earnest, and endeavoring to repent and turn to him? If not, you only want time to sin longer—to pursue the world and your pleasures longer. And can you expect God will indulge you in such a wicked desire? Thirdly, it is not the want of time, but the want of a heart, that keeps you unconverted. St. Paul was converted in three days, the jailer in a few hours, and St. Peter's hearers under one short sermon; and why may you not hope for the like blessing, if you exert yourselves in earnest? Fourthly, to excite you to this, let me try an argument or two from a new topic. It is you, and such sinners as you, that have brought all these calamities upon your country. Impenitent sinners are the bane of society, and bring down the wrath of God upon it. Therefore, if you would serve your country, repent and be converted.

What a cutting thought may it now be to you, “I am one of the guilty creatures for whom my country is now suffering?” Consider also, if the things you fear should come upon you, how miserable would you be! An angry God above you; a withering, ravaged country, an aceldama, a field of blood around you; a guilty conscience within you; and a burning hell just before you! Then you will borrow the despairing complaint of Saul. “The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me.” 1 Sam. 28:15. Then you will see the use of religion, and bitterly lament your neglect of it. Therefore now make that your concern.

I shall conclude with two or three remarks.

First, Let us not be too much discouraged. Our country is in danger of famine and the sword; but the case is not desperate. Do not, therefore, give it up as a lost case. Our inhabitants are numerous; some parts of the country have promising crops; our army, we hope, is not cut off; the New England forces are likely to succeed in their expeditions; and we have a gracious, though a provoked God over all: therefore, let us not despond, nor let us think it hard to suffer a little in such a world as this. Let us not think it a mighty matter, that we who have forfeited every blessing, should fall into poverty. We may still have food and raiment somewhere or other; and why should we complain?

It is one character of a good man, that “he is not afraid of evil tidings.” Psalm 112:7. “Though the fig-tree,” says Habakkuk, “shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Hab. 3:17,18. What a noble spirit appears in the forty-sixth Psalm. “We will not be afraid, though the earth be removed, and



though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” Prov. 18:10. To have a Friend in heaven, a Friend who is the Lord of armies, what a strong support is this! And what is that religion good for, that will not support a man under trials? It has been a kind of a gracious calamity to our land, that we have not had anything to try our religion, and to distinguish the chaff from the wheat. Now, perhaps the trying time is coming; and “he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Matt. 10:22.

Let me address this in particular to such of you as fear the Lord. You are safe, come what will. Therefore, do not disgrace your religion, by unmanly, cowardly fears; but like David, when he had lost all, and even his wives and his concubines were taken captive,—encourage yourselves in your God. 1 Sam. 30:6. But,

Secondly, Be not too presumptuous; “be not high-minded, but fear.” I am most afraid you should fall into this extreme. We have many reasons to fear; we are a sinful land; we are but poorly provided against war or famine: it is fit we should in our turn experience the fate of other nations, that we may know what sort of a world we live in. We are in danger from foreigners of a gloomy hue—in a state of servility among ourselves. (I speak in this style, that I may give no dangerous intimation to the persons concerned.) It is certain many will be great sufferers by the drought; and many lives will be lost in our various expeditions; our poor brethren in Augusta, and other frontier counties, are slaughtered and scalped. In short, it is certain, be the final issue what it will, that our country will suffer a great deal; therefore, be humble.

Thirdly, Be diligent in prayer for our army, for the unhappy families in our frontiers, &c. “And may the Lord of hosts be with us, and the God of Jacob be our refuge.” Psalm 46:7.

# *SERM. LXX. GOD THE SOVEREIGN OF ALL KINGDOMS.*

**D**an. 4:25.— *The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

That this world owes its existence to the creating power of God, and that he established its laws, and put its every wheel in motion, is a truth so evident, that it has extorted the consent of all mankind. But did he then exhaust his omnipotence? And has he been inactive ever since? Did he cast it off his hand, as an orphan-world, deprived of his paternal care, and left to shift for itself? No; as we were at first the creatures of his power, we are still the subjects of his government—he still supports and rules the world which he made. In the material world, events are accomplished according to those laws which he first established in nature; but it is his agency that still continues these laws, and carries them into execution. In the rational world, events are frequently brought to pass by the instrumentality of free agents; but still they are under the direction of the universal cause; and their liberty is not inconsistent with his sovereign dominion, nor does it exempt them from it. Though he makes use of secondary causes, yet he reserves to

himself the important character of the Ruler of the universe, and is the Supreme Disposer of all events.

This is a truth of infinite moment, and fundamental to all religion; and unless we are met here to-day with a deep impression of this upon our spirits, we are wholly unfit to make a proper improvement of this solemn occasion. It is pertinently observed in that proclamation, in cheerful obedience to which we are now met, that— “In every undertaking it is expedient and necessary to implore the blessing and protection of Almighty God.”

But if Almighty God does not govern the world, and order all the affairs of men according to his pleasure, where is the expediency or necessity of imploring his blessing and protection? “A powerful and perfidious enemy is making inroads upon our territories; our religion and our liberty, our property, our lives, and everything sacred or dear to us, are in danger. We are preparing to make a defense; and our most gracious sovereign has been pleased to send a considerable number of his ships and forces to oppose the unjustifiable attempts of our enemies.”

But unless the success of the expedition depend upon the providence of God, to what end do we humble ourselves before him, and implore his help? The thing itself, upon this supposition, would be an incongruity, an empty compliment, a mockery. If he exerts no agency in such cases, but leaves things entirely to their natural course, then we have nothing to fear from his displeasure on the account of sin; and we have nothing to hope from his assistance; and consequently, it is needless and absurd to humble ourselves for the one, or to be importunate with him for the other. I cannot, therefore, inculcate upon you, at present, a more seasonable truth than that

contained in my text— “The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

Nebuchadnezzar, of whom we read so much in the sacred writings, was the first founder of the rich and powerful Babylonian empire, which was built upon the ruins of that of the Assyrians, the metropolis of which was Nineveh, and sundry other mighty kingdoms. Providence has raised him up to be the scourge of the Jews in particular, the favorite people of God. After his numerous and extensive conquests, while living at ease in grandeur and luxury in his palace, and surveying the glories of Babylon, his magnificent metropolis, his heart was elated—he becomes of great importance in his own sight—he ascribes his successes to himself alone; and arrogates a style that becomes none but the King of heaven: “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” Dan. 4:30. While he is thus self-deified, He that is higher than the highest, and who pours contempt upon princes, resents his insolence; and will let him know that he is but a man, by degrading him to a level with the beasts; but he is so gracious as to warn him of it in a dream, that he might escape the doom by a timely repentance; and Daniel gives him a solemn advice, “O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.” Dan. 4:27.

He continued impenitently proud, and did not regard the counsel; and therefore the threatened judgment was inflicted upon him. His case seems to have been this: after divine patience had tried him for a whole year, while he was venting his arrogance in his palace, he was judicially struck, in an instant, with a melancholy madness; and while he was in a raving fury, his domestics turned him out of his palace. There are instances, now-a-day, of

persons imagining themselves transformed into other creatures: and Nebuchadnezzar probably fancied himself an ox, and therefore tried to imitate the actions of that animal; he ran wild in the fields with beasts; eat grass like them, and laid abroad under the dews of heaven; until, at length, his hairs grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails, for want of paring, like birds' claws. At the time appointed, he recovered his reason; made the most humble acknowledgments of the sovereignty of the divine government, and was reinstated in his kingdom.

The text informs us of the design of Heaven in this judgment upon him, and that it should not be removed until it had answered its end. "This is the decree of the Most High—that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times," that is, seven years shall pass over thee in this condition, "until thou knowest that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Then, and not till then, he was restored to his reason and his kingdom; but he did not enjoy it long, for after a few days, he was cut off by the stroke of death.

I might very properly take occasion from this text to prove the universal agency of Providence in the natural and moral world. But, at present, I must confine myself to the proof and illustration of this important truth—that the Most High is the sole disposer of the fates of kingdoms, and particularly of the events of war.

This is demonstrable from the perfections of God— from the repeated declarations of Scripture—from the common sense of mankind—and from the remarkable coincidence of circumstances in critical times.

First, That the Most high is the sole disposer of the fates of kingdoms, and the events of war, is demonstrable from his perfections.

We may infer from his wisdom, that he formed the world, and particularly man, for some important design, which he determined to accomplish; but could he expect that this design would be accomplished by free agents, left entirely to themselves, without any direction or control from him? Or would it be consistent with wisdom to form creatures incapable of self-government, and fit subjects for him to rule, and yet exercise no government over them, but leave them entirely to themselves? Justice is an awful and amiable attribute. And on whom shall he display it but on rational creatures, who are capable of moral good and evil? Indeed, the display of justice on particular persons may be deferred, as it generally is, to another state; but on societies, as such, it cannot be displayed but in this life; for it is only in this life that they subsist in that capacity; and therefore guilty nations must feel divine judgments in the present state, which supposes that God disposes of them as he pleases. His goodness, that favorite perfection, is diffusive and unbounded; but how shall this be displayed in this world, unless he hold the reins of government in his own hands, and distributes his blessings to what kingdom or nation he pleases! If he do not manage their concerns, his mercy cannot be shown in delivering them from calamities; nor his patience, in bearing with their provocations. His power is infinite, and therefore the management of all the worlds he has made, is as easy to him as the concerns of one individual. He knows all things, and is everywhere present; and can he be an unconcerned spectator of the affairs of his own creatures, and see them run on at random, without interposing? We may as well say in our hearts, with the fool, “There is no God,” Psalm 53:1, as entertain such mean ideas of him, as an idle being, whose

happiness consists in inactivity. He will display his perfections in the most God-like manner, and this was his design in the creation of the universe; and since he cannot do this without exercising a perpetual providence over it, we may be assured he will do “according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” Dan. 4:35. Indeed, there is something unnatural in the idea of a Creator, who takes no care of his own creatures. Do you who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children? Are you shocked at the thought of a parent who takes no care of his own children, but leaves them as soon as born, to shift for themselves? And will not the great Father of Nature, who has implanted these parental passions in your breasts, will not he look after his own offspring, and manage their affairs. Undoubtedly he will.

Secondly, That God is the supreme Disposer of the fates of kingdoms, and of the events of war, is demonstrable from the repeated declarations of Scripture; and this alone is sufficient proof to those that believe their divine authority.

This great truth, in one form or other, runs through the whole Bible. Sometimes the divine government is asserted to be universal, supreme, and uncontrollable. “Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth. Psalm 115:3. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Ps. 103:19. He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?” Dan. 4:35. Now his universal government, which is so strongly asserted in these passages, implies his particular government of the affairs of kingdoms and nations; and the Scriptures declare that the care of Providence extends to the most minute and inconsiderable parts of the creation; and therefore much more



does it extend to the affairs of men, and the fates of kingdoms. “He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry: Psalm 147:9. Behold, the fowls of the air; they sow not; neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.” Hence Christ draws the inference now in view, “Are not ye much better—or of more importance—than they?” And therefore must not you be more particularly the objects of your Father’s care? “God,” says he, “clothes even the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven.” Matt. 6:26-30. The value of two sparrows is but one farthing; and yet, says Christ, not one of them can so much as fall to the ground without your Father; that is, without the permission of his providence. Nay, the very hairs of your head, the most trifling things that belong to you, are all numbered—God takes as particular care of them, as if he kept an account of each of them, and not one of them can be lost without his notice. Here again our blessed Savior makes the same improvement as before, which is directly to my purpose: “Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows,” Matt. 10:29-31. Does divine Providence take notice of ravens and sparrows, and the grass of the field? And will God not concern himself with the kingdoms of the earth? Does he take care even of the hairs of men’s heads? And will he not take care of men themselves? Undoubtedly he will. The Scriptures farther expressly assert, that the promotion and degradation of princes, and the prosperity and destruction of kingdoms, are from God. “Promotion,” says the Psalmist, “cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” Ps. 75:6. “He changeth the times and seasons,” says Daniel: “he removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” Chap. 2:21. “The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” Dan. 4:32; and

sometimes in his wise sovereignty, “Setteth up over it even the basest of men,” ver. 17. “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” Job 34:29. “Shall there be evil (or affliction) in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” Amos 3:6. “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth: he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.” Ps. 46:8,9. Hence pious warriors have confided for victory in the providence of God, and been sensible that without him, all their military forces were in vain. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” And observe the difference: “They are brought down and fallen: but we, (who put our trust in the Lord,) are risen, and stand upright.” Ps. 20:8— 33:16,17. Again, we find many instances in the sacred writings of God’s overruling the conduct of men, even of the wicked, to accomplish his own great designs, when the persons themselves had nothing in view, but their own interest, or the gratification of their malignant passions; and thus he brings good out of evil.

Who could have had any raised expectations from the sale of Joseph, a poor helpless youth, as a slave into Egypt? His brethren had no other end in it, than to remove out of the way the object of their envy, and their rival in their father’s affection. But God had a very important design in it, even the deliverance of the holy family and thousands of others from famishing. And therefore Joseph tells his brethren, “It was not you that sent me hither, but God,” Gen. 45:8. The crucifixion of Christ was the most wicked action that ever was committed on this guilty globe; and the Jews freely followed their own malignant passions, and were not prompted to it by any influence from God, who cannot tempt to evil. But I need not tell you that this greatest evil

is over-ruled for the greatest good of mankind. Though I might easily multiply instances, I can take time only to mention one more, exactly pertinent to my purpose; and this is the haughty and powerful Assyrian monarch, Isaiah 10:5-7. Having pushed his conquests far and wide among other nations, he resolves to turn his victorious arms against the Jews. He was an arbitrary prince in his own empire, and apprehended he was subject to no control. His design in this expedition, was not to chastise the Jews for their sins against Heaven, but to enlarge his own territories, to increase his riches, to display his power, and spread the terror of his name. He proudly thought he acted wholly from himself, and disdained the thought of being a mere agent, commissioned by another. But hear in what a style the King of kings speaks of him and degrades him into a rod, or a mere servant under command. “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger; and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, (namely the Jews;) and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” Thus, says God, I commission him—these are the orders I give him to perform. “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so he does not so much as know that he has orders from me; much less does he design to obey them, “but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few;” this is all his design. And when this haughty Assyrian arrogates to himself the honor of his successes, and vents himself in the most extravagant rant of self-applause, hear how God pours contempt upon him, and speaks of him in the most diminutive language, as a passive axe in his hand to hew rebellious nations; a saw, a rod, a staff of wood. “Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should threaten and shake

itself against them that lift it up: or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood,” Isaiah 10:15. What mortifying images are these to represent a powerful and insolent prince? And how strongly may we infer from hence the supreme and absolute dominion of the King of heaven over the kings and empires of our world, and his directing the fate of war? Surely he has the spirits of men wholly under his command, who can make even their sins subservient to his good purposes, and who can accomplish his wise designs by them, even when they have no such thought, but are entirely ignorant of him. Thus he appears worthy of that august character, which he assumes to himself in his word more frequently, perhaps, than any other; I mean, “the Lord of hosts,” or the Lord of armies. Thus appears the truth of Solomon’s observation, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; he turneth it whithersoever he will,” Prov. 21:1.

Thirdly, It is the common sense of all mankind, that the affairs of kingdoms, and particularly success in war, depend upon God. Read over the historical parts of the Old Testament, and you will find it the common sense of the Jews, that they should never engage in war, without first consulting God, and imploring his blessing. The instances of this are so many, that it would take up too much time even to mention them. And since Christian kingdoms have been formed, we find the same sense prevailing among them, even in the darkest times. Nay, the very heathens were taught this by their reason, as one of the plainest dictates of the light of nature. They had all of them Gentilial gods for the protection of their nation. They had a Mars and a Minerva; the one the god, and the other the goddess of war. They never engaged in war without anxiously consulting oracles, and offering a profusion of sacrifices and prayers. And after a victory, they were wont to express the grateful sense of their success as from God, by rich

offerings, and by consecrating to their deities a part of the spoils they had taken, which they hung up in their temples. Now that which is common to all mankind, in all countries, in all ages, and of every religion, seems to be implanted in their nature by its author; and, consequently, must be true. And since all mankind agree to supplicate divine assistance in their expeditions, and to return him thanks for victory; since they agree in this, however different in sentiments and prejudices, it follows that this is the common sense of the world, and a very important truth, that the fate of war depends upon the divine Superintendent. But I cannot enlarge on this head.

Fourthly, The interposition of Providence is frequently visible in the remarkable coincidence of circumstances to accomplish some important end in critical times.

I am not enthusiastic enough to look upon every event as the effect of an immediate Providence, excluding or controlling the agency of natural causes; but when some important design is in agitation, for the advantage of one nation and the chastisement of another; and everything, even the most fickle or reluctant causes, seems steadily and uniformly to concur to accomplish it—when the winds and seas, the clouds and rain, conspire to promote it—when the friends of the scheme, perhaps with hesitation and perplexity, are directed to such measures as the event shows to be the most proper to obtain their end—when they are restrained from pursuing measures for which they were very sanguine, which the event shows would have blasted the whole scheme—when the enemies of the design are restrained from such means as would overthrow it, though they seem easy, and such as their own reason might at first sight direct them to—when they are overruled to act contrary to all the rules of prudence and good policy, on which they act in other cases, and so bring confusion and disappointment

upon themselves—when an important life is continued or taken away, in a critical juncture, just as is most conducive to the design; I say, when such things as these happen, must we not own that it is the finger of God? Will we affect the philosopher so much as to dispute it? Can we suppose that mere natural causes, that act without design, or that free agents, who act as they please, and who have different views, different prejudices, and contrary interests and inclinations —can we suppose that all these should conspire to promote one design, unless they were under the overruling influence of divine Providence? Must not such a remarkable and even preternatural concurrence of various circumstances convince us of the truth of Solomon’s remark, “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand!” Prov. 19:21. “He disappointeth the devices of the crafty; so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.” Job 5:12,13.

Both sacred and profane history may furnish us with many instances of such remarkable interpositions of Providence; but I can, at present, only select a few out of the history of our mother-country, in which we are more particularly concerned, and which may therefore excite our gratitude for the divine goodness to our guilty nation, and break our hearts into penitential sorrows for our unsuitable returns. These may also convince us, that though divine Providence did, in a more visible and miraculous manner, manage the affairs of kingdoms in the earlier ages of the world; yet even in our days, when the age of miracles is ceased, God does really exercise the same government, and dispose the concerns of nations as he

The first critical time which I would call to your remembrance, is the Spanish invasion in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1588. The Spaniards,

enriched with the gold of the new world, America, then lately discovered, and their king enraged against England with all the malignity of a papist, and a disappointed expectant of the crown; fitted out a fleet of such a force as the world had never before seen. They proudly called it the invincible armada; and, indeed, it seemed to deserve the name. “The seas were overspread with their burden, and the ocean groaned with their weight.” England then was but weak by sea, and in no condition to make a defense; so that she seemed on the very brink of popery, and slavery, and ruin. But she had little else to do, but to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” Exodus 14:13. Scarce had they displayed their sails to the inviting gales, when He who holds the winds in his treasures, let them loose upon the face of the deep. They were scattered—they were dashed in pieces against one another—they foundered in the mighty waters. And of this mighty fleet, there was hardly one left to carry back the dismal news. And was not this the Lord’s doing, and marvelous in our eyes? Psalm 118:23. Did he not make the winds, in their courses, fight for England? In this light it appeared to Queen Elizabeth and her court; and therefore, in commemoration of this remarkable event, medals were struck with this inscription, “*afflavit deus, et dissipantur*.” He blew with his wind, and they were scattered.

This loss was so great a stroke to Spain, that they have not been able to repair it to this day, with all the prodigious treasures of South America. Nevertheless, in the year 1596, they made another attempt upon our mother-country, with a very formidable navy, though not equal to the former. “But (to borrow the words of Rapin, a foreigner, and therefore disinterested,) a violent storm arising in the midst of the voyage, several of the ships were lost, and the rest so dispersed, that the fleet was rendered unserviceable for

that year. Thus Elizabeth had the pleasure of hearing that it was disabled from hurting her, before she knew of its sailing.” And was not this another remarkable interposition of Heaven in our favor?

The next crisis I shall take notice of is the Gunpowder Plot, on the 5th of November, Old Style, 1605. The infernal power of Popery had formed a scheme at one blow to hurry from the earth our king and the flower of our nobility and great men of the nation, by a mine of gunpowder under the parliament-house. They had carried on the plot with the utmost secrecy, and there was no suspicion till the very day before the diabolical scheme was to be carried into execution. It was discovered by the miscarriage of a suspicious letter to Lord Mounteagle, whom they were desirous to save from the general ruin.

The interspace between 1685 and 1688 was a dark period. The British throne, the usual seat of law and liberty, was filled with a prince who was a flaming bigot for popery, and of arbitrary principles of government. The standing laws of the kingdom were laid aside, and the capricious pleasure of the prince was the rule of right and wrong. Charters were extorted from boroughs and corporations. The vilest of men were advanced to places of trust, particularly Jeffries, that monster of cruelty and injustice, to the highest seat of justice. Popish bishops were obtruded upon the church of England, and no fewer than seven Protestant bishops were imprisoned in the tower for no other crime than refusing to read a proclamation intended to introduce popery. The Protestant dissenters, their ministers especially, were perishing in jail, or chased like partridges on the mountains; or if any of them were tolerated, it was not in favor of them, but their worst enemies, the papists.



These, (says an animated writer,) these were scenes of gloominess and darkness—these were days of horror and despair. How didst thou then, fair liberty, and thou, star-crowned religion, lift thy streaming eyes to heaven! And how didst thou, O my country, faint with thy deadly wounds—how didst thou lie, all pale and ghastly, wallowing in thy blood! Come, glorious deliverer! Come, immortal William! For thee is reserved the honor of saving a miserable nation from temporal and spiritual slavery. Venit, vidit, vicit: he came, he saw, he delivered. The inconstant winds seemed proud to serve him, and the swelling floods smothered their rage to waft him over. They varied and calmed in a minute when he needed them, and his fleet was carried prosperously through the seas, while that of the enemy was shut up in port. The winds breathed a gentle and favorable gale, until his fleet was secured, and then broke in a violent storm upon that which came against him. They were scattered, and forced into ports: their hopes and the fears of the Protestants were at the same time extinguished; and King William was peaceably fixed upon the throne, as the guardian of liberty, property, and religion. And can you see nothing of divine Providence in this? Surely you must; unless you regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands. Psalm 28:5.

When the throne was once cleared of a Popish prince, and a Protestant seated on it, it was a matter of the utmost importance to all posterity to keep it so. This King William had much at heart; and he labored all his life to get an act of Parliament to exclude all the popish branches of the family, and to settle the succession of the crown in the family of Hanover, the next Protestant branch, in case Queen Anne left no heir, as she did not: but he had so many enemies in both houses of Parliament, that they disconcerted all his measures; and he could not carry his point for sundry years. At last

the act passed in both houses; and while the matter was in agitation, he was seized with his last illness; and the last act of his life was giving his assent to that bill, which has been our grand security ever since, against the claims of an abjured pretender.

Thus Providence continued his life till the critical moment; and if he had not lived to establish this law, it is very unlikely it would ever have been established afterwards; and popery and tyranny would have broken in upon us like a torrent. The same Providence that appeared in the preservation of his life, did also appear in cutting off the life of Queen Anne in a most critical time. It is well known that from the year 1710 to 1714, a number of arbitrary high-flyers, favorites of the Pretender, had wormed themselves into her court, and engrossed the management of affairs; while the brave duke of Marlborough, and the best friends of the nation, were disgraced. If the design can be known from the direct tendency of means, and the characters of the agents, it was plain the scheme was to lay aside the act of succession, and restore the Pretender. And the Jacobite party openly declared, that if the Queen had lived but six weeks longer, their schemes would have been quite ripe for execution. But, at this dangerous crisis, death was sent to cut short the Queen's life, which blasted their design, and the crown descended to the house of Hanover, in the person of King George the First. By this seasonable death, we, who are Protestant dissenters, are delivered from another intolerable imposition. The high-flying party had formed an engine of church-tyranny and persecution against the dissenters; and that was, an act of parliament to tear from them their children, and compel them to be educated in the established church. This act was to take place on the first of August, 1714; but on that very day the Queen died; and the government fell into, and blessed be God, still continues in, the hands of

persons more friendly to the liberty of mankind and the sacred rights of conscience; and there may it long continue!

I shall only add, that Providence very remarkably infatuated the rebels in the last rebellion in 1745—turned their counsels into foolishness, and thus delivered the nation. If immediately after the victory they obtained over our forces at Preston-Pans, they had pursued their way to London, they would, very probably, have cut their way to the throne; or at least made the nation a scene of blood. The whole country was struck into a violent panic; our forces were abroad in Flanders; and there was no power to stop the progress of the enemy. But the rebels, instead of pursuing their way to the metropolis, loitered in and about Edinburgh, and wasted their time in a chimerical project of taking the castle of that city: which both nature and art had rendered impregnable. By this delay, they gave time to the nation to recover from its panic—to the forces to return, and proper preparations to be made to repel them.

And is there nothing of the hand of God in all this? Is it not so evident as to extort an acknowledgment even from the thoughtless and reluctant? Has not God appeared the guardian of that favorite island, Great Britain?

I may now presume, the great truth I had in view is sufficiently evident: namely, that God is the Supreme Disposer of the affairs of nations and the events of war.

If any of you should ask, “In what manner does he do this? Or how is it possible he should do it, when we see no sensible appearances of his controlling the laws of nature, or restraining the liberty of men? Natural causes produce their proper effects; and men fight against men; and perceive they are free to act or not to act, as they please. Where, then, is there any room for the agency of Providence?” I answer, it is the excellency

of the Divine government to accomplish its purposes without throwing the world into disturbance and confusion, by great breaches upon its established laws; it accomplishes them, either by continuing the course of nature, or by altering it in so gentle and easy a manner, that it is hardly, if at all, perceivable. And as to men, God carries them on to effect his designs, without offering the least violence to their free and rational nature; and sways their minds so gently, that while they are performing his orders, they often seem to themselves to act from principles wholly within themselves. He manages all events as really as if he had made no use of secondary causes! And yet secondary causes produce their effects, and are, in action, as really as if they were the only agents. What a surprising, mysterious government; what a perfect administration is this! Yet, I think, we can form some general ideas how the Lord manages the affairs of men, and particularly determines victory in the field of battle as he pleases. The event of war often depends in a great measure upon the winds and waves, clouds and rain. And why may not he, by a secret touch of his hand, order these so as to favor one party, and incommode the other? The fate of war greatly depends on the prudence of counsels, and the courage of the soldiers; and why may we not suppose, that he who formed the souls of men, and knows all their secret springs of action, and how to manage them:—why may we not suppose that he may imperceptibly direct the minds of the one party to concert proper measures, and darken and confuse the understandings of the other, to take measures injurious to themselves, and advantageous to the enemy, though they appear right to them, until the event shows them mistaken? He may suggest hints of thoughts, and secretly bias the mind to a certain set of counsels; and yet the influence, though efficacious, may be so gentle, and so consistent with human nature, as hardly to be perceived. Why

may he not imperceptibly animate the one party with intrepid courage, and damp the other, and strike them with terror? These things and the like may easily be done by “the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” Isaiah 28:29.

This subject is so rich in important inferences, that I am sorry I have not time to mention and enlarge upon them all. I only crave your attention to the following:

First, if God rule in the kingdoms of men, and manage the affairs of the world, then we should live upon earth as in a world governed by divine Providence. Though secondary causes may be used to bless or afflict us; yet let us look upon ourselves as in the hands of God, and all the blessings and afflictions of life as coming from him. Is it God that chastises us with sickness and misfortunes? Can we dare, then, to fly in his face by impatient murmurings and fretful complaints? Rather say, though I might take this ill from my fellow-creatures, yet, if it be thy hand, I am dumb, and will not open my mouth, because thou doest it. Psalm 39:9. Are you prosperous and happy? Then it is God that makes you so, however many secondary causes you may observe contributing to it; and must not your devoutest gratitude ascend to him? When you fret at the dispensations of life, remember, you are quarrelling with the divine government. This rebellious temper may show itself about the smallest things. When you find fault with the winds or weather, the heat of summer, or the cold of winter, whom do you find fault with? Is it not with him that is the Disposer of these things? And do you not tremble at such a blasphemous insurrection against him. While a Being of such infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, sits at the helm, it becomes us implicitly to approve all his dispensations, and to be still, and know that he is God. Psalm 46:10.

Secondly, If the affairs of nations are at the disposal of the King of heaven, then how dreadful is the case of a guilty, provoking, impenitent nation! If he be the Supreme Ruler of the kingdoms of the earth, then it belongs to his character to punish the rebellious disobedience to his authority, the contempt of his laws, the abuse of his mercies, and a sullen incorrigibleness under his chastisements. These crimes must turn his heart from a people, and provoke him to punish them. This world, as I observed before, is the only place where societies are punished as such; for in the future world they are dissolved; and every man is dealt with according to his own personal works. And if God be turned against a nation, if he be resolved to punish them, how helpless is their condition! Who can defend them if the Ruler of the universe be their enemy? Now, it is guilt only that can incur his displeasure—it is guilt only that can remove a nation from off its only sure basis—the protection of Heaven. Guilt, therefore, is poison in the veins of a body politic, and will cast it into dreadful convulsions, if not remedied in time by a speedy repentance. And, if this be the case, how may we tremble for our country, and fear the divine displeasure? We have enjoyed a long, uninterrupted peace in this land. We have not been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet, nor seen garments rolled in blood. But what a wretched improvement have we made of this, and many other inestimable blessings? What a torrent of vice, irreligion, and luxury has broken in, and overwhelmed the land? What ignorance of God and divine things; what carelessness about the concerns of religion and a future state? What a neglect of Christ and his precious gospel, has spread, like a subtle poison, among all ranks and characters? How daring are the immoralities of some, their profane oaths, their drunkenness, uncleanness, and many other monstrous vices under which our land groans? What luxury and

extravagance in eating and drinking, and especially in diversions and amusements, (if they deserve so soft a name,) may we see among us, especially among persons in high life? How few are the penitent, affectionate, dutiful servants of God among us? How little is the Ruler of the universe regarded by his own creatures in his own world? Creatures supported by his constant bounties, and protected by his guardian care. Alas! My brethren, what shall I say? Most willingly would I draw a veil over the shame of my country; but, alas! It cannot be hid. While such glaring crimes are rampant among us; while such a stupid carelessness about the concerns of eternity prevails among us, it is impossible for the most benevolent charity to avoid the discovery. And may we not fear that the measure of our iniquity is just full? May we not fear that the righteous Judge of the earth will visit us for these things? Under the present happy government, we have enjoyed our liberty, our property, and our religion, and everything dear to us; but we have abused them all. And may we not fear that these blessings shall be exchanged for the tyranny of a French government, and the superstitions and cruelties of the church of Rome? I hope and pray this may not be our doom; but I think it is the part of stupid presumption, and not of rational courage, to be quite fearless about it. We are, indeed, so happy as to be closely connected with our mother country, and under its protection. But, alas! Vice and luxury have spread like a deadly contagion, there, as well as here: and Great Britain is worthy of divine vengeance, as well as we.

Now what shall we do in this case? Shall we put our trust in our military forces? Alas! What can an arm of flesh do for us, if the Lord of hosts desert us? Though our army was never so powerful, how sad would be our case,

had we reason to say, like Saul, “The French are upon us, and God is departed from us?” Who can bear the thought? What then remains, but,

Thirdly, That we should humble ourselves before the King of kings, and take all proper means to gain his protection? If God dispose the victory as he pleases, then it is most fit, and absolutely necessary, that we should seek to secure his friendship. If we have such an almighty Ally, we are safe; and if we have provoked his displeasure, and forfeited his friendship, what can we do but prostrate ourselves in the deepest repentance and humiliation before him? For that is the only way to regain his favor. This is the great design of a fast; and from what you have heard, you may see it is not a needless ceremony, but a seasonable and important duty. Indeed, if he did not concern himself in the affairs of men, we need not concern ourselves with him. But since all our successes depend upon his Providence, how fit is it we should mourn over our provocations, and seek his favor? Let us, therefore, follow the advice of Joel, chap. 2:12-18, and “turn to the Lord with weeping, with mourning, and with fasting.” Let us confess our own sins, and the sins of our land, which have brought all our evils upon us. Let us be importunate and incessant in prayer, that God would pour out his Spirit and promote a general reformation; that he would direct our rulers to proper measures, inspire our soldiers with courage, and decide the event of battle in our favor. If the doctrine I have proved be true, then there is a congruity, a fitness in these things; yea, an absolute necessity for them.

To excite you, therefore, to these duties, let your hearts be deeply impressed with the truth I have been inculcating, that our success must come from God, and that without him all the means of our defense are in vain.



Consider the many blessings you enjoy under the present government. I think it may be truly said that the constitution of the British government is the happiest in all the world. It is a proper mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The people choose their representatives to make laws for them, and the king, as well as the subject, is bound by these laws. No man is disturbed in his liberty, his property, or conscience; nor subjected to the capricious pleasure of the greatest man in the kingdom. I may also safely affirm, that of all the kings in Europe, or perhaps in the world, our gracious sovereign is the most tender of the liberties of his subjects, and zealous for the constitution of his country. Mercy and clemency are his delight; but his gentle nature is pained when he is constrained to exercise even the wholesome severities of justice; and never was a king's government more firmly established in the hearts and affections of his subjects. He is not perpetually making exorbitant claims by a pretended prerogative, like many of his predecessors, especially those of the family of Stewart. He does not assume the province of Heaven to prescribe to conscience, but allows every man the free and unmolested exercise of his religion, who lives inoffensive to the government. And, through the mercy of God, the principles of liberty are more generally embraced than ever in Great Britain. In short, the inhabitants of that favorite island and the colonies dependent upon it, are the happiest of mankind as to all the blessings of government. And shall we not be tenacious of these blessings, which are of such great importance to us, and our posterity, and which were purchased at the expense of their blood, by our brave forefathers.

And now, by way of contrast, let us take a view of the French government, and of our wretched circumstances if we should fall under it. There, everything is done according to the pleasure of an arbitrary, absolute

monarch, who is above law and all control. He may take away the liberty, and even the lives of his subjects, without assigning a reason why. There you must conform to all the superstitions and idolatries of the church of Rome, or lose your life; or, at best, be obliged to flee your country, hungry and famishing, and leave all your estate behind you. Nay, to such a height is persecution carried there now, that they place soldiers to guard the frontiers of the country, and will not allow the Protestants the poor favor of going to beg their bread, or begin the world anew, in a strange country. It is but a little while ago, that a minister was apprehended, condemned, and hanged, all in three hours, and for no other crime but preaching a sermon to a number of Protestants. And even now, such as can make their escape, are flying over in multitudes to Great Britain—that land of liberty. And can you bear the thought, that you and your children should have such an iron yoke as this riveted about your necks? Would you not rather die in defense of your privileges? I am sure you would, if you had the spirit of men or of Christians. Therefore, improve your religion, lest you lose it: make a good use of your liberty, lest you forfeit it; and cry mightily to God for deliverance.

To heighten the terror of a French government, they have on this continent a numerous body of Indian savages in their interest, whom they will hound out upon us; and from them we may expect such bloody barbarities as we cannot bear so much as to think of. If the barbarities should make inroads upon us, as they have begun to do in some of the neighboring provinces, how miserable are we!

To alarm you the more, reflect upon the growing power of France. She keeps an army of a hundred and forty thousand men on foot, even in time of peace; and is undoubtedly superior to the English by land. She has, also, of

late, greatly increased in strength at sea; in which Britain has hitherto maintained the sovereignty. And though in America the French are but few in comparison of the English, yet they receive very powerful recruits from their mother country.

It is also a most discouraging omen, that though the British colonies are superior in number, yet they are so possessed with a spirit of contention, or so stupidly insensible of danger, that they do not exert themselves with proper vigor for their own defense, or delay it too long to prevent the influence of so active an enemy. If we tamely suffer ourselves to be enslaved, while we are so much superior in power, we well deserve it.

Fourthly, If God govern the world by means of second causes, then it is our duty, according to our characters, to use all proper means to defend our country, and stop the encroachments of our enemies. We have no ground for a lazy confidence in divine Providence; nor should we content ourselves with idle, inactive prayers; but let us rouse ourselves, and be active. Let us cheerfully pay the taxes the government has laid upon us to support this expedition. Let us use our influence to diffuse a military spirit around us. I have no scruple thus openly to declare, that such of you whose circumstances allow of it, may not only lawfully enlist and take up arms, but that your so doing is a Christian duty, and acting an honorable part, worthy of a man, a freeman, a Briton, and a Christian.

# *SERM. LXXI. A THANKSGIVING SERMON FOR NATIONAL BLESSINGS.*

**E**zekiel 20:43,44.— *And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God.*

I am by no means fond of employing your sacred time in harangues upon political or military subjects; and last Sunday I intended to touch upon them once for all, and then confine myself to the more important concerns of religion and eternity; but Providence has surprised us in one week with so many, and such important, turns in our favor, that loyalty, religion, and all the virtues of patriotism and Christianity united, require us to take grateful notice of them. Therefore, I beg an hour of your sacred time for this purpose. I need not tell you, what you already know, that Ticonderoga, Crown Point, and Niagara, are in our possession; nests of savages that had

so long ravaged our frontiers; fortifications that had defied our utmost efforts in I know not how many fruitless expeditions, and cost our country and nation so many thousands of money, and so many limbs and lives of our countrymen and fellow-subjects. Before the hour of victory, destined by Heaven, all our attempts were in vain, and issued in inglorious defeats; but when that hour is come, the terror of the Lord falls upon our enemies, and the important acquisitions are made as without hands. The sword of the Lord and of General Amherst gleaming from afar, strike our enemies into a panic; they lose all power of resistance, and the terror of the British name puts them to flight.

After frequent days of fasting and humiliation under the frowns of Heaven upon our country and nation, and still more frequent occasions for them; after the Lord of hosts has called us to weeping and mourning, and all the sad solemnities of repentance and sorrow, for a course of years; behold! Through the unmerited, and almost unexpected, mercy of God, we, at length, see one more day of joy and thanksgiving. To this agreeable duty, Heaven calls us by the late success of our expeditions; and our government has gratefully obeyed the call; and divine and human authority conspire to render the business of this day our duty. And oh! That we may engage in it with hearts overflowing with gratitude, and all the sacred passions which the occasion requires!

I need not tell you that you have occasion for joy and thanksgiving, when you know, Cape Breton is ours, and Fort Duquesne is abandoned and demolished. Cape Breton, the key of the French settlements in America, the object of our anxious fears, and of fruitless expeditions of immense expense—Cape Breton, whose inexhaustible fishery enriched the treasury of France, and educated so many men for her marine service—Cape Breton,

the asylum of the privateers that ruined our trade, and that shut up our entrance by sea into the heart of Canada— Cape Breton, the possession of which puts it in our power to weaken the enemy both in Europe and America, by cutting off their mutual intercourse by navigation: Cape Breton is ours! Ours with the additional acquisition of the fertile island of St. John—ours, after a short siege, and a very inconsiderable loss—ours, after a long season of anxious suspense and discouragements; after repeated disappointments and mortifications.

Fort Duquesne, the den of those mongrel savages of French and Indians, who have ravaged our frontiers, captivated and butchered so many of our fellow subjects, and ruined so many poor families—Fort Duquesne, the object of Braddock's ever-tragical and unfortunate expedition, near which so many brave lives have been repeatedly thrown away in vain—Fort Duquesne, the magazine which furnished our Indian enemies with provisions, arms, and fury, to make their barbarous inroads upon the British settlements, and prevented our growing country from extending its frontiers on the Ohio—Fort Duquesne, is abandoned and demolished; demolished by those hands that built it, without the loss of a man on our side. The terror of the Lord fell upon them, and they fled at the approach of our army, so superior to them in number, and so resolute to pursue the expedition, notwithstanding the severities of approaching winter. What though those, if such there be, who thirsted for their blood, are not gratified? What though our commanders may not have acquired the same military glory, as if they had taken it after all the dreadful formalities of a siege? What though we are not possessed of a fort, arms, and ammunition ready to our hands? These disadvantages are more than balanced by this consideration, so agreeable to every man of humanity and benevolence; that the lives and limbs of men

have been spared, many of which, no doubt, must have been lost in a regular siege; and that only wood, and stone, and iron, and the other materials and furniture of the fort, have felt the violence of our enemies. We have been at a loss to account for the slow motions of our army the last summer; and such domestic politicians are very incompetent judges of an affair so distant from them. But now, methinks, the event makes all plain: they are graciously delayed by the powerful, though invisible and unacknowledged, hand of divine Providence, that the acquisition might be made without the effusion of the precious blood of mankind, and the destruction of human lives and limbs. Many have died by sickness, by rash attempts, and the unavoidable hardships of a late campaign in that inhospitable wilderness; but how many more, may we reasonably suppose, would have been cut off, had they been obliged to attack the fort? No doubt, some of our friends would never have returned, whom we now have the pleasure of welcoming home with open arms. We did not want the lives of our enemies, but only to drive such troublesome neighbors to a proper distance. This end is fully obtained. And since the French are removed, the Indian savages who have done us the most mischief, will be under a necessity of breaking off their alliance with them, and espouse our interest, or at least become neuters. This is one of the happiest revolutions in our favor that we could wish.

Besides these successes by land in America, in which we are more immediately concerned, success has also attended the arms of Britain on her own element, the ocean; the French trade has sustained irreparable losses by the capture and destruction of so many of their ships; and their naval force has been prodigiously weakened by the loss of so many men-of-war.

France has also received considerable damage, and Britain equal advantage, by the descents that were made upon her coasts at St. Maloes and Cherbourg. Her numerous army in Germany has melted away, like snow before the sun, and been obliged to abandon Hanover in consternation, after an easy conquest.

In short, notwithstanding some losses and defeats, and particularly that heavy blow at Ticonderoga, which destroyed near two thousand brave men, and rendered a most important expedition abortive, the hand of Providence has been upon our side, the last season, in many illustrious instances; and for these we are called to the delightful work of praise this day.

And certainly we ought also to give praise to God for the unprecedented and almost miraculous successes of our glorious ally, the king of Prussia: a man raised up to be the great instrument of Providence, and to astonish the world with the exemplification of that old remark, “that there is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or few.” 1 Sam. 14:6. He has stood almost the single champion of the cause of liberty and the Protestant religion, and appeared alone a match for the half of Europe. The Lord is on his side; and what need he fear what man can do unto him? Psalm 118:6. He acknowledges God in all his ways; and those that honor him, he will honor: while those that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed. 1 Sam. 2:30.

These are the blessings and deliverance we are this day to celebrate. And why has God thus favored our country and nation? Is it for our sakes, or on account of our merit? No; not for your sakes do I do this, saith the Lord God; be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O Britons and Virginians. Ezek. 36:32. But, according to my text, he hath wrought with us for his own name's sake, not according to our wicked ways, nor according to our corrupt doings.



I am not entirely without hopes, that a sinner here and there has been awakened to a serious sense of religion, and turned from his evil ways, by the judgments and chastisements of Heaven upon our country and nation: though as far as my observation or intelligence reaches, the number of such happy converts is but small. The utmost effect of the most alarming dispensations of Providence upon the multitude, has been only a sudden panic and consternation, which has perhaps extorted a transient prayer from them, and put them to a stand for a few moments in their thoughtless, presumptuous career; but it has soon worn off, and produced no lasting and thorough reformation. If you should take a tour through our country, and the British dominions, in general, alas! You will see but little appearance of amendment, since the war commenced: the same infidelity and vice: the same atheistical insensibility of the agency of Providence in the management of human affairs, and particularly in determining the events of war; the same contempt or neglect of the gospel of the Son of God; the same stupid security and unconcernedness about the affairs of the soul; the same languor and indifferency in the worship of God, and the duties of religion; the same appearances of pride, injustice, uncharitableness, contention, and animosity, and all forms of wickedness that can subsist between man and man; the same luxury, intemperance, and extravagant love of pleasure, still prevail among the generality. Their ways are still wicked, and their doings still corrupt.

We must therefore conclude, that the reasons why God has once more interposed in favor of obnoxious Britons, and their American descendants, are not at all taken from them, but from himself—from his own great name. He hath wrought for us, as he did for his old peculiar people, the Jews, or his own name's sake.

But what does this mean?

The name of God, in the same writings, very frequently signifies his nature and perfections. Thus when he proclaimed the name of the Lord in the hearing of Moses, (compare Exod. 33:19, with 34:6,7,) the proclamation contained his nature and perfections, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Exod. 34:6. Now, if we understand the name of God in this sense, as signifying his nature and perfections, when he is said to deliver a people for his own name’s sake, the meaning is, that it is not their merit or goodness, but the benevolence and grace of his own nature, that excites him to deliver them. He does good, because it is his nature to do good. His grace is overflowing, and can bear no restraints, where the object is pointed out by divine wisdom. It requires a God of infinite perfections to create a world out of nothing; this is universally granted. But it is often thought of, though equally true, that it also requires a God of infinite perfections, to bear so long with so guilty and provoking a world as ours: it is the patience and long-suffering of a God only, that is capable of this. It requires a God of infinite perfections, to deliver a people so ripe for judgment, as Great Britain and her territories. The grace of the most benevolent of mortals, and even of angels, is not equal to this exploit of mercy. This is as far above all created grace, as the production of the universe out of nothing is above all created power. Our God is Godlike and unrivaled in all his works; and in nothing more so than in works of grace and mercy. Oh, “who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.” Micah 7:18. Hence it is that guilty Britain and her colonies are this day rejoicing in God their Savior; and that the arms of a

people worthy of destruction have been victorious. Oh, “praise ye the Lord, because he is good;” good in himself, and therefore he doth good; “and his mercy endureth forever.”

But there is another sense in which the name of God is often used in Scripture; and that is, to signify his honor and reputation, as the supreme Magistrate of the world. A man’s name, in vulgar language, often means his fame or renown. Hence a good or great name signifies a good or great reputation. So it is used when God tells David, “I took thee from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people Israel; and have made thee a great name, like the name of the great men that are in the earth.” In this sense it is used by Isaiah; as to the great God. Isaiah 63:12-14. “That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name.” Thus God himself uses his own name, Jer. 13:11, when he says of the Israelites, that he had caused them to cleave as near to him as a man’s girdle to his loins, for this end, “that they might be unto him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.” In this sense the name of God is to be understood in the text. And the meaning is, that he wrought this deliverance for his people, for the sake of his own honor and reputation, and to render his fame illustrious in the world. It is, indeed, the applause of his own all-wise mind that he principally regards, and his proceedings being really deserving of the approbation of his creatures, whether they approve them or not. They often ignorantly and presumptuously censure his conduct; but it is enough that he has always the applause of his own all-perfect wisdom, which is the best judge. He does what is right, principally for its own sake; satisfied in his own approbation; and assured that his proceedings will extort the plaudit even of ignorant cavilers, when the reasons of them are fully known, and

the grand result appears. Yet, as his conduct is, in itself, always worthy of the applause of his creatures, and as it is both their duty and happiness to approve it, he must take pleasure in seeing them paying him deserved honor, and rendering his name, that is, his fame and reputation, glorious in the world. As the ruler of the universe, he is concerned to do everything in character, in a manner worthy of himself, and conducive to the honor of his government. And he justly resents it, when the spectators of his proceedings refuse their applause. Hence he is often called a jealous God: he is jealous of his glory, or as mortals speak in modern phrase, he has a high sense of honor; he cannot bear any stain upon it, or any injury to his reputation. He justly demands what he deserves, a good name, from the whole universe; and when this is denied, his honor is touched, and he highly resents it. Therefore, when he is said to bestow any favor, not for the sake of the receivers, but for his own name's sake, the meaning is, that though they have no claim upon him, founded on their own merit, but may be punished in strict justice, yet there are some circumstances that attend the case, which render it more great, more honorable to his character and government, and more conducive to his fame, to forgive them, and bestow unmerited favors upon them, than to punish them according to their demerit. He may have such connections with a people, that it would be liable to misconstruction and censure, it would appear mean and inglorious, if he should cast them off, though they well deserve it.

Of this we have a remarkable instance in the Jewish nation, whom God had chosen as his peculiar people, and established the true religion among them, whom he had, by his own immediate miraculous hand, delivered from Egyptian slavery, conducted through the wilderness, planted in a country particularly allotted for them, espoused their cause, and appeared to

all the world as their guardian God. Now when he had, for wise reasons, assumed such relations, and entered into such engagements with them, his honor was peculiarly concerned in their fate; and it would have been a matter of ill-fame for him not to take special care of them. It was this consideration, and not their good conduct, that prevailed with him to own and protect them, as his peculiar people, so long. This appears, in various forms, through all the Old Testament.

This is remarkably evident in the chapter where my text stands. If the honor of God had not been deeply concerned in their preservation, the Israelites would have been early destroyed; for they deserved it even in Egypt, before the divine Hand interposed in their deliverance. In Egypt, in the wilderness, in their own land, in every place, and in every age, their rebellion against their heavenly King arose to such a height, that he represents himself repeatedly as resolving to cut them off. "Then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them." Ezek. 20:8,13,21. But lo! His uplifted arm is kindly checked, and the falling blow prevented, by his regard for his own name. Whenever the vindictive denunciation is mentioned, it is immediately added, "But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them." Ezek. 20:9. There is a particular stress laid upon this circumstance, that he had brought them forth out of Egypt, and made himself known unto them, in the sight of the heathen. Ezek. 20:14-22. The heathen had seen what peculiar relations he had assumed to this people: the heathen were witnesses how far he had espoused their cause, and what wonders he had wrought in their favor; and they could see how much his honor was engaged to make thorough work, and perfect what he had begun. And should he punish them as soon, and as

severely, as their iniquities deserve, and give them up to the power of their enemies, what would the heathen say? What injurious reflections would they cast upon the tutelary God of Israel? How would they blacken his fame, and stain his honor? But out of tenderness for his own honor, he will prevent these reproaches, and still own them as his people, though deserving utter rejection. How cautious he is not to give cavilers any umbrage to blaspheme his name, and injure his reputation, is still more strongly expressed. Deut. 32:26,27. “I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done this.” It was this fear, speaking after the manner of man, that restrained his hand from punishing them, when they seemed ripe for it. The same sentiment runs through Ezekiel the thirty-sixth, from 5:18-24. “I scattered them among the heathen: and they profaned my holy name:” that is, brought it into disgrace, “when they said to them, these are the people of the Lord, and they are gone forth out of his land.” As if they had said, see what a God the God of Israel proves after all. See here, his people are captives and vagabonds in a strange land. He was too weak to protect them, or too fickle to love them long. This blasphemy touched the divine honor, and hurt his fame in the world. Therefore it is immediately added, “I had pity for my holy name:” (it was pity for his own injured name rather than for them, that moved him to deliver them.) “I had pity for mine own holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went—Thus saith the Lord, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine own holy name’s sake, which ye profaned among the heathen, whither ye went;” (5:21,22.) “And I will sanctify my

great name, which was profaned among the heathen: and the heathen,” who now insult me, “shall know that I am the Lord, for I will gather them out of all countries, and bring them into their own land.” It is counted a scandal to me that my people should be the slaves of heathens; but I will wipe off the scandal, by bringing them back to their own land; not because they deserve deliverance, but because my reputation requires it.

This is an argument of great weight in prayers for a people; and as such we find it used by the most prevalent intercessors. Thus Jeremiah prays, “We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.” Thus he acknowledges that they deserved to be utterly rejected. Yet he ventures humbly to plead, “Do not abhor us, for thy name’s sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.” Jer. 14:20,21. We have no argument to urge from our own deserving’s; but, Lord, thine honor is at stake: thou hast condescended to enter into covenant with us; and if thou but seem to break it, it will render thy veracity and faithfulness suspicious, and cast a stain upon thy glory. Therefore, though there be nothing in us to restrain thee from abhorring us; yet have a regard to thine own honor, which is nearly concerned; and do not abhor us, for thy name’s sake; do not disgrace thyself.

We find Moses also urging his argument with wonderful skill, and a kind of almighty importunity, and always carrying his point in favor of an obnoxious people. When they had fallen into idolatry, and made a golden calf their god, Jehovah says unto Moses, “I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone,” and do not intercede for them. Oh! The astonishing grace and condescension of God! Oh! The astonishing force of believing prayer! God cannot be angry with a

guilty, rebellious people, unless Moses give over praying for them. “Let me alone,” says he, “that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.” And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, “Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand?” See how he pleads God’s relation to them as his people, and what he had done for them, which engaged his honor to continue his protection. He goes on, still touching upon that tender point, the honor of God. “Wherefore,” says he, “should the Egyptians speak and say,” that is, why shouldst thou give them occasion to reflect, “For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?” as though they should say, see what all his pretended love for his favorite people is come to at last. He only carried them out into the wilderness, that he might destroy them clandestinely. And is such a God to be trusted? “Therefore,” says Moses, “turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people;” and so prevent this occasion of reproach. “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.” Exod. 32:9-14. Thy word, thine oath, is passed, in favor of this people: therefore, thou canst not honorably retract. Moses prevailed, though he had not one argument drawn from their merit to plead; but he engages the divine honor on their side; and this is an argument which even the Almighty could not resist.

Upon the people renewing their rebellion, and God’s threatening again, “I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them; and will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they;” Numb. 14:12-17, Moses tries



the force of the old argument again. "Then," says he, "the Egyptians will hear it, for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;" and they will know how far thou hast engaged thyself in their favor; "and the Egyptians will tell it to the inhabitants of this land," that is, the Canaanites; and thus the scandal will spread from country to country; "for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people," and hast wrought the most astonishing miracles for them, and ownest them as thy peculiar charge; this matter is public to all the world, and thy dear relation to them cannot be concealed. "Now," says he, "if thou shalt kill all this people, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness." Thus they will take occasion to blaspheme thy power, and they will entertain contemptuous thoughts of the God of Israel. This, you see, is the topic Moses insists upon. He is not content with the divine promise to himself, that God would make him great, and render his posterity more numerous and illustrious than that of Israel; nay, he seems not to have heard it, or at all listened to it, for he takes not the least notice of it in his prayer. He was quite swallowed up in concern for the honor of God, which was at stake; and thus was conformed to God himself, who is peculiarly tender of his honor; and he gave a lively specimen of the prevailing temper of every good man, and set a noble example, to all ages, of the most powerful and acceptable method of prayer. This, indeed, Christ himself also hath particularly taught us; for all the petitions in the prayer he has left for our imitation, are enforced in the conclusion from the divine name only, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory;" and the very first petition is, "Hallowed be thy name;" or, May thy name be sanctified.

Joshua, the successor of Moses, and the heir of his spirit, urges the same plea in prayer, as the most prevalent with God. Josh. 7:7,8, 9. When the Israelites were defeated at Ai, he is nonplussed, and knows not what to say. “O Lord,” says he, “what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth.” Thus, like a true patriot, he is deeply concerned for the honor and safety of his nation. But this is not the principal object of his concern: But “what wilt thou do for thy great name?” This is what he is chiefly solicitous about; and this, he knew, was the principal object of solicitude to the divine mind. “If our name be cut off from the earth, what will become of thy name? How can the honor of that be supported, if thou abandon a people whom thou hast in so many ways engaged to preserve?”

I could easily multiply instances of this kind; but these may suffice to inform you, that the honor of God may be so intimately concerned in the protection of a people, that he may work deliverance for them, even when they deserve to be cut off; and when it would be just and fit to give them up into the hands of their enemies, were it not that he has assumed such relations, and come under such engagements to them.

And now, to apply this to ourselves. Though, no doubt, the reformation of a sinner here and there, and the prayers of the few Lots that are still to be found in the British Sodom, and the interest these righteous persons have with God through Jesus Christ, have been prevailing reasons with the Lord to spare our guilty country and nation, at least a little longer, and to bless our arms with success; yet the most powerful reasons with him has been, the honor of his own great name, or his fame and renown as the Ruler of the world, the Guardian of right, and the Patron of the gospel and true religion.

It has pleased God to choose Great Britain out of the wide world, and to make her the object of his special care for many ages. He has often interposed for her deliverance, when on the very brink of ruin, and never more remarkably than since the reformation from Popery. There he has planted his pure gospel, purged from the corrupt mixtures of Popery; and Great Britain has been the principal bulwark of the Protestant religion, ever since it first spread in Europe. On the other hand, our French and Indian enemies are papists and heathens; and should they prove victorious, they would not only insult us, but our God too. They would spread the scandal among the nations of the world, and the God and the religion of Christians and Protestants would become the scorn of popish and pagan idolaters.

Here I may pertinently introduce an extract of a letter from one of my worthy correspondents in London, a man mighty in prayer, and a zealous friend to his country.' Speaking of the easy acquisition the French made of Hanover in Germany, and our various mortifying defeats in America, he says:— "Our fears, at that time, ran high; but did not equal our enemies' boastings." I was informed by one that had been prisoner in France, that the haughtiness of their insulting expressions was not to be conceived. They had made such conquests in America, that they declared our hold there was very feeble; Germany was entirely conquered; the King of Prussia a desperate madman, who was forced to hide and shelter himself in bushes; the conquest of England must inevitably follow, and we must soon be a province of France.

"God beheld their threatening's," says my friend; "and has raised up a Cyrus, and girded him to the war. And oh! What has God wrought by him! It is surprising! It is astonishing!"

Thus also to check the proud insults of our popish and heathen enemies, God has blessed the arms of Britain with success, both on the seas and in America. He seems resolved not to suffer the powers of antichrist to triumph any more over the religion of his Son; and in order to do honor to it, and so to his own name, he preserves from destruction the people who make profession of it, though their sins cry aloud for vengeance, and their own dilatory, languid, and ill-contrived measures, naturally tended to their ruin.

I shall dismiss this subject with three reflections.

The first is, that since God has wrought in us, not for our sake, but for his own name's sake, we ought, in justice and gratitude, to ascribe our victories to him, and not to ourselves. Let us show all due honor to those brave men, who have risked their limbs and lives for our defense, and been the instruments of our deliverance, but let the God of battles stand unrivalled in honor, and be universally acknowledged as the great original Author of all our successes. Particularly, let us suppress a proud, self-righteous spirit, and not once imagine that our victories are the reward of our national goodness; for, alas! We are still a guilty, rebellious, people, that might justly be persecuted and destroyed in anger from under the heaven of the Lord. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways." Jehovah has begun to deliver us, to make himself a glorious name: therefore, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Psalm 115:1. He hath made known his power in our favor, obnoxious criminals as we are, that the heathen might not insult him, and say, "Where is their God?" He hath let them know, that our God is in the heavens, and hath done whatsoever he pleased. Psalm 115:2,3. Let us, therefore, concur with him in pursuing the same end, and

make his praise glorious: otherwise, we are guilty, even upon our Thanksgiving day, of forming a rebellious insurrection against his great design; than which, what can be more insolent and wicked! Therefore, let all the glory and pride, all the vanity and self-confidence of man be abased and confounded at his feet; and let the Lord alone be exalted on this day.

The second reflection is, That, in our intercessions for our country, we should draw our principal argument from the glory of his own name. Here let me give you another extract from the above-mentioned letter of my friend:—"God," says he, "must have the glory; for it is his own arm that must bring salvation. And may we not plead with him the glory of his name? For, should our anti-christian enemies prevail, will they not ascribe their successes to their patron saints, and guardian angels; and say, the Protestants God would not deliver them, when they cried unto him? "I must confess," says he, "this plea has lain warm on my heart, at seasons when I have been wrestling with God, for our rebellious, guilty land. And herein, we have Moses, the typical mediator, for our example, and his glorious antitype, into whose hands we commit our cause; and he is head over all things to his church, and has all nature and grace at his disposal."

This, my brethren, is the spirit that prevails in a remnant on the other side of the Atlantic; and no doubt our American deliverances are answers to their prayers. Oh that the same spirit may spread among us; and that we also may learn to pray with the same sacred skill and successful importunity! Prayers enforced with arguments drawn from such insignificant and unworthy creatures as we, will have small efficacy; but arguments derived from his own name, his own honor and glory, will always prevail with God.

The third reflection is, That we should not flatter ourselves, that God is so bound by his honor to protect us, that he can never cast us off, and that we

are not in any danger. It has appeared by the event, and nothing else could discover it, that it is not consistent with his honor to give us up a prey to our enemies at present. But it may soon be so. Nay, the time may be very near at hand, when the honor of his name, which is now an argument for us, may be an argument against us; that is, when it will no longer consist with the glory of God, but be a matter of ill-fame, for him to own and defend us as his people. Thus the Israelites were preserved, in the midst of enemies, for many ages, because the glory of God's name required it; but, at length, he abandoned them, and cast them out of his favor, for the very same reason, because his glory required it. His glory required, that he should, at length, visit such a wicked people with deserved punishment, that it might appear to all the world that he did not connive at, or patronize their sin. Thus, also, the glory of his name, the only argument now left in our favor, may turn against us, and our country and nation. Do not think that the controversy will thus end, if we persist in our rebellion; no, God will visit our iniquities upon us, as he did upon the Jews, if, like them, we refuse to repent. Perhaps the day of vengeance is at hand. Perhaps the present war may be the dawn of it, notwithstanding the late happy turn of Providence in our favor. A disease may intermit, and yet prove mortal. The sword is still drawn; and the events are very uncertain; and what turn it may yet take, is known only to him who is the supreme Arbiter of war. Therefore, let us this day serve God with fear, and rejoice, with trembling. Let us never think ourselves safe, while iniquity abounds so much in our country and nation. For I can as freely venture the reputation of my judgment upon it now, as when our affairs were in the most discouraging posture, that it will never be well with us, till there be more of the fear and love of God among us; and that we shall never enjoy the happy fruits of peace without interruption, till we

secure the divine favor by turning from our evil ways. Without a general reformation, God will, sooner or later, be avenged upon such a nation as this.

But whatever be the issue of the present war, and whatever be the future doom of Britain and her colonies, we have certainly great cause to celebrate our late deliverances and acquisitions, and to keep this day in a proper manner.

But in what manner ought a thanksgiving day to be observed; and how should we celebrate our late acquisitions and deliverances? I answer,

We may lawfully indulge ourselves in all natural and decent expressions of joy. We may keep this day as the Jews did the days of Purim, as a day of gladness and joy, of feasting and sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. Esther 9:19-22, &c. But let us not indulge ourselves in those riotous excesses and extravagances by which days of thanksgiving are profaned by many, under pretense of solemnizing them.

Let us talk over the goodness of God to our king and country: let our hearts and voices concur in his praise: praise him for all our successes, as their original author. And to inflame our gratitude, let us meditate—upon our former disasters and mortifications, under the frowns of Providence; and the distressing circumstances to which we were reduced—upon the happy providence that routed our enemies before us, without the loss of many lives— upon the goodness of God in preserving our friends and relations that went upon the expedition, and restoring them safely to our arms—upon the agreeable prospect of the security of our frontiers, since the nest of savages, that ravaged them, is demolished; and the enlargement of our settlements to the westward—upon the unanimity that now seems to be restored in the ministry at home, and the invaluable blessing of so good a

king—upon the prospect of the preservation of the Protestant religion and liberty, even in Germany, where they were in the most imminent danger, by the glorious successes of the King of Prussia, that greatest of men—upon the probability of an honorable peace being restored to the earth, that men may no more kill one another—upon the encouragement we have bravely to venture our lives in defense of our country, if it should again stand in need of our assistance —and especially upon the astonishing goodness and grace of God, who is the author of all these agreeable occurrences, and has once more shown mercy to a people deserving of his wrath. Let such things as these be the delightful materials of your meditations and thanksgivings this day. This duty is so pleasing, that methinks I may expect a universal compliance. Methinks it must be pleasing even to a depraved heart, that is averse to the other duties of religion. Hallelujah! “Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it pleasant; and praise is comely” Psalm 147:1.

But what if I should tell you, that repentance, that broken-hearted, bitter, mortifying duty, repentance, is a very proper and seasonable duty, even upon this day of rejoicing? My text authorizes me to tell you this; and this is the only particular in it that I have now time to take any further notice of. “There,” says the Lord to the Jews, that is, in your own country, when delivered from your enemies, and restored to my favor, and a prosperous state, “there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.”

There is something generous and noble in such a repentance. To repent under the rod; to be sorry for the crime, when about to be executed for it; to humble ourselves and mourn, when feeling the frowns of Heaven; this



argues nothing great or generous; this may proceed from an aversion and fear of the punishment, and not of the offence; all this may be merely the effect of self-love, that mean, sneaking passion, which restrains its full power even in infernal spirits; but it is no certain evidence of the least genuine regard to God, or love to holiness. But to be sorry for sin against a sin-pardoning God—to repent with a pardon in our hands—to bewail our crimes when we are delivered from the punishment of them—to loathe ourselves for our abominations, when God loves us notwithstanding—to refuse joy, and melt into tears of penitential sorrow upon a day of rejoicing, because we have so basely and ungratefully treated that gracious Being, who has given us cause of joy; to be unable to forgive ourselves such a course of conduct, though God forgives it; nay, to be the more displeased and implacable against ourselves, because we have sinned against a God who is so merciful as to forgive us after all; this is genuine repentance indeed: it shows true greatness of mind, and sincere abhorrence of sin in itself, as base in its own nature: it argues a real concern for the honor of God, and a generous, disinterested love to him and holiness. This is repentance that will stand the test. And oh! That divine grace would this day produce it in the heart of each of us! This would not damp the joy of this day, but render it more refined and elevated. The tears of such a repentance are agreeable bitter-sweets; and to feel a hard, selfish heart broken with it, is a most delightful sensation; as every evangelical penitent knows in some measure by experience. Oh! Can we bear the thought of ever sinning more against our gracious guardian, God? If we have any sense of honor or gratitude within us, his goodness will certainly do what all his judgments have failed to do, that is, turns us all from our evil ways, to love and serve

him for the future. God grant that it may have this effect, for his own name's sake! Amen.

# *SERM. LXXII. PRACTICAL ATHEISM, IN DENYING THE AGENCY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, EXPOSED.*

***Z**ephaniah 1:12.— *And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.**

Whoever takes a review of the state of our country, for about two years past, or observes its present posture, must be sensible, that matters have gone very ill with us, and that they still bear a threatening aspect. If our country be entirely under the management of blind chance, according to the uncomfortable doctrines of Atheists and Epicureans, alas! We have reason to be alarmed; for the wheel of fortune has begun to turn against us. If all our affairs be entirely dependent upon natural causes, and wholly subject to the power and pleasure of mortals, it is time for us to tremble; for the arm of flesh has been against us. But if our land be a little province of Jehovah's empire; if all natural causes be actuated, directed, and overruled by his superintending providence; if all our affairs be under his sovereign

management, and all our calamities, private and public, be the chastisements of his hand—if, I say, this be the case in fact, as every man believes and wishes, then, it is high time for us to acknowledge it, and be deeply sensible of it, and solicitously to inquire how we have incurred the displeasure of our gracious and righteous Governor, that we may amend our conduct, and labor to regain his favor.

And, after a very serious inquiry, I could discover nothing more likely to be the cause of our present calamities from the divine hand, than the general insensibility and practical disbelief of the Providence of God, that prevail among us. This, I apprehend, is the epidemical disease of the age, and is likely to prove fatal, without a timely remedy. Secondary causes are advanced to the throne of God, and the administration of the world is put into their hands, in his stead; feeble, precarious mortals set up for independency, and would manage their affairs themselves, without a proper subordination to that power by whom they live, move, and have their being. If blessings fall to their lot, they ascribe the honor to themselves: or, if they meet with mortifications and calamities, some poor creature must bear the blame; and they will not realize the hand of Providence in such things. I do not mean that the doctrine of divine providence is not an article of our public and professed faith; or that we avow it as our belief, that God has nothing to do with our affairs or the kingdoms of men. But I mean, the temper and conduct of multitudes is equivalent to a professed disbelief of divine providence; or, in the words of my text, “they say,” in their hearts, “the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil;” that is, he does not concern himself, one way or other, with human affairs. This they say, in their hearts; this is the language of their temper, though with their lips they profess quite the contrary.

This practical Atheism brought the judgments of God upon the Jews, which are so terribly denounced against them by the prophet Zephaniah; and were fully executed, a little time after, in the Babylonish captivity. To that period of national desolation my text refers. "It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles;" I will make the strictest search in every corner and apartment of the city, like persons that search a room with lighted candles. "And I will punish the men that are settled upon their lees;" such men will I find out, wherever they lurk; and no one shall escape. By their being settled on their lees, we may understand their riches; for wine grows rich by being kept on the lees. So, by a long scene of peace and prosperity, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were arrived to very great riches: or it may signify a state of security; like wine settled on the lees, they have been undisturbed; they are not moved with the threatening's or judgments of God, which hang over them; and, therefore, they are easy, and sunk in security and luxury. In both these senses, this metaphorical expression may be understood in Jeremiah, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth; and he hath settled on his lees;" Jer. 48:11. That is, the kingdom of Moab hath enjoyed a long series of peace and prosperity, and this has advanced them to riches and pleasure; and they are dissolved in ease and luxury. They had not experienced the calamities of war; or, as it is there added, "he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity;" he hath not been tossed from country to country, but enjoyed a peaceable settlement in his own land for a length of years; or this phrase, "the men that are settled on their lees," may be rendered, with little alteration, "the men that are curdled or corrupted on their lees;" and then it denotes their corrupt state; they were, as it were, settled and stagnated in their sins: these filthy dregs are mingled and incorporated with

their body politic; and they were become a mere mass of corruption; and they must be shaken and tossed with divine judgments, to purge out their filth. Wars and calamities in the moral world are as necessary as storms and tempests in the natural, to keep the sea and air from putrefying; and a constant calm would introduce a general corruption. The mire and dirt must be cast out; which cannot be done without casting the whole body into a violent ferment and commotion.

“I will punish,” says Jehovah, “I will punish the men that are settled on their lees.” Though I am not fond of a parade of learning in popular discourses, yet it may be worthwhile to make this criticism, that the word here rendered, “I will punish,” is in the original Hebrew, the language in which the Old Testament was written, “I will visit.” And this word is very often used to denote the punishments of the Divine hand; and sometimes it is so rendered, “Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Jer. 5:9. And this word suggests to us, that sinners are apt to look upon God as far from them; they flatter themselves he will let them alone in their sinful security, and that his judgments will always keep at a distance from them; But, says God, I will pay them a visit: I will come upon them unexpectedly with the terrors of my displeasure, and let them know, to their surprise, that I am not so far off as they imagine.

This sense is very pertinent in my text, where it is made one part of the character of these devoted Jews, “That they say in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.” Men are often said in Scripture to say that in their hearts, which is their secret thought, or their inward temper; that which is their governing principle, and which directs their practice; though they dare not express it in words, or though it be quite contrary to

their outward profession, and the declaration of their lips. To a heart-searching God, the temper of the mind, and the principle of action, is more than equivalent to the strongest declaration in words; and by this he judges of men, and not by the outward appearances and pretensions. To this purpose you read in Ezekiel, "Thus have ye said, O house of Israel." But how does this appear? Why, says God, "I knew the things that come into your mind, every one of them." Ezek. 11:5. "You never may have said such a thing in words, but it has been in your thoughts; it has been in the temper of your hearts; and that is what I regard; that language is very intelligible to me."

Hence, my brethren, you see the charge here brought against the Jews amounts to this, that their temper and practice were such as would not at all agree to the practical belief of a providence. They thought and acted, as if it were their real and professed belief, that the Lord would do neither good nor evil, nor meddle with human affairs. If one should judge of their creed by their practice, he would be apt to conclude it was an article of their faith, that Jehovah had abdicated the throne of the universe, and that the blessings and calamities of life were the mere effects of secondary causes, without the influence, direction, or control of an all-ruling Providence.

This is often represented as the secret sentiment of wicked men, and a special cause of the judgments of God upon guilty nations.

You may see their reasoning dressed in all the pomp of language by Eliphaz, who censoriously charges Job with this atheistic notion. "Thou sayest, how doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh" at ease, without troubling himself with the affairs of mortals, "in the circuit of heaven." Job 22:13,14. David also represents the preposterous ungodly as

querying in this infidel strain—"How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" Ps. 73:11. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless; yet they say the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard." Ps. 94:6,7. An arrogant self-sufficiency, and a practical renunciation of divine providence, have brought the judgments of Heaven upon many a powerful nation. Why was Egypt destroyed? It was for her pride in saying, "My river," the river Nile, (on which the land depended for its fruitfulness,) "my river is mine own; and I have made it for myself." Ezek. 29:3. When God denounces his judgments against Tyrus, that center of trade and riches, and mart of nations, it was because she had said in her heart, "I am a God;" I am independent, and owe no subjection to any superior power. But how mortifying is that question, "Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am a God?" alas! You must then lay aside your airs of deity, and own your entire dependence. Ezek. 28:2,6, 7,9. Why was Nebuchadnezzar struck with a melancholy madness, and transformed into a brute? It was because he had presumed to speak in this uncreature-like language, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of MY power for the honor of MY majesty?" Dan. 4:30. Observe what stress he lays upon the little, proud monosyllables I and MY. Daniel, that honest courtier, who had not learned to flatter even kings and monarchs, assigns this as the reason of the destruction of Babylon, and the haughty Belshazzar. "Thou has not humbled thine heart; but thou hast lifted up thine heart against the Lord of heaven; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways;" that is, the God on whom thou art wholly dependent, "hast thou not glorified." Dan. 5:22,23. But this atheistical insolence appears nowhere with more pride and self-sufficiency, and is nowhere more signally mortified than in the haughty Assyrian



monarch, of whom you read in the tenth chapter of Isaiah. Hear the language of his arrogance: “By the strength of my hand have I done it; and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures; and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.” Isa. 10:13. And was he, indeed, that Godlike, independent, self-sufficient being he took himself to be? Does the God of heaven pronounce him such, and confirm his claim? No. What contempt does he pour upon him! “O, Assyrian,” says he, “the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.” Ver. 5. He is but a poor passive instrument in my hand, to chastise and punish guilty nations. And “shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up; or, as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.” Isa. 10:15. What mortifying images are these, to represent this haughty conqueror! “Wherefore, it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed his whole work of judgment upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem,” for which he hath raised him up and commissioned him, “then will I punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.” Isa. 10:12.

In short, my brethren, this atheistical affectation of independency, and secret or practical renunciation of divine providence, is the fatal thing that generally overturned the empires, and impoverished, enslaved, and ruined the nations of the earth. This prevailed even among the Jews, the peculiar people of God, and brought his vengeance upon them: even they had learned to speak in this atheistical strain, “The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.” Ezek. 9:9.

And, I am afraid, it is for this that Virginia now totters. This is the source of those numerous filthy streams of vice and impiety, which are likely to overwhelm us, and open the flood-gates of divine vengeance. Jehovah, who hears and understands the significant language of the heart and practice, no doubt hears this blasphemy whispered in every corner of our country, “We have nothing to do with Him. The sun, and clouds, and earth conspire to produce food for us; but what hand has He in all this? Many parts of our country are languishing under the effects of a severe drought; and the French and Indians are invading our territories, and murdering our fellow-subjects; but what has God to do in all this? We will fight it out with them ourselves, flesh with flesh; and let Him look on as an idle spectator.” Horrid language, indeed! And, perhaps, the most audacious sinner among us would not venture to express it with his lips. But, what says the inward temper—what says the practice of our countrymen? This shall be our present inquiry; and for this purpose, I shall,

First, Offer a few arguments to establish the doctrine of a divine providence over the affairs of men, and particularly in national blessings and calamities. I will,

Secondly, Point out some things in the temper and conduct of our countrymen, which argue a secret and practical disbelief of this doctrine. And,

Thirdly, Expose the aggravated wickedness of such a disbelief.

My design, in the whole, is not so much to convince your understanding, as to impress your hearts with a sense of the divine government over the world. You already speculatively believe it; but the grand defect lies in the efficacy of this belief on your hearts and lives; and this I would willingly supply. It is but a little one, in so narrow a sphere, can do, to reform the

country in general, in this particular; and truly this is a painful reflection to him, that, in an agony of zeal, would sometimes wish for a voice to reach every corner of the land, and address all the inhabitants upon this point. But since the extensive benevolence of my soul, in this particular, cannot be gratified, I would at least exert all my little influence among you, my dear people, to banish this atheistic spirit from among you, and prevent your concurring to the destruction of your country, by indulging in it. Therefore attend, while, in the first place, I offer a few arguments, to establish the doctrine of a divine providence over the affairs of men, and particularly in national and public blessings and calamities.

For the proof of this, I am more at a loss what arguments to select out of a great number, than how to invent them. We may argue from the perfections of God, and his relations to us. Can we imagine, that a God of infinite knowledge, power, wisdom, and goodness, would sit idle on the throne of the universe, and be an unconcerned, inactive spectator of his own creatures? Would he make such a world as this, and then cast it off his hand, as an abandoned orphan, and never look after it more? Had he no wise and good designs in the production of this vast and curious frame of things? And will he leave these designs to be accomplished or blasted by chance, or the humors or caprice of mortals? We may argue from the natural dependence of creatures upon the supreme cause, that he did not invest them with the incommunicable attribute of self-sufficiency; but they must depend in acting on Him, on whom they depend for existence. We may argue from our confessed obligations to religion, and the worship of God: if there should be such a thing as religion, there must be a Providence; for it is plain, that if God has nothing to do with us, we have nothing to do with him. Where there is no dependence, there should be no acknowledgment;

where there is no beneficence, there should be no gratitude. This is so evident, that Cicero, a heathen, expresses it in the strongest terms. I shall give you a translation of his words. “If,” said he, “the gods neither can nor will assist us, nor take any care of us; if they take no notice what we do, and nothing can proceed from them which affects the life of man, why should we pay them worship and honor? Why should we pray to them?”

If I should go about formally to prove this doctrine by particular quotations from Scripture, it would be to insult you, as entirely ignorant of your Bibles. How often do you there find the supreme dominion of Providence over the world asserted in the strongest terms? How often are personal and national blessings and calamities ascribed to divine agency? Rain and fruitful seasons, drought and famine, sickness and health, peace and war, poverty and riches, promotion and abasement, all such events are uniformly represented as at the disposal of the great Lord of the universe. Nay, his Providence is expressly said to be extended to the hairs of our heads, to young ravens and sparrows, to the lily and grass of the field. And can we then suppose, that he takes no care of men, or of kingdoms and nations? In short, this doctrine is true, or our Bibles are good for nothing; for there is nothing they more frequently and strongly assert.

The testimony of Scripture is so plain, and I have insisted upon it so much, in your hearing, that I shall say no more upon it at present; but I shall produce a class of new and unexpected witnesses to this truth; I mean the heathens, who generally had nothing but the light of Nature for their teacher. Their evidence maybe attended with sundry advantages. It will be new to most of you who have not opportunity of perusing their writings: and therefore may make deeper impressions on your minds. It will show you, that the substance of this truth is so evident, that even the light of

Nature could discover it, without the special help of Revelation—and it may put you, that call yourselves Christians, to the blush, to find even heathens exceed you in a full persuasion of this truth, and perhaps a practical regard to it.

I shall begin with such heathen witnesses as are recorded in sacred history, sundry of whom have some glimmering light from Revelation, or from their conversation with the Jews.

Let us first hear the extorted confession of that proud, but mortified monarch, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:34, &c. “I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou? And those that walk in pride, he is able to abase.” God complains of that mighty conqueror Cyrus, who was the executioner of his justice upon the powerful Babylonian empire, and many other nations, “I have girded thee, though thou hast not known me.” Isaiah 45:5. Yet we find even this heathen monarch, at least once, ascribing all his victories to the God of heaven, in his edict for the dismissal of the Jews, and the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra 1:2. “Thus saith Cyrus, King of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth:” I acknowledge my universal empire is his gift. Hear also Nebuzar-adan upon this head, the general of the King of Babylon. “The Lord thy God (says he to Jeremiah) hath pronounced this evil upon this place: now the Lord hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord,

and have not obeyed his voice: therefore this thing has come upon you.” You see, my brethren, a heathen could instruct many of our countrymen who are professed Christians, that their sin is the cause of their national calamities. Josephus informs us, that Titus the Roman general, when he took a view of the prodigious strength of Jerusalem, acknowledged that all the force of the Roman army would not have been able to take it, had not the providence of God been upon his side, and against the devoted Jews.

But let us next hear heathens speak their own minds in their own language and writings. Plato, a Greek philosopher, above two thousand years ago, teaches us, “that all things are disposed by him, who takes care of the whole universe for the safety and advantage of the whole; the force and efficacy of whose providence doth diffuse itself through all parts of the universe, according to their nature.” “Shall we not affirm,” says he, “with our ancestors, that mind and a certain disposing wisdom, does govern? The Divine mind disposes all things in the best order, and is the cause of all things; and disposes all things in that manner which is best.” He also asserts, that it was the doctrine of Ulysses and Socrates as well as his own, “that we cannot so much as move without God.” Thus, you see, Plato’s evidence is full to the purpose.

The next I shall introduce, is Horace, a Roman poet; and though an epicurean in other things, he very expressly acknowledges a Providence over the kingdoms of the earth and human affairs. “Kings,” says he, “have authority over their proper subjects; but Jove (that is the heathen name for Supreme Being) has authority over the kings themselves.” He asserts, that he alone exercises an equal government over earth and sea, over ghosts and the regions of the dead, over gods and mortals, or, in our style, over men and angels. Nay, he expressly tells the Romans, who then ruled the world,

that they had the superiority among men, because they behaved themselves inferior to the divine Being; and that the reason of the calamities their country groaned under, was, their neglect of God.

But the principal authority I shall produce is that of Cicero,—one of the greatest men that any age has produced; a great statesman and politician, a Roman senator, and one that sustained the consulship with great honor, which was the highest dignity in that commonwealth. I have been not a little surprised to hear him speak in such strains as these:— “This,” says he, “has been the persuasion of our citizens from the beginning, that the gods are the proprietors and rulers of all things; and that those things which are done, are done by their judgment and power; that they are very kind to mankind, and inspect every man’s character, what he does, what he commits, with what mind, with what piety, he worships; and that they make a distinction between good and bad men.” He calls “Jove the greatest and best of beings, by whose nod and pleasure, the heaven, the earth, and seas are ruled; which frequently, with violent winds and hurricanes, or with excessive heat, or intolerable cold, has afflicted men, demolished cities, and destroyed the fruits of the earth; and who, on the other hand, gives us all our blessings; the light we enjoy, and the breath we draw.” The Romans, who were at first but a little savage village of banditti and run-aways, had conquered the world, and advanced themselves to universal empire; and this he expressly ascribes to the providence of God, and their own piety. The following passage deserves the attention of even an improved Christian. “Who is there so mad,” says he, “that when he takes a view of the heavens, does not perceive that there is a God, and that should think those things which are made with so much wisdom, that human art can hardly attain the knowledge of their order and revolutions, were made by chance: or that

having discovered that there is a God, does not also discover, that it is by his providence that this whole empire was founded, increased, and preserved? We may love ourselves,” says he to the Roman senate, “as much as we will: but we must own, that we have not conquered the Spaniards by our number, nor the Gauls by our strength, nor the Carthaginians by our policy, nor the Greeks by our learning, nor the natives of this country, Italy: but we have conquered them only by our piety and religion; and by this wisdom only, namely, that we have discovered and acknowledged, that all things are governed by the providence of God; by this wisdom only, have we overcome all nations.” What an humble, creature-like declaration is this! And how may we be surprised to hear it from the mouth of a heathen, when we hear so little of this language in a Christian country! The Roman commonwealth was in great danger by the conspiracy of Catiline; and Cicero had been successfully active in detecting and suppressing it; and he promises the Romans that he would put an end to it. “But I do not promise this,” says he, “trusting in my own prudence, or in human councils; but in God—and you ought to pray, that he who has made your city so beautiful, so flourishing, and powerful, would defend it, and subdue its enemies by sea and land.” And when the conspiracy was happily suppressed by his vigilance, he gratefully acknowledges a divine Providence in it. “Who is there,” says he, “O Romans, so averse from truth, so presumptuous, so bereft of his senses, as to deny, that all these things which we see, and especially this city, are managed by the power and providence of God! If I should say that it was I that defeated the conspirators, I should take too much upon me, and my arrogance would be insufferable. It was the Supreme God, it was he, it was he that defeated them, it was his will to preserve our capitol—his will to preserve this city, and these temples—his



will that you should be all safe. It was under the conduct of the immortal God, that I formed this judgment and determination, and made such a discovery of the plot.”

In this manner, my brethren, does one of the greatest men that ever Rome was adorned with, acknowledge the hand of Providence in all his successes; and though vanity was remarkably his foible, he was ashamed to arrogate the glory to himself. When shall our newspapers and political writings be so far reformed, as to speak the language of heathens? Alas! They are stuffed with such empty boasts and bravadoes about our powerful fleet, our brave officers, and so forth, as would have been judged impious and intolerably insolent, in heathen Rome. To acknowledge the divine hand in our victories and defeats, to profess a dependence upon him for success, and acknowledge the utter insufficiency of all our forces without him; this is unpolite and unfashionable; this, to be sure, must be the canting language of an enthusiast, or a Presbyterian; whereas one would think it would be the natural language of every creature. Christians! Protestants! If ye will not learn the doctrine of an all-ruling Providence from your Bibles, learn it, at least, from Plato and Cicero. Can you shut your eyes against the light of nature and of Revelation too, when they mingle their beams, and pour upon you in a flood of day?

Were it necessary to enlarge upon this head, I might add a great many more quotations from sundry of the ancient poets and philosophers; and I might also show you that this was the belief, not only of the learned men in the heathen world, but of the vulgar or common people in general. This appeared from their anxious consultations of oracles, their prayers and sacrifices, before they entered into war; and their religious festivals and thank-offerings after victory. And you can hardly meet with one of their

authors, but what is full of such accounts. And will not Rome and Greece rise up in judgment against the men of our country, who cast off a practical regard to God in their expeditions, and seem desirous that the arm of flesh alone should fight it out, without the interposition of a superior cause? From this I naturally proceed,

Secondly, To point out some things in the temper and conduct of our countrymen, which argue a secret and practical disbelief of the doctrine of divine Providence. And these, alas! Are easily discovered.

First, Do you think there would be so little prayer among us, if we were generally affected with this truth? If we looked upon the concurrence of Providence of any importance, should we not think it worthwhile to pray for it, with our most importunate cries? We look to our government to make provision; we try to enlist men; we regard their number, courage, and conduct; their arms and ammunition; but who is there in our land that looks to the Lord? Where are the Abrahams among us, to intercede for our Sodom? Where are Moses's to hold up the hands of prayer, while our forces are engaged? There are, I doubt not, a few persons, and perhaps a few families, here and there, that thus show their friendship for their country; and there are multitudes that seem to join in those forms of prayer for the public, which are used in the places where they respectively attend. But it is most evident, there is but very little of a spirit of prayer in our land. Alas! How many private persons live in the habitual neglect of secret devotion—how many families live and die together, without any appearances of family-religion?

In short, there is but little prayer to be heard in our country on any account; but few that earnestly cry to God for themselves. And how few then, O my neglected country! How few appear as thy advocates at the

throne of grace! How few prayers are offered up for thee! Now, when men will not so much as earnestly ask the alliance of Providence, is it not plain that they have very slight thoughts of it, and do not seriously believe it? O sirs! It will never be well with our country, until we learn to bow the knees, until poor strangers to the throne of grace begin to frequent it, and until the voice of prayer be heard from every corner of our land. Let others do as they will; but as for us, my brethren, let us become a little congregation of praying souls; and we may do more real service to our country, than an equal number of armed men.

Secondly, Is not the general indulgence of vice, and neglect of religion, a plain evidence of the general disbelief of a divine Providence over our country? That wickedness is almost universally triumphant, and practical religion and the concerns of eternity are generally neglected, is too evident to require a formal proof. Take a journey through our country, mingle in company, enter into families, observe the conduct of men in their retirements; and you will soon meet with the disagreeable conviction. If there be much religion in Virginia, I am sure it is not the religion of our Bibles—it is not the religion of Jesus; it is a religion that consists in swearing, drinking, quarrelling, carousing, luxury, and pleasure—in fraud, covetousness, and the grossest vices and impieties—it is a cold, careless, immoral, prayerless religion; or, at best, it is a religion made up of a few lukewarm, insipid, Sunday formalities of devotion, without life, without spirit, without earnestness. And would it be thus, do you think, if men were deeply sensible that God exercises a providence over the kingdoms of the earth, to punish them for their sins? Would they dare to affront him thus, if they firmly believed that he would resent it in earnest? Or would they be so careless about securing his favor by a conscientious obedience? No; they

would be solicitous, above all things, to keep upon good terms with their Supreme Ruler; and they would no more dare to provoke him, than they would set a train of powder under the foundations of their houses, to blow them up. But now they act as if it were their belief, that the Lord has forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of the conduct of the inhabitants; as if they had nothing to hope and nothing to fear from him; and therefore they may do what they please, and shift for themselves as they can.

Thirdly, Is not the general impenitence, notwithstanding the many public calamities under which our country has groaned, a melancholy evidence of this practical atheism? Judgments have crowded thick and heavy upon our land, these twelve months past. Our general has been most ingloriously defeated, and all our high hopes from that expedition mortified. Our northern forces, from which we had still higher expectations, returned, without carrying their designs into execution. The Indian savages, under French instigation, have laid a great part of our country desolate, and murdered many hundreds of our fellow-subjects, in one part or other; and they still continue their depredations and barbarities, and that generally with impunity. To all this I must add, that our promising expedition against the Shawaneese, is coming to nothing; an expedition on which the country has spent about six thousand pounds, and which seemed the best expedient to put an end to the inroads of the savages upon our ravished frontier. We were not without fears of disappointment from various causes: we were apprehensive that they might have heard of the design, and either deserted their towns, or so fortified themselves with the assistance of the French, as to be an over-match for our forces: these were plausible suppositions. But who would ever have suspected that the expedition should fail for want of provisions? That men, leaving a plentiful country, and about to march

through a tedious and unknown wilderness, should not take a sufficient supply with them? Who would have thought that men in their senses would have been so stupid and improvident? To me, I must own, it looks like a judicial infatuation. Last summer, our men were killed by one another, in the ever-melancholy engagement on the banks of the Monongahela, and now a provoked God has let us see once more, that he needs not the instrumentality of enemies and arms to blast the expedition of a guilty people. By their own mismanagement, they defeat themselves, and disconcert their own schemes. In truth, my brethren, if there be a divine providence, I think it dreadfully evident that it is against us. All our most promising undertakings issue in disappointments; and nothing prospers that we take in hand. But to return—we have not only suffered by the calamities of war, but a great part of our country is languishing under the effects of a very severe drought, which we, in this neighborhood, are so happy as to know but little of by experience. Now, if there be a providence, these calamities are inflicted upon us by a divine hand: they are not the random strokes of chance, or the effects of blind fate; but the chastisements or judgments of an angry God. And if he be the inflictor of them, it is certain he inflicts them for the sins of the land. It is sin, it is sin only, that can bring down punishments on the subjects of a just government. But is this generally believed? If it were, would it not strip impenitent sinners of their presumptuous airs, and bring them to the knee, as humble, broken-hearted penitents, at the feet of their injured Sovereign? If everyone believed that his sins have had a share in bringing down the vengeance of Heaven upon his country, would he not smite upon his breast, and say, alas! What have I done? God be merciful to me a sinner! Would he not immediately attempt a reformation, which is the principal constituent of true repentance? But alas!

Have these calamities been thus improved by our countrymen? Produce me one instance of conversion, if you can, by all the terrors of war, and by all the alarming apprehensions of famine! Alas! In vain has the blood of our soldiers and fellow-subjects been shed—in vain has nature languished around us, and the earth denied its fruitfulness—in vain has the rod of divine indignation chastised us, if not one soul be brought to repentance by all these means. And if reformation be found impracticable, what must follow but destruction? God may bear long with a guilty people; and, indeed, he has done so with us: but he will take them in hand at length: and when he does take them in hand, he will make thorough work with them. If chastisement will not amend, vengeance shall destroy. And I am bold to pronounce, that you have no other alternative, but repent or perish. I will not presume to determine the time, the degree, or the circumstances; but I am bold to renew my declaration, that misery and ruin await our country, if we still continue incorrigibly impenitent. Men and money; arms, ammunition, and fortifications, courage, conduct, and skill, are all necessary for the defense of our land; but there is an unthought-of something as necessary as any, or all these, and that is Reformation—a general, public reformation: and without this, all other means will be to no purpose in the issue. I do not now take upon me to prophesy: I only draw a natural consequence from known premises; and infer, what will be, from what has always been. Thus God has always dealt with the kingdoms of the earth, these have always been the maxims of his providential government. The ruins of Egypt, Babylon, Rome, and many a flourishing city, country, and empire, proclaim this truth. And if we disregard it, it is well if it be not written in the ruins of Virginia ere long. My brethren I must speak to you without reserve: the general impenitence of our inhabitants, under all the

providences of God to bring them to repentance, is by far the most discouraging symptom to me; much more so than our divided counsels, our routed armies, and our blasted schemes: indeed, I look upon it as the cause of all these. May I then hope to be heard, at least in the little circle of my own congregation, when, as an advocate for your country, I call you to repentance? O Sirs, you have carried the matter far enough; you have trifled with your God, and delayed your reformation long enough; therefore, from this moment commence humble penitents, and let your country and your souls suffer no more by your willful wickedness. Whenever you recollect our past calamities, or whenever you meet with the like in time to come, immediately prostrate yourselves before the Lord; plead guilty; guilty; bewail your own sins: and bewail and mourn over the sins of the land. If even all this congregation should be enabled, by divine grace, to take this method, they might, in the sight of God, obtain the glorious character of deliverers of their country. Who knows but our Sodom might be spared, for the sake of a few such righteous persons?

Fourthly, Is not the general ingratitude a plain evidence of the general disbelief of a providential government over the world? My brethren, our blessings, in this country, have been distinguishing: the blessings of a good soil, and a healthy and temperate climate—the blessings of liberty, plenty, and a long peace—the blessings of a well-constituted government, and a gentle administration—the invaluable but despised blessings of the gospel of Christ; blessings public and private, personal and relative, spiritual and temporal: in short, it is hard to find a spot upon our globe more rich in blessings, all things considered. But how little gratitude to God for all these blessings? How little is his hand acknowledged in them? Men bless their own good fortune, their industry, or good management, but how few

sincerely, and with their whole souls, bless their divine benefactor? Now if his agency were thoroughly believed, would they, could they be so stupidly ungrateful under the reception of so many blessings from him? No; their hearts must glow with love, and their lips must speak his praise.

Fifthly, How little serious and humble acknowledgment of the providence of God in our disappointments and mortifications, is to be found among us! Men murmur and fret in a sort of sullen stupidity; or they cast all the blame upon their fellow-creatures. Those that sneak at home, and know nothing of politics or war, will severely censure the men in power, for imprudent regulations, or negligence —military officers for their bad conduct, or soldiers for their cowardice. But who is it that sees and reveres the hand of an angry God in all this? Alas, the generality seem to think that the world is left to men, to manage as they please; and that God has nothing to do with it. They say in their hearts, “the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.”

These things may suffice to prove the fact, that this practical atheism is very common and prevalent in our country: and now it is proper I should show the aggravations of it. I therefore proceed,

Thirdly, to expose the horrid wickedness of this atheistical temper and conduct.

And here, had I words gloomy enough to represent the most diabolical dispositions in the infernal regions, they would not be too black for my purpose. I shall throw sundry things together promiscuously upon this head, without any formal order. To deny the agency of Providence, is the most daring rebellion against the King of heaven: it is to abjure his government in his own territories, in his own world, which he has made: it is to draw away his subjects from their allegiance; and to represent him as a mere



name; for what is his character as the ruler of the universe but an idle title, if he do not actually exercise a providence over it, but leaves his creatures to themselves, to worry and destroy one another, as they please? If he do not punish the kingdoms of the earth, for their sin; and if the blessings they enjoy, be not the gifts of his hand, it is not worthwhile to acknowledge his government: for of what benefit is that government that neither rewards nor punishes its subjects? But if God be indeed the author of these things, it must be the most unnatural rebellion, the blackest treason, to deny his agency. To be rejected in his own world by his own creatures—for the great Parent and support of nature to be renounced by the creatures, whom he supports in existence every moment—that all his chastisements, and all his blessings, should not be able to bring his own offspring to acknowledge him: what can be more shocking or provoking? This is also a most ungrateful wickedness. Alas! Shall God so richly bless us from year to year; shall he so gently chastise us; and yet be forgotten, disregarded, unacknowledged? It is hard, indeed, if such a country full of blessings cannot bring us so much as dutifully and thankfully to acknowledge him. Alas! Shall poor, subordinate, dependent creatures run away with all the glory, and still be made his rivals, or rather, entirely exclude him? What unnatural ingratitude is this? It is likewise intolerable pride and arrogance. Ye poor, precarious beings, that were nothing a little while ago, and that would relapse into nothing this moment, without the support of the divine hand; alas! Will ye set up for independency and self-sufficiency? Are you capable of managing the world, and shifting for yourselves? And is the God, in whom you live, and move, and have your being, become a kind of superfluity to you? Can you carry on war, can you defend your country, and provide for yourselves without him? Will you usurp his throne, and set your

“heart as the heart of God.” Ezek. 28:2. Alas! The province is too high for you. “Will you say in the hand of him that slayeth you, I am a god?” Ezek. 28:9. What impiety and insolence; what arrogance and blasphemy is this? Will you substitute natural causes for your God, and ascribe all the events you meet with to their independent agency, when they are but the mere instruments of divine Providence? Can Jehovah bear with such a sacrilegious attempt upon the royalties of his crown? Again; this atheistical spirit is the source of all vice and irreligion. If men had an affecting belief, that “verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth,” Ps. 58:11; would they neglect him as they do, or would they so audaciously provoke him, and bid him defiance by their sins? No; a conviction of this would bring the sinner to his knee; it would restrain him from everything that would displease him, and prompt him to every duty. But if the Lord hath forsaken the earth, then every man may consult his pleasure, and do what is good in his own eyes, without control. This, my brethren, as I observed, is the source of that torrent of wickedness, which has overwhelmed our country: mankind say in their hearts, that God will connive at their conduct, or that he takes no notice of it: and hence their presumptuous sin and impenitence. Which leads me to add, that such a spirit prevents the improvement and good effect of all the providences of God towards us and our country. Calamities may make us miserable, fretful, and impatient; but they can never bring us to reformation, and a genuine repentance for our sins against God, unless we are sensible that it is a provoked God that lays them upon us. The bounties of Providence may make us happy, wanton, proud, and self-confident; but they can never fire our hearts with gratitude, nor allure us to obedience, unless we receive them as from his gracious hand. It is the want of this, my brethren, that has

rendered all the providence of God so useless to our land: hence it is, they have produced so few, if any, instances, of true conversion. And thus it will be, we shall but abuse mercy, and we never shall learn the art of extracting good out of evil, and profit by our afflictions till we learn this lesson.

And now, sirs, upon the whole, must you not shudder to think what a load of guilt lies upon our country, on account of this spirit of atheism that has spread over it? When the generality of the subjects turn rebels, and promise themselves impunity, is it not time for their Sovereign to come forth against them and make them sensible of his power and authority, to their cost? Is it not time for a neglected, disregarded, forgotten Deity, to take our country in hand, and extort from practical atheists a confession of his government by the pressure of their miseries? Will he always suffer himself to be denied and renounced in his own dominions? I say his own dominions; for, assume what airs you will, Virginia is a little province of his universal empire; and all the world shall know it, either by the terrors of his justice, or by our voluntary confession and cheerful subjection. If gentler measures will not do, he may employ French tyranny and Indian barbarity to bring down our haughty spirits, and cause us to own his government, and our dependence and subjection.

Are not some of us guilty of this epidemical, fashionable infidelity? Have you not lived in this world until this moment, without being sensible of that all-ruling Power, by which it is governed? Then you are to be ranked among the destroyers of your country. Alas! Such persons are its worst enemies. Prepare, ye infidels, prepare for his judgments to teach you a more creature-like temper. Or if you escape his judgments in this life, prepare for those more dreadful punishments of the world to come, which will oblige the most rebellious spirit in hell to acknowledge that the Lord reigns.

Finally; amid all the tumults of this restless world— amid all the terror of war, and, in short, amid all the events of life of every kind, let us labor to impress our spirits with this truth, that all things are under the management of a wise and good God, who will always do what is best, upon the whole. This will be a source of obedience; this will teach us to turn the greatest miseries into blessings, and to derive good from evil; and this will be a sweet support, and afford us an agreeable calm, amid all the pressures and tossing's of this boisterous world, till we arrive at the harbor of eternal rest.

# *SERM. LXXIII. THE PRIMITIVE AND PRESENT STATE OF MAN COMPARED.*

**R**omans 5:17.— *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive [the] abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*

The ruin of mankind by the fall of Adam, and the method of redemption by Jesus Christ, are subjects of the utmost importance in the Christian religion: and it is necessary we should have some competent knowledge of them, and be suitably affected with them: otherwise, we cannot be recovered from the ruins of the grand apostacy, nor enjoy the salvation of the gospel. I do not mean, that it is absolutely necessary for any man, much less for plain and illiterate understandings, to know all the niceties of controversy, and to be able to solve all the difficulties and objections, which the ignorance, arrogance, or curiosity of wrangling and presumptuous disputants, have started upon these heads: but the substance and importance of the truths themselves, their principal consequences as to us, and the duties resulting from them; these we ought to understand and feel. This

knowledge and sense of these things, is as necessary to our salvation, as a sense of sickness, and a knowledge of the means of cure, is to the recovery of the sick. And, whatever obscurity and perplexity attend these subjects, we have sufficient light from our Bibles, from observation and experience, to obtain such a degree of knowledge and sense of them, as is sufficient for this purpose. These subjects, therefore, shall now employ an hour of your sacred time. And may the blessed Spirit of God enable me to discover, and you to receive, the knowledge of his own truths, without adulteration, without corrupt mixtures of human invention, and without partiality and self-flattery! And may He deeply impress our hearts with the knowledge we acquire, and make it a lively principle of practice!

The ruin and recovery of mankind, by the first and second Adam, is the subject of the apostle in the context. His immediate design is to show, the parity in some respects, and the disparity in others, between these two public persons.

We have an instance of this parity and disparity in my text. The instance of parity in this—That as the offence of Adam gave death a universal dominion over all his numerous posterity; so the grace and righteousness of Christ procure and bestow everlasting life to all those who receive these blessings. “As, by one man’s offence, death reigned by one, so they, who receive the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

The instance of disparity is this: The superior efficacy of the grace and righteousness of Christ to procure and bestow life, above that of the offence of Adam, to subject mankind to the dominion of death. “If, by one man’s offence, death reigned, how much more shall they reign in life, who receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness from Jesus Christ?”

If the offence of Adam was sufficient for the condemnation of all his posterity, how much more sufficient is the grace and righteousness of the second Adam, to justify and save all that have an interest in him? The expression is very strong and emphatical—“The Abundance of grace;” an overflowing, a redundance of grace; not only sufficient, but more, than sufficient to repair all the ruinous consequences of Adam’s fall; sufficient to procure more blessings, than he or his posterity would have enjoyed, even if he had never offended; and to render the reign, the dominion of life, more glorious and triumphant, than his sin rendered the reign or dominion of death dismal and irresistible. We may gain more by Jesus Christ, than we lost in Adam. He cannot only raise human nature out of its ruins, but repair it in a more glorious form, than that in which it came from the hands of its divine Author at first.

The two great truths which the Apostle has chiefly in view in my text, are these; that by the sin of Adam all mankind are subjected to the power of death; and, that all that accept of the blessings of redemption through Christ, are delivered from the death to which they are exposed by the sin of Adam, and also entitled to a more glorious and happy life, than that, which they lost by Adam’s sin: or, in other words, that the blessings of redemption, by Christ, are even more than sufficient to recover us from all the ruinous consequences of the fall of Adam. These, I say, are the truths the apostle has chiefly in view: and these I intend chiefly to illustrate. But I would, by the bye, make some transient remarks on one or two strong and beautiful expressions, which the apostle uses in my text; and which are certainly worthy of notice.

“Death reigned”—how dreadfully striking is the representation! Death is represented as a mighty all-conquering king, that reigned undethroned,

uncontrolled, through a long succession of thousands of years, over all the sons of men, from generation to generation; keeping them in slavery and terror; arresting, imprisoning, stripping them of all their enjoyments, and depriving them even of their lives at pleasure. Death, in this sense, reigns king of kings, as well as of their subjects; the sovereign lord of absolute monarchs, as well as of their slaves; the conqueror of conquerors as well as of their helpless captives. The power of death is royal, the power of a king—he reigns. This wide world is his kingdom—the kingdom of death!—how shocking the idea!—and all mankind are his subjects, his slaves.

“By one man’s offence, death reigned by one.” It was the one offence of one man that gave death his royal dominion. Then death was proclaimed and crowned king of our world, and mankind pronounced his subjects. Oh! The unspeakable mischiefs of that one offence!

But what a glorious contrast strikes our view, in the antithesis, as to those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness! “They shall reign,”—they shall be made kings, invested with royal power and dignity. They shall reign in life—Life shall be the wide-extended territory over which they shall have full dominion: life shall be the furniture of their court, the ornament of their crown, the regalia of their reign. They shall reign in life, in opposition to the reign of death; they shall have dominion over that gloomy lord of the sons of Adam. The offspring of the dust, the dying children of Adam the sinner, the feeble mortals that were once the subjects, the slaves of the tyrant death, shall reign in life,

*“High in salvation and the climes of bliss.”* -- Milton.

What a glorious, surprising, miraculous advancement is this! And for this they are indebted, not to themselves, but to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who has conquered death for them, and dignified them with life and



immortality. “They shall reign in life, by one, Jesus Christ.” One Jesus Christ is sufficient to accomplish this illustrious revolution. Oh! What wonders has he wrought! And how worthy is he to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Rev. 5:12.

The emphasis will appear still farther, if we take notice of the comparison implied in the text. If death reigned, much more shall they reign. If death reigned by one offence, much more shall they reign by the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. If death reigned by one Adam, much more shall they reign by one Jesus Christ. He is much more able to quicken, to save, and glorify, than Adam was to kill and destroy. His spiritual children shall reign in life, much more absolutely, illustriously, and uncontrollably, than ever death reigned over the sons of Adam. What a glorious exaltation is this! To have the same command over life, as death has had over the enjoyments and lives of mankind—to be as victorious over death, and all its host of sickness and sorrow, as death once was over life and all its pleasures; what a grand and noble representation!

I now proceed to the illustration of the great truths the apostle has chiefly in view in this verse; and I begin with the first.

That, by the sin of Adam, all mankind are subjected to, the power of death.

It is the more necessary to insist upon this, as the doctrine of original sin, as it is commonly called, is not only disputed in our age and country, but too generally denied, and represented as a Calvinistic fiction, supported neither by Scripture nor reason, inferring blasphemous reflections upon the divine perfections, and degrading the dignity of human nature.

We now hear panegyrics upon the powers of man, the dignity of his nature, and I know not what: as though these powers had never been shattered by the first fall. We often hear and read such harangues as these—“Can we suppose that a righteous and good God would inflict punishment upon millions of millions of his own creatures, for an offence committed by another so long before they had a being; an offence in which they had no concurrence, and which they could not possibly have prevented? Is this consistent with the mercy or the justice of God? What horrid ideas must this raise in our minds of our common Father, as an arbitrary, cruel tyrant, that dooms us to bear his displeasure for a crime in which we had no hand? Has not this doctrine a tendency to cool our love, and excite our horror of him, as the enemy of the race of man? And does it not also tend to cherish a mean and sneaking spirit, from an apprehension that we are degraded depraved creatures, instead of that conscious greatness of mind, which proceeds from a sense of the dignity of human nature?”

We are also told, “That as this is not the doctrine of reason, no neither is it that of revelation; that there are but few passages of Scripture that so much as seem to countenance it; and that these will easily admit of another sense: that this, however, cannot be the sense of them, because it is contrary to reason, which a revelation from God can never contradict.”

A great deal to this purpose is pleaded; and the representation is so popular and pleasing, as flattering their vanity, that mankind are naturally disposed to embrace it: and those are looked upon as the generous friends of human nature, who entertain such high sentiments of it; whereas those who look upon mankind as a degraded race of creatures, are esteemed rigid, sour, malevolent creatures, that would dishonor the noble workmanship of God, and overwhelm themselves and others with melancholy. .

But, let us not be deterred by this, from an impartial examination of the subject. It is likely that in this, as well as in other matters of difference, both parties have gone to extremes; and we are most likely to find the truth in the midway between them. Moderation is a virtue, and also a guide to truth; and may it always actuate and direct our minds!

You may observe, that it is not my present design, nor that of my text, to consider that part of original sin which consists in the corruption of our nature derived from Adam; but only that which consists in the imputation of his guilt to us, or our exposedness to punishment on account of his sin.

Here I would inquire, whether we do suffer punishment on account of Adam's first sin? And how far this punishment may justly extend?

To discover this, I shall compare the primitive and present state of our world, and of mankind in it, as it is represented to us by revelation, reason, experience, and observation.

If the present state of our world be the same with that in which Adam was created, and if all mankind now be placed in the same state and circumstances that he was placed in, while in innocence, then we may conclude, that his posterity do not suffer, or are not punished for his sin; or that the guilt of it is not imputed to them. But if our world is thrown into disorder since his fall, rendered less commodious and more injurious to mankind, and, as it were, branded with the displeasure of God; if mankind, since his fall, groan under a variety of miseries, to which man in his primitive state was not subject; miseries, which cannot justly be inflicted upon a race of innocent creatures, and which are evident indications and effects of divine vengeance; if these miseries are evidently inflicted upon mankind for the sin of their first father, and not their own; if they have lost that holiness which adorned human nature, when first formed, and are

morally corrupt and depraved; if this, I say, be the case, then it is evident, we are a fallen race, and lie under the penal effects of Adam's offence.

Now, if we take a view of the primitive state of our world, and of man in it, as it is given us by the ancient Jewish historian and law-giver (Moses) in the beginning of Genesis, we shall find it vastly different from the present state.

In the primitive state, the world was so constituted, as to furnish man with the supports and comforts of life, without hard labor and toil. This is evident from the gracious grants made to the new-made man: "And God said, behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: to you it shall be for meat." Gen. 1:29. This is also evident, from the curse denounced upon the earth after man's fall. Gen. 3:17-19. "Unto Adam God said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." This loss of fruitfulness in the earth, or its fruitfulness in thorns and thistles, and things of no use, this toil and sweat to procure even bread, the most common support of life, had no place in the state of innocence, because it is here expressly denounced as the punishment of Adam's sin. But that cannot be threatened or inflicted as a punishment of an offence, which the person endured before his offence. That the state of innocence was a state of ease and spontaneous plenty, we may infer also from the fatherly care of the Creator, in planting a garden in Eden, richly furnished with every tree pleasant to the eye, or good for food, and placing the man there to look after

it, not for his toil, but for his pleasure, and to live upon the divine bounty, spontaneously springing out of the earth. Gen. 2:8,9.

This is one instance of the dissimilitude between the primitive state of our earth and the present. Instead of this universal fertility of the earth, and the spontaneous plenty of Eden, how great a part of the globe lies waste, in hideous, sandy deserts, in wildernesses of useless or noxious shrubs, in bleak and naked mountains, and horrid abrupt ridges or pyramids of barren rocks? What intemperate seasons, what parching droughts, and drowning rains, what nipping frosts and withering heats, what devastations by earthquakes and inundations, what blasting's and mildews, what consumptions by wild beasts, by locusts, caterpillars, and swarms of nameless insects, are the fruits of the earth subject to? And what scanty harvests, what severe famines and dearth's proceed from these causes? How many pine away and die by this scarcity? What coarse, insipid, and unwholesome provisions are a great part of mankind obliged to live upon, especially in the eternal winter of Lapland and Greenland, the burning, sandy wastes of Africa, and other barren, inhospitable climates? And is this the paradisaic state of our earth? Did it come out of the hands of its Maker exposed to such disorders, and so scantily furnished with provisions for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants? Does it appear like a region designed for the residence of a race of creatures in favor with their Creator? Or, rather does it not appear, like the wilds of Siberia, a country into which criminals are transported, and which bears the evident marks of the displeasure of its Maker? Does not its present disordered state pronounce upon all the sons of Adam, the curse once denounced against Adam, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake?" May we not read this curse in every brier and bramble, in every tract of barren land, in every blasted field and

scanty harvest? It is evident, the curse affects the ground, not only as to Adam, but also his posterity, through all generations; and, therefore, as it was once inflicted, so it is still continued, on account of his sin, for which they suffer, as well as himself.

Again; is the present state of labor and toil the same with the primitive state of man? It must be owned, that the life of Adam in Paradise was not a life of idleness. for such a life cannot be a happiness, but a burden, to a reasonable creature formed for action. It must also be owned, that a gracious God, according to his usual art, has brought good out of evil, and turned the labor and sweat inflicted at the fall as a curse, into a blessing, as it prevents much sin, which men in a state of idleness would fall into; for none are more liable to temptation, or more ready to employ themselves in doing evil, than the idle. And hence the general prevalence of vice, irreligion, and debauched pleasures among the rich, who can support themselves without labor. But then this happy conversion of the curse into a blessing is altogether owing to the dispensation of grace in Christ, or the new covenant, under which God has been pleased to place our world, after the breach of the first covenant. This degree of labor and toil, as it was originally imposed upon Adam, and is still continued upon his posterity, is a curse, a proper punishment for his sin. This is evident from the form of its first denunciation, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;” that is, because thou hast sinned, therefore, cursed is the ground for thy sake; and, therefore, thou shalt provide thyself bread with sweating labor. This, you see, was the curse of a broken law, the punishment of sin, in its original design, whatever new turn may be given to

it by the hand of a Mediator, under a dispensation of grace. And it has eventually, as well as in its own nature, proved a curse to many in all ages.

What labor and fatigue, what hurry and distraction of business run through all ranks of mankind, except a few idle drones, whose indolence is more uneasy than labor itself! What intense application, what anxious contrivance, what painful labor of the head, if not of the hand, exhaust even those who get their livings by more genteel methods—the statesmen, the lawyer, the merchant, &c.! But if we descend to the lower tribes of mankind, the mechanic, the planter, the common soldier, the mariner, the slave—what toils and hardships, what anxious and fatiguing nights and days do they endure, even to furnish a bare substance for themselves and families! And, after all their labor and care, they often suffer want. What days, and months, and years of toiling and sweating, what wearied bones and aching limbs do they endure! And, after all, how poorly do they live! This labor and care hinders their improvement in knowledge, so that they continue stupidly ignorant all their lives, and hardly ever enjoy any of the pleasures becoming a rational nature. This deprives them of the pleasure and ease of leisure; and, what is worse than all, it is the occasion of their neglecting the one thing needful, while they are distracted with many things. How unlike is this to the happy life of Adam in the garden of Eden! Is it not a matter of sense and experience, that the curse of labor and toil denounced upon him, reaches also to his posterity; and, consequently, that they are punished for his sin? Can we suppose that God would doom a number of reasonable, immortal creatures, capable of such high employments, to dig under the earth in mines, or upon its surface in the field—to endure so many toils and hardships, night and day, by land and sea, to procure a poor subsistence for themselves and their dependents; I

say, can we suppose this, without supposing that it is inflicted as a penalty for sin? And it is evident, it must be for the sin of our first father, on whom it was denounced. In this instance, you see, there is a visible disparity between the present and original state of our world and human nature; and this disparity is penal; that is, it is inflicted upon Adam and his posterity as the punishment of his sin.

Let us now proceed to another instance, which, for brevity's sake, must be very comprehensive; and that is, man in the state of innocence was not liable to death, or the separation of soul and body. This we may certainly infer from death's being the penalty threatened to his disobedience; but if he had been liable to it while he was innocent, it could not be threatened as a penalty. When it is said, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die," it is certainly implied, "While thou dost not eat, thou shalt not die, or thou shalt continue to live." So when God pronounces the sentence upon him, after his offence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," he undoubtedly denounces something new, to which man was not exposed before, and something penal, on account of his sin, Gen. 3:19; this St. Paul also asserts in express terms. "By man," says he, "by the first man, Adam, came death," 1 Cor. 15:21; so also, "By one man," namely, Adam, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned," Rom. 5:12. This, therefore, is certain, that death had no place in a state of innocence.

And hence it follows, that the world around was so disposed, as to have no tendency to take away the life of man. Those poisonous animals and vegetables, that now destroy human life, and those beasts of prey, which now sometimes devour man as their food, either had not these noxious qualities, or were under such providential restraints that they could not exert



them. Those explosions of lightning above, and earthquakes below; that unwholesome, pestilential air, and all those disorders in the material world, which, in the present state of things, are fatal to mankind, had no place in the paradisaic state of the earth; for if they had existed, and exerted their power, death would have been the natural and unavoidable consequence. We cannot suppose Adam's body was invulnerable, so that the tooth of a lion, the poison of a serpent, or the weight of a mountain could make no impression upon it; nor can we suppose it would have lived, though torn and devoured by beasts of prey, struck with lightning, or buried in an earthquake. Such injuries would undoubtedly have dissolved the frame, and brought on death; and the most probable security against it is, that there would have been no powers in nature to do it such injuries; but these noxious and deadly qualities have been superadded to them since the introduction of sin. Lions, and tigers, and snakes, and other animals that now destroy mankind, and also poisonous plants, did, no doubt, exist before the fall of Adam; but then they either had not these hurtful qualities, or they did not exert them upon man, while innocent. These qualities were weapons of war put into their hands, when they were employed to fight their Maker's quarrel, upon the revolt of mankind. We have more than conjecture, we have Scripture evidence for this, as far as it refers to the brutal creation; for Adam was constituted their lord, and they were not to injure him, but serve him. Thus the Divine charter ran, "God blessed them, (that is, the new-made pair,)—and God said unto them, Replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over everything that moveth upon the earth," Gen. 1:28. To this also the Psalmist refers— "Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and

the beasts of the field;” that is, wild beasts; “the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” Ps. 8:6-8. Thus man was invested with dominion over all the brutal creation, including the most fierce, ungovernable, and poisonous; and this implied an exemption from all, and especially deadly injuries from them. It would have been but a sorry dominion, if a snake or wild beast might lie in ambush for his lord and kill him. We, therefore, conclude, that all the mischiefs that mankind are liable to, from brute creatures, had no place in the world till sin entered into it.

We may also infer, farther, that since man, in his primitive state, was not liable to death, neither was he liable to sickness, pain, and mortal accidents. Death is the consequence and final result of these pains, sicknesses, and accidents; and therefore we cannot suppose them to exist in a state that did not admit of death. Death is often used in Scripture in a large sense, and signifies not only the separation of soul and body, but afflictions, pains, miseries, especially such as are the causes and concomitants of death. In this latitude it may be understood in the first threatening: and, if so, man’s exemption from death, in his primitive state, implied an exemption from all the afflictions, pains, and miseries, that are often included in that word.

There is one species of pain, which we may be sure, from express Scripture, human nature would have been free from, had it continued innocent: pains which a tender heart cannot think of without sympathy; pains, which affect the tenderest and fairest, and, I may add, the best part of mankind; which are always agonizing, sometimes mortal; and which attended our entrance into this world; I mean the pains of child-bearing. The command was given early, “Be fruitful and multiply,” Gen. 1:28; so that Adam and Eve would have had a numerous posterity, though they had never

sinned. But, after the fall, this sentence was passed upon guilty, trembling Eve, “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.” Gen. 3:16. Here, pain and sorrow are annexed to the whole process of our formation in the womb; sorrow in conception or breeding, and sorrow in bringing forth children. That this would not have been the attendant of the propagation of mankind in a state of innocence, I prove as before. If this had been the attendant of conception and birth in that state, it could not have been inflicted as the punishment of sin: for that cannot be the punishment of sin, which we must suffer though we should not sin.

Now, as this species of pain and sickness could not have afflicted mankind in a state of innocence, may we not, by a parity of reason, conclude, that neither would they have been subject to any other kind of pain or sickness; and that, as Adam was immortal, so he had no seeds or principles of any disease in his constitution, nor was he liable to any hurtful accidents from without?

But if this was the primitive state of human nature, alas! How vastly different from it is the present! And, since the terrible alteration, occasioned by Adam’s sin, sensibly affects mankind in every age, as well as himself, how lamentably evident is it, that they share in the penal effects of his sin!

Death has reigned from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and from Christ to the present generation; death has reigned over persons of every character and every age. And how painful and tormenting are its agonies, and the struggles of dissolving nature! When you view a dying man in his last conflict, with all the shocking symptoms of death strong upon him, can you imagine, that in this way man would have made his passage from world to world, if he did not lie under the imputation of guilt, and the displeasure

of his Maker? How terrible is the prospect of death before it comes! How does it embitter the pleasures of life! And how many does the fear of it keep in cruel bondage all their days! What sicknesses, pains, sorrows, and hurtful accidents, are mankind exposed to in every age, before they ripen into death, the grand result of these long-continued calamities! And what distress do the living and the healthy suffer by sympathy, from the sufferings and death of others, especially of dear friends and relatives! What desolations, what distresses and deaths are spread over the face of the earth, by famine, war, pestilence, earthquakes, hurricanes, extremities of heat and cold, and all the nameless disorders to which the natural and moral world is now exposed! How many mischiefs have mankind suffered from savage and poisonous animals, that were made the subjects of man in his primitive state! All these mischiefs, as we have seen, had no place in the state of innocence; but are the penal consequences of the sin of the first man: and it is a matter of daily observation, that they reach to his posterity also. It was his sin that occasioned the rebellion of the brutal creation against their lord; that armed serpents and vipers with deadly stings and poisons, and the lion, the tiger, the bear, and other beasts of prey, with rage, and all the powers of slaughter. These are the executioners of the Divine displeasure, turned loose upon a race of rebels, to avenge the quarrel of their Maker.

These miseries not only affect the adult, but also the young descendants of Adam, before they have done good or evil in their own persons. How many dangerous and deadly accidents are these young immortals exposed to, even while enclosed and guarded by the womb! And with what pain and risk of life do they make their entrance into the world! And how many of them are maimed or perish in the very porch of life! It is often a dubious struggle, whose life must go, the mother's or the child's; and sometimes both perish

together. Here I must enlarge a little upon the pains and sorrows of conception and birth, because this is more expressly the penal consequences of the first offence.

During the tedious months of pregnancy, what sick qualms, what nausea and loathing; what unnatural longing; what languor of spirits, and hysterical disorders; what anxious and trembling expectations of the painful hour, and what danger of miscarriages even from trifling accidents, and when the painful hour comes, what exquisite anguish and violent throes—so violent and exquisite, that the pains of a travailing woman are become a proverbial expression, to signify the greatest possible misery. How many lose their life in that distressing hour, or receive such injuries as from which they never recover! Thus the manner of our entrance into the world intimates, that we are a race of creatures out of favor with God, and lie under his displeasure from generation to generation. Ye daughters of Eve, while I drop a sympathizing tear over your miseries, I must put you in mind, that you are suffering the bitter effects of the original curse—that you are degenerate creatures yourselves, and the mothers of a guilty and degenerate race. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God; and let the sorrows and pains of conception and child-bearing be turned into blessings, by bringing you to a deep sense of your original guilt and depravity. In so tender and urgent a case, I cannot but anticipate the subject of, perhaps, some future discourse, and put you in mind, that though your sex was first in the transgression, and you still feel the effects of the old curse denounced upon your mother Eve; Jesus Christ, the great deliverer, is also the seed of the woman; and in this view, the race of man is indebted to your sex for their deliverance. This seed of the woman, the second Adam, is able and willing to save you in due time, from all the consequences of the curse, if

you apply to him by faith. This may be St. Paul's meaning, "The woman being deceived was in the transgression; notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, or by child-birth," 1 Tim. 2:15, by giving birth to the great deliverer, who was made and born of a woman: or, as others understand it, she shall be saved in child-bearing, saved even though she continues to bear children with sorrow and pain, and suffers the fruits of the old curse inflicted upon the sex; that shall not hinder her everlasting salvation, if she continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety.

But to return to the case of infants. If they escape with life into the world, what various calamities are immediately ready to attack the little strangers! How much do they suffer from the unskillfulness, carelessness, or poverty of their parents and nurses! What various nameless diseases and pains, bruises and fatal accidents, are they subject to: the sense of which they express by their crying, the only language they are capable of! What multitudes of them die in their tender years, before they have answered any of the purposes of the present life, only to give their parent a double trouble, first in nursing them, and then in suffering the bereavement of them! It is computed, that at least one half of mankind die under seven years old; and the greater part of this half die before they are moral agents, or capable of personal sin or duty, even in the lowest degree. Whatever therefore they suffer, must be for the sin of another, even Adam their common father, whose offence subjected him and all his posterity to the power of death and the various calamities that precede it. To these early subjects of death, many suppose the apostle refers, when he says, "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Rom. 5:14, over infants, who had not sinned actually in their own persons, as Adam did.

Now is this world, which is so replenished with destructive powers, causes of sickness, sorrow, and death, and which render these miseries inevitable according to the present course of nature: is this world, I say, in that order and harmony, in which it was formed for the residence of upright man? Has it not passed through some dismal alteration, when the earth, the sea, the air, the fire, animals, and vegetables, are full of the principles of sickness, misery, and death, which were once all friendly to human life, and subservient to its preservation or pleasure? Does it not look like a palace turned into a prison, to confine and punish obnoxious rebels? Are these frail, sickly, mortal bodies, such as the pure soul of Adam animated, when it first came out of the hands of its Creator? Does man now retain his original dominion over the brute inhabitants of the earth, the sea, or air? Or have they not rebelled against him, because he has rebelled against his Maker? Is not the curse denounced against Eve entailed upon all her daughters? And is not the sentence passed upon Adam, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,” executed upon all his children— executed upon them in such a manner, as shows, it is for his sin and not their own; and therefore executed upon his infant offspring, before they have contracted personal guilt by actual sin? Are not human bodies now formed so as to be proper recipients of sickness, and various forms of miseries and deaths? And is not all nature around them adapted to answer these dreadful purposes? What then can be more evident, even from daily experience and observation, than that all mankind do, in fact, suffer for the sin of their first parent, or that the guilt of his sin is imputed to them, and punished upon them? Whether this be consistent with the Divine perfections, and how it comes to pass, we may consider at some other opportunity: we are now only inquiring into the fact;

and that it is fact, cannot be denied, without denying a matter of universal sensation and observation.

There are two other instances of dissimilitude between the present and primitive state of man, which I might very properly insist upon; namely, that man was innocent and holy in his original state, and also entitled to everlasting happiness; but that in his present state, both these are forfeited. The time that remains, I shall employ in answering an objection, that the arguments that have been offered may continue firm and unshaken.

It may be objected, that the misery and death of mankind can be no proof of the imputation of Adam's sin to them, because the various tribes of mere animals are exposed to the same. They all return to the dust, as well as man. They are subject to sickness, famine, hurtful accidents, toil, and labor. They bring forth their young with pain and danger. They tyrannize over one another, and many of the greater live upon the small. In short, they share in most of the miseries of human nature, and suffer some peculiar to themselves. And yet we cannot suppose, that their first ancestor sinned, and that his guilt is imputed to them, and they are punished for it. Why then may we not suppose, that mankind suffer such calamities, without the imputation of the sin of their first ancestor Adam?

To this I answer,

First, That we have no evidence from Scripture or reason, that the brutal creation was formed for immortality, or that they were originally intended to be free from death. But as to man, it has been proved, that in his original state he was not liable to death, nor any of its antecedent or concomitant calamities, but that his gracious Maker intended he should live and be happy for ever, if he continued for ever obedient. Now this consideration shows there is a wide difference between the case of man and that of brutes.



In their primitive state, and according to the original destination of their Creator, they appear to have been intended for death, and consequently for the calamities and pains, and sicknesses, that are the causes and attendants of death. It is probable, they were originally intended to be food for man, and for one another, even in the state of innocence. Hence, St. Peter says, Natural brute beasts, or natural animals without reason, were made to be taken and destroyed. Now, if they were made for this purpose, their being taken and destroyed is not a punishment for any previous guilt, but only using them according to their original design. But man was not intended for this purpose; he was not made for death at his first creation; and consequently his being subjected to it, must be a punishment that supposes previous sin and guilt. It is no punishment to a brute that it does not enjoy the privileges and immunities of man in his original state: because these were never intended for the brutal nature. But if Adam's posterity are stripped of these privileges and immunities which belonged to their nature in him, and which were ensured both to him and them, if he continued obedient; and if they are stripped of these on account of his sin: then it is evident his sin is imputed to them, and they are punished for it. This answer will account for the death of mere animals, and the sufferings which death necessarily includes or pre-supposes. But as they are exposed to many sufferings, which death does not necessarily include or pre-suppose, this answer alone is not sufficient; therefore I add,

Secondly, That there is great reason to conclude, that even the brutal tribes of creatures do suffer by the fall of Adam; that they have lost that ease, peace, security, and plenty, in which they would have lived, had he never sinned; and incurred a variety of miseries in consequence of his offence. When they became fierce, savage, and rebellious towards him, they would

of course become mischievous and destructive to one another. The poison of the viper and serpent, the carnivorous rage of the lion, the tiger and the bear, which were intended primarily as a punishment to guilty man, would naturally render them injurious to their fellow-brutes. When weeds and plants received their hurtful qualities, in consequence of Adam's sin, they would, according to the course of nature, be injurious to the beasts that might feed upon them. The barrenness of the earth, the desolations occasioned by intemperate seasons, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other disorders introduced into the material world, by the sin of man, must affect the brutes, as well as man. These must involve them in pain, sickness, death, and various calamities. When their lord was guilty of rebellion against his Master in heaven, his subjects also share in his sufferings: his whole territory is cast into confusion, and all its inhabitants, of every rank, must painfully feel the terrible change. The ground was cursed for his sake; and why may we not suppose the creatures that dwelt upon it were cursed for his sake also? This curse would ultimately affect him, because their sickness and other calamities would disable them from serving him. Indeed it is the conduct of Providence in every age to involve the brutes in the same punishments with mankind. Thus the deluge, the fire and earthquake that destroyed Sodom, the plagues of Egypt, and other public judgments, swept off beasts as well as men, though the sin of men were the cause of these judgments.

That which chiefly confirms me in this belief, is, the authority of St. Paul. "The creature, (says he,) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected it;" that is, the inanimate and brutal creation is reduced into a state of vanity, confusion, and misery, not willingly, not of its own accord, not as the effect of any natural tendency to

it, nor as the punishment of its own sin; but it was reduced into this state by a righteous God, who subjected it to vanity, as a just punishment for the sin of man." And as it felt the effects of the first Adam's fall, so it shall share in the glorious deliverance wrought by the second Adam; and it was subjected to vanity with a view to this; for, the apostle adds, "God subjected it in hope that the creature itself"—even the inanimate and brutal creation also, as well as the children of God, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Their being delivered from the bondage of corruption, implies, that they now lie under it. And this phrase, "the bondage of corruption," may include all the disorders and miseries they are now groaning under; and since they were not subjected to this willingly, or of their own accord, or for anything they had done, it follows, they were judicially subjected to it on account of the sin of man. His first sin was a universal mischief to all the inhabitants of the world formed for his residence, both animate and inanimate, rational and irrational: and is the source of all the disorders and miseries that any part of this lower creation groans under. When I view the matter in this light, I am ready to retract the former answer, and to rest in this as sufficient; and perhaps, not only the miseries, but even the death of the animal creation, which in the former answer I accounted for in another way, may be entirely owing to this cause, even the sin of man, their lord and proprietor. "The bondage of corruption," to which that has exposed them, is a phrase that may, and perhaps must, include death, as well as other miseries.

I hope you will excuse me, that I have dwelt so long upon these arguments, and left so little room for a practical improvement. My design has been to give you a rational, solid, deep conviction of this important though mortifying truth. And as some of the topics I have reasoned from are

not very common, and may be new to most of you, I thought it necessary to dwell the longer upon them.

Upon a review of the whole, let me exhort you,  
To impress your minds deeply with a sense of your degeneracy, that you may cherish humility, and be the more solicitous for deliverance. And,  
To improve all the calamities of life, to make you sensible of this.

A HYMN.

(FROM THE REV. DR. DODDRIDGE.)

*With flowing eye? And bleeding hearts*

*A blasted world survey!*

*See the wide ruin sin has wrought*

*In one unhappy day!*

*Adam, in God's own image form'd*

*From God and bliss estrang'd,*

*And all the joys of Paradise*

*For guilt and horror chang'd!*

*Ages of labour and of grief*

*He mourn'd his glory lost;*

*At length the goodliest work of Heaven*

*Sunk down to common dust.*

*Oh fatal heritage, bequeath'd*

*To all his helpless race!*

*Thro' various mis'ries, toils and death,*

*Thus to the grave we pass.*

*But, oh my soul, with rapture hear*

*The Second Adam's name;*

*And the celestial gifts he brings,*

*To all his seed proclaim.  
In holiness and joy complete  
He reigns to endless years,  
And each adopted chosen child,  
His glorious image wears.  
Praise to his rich, mysterious love  
E'en by our fall we rise;  
And gain, for earthly Eden lost,  
A heav'nly Paradise.*

# *SERM. LXXIV. THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH; A FUNERAL SERMON.*

**E**zek. 33:8.— *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.*

Men love themselves, and therefore delight to hear things favorable to themselves; and a benevolent mind, that feels pain, whenever he occasions pain to the meanest of his fellow-creatures, would delight to dwell upon such pleasing subjects. And as to the happy few, who are really the sincere servants of God, and are holy in heart and life, I may safely gratify this benevolent inclination, and publish the most joyful tidings. I am authorized to “say to the righteous, it shall be well with him.” Isaiah 3:10. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.” Isa. 40:1,2. This is the gracious command of God to all his ministers. And oh! How delightful an office to perform it! This only should be the pleasing business of this hour, could I stretch my charity so far as to conclude, that all this promiscuous crowd, without exception, are indeed the dutiful people of God. But was there ever such a pure assembly upon our guilty earth?—upon our earth, where an accursed Ham was found in the little select family of Noah, the best in the whole world—where a Judas mingled among the

chosen twelve, the first followers of Jesus—where the tares and the wheat grow together in one field till the harvest; and where we are expressly told, “many are called, but few chosen.” Matt. 20:16. In such a corrupt world, the most generous charity, if under any rational and scriptural limitations, must hesitate at the sight of such a mixed multitude as this—must be jealous over them with a godly jealousy, (2 Cor. 11:2,) and stand in doubt of them, (Gal. 4:20,)—must fear, lest there be one, yea, more than one, wicked man among them. That there is too much reason for this suspicion, that even a benevolent mind is constrained to admit it, however unwilling, will appear evident, I presume, to yourselves, before I have finished my discourse. And if there be so much as one wicked man among us, I would, as it were, single him out from the crowd, and discharge this pointed arrow from the quiver of the Almighty against his heart, to give him, not a deadly, but a medicinal wound: “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.” I am obliged, at my peril, to denounce this doom against thee: and I dare not flatter thee with better hopes, unless I would be accessory to thy death, and at once ruin both myself and thee. For observe the context, which contains the instructions of the great Jehovah to his minister Ezekiel, which are equally binding upon all the ministers of his word in every age. “O thou son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.” This phrase, “I will require his blood at thy hand,” signifies, “I will look upon thee as guilty of his murder, and I will punish thee accordingly.” Therefore, if I would not incur the guilt and punishment of murder, soul-murder, the most shocking kind of murder; if I would not

destroy you and myself, that you may enjoy the sorry pleasure of flattery, and that I may enjoy the short-lived trifling reward of a little popular applause, I am obliged to tell such of you as are wicked, in the most pungent manner, and as it were by name, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die whoever thou art; however rich, or powerful, or honorable; however bold and presumptuous; however full of flattering hopes; however sure of life in thine own conceit; if thou be wicked, thou shalt die; thou shalt surely die;” or, to use the force of the Hebrew phrase, “dying thou shalt die;” in death thou shalt die indeed: thou shalt surely die, saith the Lord, and not man: it is the declaration of eternal truth, which cannot fail: it is the sentence of the Lord of hosts, who is able to carry it into execution. That it is his sentence, and not man’s, you may see by the connection: “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.” When I say, that is, when I, the Lord of hosts, say this. Let this, therefore, be regarded, not as the rash sentence of censorious mortals, but as the unchangeable constitution and authentic declaration of a wise and righteous God, which must infallibly stand good, whoever oppose; “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.”

But here two interesting questions occur, Who are the wicked? And, what kind of death shall they die?

If we should not first inquire, who the wicked are, I should but speak to the air; for hardly any would apply the character to themselves. It is an odious character; and that alone is the reason why many try to persuade themselves, it is not theirs. But, my brethren, many things that are very disagreeable, are, notwithstanding, true. And it may be our interest to know them, however painful the discovery may be: for now, while we are in a mutable state, we may, through divine grace, change characters; those who



are now wicked, and consequently exposed to eternal death, may yet become righteous, the favorites of heaven, and the heirs of eternal life. And the first step towards such a happy change, is, a clear, affecting conviction, that their present character and condition are bad and dangerous. Let us, therefore, submit ourselves to an impartial trial, and endeavor to discover whether the character of the wicked man belong to us or not. I would by no means desire or expect, you should pay me so extravagant a compliment, as to form a judgment of yourselves merely upon my assertion. I refer you to a higher authority, to your own reason and conscience, and especially to the Holy Scriptures. “The Bible, the Bible is the religion of Protestants:” by the Bible you must be tried at last, by the Supreme Judge: and by that infallible test, I would have you try yourselves now.

The first class of wicked men that I shall take notice of, are profane and gross sinners, who indulge themselves in notorious immoralities. Instead of particularizing them myself, I shall produce to you a list of them, which the apostle has given long ago. “Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” He seems surprised any should be ignorant of so plain a point as this. “Be not deceived,” says he: do not flatter yourselves with better hope; but who are the unrighteous? He tells you particularly; “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate,” soft, luxurious creatures, unmanned with sensual pleasures, “nor abusers of themselves with mankind,” Sodomites, “nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Cor. 6:9,10. You see the apostle is fixed and peremptory in it, that sinners of this class are universally excluded from the kingdom of heaven—not one of them all shall ever be admitted there, if they continue such. All such shall certainly perish, or else St. Paul was an impostor. To the same purpose he

speaks, Gal. 5:19-21; “the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying’s, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before,” that is, I honestly forewarn you, “as I have also told you in the time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” As sin is a monster of so many heads, he does not enumerate them all, but comprehends them in the lump; declaring, that they who practiced the vices mentioned, or such like, though not exactly the same, shall be excluded from heaven. This was not an occasional declaration, but what he had solemnly repeated at various seasons: “I forewarn you now,” says he, “as I have done in times past.” He denounces the same doom against these vices in his epistle to the Colossians; “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness—for which things’ sake, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” Col. 3:5,6.

I shall add but one testimony more, “The fearful,” the cowardly in the cause of God, “and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Rev. 21:8. These, you see, are the certain symptoms of the heirs of hell: and if they be admitted into a state of everlasting happiness, while they continue such, it is certain your religion must be false; for the Bible, which is the foundation of your religion, repeatedly declares they shall not be admitted there. It is also observable, that in this black list, you not only find such gross vices as are scandalous in the common estimate of mankind, but also such as are secret, seated in the heart, and generally esteemed but lesser evils. Here you find not only murder, whoredom, idolatry, theft, and such

enormous and scandalous sins, but also covetousness, wrath, strife, envying's, unbelief, and such like latent sins, which men generally indulge themselves in, without feeling much guilt upon their consciences, or apprehending themselves in great danger of punishment. These are but foibles and peccadillos—little, trifling sins, in their esteem: but oh! How different an estimate does God form of them! He pronounces them damnable vices, the practice of which will certainly exclude from his favor. And his sentence will stand, whether we will or not.

I should be very sorry so much as to suppose, there are any among you of this abandoned character. But I must propose the matter to your own decision; and at so favorable a tribunal, you will, no doubt, be acquitted, if you be clear. I say, I propose it to yourselves, whether some of you be not drunkards, swearers, liars, whoremongers, extortioners, sabbath-breakers, and the like? Or, if you are free from these grosser forms of vice, do not some of you live in wrath, strife, reveling, and carousing, covetousness, secret uncleanness, and the like? If this be your character, I have another thing to propose to you; and that is, whether it be most likely that you shall be excluded the kingdom of heaven; or that Christ and his apostles, and the other writers of the Holy Scriptures, were deceivers? One or other must be the case; if you be admitted into heaven, then they were certainly deceivers: for they have declared you shall not be admitted. Will you disbelieve their evidence, merely because it is against you? Will you believe nothing but what is in your favor? That would be a strange test of truth indeed.

Thus far you are assisted to judge, who are the wicked; and whether some of you do not belong to this unhappy class. And now I proceed to another class.

Secondly, All those are wicked, who knowingly and willfully indulge themselves habitually in any one sin, whether it be the omission of a commanded duty, or the practice of something forbidden. Every good man is of the same spirit with David, who could appeal to God himself, “Lord, I have respect to all thy commandments.” Psalm 119:6; and with St. Paul, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Rom. 7:22. And consequently, they who have not practical respect to all God’s commandments, without exception, and who do not inwardly delight in his law, are of a spirit and character directly contrary to David and Paul; in other words, they are wicked. The willful and habitual practice of any known sin, and the willful and habitual neglect of any known duty, are repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, as the sure signs of a wicked man. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:4. “He that committeth sin,” that is, willfully, knowingly, and habitually, “is of the devil.” 1 John 3:8. “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil;” verse 10; this is the great difference between them; “whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.” Our Lord himself has repeatedly assured us, that all pretensions to love him are vain, unless we keep his commandments. “If a man love me, he will keep my words—he that loveth me not, keepeth not my saying.” John 14:23,24. What is it to be a wicked man but to work iniquity? And what is it to work iniquity but to neglect what God has commanded, or practice what he has forbidden? He that does one thing from a regard to God, will endeavor to do everything from the same principle. And willful disobedience to him in one instance discovers a disposition which would disobey the divine authority in every instance, if there were the same temptations to it.

Be this, therefore, known to you all, as an undoubted truth, that the willful habitual indulgence of any known sin, is the inseparable character of a wicked man. You may plead the infirmity of human nature, the strength of temptation, or the innocence of your hearts and intentions, even in the midst of your sins; you may plead that the best have their infirmities, as well as you: and that many around you, are much worse than you—you may plead these, and a thousand such excuses: but plead what you will, all your excuses are in vain; and this still remains an unchangeable truth, that all the habitual practicers of sin are the servants of sin. It matters not whether the sin be secret and clandestine, or public and avowed; whether it be of a greater or smaller size; whether you are stung with remorse for it afterwards or not; whether you intend to forsake it hereafter, or not: such circumstances as these will not alter the case: in spite of such circumstances, if you indulge any one known sin, you bear the infernal brand of wickedness upon you. I grant, that good men sin, and that they are far from perfection of holiness in this life. I grant also, that some of them have fallen, perhaps once in their life, into some gross sin.

But, after all, I must insist, that they do not indulge themselves in the willful, habitual practice of any known sin, or the willful, habitual neglect of any known duty. St John expressly tells us, that he that is born of God, neither doth nor can sin, in this sense. 1 John 3:9. He cannot sin habitually; the meaning is, he cannot go on in any one sin as his usual course; but if he fall, it is by surprise; and taking one time with another, he is generally, and for the most part, under the influence of holy principles—these are predominant, or have the mastery within him: and from these he chiefly acts. Again; he cannot sin willfully; that is, with full bent of soul. The prevailing inclination and tendency of his soul is not towards sin: but on the

other hand, he really hates it and resists it, even in its most tempting forms; and it is his incessant struggle and honest endeavor to suppress it. He never can abandon himself more to the free, uncontrolled indulgence of the sweetest sin, though it should be only in heart. Both Scripture and Reason renounce those crowds of pretended Christians we have among us, who are under the habitual power of some sin or other, and live in the neglect of some known duty. A servant of Christ, who does not endeavor to do his Master's will, in every known instance, is a contradiction.

And now, are not sundry of you convicted of the character of wicked men, who might not come under the former class of profane sinners? Do not some of you know in your consciences, that there is some little sweet sin (so you esteem it) which you cannot bear to part with? Is there not some duty, which is so disagreeable to you, so contrary to your inclination, to your reputation in the wicked world, or to your temporal interest, that though you are secretly convinced it is your duty, yet you omit it; you put it off; and think God will dispense with your obedience in so slight a manner? Are not some of you conscious that this is your practice? If so, you must be ranked in the numerous class of wicked men. There, indeed, you have company enough: but company is no security in a combination against Omnipotence.

Thirdly, all those are wicked, who are destitute of those graces and virtues, which constitute the character of positive goodness. Wickedness is a moral privation, or the want of real goodness. The want of faith, the want of love, repentance, benevolence, and charity, does as really constitute a wicked man, as drunkenness, blasphemy, or any notorious immorality. Certainly I need not particularly mention to you those passages of Scripture, which declare these graces and virtues essential to a good man, and the

want of them the grand mark and constituent of a bad one. A good man, that does not love God or mankind; a good man without faith or repentance, is as great a contradiction as a hero without courage, a scholar without learning, a righteous ruler without justice, or a fire without heat. Therefore, if any of you do not believe, that is, if you have not such a realizing persuasion of the truth and importance of the things contained in the word of God, as to impress and govern your heart and life; particularly, if you do not believe in Jesus Christ, which is the grand requirement of the gospel, if you be not deeply sensible of your guilty and helpless condition; and if, as corrupt, helpless sinners, you do not accept Jesus Christ as your only Savior, and trust in his righteousness alone as the only ground of your acceptance with God; I say, if you have not such a faith as this, you are wicked men; I say, such a faith as this; for, as to the faith which is fashionable among us, I mean a mere speculative or historical assent to the truth of the Christian religion, and that Christ is the Messiah; this is but the faith of devils, only with this difference, that devils believe and tremble; whereas, many who have this faith among us, believe and sin without trembling. If you be destitute of the grace of repentance, if you have not a clear conviction and deep sense of your sinfulness in heart and life, by nature and practice; if you be not deeply sorry at heart for your sins, and hate them—hate them all without exception; if you do not hate them, not only on account of the punishment annexed to them, but because of their intrinsic vileness and their contrariety to the Divine purity; if you do not forsake your sins, as well as sorrow for them; and if you do not fly to the mere mercy of God in Jesus Christ for pardon, and place all your dependence upon his righteousness—I say, unless this be your daily experience and practice, you are entirely destitute of true evangelic

repentance, and consequently come under the unhappy class of wicked men. If you do not love God with all your hearts, that is, if you have not frequent affectionate thoughts of him; if you do not delight in his service, and in communion with him in divine ordinances; if your love does not produce cheerful, universal obedience, which is the infallible test of love; then you are certainly destitute of the heavenly grace of love; and sure, without this, you will not pretend to the character of good men! A good man, without the love of God, is the grossest absurdity. Finally, if your hearts be not actuated with the generous principle of love and benevolence to mankind; if you do not consult, and endeavor to promote their good as well as your own, and especially the good of their souls by their conversion to God; if you do not habitually observe the rules of justice and charity in your transactions with them, and do to others what you would reasonably desire them to do to you in like circumstances; if you are destitute of this temper towards mankind, you are destitute of an essential constituent of a good man, and consequently are wicked. Now if all who are destitute of these qualifications should walk off to the left hand, as they must do another day, would it not thin this crowd? Oh! How few would be left behind! I beseech you to examine yourselves impartially, that you may know your true character.

Fourthly, to sum up the whole, all those are wicked, who still continue in their natural state; who have never been regenerated, or experienced a thorough change of their views and dispositions towards God and divine things. Even our own observation of the natural temper of mankind is sufficient to convince us, though the Scriptures were silent, that they are from their very birth wicked, disinclined to God and holiness, and bent to that which is evil. Alas! You are stupidly ignorant of yourselves, if you do



not know, by experience, that this is your case. To this the Scriptures also bear abundant testimony. “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh: and they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.” John 3:6; Rom. 8:8. “We were by nature children of wrath, even as others;” we and others, that is, all, without exception, are by nature children of wrath, and consequently, by nature wicked: for certainly those who are not wicked, cannot be children of wrath. Eph. 2:3. Every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart, is only evil continually, from his youth up. Gen. 6:5; 8:21. And in their flesh dwells no good thing. Rom. 7:18. Upon this corruption of human nature, is founded the necessity of that change of temper, which the Scripture calls, and which, therefore, we dare to call, the new birth, or new creation. And since this corruption of human nature is universal, it follows, that all are wicked, who have never experienced this divine change.

This must suffice, at present, in answer to the first question, Who are the wicked? And I hope sundry of you, if you honestly make use of the light you have, have discovered, that whatever flattering hopes you have entertained, you must really place yourselves in the class with wicked men. This is an alarming discovery at any time: but it is much better to receive it now, when the case may be remedied, than in the eternal world, when it will be too late, and your case will be desperate.

And now, O wicked man, whoever thou art, as Ehud said to Eglon, “I have a message from God unto thee,” Judges 3:20, a message not unlike to his; and that is, “Thou shalt surely die.” Profane sinner, drunkard, swearer, whoremonger, “thou shalt surely die.” You, that knowingly, willfully, and habitually indulge yourselves in any favorite sin, “you shall surely die.” You that are destitute of genuine faith, love, and the other graces and virtues essential to a good man, “you shall surely die.” You, that are still the same

in temper and disposition, that you were by nature, “you shall surely die.” This is the invariable decree of Heaven, that you shall die. You may cast death out of your thoughts: but, for all that, you shall die; you may continue unprepared for it; but you must die. Were you as high and bright as Lucifer, as rich as Croesus, as powerful as Alexander, you must die. Your wickedness cannot immortalize you. Though you are wicked men now, you shall be dead men ere long: yes, as surely as you now live, you shall die.

But you will perhaps reply, “What is this that you tell us? Is death the lot only of the wicked? Must not all men die, the good as well as the bad? How then can death be threatened as the peculiar doom of the wicked?” The answer to this naturally leads me to

The second question, What kind of death shall the wicked man die? It is true, natural death is the universal doom of all the sons of men. “How dieth the wise man? As the fool.” Eccl. 2:16. The highest attainments in piety cannot secure an earthly immortality. Peter and Paul are dead, as well as Judas. But though there be no difference in this respect, there is a wide difference in another, and that is, the death of the wicked is quite another thing, or comes under quite a different notion, from the death of the righteous. The death of the wicked, like an officer, from their offended sovereign, strikes off the fetters of flesh, that they may be carried away to the place of execution: but the death of the righteous, like a friendly angel, only opens the doors of their prison, and dismisses them from their bondage in sinful flesh. The righteous, in death, enjoy, more or less, the consolations of an approving conscience, the sweets of the love of God, and the kind supports of an Almighty Savior’s hand. But the wicked die as criminals by the hand of justice; their guilt is unpardoned, and this gives death its sting: they have no almighty Friend in death; but Jesus, who alone can relieve

them, is their enemy: they have no reviving sensations of divine love; but guilty reflections and shocking prospects; or, if they entertain hopes of happiness, which most of them probably do, alas! They are but short-lived delusions, which will vanish like a dream in the morning, as soon as the light of eternity flashes upon them. Death dismisses the righteous from all their sins and sorrows, and conveys them into a state of perfect and everlasting holiness and happiness: but the death of the wicked cuts them off from all enjoyments, from all the means and hopes of salvation, and fixes them in an unchangeable, everlasting state of sin and misery: death to them is the gate of hell, the door of their infernal prison, and a sad farewell to all happiness. Then, farewell, a long, an everlasting farewell to the comforts of this life, and all its agreeable prospects: farewell to friends: farewell to hope and peace: farewell to all the means of grace: farewell God, and Christ, and angels, and all the blessedness of heaven. Now, nothing awaits them, but wrath and fiery indignation. Thus, O wicked man, you shall die: and is not this a very different thing from the death of the righteous?

Realize this prospect, sinners, and sure it must startle you. The time is just at hand, when the cold hand of death shall arrest you; when the vital pulse shall cease to beat, and your blood to flow; when your jaws shall fall; the shadow of death hover over your eyes; a ghastly paleness overspread your countenances: and a deadly numbness creep over your frame, and stupefy your active limbs: when the unwilling, lingering soul must be torn from its old companion of flesh; must bid adieu to all the enjoyments and pursuits of this mortal life, and shoot the gulf of eternity, and launch away: when it must pass into the immediate presence of God, mingle among the strange, unacquainted beings that inhabit the unseen, untried world, and be fixed in

an unchangeable state: when your bodies, like that of our deceased friend, must be laid in the cold and gloomy grave, to molder there, and feed the worms you were wont to tread upon; when you must leave your riches, your honor, your pleasures, which you pursued with so much labor and eagerness, and go as naked out of the world as you came into it; when you are reduced to this extremity, think, O wicked man, think seriously how miserable your condition will be! Then no comfortable reviews of past life! No supporting whispers of conscience within! No God, no Jesus, no Savior to support you! No encouraging prospects before you! Or none but the delusive, evanishing, confounding encouragement of a false and flattering hope! No relief, no gleam of hope from heaven or earth, from God or his creatures! But a guilty life behind you! A corrupt heart, utterly unfit for heaven, and a clamorous, gnawing conscience, within you! An angry God, a frowning Savior, and a lost heaven above you! A boundless, burning ocean below you! Oh! What a tragical exit, what a melancholy end is this! This is to die indeed: And thus, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.” Such a death will be the certain doom of persisting, impenitent wickedness. I need make no exception at all, but only that which I have already hinted at, namely, that many a wicked man dies with a self-flattering apprehension, that he is not wicked, and with sanguine hopes of heaven. This is a common case, especially with persons that have not lived under a faithful ministry, to inform them honestly of the nature of religion, and the pre-requisites of salvation. But alas! What a sandy foundation is this! What avails it to enjoy a little delusive relief in the hour of death, when the first entrance into the eternal world will cause the dream to evanish forever, and leave you to perish without hope, in all the confusion and consternation of a disappointment! With this trifling exception, which is indeed rather an

aggravation, than a real mitigation, I denounce from the living God, that thus shall every wicked man among you die, if you still continue such.

But even this, dreadful as it is, is not all: there is, besides this, that dreadful something, called the second death, Rev. 21:8; 2:11; 20:6,14, which thou, O wicked man, must die. Besides that death, which will put an end to this transitory life, you will have another death to suffer; a death, which will immediately commence when the other is over: a death, which will not be over in a few moments like the other, but the agonies of which will continue—an everlasting death—a state of misery, which will render life worse than death, or being worse than annihilation. Then the soul will be forever dead to God and holiness—dead to all the means of grace, and all the enjoyments of this life—dead to all happiness and all hope—dead to all the comfortable purposes of existence—dead to everything that deserves the name of life; in short, dead to everything but the torturing sensations of pain: to these the soul will be tremblingly alive all over, to eternity: but, alas! To be alive, in this sense, alive only to suffer pain, is worse than death, worse than annihilation. This is the import of that dreadful phrase, “the second death.” As life, in the language of Scripture, frequently signifies a state of perfect, everlasting happiness; so death often signifies a state of misery: and the “second death” signifies that second state that follows upon this, which is our first; a state of perfect, everlasting misery! As full of death and misery, as heaven is of life and felicity. Thus, O wicked man, shalt thou surely die: for remember, you have not the character of those who are safe from the “second death.” Their character you have in Revelation: “He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death.” Rev. 2:11. It is only the Christian hero, the brave soldier of Jesus Christ, who is enabled by divine grace to conquer his sins within, and all temptations from without: it

is he, and he only, that shall escape unhurt by this dreadful king of death. As for others, particularly the “fearful, the unbelieving, whoremongers, and all liars, you are expressly told, they shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” Here, also, you may see a Scripture definition of the “second death.” Rev. 21:8; it is to lie in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. What a shocking image is this!

And now, when you see the dreadful import of this denunciation, may it not spread terror through this assembly to hear, “Oh, wicked man, thou shalt surely die!” Are your hearts proof against the thunder of his threatening? Are you so fool-hardy, as not to be concerned, whether life or death, eternal life or eternal death, be your doom?

Is there no wicked man in this assembly so much affected, as at least to inquire, “Is there no way to escape? Must I die without relief? Is the sentence past beyond repeal?” No, blessed be God, you are yet alive; and while there is life, there is hope. The gates of eternal despair are not yet shut and barred upon you. Therefore, in the name of God, I assure you, there is hope, there is a possibility of escaping. But in what way? Suppose you sin on, as you have done hitherto, and herd in the crowd of wicked men; suppose you still continue thoughtless about the great concerns of eternity, neglect the Lord Jesus, and attend upon the means of grace in a careless, formal manner—suppose your hearts should never be changed by the almighty power of Divine grace, but still remain hard, impenitent, in love with sin and the world, and destitute of the love of God—suppose you resist the strivings of the Holy Spirit and your own consciences, flatter yourselves with vain hopes of safety, and shut your eyes against the light of conviction—suppose you should abandon yourselves to the pursuit of this world with your usual eagerness, and drown all serious thoughts in the bustle and

confusion of secular affairs; I say, suppose you should take this course, is there any hope? No; in this way there is nothing but despair. If you should live as long as Methuselah, and continue in this course, you would still continue wicked, and never become more fit for heaven than you now are; nay, like a body tending to corruption, you would corrupt and putrefy more and more. Consult your reason, consult your Bible, consult anything, except the self-flattering heart of man, and the father of lies; and they will all tell you, that if you persist in this course, you shall surely die. Not one that ever went on in this course has entered into heaven: but in this downward road those crowds persisted, who are now with Judas and Dives, in the place of torment; and, if you tread in their steps, you shall certainly, ere long, be among them.

But if you will attend, I will endeavor to show you what you must do to be saved, and point out to you the way of life and hope. Hear me, O wicked man! Who art under the sentence of death; hear me, and I will direct thee how thou mayest procure a repeal of the sentence, and live forever. Blessed Spirit! We need thy assistance in this attempt. Oh! Bear home my feeble words with resistless energy upon the hearts of sinners, that this day they may pass from death to life. Let me again demand your attention to the following directions:

If you would escape death in its most dreadful form, and enter into life, then,

First, Betake yourselves immediately to serious thoughtfulness. No more of your levity and froth; no more of your mirth, and vanity, and dissipation of thought. But now, at last, begin to think; to think seriously and sadly of your sins, of your guilty and wretched condition, of your danger of being forever miserable, and of the best means of deliverance.

Secondly, Break off from those things that hinder your conversion. No more of your drunkenness, swearing, and other vices. No more mingle in the company of sinners, nor run with them into the same excess of riot. Break off from your over-eager pursuit of the world; and act as if you thought it infinitely worse to be lost forever, than to be mean and poor in this life.

Thirdly, Diligently use all means that may instruct you in the nature of true religion, and teach you what you should do to be saved: particularly, read the Scriptures, and other good books, and attend upon the most faithful preaching as you have opportunity.

Fourthly, Earnestly pray to God. If you have hitherto had prayerless families, or prayerless closets, let them be so no longer: this evening consecrate them to God by prayer—Pray, particularly, for the Holy Spirit, who alone can thoroughly convert and sanctify you.

Fifthly, Endeavour to receive and submit to the Lord Jesus as your only Savior. It is through him alone you can be saved: therefore, make use of him as your only mediator, in all your transactions with God.

Finally, Do not delay to follow these directions. Alas! If, with Felix, you put it off to a more convenient season, (Acts 24:25.) there is very little hope. “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” (Heb. 3:15.) “Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2.) Therefore, now, this moment, begin the work. Now dart up a prayer to heaven, “Lord, here is a poor wicked creature, that must die ere long, unless thou have mercy upon me: have mercy upon me, O thou God of mercy.” Thus pray, and keep your souls, as it were, always in a praying posture until you are heard.



And now, my dear brethren, what is your resolution upon the whole? Are you resolved to use these means for your deliverance or are you not? If you are, you have great reason to hope for success. But if not, I defy you to find one encouraging word to you in all the Bible. On the other hand, I am commanded, upon my peril, to warn you; and therefore I would once more sound this dreadful alarm in your ears, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.” And if, when you hear the words of this curse, you bless yourselves in your hearts, and hope better things, God foresaw there would be such self-flattering, presumptuous sinners in the world, and he hath prepared his terrors against them. “If there should be among you a man or a woman, or family or tribe—a root that beareth gall and wormwood, that when he heareth the words of his curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart; the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven: and the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel.” (Deut. 29:19-21.) What a tremendous threatening is this! And you see it stands in full force against those that presumptuously flatter themselves with false hopes of impunity, whether they be men or women, family or tribe: and it will certainly have a dreadful accomplishment upon such of you as disregard this repeated warning, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.”

I doubt not but there are some of you to whom the character of the wicked does not belong, and therefore are in no danger of dying their death. To you I would speak a few parting words of encouragement. You must die; but oh! Death to you will be a harmless, stingless thing—your Father’s messenger to fetch you home, that you may be forever with him. You will have good

company in death; Jesus, your faithful and never-failing friend, will then be with you, and support you: and his angels will wait round your dying beds to receive your departing souls, and conduct them to eternal rest. Death will be your birth-day; then you will be born, not a helpless, weeping infant, into a world of sin and sorrow, but a perfect immortal, into a world of consummate happiness and glory. Death will be the last enemy that ever you shall conflict with; after that, you will be conquerors, more than conquerors, forever. Death to you will be a blessing, and not a curse: so that as to you, I may change the threatening in my text, into a promise, “O good man, thou shalt surely die.” Yes, blessed be God, thou shalt die in spite of earth and hell; thou shalt not be doomed to live always in such a sinful wretched world as this; but death, thy friend, will set thee free, and convey thee to the place where Jesus is, and where thy heart is gone before thee. This may, perhaps, seem strange language, that death should become a blessing: but such strange things does Jesus perform for his people. O may we all “die the death of the righteous; and may our last end be like his!” (Numb. 23:10.)

For a more immediate improvement of this funeral occasion, instead of haranguing upon the virtues of the dead, many of which, I doubt not, deserve commendation, my business is with the living, who alone can receive advantage from what I say; and to them I would suggest a few solemn reflections.

First, how uncertain and frail are the nearest ties of relation, and all our domestic and relative happiness! Therefore, how much should we be concerned, to contract immortal friendships, and secure a never-dying happiness!

Secondly, Such bereavements should be made occasions of exercising resignation to the will of God.

Thirdly, Let this instance of mortality put us in mind of our own. Shall others die to warn us that we must die? And shall the warning be in vain?

Fourthly, Let us rejoice that though our friends die, yet the Lord liveth, and blessed be our rock! 2 Sam. 22:47. Ps. 18:46.

# *SERM. LXXV. EVIDENCES OF THE WANT OF LOVE TO GOD.*

**J**ohn 5:42.— *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*

Nothing seems to be a more natural duty for a creature—nothing is more essential to religion—nothing more necessary as a principle of obedience, or a qualification for everlasting happiness, than the love of God; and it is universally confessed to be so. Whatever be the object, or whatever be the religion, all acknowledge that the love of God is an essential ingredient in it.

Should we consider only the excellency of the divine Being, and the numerous and endearing obligations of all reasonable creatures to him, we should naturally think, that the love of God must be universal among mankind; and not one heart can be destitute of that sacred, filial passion. But, alas! If we regard the evidence of Scripture or observation we must conclude the contrary. The love of God is a rare thing among his own offspring in our degenerate world. Here in my text, a company of Jews, highly privileged above all nations then upon earth, and making large professions of regard to God, are charged with the want of his love; charged

by one that thoroughly knew them and could not be deceived. “I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.”

But, blessed be God, his love is not entirely extinct and lost even on our guilty globe. There are some hearts that feel the sacred flame, even among the degenerate sons of Adam.

These two sorts of persons widely differ in their inward temper; and God, who knows their hearts, makes a proper distinction between them. But in this world they are mixed—mixed in families, and in public assemblies; and sometimes the eyes of their fellow mortals can discern but little difference; and they very often mistake their own true character, and rank themselves in that class to which they do not belong. While they continue in this mistake, the one cannot possess the pleasure either of enjoyment or hope; and the other cannot receive those alarms of danger which alone can rouse them out of their ruinous security, nor earnestly use means for the implantation of the sacred principle of divine love in their souls. To remove this mistake is therefore a necessary and benevolent attempt; benevolent not only to the former sort, but even to those who are unwilling to submit to the search, and who shut their eyes against the light of all conviction.

I am afraid many of my hearers, especially in places where I have not frequently officiated, are excited to attend by curiosity, and not by an eager thirst for religious instruction. And while hearing, they are either staring with eager expectation to hear something new and strange, or they are lying in wait to catch at some word or sentiment to furnish them with matter for cavil or ridicule; or they stand upon their guard, lest they should be caught and ensnared inadvertently to a party, or seized with the infection of some false doctrine: and thus all my labors and their attendance are in vain; and immortal souls perish in the midst of the means of salvation. But I tell you,

once for all, you need not indulge an eager curiosity; for I have nothing new to communicate to you, unless it be a new thing to you to hear that the love of God is essential to a Christian, and an absolutely necessary pre-requisite to your salvation; and that you cannot be lovers of God, while your temper and conduct have the evident marks of enmity or disaffection to him. Or, if cavil or ridicule be an agreeable entertainment to any of you, you are not likely to be gratified: for the things I have to say are too plain and convictive to be caviled at by men of sense and candor, and too serious and interesting to be laughed at. Nor need you be cautiously upon your guard; for I assure you, once for all, I have something else to do, than to come here to hang out baits to catch graceless proselytes to a party, or to propagate the infection of some false opinion. I come here to use my poor endeavors to build up such of you as love God, in your most holy faith; and to reconcile such of you to him as are now destitute of his love. This is my professed design: and when you find the drift and tendency of my labors here aim at something opposite to this, pronounce my anathema, and reject me with just abhorrence. This I not only allow, but invite and charge you to do.

The subject now before us is this: Since it is evident that some, under the profession of religion, are destitute of the love of God; and since it is of the utmost importance that we should know our true character in this respect, let us inquire what are those marks whereby we may know whether the love of God dwells in us or not. Let us follow this inquiry with impartiality and self-application; and receive the conviction which may result from it, whether for or against us.

Now it is evident the love of God does not dwell in you, if the native enmity of your hearts against him has not been subdued; if your thoughts and affections do not fix upon him with peculiar endearment, above all

other things; if you do not give him and his interests the preference of all things that may come in competition with him; if you do not labor for conformity to him; if you do not love to converse with him in his ordinances; and if you do not make it the great business of your lives to please him by keeping his commandments.

First, The love of God is not in you, if the native enmity of your hearts against him has not been subdued.

This will appear evident to everyone that believes the Scripture account of human nature, in its present degenerate state. By nature we are “children of wrath,” (Eph. 2:3:) and certainly the children of wrath cannot be the lovers of God, while such. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” (John 3:6,) and the savor of the flesh, or, as we render it, “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” Rom. 8:7. And hence it is, that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Rom. 8:8. St. Paul gives this character of the Colossians, in their natural state; and there is no reason to confine it to them: that they “were some time alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works.” Col. 1:21. In short, it is evident from the uniform tenor of the gospel, that it is a dispensation for reconciling enemies and disaffected rebels to God. Hence it is so often expressly called the ministry of reconciliation: and ministers are represented as ambassadors for Christ, whose business it is to beseech men, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:18-20. But reconciliation presupposes variance and disaffection to God. From these things, it is evident, that, according to the Scripture account, the present state of nature is a state of disaffection and hostility against God. The authority of Scripture must be sufficient evidence to us, who call ourselves Christians. But this is not all the evidence we have in this case. This is a sensible matter of fact and experience. For I appeal to all

of you that have the least self-acquaintance, whether you are not conscious that your temper, ever since you can remember, and consequently your natural temper, has habitually been indisposed and disaffected, or, which is the same, lukewarm and indifferent towards the blessed God—whether you have had the same delight in him and his service, as in many other things—whether your earliest affections fixed upon him, with all the reverence and endearment of a filial heart. You cannot but know, the answer to such inquiries will be against you, and convince you that you are by nature enemies to the God that made you, however much you have flattered yourselves to the contrary.

Now, it is most evident, that since you are by nature enemies to God, your natural enmity to him must be subdued; or, in the language of the New Testament, you must be reconciled to him, before you can be lovers of him. And have you ever felt such a change of temper? Such a change of temper could not be wrought in you while you were asleep, or in a state of insensibility. I will not say, that everyone who has experienced this, is assured that it is a real sufficient change, and that he is now a sincere lover of God; but this I will say, and this is obvious to common sense, that everyone who has experienced this, is assured that he has felt a great change, of some kind or other, and that his temper towards God is not the same now as it once was. This, therefore, may be a decisive evidence to you: If divine grace has never changed your temper towards God, but you still continue the same, you may be sure the love of God is not in you. And if this change has been wrought, you have felt it. It was preceded by a glaring conviction of your enmity, and the utmost horror and detestation of yourselves upon the account of it. It was attended with affecting views of the attractive excellencies of God, and of your obligations to love him; and



with those tender and affectionate emotions of the heart towards him, which the passion of love always includes. And it was followed with a cheerful universal dedication of yourselves to God and his service. And does conscience (for to that I now address) speak in your favor in this inquiry? Listen to its voice as the voice of God.

Secondly, It is evident, that you have not the love of God in you, if your thoughts and affections do not fix upon him with affectionate endearment above all other things.

This is so obvious to common sense, that I need not take up your time with Scripture quotations: for you would not have the face to profess to a person that you loved him, if, in the meantime, you have told him that he had little or no share in your thoughts and affections. You know by experience, your affectionate thoughts will eagerly pursue the object of your love over wide-extended countries and oceans: and that in proportion to the degree of your love. Now if you love God sincerely at all, you love him supremely; you love him above all persons and things in the universe. To offer subordinate love to supreme perfection and excellency, what a gross affront! It is essential to the love of God, that it be prevalent, or habitually uppermost in your souls. Now if every degree of love will engage a proportionable degree of your affectionate thoughts, can you imagine, that you may love God in the highest degree, and yet hardly ever have one affectionate thought of him? Can you love him above all, and yet think of him with less endearment and frequency than of many other things that you love in an inferior degree? Certainly, it is impossible. And is it not as evident to some of you, as almost anything you know of yourselves, that your affectionate thoughts are not frequently fixed upon the blessed God? Nay, are you not conscious, that your thoughts fly off from this object, and

pursue a thousand other things with more eagerness and pleasure? Certainly, by a little inquiry, you may easily find out the beaten road of your thoughts and affections, or their favorite object. And why will you not push the inquiry to a determination? Is there any matter of daily sensation and experience more plain to some of you than this, that God is not the object of your highest reverential love, and of your eager desires and hopes? Do you not know in your consciences, that you delight more in a thousand other things: nay, that the thoughts of him, and whatever forces serious thoughts of him upon your minds, are disagreeable to you, and you turn every way to avoid them? Do you not know that you can give your hearts a-loose for days and weeks together, to pursue some favorite creature, without once calling them off, to think seriously and affectionately upon the ever-blessed God? Are not even all the arts of self-flattery unable to keep some of you from discovering a fact at once so notorious, and so melancholy? Well, if this be the case, never pretend that you love God. You may have many commendable qualities—you may have many splendid appearances of virtue—you may have done many actions materially good: but it is evident to a demonstration, that the love of God, the first principle and root of all true religion and virtue, is not in you.

Thirdly, The love of God is not in you, unless you give him and his interests the preference above all other things.

I have told you already, that if you love God at all in sincerity, you love him above all. And now, I add, as the consequence of this, that if you love him at all, you will give him and his interest the preference before all things that may come in competition with him. You will cleave, with a pious obstinacy, to that which he enjoins upon you, whatever be the consequence: and you will cheerfully resign all your other interests, however dear, when

they clash with his. This you will do, not only in speculation, but in practice: that is, you will not only allow him the chief place in your hearts, but you will show that you do allow him the supremacy there, by your habitual practice. I beg you would examine yourselves by this test: for here lies the dangerous delusion of multitudes. Multitudes find it easy to flatter themselves, that they love God above all his creatures, while, in the meantime, they will hardly part with anything for his sake, that their own imaginary interest recommends to them. But this is made the decisive test by Christ himself. "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26. By hating these dear relatives, and even life itself, Jesus does not mean positive hatred: for, in a subordinate degree, it is our duty to love them: but he means, that every sincere disciple of his must act as if he hated all these, when they come in competition with his infinitely dearer Lord and Savior; that is, he must part with them all, as we do with things that are hateful to us. This was, in fact, the effect of this love in St. Paul. "What things were gain to me, those," says he, "I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:7,8. Now, perhaps, this trial, in all its extent, may never be your lot: though this is not at all unlikely, if a mongrel race of Indian savages and French papists, by whom your country now bleeds in a thousand veins, should carry their schemes into execution; for popery has always been a bloody, persecuting power, and gained its proselytes by the terror of fire and faggot, and the tortures of the inquisition, and not by argument, or any of the methods adapted to the make of a reasonable being.

But though this severe trial should never come in your way, yet, from your conduct in lesser trials, you may judge how you would behave in greater. Therefore, inquire, when the pleasures of sin and your duty to God interfere, which do you part with? When the will of God and your own will clash, which do you obey? When the pleasing of God, and the pleasing of men come in competition, which do you choose? When you must give up with your carnal ease or applause among mortals, or violate your duty to God, which has most weight with you? When you must deny yourself, or deny your Savior, which do you submit to? What is your habitual conduct in such trying circumstances? Do you in such cases give to God and his interests the preference in your practice? If not, your pretended love is reprobated, and appears to be counterfeit. Brethren, it is little matter in this case, what you profess, or speculatively believe: but the grand inquiry is, what is your habitual practice? And if you must be judged by this, is it not evident, that some of you have not the love of God in you?

Fourthly, The love of God is not in you, if you do not labor for conformity to him.

Conformity to him is at once the duty and the peculiar character of every sincere lover of God. “Be ye holy, as I am holy,” (Lev. 19:2.—21:8,) is a duty repeatedly enjoined: and all the heirs of glory are characterized as being “conformed to the image of God's dear Son.” Rom. 8:29. Indeed, love is naturally an assimilating passion. It is excellency, real or apparent, that we love: and it is natural to imitate excellency. We naturally catch the manner and spirit of those we love. Thus if we love God, we shall naturally imitate him; we shall love what he loves, and hate what he hates. We shall imitate his justice, veracity, goodness, and mercy; or, in a word, his holiness. If we love him, nothing will satisfy us till we awake in his

likeness. Now, my brethren, does your love stand this test? Are you laboring to copy after so divine a pattern? Have you ever been renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the image of him that created you? And is it the honest endeavor of your life to be holy in all manner of conversation: holy as God is holy? Can you have the face to pretend you love him, while you do not desire and labor to be like him: and while there is such an indulged contrariety in your temper to his? The pretense is delusive and absurd. Since your conformity to him consists in holiness, let me beg you to inquire again, Do you delight in holiness? Is it the great business of your life to improve in it? And are your deficiencies the burden of your spirits, and matter of daily lamentation and repentance to you? Alas! Is it not as evident as almost anything you know concerning yourselves, that this is not your habitual character, and, consequently, that the love of God is not in you?

Fifthly, You have not the love of God in you, if you do not delight to converse with him in his ordinances.

I need not tell you, that friends are fond of interviews, and delight in each other's company. But persons disaffected to one another, are shy, and strange, and keep off. Now God has been so condescending, as to represent his ordinances as so many places of interview for his people, where they may meet with him, or, in the Scripture phrase, draw near to him, appear before him, and carry on a spiritual intercourse with him. Hence it is, that they delight in his ordinances: that they love to pray, to hear, to meditate, to commemorate the death of Christ, and to draw near to the throne of grace in all the ways in which it is accessible. These appear to them not only duties, but privileges; exalted and delightful privileges, which sweeten their pilgrimage through this wilderness, and sometimes transform it into a

paradise. Now, will your love, my brethren, stand this test? Have you found it good for you to draw near to God in these institutions? Or are you not indisposed and disaffected to them? Do not some of you generally neglect them? Or is not your attendance upon them an insipid, spiritless formality? Have not some of you prayerless closets—prayerless families? And if you attend upon public worship once a week, is it not rather that you may observe an old custom, that you may see and be seen, or that you may transact some temporal business, than that you may converse with God and his ordinances? In short, is it not evident, that devotion is not your delight; and consequently not your daily practice? How then can you pretend, that the love of God dwells in you? What! Can you love him, and yet be so shy of him, so alienated from him, and have no pleasure in drawing near to him, and conversing with him? This is contrary to the prevailing temper of every true lover of God. Every true lover of God is of the same spirit with David, who, in his banishment from the house of God, cries out in this affecting strain, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” Ps. 42:1,2. This is certainly your temper, if his love dwell in you.

Sixthly, The love of God is not in you, unless you make it the great business of your lives to please him by keeping his commandments.

It is natural to us to seek to please those we love; and to obey them with pleasure, if they be invested with authority to command us. But those whom we disaffect, we do not study to please: or if we should be overawed and constrained by their authority to obey their commands, it is with reluctance and regret. So, my brethren, if you love God, you will habitually keep his commandments, and that with pleasure and delight. But if you can

habitually indulge yourselves in willful disobedience in any one instance, or if you yield obedience through constraint, it is demonstration against you, that you are destitute of his love. This is as plain as anything in the whole Bible. “If ye love me,” says Christ, himself, “keep my commandments.” John 14:15. “If any man love me, he will keep my words—he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.” John 5:23,24. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” John 15:14. “This is the love of God,” says St. John, “that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5:3. Keeping his commandments is not grievous, when love is the principle. You see, my brethren, that obedience, cheerful, unconstrained obedience, is the grand test of your love to God. There is more stress laid upon this, in the word of God, than, perhaps, upon any other: and therefore you should regard it the more. Now, recollect, is there not at least some favorite sin, which you willfully and knowingly indulge yourselves in? And are there not some self-denying mortifying duties, which you dare to omit? And yet you pretend that you love God? You pretend that you love him, though your love is directly opposite to this grand test, which himself has appointed to try it. You may have your excuses and evasions: you may plead the goodness of your hearts, even when your practice is bad—you may plead the strength of temptation, the frailty of your nature, and a thousand other things; but plead what you will, this is an eternal truth, that if you habitually and willfully live in disobedience to the commandments of God, you are entirely destitute of his love. And does not this flash conviction on some of your minds? Does not conscience tell you just now, that your love does not stand this test?

And now, upon a review of the whole, what do you think of yourselves? Does the love of God dwell in you, or does it not? That is, Do those

characters of the want of love belong to you, or do they not? If they do, it is all absurdity and delusion for you to flatter yourselves that you love him; for it is all one as if you should say, “Lord, I love thee, though my native enmity against thee still remains unsubdued. I love thee above all, though my thoughts and affections are scattered among other things, and never fix upon thee. I love thee above all, though I prefer a thousand things to thee and thy interest. I love thee above all, though I have no pleasure in conversing with thee. I love thee above all, though I am not careful to please thee;” that is, I love thee above all, though I have all the marks of an enemy upon me. Can anything be more absurd? Make such a profession of friendship as this to your fellow-creatures and see how they will take it! Will they believe you really love them? No; common sense will teach them better. And will God, do you think, accept that as supreme love to him, which will not pass current for common friendship among mortals? Is he capable of being imposed upon by such inconsistent pretensions? No; “be not deceived: God is not mocked.” Gal. 6:7. Draw the peremptory conclusion, without any hesitation, that “the love of God does not dwell in you.”

And if this be your case, what do you think of it? What a monstrous soul have you within you, that cannot love God—that cannot love supreme excellence, and all perfect beauty—that cannot love the origin and author of all the excellence and beauty that you see scattered among the works of his hands—that cannot love your divine Parent, the immediate Father of your spirit, and the Author of your mortal frame—that cannot love your prime Benefactor and gracious Redeemer—that cannot love him, “in whom you live, and move, and have your being,” Acts 17:28, “in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways,” Dan. 5:23, and who alone is the



proper happiness for your immortal spirit—that can love a parent, a child, a friend, with all their infirmities about them, but cannot love God—that can love the world —that can love sensual and even guilty enjoyments, pleasures, riches, and honors; and yet cannot love God!— that can love everything that is lovely but God, who is infinitely lovely—that can love wisdom, justice, veracity, goodness, clemency, in creatures, where they are attended with many imperfections; and yet cannot love God, where they all center and shine in the highest perfection! What a monster of a soul is this! Must it not be a fallen spirit, to be capable of such unnatural horrendous wickedness? Can you be easy, while you have such a soul within you? What a load of guilt must lie upon you! If love be the fulfilling of the whole law, then the want of love must be the breach of the whole law. You break it all at one blow; and your life is but one continued, uniform, uninterrupted series of sinning. The want of love takes away all spirit and life from all your religious services, and diffuses a malignity through all you do. Without the love of God, you may pray, you may receive the sacrament, you may perform the outward part of every duty of religion; you may be just and charitable, and do no man any harm; you may be sober and temperate; but, without the love of God, you cannot do one action that is truly and formally good, and acceptable to God; for how can you imagine he will accept anything you do, when he sees your hearts, and knows that you do it not because you love him, but from some other low, selfish principle? If a man treat you well, and perform for you all the good offices of the sincerest friendship; yet, if you know in the meantime, that he has no real regard for you at all, but acts from some sordid, mercenary views, are you thankful for his services, or do you love him in return? No, you abhor the deceiver, and secretly loathe his services. And will God accept of that as obedience from

you, which he knows does not proceed from love to him? No. Hence it is, that as Solomon tells us, the prayer, the sacrifice, and even “the ploughing of the wicked, is sin.” Prov. 21:4.

Now, I appeal to yourselves, is not this a very dangerous situation? While you are destitute of the love of God, can you flatter yourselves that you are fit for heaven? What! Fit for the region of love! Fit to converse with a holy God, and live forever in his presence! Fit to spend an eternity in his service! Can you be fit for these things, while you have no love to him? Certainly not; you must perceive yourselves fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else. You are fallen spirits—devilized already.

Disaffection to God is the grand constituent of a devil, the worst ingredient in that infernal composition. And must you not then be doomed to that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels? Are you capable of hoping better things, while the love of God is not in you?

And now, what must you do, when this shocking conviction has forced itself upon you. Must you now give up all hopes? Must you now despair of ever having the love of God kindled in your hearts? Yes; you may, you must give up all hopes, you must despair; if you go on, as you have hitherto done, thoughtless, careless, and presumptuous in sin, and in the neglect of the means which God has appointed to implant and cherish this divine, heaven-born principle in your souls. This is the direct course towards remediless, everlasting despair. But if you now admit the conviction of your miserable condition; if you endeavor immediately to break off from sin, and from everything that tends to harden you in it; if you turn your minds to serious meditation; if you prostrate yourselves as humble earnest petitioners before God, and continue instant in prayer; if you use every other means of grace ordained for this purpose; I say, if you take this course, there is hope

—there is hope! There is as much hope for you, as there once was for any one of that glorious company of saints, now in heaven, while they were as destitute of the love of God as any of you. And will you not take these pains to save your own souls from death? Many have taken more, to save the souls of others: and you have taken a great deal to obtain the transitory, perishing enjoyments of this life. And will you take no pains for your own immortal interests? Oh let me prevail, let even a stranger prevail upon you, to lay out your endeavors upon this grand concern. I must insist upon it, and can take no denial. This is not the peculiarity of a party I am urging upon you. Is it Presbyterianism, or new light, that tells you, you cannot be saved without the love of God? Churchmen and dissenters, Protestants and papists, nay Jews, Mahometans and pagans, agree in this, that the love of God is essential to all true religion: and if you entertain hopes of heaven without it, the common sense of mankind is against you. Therefore, oh, seek to have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts.

As for such of you, and I hope there are sundry such among you, that love God in sincerity, I have not time to speak much to you at present. Go to your Bibles, and there you will find abundant consolation. I shall only refer you to one or two passages, as a specimen. “All things shall work together for good to them that love God.” Rom. 8:28. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” 1 Cor. 2:9. The love of God in your hearts is a surer earnest of your salvation, than an immediate voice from heaven. Heaven, the element of love, was prepared for such as you: and you need never dread an exclusion.

# *SERM. LXXVI. THE OBJECTS, GROUNDS, AND EVIDENCES OF THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.*

**P**rov. 14:23.— *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.*

To creatures that are placed here a few years upon trial for an everlasting state, it is of the greatest importance how they make their departure hence. The gloomy hour of nature's last extremity: it stands in need of some effectual support; and that support can proceed from nothing then present, but only from reviews and prospects; from the review of past life so spent as to answer the end of life; and from the prospect of a happy immortality to follow upon this last struggle.

Now, men will leave the world according to their conduct in it; and be happy or miserable hereafter, according to their improvement of the present state of trial. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness," says the wisest of men; "but the righteous hath hope in his death."

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness"—he dies as he lived: he lived in wickedness, and in wickedness he dies. His wickedness sticks fast

upon him, when his earthly enjoyments, his friends, and all created comforts leave him forever. The guilt of his wickedness lies heavy upon him, like a mountain of lead, ready to sink him into the depth of misery. And the principles of wickedness, which he indulged all his life, still live within him, even in the agonies of death; nay, they now arrive at a dreadful immortality, and produce an eternal hell in his breast. He leaves behind him not only all his earthly comforts, but all the little remains of goodness he seemed to have, while under the restraints of divine grace: and he carries nothing but his wickedness along with him. With this dreadful attendant he must pass to the tribunal of his Judge. To leave his earthly all behind him, and die in the agonies of dissolving nature—this is terrible. But to die in his wickedness—this is infinitely the most terrible of all!

He once flattered himself that though he lived in wickedness, he should not die in it. He adopted many resolutions to amend, and forsake his wickedness, toward the close of life, or upon a death-bed. But how is he disappointed? After all his promising purposes and hopes, he died as he lived, in wickedness. This is generally the fate of veterans in sin. They are resolving and re-resolving to reform all their lives; but after all they die the same. They propose to prepare for death and eternity: but they have always some objections against the present time. They have always something else to do to-day; and therefore they put off this work till to-morrow—to-morrow comes, and instead of reforming, they die in their wickedness—to-morrow comes, and they are in hell. Oh! That the loiterers of this generation would take warning from the ruin of thousands of their unhappy ancestors, who have perished by the dread experiment! Brethren! Are not some of you in danger of splitting upon the same rock? Are not some of you conscious, that if you should die this moment, you would die in your wickedness? And

yet you have but very little fear of dying in this manner: no; you purpose yet to become mighty good, and prepare for death, before you die. So thousands purposed as strongly as you, who are now in hell. The time for repentance was still a hereafter to them, till it was irrecoverably past. They were snatched away unexpectedly, by the sudden hand of death, and knew not where they were, till they found themselves in eternity: and thus they had no time for this work: or their thoughts were so much engrossed with their pains, that they had no composure for it: or, they found their sins, by long indulgence, were become invincibly strong, their hearts judicially hardened, and all the influences of divine grace withdrawn: so that the work became impossible. And thus, they died in their sins. And if any of you be so foolhardy as to imitate them in their delays, you may expect to die as they did.

“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness”— driven away in spite of all his reluctance. Let him cling to life never so fast, yet he must go. All his struggles are vain, and cannot add one moment to his days. Indeed, the wicked have so little taste for heaven, and are so much in love with this world, that if they leave it at all, they must be driven out of it—driven out of it, whether they will or not. When they hope for heaven, they do in reality consider it but a shift, or a refuge, when they can no longer live in this their favorite world. They do not at all desire it, in comparison with this world. Here they would live forever, if they could have their will. But let them grasp never so hard, they must let go their hold. They must be driven away, like chaff before a whirlwind —driven away into the regions of misery—into the regions of misery, I say; for certainly the happiness of heaven was never intended for such as are so disaffected to it; and that

prefer this wretched world, with all its cares and sorrows, before heaven itself.

This is the certain doom of the wicked: but who are they? Though the character be so common among us, yet there are few that will own it. It is an odious character: and therefore few will take it to themselves. But there is no room for flattery in the case: and therefore we must inquire, who are the wicked? I answer, all that habitually indulge themselves in the practice of any known wickedness—all that neglect the God that made them, and the Savior that bought them—all that live in the willful omission of the known duties of religion and morality—all that have never known by experience what it is to repent and believe; in a word, all that are in their natural state, and have never felt a change of spirit and practice, so great and important, that it may be called, with propriety, a new birth, or a new creation—all such, without exception, are wicked: They are wicked in reality, and in the sight of God, however righteous they may be in their own eyes, or however unblameably some of them may conduct themselves before men.

And are there not some such in this assembly? Is this assembly so glorious and happy a rarity, as not to have one wicked person in it? Alas! I am afraid the most generous charity cannot indulge such a hope. May you make an impartial inquiry into a matter so important! And if you find the character of the wicked is yours, believe it, you must share in the dreadful doom of the wicked, if you continue such.

But I proceed to that part of my text, which I intend to make the principal subject of this discourse— “The righteous hath hope in his death.” To have hope in death is to have hope in the most desperate extremity of human nature. Then the spirits flag, and the heart sinks; and all the sanguine hopes of blooming health and prosperity vanish. Then all hopes from things

below— all expectations of happiness from all things under the sun, are cut off. All hopes of escaping the arrest of death, are fled, when the iron grasp of its cold hand is felt. Even in these hopeless circumstances, the righteous man hath hope. The foundation of his hope must be well laid, it must be firm indeed, when it can stand such shocks as these. It is evident the objects of his hope must lie beyond the grave; for on this side of it all is hopeless. His friends and physician despair of him: and he despairs of himself, as to all the prospects of this mortal life. But he does not despair of a happier life in another state: No, he hopes to live and be happy, when the agonies of death are over: and this hope bears him up under them.

This hope I intend to consider as to its objects, its grounds and evidences, and its various degrees and limitations.

First, I am to consider the objects of the righteous man's hope in death. And here I shall only mention his hope of support in death—of the immortality of the soul— of the resurrection of his body—and of perfect happiness in heaven.

In the first place, The righteous man has an humble hope of support in death. He has repeatedly entrusted himself into the faithful hands of an almighty Savior, for life and death, for time and eternity; and he humbly hopes his Savior will not forsake him now—now, when he most needs his assistance. This was St. Paul's support, under the prospect of his last hour: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12. As if he had said, finding my own weakness, I have committed my all into another hand; and I have committed it to one, whose ability and faithfulness have been tried by thousands, as well as myself; and, therefore, I am confident, he will keep the sacred depositum, and never suffer it to be injured or lost.



This was also the support of the Psalmist; “Though I walk,” says he, “through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Psa. 23:4. Yea, it was upon this support St. Paul leaned, when he braved death, in that triumphant language, “Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay; in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us: for I am persuaded,” says he, “that death”—that separates our souls and bodies,—that separates friend from friend,—that separates us from all our earthly comforts, and breaks all our connections with this world, even death itself “shall never separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 8:35-39. What a faithful friend, what a powerful guardian is this, who stands by his people, and bears them up in their last extremity, and makes them more than conquerors in the struggle with the all-conquering enemy of mankind! How peculiar a happiness is this, to be able to enjoy the comfort of hope, in the wreck of human nature! How sweet to lean a dying head upon the kind arm of an almighty Savior! How sweet to entrust a departing soul, as a depositum in his faithful hand! Oh, may you and I enjoy this blessed support in a dying hour! And may we make it our great business in life to secure it! In that gloomy hour, our friends may weep, and wring their hands around our beds; but they can afford us no help—no hope! But Jesus can. as thousands have known by experience. Then he can bear home his promises upon the heart; then he can communicate his love, which is better than life; and by his holy Spirit, bear up and encourage the sinking soul! Blessed Jesus! What friend can compare to thee?—

*“Jesus can make a dying bed*

*Feel soft as downy pillows are;*

*While on his breast I lean my head,  
And breathe my soul out sweetly there.*”— Watts.

But, Secondly, The immortality of the soul is an object of the righteous man's hope. He is not like a Bolingbroke, and other infidels, who have made it their interest that there should be no future state, who consider immortality as an object of fear, and therefore try to reason themselves out of the belief of it, and choose to engulf themselves in the abyss of annihilation. That man has indeed a terrible consciousness of his demerit, who dares not trust himself for ever in the hands of a just and gracious God, but wishes to escape out of his hands, though it were by resigning his being. It is not the force of argument that drives our infidels to this. Demonstration and certainty were never so much as pretended for it. And after all the preposterous pains they take to work themselves up to the gloomy hope, that when they die they shall escape punishment by the loss of all the sweets of existence; yet, if I may venture to guess at, and divulge the secret, they are often alarmed with the dreadful may-be of a future state. In their solemn and thoughtful moments their hope wavers, and they fear they shall not be more happy than a dog or a stone, when they die. Unhappy creatures! How much are they to be pitied! And were it not for the universal benevolence of that religion which they despise, how justly would they be contemned and abhorred! They are men of pleasure now; they are merry, jovial and gay, and give a loose to all their licentious passions and appetites. But how short, how sordid, how brutal the pleasure! How gloomy, how low, how shocking their highest hope! Their highest hope is to be as much as nothing, in a few years or moments hence, as they were ten thousand years ago. They are men of pleasure, who would lose all their pleasures, if they were angels in heaven: but would lose none of them, if they were swine in

the mire. Blessed be God, this gloomy hope is not the hope which the religion of Jesus inspires. No, “he hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Tim. 1:10. He opens to the departing soul the endless prospects of a future state of being: a state, where death shall no more make such havoc and desolations among the works of God: but where everything is vital and immortal. Hence the righteous man hath hope in his death. He has not made it best for him, that his religion should be false. He is not driven to seek for shelter in the gulf of annihilation; nor to combat with the blessed hopes which reason and revelation unitedly inspire, as his worst enemies. He wishes and hopes to live forever, that he may forever enjoy the generous pleasure of serving his God, and doing good to his fellow-creatures. The belief of immortality is not, indeed, peculiar to the righteous: it is the belief of mankind in general, except a few infidels here and there, who are to be regarded as monsters in human nature. But this is not so properly the object of hope, as of fear, to multitudes. They wish it were false, though they cannot believe it is so. They have no joy and peace in believing this; but, like “devils, they believe and tremble.” James 2:19. But, to the righteous man, this is properly an object of hope: the prospect is pleasing to him. If it were a dream, which, blessed be God, it is not, it is a pleasing dream. If it were a delusion, it is a harmless and profitable delusion. It inspires him with noble pleasures, and excites him to glorious deeds, while life lasts: and if it must be entirely given up in death, he will sleep as easy as the most staunch unbeliever upon earth, who lived in the expectation of so terrible a doom. Therefore, *maneant mentis gratissimus error!* “Still may the pleasing error cheat the mind!” Thus we might argue even upon the worst supposition that can be made. But we are left in no such uncertainty. This is not a pleasing error, but a pleasing truth; nay, I had

almost said, a pleasing demonstration. Such it proves to the righteous man: for oh! How pleasing to the offspring of the dust, to claim immortality as his inalienable inheritance! How transporting to a soul, just ready to take its flight from the quivering lips of the dissolving clay, to look forward, through everlasting ages of felicity, and call them all its own! To sit, and prognosticate, and pause upon, its own futurities—to defy the stroke of death, and smile at the impotent malice of the gaping grave! Oh, what a happiness, what a privilege, is this! And this is what the righteous man in some measure enjoys.

Thirdly, The righteous in death has the hope of the resurrection of his body. This glorious hope we owe entirely to Revelation. The ancient philosophers could never discover it by their reason; and when it was discovered by a superior light, they ridiculed it as the hope of worms. But this is a reviving hope to the righteous, in the agonies of death. Those old intimate friends, the soul and body, that must now part, with so much reluctance, shall again meet, and be united in inseparable bonds. The righteous man does not deliver up his body, as the eternal prey of worms, or the irredeemable prisoner of the grave; but his hope looks forward to the glorious dreadful morning of the resurrection; and sees the bonds of death bursting; the prison of the grave flying open; the moldering dust collected, and formed into a human body once more—a human body, most gloriously improved. This prospect affords a very agreeable support in death, and enables the righteous to say with Job, though I die, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Job 19:25,26. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.

O, death! Where is thy sting? O, grave! Where is thy victory? 1 Cor. 15:53-55. This is an illustrious victory indeed; a victory over the conqueror of conquerors, and of all the sons of Adam. And yet, thus victorious shall the frail dying believer be made, over that terror of human nature.

Fourthly, The perfect and everlasting happiness of heaven is an object of the righteous man's hope in death. He hopes to drop all his sins, and their attendant train of sorrows, behind him; and to be perfectly holy, and consequently happy, forever. He hopes to see his God and Savior, and to spend a happy eternity in society with him, and in his service. He hopes to join the company of angels, and of his fellow-saints of the human race. He hopes to improve in knowledge, in holiness, and in capacities for action and enjoyment, in an endless gradation. He hopes to see the face of his God in righteousness; and to be satisfied, when he awakes, with his image. Ps. 17:15. In short, he hopes to be as happy as his nature will possibly admit through an endless duration. Oh, what a glorious hope is this! This has made many a soul welcome death with open arms. This has made them desirous to be with Christ, which is far better. Phil. 1:23. And this has sweetly swallowed up the sensations of bodily pain. Indeed, without this, immortality would be an object of terror, and not of hope: the prospect would be insupportably dreadful. For who can bear the thought of an immortal duration spent in an eternal banishment from God and all happiness, and in the sufferance of the most exquisite pain? But a happy immortality, what can charm us more?

Having thus shown you some of the principal objects of a good man's hope in death, I now proceed.

Secondly, To show you what are the grounds and evidences of such a hope.

It is evident, it is not every kind of hope, that is intended in my text; it is a hope peculiar to the righteous: and it is a hope that shall never be disappointed, or put to shame. This, alas! Is not the common popular hope of the world. Job speaks of the hope of the hypocrite: Job 8:13; 27:8, and one greater than Job tells us, that many will carry their false hopes with them to the very tribunal of their Judge. When he assures them, he never knew them, they hardly think him in earnest: “Strange! Dost thou not know us? Have we not eat and drunk in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets?” Luke 13:26. St. Paul also tells us, that while some are crying peace and safety, and apprehend no danger, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. 1 Thess. 5:3. This is likewise evidently confirmed by observation: for how often do we find in fact, that many not only hope for immortality, but for immortal happiness, who give no evidence at all of their title to it, but many of the contrary? Here, then, is a very proper occasion for self-examination. Since there are so many false hopes among mankind, we should solicitously inquire, whether ours will stand the test. To assist us in this inquiry, let us consider what are the peculiar grounds and evidences of the righteous man’s hope.

Now it will be universally granted, that God best knows whom he will admit into heaven, and whom he will exclude—that it is his province to appoint the ground of our hope, and that constitution according to which we may be saved—that none can be saved, but those who have the characters which he has declared essentially necessary to salvation; and that none shall perish, who have those characters. And hence it follows, that the righteous man’s hope is entirely regulated by the divine constitution, and the declarations of that holy Word, which alone gives us certain information in

this case. This I say is the grand test of a true hope: it expects what God has promised: and it expects it in the way and manner established by him. It is a humble submissive hope: it does not expect happiness, as it were, in spite of him who is the author of it; but it expects happiness just in the manner which he has appointed.

Now what has God appointed to be the ground or foundation of our hope? St. Paul will tell you, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11. God himself proclaims, by Isaiah, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Isaiah 28:16. Jesus Christ then is the only sure ground of hope; appointed by God himself. Or, in other words, the free mercy of God, which can be communicated only through Jesus Christ, or, for his sake, is the only sure ground of hope for a sinner. It is upon this, and not upon his own righteousness, that the righteous man dares to build his hope. He is sensible that every other foundation is but a quicksand. He cannot venture to hope on account of his own merit, either in whole, or in part. It is in the mercy, the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, that he trusts. He is gratefully sensible, indeed, that God has wrought many good things in him, and enabled him to perform many good actions: but these are not the ground of his hope, but the evidences of it; I mean, he does not make these any part of his justifying righteousness; but only evidences that he has an interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can procure him the blessings he hopes for. Which leads me to add,

That the evidence of this hope is, the righteous man's finding, upon a thorough trial, that the characters which God has declared essentially necessary to salvation, do belong to him. Has God declared, that the regenerate, that believers and penitents, that they who are made holy in

heart and life, and none but such, shall be saved? Then is my hope true and sure, when I hope for salvation, because I find these characters belong to me. I know the God of truth will keep his word: and therefore, poor and guilty and unworthy as I am, it is no presumption for me to hope for everlasting happiness from him, if I find myself to be such as he has promised everlasting happiness to.

This, brethren, is the only valid evidence of a good hope. And is this the evidence that encourages you in this important affair? Alas! The world is overrun with delusive hopes, that are so far from being supported by this evidence, that they are supported in direct opposition to it. God has declared, in the plainest and strongest terms, that no drunkard, nor swearer, nor fornicator, nor any similar characters, shall inherit his kingdom: and yet what crowds of drunkards, swearers, fornicators, and the like will maintain their hopes of heaven, in spite of these declarations? He has declared, with the utmost solemnity, that “except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” John 3:3. And yet what multitudes presume to hope they shall enter there, though they still continue in their natural state, and have no evidences at all of their being born again? God has declared, that “except ye repent, ye shall all perish,” Luke 13:3,5, like the infidel Jews; and that “he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:16. And yet, how many hope to be saved, though they have never felt the kindly relenting’s of ingenuous, evangelical repentance, nor the work of faith with power wrought upon their hearts? What can be more plain than that declaration, “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord?” Heb. 12:14. And yet multitudes that hate holiness in their hearts, hope to be saved, as well as your precise and sanctified creatures, as they call them. In short, the hopes of many are so far from being supported by the authority of the



Scriptures, that they are supported only by the supposition of their being false. If the Scriptures be true, then they and their hopes must perish together: but, if the Scriptures be false, then they have some chance to be saved; though it is but a very dull chance after all: for if they have to do with a lying, deceitful Deity, they have no ground at all of any confidence in him: they must be anxiously uncertain what they should hope, or what they should fear, from his hands. Hence you see, that we should vindicate the truth of God in these declarations, even by way of self-defense: for if the divine veracity fail in one instance, it becomes doubtful in every instance, and we have nothing left to depend upon. If they may be saved, whom God has declared shall perish, then, by a parity of reason, they may perish whom he has characterized as the heirs of salvation: and consequently, there is no certainty that any will be saved at all. Thus, sinners, while establishing their own false hopes, remove all ground of hope, and leave us in the most dreadful suspense.

Brethren! Let us regulate our hopes according to his declaration, who has the objects of our hopes entirely at his disposal. When we pretend to improve upon divine constitutions, or, as we think, turn them in our favor, we do in reality but ruin them, and turn them against ourselves. Make that, and that only, the ground and evidence of your hope, which God has made such. Your hope is not almighty, to change the nature of things, or reverse his appointments: but his constitution will stand, and you shall be judged according to it, whether you will or not. Do not make that the ground or evidence of your hope, which he has not so made, or which he has pronounced the characteristic of the heirs of hell. You hope, perhaps, to be saved, though you live in the willful neglect of some known duty, or in the willful practice of some known sin. But has God given you any reason for

such a hope? You know he has not, but the contrary. You hope he will show mercy to you, because his nature is mercy and love, and he is the compassionate Father of his creatures; or because Christ has died for sinners. But has he given you any assurances, that because he is so merciful—because he is so compassionate a Father—because Christ has died for sinners, therefore he will save you in your present condition? You hope to be saved, because you are as good as the generality, or perhaps better than many around you. But has God made this a sufficient ground of hope? Has he told you, that to be fashionably religious, is to be sufficiently religious; or, that the way of the multitude leads to life? This may be your hope; but is it the authentic declaration of eternal Truth? You know it is not, but quite the contrary. I might add sundry other instances of unscriptural hope; but these may suffice as a specimen. And I shall lay down this as a general rule, which will enable yourselves to make farther discoveries, namely, those hopes are all false, which are opposite to the declarations of God in his word.

Certainly, this needs no proof to such as believe the Divine authority of the Scriptures: and, as for the infidels, it is not the business of this day to deal with them. You who acknowledge the Scriptures as the foundation of your religion, with what force can you entertain hopes unsupported by them, or contrary to them? Hopes, that must be disappointed if God be true; and that cannot be accomplished, unless he prove a liar? Can you venture your eternal all upon such a blasphemous hope as this? But I proceed,

Thirdly, To consider the various degrees and limitations of a good hope in death.

A good hope is always supported by evidence; and, according to the degree of evidence, is the degree of hope. When the evidence is clear and

undoubted, then it rises to a joyful assurance: but when the evidence is dark and doubtful, then it wavers, and is weakened by dismal fears and jealousies. Now, I have told you already, that the evidence of a good hope is a person's discovering, by impartial examination, that those characters, which God has pronounced the inseparable characters of those that shall be saved, do belong to him: or, that he has those graces and virtues, which are at once his preparation for heaven, and the evidence of his title to it. Now different believers, and even the same persons at different times, have very different degrees of this evidence. And the reason of this difference is, that sundry causes are necessary to make the evidence clear and satisfactory; and, when any of these are wanting, or do not concur in a proper degree, then the evidence is dark and doubtful. In order to be fully satisfied of the truth and reality of our graces, it is necessary we should arrive to some eminence in them: otherwise, like a jewel in a heap of rubbish, they may be so blended with corruption, that it may be impossible to discern them with certainty. Hence the weak Christian, unless he have unusual supplies of Divine grace, enters the valley of the shadow of death with fear and trembling: whereas he, who has made great attainments in holiness, enters it with courage, or perhaps with transports of joy. It is also necessary to a full assurance of hope, that the Spirit of God bears witness with our Spirit, that we are the sons of God, Rom. 8:16, or, that he excites our graces to such a lively exercise, as to render them visible by their effects, and distinguishable from all other principles. And therefore, if a sovereign God see fit to withhold his influences from the dying saint, his graces will languish, his past experience will appear confused and doubtful, and consequently his mind will be tossed with anxious fears and jealousies. But if he be pleased to pour out his Spirit upon him, it will be like a ray of

heavenly light, to point out his way through the dark shades of death, and open to him the transporting prospects of eternal day, that lies just before him.

Another thing that occasions a difference in this case, is, that an assured hope is the result of frequent self-examination; and, therefore, the Christian that has been diligent in this duty, and all his life been laboring to make all sure against his last hour, generally enjoys the happy fruits of his past diligence, and enters the harbor of rest with a *πληροφορία*, with sails full of the fair gales of hope: but he that has been negligent in his duty, is tossed with billows and tempests of doubts and fears, and is afraid of being shipwrecked in sight of the port.

It is also necessary to the enjoyment of a comfortable hope in death, that the mind be in some measure calm and rational, not clouded with the glooms of melancholy, or thrown into a delirium or insensibility by the violence of the disorder. And, according as this is, or is not the case, a good man may enjoy, or not enjoy, the comforts of hope.

These remarks will help us to discover with what limitations we are to understand my text, “The righteous hath hope in his death.” It does not mean that every righteous man has the same degree of hope; or that no righteous man is distressed with fears and doubts in his last moments. But it means, in the,

First place, That every righteous man has a substantial reason to hope, whether he clearly see it, or not. His eternal all is really safe; and as all the false hopes of the wicked cannot save him, so all his fears cannot destroy him, though they may afford him some transient pangs of horror. He is in the possession of a faithful God, who will take care of him; and nothing shall pluck him out of his hands. He sees fit to leave some of his people in

their last moments to conflict at once with death and with their more dreadful fears: but even this will issue in their real advantage. And what an agreeable surprise will it be to such trembling souls, to find death has unexpectedly transported them to heaven!

Secondly, When it is said, “the righteous hath hope in his death,” it means, that good men, in common, do in fact, enjoy a comfortable hope. There never was one of them that was suffered to fall into absolute despair, in this last extremity. In the greatest agonies of fear and suspicion, the trembling soul has still some glimmering hope to support it; and its gracious Savior never abandons it entirely. And it is the more common case of the saints, to enjoy more comfort and confidence in death, than they were wont to do in life. Many, that in life were wont to shudder at every danger, and fly at the sound of a shaking leaf, have been emboldened at death to meet the king of terrors, and to welcome his fiercest assault. The soldiers of Jesus Christ have generally left this mortal state in triumph; though this is not a universal rule. And who would not wish and pray for such an exit? That he may do honor to his God and Savior, and to his religion, with his last breath; that he may discover to the world, that religion can bear him up, when all other supports prove a broken reed; and that his last words may sow the seeds of piety in the hearts of those that surround his dying bed; this every good man should pray and wish for; though it must be left in the hands of a sovereign God to do as he pleases.

Thirdly, When it is said, “the righteous hath hope in his death,” it may mean, that the hope which he hath in death shall be accomplished. It is not a flattering, delusive dream, but a glorious reality; and, therefore, deserves the name. His hope shall not make him ashamed, Rom. 5:5, but shall be fulfilled, and even exceeded. However high his expectations, death will

convey him to such a state, as will afford him an agreeable surprise; and he will find, that it never entered into his heart to conceive the things that God hath laid up for him, and for all that love him. 1 Cor. 2:9.

This is the glorious peculiarity of the good man's hope. Many carry their hope with them to death, and will not give it up, till they give up the ghost. But as it is ungrounded, it will end in disappointment and confusion. And oh! Into what a terrible consternation will it strike them, to find themselves surrounded with flames, when they expected to land on the blissful coasts of Paradise! To find their Judge and their conscience accusing and condemning, instead of acquitting them!—to find their souls plunged into hell under a strong guard of devils, instead of being conducted to heaven by a glorious convoy of angels!—to feel the pangs and horrors of everlasting despair succeed, in an instant, to the flattering prospect of delusive hope I to fall back to hell from the very gates of heaven! Oh! What a shocking disappointment, what a terrible change is this!

Therefore, now, my brethren, make sure work. Do not venture your souls upon the broken reed of false hope. But “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” 2 Peter 1:10. Now, you may make a profitable discovery of your mistake: if your hope be ungrounded, you have now time and means to obtain a good hope' through grace. But then it will be too late: your only chance, if I may so speak, will be lost; and you must forever stand by the consequences. O, can you bear the thought of taking a leap in the dark into the eternal world; or of owing your courage only to a delusive dream? Why will you not labor to secure so important an interest, beyond all rational possibility of a disappointment? Have you anything else to do, which is of greater, of equal, or comparable importance? Do you think you will approve of this neglect upon a dying bed, or in the eternal world?

Let this subject strengthen the hope of such of you, whose hope will stand the Scripture-test. You must die, 'tis true; your bodies must be the food of worms: but be of good courage: your almighty and immortal Savior will support you in the hour of your extremity, and confer immortality upon you. He will also quicken your mortal bodies, and re-unite them to your souls, and make your whole persons as happy as your natures will admit. Blessed be God, you are safe from all the fatal consequences of the original apostacy, and your own personal sin. Death, the last enemy, which seems to survive all the rest, shall not triumph over you: but even death itself shall die, and be no more. Oh, happy people! Who is like unto you, a people saved by the Lord! Deut. 33:29.

Let me now conclude with a melancholy contrast: I mean the wretched condition of the wicked in a dying hour. Some of them, indeed, have a hope, a strong hope, which the clearest evidence cannot wrest from them. This may afford them a little delusive support in death; but upon the whole, it is their plague:—it keeps them from spending their last moments in seeking after a well-grounded hope: and as soon as their souls are separated from their bodies, it exposes them to the additional confusion of a dreadful disappointment. Others of them live like beasts; and like beasts they die; that is, as thoughtless, as stupid, about their eternal state, as the brutes that perish. Oh! What a shocking sight is the death-bed of such a stupid sinner! Others, who, with a great deal of pains, made a shift to keep their consciences easy, in the gay hours of health and prosperity, when death and eternity stare them in the face, find this sleeping lion rousing, roaring, and tearing them to pieces. They had a secret consciousness before, that they had no ground for a comfortable hope; but they suppressed the conviction, and would not regard it. But now it revives, and they tremble with a fearful

expectation of wrath and fiery indignation. This is especially the usual doom of such as lived under a faithful ministry, and have had a clear light of the gospel, and just notions of divine things forced upon their unwilling minds. It is not so easy for them, as for others, to flatter themselves with false hopes, in the honest, impartial hour of death. Their knowledge is a magazine of arms for their consciences to use to torment them. Oh! In what horrors do some of them die! And how much of hell do they feel upon earth!

Nay, this is sometimes the doom of some infidel profligates, who flattered themselves they could condemn the bugbear of a future state, even in death. They thought they had conquered truth and conscience, but they find themselves mistaken—they find these are unsuppressible, victorious, immortal: and that, though with mountains overwhelmed, they will, one day, burst out like the smothered fires of Aetna; visibly bright and tormenting. Of this the celebrated Dr. Young, whose inimitable pen embellishes whatever it touches, gives us a most melancholy instance, related in the true spirit of tragedy—an instance of a youth of noble birth, fine accomplishments, and large estate, who imbibed the infidel principles of deism, so fashionable in high life, and debauched himself with sensual indulgences; who, by this unkind treatment, broke the heart of an amiable wife, and by his prodigality, squandered away his estate, and thus disinherited his only son—Hear the tragical story from the author's own words:

“The death-bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss, to which it leads. It has the most of hell, that is visible on earth; and he that has seen it, has more than faith, he has the evidence of sense to confirm him in his creed. I see it now! For who can forget it? Are there in it no flames or



furies? You know not, then, what a seared imagination can figure—what a guilty heart can feel. How dismal is it! The two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin, sink and confound his friends, silence and darken the shocking scene. Sickness excludes the light of heaven, and sin excludes the blessed hope. Oh! Double darkness! More than Egyptian! Acutely to be felt! See! How he lies, a sad, deserted outcast, on a narrow isthmus, between time and eternity, for he is scarcely alive! Lashed and overwhelmed on one side, by the sense of sin! On the other, by the dread of punishment! Beyond the reach of human help, and in despair of divine!”

“His dissipated fortune, impoverished babe, and murdered wife, lie heavy on him: The ghost of his murdered time, (for now no more is left) all stained with folly, and gashed with vice, haunts his distracted thought. Conscience, which long has slept, awakes like a giant refreshed with wine; lays waste all his former thoughts and desires: and like a long-deposed, now victorious prince, takes the severest revenges upon his bleeding heart. Its late soft whispers are thunder in his ears: and all means of grace rejected, exploded, ridiculed, are now the bolt that strikes him dead—dead even to the thoughts of death. In deeper distress, despair of life is forgot. He lies a wretched wreck of man on the shore of eternity! And the next breath he draws, blows him off into ruin.—”

“The sad evening before the death of that noble youth, I was there. No one was with him, but his physician, and an intimate whom he loved, and whom he had ruined by his infidel principles, and debauched practices. At my coming in, he said;”

“You and the physician are come too late. I have neither life nor hope. You would aim at miracles—you would raise the dead.”

“Heaven, I said, was merciful,”

“Or I should not have been so deeply guilty. What has it not done to bless and to save me:—I have been too strong for Omnipotence! I have plucked down ruin.”

“I said, the blessed Redeemer,”

“Hold! Hold! You wound me!—That is the rock on which I split—I denied his name, and his religion.”

“Refusing to hear anything from me, or take anything from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then, with vehemence:”

“Oh, Time! Time! It is fit thou shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the heart—How, art thou fled forever? —A month! Oh, for a single week! I ask not for years; though an age were too little for the much I have to do!”

“On my saying, we could not do too much—that heaven was a blessed place,”

“So much the worse. It is lost! It is lost! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell, as the loss of it is my greatest pain.”

“Soon after, I proposed prayer.”

“Pray, you that can. I never prayed—I cannot pray —nor need I. Is not heaven on my side already? It closes with my conscience. It but executes the sentence I pass upon myself. Its severest strokes but second my own.”

“His friend being much touched, even to tears at this, (who could forbear? I could not,) with a most affectionate look he said,”

“Keep those tears for thyself. I have undone thee— Dost weep for me? That is cruel. What can pain me more?”

“Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.”

“No, stay. Thou still mayest hope:—therefore, hear me. How madly have I talked? How madly hast thou listened, and believed? But look on my

present state, as a full answer to thee and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain: but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason—full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is, doubtless, immortal—And, as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict what I feel.”

“I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary confessor, on asserting the two prime articles of his creed, the existence of a God, and the immortality of the soul, extorted by the rack of nature; when he thus very passionately exclaimed,”

“No, no! Let me speak on. I have not long to speak —My much-injured friend! My soul, as my body, lies in ruins, in scattered fragments of broken thought. Remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray—Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flames:— that is not an everlasting flame: that is not an unquenchable fire.”

“How were we struck? Yet soon after, still more. With an eye of distraction, with a face of despair, he cried out:”

“My principles have poisoned my friend; my extravagance has beggared my boy; my unkindness has murdered my wife!—And is there another hell? —Oh! Thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! Hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown.”

“Soon after, his understanding failed. His terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgot. And, ere the sun (which I hope has seen few like him,) arose, the gay, young, noble, ingenuous, accomplished, and most wretched Altamont expired.”

Is not this tragical instance, my brethren, a loud warning to us all, and especially to such of us as may be walking in the steps of this unhappy youth? “Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die.” Death will make them wise, and show them their true interest, when it is too late to secure it. Ignorance and thoughtlessness, or the principles of infidelity, may make them live like beasts; but these will not enable them to die like beasts—May we live as candidates for immortality! May we now seek a well-established hope, that will stand the severest trial! And may we labor to secure the protection of the Lord of life and death, who can be our sure support in the wreck of dissolving nature! May we live the life, that we may die the death of the righteous; and find that dark valley a short passage into the world of bliss and glory! Amen.

LINES

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE FOREGOING SERMON.

*Yes! I must bow my head and die!—  
What then can bear my spirit up?  
In nature’s last extremity,  
Who can afford one ray of hope?  
Then all created comforts fail,  
And earth speaks nothing but despair;  
And you, my friends, must bid farewell,  
And leave your fellow-traveler.  
Yet, Savior, thy almighty hand,  
Even then, can sure support afford;  
Even then that hope shall firmly stand,  
That’s now supported by thy word.  
Searcher of hearts! O try me now,*

*Nor let me build upon the sand;  
Oh teach me now myself to know,  
That I may then the trial stand.*

# *SERM. LXXVII. THE LOVE OF SOULS, A NECESSARY QUALIFICATION FOR THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.*

**1** Thess. 2:8.— *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

A complete ministerial character is a constellation of all those graces and virtues which can adorn human nature; and the want of any one of them leaves a hideous defect in it, that breaks its symmetry and uniformity, and renders it less amiable and less useful. The love of God, and the love of man, and all the various modifications of this sacred passion—ardent devotion and active zeal, charity, compassion, meekness, patience, and humility; the accomplishments of the man of sense, the scholar, and the Christian, are necessary to finish this character, and make us able ministers of the New Testament. Each of these deserves to be illustrated and recommended; but should I attempt to crowd them into one discourse, I should be bewildered and lost in the vast variety of materials. I must, therefore, single out some one particular, some one bright star in this

heavenly constellation, to which I would confine your attention on this solemn occasion, and with the sacred splendor of which I would adorn both myself and you. Let the subject be Benevolence, or the love of souls. Love is a delightful theme; and those that feel it, take pleasure in thinking and talking about it. Therefore, while this is the subject, we cannot be weary nor inattentive.

The history of mankind cannot furnish us with a more striking instance of benevolence, or the love of souls, than we find in St. Paul, who speaks as like a father and an orator, as an apostle, in this chapter—a chapter written in such pathetic strains, that I can remember the time, when the reading of it has drawn tears even from heart so hard as mine. “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

The connection seems to be this—“As a nurse cherisheth her children,” that is, as a tender mother, who undertakes to nurse her own children, with fond endearment gives them the breast, and feeds them with her milk, the quintessence of her own blood; “so,” saith St. Paul, “being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you” the sincere milk of the word, even “the gospel of God,” the most precious thing we had to communicate: and not only this, but “our own souls, (or lives also,) because ye were dear unto us.”

When he says, “We were willing to have imparted to you our own souls or lives;” he may either mean, that such was his affection for the Thessalonians, and such was the influence his affection had upon his address to them, that he, as it were, breathed out his soul in every word. So affectionate, so pathetic, and earnest was his discourse, that it seemed animated with his very soul. Every word came from his heart, and seemed a

vehicle to convey his spirit into them. He spoke as if he would have died on the spot, through earnestness to affect them with what he said, that their souls, so dear to him, might be saved. Or, he may mean, that so ardent was his love for them, that he was willing not only to preach to them, but to lay down his life for them: he would willingly endure a natural death, if by that means he might bring them to obtain eternal life. Some of the patriots of antiquity, we are told, loved their country so well, that they generously sacrificed their lives for it. This public spirit, indeed, is almost lost in these dregs of time; but the evidence of ancient history is sufficient to convince us, that such a thing once was. And shall not the love of souls be as heroic, and work as powerfully? Yes, we find this spirit of sacred patriotism glowing with the utmost ardor in the generous breasts of St. Paul and his brethren. St. Paul breathes out his spirit towards the Philippians: “If,” says he, “I be offered up, (as a libation,) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.” St. John also infers this as a matter of obligation, from the consideration of Christ’s laying down a life of infinitely greater worth for us. “Hereby,” says he, “perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” 1 John 3:16.

Such, my brethren, ought to be the spirit of every gospel minister: thus dearly should they love the souls of men; and thus ardently desirous should they be to conduct them to Jesus and salvation.

My present design is to show what a happy effect the generous principles of benevolence, or the love of souls, would have upon us in the exercise of the ministerial office. And this will appear in the following particulars:

First, The prevalence of this disposition will contribute to ingratiate us with mankind, and so promote our usefulness.



It is not to be expected in the stated course of our ministry, that those should receive advantage by our labors to whom we are unacceptable. If they are disaffected to us, they will also disregard what we say; and while they disregard it, they can receive no benefit from it. The ministry of a contemptible minister will always be contemptible, and consequently useless.

But, on the other hand, when a minister in his congregation appears in a circle of friends, whose affections meet in him as their common center, then his labors are likely to be at once pleasing and profitable to them. When the heart is open to the speaker, his words will gain admission through the same door of entrance. Then there will be no suspicions of imposition, or sinister interested design. Then even hard things will be received, not as the effect of moroseness, but as wholesome severities from faithful friendship. For the confirmation of this, I may appeal to your observations of mankind: you know they will bear many things, and even take them well, from a known friend, which they would warmly resent from others. You know the persuasion, the remonstrance, or admonition of a friend will have great weight, when that of others would be neglected or contemned. In short, you may almost carry any point with mankind, if they are satisfied you love them, and regard their interest; and they also love you: but even real kindnesses from those whom they disaffect, will be received with suspicious caution, and perhaps with indignation.

Now, such is the nature of the ministerial office, that there is much need of this happy prepossession of mankind in our favor, that we may discharge it with comfort and success. We are not only to display the rich grace of the gospel, and the fair prospects of a blessed immortality, but also to denounce the terrors of the Lord, and rouse up again the lightning, and thunder, and

tempest of Sinai. We must represent human nature, in its present fallen state, in a very disagreeable and mortifying light; we must overturn the flattering hopes of mankind, and embitter to them the false measures of sin, in which they place so much of their happiness. We must put the cross of Christ on their shoulder, and reconcile them to self-denial, reproach, and various forms of suffering, for the sake of righteousness. We must inculcate upon them a religion for sinners; in which self-accusation, remorse, fear, sorrow, and all the painful heart-breakings of repentance are necessary ingredients. We must set ourselves in a strenuous opposition to the favorite lusts of the world, and the ways of the multitude; and this alone will set the world against us as their enemies, and officious disturbers of their peace. We must also exercise the rod of discipline for the correction of offenders; must take upon us the ungrateful office of reprovers, and give the reproof with proper degrees of severity. In short, the faithful discharge of our office will oblige us to use such measures as have been found, by the experience of thousands of years, to be very unpopular and irritating to mankind—measures, which brought upon the prophets, the apostles, and other servants of Christ, the odium of the world, and cost many of them their lives: and if we tread in their steps, we may expect the same treatment in a greater or less degree.

And how shall this unacceptable office be discharged faithfully, and yet as inoffensively and acceptably as may be? I can prescribe no certain expedient for this purpose while the world continues as bad as it is. This is what neither the prophets nor apostles, though inspired from heaven, were ever able to find out. But that which will have the happiest tendency of anything within the reach of humanity is the prevalence of benevolence, or the love of souls. It is comparatively easy to a minister, who ardently loves

his people to make them sensible he does love them, and is their real friend, even when he is constrained to put on the appearance of severity. Love has a language of its own—a language which mankind can hardly fail to understand; and which flattery and affectation can but seldom mimic with success. Love, like the other passions, has its own look, its own voice, its own air and manner in everything, strongly expressive of itself. Look at a friend when the sensations of love are tender and vigorous; and you see the generous passion looking upon you through his eyes, speaking to you by his voice, and expressing itself in every gesture. The most studied and well-managed artifices of flattery and dissimulation have something in them so stiff, so affected, so forced, so unnatural, that the cheat may often be detected, or, at least, suspected. When dissimulation mourns, and puts on the airs of sorrow and compassion, it is but whining and grimace: and when she smiles, it is but fawning and affectation; so hard is it to put on the face of genuine love without being possessed of it; and so easy is it for a real friend to appear such.

Hence it appears that the most effectual method to convince our hearers we love them, is, to be under the strong influence of that benevolent passion which we profess. The sacred fire of love will blaze out in full evidence, and afford the strongest conviction they can receive that their minister is their friend and aims at their best interest, even when he denounces the terrors of the Lord against them, or assumes the unacceptable character of their reprover; and when they are thus happily prepossessed in his favor, they will take almost anything well at his hands. Then, if ever, they will receive the truth in love, when they believe it is spoken in love. That must be a base, ungenerous sinner indeed, that can look up to the pulpit, and there see an affectionate friend in the person of his minister, adorned with

smiles of love, or melting into tears of tender pity, and yet resent his faithful freedoms, and hate him as his enemy for telling him the truth. Some ministers are not loved in a suitable degree by their people. But, not to mention at present the criminal cause of this neglect on the side of the people, I am afraid one common cause is, that they do not sufficiently love them. Love is naturally productive of love; it scatters its heavenly sparks around, and these kindle the gentle flame where they fall. Oh! That each of us, who sustain the sacred character, may purchase the love of our people with the price of our own love! And may we distribute this to them with so liberal a hand, as always to leave them debtors to us in this precious article? That people should love their minister more than he loves their souls, is a shocking, unnatural disproportion.

Farther; the prevalence of this sacred passion naturally tends to give our ministrations, and the whole of our behavior, such an air as will ingratiate us with mankind. Let a minister of Christ ascend the sacred desk, with a heart glowing with the love of souls, and what an amiable, engaging figure does he make, even in the most gloomy and terrible attitude? Then, if he denounces the vengeance of Heaven against impenitent sinners, he passes sentence with tears in his eyes, and the aspect of tender compassion and friendly reluctance. And if he is obliged to put on the stern air of a reprover, he still retains the winning character of the friend of human nature, and the lover of souls. Love gives a smooth, though sharp edge to his address, like a razor set in oil. Love animates his persuasions and exhortations, and gives them additional force. Love breathes through his invitations, and renders them irresistible. Love brightens the evidence of conviction, and sweetly forces it upon unwilling minds: for who would not lay his heart open to a friend? Love mingles smiles with his frowns, and convinces his hearers,

that he denounces the morose terrors of the law with all the affectionate benevolence of the gospel; and represents their danger and misery in a tremendous light, merely because he loves them, and is zealous to save them from it. Love would direct him to express the friend in conversation, better than all the rules of good-breeding that can be prescribed, and all the affected familiarity and complaisance that the greatest artificer of flattery and dissimulation could use. Love would give a graceful ease, an engaging softness, and a generous open-hearted frankness, to his behavior. Then, like St. Paul, he would comfort, and exhort, and charge his dear people, as a father doth his children, (1 Thess. 2:11:) and would carry all the attractive charms of love with him, wherever he went. This would be an inward principle of conduct; and, therefore, the conduct to which it incites, would be natural, easy, and unsuspicious, and free from stiffness and affectation, which never fails to disgust whenever it is perceived. “Thou God of Love! Implant and cherish this noble principle of love in our breasts; and may it actuate us in all our ministrations and adorn and recommend them!”

Secondly, The love of souls will enable and excite us to exercise the ministry in such a manner as tends to affect our hearers, and make deep impressions upon their hearts.

Love will move all the springs of sacred oratory, and give a force and spirit to our address, which even a hard heart cannot but feel. When we speak to those we love, we shall speak in earnest; and that is the most likely way to speak to the heart. Love will render us sincere, and adorn all our ministrations with the plain, artless garb of sincerity; and the sincerity of the speaker will have no small influence upon the hearers. When love warns of danger, the hearers are alarmed, and apprehend there is danger indeed. When love dissuades, it is the gentle restraint of a friendly hand; and

therefore agreeable, or at least tolerable. When love persuades and exhorts, what heart can be obstinate, when it is known it does but persuade to happiness? When men see the confessed lover of souls in the pulpit, it is natural for them to say, "Now it is proper I should be attentive, and regard what I hear; for I am convinced the speaker aims at my best interest. His advice I may safely follow, as the voice of benevolence; and even his admonitions and reproofs I should take in good part, as the effects of faithful friendship, that would rather run the risk of my displeasure by plain and honest dealing, than be necessary to my ruin by flattery and excessive complaisance." Thus it is natural for them to reflect; and by these reflections the way is opened into their hearts. Oh! That you and I, my reverend brethren, may make thorough trial for the future of the efficacy of this affectionate preaching! May the arrows we shoot at the hearts of our hearers be pointed with love! Then are they most likely to make a deep medicinal wound. The force of love is at once gentle and powerful: it will tenderly affect, when a stern, austere, imperious address never fails to disgust and exasperate; and a languid and indifferent address, the language of a cold unfeeling heart, leaves the hearers as cold and languid as itself.

Thirdly, The ardent love of souls will make a minister of the gospel diligent and laborious in his office.

How laborious and indefatigable are we in pursuing a point we have so much at heart, and in serving those we love? Therefore, if the love of souls be our ruling passion, and their salvation be the object we have in view, with what indefatigable zeal and diligence shall we labor to serve their immortal interests? How gladly shall we spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly we love, the less we should be loved. 2 Cor. 12:15. How will this endear our office to us, as an office of benevolence,

and a labor of love? How shall we love and bless the name of our divine Master, who has made it our duty to spend our life in the agreeable work of serving our friends? While this benevolent spirit glows in our breasts, we can leave no blanks in the page of life, but all must be filled up, with the offices of friendship. Love, an ever-operating love, will always keep us busy; and that amiable and comprehensive summary of our Master's history, will, in some measure, agree to us, "he went about doing good." Acts 10:38. Love will excite us to preach the word, to be instant in season, out of season. 2 Tim. 4:2. Love will give our conversation a right turn; and with a natural unaffected air, drop a word upon every occasion that may edify the circle of friends—a circle so wide, that we can never pass over it while in company with any of the human race. As souls are equal in worth, notwithstanding the various ranks and distinctions among mankind, so the love of souls is an impartial passion: like the redeeming love of Christ, it extends to "all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, and languages;" and it will excite us to the most condescending services to the poorest and meanest, as well as the great and honorable. Love will often cast us on the knee, as affectionate intercessors for our dear friends, that is, for all mankind, and particularly for that part of them which is more immediately entrusted to our ministerial care. Love will inspire our prayers with a kind of almighty importunity, and render us unable to bear a refusal in a point that we have so much at heart. Oh! What wonders would love enable us to perform! How many precious hours, now trifled away, would it redeem! What spirit, what life, would it diffuse through our secret devotions and public ministrations! It would adorn our life not only with a shining action here and there, like a single star in the expanse of heaven, but crowd it thick with pious offices of friendship, and generous exploits of benevolence, like

the glow of blended splendor from ten thousand stars in the milky way. It would render idleness an intolerable burden, and labor a pleasure; which leads me to observe more particularly, in the

Fourth place, The ardent love of souls will not only make us diligent and laborious in our ministry, but enable us to bear all the hardships and difficulties we may meet with in the discharge of it, with patience, and even with cheerfulness. Love is strong to suffer, and mighty to conquer, difficulties. The love of fame, the love of riches, the love of honor and pre-eminence, what difficulties has it encountered—what obstructions has it surmounted— what dangers has it dared! How tolerable, yea, how pleasant, has it rendered fatigues and hardships? And how has it rendered dangers and death charming and illustrious! And shall not the nobler passion, the love of souls, do vastly more? It has already done more. This was the heroic passion that animated St. Paul, and taught him to look upon dangers and death, in their most shocking forms, with a generous contempt. Though he knew that bonds and imprisonments awaited him, yet, “none of these things move me,” says he, “neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.” Acts 20:24. I point out this Christian hero as a specimen; but it would be easy to add many other illustrious names to the list. And would not the sacred fervor of love reconcile even such feeble and cowardly creatures as we, to hardships and dangers, in the service of souls? If we may but save them from everlasting ruin, how insignificant are the greatest difficulties we can suffer in the generous attempt? If we make those happy whom we love, then welcome labor, fatigue, difficulties and dangers; and farewell that ease and indolence, that pleasure or pursuit, that is inconsistent with this main design. Labor is delight, difficulty inviting, and



danger illustrious and alluring, in this benevolent enterprise. Who would not labor with pleasure, and suffer with patience, and even with joy, for the service of souls—souls formed for immortality! Souls whom we love even as ourselves! We begrudge a little pains or suffering for those whom we disregard; but love sweetens labor, and lightens every burden.

This I would direct to you, my brethren, who are now to take part with us in this ministry. I doubt not but you are better acquainted with the work you are about to undertake than to need my information, that you are not entering into an office of ease and self-indulgence, but of labor, toil, and difficulty—an office that cannot be faithfully discharged without frequent self-denial, incessant application, and exhausting fatigues. But for your encouragement, remember, all this labor, difficulty, and self-denial, you are to endure in the service of those you love; and love, you will find, will lighten the burden, and render a life of toil and fatigue more easy and delightful, than indolence and inactivity. Therefore, cherish this generous benevolence, as that which will render you vigorous in doing, and strong in suffering. O that your Divine Master may fire your hearts with much of this truly ministerial spirit!

Fifthly, I observe the prevalence of a spirit of benevolence would happily restrain us from everything “low, disgraceful, or offensive,” in our ministrations, in our conversation and designs.

Let the love of mankind be warm and vigorous in our hearts, and we cannot address them, even upon terrible subjects, in a stern, unrelenting manner—a manner that looks more like a scold, than a Christian orator; and that tends rather to exasperate, than reform. But we shall denounce the most terrible things, in a soft language, and with as mild and gentle an aspect as faithfulness will allow, or compassion inspire.

Let love be the spring of your conduct, and it will render it courteous without affectation, insinuating without artifice, engaging without flattery, and honest without a huffish bluntness. This will guard us against all airs of insolence and affected superiority in conversation, and a distant, imperious behavior, that seems to forbid access, and never fails to excite disgust. When a man appears of vast importance to himself, and assumes state, he will, for that very reason, appear very insignificant and contemptible to others. But if we tenderly love those with whom we converse, it will render our conversation affable, sociable, and condescending, and modest. And this will be found the best expedient to engage the esteem of mankind, and procure that respect which pride with all its artifices seeks in vain: for that maxim, repeated more than once by our blessed Lord, who knew mankind so well, will hold good in this case, “He that exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Luke 14:11.—18:14.

The ardent love of souls will render us meek and patient under kind treatment, and keep down those sallies of passion, which are at once so unmanly and unministerial. This will sweeten our temper, and purge out those sour humors, that render men peevish, sullen, and ready to blaze, out into anger at every provocation. This lamb-like spirit will conform us to the Lamb of God, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not,” 1 Pet. 2:23, nor burst out into a flame of passion.

If love be predominant in the heart, it will happily disable us from aiming at sordid ends, and from taking sordid measures to obtain those ends. Then we shall not labor for the applause of mankind, but for their salvation. We shall not seek their silver and gold, but their souls: and we shall be able to

say with St. Paul, “We seek not yours, but you.” 2 Cor. 12:14. Though we may not only be willing to receive, but justly insist upon, a competent support, from those in whose service we spend our lives; yet if the love of their souls, and not of their money, be uppermost in our hearts, it will inspire us with such moderation, contentment, and noble negligence, as to earthly things, and with such apparent zeal and earnestness for their salvation, that if they have the least degree of candor, they cannot but be convinced that it is the latter, and not the former, which we have most at heart, and chiefly labor to promote. This principle will restrain us from all the artifices of avarice, and from ever wearing a “cloak of covetousness.” 1 Thess. 2:5. It would enable us so to behave, as may afford mankind sufficient matter of conviction, that we need not be hired to do them good offices, and endeavor to save their souls; but that we do it freely, were it possible for us to make the attempt successfully, without devoting all that time and strength to it, which others lay out in providing for themselves and their families.

Thus I have shown you, in a few instances, by way of specimen, what a happy influence the love of souls would have upon the ministerial character, and consequently upon those among whom we exercise our office. And I hope you will forgive me, my reverend fathers and brethren, if I have, as it were, forgotten there are any present but you, and that I have talked over the matter with you among ourselves. Indeed, my thoughts were so engrossed with that peculiar share which we have in the subject, that it seemed unnatural to me to take notice of its reference to mankind in general, and how much the love of souls is the duty of hearers as well as ministers.

But now, my brethren of the laity, I must turn my address to you: and the first improvement I would have you make of what you have heard, is, to

learn from it in what light you should look upon your ministers. Look upon us as “the friends, the lovers of your souls.” If you can discover that we are not worthy of that character in some suitable degree, then it is your right as men, as Christians, and I may add, as Presbyterians, to reject us, and not own us as your ministers. But, while you cannot but acknowledge us in that sacred character, you are bound to esteem us as your friends—the real friends of your best interests.

And while you look upon us in this light, will you not practically treat us as such? Will you not regard the instructions, the exhortations and warnings, which you hear from your friends, who feel themselves deeply interested in your happiness? “Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord:” (1 Thess. 3:8,) but, O! It kills us to see you destroy yourselves. Will you not bear with our severity, since it is the warmest benevolence to you, that constrains us to use it? When we would engage you to a life of holiness, why do you fly off, as if you were afraid of being overreached, and caught in some snare? We are your friends that persuade you: and why will you apprehend any injury from us? When we would dissuade you from the pursuit of guilty pleasures, why are you so stiff, and tenacious of them? Do you think we love you so little, that we could begrudge you any real happiness, or would be officious to impair it? No, indeed, my dear brethren, such a design is so far from our hearts, that to promote your happiness in time and eternity, is the great end of all our labors. When we would put the cross of Christ on your shoulders, and compel you to carry it; when we inculcate upon you a life of self-denial, mortification, and repentance, believe me, it is because we love you, and are fully persuaded this course will turn out best for you in the issue. Do we denounce the curses of the law against you? Do we severely reprove, and loudly alarm you? Why, what

possible motive can we have to this, but love, honest, disinterested love? We love you, and therefore cannot bear the thought that you should perish for want of faithful warning. Were self-love our principle, we are not so dull, but we could learn the art of flattery, and prophesy smooth things, as well as others. But we are afraid for ourselves, as we are afraid for you, lest it should be said to us, when the wall, which we have daubed with untempered mortar, is fallen, “Where is the daubing, wherewith ye have daubed it?” (Ezek. 13:12.) And will you not regard the warning of a friendly voice? Will you not fear, when love itself points out your danger, and dare conceal it no longer?

Let me also propose it to you, since your ministers love you, ought you not to love them in return? Does not love deserve love? Ought you not to esteem them highly in love, if not for their own, yet “for their works’ sake?” 1 Thess. 5:13. And ought you not to give them proper expressions of your love, by improving their affectionate endeavors for your own benefit? Do but permit them to be the instruments of making you happy, and you gratify them in the main point. For this purpose, while they speak the truth in love, do you receive it in love; and cheerfully submit to their admonitions and reproofs, which, however often they meet with angry resentments, are the most substantial evidences of a faithful disinterested friendship which they can possibly give you. Here also I may add, and I hope without offence, since in this place I can have no personal concern in it myself, that you should express your love to your ministers by cheerfully and generously contributing to their support. While they love you so tenderly, while they spend their time, their strength, and all their abilities in your service, can you be so sneaking, so ungenerous, so ungrateful as to leave them and their

families to suffer want, and incur the contempt entailed upon poverty? Sure you cannot be guilty of such a conduct?

Finally, let me exhort you to love your own souls. Certainly your ministers should not be singular in this. If they are so strongly obliged to love the souls of others, surely you must be obliged to love your own. It may seem strange that I should exhort creatures to love themselves, whose guilt and misery are so much owing to the excess of that principle. But alas! The soul is hardly any part of that self, which they so immoderately love: no, that precious immortal part is disregarded, as if it were but a trifling excrescence, like their nails or their hair, incapable of pleasure or pain. But, oh! Love their souls; make sure of their happiness, whatever becomes of you in other respects; for what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world, and lose your own souls? Matt. 16:26.

Let me now resume the consideration of my subject, as it refers to us of the sacred character. Methinks we may claim a peculiar property in this day; as we are peculiarly concerned in the business of it. We often preach to others; but let us for once preach to ourselves; and let the love of souls be the generous, and delightful subject. The subject may recommend itself; and what has been said, strongly enforces it. But, alas! I feel there is one heart among us, that stands in need of farther excitements. Therefore, though I doubt not but I might address myself to all my fathers and brethren, without offence, I must indulge myself in soliloquy and preach to one that needs it most. I mean myself.

My glorious and condescending Lord, who has endowed mankind with a wise variety of capacities, and assigned to each of them his proper work, agreeably to the various exigencies of the world they inhabit, has appointed me the most pleasing work, the work of love and benevolence. He only

requires me to act the friend of human nature, and show myself a lover of souls—souls whom He loves, and whom he redeemed with the blood of his heart—souls whom his Father loves; and for whom he gave up his own Son unto death—souls, whom my fellow-servants of a superior order, the blessed angels love; and to whom they concur with me in ministering—souls, precious in themselves, and of more value than the whole material universe —souls that must be happy or miserable, in the highest degree, through an immortal duration—souls united to me by the endearing ties of our common humanity—souls for whom I must give an account to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls—souls whom none hate but the malignant ghosts of hell, and those fallen spirits in flesh, who are under their influence upon earth. And oh! Can I help loving these dear souls? Why does not my heart always glow with affection and zeal for them? Oh! Why am I such a languid friend, when the love of my Master and his Father is so ardent? When the ministers of heaven are flaming fires of love, though they do not share in the same nature? And when the object of my love is so precious and valuable? The owners of those souls often do not love them; and they are likely to be lost forever by the neglect. Oh! Shall not I love them? Shall not love invigorate my hand, to pluck them out of the burning? Yes, I will, I must love them. But ah; to love them more! Glow, my zeal! Kindle my affections! Speak, my tongue! Flow, my blood! Be exerted, all my powers! Be my life, if necessary, a sacrifice to save souls from death! Let labor be a pleasure; let difficulties appear glorious and inviting, in this service. O thou God of Love! Kindle a flame of love in this cold heart of mine; and then I shall perform my work with alacrity and success.

But I must drop my soliloquy and return to you my venerable friends; and I shall take up no more of your time, than just to glance at a collateral

inference from my subject; and that is, if we should love our hearers, and even all mankind, then certainly we should love one another. If when we see one another in judicatures, or at any other place, we see our friends, how pleasing and delightful will it render all our interviews? If mutual confidence and union of hearts subsist among us, with what ease, harmony and pleasure shall we manage all our affairs? If we love one another with a pure heart fervently, with what life and ardor will it inspire our intercessions for each other, when we are far apart, in our respective closets? How will it teach us to bear one another's burdens, to sympathize with each other, to compromise differences, to forgive infirmities, and agree to differ, that is, differ peaceably, if in anything we should differ in sentiment. How sweet is friendship, how reviving the conversation, and even the very sight of a friend! Blessed be God, this pleasure we have enjoyed in our little presbytery; and I must add, in all the ecclesiastical judicatures to which I have ever belonged. This has rendered absence on such occasions so painful a self-denial to me, that nothing but incapacity could constrain me to submit to it. The conviction of duty, and the impulse of friendship, pushed me on the same way, and were irresistible.

I am so happy as to be able to furnish you with a new argument for brotherly love and harmony among us, in a presbyterial capacity; and that is, the union between the synods of New York and Philadelphia, to which we belong—a union of which I was witness; and which appeared to me not a merely external artificial bond, which would soon break to pieces, but a union of hearts. And I must say, that however warm have been my desires, and however sanguine my hopes of peace, yet I never expected to see so truly pacific a spirit prevail in both bodies, and such a generous forgiveness and oblivion of past mutual offences. May the same spirit of peace circulate



far and wide among ministers and people; and may it reach to this colony, where we so peculiarly need that additional strength which results from a state of union. This is not only my wish and prayer, but my hope: and as the union of synods leaves the people in the possession of their right to choose their own ministers, as much as while we were in a divided state: as all objections from the Protest, which was long looked upon as an insuperable obstacle, are effectually removed, by both synods agreeing in the general principles of protestation, and by the synod of Philadelphia declaring, “That they never judicially adopted the protestation entered Anno Domini seventeen hundred and forty-one, nor do account it a synodical act;” and as the synod of New York have done proper honor to what they account the late work of God, in which I shall always esteem it both my duty and my right peaceably to concur with them; I say, as the union has been formed upon such fair and honorable terms, I hope it will be acceptable to the people in general, and that instead of endeavoring to re-kindle the flames of contention, they will honestly endeavor to improve the advantages of a state of peace and union; and then the God of peace will be with them. Amen.

#### THE MANNER OF ORDINATION, &c.

I now proceed to prepare the way more immediately for the solemnity of this day: and for the sake of the hearers in general, it may be proper for me to show, in a few words, the design and propriety of ordination by the imposition of hands, and who are the persons invested with the power of ordination.

It is agreeable to the common practice of mankind, to signify the conveyance of important offices by some solemn rite; and God wisely condescends to deal with men in their own manner, and to cast his transactions with them into the model of their transactions with one another.

Thus, in particular, he has appointed that the investiture of persons with the sacred office should be performed with the significant ceremony of laying on of hands. This is evident from St. Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." 1 Timothy 4:14. He intimates in his second Epistle, that he had a peculiar share in that solemnity, or presided at the occasion; for, says he, "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands." 2 Tim. 1:6. Thus Paul himself, and his colleague Barnabas, were set apart to their mission to the heathen world; for St. Luke informs us, that while the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch were ministering to the Lord, and fasting, "the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away." Acts 13:2,3. To this also St. Paul refers, when he enjoins Timothy to "lay hands suddenly on no man;" 1 Tim. 5:22; that is, to invest no man with the sacred office, till he had taken sufficient time to be satisfied of his qualifications. This solemn rite was used for the like purpose under the law of Moses; and from thence it was transferred to the Christian church. Thus, when Joshua was nominated his successor, the Lord commands Moses, "Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him, and give him a charge. And Moses did as the Lord had commanded him." Num. 27:18-23. Deut. 34:9. This ceremony was also used upon other solemn occasions both under the Old and New Testament, as in the authoritative benedictions of the inspired patriarchs and prophets; Gen. 48:14,15, &c. Mark 10:16; in miraculously healing the sick; Mark 6:5, and 16:18, and in conveying the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, on which account the

imposition of hands generally attended baptism, in the apostolic age. Acts 8:15-17, and 19:5,6. Heb. 6:2.

It must be granted, that in the ordinary ages of the church, when miraculous powers have ceased, this rite cannot answer all the same purposes, in the same extent, as in the age of miracles and inspiration. There is no such virtue in the hand of a bishop or presbytery, as to infuse ministerial qualifications, or the gifts of the Spirit: and all pretensions to such a power, are arrogant, enthusiastical and ridiculous. Yet, there are sufficient reasons for the continued use of this rite in the church in all ages. It may still answer some important ends, for the sake of which it should be used, though it may not now answer all the ends it once did. It may now serve, as well as in the apostolic age, as a solemn significant sign of a man's consecration to the sacred office. It may now serve as well as then, as a significant ceremony in solemn ministerial benedictions, or in the presbytery's prayer to God for his blessing upon the person so peculiarly devoted to his service; after the example of Christ, the patriarchs and prophets. And it may also be used now, as well as ever, as a significant sign and seal of the ordinary gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are the privilege of the church, and particularly of its ministers in all ages. Of this it may still be a proper sign, as baptism is still a sign of regeneration and the remission of sins; and, therefore, still administered, though it be not now followed with such miraculous effects as in the apostolic age. When the main ends of an ordinance can be substantially answered, there is always good reason for its continuance, whatever circumstantial variations it may be subjected to.

Upon such principles as these the generality of Christians, in all ages have practiced ordination by the imposition of hands as a divine institution still

in force. And upon these principles we now intend to proceed in investing these our brethren with the sacred office.

But here a question lies in our way, which has been much agitated in the world, to whom does the power of ordination belong? To a presbytery, that is, to a collective body of ministers of the same rank and order? Or to a bishop, that is, to a minister of a superior order, above the rest of the clergy? To this my time will allow me to give but a short answer.

First, it may be easily proved, by an induction of particulars, that ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος, bishop or presbyter, in the New Testament, signify the same office, and are applied to the common ministers of the gospel promiscuously; and consequently, that there is no such office by divine appointment, as that of a bishop in the modern sense of the word, that is, a diocesan bishop, of an order superior to the rest of the clergy. Now, if there should be no such office, certainly the power of ordination cannot belong to it; for it cannot belong to a nonentity, or a usurped authority. I bind myself to make out this, when called to it; but now I must pass it over thus superficially.

Secondly, I remark, that ordination is an act of presbytery appears from sundry scripture instances. The apostles were all upon an equality, or formed a presbytery; and they concurred in this act. Thus Paul and Barnabas jointly ordained elders in every city. Acts 14:23. Timothy, as I observed before, was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. 4:14, in which it seems St. Paul presided. 2 Tim. 1:6. And we have seen that Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the prophets and teachers, or as they may be called, the presbytery of Antioch. I add,

Thirdly, That ordination is, I think, universally acknowledged to be an act of government; and consequently to belong to those who are invested with

the government of the church: but the power of church-government is committed to the ministers of the gospel in general: therefore, so is the power of ordination. That the power of church-government is committed to ministers in common, is evident from more passages of the New Testament than I can take time to quote. St. Paul speaks of it as belonging to elders, or presbyters, “to rule well,” as well as to “labor in word and doctrine.” 1 Tim. 5:17. “Them that have the rule over you,” is his periphrasis for the ministers of the churches to whom he writes. Heb. 13:7,17,24. He mentions it as a necessary qualification of a minister, that, “he rule his own house” well; “for,” says he, “if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” 1 Tim. 3:4,5. This implies, that it belongs to the province of every minister, to rule the church of God, as the master of a house does his family. So also, when submission and obedience are required, on the part of the people, it implies a power to rule, on the part of the elders or presbyters. Of this many instances might be given. See 1 Cor. 16:16; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12,13. Now, since it is evident, that ordination is an act of government, and that the power of government belongs to the ministers in general, it follows, that the power of ordination also belongs to ministers in general, and should not be appropriated to a superior order of bishops. Therefore, without encroachment or usurpation, we proceed, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to exercise this power.

And now, my dear brethren, the solemn business of the day comes very near you. You are just entering into the most solemn engagement, that human nature is capable of: you have already had some trial of your work; and though no doubt the trial has discovered to you so much of your weakness and insufficiency as may keep you always humble and dependent upon divine grace; yet, I hope, you have found it a delightful work—the

work of love—the office of friendship; and therefore pleasing. I hope you have already found, that you serve a good master; and that you never desire to change for another: no, you are fixed for life, and even for eternity. The churches also have had trial of your ministerial qualifications; and we have reason to hope, they are so well satisfied, that it is their general and earnest desire, you should be invested with full authority to exercise all the branches of the sacred office. And this presbytery, from the repeated trials they have had of your piety, learning, and other qualifications, judge you fit to take part with them in the ministry. You are therefore desired, and solemnly charged, in the presence of God, to give an honest answer to the following questions:

Do you heartily believe the divine authority of the Christian religion, as taught in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament? And do you promise, that in the strength of God, you will resolutely profess it, and adhere to it, though it should cost you all that is dear to you in the world, and even life itself?

Do you receive the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the confession of your faith: that is, do you believe it contains an excellent summary of the pure doctrines of Christianity as taught in the Scriptures, and as purged from the corruptions of popery, and other errors that have crept into the church? And do you purpose to explain the Scriptures agreeably to the substance of it?

Do you receive the directory for worship and government composed by the Westminster Assembly, as agreeable to the word of God, and promise to conform to the substance of it?

Can you honestly declare, that as far as you can discover, after frequent examination, you have reason to hope, that the religion you now undertake

to teach, has had a sanctifying efficacy upon yourselves, and made you habitually holy in heart and life?

Can you honestly declare, that as far as you know yourselves, after strict examination, you do not undertake the holy ministry from any low, interested and mercenary views; but with a sincere, prevailing aim at the glory of God and the salvation of men?

Do you solemnly promise, depending upon divine grace, for assistance, that you will faithfully and zealously endeavor to discharge all the duties of the sacred office with which you are now about to be invested; particularly, that you will be diligent in prayer, reading, study, preaching, ministering the sacraments, exercising ecclesiastical discipline, and edifying conversation?

Do you promise that you will endeavor to form your conduct, and that of your families, as far as your influence can extend, that they may be imitable examples to all around you of that holy religion which you profess and preach?

Do you profess your willingness, in meekness of spirit, to submit in the Lord to the discipline and government of the church of Christ, and the admonitions of your brethren?

Finally; Do you resolve and promise, that you will continue in the faithful discharge of your office, so long as you have life, strength and opportunity, to whatever discouragements and suffering it may expose you?

As you have thus made a good confession before many witnesses, and given us ground to hope that God has really called you to this office, we proceed, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus, solemnly to set you apart to it, by prayer and the imposition of hands, which himself has appointed for this purpose.

[Here Mr. Patillo, and Mr. Richardson kneeled down, and the presbytery put their hands upon them; and he that presided offered up a solemn prayer over them, agreeably to the materials recommended in the Westminster Directory upon this head.]

And now, our dear brethren and fellow-servants in the gospel, as Moses laid his hands on Joshua, and gave him a charge, so we, in this solemn posture, “charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine, 2 Tim. 4:1,2; that you may save yourselves, and those that hear you.” 1 Tim. 4:16. We solemnly charge you, to “take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28. Remember the consequences of this day’s transaction will follow you through all eternity. Therefore, make it the business of your lives to perform your obligations. The oath of God is upon you, and ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord for your master, to serve him. “And now, brethren, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” Acts 20:32. But I would not encroach; and therefore leave this charge to be finished by another.

And as a token of our receiving you into ministerial communion, as members of this presbytery, we give you the right hand of fellowship.

[Here each member of the presbytery gave Messrs. Patillo and Richardson his right hand.]

And with our hand we give you our heart. We welcome you as new laborers into our Lord’s vineyard; and we wish, we hope, and pray you may



long be employed there with great pleasure and success. We cannot help pouring out a torrent of fatherly wishes and prayers for you. May the great God make you able ministers of the New Testament. May you shine as illustrious luminaries in the church— “holding forth the word of life.” Phil. 2:16. And may you be made the happy instruments of “turning many from darkness to light.” Acts 26:18. “Oh! May your whole lives be one uninterrupted course of pleasing labor to yourselves, and extensive usefulness to the world. And when you die, may you fall with the dignity of ministers of Jesus. May this be your rejoicing in your last agonies, and in the nearest view of the supreme tribunal, even the testimony of your consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world. 2 Cor. 1:12. And when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then may you also appear with him in glory. Col. 3:4. O thou supreme Lord of the world, and King of the church, thus let these thy servants live, and thus let them die. Amen.

# *SERM. LXXVIII. THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP A GOOD WORK.*

**1** Tim. 3:1.— *This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

It is agreeable to the common sense and common practice of mankind, that persons should be invested with important offices by some solemn and significant ceremony: and it is an instance of the wisdom and condescension of the great God, that he deals with men in their own manner, and models his transactions with them, into the form of their transactions with one another. Thus, in particular, he has appointed, that the investiture of persons with the sacred and important office of the gospel ministry, should be performed by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, attended with solemn fasting and prayer. To this St. Paul refers, when he exhorts Timothy not to neglect the gift that was in him, which was given him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; 1 Tim. 4:14, at which solemnity, it seems, St. Paul presided; for, in the second epistle, he gives the same exhortation to the same person, in terms that imply thus much: “I put thee in remembrance once more, that thou stir up

the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.” 2 Tim. 1:6. Thus Paul himself and Barnabas were set apart for their mission to the Gentile world. Acts 13:2,3. While the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch were ministering to the Lord, and fasting “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away.” This is probably included in “the doctrine of laying on of hands,” which the apostle enumerates among “the first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” Heb. 6:1,2, and to this he refers, when he enjoins Timothy, 1 Tim. 5:22. “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” This solemn rite was used for the like purpose under the law of Moses, and from thence was transferred to the gospel church. Thus, when Joshua was nominated his successor, the Lord commands Moses, “Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hands upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded.” Numbers 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9. This solemn rite was used also upon other occasions both under the Old and New Testament: as in the authoritative benedictions of the patriarchs and prophets, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit: Gen. 48:14,15, &c.; Mark. 10:16; in miraculously healing the sick: Mark 16:18, and 6:5; and especially in communicating the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not only to the persons invested with the ministerial office, but to the primitive Christians in general. Acts 8:15-17, and 19:5,6; Heb. 6:2. And hence the imposition of hands generally attended, or soon followed upon, baptism, in the apostolic age.

This is the best precedent I can recollect for annexing a solemn charge to the imposition of hands. Indeed, a charge given in so solemn a posture, is so weighty and affecting, that methinks it is impossible not to feel it at the time; or for those that have once felt it, ever to forget it afterwards.

It is evident, that in the ordinary ages of the church, when miracles are become needless for the confirmation of our religion, the imposition of hands in investing persons with the ministerial office, cannot answer all the same purposes, in the same extent, as in the apostolic age of miracles and inspirations. The hands of a bishop or a presbytery cannot now confer the Holy Ghost, or any of his miraculous gifts; and the high and extravagant pretensions of this kind, that have been made, have cherished superstition and enthusiasm in some, and exposed the institution itself to the ridicule and contempt of others. But though the institution cannot now answer all the same purposes, in the same extent, as in the apostolic age, yet there is no reason to lay it entirely aside, or to esteem it an idle insignificant ceremony. It may still answer some ends, common to the ordinary and extraordinary ages of the church. And there may be sundry purposes even now, so analogous to the miraculous purposes of the primitive institution, that it may be very proper still to retain it, on account of this analogy. It may now serve, as well as in miraculous ages, as a solemn ceremony and significant sign of a man's consecration to the sacred office. It may now serve, as well as in miraculous ages, as a solemn rite in ministerial benedictions, or in the presbytery's earnest prayer to God for his blessing upon the person so peculiarly devoted to his service; after the example of Christ, the patriarchs and prophets. And it may also be used now, as properly as ever, as a significant sign and seal of the ordinary gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, which are the privilege of the church of Christ,

and particularly of its ministers in all ages. Of this it may still be a sign; as baptism is still a sign of regeneration and the forgiveness of sins: and therefore still observed, though it be not now followed with such miraculous effects, as in the apostolic age. When the ends of an ordinance can be substantially answered, there is always a good reason for its continuance, to whatever circumstantial variations it may be subject.

Upon such principles as these the generality of Christians in all ages have looked upon ordination by the laying on of hands, as a divine institution still in force. This is the solemnity, that has occasioned our present meeting; and, I hope, that in so large an assembly, there are not a few, who have been and still are, wafting up their earnest prayers to God, that his efficacious blessing may attend a solemnity so important in itself, and so unusual in this colony.

My text will furnish materials for a discourse adapted to this occasion. “This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” To explain and improve the sundry parts of which shall be my present business.

“The office of bishop.”—What is meant by this office, or what rank a bishop should bear in the Christian church, is a debate that has been managed with great learning and plausibility: and alas! With much uncharitableness and fury, on both sides, for a long time. I am not able to add anything new to the argumentative part of the controversy: and I am sure I am not disposed to add anything to the heat and fury of it. But the present occasion renders it necessary for me to declare my sentiments upon this point, with the reasons of them: in order to show you the principles on which the validity of Presbyterian ordination, to be solemnized at the close of this hour, is founded.

We may easily know what the office of a bishop is, in a certain church, for which I have the sincerest benevolence and veneration, though I cannot think and practice in some little things as she does. In that church, we know, a bishop is an officer of a distinct and superior order among the clergy; as distinct from the rest of the clergy, as a colonel from a captain, or a justice of the peace from a constable; and superior to them in his revenues, in his civil rank, and in ecclesiastical authority. As to his revenues, they generally amount to two or three thousand pounds sterling per annum, while many of the inferior clergy have hardly the fiftieth part of that income. As to his civil rank, he is a peer of the realm, and a member of the House of Lords. His ecclesiastical authority extends to many things, which the common clergy are supposed incapable of; such as, the over-sight of the clergy in his diocese, (which many perhaps include some hundreds of them) as they oversee the laity—the power of ordaining priests and deacons, and degrading them; of confirming catechumens; of holding spiritual courts, &c. At the head of this hierarchy is an archbishop, who oversees these overseers, and has pretty much the same power over the bishops as they have over the common clergy. The bishops are supposed to be so much engaged in these more honorable duties of their function, that they are very seldom employed in the lower and more laborious duties of the pastoral office, such as preaching the word, and administering the sacraments. This is a brief view of the office of bishop, in that church from which we have the misfortune to dissent; and the church of Rome has pretty much the same notion of it; which certainly cannot add to its popularity among Protestants.

But the inquiry now before us, is not, what is meant by an English bishop; but what is meant by an apostolic New Testament bishop? Whether it be indeed a distinct superior order of ministers; or whether it be a name

common, and equally applicable, to ministers in general, without distinction?—whether certain acts of authority are peculiar to a bishop, according to the apostolic constitution? Or whether they equally belong to all ministers of the gospel? You see this inquiry will lead you to your Bibles: and I hope, you are all so far protestants, as to join with the great Chillingworth in saying “The Bible! The Bible! Is the religion of protestants.”

It is a strong presumption, in my view, that Jesus Christ never intended to establish a superior order among his ministers; but, on the other hand, that they should all stand upon equal ground: in that he checks the proud contention of his disciples for superiority in the following strong terms; “Ye know, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great, exercise authority upon them: but it shall not be so among you,” Matt. 20:25,26, that is, in civil courts, there are officers of various orders, and various ranks of nobility: but among you, the officers of my kingdom, it shall not be so: but you shall be all of one order.

But that which appears decisive in this point is, that the term bishop, in the New Testament, does not, in one instance, signify a superior order of ministers; but is indisputably applied to all the ministers of the gospel in general.

The officers of the apostolic church were of two kinds, ordinary and extraordinary: and both are enumerated by the apostle. The ascended Redeemer gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers. Eph. 4:11. The apostolate was an extraordinary office, and ceased with the twelve who were invested with it by Christ himself. To this office belonged the administration of the word and sacraments, and the exercise of discipline. But besides these ordinary

duties of the ministerial office, there were some grand peculiarities that belonged to the apostles. They were the immediate witnesses of Christ's resurrection; and therefore it was an essential qualification for their office, that they had. seen him after his resurrection; which St. Paul intimates in that query, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" 1 Cor. 9:1. They were also endowed with the gift of tongues, and other miraculous powers of the Spirit, which they were enabled to communicate to others. Thus they were qualified to be the first founders of the church, and propagators of the gospel among all nations. But it needs no proof, that they had no successors in these extraordinary parts of their office; and consequently, the superiority of the apostles cannot be urged as an argument for the superiority of bishops over the rest of the clergy, in ordinary ages: nor can it be pretended, without intolerable arrogance, that bishops, without one of the distinguishing qualifications of the apostles, are their successors in office.

The next rank of officers, namely prophets, were persons inspired with the knowledge of things future. And it is not pretended, that theirs was an office of perpetual standing in the church.

As for the evangelists, they were itinerant ministers, or commissaries under the apostles, who travelled among the churches, and made such regulations as were wanting. This seems to have been the only peculiarity of their office: and in other respects it does not appear, that they were superior to the common ministers of the gospel. Therefore it is not to my purpose to inquire, whether their office should be still continued in the church or not.

The ordinary ministers of the gospel, are those whom the apostle here calls pastors and teachers. They are denominated from their office. Because the churches under their care, are often represented as flocks, which they



were to feed, guide, and guard; therefore they are called pastors or shepherds. Because it was their office to teach the great doctrines and precepts of the gospel; therefore they are called teachers. Because the term [πρεσβύτεροι] elders, which properly signifies elders in age; did at length become a respectable term for honorable officers, like the Roman word, Senator; or rather because those were generally ordained to the ministry, who had been of longest standing in the churches, and were properly [πρεσβύτεροι] elders, in Christianity, if not in age, in opposition to the [νεόφυτοι] novices, who were but lately introduced into the church, and were but juniors in Christianity; therefore the ministers of the gospel are often called [πρεσβύτεροι] elders. And because it was their office to oversee, to visit, and to take care of their churches, as a shepherd does his flock: therefore they were called [ἐπισκοποι] bishops, or overseers. Wherever the word bishop occurs in our translation of the New Testament, it is always [ἐπισκοπος] in the original: and the proper signification of this word, is an overseer, or inspector. So it is sometimes translated, particularly in the Acts. “Take heed to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.” Chap. 20:28. The original word is ἐπισκοπους, the same which is elsewhere translated bishops. So also, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not through constraint, but willingly.” 1 Pet. 5:2. Here again the original word is ἐπισκοπουντες which, indeed, properly signifies taking the oversight; but might be rendered discharging the office of a bishop, with as much propriety as ἐπισκοπους, is anywhere rendered bishop. You see, then, that the title of bishop, according to its original signification, which is, an overseer, does not denote a superior order of clergy; but is applicable equally to all the

ministers of the gospel in general, whose common duty it is to take the oversight of their flocks.

And as the original sense of the word will admit of this application; so we find, in fact, that it is applied promiscuously to all ministers without distinction; and that the very same persons, who in some places are called presbyters or elders, are in other places called bishops; and consequently a presbyter and a bishop, in the sense of the New Testament, signify the very same person. Of this I shall give you a few instances. A remarkable one of this kind, you have in the passage just quoted for another purpose. St. Paul being on his way to Jerusalem, was desirous of an interview with the ministers of the Ephesian church: and therefore we are told “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” Observe the persons he sent for were the elders or presbyters, Acts 20:17, (compared with verse 28), of the church: and these were the persons that came: for it is added, when they (the presbyters) were come to him, he said unto them, “Ye know after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.” And thus he goes on in a very affecting discourse to them; and then, addressing himself to the very same persons a little before called elders or presbyters, he exhorts them to take heed to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. Here, as I observed before, the original word rendered overseers, is the same with that which is translated bishops, in other places, in the New Testament. And it is undeniably evident, that the very same persons who are called [πρεσβυτέρους] presbyters or elders in the seventeenth verse, are called [επισκοπους] bishops, in the twenty-eighth; and consequently a scripture-bishop, and a presbyter or elder, are the same thing, or denote the same office.

A like instance we have in the Epistle to Titus. “For this cause,” says St. Paul, “left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders or presbyters in every city.” Chap. 1:5—7. He then proceeds to describe the qualifications of those, whom Titus should ordain elders or presbyters. “If any man be blameless, the husband of one wife,” &c. And still speaking of the same point, he immediately adds, “For a bishop must be blameless.” Here it is evident, that by bishop he means the same person, and the same office, as by elder or presbyter just before. In this sense, his argument is conclusive, and the transition natural; and stands thus: “Ordain only such to the office of a presbyter or bishop, who are blameless; for a bishop or presbyter must be blameless.” But if we suppose, that by these two titles he means to offices of a distinct order, the argument is languid, and the transition impertinent; for it would stand thus: “Ordain no man a presbyter unless he be blameless, for this reason, because a bishop, an officer of a distinct and superior order must be blameless.” This would be as weak and impertinent, as if I should say, no man shall be made a deacon, to look after the poor, unless he be a scholar, because a minister of the gospel must be a scholar. We therefore conclude, that an apostolic bishop signified no more than a presbyter, or an ordinary minister of the gospel.

We may also draw the same conclusions from a passage in Peter: “The elders,” or presbyters, “who are among you, I exhort,” says he, “who also am an elder,” or co-presbyter: 1 Pet. 5:1,2, συμπρεσβύτερος. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not through constraint, but willingly.” I had occasion to tell you before, that the original word here used (ἐπισκοπουντες) might be rendered discharging the office of a bishop, with as much propriety as any word in the New Testament is

rendered bishop. And as the apostle expressly calls those, to whom he directs his exhortation, presbyters, it unavoidably follows, that the discharging the office of a Scripture-bishop, belongs to presbyters, or to the ministers of the gospel in common, and consequently that both these terms denote one and the same office.

From these instances, I think it evident, that according to the truly primitive and apostolic plan, all the ministers of the gospel are of the same order, and that there should be no superiority among them but what may be among persons of the same order. Were it necessary, and did my time allow, I might confirm this opinion by the testimonies of some of the fathers, particularly of those who lived nearest to the apostolic age. Though it must be owned, that the distinction between bishops and presbyters was early introduced into the church; and the gradation still went on, till at length the bishop of Rome usurped the character of universal bishop, and exalted himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped. 2 Thes. 2:4. Indeed, the Episcopal scheme gives room, and consequently lays a temptation to ambitious men, to climb until they come to the top of the hierarchy. But when all ministers are upon a level, and their office is not attended with secular honors and riches, they have not such room, or temptation to ambition; and the highest character they can aspire to, is that of humble laborious servants of Christ and the souls of men.

Having discovered, that the office of a bishop in my text, signifies the same with that of an ordinary minister of the gospel, it may be proper briefly to mention the principal powers and duties of this office.

To the office of a gospel minister, then, it belongs to preach the word; to administer the sacraments; to concur in the ordination of persons duly qualified to this office; and to rule the church of God. The two first

particulars are hardly disputed; but upon the two last, it may be necessary to offer a few observations.

It has been urged by the patrons of diocesan episcopacy, that the ordination of ministers, and the government of the church, are acts of authority, peculiar to the superior order of bishops. But if, as has been proved, there be no such superior order, according to the original constitution of the New Testament, it follows, that ministers must be ordained, and the church governed by presbyters: or there can be no ordination or church government at all.

That ordination is the act of a presbytery, appears from sundry passages of Scripture. The apostles were all upon an equality; and they concurred in this act. Thus Paul and Barnabas jointly ordained elders in every city, with fasting and prayer. Acts 14:23. Timothy, as I observed before, was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. 4:14, in which St. Paul presided. 2 Tim. 1:6. And Paul and Barnabas were ordained to their mission among the Gentiles, by the prophets and teachers, or, as they may be called, the presbytery of Antioch. Acts 13:2,3.

Ordination is universally acknowledged to belong to them that have the government of the church of Christ committed to them. But this we find, is committed to the ministers of the gospel in general: therefore, so is ordination. St. Paul speaks of it as the province of elders or presbyters to rule or preside well, no less than to labor in the word and doctrine. When he is writing to a particular church, “them that have the rule over you” or your guides, a frequent phrase for its ministers. He mentions it as a necessary qualification of ministers in common, “that they rule” or preside; 1 Cor. 16:16; “over their houses well: for,” says he, “if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” This

implies, that it belongs to the province of every minister, to rule and take care of the church of God, as the master of a house does of his family. So also, wherever submission and obedience is required on the part of the people, it implies a power to rule on the part of the elders or presbyters. Thus, it is said, “submit yourselves—to everyone that helpeth with us, and laboureth;” or, as it may be more properly rendered, to every fellow-worker [with us] and laborer; that is, according to the use of the word elsewhere, every “laborer in word and doctrine.” “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.” Heb. 13:17. “We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” 1 Thess. 5:12,13. You see, from these instances, that to labor in the word and doctrine, and to rule the church of God, are duties that belong to one and the same office, namely, that of presbyters, or ordinary ministers of the gospel: and therefore, all the acts of church government, and particularly that of ordination, belong equally to them all in general.

Here I would observe, that by the power of church government, I do not mean, nor does the New Testament design, a power to lord it over God’s heritage—a power to dictate and prescribe, in matters of faith and practice, what Jesus Christ, the great head of the church, has not prescribed in his word—a power over the persons or estates of the laity; or to govern the church with the secular arm. Such a power has been usurped by ambitious ecclesiastics, and many countries still groan under the tyranny. But this is not the power with which Christ has invested his ministers. They only have power to admit new members into the church, upon finding them properly qualified—power to instruct, advise, comfort, and admonish their charge,

according to their circumstances—a power of using proper measures with offending members to bring them to repentance—to exclude them from the peculiar privileges of the church, if they continue obstinately impenitent; and to re-admit them upon their repentance. These are the principal acts of the governing power of ministers of the gospel. And what is this, but a power essential to all societies, in which there is any order or decorum? A power of ruling, without oppressing; of executing Christ’s laws, not of imposing laws of their own; in short, a power of doing good!

I now proceed to the other parts of my text; in considering which, I shall have the happiness of being more practical.

“If any man desire the office of a bishop.” The word here rendered desire is very strong and emphatical; and signifies to catch at—to reach after—to be carried away with eager desires. And this naturally leads me to say something of those inward struggles and perplexities— those eager desires and agonies of zeal, which honest souls generally feel before they enter into the ministry; and by which it pleases God to qualify them for it. I have now nothing to do with those unhappy creatures, who desire and catch at the sacred office as a post of honor, profit, or ease; or, as the last shift for a livelihood, when other expedients have failed. Such deserve to be exposed in severer terms than I am disposed to use; and I cannot but tremble to think what account they will be able to give to the great Bishop of souls, and Judge of the universe.

But, as to those honest souls, who engage in it with proper motives and views, they are generally determined to it after many hard conflicts and reluctations. Some of them had the advantage of an early education, with a view to some other office. But when it pleases God to rouse them out of their security, and bring them under the strong but agreeable constraints of

the love of Christ— when their eyes are opened to see the dangerous situation of a slumbering world around them; and their hearts are fired with a generous zeal for the honor of God and Jesus Christ, and the salvation of their perishing fellow sinners; then they begin to cast about, and inquire, in what way they are most likely to promote these important interests: and as the ministry of the gospel appears to them the most promising expedient for this purpose, they devote their whole life, and all their accomplishments, to this humble and despised office, and give up all their other prospects, whatever tempting scenes of riches, grandeur, or ease, might lie open before them.

Others have been put to learning in their childhood by their parents, and by them have been intended for the church, in order to get a living; when neither party had a view to the sacred office from just and honorable motives, but considered it in the same light with other trades. Thus many commence ministers of the gospel, from the very same principles that others commence lawyers, physicians, or merchants. But, when it pleases God to awaken the careless youth to a serious sense of religion, and qualify him in reality for that office, which he presumptuously aimed at from sordid motives, or in complaisance to his parents; then, though the office he chooses be the same, yet the principles and reasons of his choice are very different: now they are sublime, disinterested, and divine. Others have spent their early days equally thoughtless of God, of a liberal education, and of the ministerial office. But when they are brought out of darkness into light, and fired with the love of God, and a benevolent zeal for the salvation of men, then they begin to languish and pine away with generous anxieties, how they may best promote the glory of God, and be of service to the immortal interests of mankind, in the world. And while they are thus



perplexed, the agitations of their own thoughts, or perhaps the conversation of a friend, turns their minds to the sacred office. “Oh that I might have the honor of employing my life, and all that I am and have, in recommending that dear Redeemer, who, I hope, has died for me, and had pity on this once perishing soul of mine. Oh! That it might be my happiness to contribute something towards promoting his cause in the world, and saving souls from death. Oh! If it should be but one soul, I should count it a sufficient reward for all the labors of my whole life.” These are the noble motives that operate upon such a person to desire the office of a bishop. But alas! A thousand discouragements rise in his way. His being so far advanced in life, his want of an early education, the difficulty of acquiring a competency of learning in his circumstances: these appear as insuperable obstructions in his way; and oblige him frequently to give up all hopes of accomplishing his desire. But when he has relinquished the desperate project, his uneasiness returns; his panting desires revive; and he can obtain no rest, till he is at length constrained to make the attempt, in the name of God, and leave the issue to him. He hopes he shall either have his zealous desires gratified, in building up the church of God; or, at least, that he shall be approved in his generous, though unsuccessful endeavor, and hear it said to him, as it was to David, “Thou didst well, that it was in thine heart.” 1 Kings 8:18.

But though this group of discouragements may be peculiar to such as devote themselves to the service of the church after that early part of life which is most favorable to a liberal education, is unhappily lost; yet, there are other discouragements, which all meet with, more or less, who enter into this office with proper views. They are deeply sensible of the difficulty of a faithful discharge of this office—of its solemn and tremendous

consequences, both with regard to themselves, and their hearers, which made even the chief of the apostles to cry out, “and who is sufficient for these things?” 2 Cor. 2:16—of the various opposition they may expect from the world, who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, John 3:19, and especially of their want of proper abilities to discharge, with honor and success, an office so difficult and so important. These discouragements, which strike them back, and the impulses of a generous zeal, which push them on, often throw them into a ferment, and agitate them with various passions; so that they can enjoy no ease in the thoughts either of prosecuting or declining the design. Now they give it up in discouragement: but immediately they are seized with agonies of zeal, and resolve, in a dependance upon divine strength, to break through all discouragements, and make the attempt, at all adventures. Again, their fears arise, and strike them off from the design. Again, their zeal revives, and impels them to pursue it. They can find no heart for any other pursuit. Or, if they fly to some other business, like Jonah to Tarshish, to avoid the mission, Providence appears against them, and raises some furious storm, that oversets all their schemes: till, at length, they are constrained to yield, and surrender themselves to God, to be used by him according to his pleasure. If they had resolved with Jeremiah, “I will not make mention of him, nor speak in his name,” they find like him, that the word of God is in their heart, as a burning fire shut up in their bones, and they are weary with forbearing, and they cannot stay. Jer. 20:9.

We find many of the great and good men of antiquity in such a struggle, when God was about to send them upon a mission for him. Moses forms a great many excuses—from his own meanness: “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of

Egypt?” Ex. 3:11—from the incredulity of those to whom he was sent: “Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice Ex. 4:1—from his want of qualifications for the mission: “O my Lord, I am not eloquent: I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue,” 5:10. And when all these excuses are removed, he prays to be excused at any rate; “O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send,” 5:13. As, if he had said, “employ anyone in this mission, rather than me.” We repeatedly perceive the same reluctance in Jeremiah, “Ah! Lord God,” says he, “I cannot speak, for I am a child.” Jer. 1:6. And elsewhere, in a passage that has rather a harsh sound, according to our translation, Jer. 20:7; but should be rendered thus: “Thou hast persuaded me, O Lord, and I was persuaded; that is, to undertake the prophetic office: “Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed;” prevailed over all my reluctance. “I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” So Ezekiel tells us, that when he went to discharge his office, “he went in bitterness, and in the heat of his spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon him,” and he could not resist the almighty impulse. Ezek. 3:14.

Thus, you see, with what reluctance those generally engage in the sacred office, who are justly sensible of its importance and difficulty, and of their own weakness. Men, whose choice is directed by their parents, or proceeds from the love of popular applause—from avarice, or some other low, selfish principle, may rush thoughtlessly into it; and in the presumptuous pride of self-confidence, imagine themselves equal to the undertaking. But those honest souls, who know what they are going about, and what they themselves are, if they reach after this sacred office, it is with a trembling

hand. They do indeed desire it, most ardently desire it; but it is when they are under the sweet constraints of the love of Christ, and the souls of men. This bears them away like a torrent, through all difficulties; and they would willingly hazard their lives in the attempt. But notwithstanding this ardor, their hearts frequently fail, and recoil; and, at such times, nothing but necessity could push them on.

Through such struggles as these, my brethren in the gospel, have you entered into that office, which you are now painfully discharging. Your desire after it was indeed ardent and inextinguishable: but oh! What strong reluctance, what hard conflicts have you felt when you compared your own furniture with the work you had to do? And these discouragements have appeared to you perhaps, in so affecting a light, even since you have been invested with your office, that you would most willingly have resigned it. But “necessity is laid upon you; yea, wo unto you, if you preach not the gospel.” 1 Cor. 9:16. Therefore, in a humble dependence upon divine assistance, you resolve to continue in it, whatever discouragements arise from a sense of your own imperfections, or from the unsuccessfulness of your labors in the world. And at times you feel, that God is with you, as a mighty terrible one; and causes his pleasure to prosper in your hands; and renders your hardest labors your highest delights: and then, oh then, you would not exchange your pulpit for a throne, nor envy ministers of state, if you may be but ministers of the glorious gospel. Then “you magnify your office;” Rom. 11:13, and count it a very great grace, that you, who are so little among the saints, should be employed to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. You find, indeed, that the office of a bishop is a good work—good, pleasant, benevolent, divine.

But still it is a work. So the apostle calls it in my text, “The office of a bishop a good work.” “It is the name of a work, not of a dignity,” says St. Augustine. If a man desire the office of a bishop from right principles, he desireth—not a secular dignity—not a good benefice—not a post of honor or profit—not an easy idle life—but he desireth a work; a good work indeed it is: but still it is a work.

It may properly be called a work, if we consider the duties of the office, which require the utmost assiduity, and some of which are peculiarly painful and laborious. It is the minister’s concern, in common with other Christians, to work out his own salvation; to struggle with temptation; to be always in arms to bear down the insurrections of sin in his heart; and to discharge all the ordinary duties of the Christian life, towards God, his neighbor, and himself. This work is as necessary, as important, as difficult to him, as to his hearers. And I appeal to such of you as have ever engaged in it, whether this alone be not extremely difficult and laborious. It is, indeed, noble and delightful; but still it is laborious. But besides this, there is a great, an arduous and laborious work peculiar to the office of a bishop, or minister of the gospel, which not only is sufficient to exhaust all his time and abilities, but which requires daily supplies of strength from above to enable him to perform it. To employ his hours at home, not in idleness, or worldly pursuits, but in study and devotion, that his head and heart may be furnished for the discharge of his office—to preach the word, instant in season and out of season, with that vigorous exertion, and those agonies of zeal, which exhaust the spirits, and throw the whole frame into such a ferment as hardly any other labor can produce—to visit the sick, and to teach his people in general, from house to house, in the more social and familiar forms of private instruction—to do all this, not as a thing by-the-

by, or a matter of form, but with zeal, fidelity, prudence, and incessant application, as the main business of life; deeply solicitous about the important, consequences—to do this with fortitude and perseverance, in spite of all the discouragements of unsuccessfulness and the various forms of opposition that may arise from earth and hell—to abide steady and unshaken under the strong gales of popular applause, and the storms of persecution—to bless, when reviled; to forbear, when persecuted; to entreat, when defamed; to be abased as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things; (1 Cor. 4:12,13,) to give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things to approve himself as the minister of God: (2 Cor. 6:3,4,)—to preach Christianity out of the pulpit, by his example as well as in it, by his discourses; and to make his life a constant sermon. This, this, my brethren, is the work of a bishop, or a minister of the gospel. “And who is sufficient for these things?” Is not this a work that would require the strength of an angel? And yet this work must be done—done habitually, honestly, conscientiously, by us frail mortals, that sustain this office; or else we shall be condemned as slothful and wicked servants. This thought must forever sink our spirits, were it not that Christ is our strength and life. Yes, my dear fellow-laborers, such weaklings as we may spring up, and lay hold of his strength; and we can do all things through Christ strengthening us. (Phil. 4:13.) Thus you have experienced in hours of dejection; and unless the Lord had been your help, your souls, ere now, had dwelt in silence. (Psalm 94:17.) Hence, by-the-by, you may see the reason why the Lord hath appointed, that they who preach the gospel should live by it: it is because, that time, those abilities, and those labors, which others lay out in providing for themselves and their dependents, must be laid out by them in serving others, by a faithful discharge of their office.

If they thus devote themselves to the duties of their function, it is but just and reasonable that those for whom they labor, should provide for their subsistence while they are serving them. But if those who style themselves ministers, do not suffer their office to restrain them from secular pursuits; if it only employ an hour or two once a week, upon a day in which it is unlawful even for the laity to mind their worldly affairs; in short, if, notwithstanding their office, they have the same opportunities with other people, to provide themselves a living, I see no reason why they should be supported at the public charge—supported at the public charge, to serve themselves! They are a kind of supernumerary placemen, or pensioners and drones in society. “The laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7; 1 Tim. 5:18,) but the loiterer deserves none. But this I mention by-the-by.

You see, my brother, what it is you are now to engage in. You have desired the office of a bishop; and after many struggles and disappointments, the object of your desire appears now within your reach. But remember, it is not a post of honor, profit, or ease, that you are about to be advanced to; but it is a work. You are now entering upon a life of painful labor, fatigue, and mortification. Now you have nothing to do but to work for your Lord and Master: to work, not merely for an hour or two once a week, but every day, in every week, and through your whole life. If you enter into your closet, it must be to pray. If you enter your study, it must be to think what you shall say to recommend your Master, not yourself; and to save the souls that hear you. If you enter into the pulpit, it must be not to “preach yourself, but Christ Jesus the Lord;” (2 Cor. 4:5,) not to set yourself off as a fine speaker, a great scholar, or a profound reasoner, but to preach Christ crucified, and the humble, unpopular doctrines of Jesus of Galilee; and to beseech men, in his stead, to be reconciled to God; to warn every

man, and teach every man, that you may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. 1:28.) If you go into the world, and mingle in conversation, it must be to drop a word for Christ; and let mankind see, that you live, as well as talk, like a Christian. If you travel about from place to place, among necessitous vacancies, it must be to diffuse the vital savor of your Master's name, and not your own. If you settle, and undertake a particular charge, it must be to watch for souls, as one that must give account; (Heb. 13:17,) and industriously to plant and water that spot which is laid out for you in the Lord's vineyard. Here, my friend, here is your work; and while you survey it, I doubt not but you are ready to renew the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16.) This work will leave no blanks in your time, but is sufficient to employ it well. It will leave none of your powers idle, but requires the utmost exertion of them everyone. It is the work of your Sundays, and of your week days—the work of your retirement, and your social hours—the work of soul and body—of the head and heart—the work of life and death: a laborious, anxious, uninterrupted work. But, blessed be God! It is, after all, a good work.

It is a good work, whether you consider—for whom— with whom—or for what you work.

The ministers of the gospel work for God, who is carrying on the grand scheme of salvation in our world. His immediate service is the peculiar business of their lives. Their office calls them to minister at his altar, while others are called even in duty to mind the labors and pursuits of this world. Of them it may be said, in a peculiar degree, what holds true of Christians in common in a lower sense, They neither live to themselves, nor die to themselves: but whether they live, they live unto the Lord; or whether they die, they die unto the Lord: so that, living and dying, they are the Lord's.



Rom. 14:7,8. Now, who would not work for the God that made them, that gives them all their blessings, and that alone can make them happy through an immortal duration? Who would not work for so good, so excellent, so munificent a master? Oh! How good a work is this!

Ministers also work for Jesus Christ. It was he that originally gave them their commission; it was he that assigned them their work; it is he that is interested in their success. It is his work they are engaged in; the great work of saving sinners, in which he himself worked for three-and-thirty painful, laborious years; and to promote which, he suffered all the agonies of crucifixion. And blessed Jesus! Who would not work for thee! For thee, who didst work and suffer so much for us! Oh! While we feel the constraints of thy love, who can forbear crying out with Isaiah, “Here am I; send me!” Isa. 6:8. Send me to the ends of the earth; send me among savage barbarians; send me through fire and water; send me where thou wilt, if it be for thee, here, Lord, I go: I would undertake the hardest work, if it be for thee: for oh! What work can be so good, so grateful, so pleasant!

Again, the ministers of the gospel work for the souls of men. To do good to mankind is the great purpose of their office. It is their business to serve the best interests of others, to endeavor to make men wise and good, and consequently happy, in time and eternity: to make them useful members of civil and religious society in this world; and prepared heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light: in short, to refine and advance human nature to the highest possible degree of moral excellence, glory and happiness. Is not this the most generous beneficent office in all the world? And how good, how pleasing, and how delightful must it be, in this view, to a benevolent soul! It is an office the most friendly to civil government, and the happiness of the world in general. And if ecclesiastics have often proved

firebrands in society, and disturbers of the peace of mankind, it has not been owing to the nature, design, and tendency of their office, but to their being carried headlong by their own avarice or ambition, or some other sordid lust, to abuse it to purposes directly contrary to those for which it was intended and adapted. Every minister of the gospel ought to have a benevolent, generous, patriotic spirit, and be the friend of human nature, from noble and disinterested views: otherwise, his temper and his office appear a shocking contrariety to each other. But when they agree, he is a public blessing to the world, and an immortal blessing to the souls of men. Thus, you see, this office is a good work, if we consider/or whom the work is done.

Let us next consider with whom the ministers of the gospel work; and we shall see how good their employment is. They are workers together with God, 2 Cor. 6:1, engaged in carrying on the same gracious design which lay so near his heart from eternity; for the execution of which, he sent his Son into the world; has appointed various means of grace, under the various dispensations of religion, during the space of near six thousand years; and manages all the events of time, by his all-ruling providence.

They are also co-workers with Jesus Christ: promoting the same cause, for which he became man; for which he lived the life of a servant, and died the death of a malefactor and a slave. Jesus, their Lord and Master, condescended to be their predecessor in office, and to become the preacher of his own gospel. They are engaged, though in a humbler sphere, in that work, which he is now carrying on, since his return to his native heaven. And whenever the pleasure of the Lord prospers in their hands, he actually works with them, and is the author of all their successes. He sends his Spirit to convince the world, by their means, of sin, of righteousness, and of

judgment, John 16:8, and to make his gospel powerful for the salvation of those that hear it. Oh! Were it not for his concurrence, all the little religion which is in the world would immediately expire; and the united efforts of all the ministers upon earth, would not be able to preserve one spark of it alive.

They may also be called fellow-workers with the Holy Spirit, whose great office it is to sanctify depraved creatures, and prepare them for the refined happiness of heaven. While they are speaking to the ear, He speaks to the heart, and causes men to feel, as well as to hear, the gospel of salvation.

They also act in concert with angels: for what are these glorious creatures but “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Heb. 1:14. An angel once condescended to call a minister of the gospel his fellow-servant. “I am thy fellow-servant,” says the angel to John, (the fellow-servant) “of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus,” Rev. 19:10. And when these servants of an humbler order have finished their painful ministration on earth, they shall join their fellow-servants of a higher class in the court of heaven, and perhaps, share in the much more exalted forms of angelic ministration. This seems implied in that text where the angel of the Lord protests to Joshua the high-priest, saying, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; if thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.” Zech. 3:5-7. And who are they that stand by? You are told, “The angel of the Lord stood by.” Among these, therefore, Joshua had places given him to walk, as the companion and fellow-servant of angels.

Ministers also are engaged in that work, in which the apostles went before them. In this good cause, they travelled over sea and land, they labored,

they spent their lives, and at last gloriously departed. Yes, my fellow-laborers, they felt the generous toils, and braved the heroic dangers of your office, long before you. In this good cause, thousands of martyrs have shed their blood—thousands of ministers, in various ages, and in various countries, have spent their strength, their life, their all.

In short, all the good men that ever have been, that now are, or ever shall be upon earth, concur in the same good work with you, according to their respective characters. To make men wise, holy, and happy, is their united effort—the object they have in view in their prayers, in their instructions, in their conversation, and in all their endeavors.

All good beings, in the whole compass of the vast universe, befriend your design; and none are against it but fallen spirits on the earth and in hell. And must not this be a good work in which such a glorious company concur? And oh! Who would not work in such company? With God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with angels, with apostles, with martyrs, with all good men upon the face of the earth? Who would be so shocking a singularity as not to join with this assembly in the work. Or who can question its goodness, since such an assembly join in it?

The office of a bishop will farther appear a good work, if it be considered for what it is that ministers work. They do not indeed work for a reward upon the footing of personal merit; but they hope for it on the plan of the gospel, through Jesus Christ. In this view, like Moses, they have “a respect to the recompense of the reward.” Heb. 11:26. God will not forget their honest, though feeble, and frequently unsuccessful labors in his own work. “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.” Dan. 12:3. If a cup of cold water, given to the meanest disciple of Christ, shall not be unrewarded, what rich rewards must be prepared for

those who employ their time, their abilities, their life, their all, in the most important, benevolent, and laborious services for his church which he has purchased with his own blood? Crowns of distinguished brightness, and thrones of superior dignity are reserved for them: and in proportion to their labors here will be their glory and felicity in the world to come. In serving their divine Master and the souls of men, they are serving themselves; and in promoting the interests of others, they most effectually promote their own. Thus, their duty and interest—the interest of mankind and their own are wisely and graciously united, and mutually promote each other. And thus it appears, their laborious and painful work is good—good in itself good for the world, and good for themselves.

To sum up the whole—whatever contempt the ministerial office has lain under; how much soever it has been disgraced, and rendered useless, and even injurious, by the unworthy conduct of such as have thrust themselves into it, from base and mercenary views; yet, it is in itself, and in its natural tendency, the most noble, benevolent, and useful office in the world. To be the minister of Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is a greater honor than to be prime minister to the most illustrious monarch upon earth. To save souls from death, is a more heroic exploit, than to rescue enslaved nations from oppression and ruin. To make a multitude of wretched, perishing souls rich with the unsearchable treasures of Christ, is a more generous charity, than to clothe the naked, or feed the hungry. To refine depraved spirits, and improve into a fitness for the exalted employments and enjoyments of heaven, is a higher pitch of patriotism, than to civilize and polish barbarous nations, by introducing the arts and sciences, and a good form of government among them. To negotiate a peace between God and man, and prevent the terrible consequences of the

unnatural, unequal war, that has so long been waged between them, is a more benevolent and important service than to negotiate a peace between contending nations—to stop the current of human blood, and heal the deadly wounds of war. Let those, therefore, who are called to this blessed work, join with St. Paul, though in a humbler order, and thank the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath enabled them, for “that He counted them faithful, putting them into the ministry.” 1 Tim. 1:12. Let them “magnify their office,” not by assuming airs of superiority, or by making ostentatious claims to powers that they have nothing to do with, but by rejoicing more in it, than in crowns and thrones—by supporting it with dignity, that is, acting up to their high character; and by so exercising it, as to render it an extensive blessing to the world. This will be the best expedient to keep themselves and their office above contempt, and to gain the approbation of God and man.

But when we reflect upon the dignity, the importance, the difficulty, and the grand consequences of this office, it may render us who sustain it, peculiarly sensible of our constant need of supplies of Divine grace, to enable us to discharge it. Alas! We know nothing of ourselves, if we imagine we are equal to it. St. Paul, with all his apostolic furniture, humbly acknowledges, “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament.” 2 Cor. 3:5,6. “Who is Paul,” says he, “and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” Observe, their success was just as the Lord gave to every man. “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” He is all in all. 1 Cor. 3:5-7. If I labored more abundantly than others, says he, it was not I, but the grace of God which

was with me. 1 Cor. 15:10. Thus, my brethren, it becomes us to be always dependent upon Divine grace. It becomes us to be often on the knee at the throne of mercy, petitioning for help and success: and if we are, in any measure, blessed with either, we should arrogate nothing to ourselves, but ascribe all the glory to him, who condescends to distribute gifts to men, and to crown these gifts with his Divine blessing.

Hence, also, my brethren of the laity, you may see how much ministers need the assistance of your prayers.

Even the great St. Paul did not disdain to ask the prayers of common Christians, but repeats his request over and over. And I, from much more urgent necessity, as the mouth of these my brethren, beg this charity of you for myself and them. Surely, you cannot deny it, especially as yourselves will reap the advantage in the issue: for whatever ministerial abilities God may bestow upon us, in answer to your prayers, they are to be employed for your service: and it is our being so poorly qualified to serve you, that extorts this request from us, and is the cause of many a weeping, melancholy hour to us.

You must, also, hence see, that it is your concern to concur with ministers of the gospel in promoting the benevolent and important ends of their office. Endeavour so to attend upon their ministrations, as that you yourselves may be saved by them. And endeavor by your conversation and example, and all methods in your power, to make them useful to others. Oh! Let us all, ministers and people, form a noble confederacy against the kingdom of darkness, and make a vigorous attack upon it, with our united forces. Let us all enlist volunteers—as good soldiers, under Jesus; and in our post, whether high or low, do all we can to promote his kingdom. Amen.

A HYMN.

BT THE AUTHOR OF THE SERMON FOREGOING.

(Varied from Dr. Doddridge.)

*With grateful hearts come let us sing,  
The gifts of our ascended King;  
Though long since gone from earth below,  
Through every age his bounties flow.  
The Saviour, when to heav'n he rose  
In splendid triumph o'er his foes  
His gifts on rebel men bestowed,  
And wide his royal bounties flow'd.  
Hence sprang th' apostles' honoured name,  
More glorious than the hero's fame '  
Evangelists and prophets hence  
Derive the blessings they dispense.  
In humbler forms, to bless our eyes,  
Pastors from hence and teachers rise;  
Who, though with feebler rays they shine,  
Still gild a long-extended line.  
From Christ their various gifts derive,  
And fed by Christ their graces live;  
While, guarded by his mighty hand,  
'Midst all the rage of hell they stand.  
Thus teachers, teachers shall succeed  
When we lie silent with the dead!  
And unborn churches, by their care,  
Shall rise and flourish large and fair.*



*Pastors and people join and sing,  
This constant, inexhausted spring,  
Whence through all ages richly flow  
The streams that cheer the church below.*

# *SERM. LXXIX. A CHRISTMAS-DAY SERMON.*

**L**uke 2:13,14.— *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men.*

This is the day which the church of Rome, and some other churches that deserve to be placed in better company have agreed to celebrate in memory of the Prince of Peace, the Savior of men, the incarnate God, Immanuel. And I doubt not, but many convert superstition into rational and scriptural devotion, and religiously employ themselves in a manner acceptable to God, though they want the sanction of divine authority for appropriating this day to a sacred use. But, alas! It is generally a season of sinning, sensuality, luxury, and various forms of extravagance; as though men were not celebrating the birth of the holy Jesus, but of Venus, or Bacchus, whose most sacred rites were mysteries of iniquity and debauchery. The birth of Jesus was solemnized by armies of angels; they had their music and their songs on this occasion. But how different from those generally used among mortals! “Glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace, good will to men!”

This was their song. But is the music and dancing, the feasting and rioting, the idle songs and extravagant mirth of mortals at this season, a proper echo or response to this angelic song? I leave you to your own reflections upon this subject, after I have given the hint; and I am sure, if they be natural and pertinent, and have a proper influence upon you, they will restrain you from running into the fashionable excesses of riot on this occasion.

To remember and religiously improve the incarnation of our divine Redeemer, to join the concert of angels, and dwell in ecstatic meditation upon their song; this is lawful, this is a seasonable duty every day; and consequently upon this day. And as Jesus improved the feast of dedication, though not of divine institution, as a proper opportunity to exercise his ministry, when crowds of the Jews were gathered from all parts; so I would improve this day for your instruction, since it is the custom of our country to spend it religiously, or idly, or wickedly, as different persons are differently disposed.

But as the seed of superstition which have sometimes grown up to a prodigious height, have been frequently sown and cherished by very inconsiderable incidents, I think it proper to inform you, that I may guard against this danger, that I do not set apart this day for public worship, as though it had any peculiar sanctity, or we were under any obligations to keep it religiously. I know no human authority, that has power to make one day more holy than another, or that can bind the conscience in such cases. And as for divine authority, to which alone the sanctifying of days and things belongs, it has thought it sufficient to consecrate one day in seven to a religious use, for the commemoration both of the birth of this world, and the resurrection of its great Author, or of the works of creation and redemption. This I would religiously observe; and inculcate the religious

observance of it upon all. But as to other days, consecrated by the mistaken piety or superstition of men, and conveyed down to us as holy, through the corrupt medium of human tradition, I think myself free to observe them or not, according to conveniency, and the prospect of usefulness; like other common days, on which I may lawfully carry on public worship or not, as circumstances require. And since I have so fair an opportunity, and it seems necessary in order to prevent my conduct from being a confirmation of present superstition, or a temptation to future, I shall, once for all, declare my sentiments more fully upon this head.

But I must premise, that it is far from my design, to widen the differences subsisting among Christians, to embitter their hearts against each other, or to awaken dormant controversies concerning the extra-essentials of religion. And if this use should be made of what I shall say, it will be an unnatural perversion of my design. I would make every candid concession in favor of those who observe days of human institution, that can consist with truth and my own liberty. I grant, that so many plausible things may be offered for the practice as may have the appearance of solid argument, even to honest inquirers after truth. I grant, that I doubt not but many are offering up acceptable devotion to God on this day; devotion proceeding from honest, believing hearts, and therefore acceptable to him on any day—acceptable to him, notwithstanding their little mistake in this affair. I grant, we should, in this case, imitate the generous candor and forbearance of St. Paul, in a similar case. The converts to Christianity from among the Jews, long retained the prejudices of their education, and thought they were still obliged, even under the gospel dispensation, to observe the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, to which they had been accustomed, and particularly those days which were appointed by God to be religiously kept

under the Jewish dispensation. The Gentile converts, on the other hand, who were free from these early prejudices of education and custom, and had imbibed more just notions of Christian liberty, looked upon these Jewish holy-days as common days, and no longer to be observed. This occasioned a warm dispute between these two classes of converts, and St. Paul interposes, not so properly to determine which party was right, (that was comparatively a small matter,) as to bring both parties to exercise moderation and forbearance towards each other, and to put a charitable construction upon their different practices in these little articles; and particularly to believe concerning each other, that though their practices were different, yet the principle from which they acted was the same, namely, a sincere desire to glorify and please God, and a conscientious regard to what they apprehended was his will. “Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations—one man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it,” Rom. 14:1,5, 6; that is, it is a conscientious regard to the Lord, that is the principle upon which both parties act, though they act differently in this matter. Therefore, says the apostle, “Why dost thou judge thy brother?” why dost thou severely censure him for practicing differently in this little affair?—“hast thou faith?” says he, hast thou a full persuasion of what is right in these punctilios and ceremonials? Then, “have it to thyself before God;” verse 22. Keep it to thyself as a rule for thy own practice, but do not impose it upon others, nor disturb the church of Christ about it. It becomes us, my brethren, to imitate this Catholicism and charity of the apostle, in these little differences; and God forbid I should tempt any of you to forsake so noble an example. But then the example of the same

apostle will authorize us modestly to propose our own sentiments and the reasons of our practice, and to warn people from laying a great stress upon ceremonials and superstitious observances. This he does particularly to the Galatians, who not only kept the Jewish holy-days, but placed a great part of their religion in the observance of them. “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years;” therefore, says he, “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Gal. 4:10,11. The commandments of God have often been made void by the traditions of men; and human inventions more religiously observed than divine institutions; and when this was the case, St. Paul was warm in opposing even ceremonial mistakes.

Having premised this, which I look upon as much more important than the decision of the question, I proceed to show you the reasons why I would not religiously observe days of human appointment, in commemoration of Christ and the saints. What I have to say shall be particularly pointed at what is called Christmas-day: but may be easily applied to all other holy-days instituted by men.

The first reason I shall offer is, that I would take my religion just as I find it in my Bible without any imaginary improvements or supplements of human invention. All the ordinances which God has been pleased to appoint, and particularly that one day in seven, which he has set apart for his more immediate service, and the commemoration of the works of creation and redemption, I would honestly endeavor to observe in the most sacred manner. But when ignorant presuming mortals take upon them to refine upon Divine institutions, to make that a part of religion, which God has left indifferent, and consecrate more days than he has thought necessary; in short, when they would mingle something of their own with the pure religion of the Bible: then I must be excused from obedience, and

beg leave to content myself with the old, plain, simple religion of the Bible. Now that there is not the least appearance in all the Bible of the Divine appointment of Christmas, to celebrate the birth of Christ, is granted by all parties; and the Divine authority is not so much as pretended for it. Therefore, a Bible-Christian is not at all bound to observe it.

Secondly, the Christian church, for at least three-hundred years, did not observe any day in commemoration of the birth of Christ. For this we have the testimony of the primitive fathers themselves. Thus Clemens Alexandrinus, who lived about the year one hundred and ninety-four, “We are commanded to worship and honor him, who, we are persuaded, is the Word, and our Savior and Ruler, and through him, the Father; not upon certain particular or select days, as some others do, but constantly practicing this all our life, and in every proper way.” Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, has these words, “It is not yet ten years, since this day, that is, Christmas, was plainly known to us and he observes, the custom was brought to Constantinople from Rome. Now since this day was not religiously observed in the church in the first and purest ages, but was introduced as superstitions increased, and Christianity began to degenerate very fast into popery; ought not we to imitate the purity of these primitive times, and retain none of the superstitious observances of more corrupt ages?

Thirdly, if a day should be religiously observed in memory of the birth of Christ, it ought to be that day on which he was born. But that day, and even the month and the year, are altogether uncertain. The Scriptures do not determine this point of chronology. And perhaps they are silent on purpose, to prevent all temptation to the superstitious observance of it; just as the body of Moses was secretly buried, and his grave concealed, to guard the

Israelites from the danger of idolizing it. Chronologers are also divided upon the point: and even the ancients are not agreed. The learned generally suppose that Christ was born two or three years before the vulgar reckoning. And as to the month, some suppose it was in September, and some in June. And they imagine it was very unlikely, that he was born in the cold wintry months of December, because we read, that at the time of his birth, shepherds were out in the field, watching their flocks by night; which is not probable at that season of the year. The Christian epocha, or reckoning time from the birth of Christ, was not introduced till about the year five hundred; and it was not generally used till the reign of Charles the Great, about the year eight hundred, or a little above nine hundred years ago. And this must occasion a great uncertainty, both as to the year, month, and day. But why do I dwell so long upon this? It must be universally confessed, that the day of his birth is quite uncertain: nay, it is certain that it is not that which has been kept in commemoration of it. To convince you of this, I need only put you in mind of the late parliamentary correction of our computation of time by introducing the new-style; by which Christmas is eleven days sooner than it was wont to be. And yet this chronological blunder still continues in the public prayers of some, who give thanks to God, that Christ was born as upon this day. And while this prayer was offered up in England and Virginia on the twenty-fifth of December old-style, other countries that followed the new-style, were solemnly declaring in their thanksgivings to God, that Christ was born eleven days sooner; that is, on the fourteenth. of December. I therefore conclude, that neither this day or any other was ever intended to be observed for this purpose.

Finally, superstition is a very growing evil; and therefore the first beginnings of it ought to be prevented. Many things that were at first



introduced with a pious design, have grown up gradually into the most enormous superstition and idolatry in after ages. The ancient Christians, for example, had such a veneration for the pious martyrs, that they preserved a lock of hair, or some little memorial of them; and this laid the foundation for the expensive sale and stupid idolizing of the relics of the saints in popish countries. They also celebrated their memory, by observing the days of their martyrdom. But as the number of the martyrs and saints real or imaginary, increased, the saints' days also multiplied to an extravagant degree, and hardly left any days in the year for any other purpose. And as they had more saints than days in the year, they dedicated the first of November for them all, under the title of All-saints-day. But if the saints must be thus honored, then certainly much more ought Jesus Christ. This seemed a natural inference: and accordingly, these superstitious devotees appointed one day to celebrate his birth, another his baptism, another his death, another the day of Pentecost, and an endless list that I have not time now to mention. The apostles also must be put into the Calendar: and thus almost all the days in the year were consecrated by superstition, and hardly any left for the ordinary labors of life. Thus the people are taught to be idle the greatest part of their time, and so indisposed to labor on the few days that are still allowed them for that purpose. This has almost ruined some popish countries, particularly the Pope's dominions in the fine country of Italy, once the richest and best improved in the world. Mr. Addison, Bishop Burnet, and other travelers, inform us, that everything bears the appearance of poverty, notwithstanding all the advantages of soil and climate: and that this is chiefly owing to the superstition of the people, who spend the most of their time as holy-days. And if you look over the Calendar of the church of England, you will find that the festivals in one year, amount to thirty-one.

The fasts to no less than ninety-five, to which add the fifty-two Sundays in every year, and the whole will make one hundred and seventy-eight: so that only one hundred and eighty-seven days will be left in the whole year, for the common purposes of life. And whether the poor could procure a subsistence for themselves and their families by the labor of so few days, and whether it be not a yoke that neither we nor our fathers are able to bear, I leave you to judge. It is true, that but very few of these feasts and fasts are now observed, even by the members of the established church. But then they are still in their Calendar and Canons, and binding upon them by the authority of the church; and as far as they do not comply with them, so far they are dissenters: and in this, and in many other respects, they are generally dissenters, though they do not share with us in the infamy of the name. Now, since the beginnings of superstitious inventions in the worship of God are so dangerous in their issue, and may grow up into such enormous extravagance, we ought to shun the danger, by adhering to the simplicity of the Bible-religion, and not presume to make more days or things holy, than the all-wise God has been pleased to sanctify. He will be satisfied with the religious observance of his own institutions; and why should not we? It is certainly enough, that we be as religious as he requires us. And all our will-worship is liable to that confounding rejection, “Who hath required this at your hands?” Isaiah 1:12.

I now proceed to what is more delightful and profitable, the sublime anthem of the angels: “Glory to God in the highest! On earth, peace! Good will to men!”

What a happy night was this to the poor shepherds, though exposed to the damps and darkness of midnight, and keeping their painful watches in the open field! An illustrious angel, clothed in light which kindled midnight

into noon, came upon them, or suddenly hovered over them in the air, and the glory of the Lord, that is, a bright refulgent light, the usual emblem of his presence shone round about them. No wonder the poor shepherds were struck with horror, and overwhelmed at the sight of so glorious a phenomenon. But when God strikes his people with terror, it is often an introduction to some signal blessing. And they are sometimes made sore afraid, like the shepherds, even with the displays of his glories. The first appearance even of the great deliverer, may seem like that of a great destroyer. But he will at length make himself known as he is, and allay the fears of his people. So the gentle angel cheers and supports the trembling shepherds, “Fear not,” says he, you need not tremble, but rejoice at my appearance; “for behold” observe and wonder, “I bring you,” from heaven, by order from its Sovereign, “good tidings of great joy,” the best that was ever published in mortal ears, not only to you, not only to a few private persons or families, not only to the Jewish nation; but good tidings of great joy, “which shall be to all people,” to Gentiles as well as Jews, to all nations; tribes, and languages—to all the various ranks of men—to kings and subjects—to rich and poor; to free and bond: therefore let it circulate through the world, and resound from shore to shore. And what is this news that is introduced with so sublime and transporting a preface? It is this: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Unto you mortals —unto you miserable sinners, is born a Savior—a Savior from sin and ruin: a Savior of no mean or common character, but Christ, the promised Messiah, anointed with the Holy Spirit; and invested with the high office of Mediator; Christ the Lord, the Lord and ruler of heaven and earth, and universal nature. He is born—no longer represented by dark types and prophecies, but actually entered in the world—born this

day—the long expected day is at length arrived; the prophecies are accomplished, and the fulness of time is come:—born in the city of David, in Bethlehem, and therefore of the seed and lineage of David, according to the prophecies: though he be a person of such eminence, Christ the Lord is now a feeble infant, just born. The Son born, and the Child given, he is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6.

The condescension of the angel, and the joyful tidings he brought, no doubt recovered the shepherds from their consternation, and emboldened them to lift up their faces. And how was their joy heightened, that they were chosen and appointed by Heaven, to be the first visitants to this new-born Prince? “This shall be a sign to you,” said the angel, by which you may know this divine Infant from others. What shall be the sign? Shall it be, that they will find him in a palace, surrounded with all the grandeur and majesty of courts, and attended by the emperors, kings and nobles of the earth; lying in a bed of down, and dressed in silks, and gold, and jewels? This might be expected, if we consider the dignity of his person. It would be infinite condescension for him to be born even in such circumstances as these. But these are not the characteristics of the incarnate God: no, says the angel, This shall be a sign to you, “ye shall find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Lying in a manger. Luke 2:12. Astonishing! Who could expect the new-born Son of God to be there?—there, lying in straw, surrounded only with oxen and horses, and waited upon only by a feeble, solitary mother, far from home, among unkind, regardless strangers, who would not allow her room in the inn, even in her painful hour. Perhaps her poverty disabled her from bearing her expenses in the ordinary way; and therefore she must take up her lodging in a stable. In such circumstances of abasement did the Lord of glory enter our world. In these

circumstances he was “seen of angels,” 1 Tim. 3:16; who were wont to behold him in another form, in all the glories of the heavenly world. And how strange a sight must this be! How bright a display of his love to the guilty sons of men!

The angel, that was the willing messenger of these glad tidings, did not descend from heaven alone. He appears to have been the hierarch, or commandant of an army of angels, that attended him on this grand occasion. For suddenly there was with him a multitude of the heavenly host, or, as it might be rendered, of the militia or soldiery of heaven\* The angels are not a confused irregular body, or unconnected independent individuals; but a well-disposed system of beings, with proper subordinations; all marshalled into ranks under proper commanders. Hence they are called “thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers;” Col. 1:16; and we read of angels and archangels; 1 Thess. 4:16; of Michael and his angels; Rev. 12:7. They are called in the military style, the Lord’s hosts; Psalm 103:21, 148:2; and the army of heaven; Dan. 4:35. Rev. 19:14; to signify the order established among them, and also their strength and unanimity to execute the commands of their sovereign, to repel the dragon and his angels, and defend the feeble heirs of salvation, on whom they condescend to wait. Order and subordination is still retained even among the fallen angels in the kingdom of darkness. Hence we read of the prince of the devils; Matt. 9:34; the dragon and his angels; Rev. 12:7; legions of devils; Mark 5:9; which was a division of the Roman army, something like that of a regiment among us.

Now a regiment of the heavenly militia descended with their officer, to solemnize and publish the birth of their Lord, when he took upon him our nature. And no sooner had their commander delivered his message, than

they immediately join with one voice, filling all the air with their heavenly music; “praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest! On earth, peace! Good-will to men!” The language is abrupt, like that of a full heart: the sentences short, unconnected, and rapid; expressive of the ecstasy of their minds.

“Glory to God in the highest!” This deservedly leads the song. It is of more importance in itself, in the estimate of angels, and of all competent judges, than even the salvation of men. And the first and chief cause of joy and praise from the birth of a Savior is, that he shall bring glory to God. Through him, as a proper medium, the divine perfections shall shine forth with new, augmented splendor. Through him, sinners shall be saved in a way that will advance the honor of the divine perfections and government: or if any of them perish, their punishment will more illustriously display the glory of their offended Sovereign. The wisdom, grace, and mercy of God, are glorified in the contrivance of this scheme of redemption, and making millions of miserable creatures happy for ever. His power is glorified, in carrying this scheme into execution, in spite of all opposition. His justice is glorified, in the atonement and satisfaction made for the sins of men by an incarnate Deity, and in the righteous and aggravated punishment executed upon those that obstinately reject this divine Savior, and who therefore perish without the least umbrage of excuse. Oh! What wonders does Jehovah perform, in prosecution of this method of salvation! What wonders of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace! What miracles of glory and blessedness does he form out of the dust, and the polluted fragments of human nature! What monuments of his own glorious perfections does he erect, through all the extensive regions of heaven! From these wonderful works of his, the glory of his own name breaks forth upon the worlds of

angels and men, in one bright unclouded day, which shall never be obscured in night, but grow more and more illustrious through the endless ages of eternity! Of this, the choir of angels were sensible at the birth of Christ; and therefore they shout aloud in ascriptions of glory to God. It was especially on this account they rejoiced in this great event. And all believers rejoice in it principally on this account too. “Glory to God,” is the first note in the song of angels: and “hallowed be thy name;” that is, let thy name be sanctified, or glorified, is the first petition in the prayer of men. The glory of God should always be nearest our hearts: to this everything should give way; and we should rejoice in other things, and even in our own salvation, as they tend to promote this. Such is the temper of every good man: his heart is enlarged, and extended beyond the narrow limits of self: he has a generous tender regard for the glory of the great God; and rejoices in the way of salvation through Christ, not merely as it makes him happy, but especially as it advances and displays the divine honor. This is his temper, at least in some hours of refined, exalted devotion. Self is, as it were, swallowed up in God. And brethren, is this your temper?

“Glory to God in the highest!”—In the highest; that is, in the highest strains. Let the songs of men and angels be raised to a higher key, on this great occasion. The usual strains of praise are low and languid, to celebrate the birth of this illustrious prince. This is a more glorious event than ever has yet happened in heaven or earth; and therefore demands a new song, more exalted and divine than has ever yet employed even the voices of angels. At the birth of nature, the sons of God, the angels, sang together, and shouted for joy: but when the Author and Lord of nature is born, let them raise a loftier and a more ecstatic anthem of praise.

Or, “Glory to God in the highest” may signify, let glory be given to God in the highest heaven by all the choirs of angels. This celestial squadron call upon their fellow-angels, whom they left behind them in their native heaven, to echo to their song, and fill those blessed regions with the melody of new ascriptions of praise, as if they had said—though men receive the benefit, let all the angels of heaven join in the song of gratitude. Though men be silent, and refuse to celebrate the birth of their Savior and Lord; though earth does not echo with his praise, though more intimately concerned; let the heavenly inhabitants sound aloud their ascriptions of glory, and supply the guilty defect of ungrateful mortals.

Or finally, “Glory to God in the highest” may mean, glory to God who dwells in the highest heavens: glory to the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, and dwelleth in the high and holy place; Isaiah 57:15, and yet condescends to regard man that is a worm, Job 25:6, and sends his Son to assume his humble nature, to lie in a manger, and die upon a cross for him. Glory to God for this astonishing condescension and grace!

The next article of this angelic song is, “Peace on earth!” Peace to rebel man with his offended Sovereign; peace with angels; peace with conscience; peace between man and man; universal peace on earth, that region of discord and war.

Peace with God to rebel man. The illustrious Prince now born comes to make up the difference, and reconcile the world to their offended Sovereign. He is the great Peace-maker, who shall subdue the enmity of the carnal mind, and reduce the revolted sons of Adam to a willing subjection to their rightful Lord. He will bring thousands of disloyal hearts to love God above all, which were wont to love almost everything more than Him. He will reconcile them to the laws of his government, and the practice of universal



obedience and holiness. He will set on foot a treaty of peace in the ministry of the gospel, and send out his ambassadors, to beseech the rebels in his stead, to be reconciled to God. He will also reconcile God to man, by answering all the demands of his law and justice, paying the debts of insolvent sinners, and making amends for all their offences. He will appear as an all-prevailing advocate with his Father, in favor of a rebel world, and turn his heart to them again. So that this revolted province of his dominions shall again become the object of his love, and he will look down and smile upon the obnoxious sons of men. Oh happy peace! Oh blessed peace-maker! That puts an end to so fatal and unnatural a war, and brings the Creator and his creatures, the offended Sovereign and his rebellious subjects into mutual friendship again, after the grand breach, that seemed likely never to be made up, and indeed never could be made up but by so great and powerful a Mediator; a Mediator of infinite dignity, merit and authority, able to remove all obstructions in the way of both parties.

The Peace proclaimed on this grand occasion may also imply, Peace with angels; peace between the inhabitants of heaven and earth. The angelic armies, the militia of heaven, are always upon the side of their Sovereign; always at war with his enemies, and ready to fight his battles. And upon the apostacy of our world they were ready to take up arms against the rebels. But now, when their Sovereign proclaims peace, they lay down their arms, they acquiesce in the peace, and receive the penitent, returning rebels with open arms. These benevolent beings rejoice in the restoration of their fellow-creature man to the divine favor, and shout forth their songs of praise upon the publication of the news.

Again; this proclamation of peace may include peace with conscience. When man commenced an enemy to his Maker, he became an enemy to

himself: his own conscience took up arms against him, and is perpetually fighting the cause of its Lord. But now the guilt of past sin may be washed away from the conscience with the pacific blood of Jesus, and all its clamors silenced by his all-satisfying righteousness. And now the peace will be preserved, and the contracting of new guilt prevented, by the sanctifying influence of the grace of this new-born Prince. His grace shall change disloyal hearts, and reform rebellious lives; and those shall enjoy the approbation of their conscience, who were wont to sweat and agonize under its tormenting accusations. Thus, self-tormenting sinners shall be reconciled to themselves; and peace in their own breasts shall be a perennial source of happiness: a happiness,

*“Which nothing earthly gives, nor can destroy,  
The soul’s calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy.”—Pope.*

Farther; peace on earth includes peace between man and man. Now the Prince of peace is born; and upon his appearance let animosity and discord, contentions and wars cease; and let universal harmony and benevolence prevail through the world. Let the bonds of love unite all the sons of Adam together in the closest friendship. It was love that constrained him to put on the nature of man, and to change his throne in heaven for a manger: love is the ruling passion of his soul: love is the doctrine he shall preach: love is the disposition he shall inspire; and love is the first principle of his religion. Therefore, let all the world be melted and molded into love. Let the wolf and the lion put on the nature of the lamb; and let nothing hurt or destroy through all the earth. Let nation no more lift up sword against nation: let them beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; and let them learn war no more. For of him it is foretold, that in his days abundance of peace shall flourish, so long as the moon endureth. Psa.

72:7. This, my brethren, has already been accomplished in part: for peace and benevolence is the genius of Christianity; and wherever it has prevailed, it has introduced peace and harmony in families, in neighborhoods, and among nations: nor can the present disturbed state of things, the animosities, quarrels and wars, that are in the world, disprove what I say: for these prevail only so far as the Christian spirit does not prevail. Just as much as there is of these among men, just so much of Christianity is wanting; just so far the genuine tendency of the birth of Jesus fails of its efficacy. However, we rejoice in the hope, that our world shall yet see better times, and experience the full effects of this illustrious birth: when the kingdom of the Prince of peace shall become universal, and diffuse peace among all nations. Oh! When shall that glorious revolution commence!

The next article in the song of angels is, “Good-will towards men.” That is, the good-will and grace of God is now illustriously displayed towards men, sinful and unworthy as they are. And may they dutifully receive it, and enjoy all the happy effects of it!

Thus the angels declared, foretold, and wished. They declared that even then glory would redound to God, peace be established on earth, and the good-will and favor of God enjoyed by guilty men. And they foretold that thus it would be more and more to the end of time, and even through all eternity. And they also wished these glorious effects might follow, as agreeable to the high regard they had for the divine honor, and their generous benevolence to their unworthy fellow-creatures, men.

This suggests a question, and also an answer to it. The question is, since the angels were not redeemed by Jesus Christ, and do not share in the benefits of redemption, as man does, why did they thus rejoice and sing at

his birth? This we can account for from their regard to the glory of God, and their good-will to men.

Their happiness consists in the knowledge and love of God: and the more he displays his perfections in his works, the more they know of him, and consequently the more they love him. Now the redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ gives the most upright and amiable view of the divine perfections: and on this account the inhabitants of heaven rejoice in it. They know more of God from this great event, than from all his other works of creation and providence. Hence St. Peter represents them as bending and looking with eager eyes, to pry into this mystery, St. Paul also intimates, that the founding of a church in our guilty world, and particularly the gathering of the poor outcast Gentiles into it, was a secret even to the angels, till revealed by the event; and that the revelation of it discovered to them more of the wisdom of God, than they ever knew before. “This,” says he, “was a mystery, which from the beginning of the world was hid in God but it is now revealed, “to the intent that unto principalities and powers,”—to the various ranks of angels, “might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” Eph. 3:8,10. This cleared up many of the dark events of Providence, which they could not before account for: and enabled them to see farther into the designs of divine wisdom. Methinks when Abel, or the first saint from our world, arrived in heaven, the glorious natives of that country were struck with agreeable surprise, and wondered how he came there. They were ready to give up the whole race for lost, like their kindred angels that fell; and could contrive no possible method for their recovery. And how then are these earth-born strangers admitted into heaven? And when they found, by the proceedings of divine Providence, that God had gracious designs towards our world, and that these designs were to be

accomplished by his Son, must they not be agreeably perplexed and bewildered to find out the manner in which he would accomplish them? In what way could he satisfy divine justice, who was himself the judge? How could he die for sin, who was all-immortal? These and the like difficulties must perplex the inquiries even of angels. But now all is made plain; now the grand secret is disclosed. The Son of God must become the son of man, must obey the law, and die upon the cross; and thus he was to accomplish the great design, and restore guilty man to the favor of God. Angels must rejoice at this discovery, as advancing the glory of God, and increasing their own happiness.

Again: the angels are benevolent beings, and therefore rejoice at the birth of Christ, as tending to the salvation of poor sinners of the race of man. The Lord of angels tells us, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Luke 15:10. And how much more must they rejoice to see the grand scheme disclosed, by which numerous colonies were to be transplanted from our guilty world to people the heavenly regions, and perhaps fill the vacant seats of the fallen angels?

I may add, it is not unlikely that the angels may receive some great advantages, to us unknown, by the mediation of Christ; though they do not need a mediator in the same sense that we do. But I have not time to enlarge upon this.

You now see the reasons of the joy of angels on this occasion: and it is no wonder they sung, “Glory to God in the highest, for peace proclaimed on earth, and goodwill towards men.”

But how ought we to improve this subject more immediately for our own advantage? This is our great concern; for we are personally interested in it, which the angels were not; at least, not in the same degree. Hence then,

We may learn how we ought to celebrate the birth of Christ—celebrate it like angels, not with balls and assemblies—not with reveling and carousing, and all the extravagances that are usual at this season; as if you were celebrating the birth of Venus or Bacchus, or some patron of iniquity; not with the sound of bells, muskets and cannons, and the other demonstrations of joy, upon occasions of a civil nature. Some of these are not innocent upon any occasion, and have a direct tendency to make men still more thoughtless, and giddy, and to prevent the blessed effects of this illustrious birth. Others of them, though lawful upon seasons of public national joy, for temporal blessings or deliverances, yet are impious and profane, when practiced in honor of the incarnation of the holy Jesus. You will all grant, no doubt, that religious joy ought to be expressed in a religious manner; that the usual mirth, festivity, and gayety of a birth-night, in honor of our earthly sovereign, are not proper expressions of joy for the birth of a spiritual Savior—a Savior from this vain world—from sin and hell. Therefore, I say, celebrate it as the angels did; giving glory to God in the highest, in your songs of praise; giving him glory by dwelling upon the wonders of redemption, in delightful meditation; by giving him your thoughts and affections; and by a life of devotion and universal obedience. Celebrate the birth of this great Prince of peace, by accepting that peace which angels proclaimed. Give a welcome reception to this glorious stranger. Do not turn him out of doors, as the Bethlehemites did; but entertain him in your hearts. Let every faculty of your souls open to receive him. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in.” (Psalm 24:7.) O let every heart cry, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: wherefore standest thou without?” (Gen. 24:31.) He came to procure and restore peace between God and man; therefore I, his poor ambassador,

“pray you in his stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20.) No longer continue in arms, rejecting his authority, trampling upon his laws, and refusing the oilers of his grace: otherwise this peace will not extend to you; but war, eternal war, will continue between you and the Lord God omnipotent. But if the boldest rebel among you this day submit to his government, you shall enjoy the blessed peace, which angels proclaimed at his entrance into the world, and which he left as a legacy to his friends, when he was about to leave it. (John 14:27.) Make peace also with your own conscience; and scorn to live at variance with yourselves. How ill do you take it, when others condemn you? And can you be easy, while perpetually condemning yourselves? Let conscience have full liberty to exercise its authority upon you, as Jehovah’s deputy, and dare not to disobey its orders. Live in peace also with one another. Silence; ye noisy brawlers: the Prince of Peace is born. Peace! Be still! Ye contentious, angry passions: the Prince of peace is born. Away slander, backbiting, quarreling, envy, malice, revenge—away to your native hell: for know ye not, that the Prince of peace has entered into this world, and forbid you to appear upon it? Thus, brethren, celebrate the birth of the Savior, and that not only upon this day, but every day through all your lives: and thus you may have a merry Christmas all the year round.

To conclude. What encouragement may this angelic proclamation afford to trembling, desponding penitents? Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy; for to you is born a Savior, Christ the Lord. O! Do not your hearts spring within you at the news? I have somewhere heard of a crowd of criminals under condemnation, confined in one dungeon: and upon a messenger’s arriving from their king, and proclaiming a pardon, they all rushed out so eagerly to receive the pardon, and see the publisher of

the joyful news, that they trod and crushed one another to death. And shall there be no such pressing and crowding to Jesus Christ in this assembly to-day? Shall there be no such eagerness among us to receive a pardon from his hands? Alas! Will any of you turn this greatest blessing of heaven into a curse? Was it your destroyer that was born, when the angels sung the birth of a Savior? Indeed, if you continue to neglect him, you will find him such to you; and it would have been better for you, that neither you nor He had ever been born. Even the birth of the Prince of peace proclaims eternal war against you. I therefore now pray you in his stead to be reconciled to him. Amen.

A HYMN.

The Nativity of Christ. By Dr. WATTS.

*“Shepherds, rejoice, lift up your eyes,*

*And send your fears away;*

*News from the regions of the skies,*

*Salvation’s born to-day.*

*Jesus, the God, whom angels fear,*

*Comes down to dwell with you;*

*To-day he makes his entrance here,*

*But not as monarchs do.*

*No gold, nor purple swaddling bands,*

*Nor royal shining things:*

*A manger for his cradle stands,*

*And holds the King of kings.”—*

*Thus Gabriel sang, and straight around*

*The heavenly armies throng;*

*They tune their harps to lofty sound*



*And thus conclude the song:  
“Glory to God that reigns above,  
Let peace surround the earth;  
Mortals shall know their Maker’s love,  
At their Redeemer’s birth.”  
Lord! And shall angels have their songs,  
And men no tunes to raise?  
O! May we lose these useless tongues,  
When they forget to praise!  
Glory to God that reigns above,  
That pitied us forlorn;  
We join to sing our Maker’s love,  
For there’s a Savior born.*

# *SERM. LXXX. CHRISTIANS SOLEMNLY REMINDED OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS.*

**J**oshua 24:22.— *And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve him. And they said, we are witnesses.*

Should we view the conduct of mankind towards God, we should be tempted to think they are under no obligations to him, but entirely at their own disposal, and at liberty to act as they please. Who would imagine that he is their God, when they are so careless about his worship; their master, when they are so negligent in his service; their father, when they are so regardless of their duty to him; or their ruler, when they follow their own wills without consulting his pleasure? And much less should we imagine they have voluntarily taken upon them the most sacred and solemn obligations to him.

But is this really the case? Are they indeed quite lawless and unobliged? Have they a right to use the proud language of Pharaoh, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?” No; let them act as they will, let them think what they please, they are under the strongest possible obligations to the

great God: nay, they have generally assumed voluntary obligations upon themselves. This is our case in particular; especially since the solemn transaction of the last Lord's day: a transaction which I would now help you to review, that you may the better improve it in future life. In this view, I may accommodate to you the words of my text, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him." And you cannot but confess with the Israelites, that you are witnesses.

Joshua, the brave general of the people of Israel, had not only settled them in the promised land, but had used all his influence, during his life, to engage them to the Lord. And when by the course of nature, he must take his farewell of them, and could use his personal influence with them no longer, he is solicitous to leave them so fast bound to the Lord, that he might die with the pleasing hope, that they would continue in his service from generation to generation. For this end he calls them together, and makes his last speech to them, which I think, is a pattern of persuasive oratory, not equaled by any of the ancient Greeks and Romans. After drawing them on to choose the Lord for their God, and bind themselves to his service, over and over, by their own personal act, and of their own free choice, he takes them at their word, and holds them fast. And to render the obligation more solemn, and strike them with greater horror at the violation of it, he addresses them as witnesses against themselves, that they had chosen the Lord to serve him.

Accommodating the words to our circumstances, I intend,

I. To show, that we are under obligations to serve the Lord from our own choice, or voluntary engagements.

II. To inquire, how and when, or in what respects, and at what periods of time, we are witnesses against ourselves, that we have thus chosen the Lord

to serve him.

I. I am to show, that we are under obligations to serve the Lord from our own choice, or voluntary engagements.

Here I would premise, that though voluntary obligations, taken upon ourselves by our own act, have something of a peculiar force in them, yet they are not the only obligations we are under to serve the Lord. We are bound to be his servants, whether we will or not. His character as our Creator, our preserver, and benefactor, and as a being of supreme excellency, give him the most firm and indisputable right to our obedience. And our relations to him as his creatures, his beneficiaries, and dependents, lay a foundation for obligations, which are not suspended upon our consent. Our consent is not a matter of favor, but of indispensable obligation. We are born his servants, and must continue so, as long as we exist. We can no more dissolve our obligations to him, than we can destroy that being which we received from him. If children do naturally owe duty to their parents, who begat them and who provide for them; if subjects owe obedience to their sovereign, in return for his protection; certainly we are by nature under the strongest ties of duty to our heavenly Father and supreme King. The case is not here as among equals, who are under no obligations to one another, till they enter into them by voluntary contract. But here, the obligation is founded in nature, and therefore prior to, and independent upon, all acts of our own. It is naturally our duty to serve the Lord, whether we consent or not: and our not consenting is so far from keeping us free from obligations to him, that our not consenting is itself an act of rebellion, and a breach of obligations.

Consider this, ye licentious sinners, who think, that if you have not been baptized, or though you may have been baptized in infancy, yet if you do

not personally renew your obligations at the Lord's table, you are not bound to serve God, and make religion your business. Do your obligations, then, depend upon so precarious a foundation, as your own consent? Is there any merit in your enmity to God and his service, which makes you unwilling to choose it? Will this excuse your conduct, when it is its principal aggravation? Will your strong love to sin, which is the reason that you will not renounce it, excuse your continuance in it? Will you argue thus, and yet pretend to be a man, that is, a reasonable creature?— must your creation, your preservation, and all the mercies God has bestowed upon you, pass for nothing? Is it nothing at all, that he formed you by his power, when you had no being? That he has followed you with blessings, every moment, for a length of years? Nay, that he has bought you with the blood of his Son? Do these things lay no obligation upon you? Are you at liberty to treat such a Being just as you please? Be it known to you, that you are, that you always have been, that you always will be, bound to be his servants; and you can never get free from the obligation in heaven, earth, or hell, or any part of the universe. You may refuse to comply with it, you may rebel, may incur his displeasure, and ruin yourselves by your obstinacy; but you can never break the tie, while you have a spark of being. Let this fasten conviction on such of you, as refuse your consent to the covenant of grace, and will not assume voluntary engagements to the service of God. It is not a proposal left to your discretion; but it is enjoined upon you by the highest authority, under the severest penalties: and if you refuse, you must perish forever for your inexcusable rebellion. Are you blessing yourselves, that last Sunday, while others entered into such solemn engagements, you kept yourselves free? Alas! Your freedom is but slavery to sin and Satan. You do but struggle to keep out of those hands that would save you. Your refusal is so

far from setting you at liberty to neglect God with impunity, that it is itself an aggravated wickedness, and will bring upon you the heaviest vengeance from his hands. And (which perhaps you do not think of) you are not free after all. You are bound, firmly bound by an eternal obligation, though you should always exclude yourselves from baptism, and the sacred table. You may refuse to comply with it, but you cannot throw it off, do what you will.

But though we are all under obligations to God, independent upon, and prior to our own consent: yet there are a class of obligations, which we have personally, and by our own act, taken upon ourselves: and in the breach of these we are guilty of more direct and aggravated perjury. These are of different kinds, and assumed upon different occasions. There is probably none of us, but what has voluntarily entered into them at one time or other: particularly in sickness, under apprehensions of danger, under a fresh sense of some remarkable mercy, under horror of conscience, and especially in baptism and the Lord's Supper. In these two ordinances, we do in a more solemn and public manner, engage ourselves to the service of God. And as the one is frequently dispensed among us, and it is high time for us to know its design; and as we attended upon the other so very lately, I intend at present to consider particularly the engagements we have entered into on these occasions. And I shall first begin with the sacrament of Baptism. We have generally been baptized, either in infancy, upon the dedication of our parents, or in adult years, upon our making a profession of the Christian faith, and dedicating ourselves to God by our own personal act. And in what time or manner soever we were baptized, we do actually and personally, or virtually and by our representatives, choose the Lord to serve him.

Baptism may be considered in various views; and in whatever view we consider it, we shall find it lays us under solemn obligations to this.

We may consider it as a badge of Christianity, and a mark of our being the disciples, the followers, and servants of Jesus Christ. Hence it was, that in the apostolic times, as soon as persons embraced Christianity, and professed faith in Christ, they were baptized in his name. They hereupon were considered as the professed servants of Christ, and solemnly bound by their own voluntary promise, to serve him and live according to his religion. Baptism, in this respect, may be illustrated by a soldier, taking upon him the livery of his commander, whereby he may be distinguished from others; or by the ancient practice of putting a mark upon servants, in token of their belonging to such a master.

Baptism may also be considered, in a view something like this, as an initiation into the church of Christ, or as the door of entrance into that sacred society, which enjoys the means and the hopes of salvation. Hence also in the apostolic age, those who professed a desire to commence members of the Christian church, were baptized; and upon this, they were entitled to all the privileges of the church, while they behaved in character; and obliged themselves to live as becomes the members of so holy a society. Now they were looked upon as called and gathered out of the wide world, the usurped kingdom of Satan, and introduced into the Church of Christ, as his children and servants; and they were solemnly obliged to live in character. The view of the ordinance may be illustrated by a soldier enlisting himself under his general, and so making himself one of his army, whereby he engages to submit to military discipline, and to fight faithfully under his commander. Or, it is like a person's becoming a member of the court or corporation by taking the oaths, and other tests necessary to his admission.

Now, my brethren, if you consider baptism in these views, you cannot but see that such of you as have been the subjects of it, have chosen the Lord to serve him. The case is the same, in this respect, whether you have been baptized in infancy or in adult years: for if you were baptized in infancy, your parents had a right to devote you to God, and transact for you, and you are obliged to stand to their engagements in your behalf. This you acknowledge in civil affairs. The land you receive as an inheritance from them you claim a right to; and you own yourselves bound by contracts made in your name, during your minority. Or if you have been baptized in adult age, as sundry of your negroes have been, when you were capable of acting for yourselves, you have in your own persons, and by your own act, taken these obligations upon you. Here then see the ties you are under. You have taken upon you the mark and badge of the followers, the disciples and servants of Christ: you wear his livery. And are you not bound to behave according to these relations? Are you at liberty to behave as others, who make no profession of his name? If you, after all, turn rebels, and act as his enemies, or if you are friends only in show, are you not guilty of perjury—perjury in the highest degree?

You have also been admitted into that select society, which Christ has called out of the world, and owns as his peculiar people. You professedly belong to a holy nation. You have enrolled your names in the sacred register of the citizens of Zion. And does not this oblige you to be holy, in all manner of conversation? Are you at liberty to violate the laws of God, which are the constitution of this society? Is it no criminal defect in you to be destitute of that holiness of heart and life, which is essential to a true member of this holy community? Does not conviction unavoidably flash upon some of your minds from this topic? Have you always conducted



yourselves, as persons that have been thus early consecrated to God, and separated from the world that lieth in wickedness? Do you, my young friends, carry these daily obligations into practice? Or are not sundry of you breaking them, and practically renouncing your baptism every day? And you, poor negroes, who have been baptized at full age, how do you live? Do you live, since you became the professed followers of Christ, as you did before, or as those do who will not take him for their Lord? May one know that you are Christians, and have been baptized, by your holy conversation? Or are not some of you found in the ways of sin, with Christ's mark upon you? Have you not broken the solemn promises before God, and this assembly? If so, when you are baptized, you did not do what was pleasing to God, but were guilty of lying to him; and your case is now a great deal worse than when you were professed heathens. Alas! My brethren, if we take a view of the lives of the generality of our countrymen, who would conclude that Virginia is a baptized country? Are these drunken, swearing, cheating, lying, careless, prayerless creatures, are these baptized disciples of the holy Jesus? They are bound, indeed, to be so; and to live accordingly: but oh, what a load of perjury burdens our land on this account! Truly, sirs, it may strike us with horror to think, how this holy ordinance of Jesus Christ is abused among us. It is become a mere ceremony to give a name to the child, or bring it into the fashion. There is no divine ordinance but what is grossly profaned among us; but none, methinks, so much as this. And when the matter will be brought to an account, how terrible will it be to multitudes!

Again; baptism is a sign of regeneration, or of our dying to sin, and entering into a new state of existence, with new principles and views, to walk in newness of life. I say it is a sign, an outward sign of this; though not

the thing itself. The papists have made the sign and the thing signified, to be one and the same in the Lord's Supper, supposing that the outward elements of bread and wine are transubstantiated into the real body and blood of Christ. And some of us have fallen into the like error with respect to the sacrament of baptism; supposing that to be baptized, and to be really born again, are one and the same thing. However, it must be granted, it is an outward sensible sign, of inward invisible grace. So the apostle repeatedly represents it. Rom. 6:4. "We are buried with him by baptism into death;" that is, it is a sign of our dying to sin, which bears a kind of resemblance to Christ's dying a natural death—"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life," that is, live a life of holiness, entirely new, and different from our former course. Baptism is also called the circumcision of Christ made without hands, in which we put off the body of the sins of the flesh, (Col. 2:11,) and "are purged from our old sins." 2 Peter 1:9. Here then, ye that have been baptized, and had the sign, inquire whether you have had the thing signified? Whether you have been so thoroughly renewed, in the spirit of your mind, and so have entered upon a new course of life that you may be justly said to be born again, to be quickened with a new life, and to be new creatures? Have you any evidence of such a change? If not, your baptism was a solemn lie, in the presence of an omniscient God. Happy we, had we as many among us born of the Spirit, as have been born of water: as many new hearts and new lives, as baptized persons! Then our country would indeed bear the appearance of a Christian country. But alas! How different is the case in fact! How many that have been washed with baptismal water, wallow in the pollutions of sin? How many cherish the old man with his affections and lusts, instead of walking in newness of life?

However, you see what manner of persons you are bound to be by your baptismal obligations: and if you are not such, you are most grossly perjured. Nay, such of you as have been baptized upon your own account, have expressly professed, before you were admitted, and virtually in the act of baptism, that upon the best inquiries you could make, you had reason to hope, that you were really born again, and heartily determined to lead a new life of holiness and virtue. And if you had no reason for this hope, you are again convicted of a solemn lie to an omniscient God, who knows your hearts, and cannot be cheated by your vain pretensions.

Another view of baptism, somewhat like this, the apostle gives us, (1 Pet. 3:21.) “Baptism,” says he, “doth save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards, God.” That external baptism with water, which may wash away the filth of the flesh, is so insufficient to salvation, and so vain a thing, that it hardly deserves the name: and inward purity of heart and a good life are of so much importance to that complete baptism, which is saving, that that deserves to be called baptism by way of eminence. The word here rendered the answer of a good conscience [ἰνσπώτημα] properly signifies a restipulation, or an answer made to terms proposed for acceptance; and seems to refer to the proposal of the articles of the Christian covenant, which was made to those that offered themselves to baptism. And hence we learn, that they particularly engaged to be holy, or to maintain a good conscience towards God. To this you have also engaged yourselves in this ordinance: and have you endeavored to live accordingly? Do you honestly labor to keep a clear conscience, and to purge yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit? If not, you are again convicted of a perfidious breach of vows.

But that view, in which I would particularly consider baptism at present, is, as it is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of our dedication to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

By the covenant of grace, I mean the gospel scheme of salvation for sinners through the mediation of Jesus Christ. The blessings proposed on God's part are pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, and eternal salvation; or, in the short and comprehensive form often used in the sacred writings, that he will be our God; that is, that the Father will be our Father, the Son our Savior, and the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier. On our part, we are required to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh,—the trinity of the wicked, to devote ourselves to God, and to take the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be our God. This implies repentance, faith, love, and a determinate efficacious purpose to walk in universal obedience for the time to come.

Now baptism is a token of this: we are baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as a sign and seal of our consent to this contract; or, that we are devoted to the sacred Trinity, and take each person in the Godhead, under that relation which they respectively sustain in the economy of man's redemption. This is a primary and principal design of baptism; and all of us, who have been baptized, have thus professedly entered into the bonds of God's covenant.

Hence it follows, with regard to you, negroes, that have been baptized in adult years, that you have publicly professed, that you did truly repent of all your sins, that you did believe in Jesus Christ with all your hearts, with the Ethiopian eunuch; and that you did devote yourselves entirely and forever to God, and engage in a course of universal and persevering obedience. And were you sincere in this transaction? You have publicly declared it both in words and by a significant action; and if you were not really what you

professed to be, you solemnly and publicly declared a lie both to God and man; and does not such a load of guilt lie heavy upon you? Oh! Must you not shudder to reflect how treacherously, how villainously, how hypocritically you have acted under the cloak of religion? Alas! Will such a baptism as this save you? No; you will sink into hell with the livery of Christ upon you, and it would be more tolerable for you in the day of judgment, if you had still continued wild heathens in the deserts of Africa.

Again; since you have thus, of your own choice, entered into such engagements, are you not bound to live according to them? If, after all, you live unholy, and refuse to walk according to the gospel, you break covenant with God, you undo your baptism; and, as it were, renew your covenant with the devil. And have not some of you been guilty of this very thing? Alas! Do you not tremble at the thought? You have cut yourselves off from all the blessings of the covenant of grace, and brought upon you all the opposite curses. You have renounced the Father, Son, and Spirit; and chosen the devil, the world, and the flesh, in their stead. The water of baptism has been, as it were, a deadly poison to you. It has been like the bitter water of jealousy that caused the curse, under the law, which made the belly to swell, and the thigh to rot. Numb. 5:21. It has been a pollution rather than a purification; you have “been washed to fouler stains.” And is it not time now for you to begin that repentance in reality, which you should have had, and which you professed, when you were baptized?

Let this be a warning to such of you as have no reason to think you truly believe and repent, not to rush to baptism in that condition. Sundry of you are very eager to apply to a minister to be baptized, while you hardly know why you desire it, or are only desirous to be in the fashion; or, at best, have only a confused notion, that it may do you good, as is necessary though you

know not for what. And I am afraid some of you do not scruple to lie to God and man, in order to be admitted; professing faith and repentance, and a desire to be the servant of God, when in reality you know nothing about it. Well; remember, that though man cannot know your hearts, yet God does, and will call you to an account for this deceitful dealing. Alas! Poor things, why should you heap more sin upon your sinking souls, by pretending to become Christians, when you are not? First, labor to be Christians indeed; let that be your principal concern; and then come and be baptized, and welcome. You will say, perhaps, “other negroes are baptized; and why not I?” But, consider, some other negroes have been in great trouble about their souls; their hearts have been broken for sin; they have accepted of Christ as their only Savior; and are Christians indeed: and when you are such, it will be time enough for you to be baptized. Others of them, I fear, are but hypocrites, and have been admitted upon a false profession; and are you desirous to become such? Will you follow so dangerous an example, and add the guilt of hypocrisy to your other sins?

Finally; is it not proper, that you should often renew this covenant which you entered into, in baptism? For this purpose, among others, the Lord's Supper was instituted; and you are bound to partake of it for that end. I must confess, I do not understand that Christianity which is so common among us, that persons who think themselves qualified for baptism, should absent themselves from the Lord's Supper—that they should be so forward to enter into covenant with God in the one, and so backward to renew it in the other. The qualifications for both ordinances, in adults, are substantially the same. Faith, repentance, and a willingness to be devoted to God, are necessary to baptism: and these things only are necessary and sufficient for the Lord's Supper. Our obligations to the latter are as strong and endearing

as to the former, if there be any force in the last dying injunctions of Jesus Christ. This was the practice in the apostolic church, that persons were first baptized upon their profession of faith in Christ, and then, upon the same ground, they were immediately, and of course, entitled to the Lord's Supper, and partook of it. But how different is the practice in modern times? Persons who justly think themselves unqualified for the Lord's table, and either through carelessness, or some little tenderness of conscience, absent themselves from it, do, notwithstanding, make no scruple to claim a right to baptism for themselves and their children. But this is a gross absurdity: for if they are prepared for the one, they are for the other also. By baptism we are introduced into the Christian society; and the Lord's Supper is a privilege of that society, to be enjoyed when we are initiated into it. Now, whoever is fit to be admitted into a society, is also fit to enjoy the privileges of that body into which he is admitted; for his fitness for admission is nothing else but his fitness to enjoy the privileges of that body. How unaccountable and inconsistent, therefore, is the conduct of multitudes among us! They think they would be no Christians if they should continue unbaptized; but as for the Lord's Supper, it is a kind of a work of supererogation, or a superfluity in their religion; and they flatter themselves they may be very good Christians without that. And thus they live, half-excommunicated by their own act. I would not have you, negroes, or others, who have been baptized in riper years, to come to that ordinance while unprepared; nor would I have you baptized while unprepared: the case is substantially the same. But this you must know, that if after you have been baptized, you do not communicate at the Lord's table, you are but almost Christians in the sight of the church; you act a very inconsistent part; and

you live in a constant course of sin, neglecting a known duty, enjoined upon all the followers of Christ.

As for such of you as have been baptized in your infancy, I have a few things to say to you, founded upon the view I have given you of baptism as a solemn entrance into covenant with God.

The first thing is, that you are obliged by your baptismal engagements, to live devoted to God, from your first capacity of action. You were given up by those who had the disposal of you to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the obligation is binding upon you, as soon as you are capable of acting for yourselves. And if you refuse to perform it, you are guilty of perjury, and renounce your baptism. You do virtually say, "I retract and disavow the covenant made in my name with the Father, Son, and Spirit; and I will not stand to it." By your baptismal obligations, you were bound to walk every day as in covenant with God; that is, to believe, to repent, and yield universal obedience, every day of your life; and consequently every day that you spend in unbelief, in impenitence, or in any instance of willful disobedience, is filled up with perjury. And what a shocking scene does this open! Not only one, ten, or a hundred instances of perjury, but a whole life, which is nothing else but one continued series of perjury! Every day, every year since you have been capable of acting for yourselves, filled up with the grossest perjury!

I would recommend this particularly to the consideration of the young people that hear me. Some of you, I hope, feel this early obligation; and make it your great business to perform it. But, alas! How many thoughtless, gay, vain, and profligate young creatures are to be found among us? Is this not the general character of the youth of our country; and have these been baptized? Have these been so early devoted to God? Alas! Who would



imagine it from their conduct? Can such claim the blessings of the covenant of grace, when they are renouncing it every day? Can such a load of perjury lie easy upon their consciences? My young friends, be it known unto you, that you are the Lord's: you are devoted things—consecrated vessels; you have enlisted under Jesus Christ; you have bound yourselves servants to God. Therefore with the authority of a minister of God, I am sent in quest of you this day. I apprehend you as his property; I arrest you as deserters, and require your immediate return to your duty. He is willing to receive you again upon your repentance; but if you still continue renegades from his service, he will at length outlaw you. The season of grace will be over, and he will commission his judgments to destroy you. Therefore, my dear youth, let me persuade you to think of your conduct. The guilt of perjury in some slight, civil affair, has struck some with such horror, that it has cast them into melancholy and despair. And can you without uneasiness, reflect upon your life as a series of the most direct, audacious perjury against God? Believe me, you are not your own; therefore, return to your rightful owner; and bitterly repent of your base, ungrateful desertion of his good service. This point would not require persuasion, were you not extremely degenerate. Do you indeed need to be persuaded to choose so good a master, the Lord of heaven and earth? So complete a portion as the supreme and all-sufficient Good? So agreeable and advantageous a service, as that of religion, which is rewarded with an eternity of the most perfect happiness? Is the sordid drudgery of sin and Satan so pleasant, or so advantageous in its consequences, that it should be hard to dissuade you from it? And (which is still more strange and discouraging) shall I fail in carrying such a point with any of you? Alas! Are you so surprisingly and obstinately wicked? My children and youth, “for whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed

in you,” Gal. 4:19; do not put me off with a refusal this day. Remember how early you have been given up to God; remember, that when you are sinning with the greatest gayety, when you are dissolving in pleasure, when you are carousing in mirth and extravagant diversions, every act is a breach of the vows of God, which are upon you; for still you are under obligations to God, and you can never get free from them, unless you can annihilate your very beings.

Here let me hint, by the by, at the duty of parents. The early dedication of your children to God, furnishes you with a very proper motive to make them sensible of their duty. And were it duly improved for this purpose, the good effects of baptism, and its subserviency to early piety, would be more frequent and visible. Take your little creatures up in your arms, and with all the powerful oratory which the fond heart of a father and the warm heart of a Christian can make you master of, put them in mind of their early baptism; explain to them the nature of that ordinance; and labor to make them sensible of the obligations that lie upon them in consequence of it. Warn them of the danger of breaking covenant with God, and living a life of perjury. That good man, Mr. Philip Henry, drew up for his children, the following short form of the baptismal covenant, which excellently represents its nature and obligations.

“I take God the Father to be my choicest good and highest end; I take God the Son to be my Prince and Savior; I take God the Holy Ghost to be my sanctifier, teacher, guide, and comforter; I take the word of God to be my rule in all my actions: and the people of God to be my people in all conditions: I do likewise devote and dedicate to the Lord, my whole self, all I am, and all I can do; and this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and forever.”

This he taught his children, and they repeated it every Sunday evening: the good old gentleman adding, “So say, and so do, and you are made forever.” He labored to bring them to understand, and consent to, this covenant. And when they grew up, he made them all write it over severally with their own hands, and very solemnly set their names to it; and he kept it by him, telling them, that it should be produced as a witness against them, in case they should afterwards depart from God.

Thus, my brethren, do you endeavor to make your children sensible of their early obligations, and bring them to consent to this covenant, and you have reason to hope, that abused and profaned ordinance will be of great service to them.

This naturally leads me to the other thing, I would recommend to such of you, as have been baptized in infancy; and that is, when you are come to years of discretion, you should in your own persons solemnly and explicitly renew your covenant with God. You stand no more upon the footing of your parents’ representative-ship; but it is expected, that you either confirm or renounce the contract they made for you. It is expected, you should now make a choice for yourselves: God expects it, and his church expects it. Therefore, choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Had the case been difficult, you have had time enough to deliberate; but it is as plain as whether you shall choose life or death. Can you bear to live longer in a state of atheism, without any God at all: I mean without any freely chosen by your own act? Come then, this day choose that God, to whom you were devoted. From a determinate purpose, that you will be his for the future. Acknowledge freely the obligations that were so early laid upon you. Enter into an explicit covenant with God, and frequently renew it, in your hours of secret prayer; and solemnly set your seal to it at the Lord’s table.

As baptism is appointed for your first entrance into covenant with God, the Lord's Supper is appointed for renewing it in your own persons. It is expected, that all who are willing to stand to the covenant made for them in their infancy, do express it in this way, and voluntarily take the obligation upon themselves. And therefore, such of you as are arrived to years, and yet live in the neglect of the Lord's Supper, do virtually renounce your baptismal covenant, by refusing to renew and confirm it by your own act. Now, we see how you choose to act when left to choose for yourselves; we see, that you want to be off the bargain; you are not willing to be devoted to the sacred Trinity; but would alienate yourselves from the service. It is really astonishing how inconsistently persons act in this respect: they will retain the Christian name, and yet will not renew the Christian covenant in the ordinance instituted for that purpose. They claim the privilege of baptism for their children; and yet refuse to seal the covenant of grace themselves at the Lord's table. How common a practice is this, all over our country? But what authority have they thus to pick and choose what divine ordinances to observe, and what to neglect? Or what right have they to the privileges of the covenant of grace for themselves or their children, who refuse to renew their personal consent to that covenant? It is the grossest absurdity.

This I would apply particularly to children and youth. I would not have you by any means to rush unprepared to the Lord's Supper: but this I must tell you, that so long as you are unprepared for it, so long you are guilty of violating your covenant with God. So long as you willfully neglect opportunities of renewing your obligations, so long you refuse to be the Lord's and retract your baptismal covenant. You practically disavow the Christian religion, by refusing one instituted sign and seal of the Christian

profession; and you so far declare yourselves heathens and infidels. Therefore, my young friends, prepare, prepare to renew your covenant at the Lord's table: and lament, that you have omitted it so long. I would remind you again, that I would not have you unprepared communicants: alas! We have too many already. But I would have you repent, believe, and heartily consent to the gospel, and then come and seal your contract.

From the view I have given you of the nature and design of baptism, you cannot but see the justice of the remark I have already made, that this ordinance is most grossly profaned in our land. It is prostituted to those sinners, who openly violate the fundamental laws of the Christian society; and therefore have no right to any of its special privileges. It is profaned by the irreverence of parents and sureties, who rush to it, as though it were but an old custom. It is profaned by them in that they do not endeavor to make their children sensible of their obligations in consequence of it, and to educate them in the fear of God. It is profaned, insulted, and grossly abused by thousands, who forget the guide of their youth, and forsake the covenant of their God; who break through all its obligations and live impenitent in sin. It is profaned by those inconsistent half Christians among us, who refuse to renew their baptismal covenant at the Lord's table. In short, it is the occasion of national guilt: our country is overrun with this worst kind of perjury: and in this sense I may say, "Because of swearing the land mourneth." Jer. 23:10. And oh! Shall not the reflection produce a public, national repentance? Shall we not grieve, that we have sworn falsely to God himself, and dealt treacherously with him?

I now proceed to those obligations which are peculiar to the Lord's Supper; and my address shall be more immediately directed to you that partook in that ordinance the last Lord's day. But my time is so far elapsed,

and what I have to say on this head, will so naturally coincide with the former, that I shall be but short upon it.

You have, my fellow-communicants, made a good confession before many witnesses. You have openly, before heaven and earth, avouched the Lord to be your God, and devoted yourselves to him as his people. You may use the language of the Psalmist with peculiar propriety,

“Thy vows are upon me, O God!” Psalm 56:12. And now what remains, but that you endeavor to carry your engagements into execution, if you would avoid the dreadful guilt of perjury; if you would inherit the blessings of the covenant into which you have entered; if you would enjoy peace of conscience, and the joyful hopes of heaven; if you would stop the mouths of the enemies of religion, and bring it into reputation; if those are the objects of your desire, then remember and perform your vows. Alas! Can you bear the thought of returning again to folly, and undoing all that you have done? How melancholy is the prospect, that probably before the next sacrament some of you will expose yourselves to the rod of church-discipline by your misconduct? To avoid this, take the following directions; “Be not high-minded, but fear.” Rom. 11:20. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” 1 Cor. 10:12. Always be upon your watch, and retain a deep sense of your weakness, and exposedness to temptation; be sensible of your dependence upon God; look and pray to him for strength; and trust not in yourselves, or you are gone. Endeavour to maintain a lively sense of religion upon your spirits; and for this purpose, make it a matter of conscience to attend upon all the means of grace, and let no opportunity, whether public or private, pass by without improvement. Alas! The negligence and laziness of Christians in hearing the word, in reading, prayer, and meditation, is the occasion of their cooling in religion; and then

they are perpetually liable to stumble and fall. Take a proper care of your temporal affairs; and make not religion an excuse for idleness. But oh! Mind the one thing needful above all; and let not this insinuating world get uppermost in your hearts.

My brethren, I should call this a happy spot, if all of you, who were communicants last Lord's day, should behave as Christians for the future, and at last all meet at a table of nobler entertainment in heaven. But alas! If there was a Judas in the select society of the twelve apostles, how many Judases must we suppose are to be found among the sixteen times twelve communicants in this congregation? May not the thought awaken our suspicion, and set us upon inquiring, "Lord, is it I?" Matt, 26:22. However, I would make your engagements as binding as possible; and therefore I must tell you, that, however you behave, "you are witnesses against yourselves, that you have chosen the Lord to serve him— Which leads me,

Secondly, To inquire how and when, or in what respects, and at what periods of time, we are witnesses against ourselves that we have chosen the Lord to serve him.

Joshua, in appealing to the Israelites as witnesses against themselves, in this case, might mean, that as everyone was conscious of his own transaction, he himself was a witness against himself, if he should prove treacherous in his engagements; or, that as they had observed the transactions of each other, they would each of them be witnesses against one another; and that both in the present and future world. In both of these senses, I intend to consider the subject.

First, You yourselves are witnesses against yourselves, that you have chosen the Lord to be your God. You know and confess that you have been dedicated to God in baptism; and some of you know, it was your own act

and deed, when capable of choosing for yourselves. You also know in your own consciences, you were last Sunday, and at other times, at the table of the Lord; and there you renewed your covenant with God afresh; and with the memorials of a crucified Savior in your hands, made the most solemn vows, that you would serve the Lord for the future. Are not your consciences witness to these transactions? You may try to suppress the evidence by violence or bribery; but I am apt to think, you will find it difficult, with all your art, to keep them entirely silent. When they catch you in an act of sin, or in the neglect of duty, they will whisper within, “Remember, man, thou wast baptized; remember, thou hast been at the table of the Lord. Thou hast had such transactions with God, as promised better things. And is this the result? Is it thus thou performest thy obligations? Is this the baptized Christian? Is this the communicant?” And hereupon, your consciences will bring you in guilty of perjury, and forebode the judgments of God coming upon you. Thus you are not likely to enjoy even the sordid pleasure of sin, without molestation. You have a witness within that remonstrates against your conduct. You will be self-condemned, condemned by yourselves, when you are both judge and party; and who can then acquit you? Methinks, whenever you see a child presented to baptism, it may strike you with a sense of guilt; “Thus,” you may say, “in this manner was I devoted to God; but how treacherously have I revolted from him!” Methinks, the remembrance of the table of the Lord may perpetually haunt you while you are walking in the ways of sin. But though you may be able to manage your consciences, so that they may not afford you much uneasiness, while in this world, yet they will speak—they will speak plain and bold—they will speak home to your hearts, in that dread, eternal world, to which you are hastening. There, these suppressed evidences will have



fair play. Then no charge will be brought against you by your Judge, but your consciences will re-echo, “Guilty! Guilty!” And thus, you will consume away an eternity in accusing and condemning yourselves. Oh! Impenitent sinners, how will you long for a lethe—a river of oblivion, when shut up in the belly of hell, that you might drink, and forget that ever you had a drop of baptismal water upon you, or that ever you sat in the posture of a communicant at the sacred table? But, alas! Conscience will keep the painful remembrance fresh in your mind forever. Conscience will then upbraid, “you that are now the prey of devils, and the fuel of infernal flames, were once devoted to God. You that are now the companions of damned ghosts, were once among the saints, and wore the badge of the disciples of Christ. But you were insincere and treacherous in all this; and now your privileges are become your curses. You sunk into hell, as it were, with the water of baptism upon your flesh, with the sacred bread and wine, the emblems of a crucified Savior, in your hands, and with the mark of Christians upon you.” Oh! What scope for tormenting self-reflections is here! Oh! How cutting will these reviews be! Reviews of transactions passed millions of millions of ages ago. This, sirs, will be the consequence, if you fall from your sacramental engagements; you will be your own accusers, and your own tormentors. Therefore, now beware of so dreadful a doom.

Secondly, You are witnesses against one another, that you have chosen the Lord to serve him. You have seen the transactions that have passed between God and you in this house; you have seen some baptized themselves; some presenting their children to baptism, and so renewing their own covenant with God; some sealing their religious engagements at the Lord’s table. These things we can witness against one another, neighbor against neighbor,

parents against children, children against parents, brothers against brothers, friend against friend, husband against wife, and wife against husband. If we see or hear of any of you falling into immoralities, or neglecting the duties of religion and virtue, we can witness, that you promised better things. If any of you who have enjoyed the privilege of baptism among us for your children, still live in the neglect of family religion, here is a numerous crowd of witnesses, to testify that you are perjured; for we heard you solemnly promise it. One would think, the very sight of one another, should make you ashamed, and afraid to offend. You would not willingly be known and marked for a perfidious, dishonest villain in civil affairs; and will you be guilty of perfidy towards God and his church, without shame or remorse? My brethren, you are too far and too publicly engaged to be religious, to be capable now of deserting with honor and integrity. Therefore, let those who were witnesses of your vows, be also the witnesses of your performance of them. Now “Pay your vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.” Ps. 22:25. Whenever you see this place, methinks you may cry out with Jacob, “O how dreadful is this place! This is no other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” Gen. 28:17. Let the sight of your minister, and every one that has been witness to your transactions with God strike you with the remembrance of your duty, and excite you to perform it: and thus be silent, but powerful monitors to each other, and derive advantage even from the sight of one another.

But our intercourse with one another in this world will soon be over, and we must be parted, and pass solitary through the valley of the shadow of death, friendless and companionless. And can we then be witnesses against each other beyond the present state? Yes, my brethren, we must all meet in the region of spirits: we must all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ: and

there especially we shall be witnesses against each other. To realize this awful interview, let us suppose (what I am afraid will be the case in fact,) that some of you who have been baptized in infancy, will then be found on the left hand of the Judge, and be accused of violating the covenant of your God: suppose the witnesses are called to prove the charge, (for, as the process will be intended, not for the information of the omniscient Judge, but to convince the world, who can judge only by apparent evidence of the justice of the doom, this supposition may be matter of fact,) your father, mother, or sureties, (as many of my hearers were baptized in the church of England, I mention sureties on purpose for their conviction,) will stand forth, and witness, “Lord, though this be our child, yet we must bear testimony against him, that we did devote him to thee in baptism; and he who now stands among the trembling criminals on thy left hand, was once introduced into thy church, and had thy holy name called upon him.” Then those that were spectators of the transaction, will stand forth and declare, “Lord, all this is true; we ourselves saw him solemnly devoted to thy service.” Then the minister will declare, “Lord, with this hand I baptized him in thy name; and I once had some hopes he would have made a useful member of thy church; but now I see he is a condemned, lost outcast.”

Or suppose some of you negroes, who have been baptized upon your profession of faith for yourselves, accused of having once engaged yourselves to the service of God, and afterwards forsaking it; and witnesses are called to prove the fact; this whole congregation may rise up and declare with one mouth, “Lord, we heard him with our own ears profess, that he renounced all his sins, and gave up himself to thee to be thy servant forever.” And your minister must also witness, “Lord, he declared to me in private, that he did really repent of all his sins, that he did believe in thee

with all his heart, and that he was heartily willing and desirous to be thy servant forever. This, Lord, I had from his own mouth. Had he not made this profession, I would not have admitted him to thine ordinance. But as I could not judge of the sincerity of his heart, but by his declaration, I was obliged to admit him: and he renewed the same declaration publicly in the presence of thy people: and we, who could only judge by outward profession, hoped he was sincere. But how sadly are we disappointed.”

Or, suppose some of you who entered into a covenant with God last Lord’s day, should then be found workers of iniquity, what a crowd of witnesses will rise up against you to prove that you have voluntarily promised better things? One can witness, “Lord, I saw him at thy table!” Another, “Lord, he sat next to me on the same seat!” And your poor minister, “Lord, he received the elements from my hands: Lord, I conversed with him privately; and he told me, that as far as he knew his own heart, he was sincerely penitent for his sins, heartily willing to be thy servant forever, and resolved to live a life of holiness for the time to come. This he professed to me, and as I could only judge of outward profession, I was obliged to receive him among the number of thy people.” In short, sinners, you cannot possibly escape: judgment will pass against you, and that with the clearest evidence. God the Father will condemn you; Jesus, the only advocate for sinners, will condemn you: your nearest relations and friends will condemn you; the whole universe will condemn you; you will condemn one another: nay, you will condemn yourselves; your own consciences will cry out, “O Lord, thou hast judged righteously; for all these charges are true: I can neither deny nor excuse them!” Evidences will then crowd in against you from every quarter. The three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, will witness against you. The elect

angels, that are performing their ministry invisibly in the assemblies of the saints, will witness to the transactions that they saw you engaged in. And may not the sundry ministers that have labored among you, shake off the dust of their feet, as a witness against you. Matt. 10:14. May they not shake their garments and say, “Your blood be upon your own heads; we are clean?” Acts 18:6. Nay, the heavens shall reveal your iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against you. Job. 20:27. The rust of your “gold and silver, for which you exchanged your souls, shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. James 5:3. The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Hab. 2:11. And (if I may use the bold figure of Joshua, in the conclusion of his last address) behold these pews, these pillars, and this pulpit, shall be a witness against you: for they have heard all the words of the Lord; therefore these shall be a witness against you, if you forsake the Lord your God. Aly brethren, I hope I can say, I discharge those duties of my office, which belong to the present state, with some degree of cheerfulness among you. But there is an office, which some of you, I am afraid, will oblige me to perform at the tribunal of the supreme Judge, the very prospect of which may make me shudder: and that is, to be a swift witness against you. All this praying, and hearing, and baptizing, and communicating, will not be forgotten, as soon as performed: no, the matter will have a re-hearing in the other world. And oh! Endeavor, my dear people, endeavor so to improve my labors among you, that I may give in my testimony with joy. Let me read the apostle’s advice in this case, Heb. 13:17: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.”

# *SERM. LXXI. THE GUILT AND DOOM OF IMPENITENT HEARERS.*

**M**atthew 13:14.— *By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.*

This is a tremendous threatening of long standing, first denounced by Jehovah himself in the days of Isaiah, and frequently cited by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, as being still in force, and capable of application to various periods of the world. It is a threatening from God, not that he would recall the commission of his ministers, or remove them, but that he would give them a commission in wrath, and continue their ministry, as a judgment upon their hearers. It is a threatening not of the loss of the means of salvation, but of their being continued as the occasions of more aggravated guilt and punishment: a threatening to those that have abused the means of grace; not that they shall attend upon them no more, but that they shall attend upon them, but receive no advantage from them: a threatening that they shall hear, that is, that their life and rational powers, the ministry of the word of God, and all things necessary for hearing, shall be continued to them; but by all their hearing they shall not understand;

they shall not receive instructions that will be of any real service to them: they shall not understand anything to a saving purpose. Their knowledge may be increased, and their heads filled with bright notions and speculations; but all their improvements will be of no solid or lasting advantage to them; so that their hearing is equivalent to not hearing, and their understanding to entire ignorance.— “Seeing ye shall see, and not perceive;” you shall have your eyes open, or the usual exercise of your rational powers; and the sacred light of instruction shall shine around you; but even in the midst of light, and with your eyes open, you shall perceive nothing to purpose: the good you see, you will not choose: and the evil and danger you see, you will not shun, but run into it, willingly and obstinately. And certainly such seeing as this does not deserve the name.

The connection in which Christ introduces these words, is this: As he had clothed his discourse in the eastern dress of parables or allegories, his disciples, apprehending that this was not the plainest method of instruction, and that the multitude did not understand him, put this question to him, “Why speakest thou to them in parables?” “He answered and said unto them, because unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given.” This informs us, there is a dreadful distinction made, even in this world, between the hearers of the gospel, though they mingle in the same assembly, hear the same preacher, and seem to stand upon the same footing. Thus the disciples of Christ and the unbelieving crowd were upon a par; but, says Christ, to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, or the glorious doctrines of the gospel; and therefore you will easily perceive them through the veil of parables, which will be an agreeable medium of instruction to you. But to the unbelieving crowd, it is not given to know these mysteries; though they

attend upon my ministry, it is not intended that they should be made wiser or better by it; and therefore, I involve my instructions in the obscurity of parables, on purpose that they may not understand them. Alas! My dear brethren, what if such a distinction should be made between us, who meet together for the worship of God from week to week in this place!

The reason of this distinction will show the justice of it; and that is assigned in the next verse: “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath;” the meaning is, whosoever improves the privileges he hath, shall have these privileges continued to him with a blessed addition— whosoever makes a good use of the means of grace, he shall have grace given him to make a still better use of them. Whosoever has opened his mind to receive the light from past instructions, shall have farther light and farther instructions: to him it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; and they shall be conveyed to him in such forms of instruction as he will be able to understand. “But whosoever hath not,” whosoever makes no more improvement of his privileges, than if he had none given him to improve, from him shall be taken away those neglected privileges. He that has obstinately shut his eyes against the light of instruction in times past, shall be punished with the loss of that light for the future—though the light still continue to shine round him, yet he shall be left in his own chosen darkness, and divine grace will never more open his mind. He is given up as unteachable, though he may still sit in Christ’s school. It is no longer the design of the gospel to show him the way to eternal life, though he may still enjoy the ministry of it: and God in his providence may order things so, as to occasion, though not properly to cause, his continuance in ignorance and infidelity.



Here, by-the-by, I would make a remark to vindicate this dreadful instance of the execution of divine justice, which is more liable to the cavils of human pride and ignorance than perhaps any other. The remark is, that God may justly inflict privative as well as positive punishment upon obstinate sinners; or, in plainer terms, he may with undoubted justice punish them by taking away the blessings they have abused, or rendering those blessings useless to them, as well as by inflicting positive misery upon them. This is a confessed rule of justice; and it holds good as to spirituals as well as temporals. May not God as justly take away his common grace, and deny future assistance, to an obstinate sinner, who has abused it, as deprive him of health or life? Why may he not as justly leave him destitute of the sanctified use of the means of grace he has neglected and unimproved in this world, as of the happiness of heaven, in the world to come? This is certainly a righteous punishment: and there is also a propriety and congruity in it: it is proper and congruous that the lovers of darkness should not have the light obtruded upon them; that the despisers of instruction, should receive no benefit from it; that those who improve not what they have, should have no more, but should lose even what they have. Thus their own choice is made their curse, and their sin their punishment. But to return.

“Therefore,” says Jesus, “I speak to them in parables;” therefore, that is, acting upon the maxim I have just laid down, that those who abuse the light they have, shall have no more, I speak to them on purpose in this mystical form, that they may still remain in darkness, while I am communicating instruction to my teachable disciples: “because they seeing, see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand;” because, though they have the exercise of their senses and intellectual powers, and have enjoyed my instructions so frequently, they still obstinately persist in ignorance and

infidelity; and in that, let them continue: it is no longer the design of my ministry to teach to convert them.

“And in them,” says he, “is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, by hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive.” And then follow the reasons of this tremendous judgment: “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them:” they seem afraid of their own conversion, and therefore do all they can to prevent the efficacy of the means of grace upon them. Such must be given up as desperate; and though they may still live among the means of grace, it is no longer the design of them to be of any service to them.

You see, as I observed at first, this is a denunciation of long standing—about two thousand five hundred years old. It was accomplished in Isaiah’s time, when God looked out for a messenger to send to the Jews, not to convert them, but to leave them inexcusable in their impenitence, and so aggravate their guilt and punishment. “Whom shall I send?” says Jehovah; “and who will go for us?” Isaiah 6:8. As if he had said, I do not intend to deprive this obstinate people of the ministry of my servants, but am about to send them another: and where shall I find one that will accept so thankless and fruitless an office? Isaiah offers his service as a volunteer: “Here am I, says he, send me.” And then his commission is made out in these terrible terms, expressive rather of the office of an executioner than of a messenger of peace: “Go, and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear

with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” About seven hundred years after, we find this denunciation applied to the Jews by Jesus himself in my text. It was applied to the same people sometime after by the evangelist, John, chap. 12:39,40: “Therefore they could not believe,” says he, “because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” Some years after, it was applied by St. Paul to the unbelieving Jews in Rome; upon his preaching the gospel to them, “Some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not:” and with respect to the latter he says, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.” Acts 28:24-27.

Thus we can trace the accomplishment of this old denunciation in various periods. And is it antiquated and without force in our age? May it not reach to Virginia and Hanover, as well as to Judea and Jerusalem? Yes, my brethren, if the sin of the Jews be found among us, that is, the abuse of the means of instruction, then the curse of the Jews lies in full force against us. The ministry of the word may be continued among us, but many that attend upon it, may not receive any advantage from it; nay, their advantage may not be so much as attended by its continuance among them, but rather the aggravation of their sin and ruin. A dreadful thought! Which I would willingly avoid, but some late occurrences have forced it upon my mind: and since I cannot exclude it, I will endeavor to make the best use of it for your warning.

After some weeks of anxious perplexity, unknown before: and after using all the means in my power to discover my duty with all the impartiality I

was capable of, I came at length to a determination to send a final absolute refusal to the repeated application of the trustees of the college of New Jersey. Had interest been my motive, I should undoubtedly have preferred two hundred a year, before a scanty hundred. Had honor been my motive, I should have chose to have sat in the president's chair in Nassau Hall,' rather than continued a despised and calumniated new-light parson in Virginia. Or had ease been my motive, I should have preferred a college life, before that of a hurried, fatigued itinerant. But you that have known me for so many years, I dare affirm, do not need this new evidence to convince you that these are not the governing motives of my behavior: and for those who are determined at all adventures not to think well of a Presbyterian, the most conspicuous disinterestedness and integrity of conduct will not be free from their malignant censures and constructions; and it is likely to be an article of their creed, living and dying, that I am not an honest man, but a designing, artful impostor.

And now, my dear people, as far as I know or expect, we shall live and die together: and if I may judge of you by what I feel myself, the shock we have received, will unite us the closer together for the future. The warm opposition you made to my removal, was indeed somewhat surprising to me: for I did not imagine I appeared of so much importance to any society upon earth, as I found I did to you: and though no man can well be offended with so generous an error as the excess of love, yet I must tell my dear friends, that I hope religion in this place is supported by a stronger pillar than such a feeble mortal as I: otherwise, it is a very sorry religion indeed. The eternal God, the rock of ages, is the foundation that supports it: and we should always remember, even in the ardor of friendship, that he is a jealous God; jealous of his honor, and warmly resents it, when any of his poor

servants are made the idols of his people, and draw off their regard from him. And I am afraid, some of you are in danger of this idolatry. I have indeed been shocked at the high character I have heard of myself on this occasion. What am I at best, but an unworthy minister of Christ, by whom some of you have believed? I have planted and watered the word among you: but God alone gave the increase. “So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” 1 Cor. 3:6,7. He is all in all; and let none of his creatures be complimented as his rival, lest he degrade the idol, and render it despicable in the eyes of all. “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?” Isa. 2:22. But to return,

It is likely I shall live and die with you, my dear people. And I cannot but hope, some of you will flourish in the courts of the Lord, and bring forth the fruits of holiness, even under the cultivations of so unskillful a hand as mine—that you will understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, though you should have no better teacher than I: for blessed are your eyes for they see; and blessed are your ears for they hear. Matt. 13:16. Having presided in the worship of God among you, in the church upon earth, I shall, if the fault does not lie on my side, join your glorious concert in heaven, and bear some humble part in the more exalted worship of the church triumphant in glory. Well, my brethren, let us help one another by our mutual prayers, and all the assistance we can give each other: let us go on unanimously like fellow-pilgrims, through the wilderness, like fellow-candidates for the same glory, and fellow-heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light. The wilderness does not extend very far before us. May you not ken Immanuel’s land, even from where you now stand? A few weary steps more, and our pilgrimage will end in everlasting rest. Our fellow-

pilgrims are dropping off one after another every year; and some of them have got the start of us within a few weeks past. Well, we shall soon overtake them; and in a little time the hindmost in the procession will get safe through the wilderness. All hail! To this class of my hearers. But my present discourse is intended for persons of a different character; and therefore you must not expect to hear anything more addressed to you to-day.

As to those, to whom my labors for above ten years have been of no real service for their conversion to God; I must own I have very discouraging thoughts of them. It is most likely, either that God will let them alone, and suffer them to run on into the burning; or that he will make use of some other hand to pluck them out. All the means that I can use with them have been so often tried in vain, that there is but little reason to hope, they will ever have any efficacy upon them. Yet I must not entirely despair even of these: I have some little hope, sinners, that the happy time is coming, when some word spoke by that feeble breath, which has hitherto only reached your ears, will be enforced with almighty power upon our hearts, and bring you to the knee as brokenhearted penitents before God. I cannot part with the little hope I have, that we shall yet see a day of the Son of Man in this place; and then the old gospel, even from the lips of your usual minister, will be quite a new thing— then the hardest sinner among you will not be able to resist it with so much ease as he does now; but will be constrained to yield to its power, and be made a willing captive to the obedience of faith. Who could live without some little hope of this kind? For can any of you bear the thought, that not only veteran sinners should persist in their obstinacy, and perish, but that a new set of immortals, I mean the crowds of youth and children among us, should grow up, and never see a day of divine

power and grace? Alas! If this should be the case, they will only grow up in guilt, and ripen for punishment; and the little religion that is to be found among us, will die away with its present subjects. Let us therefore not only wish and pray for such a visitation from on high, but also let us humbly hope for it. We indeed do not deserve it: but oh! God is merciful and gracious; and whenever he has bestowed this favor, it has always been upon the undeserving. If such a happy period should come, before my eyes are shut in death, I should have my hands full of business once more—business of the most agreeable and benevolent kind—directing broken-hearted, trembling, desponding sinners to the all-sufficient Savior, Jesus Christ; after whom but very few are now inquiring, as if he were antiquated, or become a superfluity.

But whatever hopes I entertain of this nature, I cannot but fear that my ministry will continue useless to some of you. I am afraid some of you will still have your usual opportunities of attending upon it, without receiving any real benefit from it: or, “that hearing, you shall hear, and not understand: and seeing, you shall see, and not perceive.” I know no better method to guard you against this danger, than to warn you of it in time; and this is my principal design at present. For this purpose,

I shall mention the presages and symptoms of the approach of this tremendous judgment—the judgment of having the ministry of the gospel continued, not as the mean of salvation but as the occasion of more aggravated sin and punishment.

Now the presages and symptoms of the approach of such a judgment, are such as these—The abuse or neglect of the ministry of the gospel in time past—Incorrigible obstinacy under chastisements—Growing insensibility, or hardness of heart—Repeated violences to the motions of the Holy Spirit,

and convictions of conscience, or obstinate sinning against knowledge—The withdrawing of divine influences—And, as the consequence of all, a general decay of religion. In the first place,

One constant presage of this judgment is, the abuse or neglect of the ministry of the gospel in time past.

This is implied, as you have seen, in the maxim on which divine justice proceeds in the infliction of this judgment, namely, that “from him that hath not,”—who improves not what he hath, “shall be taken away, even that which he hath.” Mark 4:25. This was the character of the Jews, against whom this judgment was denounced: they had long enjoyed the ministry of the prophets, of Christ and his apostles; but had hardened themselves against the good effects of it, and continued unreformed and impenitent. In short, all the judgments of God of every sort are inflicted upon mankind only for their sin; and consequently this judgment in particular proceeds from this cause. But then it must be remembered, that this particular judgment is not inflicted for every sin: for who then can escape? But for one particular kind of sin, the neglect or non-improvement of the means of grace, and particularly the ministry of the gospel. It is because men have heard so often without advantage, that they are condemned to hear without understanding. It is because they have had the use of their eyes, and the light of divine instruction shining around them, a long time, without their becoming wiser or better, that they are doomed to see and not perceive. This in particular, and not their sins in general, is the cause of this tremendous curse.

And is there no such thing as this to be found among us? Have not some of you been favored with the means of grace for a length of years, yet you are still unconverted, ignorant, and impenitent? Do not your consciences



tell you that you still persist in the neglect of those duties, of which you have been convinced, and to which you have been persuaded a thousand times? And do you not still indulge some favorite sin, though you have been warned, reproved, dissuaded, and reasoned with for years together? What repeated, lively representations have you had of divine things? And yet are you not still unaffected with them? All that you have heard of the evil and danger of sin, has not turned you from it, nor struck you with a just abhorrence of it. All that you have heard of the reasonableness, obligation, happiness and blessed consequences of a life of religion, has not turned you to it; but you act as if you were afraid you should be converted, and God should hear you. The very means which have broken the hearts of others into ingenuous repentance, you have had as well as they; and yet your hearts are hard and insensible; nay, are they not growing harder and harder every day? The discoveries of Jesus Christ made in the gospel have attracted the love of thousands to him: and the very same discoveries have been exhibited to you, and yet you remain thoughtless of him and disaffected to him.

To be a little more particular: you have had sufficient means to convince you of the duty of family religion; of the evil of drunkenness, lying, Sabbath-breaking, covetousness, pride, carnal security, indifferency in religion; of the depravity of your nature; and the absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ for your justification, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit for your sanctification, and yet these means have had no suitable effect upon you. And have you not then reason to fear that this judgment hangs over your heads, “that hearing, you shall hear, and not understand; and seeing, you shall see, and not perceive?” Perhaps the judgment, near as it is, may be averted, if you take warning: and now begin

with all your might to improve the means of grace. But, oh! If you delay, and trifle on, the curse may light upon you and never be removed: and then you are as certainly and irrecoverably undone, as if the gates of eternal despair were now shut upon you.

Secondly, incorrigible obstinacy under the chastisements of the divine hand, is another dreadful presage of the approach of this judgment.

The various afflictions, public, domestic, and personal, with which our heavenly Father chastises the sons of men, are excellent means of repentance and reformation: and they have often effect upon those, with whom all other means had been used in vain. But when even these wholesome severities, which, one would think, would awaken the most secure to some sensibility, are obstinately disregarded, and men sin on still, even under the angry hand of God, lifted up to smite them, it argues an incorrigible hardness of heart; and they incur the same curse with those that misimprove the ministry of the gospel. The affliction may be removed; but it may be removed in judgment; as a father gives over correcting an incorrigible child, and leaves him to himself. But, oh! How much better to lie under the rod, than to be given up as desperate, and for that reason dismissed from the discipline of our heavenly Father!

I need not tell you, my brethren, that we have of late years been under the chastisements of heaven of various kinds. You all know, we live in a country ravaged by a savage war; the seasons of the year have been unfavorable to the fruits of the earth: and contagious and deadly diseases have raged with unusual violence in our neighborhood, and made painful breaches in some of our families. But who has been awakened, who has been reformed, who has been converted to God, by all these chastisements? If you know any, they are certainly very few. If this then be a prognostic of

the impending judgment threatened in my text, is there not reason to fear that it is ready to fall upon some of us? God may say of such, Let them alone; why should they be stricken any more. Isaiah 1:5. Or he may continue afflictions as the executioners of his vengeance, while he denies his sanctifying blessing to them, and no more afflicts by way of fatherly chastisement for our amendment.

Growing insensibility or hardness of heart, is, thirdly, a most threatening presage of the near approach of this awful judgment.

This indeed is the very beginning of the judgment, and the first perceivable effect of it; and as the sinner improves in hardness of heart, this curse falls heavier and heavier upon him, and is the cause of this horrid improvement. Hence you find in Scripture, a hard heart, a stiff neck, a reprobate mind, a seared conscience, a soul past feeling, are mentioned as the dreadful characteristics of a soul judicially given up of God.

And is every heart among us free from this alarming symptom? Can every one among us say, “I am as easily and deeply affected with eternal things, and the ministry of the gospel has as much effect upon me now, as it had five or ten years ago?” Alas! Must not some of you say, on the other hand, “Once I remember I was deeply concerned about my everlasting state; some years ago I was alarmed with a sense of my sin and danger, and earnestly used my utmost endeavors to obtain an interest in the Savior; but now it is all over; now lie I secure and unconcerned, except that now and then I am involuntarily seized with pangs of despairing horror, which wear off, without any good effect. But though I am now so easy and careless, I cannot pretend that my state is really more safe now, than it was when I was so anxiously concerned about it.” May not this be the language of some of you? If so, I must honestly tell you, you are near unto cursing. Your hearts

are waxen fat, and your ears dull of hearing: and therefore you have great reason to fear the dreadful God, whose grace and patience you have so long ungratefully abused, is about to pronounce the sentence upon you, "Hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive;" you shall enjoy the means of grace, as usual, but you shall receive no advantage from them. Must not your hearts meditate terror, while this heavy curse hangs over you? And will you not fly from it, and use all means possible to escape?

Fourthly, Repeated violences to the Spirit of God, and your own consciences, or an obstinate continuance in sin against knowledge, is an alarming symptom of the approach of this judgment.

Though a distinction may be made in some instances between those restraints and good tendencies which proceed from the Spirit of God, and those which proceed from your own consciences, it is not to my present purpose to make the distinction. They both tend to restrain you from sin, and excite you to a religious life; and therefore their tendency is the same. And I doubt not but the Spirit of God and your own consciences have repeatedly striven even with the most hardened sinner among you; and it has often cost you violent struggling to make effectual resistance. Have you not had some thoughtful, pensive, solemn, intervals, notwithstanding all your preposterous endeavors to live a life of dissipation, and to continue in your thoughtless career? Have you not had strong convictions of your guilt and danger, and the necessity of a new heart and a new life, and dismal misgivings and forebodings of heart, as to the consequences of your present conduct? Have you not, in these solemn moments formed many good resolutions and vows, and determined you would live no longer as you have done? Have you not found yourselves, as it were, weary and surfeited with

a course of sin, and your desires going out after Christ? Has not some sermon, or passage of Scripture, or alarming providence, roused you for a while out of your security, and had a strange, irresistible force upon your hearts? Well, in such seasons as these, the Holy Spirit, and your own consciences were striving with you; and had you cherished these sacred motions, you might ere now have been sincere converts and heirs of heaven. But alas! Have you not rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit, and done violence to your own consciences? Have you not talked, or laughed, or trifled, or labored away these thoughtful hours, and done your utmost to recover your stupid security again? Alas! In so doing, you trod in the very steps of those desperate sinners, who have been abandoned of God, and sealed up under his irrevocable curse. Many indeed, who have done this, have at length been subdued by the power of God, and happily constrained to forego all their resistance; but oh! This has not been the blessed end of all, who have thus fought against God; no, many of them have been given up, and allowed to gain a victory ruinous to themselves. Therefore, as you have reason to hope, you have also reason to fear; and you have undoubtedly good reason to give over your resistance, and submit to God and conscience, lest he abandon you to yourselves. And then, though you may still enjoy the gospel and its ordinances, they will be of no service to you; nay, this will not be the end God has in view in continuing these privileges; his design is the benefit of others, who mingle with you in the same assembly, and enjoy these means in common with you. They may be converted, and healed by them: But as for you, “hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive;” and this will be your condemnation, that light is come into the world, and you have loved darkness rather than light. John 3:19.

Under this head I must add, that every instance of willful sinning against knowledge is the most dangerous and provoking manner of sinning. The language of such a practice is, “Lord, I know this is displeasing to thee; and yet I will do it.” What insufferable insolence is this in a worm of the earth! How provoking must it be to the supreme majesty! And what ravages must it make in the conscience! The wretch that can venture upon this, may venture upon anything. Surely such a course of willful sinning against knowledge, must expose the daring sinner to the heaviest judgment of heaven. And according to the course of nature, it tends to harden him in impenitence; for the only way in which a sinner may be wrought upon for his conversion, is by letting him know his duty: but when he puts this knowledge at defiance, and obstinately does his pleasure in spite of it, what service can instruction do to him? What benefit can he receive from the ministry of the gospel? It is time such a one should be left “to hear, and not understand; and to see, and not perceive.” Indeed, this is in a great measure his character already. He runs into ruin with his eyes open, and wittingly rejects the means of his salvation.

Fifthly, the withdrawing of Divine influence, is a dismal symptom of this judgment.

Whatever proud and self-conceited notions men entertain of their sufficiency for the purposes of religion, it is a certain truth, confirmed both by the testimony of Scripture, and the experience of near six thousand years, that the blessed Spirit of God is the sole author of all that little religion that has been among men in every age: and when he withdraws then religion withers, like the fruits of the earth without sun and rain. It is also evident, both from Scripture, and the history of the church, that there are certain seasons, in which the Spirit is plentifully poured out; and then

multitudes of sinners, that had sat under the gospel unmoved from year to year, are converted; and religion wears another aspect, in a country, or a congregation, according to the extent of the showers of Divine influences. Then the case of sinners is hopeful; and it is a blessing to be born in such a day of the Son of man; for God works effectually within; and there are many peculiar helps and advantages for conversion without; then ministers preach, and Christians pray, converse, and do everything in another manner—a manner peculiarly adapted to strike conviction, to lead the convinced to Christ, and to bring down blessings upon the world. But when the abuse of so great a blessing provokes a jealous God to withdraw his influences, then the affairs of religion put on another face: offences happen; a spirit of contention begins to rise; sinners grow insolent; the gospel loses its force upon the consciences of men; ministers grow languid and faint-hearted, and though their compositions may be even more judicious and masterly, than when they had more effect, yet the spirit, the life, the energy, the unknown something that gave them their irresistible efficacy, is wanting. But few sinners are awakened; and the impressions of such are superficial, and they seem to halt, and make but slow progress, in returning to God; and as to the crowd of sinners, they go on careless, unawakened and unreformed under the preaching of the gospel, and harden themselves more against it. It is comparatively an easy thing for them to keep down their conscience, to resist the Spirit, and to sin away the week, though they have heard the gospel on Sunday. Now, in such a season, the case of sinners is very discouraging: there is but a very dull chance, if I may so speak, for their conversion. They may “hear indeed, but they do not understand: they may see indeed, but not perceive.” And from the brief description I have given you of such a season, have you not reason to fear, that it is your lot to live in

such a time—a time when the blessed Spirit, that has long been striving with Hanover, has, in a great measure left it. And if he has left it, you may be sure he has left it in displeasure, and in judgment: he has left it because he has been ill-treated, and could bear it no longer. And he is gone! Then the glory is departed! 1 Sam. 4:22. You may still have your favorite minister; you may still have sermons, and all the ordinances of the gospel: but alas! “hearing you shall hear, and not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive:” and the very means that ripen others for heaven, will only cause you to rot and putrefy, till you drop, as it were by your own weight into hell.

When the Spirit is withdrawn, it is not only a sign that the judgment threatened in my text is near, but that it is actually executed: for the absence of the Spirit is the great reason why sinners attend upon the ministry of the gospel without any real advantage. The curse is actually fallen: but oh! I hope it may be removed, at least, from some of you: and now is the time for you to make the trial.

Lastly, A general decay of religion is a symptom, and indeed a part of this judgment.

This is the consequence of the foregoing 'particulars: and when this is the case, it is evident the judgment has fallen upon some, and is likely to fall upon many. When a people enjoy the ministry of the gospel, and yet religion does not gain ground, but declines, then it is evident, some “hearing, hear not, and seeing, see not.”

And I leave you to judge, whether this alarming symptom be not upon us. Religion is evidently declining amongst us in some instances: and how little ground does it gain in others?



To conclude: Let such of you as have reason to apprehend, that you are “near unto cursing,” (Heb. 6:8,) pay a proper regard to this consideration, that if it be possible to escape it, now is the most likely time you will ever see: and the longer you delay, the greater will be your danger. Therefore now endeavor with all your might, to hear to purpose, when you do hear; and see to advantage when you do see. “Behold, now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation.” 2 Cor. 6:2.

# *SERM. LXXXII. THE APOSTOLIC VALEDICTION CONSIDERED AND APPLIED.*

**2** Cor. 13:11.— *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

Farewell, especially a final farewell among brethren is a very melancholy word, the language of bereaved love. And little did I once think I should ever have occasion to pronounce this doleful sound in the ears of my dear congregation in Hanover, with whom I fully expected to live and die. Both my first settlement here and my final removal were altogether unexpected. A few weeks before I made my first visit to Hanover I had no more thoughts of it as my pastoral charge, than of the remotest corner of the world; but was preparing to settle in ease near my native place, till the more urgent necessity and importunity of the people here, constrained me to alter my resolution. It is known to no mortal but myself with what reluctance, fear, and trembling, I accepted your call. The rawness and inexperience of my youth, and the formidable opposition then made both by church and

state, when a dissenter was stared at with horror, as a shocking and portentous phenomenon, were no small discouragements in my way. For some years I durst hardly venture to appear but in the pulpit, or in my study; lest, by a promiscuous conversation with the world at large, I should injure the cause of religion, by some instance of unguarded conduct. In short, my self-diffidence rose so high, that I often thought I had done a great exploit, when I had done no harm to this important interest, which I had a sincere desire, though but little ability, to promote. But having obtained help of God, I continue to this day. And I am not ashamed publicly to own these early discouragements, that if I have done the least good to any of you, God may have all the glory, who has bestowed so unmerited an honor upon the unworthiest of his servants, and made use of such clay to open the eyes of the blind; and that I may remove the despondency, into which some of you have sunk, of ever finding your present loss repaired in my successor.

But when, after many an anxious conflict, I accepted your call, I fully expected I was settled among you for life. I did not foresee, nor seek for, nor even desire an occasion to remove, notwithstanding the various difficulties attending my situation: and whatever advantageous offers have been made to me on either side the Atlantic, have not had the force of temptations. It was in my heart to live and die with you: and such of you as best know my circumstances, and how little I shall carry from Virginia after eleven years' labor in it, must be convinced in your own conscience, and can assure others, that worldly interest was not the reason of my attachment. I hope I understand my office better than to make a money-business of it, or a trade to acquire an estate. Or if this had been my design, I would have chosen some other place than Hanover to carry on the trade. This, such of you as have been most generous to me, and to whom I shall be

always grateful, have often professed yourselves sensible of, with more friendly anxiety than I could have expected or desired.

To satisfy you of the reason of my present removal, I will give you a brief impartial account of the whole affair.

The college of New Jersey, though an infant institution, is of the utmost importance to the interests of religion and learning in several extensive and populous colonies. From it both church and state expect to be supplied with persons properly qualified for public stations; and it has already been very useful to both in this respect. Before the irreparable breach made in it, by the death of that excellent man, President Burr, its members were increased to near a hundred; and there was no small prospects of considerable additions every year. But alas! President Burr, its father, is no more. Upon his removal, the trustees made choice of the Rev. Mr. Edwards to succeed him, the profoundest reasoner, and the greatest divine, in my opinion, that America ever produced. His advancement to the place, gave the public sanguine expectations of the future fame and prosperity of the college. But alas! How short is human foresight! How uncertain and blind are the highest expectations of mortals! He was seated in the president's chair but a few days, when he was taken sick and died, and left a bereaved society to lament the loss, and pine away under it. An earthquake spread a tremor through a great part of our solid continent on that melancholy day in which he died; but how much more did Nassau Hall tremble, when this pillar fell! Some of the trustees, to my great surprise, had some thoughts of me, upon the first vacancy that happened. But knowing the difficulty of my removal, and being very unwilling to bereave my congregation, they made an attempt, upon President Edwards's death to furnish the college with another; and therefore chose the Rev. Mr. Lockwood, a gentleman of a worthy

character in New England. But being disappointed as to him, they elected me on the 16th of last August, and were at the trouble and expense of sending two messengers to solicit the affair with me and the presbytery. I can honestly say, never did anything cast me into such anxious perplexities. Never did I feel myself so much in need of divine direction, and so destitute of it. My difficulty was not to find out my own inclination which was, pre-engaged to Hanover, but the path of duty; and the fear of mistaking it, in so important a turn of life, kept me uneasy night and day. I submitted the matter to the presbytery, and gave them an honest representation of it, as far as it was known to me. As I was at an entire loss in my own mind to discover my duty, I could not, upon the authority of my own judgment, approve or reject their decision; but I cheerfully acquiesced in it, and sent it, with my own negative answer to the board of trustees, and expected never to hear any more about it. But the trustees, to my still greater surprise, made a second application, requesting I would act as vice-president during the winter, till the synod should sit, when the judgment of the presbytery might be referred to that higher judicature. After making all the inquiries in my power to discover what was my duty in so perplexing a case, I thought I had certainly found out the will of God, and returned an absolute refusal in the strongest terms: transferring all my interest at the board to another gentleman, whom I looked upon as incomparably better qualified for the place, and of whose election I then had considerable hopes. Upon this I was as much settled in Hanover in my own mind as ever; and, as many of you may remember, publicly congratulated you upon the pleasing prospect. But how was I surprised and struck into a consternation, to receive a third application in more importunate terms than ever! This again unsettled my mind, and renewed my perplexities; though I was encouraged to hope, that

when I had so sincerely committed my way unto the Lord, he would direct my path, and order things so, as that the result should discover my duty. This third application, as I informed the trustees in my answer, constrained me only to admit a mere possibility of its being my duty to comply; but my mind was still almost established in the contrary persuasion. It constrained me only to lay myself open to conviction, and no longer shut up the avenues of light; and therefore I came to this conclusion—To mention at large, all my difficulties and objections—to insist that my first election should be null, because my electors were not then apprised of my objections—and to leave it to the trustees, after hearing all that could be said against it, whether to re-elect me at their next meeting. But even this was not all: I farther insisted, that in case they should re-elect me, it should be referred to the synod of New York and Philadelphia, whether I should accept the place. This is a brief view of my proceedings in the affair: and for fuller intelligence I must refer you to my friends, the elders of this congregation, to whom I have communicated all the letters I have received or written, that they may be able to satisfy you. And I can assure you in their presence, that all of them that heard my answer, expressed their acquiescence in it. The result of the affair, when left upon this footing, has been, that I was re-chosen at the board of trustees by a much greater majority than at first; and that the synod, consisting of an unusual number of ministers from various parts, after hearing at large what could be said upon both sides, not only consented to my acceptance of the proposal, but even dissolved my pastoral relation to my dear charge, and ordered my removal by an almost unanimous vote. This has brought the tedious, anxious affair to a final issue, and disarms all my resistance, so that I can struggle no longer. It was one of my vows, on the solemn day of my ordination, that I would be subject to

my brethren in the Lord, in all things lawful. It is therefore very impertinent to object, that "I might stay after all, if I would." It is true, it is in my power to refuse to comply with my duty, even when it appears: it is in my power to violate my solemn vows, and incur the guilt of perjury by disobedience to my brethren, in that judicature to which I belong: that is, it is in my power, as a free agent, to sin. But this is a preposterous power, which I hope God will enable me never willingly to exercise. Oh that his grace may always happily disable me from disobeying the call of duty.

I am sorry to take up so much of your sacred time in a narrative in which I have so much personal concern, but it is wholly owing to my solicitude to satisfy you as to the reasons of my conduct. For though my dear connections with Virginia are now broken, and my personal interest can receive no advantage or injury from your friendship or resentment, yet, since we must part, I would by all means part in peace, and prevent all unkind and suspicious thoughts of one whom you once tenderly loved, and who will always tenderly love you, wherever he goes, and whatever you think of him. To stop the clamorous mouths of the censorious world, is what I do not at all intend; because I know it is impossible. They will put what construction they please, even upon the most unsuspecting and disinterested actions; and nothing but the approbative sentence of the universal Judge from the supreme tribunal, is likely to silence their calumnies. They will make it an article of their creed, living and dying, that secular advantage is the object I have all along had in view, and in pursuit of which I am now about to remove. But among those whom I had once the pleasure of calling my people, I hope I shall find none of this censorious and malignant turn. I have always found you candid, and ready to err upon the generous extreme

of charity as to your once loved minister; and such I hope to find you at parting.

—At parting!—Alas! And must we part?—My heart fails at the thought. The most endeared friendship I have for you; the affectionate gratitude I feel for you as my benefactors; the anxieties that rush upon my heart, lest when you are, as it were, disbanded, and left as sheep without a shepherd, you should wander, and the little religion that has been among you should die away; my tender sympathy with you under your sorrows and discouragements; the diffidence and horror that seize me at the thought of entering into a sphere of action so arduous and untried, as that to which I am removing; these and a thousand other things render this a very painful and melancholy parting to me. Yet, part we must; therefore, “Finally, my brethren, farewell. Be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” This is St. Paul’s valedictory salutation and advice to the church of Corinth; and I would briefly illustrate the several parts of it, as pertinent to your present circumstances.

First of all, Be perfect: that is, labor after perfection in holiness; cherish every grace and virtue to maturity. Fill up the defects still remaining in your church: restore every disjointed member to its proper place; and correct whatever is amiss.

This advice may refer to the exercise of discipline in the church; as much as to say, “If any offending member has been excluded your communion, and now appears penitent, or if anyone has been unjustly laid under censure, restore him in the spirit of meekness to his former standing in the church, and confirm your love towards him.” In this view, I would



particularly recommend this apostolic advice to the elders of this congregation, whenever an occasion occurs of carrying it into practice.

Or the advice may refer to individuals; and then it is an exhortation to every particular church-member to improve in personal religion; as if he should say, “After all the means of sanctification you have enjoyed, you may still find yourselves deficient in every grace and virtue: therefore aspire and labor after higher attainments. You may still find many things amiss in you; therefore endeavor to reform and rectify them. You may perhaps find yourselves upon the decline in religion; therefore labor to recover what you have lost, and restore what is decaying. Strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die, that your works may be found perfect before God.” Rev. 3:2.

Far be it from me, my brethren, to think that now, when you are deprived of your minister, you may lawfully make a stand in your Christian progress, or allow yourselves to slide down the slippery, descending road of apostacy. You are still obliged to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And you will still enjoy sufficient means for that purpose, notwithstanding your present bereavement. The throne of grace is still accessible: your closets are still open for you; and you may enjoy the sweet privilege of secret devotion. Bibles and an unusual variety of excellent books are still within your reach: and these alone are sufficient to “make you wise unto salvation,” when you have no opportunity of attending upon the public ministry. You may also receive advantage from your occasional attendance upon public worship in the established church: and I hope you will always retain those catholic principles I have endeavored to inculcate upon you, and willingly receive all the spiritual good you can, wherever it may be obtained. I also hope and pray, with

Moses, that “the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, may set a man over this congregation; a man in whom is the Spirit, who may go out and come in before you; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.” Numb, 27:16-18. If you continue your earnest endeavors, and “pray to the Lord of the harvest,” methinks I can assure you, upon the truth of the divine promises, that he will not suffer this spot of his vineyard to run waste, but will send a laborer into it, and leave you no reason to be sorry at the exchange.

The apostle’s second farewell advice is, “Be of good comfort;” that is, take courage and rejoice in the Lord. Be not swallowed up in excessive sorrows: do not despond, whatever gloomy and frowning appearances things may wear as to yourselves, your church, or your country: but maintain a cheerful confidence in God, in the most discouraging circumstances. His fatherly love, his great and precious promises, the faithful care of his providence, the sweet experience which you and his people in all ages have had of his goodness, the privileges and blessings, temporal and spiritual, which he still leaves in your possession, even when he strips you of others; these and a thousand other considerations may support and comfort you: and it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to derive from them that encouragement, they are adapted to afford. It affects me with the tenderest sympathy, my brethren, to see any of you drooping, and sunk into despondency, at the prospect of my departure. But “be of good comfort, and strengthen yourselves in the Lord your God.” If you are the children of his grace, “though your father and your mother forsake you, the Lord will take you up.” Psalm 27:10; and he “will never, never, never leave you, nor forsake you. The Lord, the great Bishop of souls, will be your Shepherd; and then you shall not want.”

Or this advice may be rendered, “Be ye exhorted,” that is, be persuasible, and regard the exhortations I have given you. This is a very proper advice for me to give you, when I have but a day longer to stay in Hanover. Remember, my dear friends, the many exhortations you have heard, in the course of eleven years, from my mouth, as well as from my brethren, who have occasionally officiated among you. Oh “remember how you have received and heard; and hold fast, and repent.” Rev. 3:3. Among you I have spent the prime of my life; among you I have labored and toiled in the delightful work of serving your souls; and God is witness, that “I have declared to you the whole counsel of God,” as far as I knew it, “and kept nothing back.” And will you not regard the word of exhortation, so often repeated, and so long continued? Alas! Have I preached, and you heard, for eleven years in vain? Eleven such years is a long and important space in the life of a minister of the gospel, and of his dying hearers, who must soon give an account to the supreme Judge of their improvement of so precious a season. Therefore, oh recollect and seriously regard the many solemn exhortations you have heard.

The apostle’s third valedictory advice is, “Be of one mind” This does not so properly refer to unity of sentiment in every little article and disputable punctilio, which is not to be expected in this state of imperfection, in which even good men, who always agree in the essentials of religion, may differ in a thousand circumstantialia: I say, this does not so properly refer to unity of sentiment in this respect, as to unity of affection and design, as much as to say, “However you may differ in lesser matters, be one in heart, one in affection, and attend to the same great concern, the salvation of your souls, and the advancement of practical holiness: mind this above all, and set your

affections upon it. This is that point in which you should and may agree, even when you cannot think alike in smaller things.”

This I would particularly inculcate upon you, my dear brethren, of whom I am now taking my leave. You may differ among yourselves about a thousand less things in religion and civil life, but oh! Do not differ in heart. Still love one another: forbear and forgive one another. Give, as well as take the liberty of thinking for yourselves: and do not make a perfect uniformity of opinion in everything the test of Christianity, nor the ground of your charity. Would you regard the last advice of a dying man, a dying friend, a dying minister? Well, from this day I am dead to you: and one principle article of my last advice to you is, “Love one another. Have fervent charity among yourselves; that charity that suffereth long, and is kind; that envieth not; that is not easily provoked; that thinketh no evil; that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” 1 Cor. 13:4,5,8. This, my brethren, is the Christian temper; the very mind that was in Christ Jesus. And by this shall all men know that ye are his disciples, if ye love one another. John 13:35. It is an old tradition, that the beloved disciple John, when he was so enfeebled with age that he could not preach, thought it worth his while to be carried into the congregation every Lord’s day, just to repeat this benevolent exhortation, “Little children, love one another.” And this I would most affectionately inculcate upon you with my last breath. This will contribute to your mutual happiness, to your growth in religion, to the prosperity of your congregation, and to the comfort of your future minister. And may the God of love stamp this part of his amiable image upon your hearts!

If we give the word another turn, mind the same thing, I may take occasion to inculcate upon you the one thing needful, the choice of which I

have so often recommended to you; even the care of your souls, and the concerns of eternity. Oh make this your main study: pursue this with all your might: be unanimous in this, whatever other differences subsist among you; agree at least not to ruin yourselves for ever by a course of sin: agree at least to walk to heaven in the same road of practical holiness. However variously and freely you think, oh be of one mind in this! Akin to this, is

The apostle's fourth and last valedictory advice, Live in peace: be of a pacific temper and practice towards all men, especially those that are members of the same church with you.

Offences, my brethren, will happen among you, which will render it difficult even for the lovers of peace to maintain it, and enjoy their favorite blessing. And a thousand trifles will happen every day, which will be made an occasion of contention by proud and turbulent spirits, that delight in noise and animosities. Angry contests and ill-will may rise from very trivial causes, and spread among you, like a conflagration. Some small difference in opinion, a little matter of property, a supposed neglect or contempt, the whisper of tattlers and busy bodies, and a thousand other trifles, may strike the spark, which may burst out into a destructive blaze. Therefore be upon your guard against everything that may break the peace of the society to which you belong. Be patient and forbearing; not blustering and quick of resentment. Be meek and humble, not insolent, imperious and over-bearing. Be pliable, self-diffident, and submissive; not obstinate, head-strong, and self-willed. Be yielding to others, and do not usurp the province of universal dictators. Be at peace with God, and love the common Father of mankind; and if you love him that begat, you will naturally love them that are begotten of him. 1 John 5:1. This is the way to cultivate and preserve peace, and restore it when lost. And if you go on in this way, you may hope

you will continue a flourishing society, and that the God of love and peace will be with you; which is the motive the apostle urges to enforce his exhortation.

But this is not the whole extent of your duty. You are to cultivate peace not only among yourselves in your own congregation, but to follow peace with all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Rom. 12:18. Maintain peace with your brethren around you of the established church; and never let differences in religion break up good neighborhood, or interrupt the good offices in civil life. Indeed, if men will quarrel with you because you think for yourselves in matters in which every man must give an account of himself to God; because you will not follow the multitude to do evil, but resolve to save your souls, though you should be singular in the attempt; because you will not be of their mind in every punctilio, nor take your religion upon trust for them: I say, if men will quarrel with you on such accounts as these, you cannot help it: the breach of peace is chargeable upon them; and you are not obliged to give up truth, religion and liberty, to gratify their humor. Be tenacious of truth and liberty, and contend earnestly for the faith, Jude, 3, but still in the spirit of meekness, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. James 1:20. Were I never to speak a word more, I could venture to affirm, that it is the cause of liberty and the gospel, and not a carnal faction, or a schismatical body, that you, my dissenting brethren, have been promoting: and this is the true grace of God in which you stand. 1 Peter 5:12. The longer I live, the more I am confirmed, that the simple method of worship I have practiced, free from the ceremonies of human invention, and those doctrines of grace so mortifying to the pride of man, and so unfashionable in our age and country, which I have taught you, are agreeable to the pure

gospel of Christ, pleasing to God, and conducive to your salvation. I am so far from advising you to give up this cause for the sake of peace, that, on the other hand, it is my solemn charge to you, in the name of God, zealously to maintain and promote it. But this you may do without breaking the peace of church or state: this you may do, and yet maintain a peaceable temper and conduct towards those that differ from you.

Thus “mind the same thing, and live in peace,” and be assured, upon the authority of an inspired apostle that “the God of love and peace will be with you,” and distinguished you with his gracious presence. There is a peculiar propriety and fitness in this; that the God of love should be with those who love one another; that the God of peace should be with those that delight in peace, and maintain it; that is, that he should dwell with those that are like him. What can be more becoming? What can be more in character? Such do you endeavor to be, my brethren, and the God of love and peace will be with you, though your once-loved minister can be with you no longer. He will dwell among you; and his gracious presence will more than supply the absence of all his creatures. If he be with you, he will cause his church among you to flourish, and adorn every individual in it with the beauties of holiness. If the God of love and peace be with you, he will cause love and peace to prevail among you, and render you a society of friends and brethren, walking unanimously to the same heavenly country, like affectionate fellow-pilgrims. If he be with you, his gospel will not be that languid, feeble, inefficacious thing that it has been for some time; but even occasional opportunities of worship will be more serviceable to you, than stated have been; and even your silent Sabbaths, will be more delightful seasons, than those you have spent in his house, without his gracious

presence. God grant you may enjoy this blessing in time, till you are advanced into his more immediate presence in a happy eternity!

Thus have I endeavored to illustrate the apostle's general farewell advice. The remaining part of my design is, to take my leave of the several classes and ranks among you in a particular manner, and to give you a few parting advices adapted to your respective characters.

Farewell, ye saints of the living God, ye “few names even in Hanover, that have not defiled your garments.” Ye shall fare well indeed. That God, whose the earth is, and the fullness thereof; that God, who makes angels happy, and whose goodness extends from the highest archangels down to the sparrows, the young ravens, and the lily and grass of the field; that God is your God, and has undertaken your welfare. That God will be your God for ever; and he will be your guide even until death. Ps. 48:14. He will guide you by his counsel through the intricacies of life, and then receive you into glory. Ps. 73:24. Survey the sacred treasury of the divine promises laid up for you in the Bible, and stand lost in delightful wonder at your own riches. Behold the immense inheritance which the blood of Christ has purchased for you, and the grace of God bestowed upon you by an unalienable title. “All things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas;” all the ministers of Christ, and all their various gifts, are for your service; and if you are deprived of one of them, God will provide you another, or in some way make up the loss. “All things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;” 1 Cor. 3:21,22,23. It doth not yet appear what you shall be. I have known you brokenhearted penitents; honest, laborious, weeping seekers of Jesus, and conscientious, though imperfect observers of his will: I have known you poor mortal



creatures, sometimes trembling, sometimes rejoicing, sometimes nobly indifferent at the prospect of death. But I hope yet to know you under a higher character; glorious Immortals, perfect in holiness, vigorous and bright, and full of devotion, “as the rapt seraphs adore and burn;” and qualified to bear a part in a more sublime and divine worship of the heavenly temple. There I hope to find some humble seat among you, and spend a blessed eternity in the divine intimacy of immortal friendship, without interruption or the fear of parting. Therefore adieu; but not for ever. Adieu for a few years, or months, or days, till death collects us to our common home, in our Father’s house above. You have been the joy of my life, under all the discouragements and fatigues of my ministry; and to your prayers I owe the comfort and success I have had among you. You have great interest in the court of heaven, through the all-prevailing intercession of that advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous; therefore I beg you would always afford me the charity of your prayers, wherever I go, till the weeping voice of prayer be changed into rapturous strains of praise. If I have been so happy as to improve you in divine knowledge, and help you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness, I esteem it one of the most delightful actions of my life, and one of the greatest blessings of God to the unworthiest of his servants; and to him alone I would have you and myself ascribe all the glory. “Neither is he that planteth anything; neither he that watereth; but God, that giveth the increase;” 1 Cor. 3:7; he is all in all.

If there be among you any of my spiritual children; any that have received their first deep and effectual impressions of religion from my ministry, though it should be the meanest among you, I most heartily bid you farewell. It was worth my while to come into existence, and pass through the hard and dubious conflict of life, if my Maker has been pleased to use

my feeble, unskillful hand to save some soul from death. This is a more noble and benevolent exploit than to save a kingdom from the heaviest temporal slavery; for what is an earthly kingdom to an immortal spirit? I take my leave of you with all the fond endearments of a fatherly heart; for what is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Yes, ye are my glory, and my joy. “Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” Phil. 4:1. Endeavour to make daily proficiency in every branch of true goodness, and beware of apostacy. Having begun in the spirit, beware that you do not end in the flesh. Remember, it is only he that endureth to the end, that shall be saved; but if any man draw back, God’s soul shall have no pleasure in him. Heb. 10:38.

Shall I say farewell, impenitent sinners? Alas! You cannot fare well, however heartily I wish it. “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.” Isa. 48:22; and whoever speaks peace to you, in your present condition, does but heal your hurt slightly, and flatter you to your ruin; for who can bless whom God hath not blessed? Your consciences bear witness, “that you have had precept upon precept, and line upon line,” during my ministry among you—That I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God, Acts 20:27; and have kept back nothing that was likely to be profitable to you. Acts 20:20. I have warned you, in season and out of season—I have reproved, rebuked, and exhorted you, with all long-suffering and doctrine. 2 Tim. 4:2. I have preached to you as a dying man to dying men, and—now the time of my departure is at hand—I must take my farewell of you. Receive, all of you, my brethren, the word of exhortation, from the lips of him, whose voice has so often sounded an alarm in your

ears; though I fear, as to many of you, without the desired effect. My voice, it is probable, will never more be heard by you. This will be the last time. Oh recollect the many invitations I have given you on the one hand, and threatening's on the other. Heaven forbid that any of them should arise in judgment against you another day! Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2. Cor. 6:2. Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. I beseech you, once more, and I may say, once for all, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:20. Do not cause me to appear, as a swift witness against you another day—the day of universal retribution—Flee, flee, all of you, from the wrath to come—lay hold on the hope that is set before you. I have finished my message among you. Oh forget it not. Lay it seriously to heart. If the word you have heard from my lips, prove not a savor of life unto life, it will, it must be a savor of death unto death. Farewell— “finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you,”—which may God grant for Christ's sake. Amen.

*PART. II. MISCELLANEOUS  
POEMS, CHIEFLY ON  
DIVINE SUBJECTS.*

Published By Monergism Books

*I. LORD THOU KNOWEST  
ALL THINGS, THOU  
KNOWEST THAT I LOVE  
THEE.*

**M**y God! The Wretch that does not love Thy Name  
To Life and Being forfeits all his Claim,  
And may he sink to nothing whence he came.  
Or let the Yawn of the dire Mouth of Hell,  
Receive him with his Fellow-Fiends to dwell.  
Oh! If my Heart does not to Thee aspire,  
If aught with equal Fervor I desire,  
I'm self-condemned, and doom myself to Fire.  
Let not my guilty Breath profane Thy Air,  
Nor groaning Earth the monstrous Burden bear.  
Let Clouds with Vengeance big, burst over my Head,  
And Volleys of red Thunder strike me dead.  
The Sun convert his gentle Rays to Flames,  
And blast the Miscreant with his vengeful Beams.  
The whole Creation rise in Arms for Thee,

To vindicate the Rights of Thy Divinity.  
Vile Wretch! That dare refuse to love a God,  
Who formed me Man out of my native Clod;  
Whose Breath the Faculty of Love inspired,  
And with the heavenly Spark my Bosom fired:  
Whose uncreated Beauties charm the Sight  
Of gazing Angels, in the Realms of Light:  
Whose Glories, faintly copied, round me shine,  
And mildly beam through all these Works of Thine,  
Proclaiming Thee their Origin Divine:  
Whose Grace, diffused around in thousand Rills,  
Arrays a thousand Worlds in cheerful Smiles:  
Thou too, when Man to dreadful Ruin fell,  
Helpless, unpitied on the Brink of Hell;  
When Justice frowning did the Prey demand,  
And None could rescue from his vengeful Hand;  
Thou, touched with Pity, did'st avert his Doom,  
And gav'st Thy Son a Victim in his Room.  
Nailed to the Cross the bleeding Savior hangs,  
And courts my Love with Groans and dying Pangs.  
Oh! I must love!—Or can the Groans and Blood  
Of an incarnate Godhead be withstood!  
Yet ah! In some dark Hours I hardly know  
Whether I love my gracious God or no.  
Gloomy Suspicions, twinging Jealousies,  
And anxious Doubts in all their Horrors rise.  
I hear the Whisperings of misgiving Fear,

"Thy Love is feigned, thy Ardor insincere"  
Too true! Too true! My trembling Soul replies,  
Else whence so often could this Languor rise?  
Ah! These unruly Passions would not rove  
Thus wildly, were they fixed with sacred Love.  
Nor would the Flame of pure Devotion die  
Thus frequent, and my Powers so stupid lie.  
And yet methinks in some bright Moments too,  
I feel the heavenly Flame divinely glow.  
To Thee so ardent all my Passions move,  
That if I love Thee not, I know not what I love.  
If I'm deceived in this with empty Shew,  
Then my Existence is uncertain too:  
A universal Skeptic I commence,  
Beneath the Glare of brightest Evidence,  
In spite of Reason, and in spite of Sense.  
Oh! If I love Thee not, as Fears suggest,  
Why am I, in Thine Absence, thus distressed?  
Whence this strange Tumult, this uneasy Pain,  
'Till Thy sweet Smiles compose my Soul again?  
Whence these wild Panting's of immense Desire?  
Why should poor breathing Dust so high aspire?  
I see my busy Fellow-Worms pursue  
Created Bliss, and nothing nobler view;  
Content they waste their Life, estranged from Thee,  
In undisturbed, serene Stupidity.  
And why, like them, can't I contented play,

And eat, and drink, and sleep my Life away?  
Whence this immense Ambition in my Mind,  
That scorns all Joys but those of heavenly Kind?  
Why should a Worm, an animated Clod;  
Disdain all Bliss beneath a boundless God?  
Oh! What but the attractive Force of Love,  
Could raise my groveling Spirit thus above?  
Say, Great Omniscient! (for Thou know'st my Heart)  
Can Nature ease my Soul, if Thou depart?  
Can Riches, Pleasures, Honors, Empires, Crowns,  
Or Friends, content me, when I feel Thy Frowns?  
No! All Creation dwindles to a Toy,  
And Heaven itself could not excite my Joy.  
The cheerful Sun glares hateful to my Eyes,  
And every blooming Beauty round me dies.  
Thou great Invisible! Thou dear Unknown!  
Why thus to Thee should my soft Passions run?  
Thus through the Objects of my Senses break,  
And Charms unknown and hidden Glories seek?  
Deep in Recesses of approachless Light  
Thou dwellest, far beyond my feeble Sight;  
Yet drawn by some strange mystic Influence,  
I love Thee more than all that strikes my Sense;  
Than all my Ears have heard, or Eyes have seen,  
Or lively Fancy's gayest Powers can feign.  
O! If Thy Love does not my Heart inflame,  
Why do I thus delight in Jesus' Name?



His Name is Music to my ravished Ears,  
Sweeter than that which charms the heavenly Spheres:  
A cheering Cordial to my fainting Breast;  
My Hope, my Joy, my Peace, my Heaven, my Rest.  
I spring from Earth, and Heaven is my Abode,  
When I can say those charming Words, My God;  
My God!—Infinite Joys lie in the Sound:  
Be Thou but mine; and all the Sun goes round  
Without reluctant Murmuring I resign;  
I have enough, if I can call Thee Mine.  
O! If I love Thee not, why do I thus  
Love the dear Mansion of Thy earthly House?  
The sacred Morning shines with heavenly Rays.  
More bright, more charming than ten thousand Days,  
That bids me visit that delightful Place.  
There would I dwell, and pass my Life away,  
‘Till Death convey me up to brighter Day.  
In all the Institutions of Thy Grace,  
For Thee I look; and if Thou hide Thy Face,  
The sacred Rites would dull and tiresome seem,  
Did I not hope to find my God in them.  
When at Thy Throne I bow my suppliant Knee,  
Is Prayer a stupid cold Formality!  
Oh! Can my Prayers content me without Thee?  
No! These are but the Channels of thy Grace,  
Transparent Glasses where I see Thy Face:  
I thirst for living Water all in vain,

If Thou Thy gracious Influence restrain:  
The radiant Glasses shew me nothing fair,  
Unless I see Thy Charms reflected there.  
Then Peace, my restless and suspicious Heart;  
And ye dire-boding Jealousies, depart.  
I love my God, or else I nothing love;  
And the pure Flame ever long shall burn above,  
And from its native Element never remove.

## *II. EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED.*

**Y**e lovely Flowers, that just begin to bloom,  
And raise our Hope of glorious Fruit to come;  
That just begin to open all your Charms,  
While vigorous Youth your tender Bosoms warms:  
Indulge a Muse, that's anxious for your Good,  
Lest some rude Storm should blast the opening Bud;  
Indulge the Muse, that would the Blossoms shield,  
'Till they mature, and Fruit immortal yield,  
And bloom forever gay in Heaven's fair azure Field.  
Now you begin to tread Youth's slippery Path,  
Where Thousands stumble, and sink down to Death.  
Wherever you walk, 'tis all enchanted Ground,  
And Snares in dangerous Ambush lurk around.  
The flattering World presents her fairest Charms,  
And Vice would tempt you to her horrid Arms.  
The Crowd of fashionable Sinner's aim

To form you to the Mode, to walk with them;  
Spread false enchanting Scenes before your Eyes,  
And promise Bliss from empty Vanities:  
While sanguine, forward Youth is still intent  
To make the terrible Experiment;  
And will not, 'til by dear Experience taught,  
Indulge the true, though melancholy Thought,  
That all beneath the Sun is Vanity and Nought.  
The dangerous Path of Youth my Feet have trod,  
And lately left the smooth enchanting Road:  
Now safe advanced to a more solid Age,  
Let me conduct, you over the slippery Stage.  
Trembling I wait the Event of every Step,  
And shudder lest you make a fatal Slip.  
O! Cautious tread: Let Virtue be your Guard:  
Virtue alone can keep you un-ensnared.  
O! Choose your Maker for your early Friend,  
And on His gracious Patronage depend:  
He can obscure Temptation's brightest Charms,  
And shelter feeble Youth from threatening Harms;  
Steel the weak Breast with Grace invincible,  
And baffle all the Stratagems of Hell.  
O! Heave the Sigh, waft up the weeping Prayer  
To Him who loves that Harmony to hear:  
He looks and smiles and sheds His richest Grace  
On Virgin-Souls that early seek His Face.  
O! Let not Earth your tender Hearts ensnare;

Give your first Love to The Eternal Fair.  
'Twas He, 'twas He that formed your mortal Frame,  
Inspired the living Soul, that heavenly Flame:  
Taught senseless Dust to see and hear and move,  
And kindled in the Breast the gentle Power of Love:  
But lately, from His all-creating Hand  
You came, and sprung to Life at His Command;  
'Till then, you lay in native Nothing's Shade;  
And but for Him, had still remained unmade;  
A Father's tender Name He bears to you;  
And is not your first Love a Father's Due?  
O! Can your grateful Souls so soon forget  
The gracious Power from whence they came so late?  
Should not your Bosoms with His Love be fired,  
Whose Breath the tender Passions all inspired?  
He too, when Man to deepest Ruin fell,  
Helpless, forlorn on the dire Brink of Hell;  
He, touched with Pity, and impelled by Grace,  
Sent his own Son to save a guilty Race,  
And yield His sacred Soul a Ransom in their Place.  
The Infant-God did soon begin for you  
To bear the Vengeance to your Follies due.  
For you the heavenly Mansions He forsook,  
And a vile Stable for His Chamber took.  
His Robes of Light Divine aside he threw,  
And wrapped Himself in swaddling Cloths for you.  
Just as He entered on the Stage of Life,

He felt the painful circumcising Knife.  
In His weak Mother's Arms the young Exile,  
From Herod's Rage fled to the Land of Nile.  
His Load of Sorrow grew still as He grew;  
At length, see! On the Cross He bleeds for you!  
There racked and tortured your Redeemer hangs,  
And courts your Love with Groans and dying Pangs.  
See how He agonizes! See His Blood!  
And say, Can such Allurements be withstood?  
Oh no! You melt! You yield! I hear you say,  
"See, Jesus! Here we give our Hearts away!  
"Our earliest Love, Dear Lord! Unrivalled take;  
" 'Tis all the poor Requital we can make."  
See how in youthful Prime, the smiling Year  
Now blooms, and all her flowery Charms appear:  
The tuneful Birds, that hail the welcome Spring,  
Grateful at Nature's Restoration sing,  
And all the Groves with charming Music ring:  
A living Green arrays the Woods and Fields,  
And the sweet Vale a thousand Pleasures yields:  
The lovely Family of Flowers appear,  
And breathe Perfumes through all the balmy Air:  
The Sun shines bright and mild; the gentle Breeze  
Regales our Sense, and whispers through the Trees:  
The wide Creation smiles; Earth, Sky and Air  
In vernal Robes and blooming Youth appear.  
But ah! Ever long will surly Winter come,

Strip the gay Year of all her youthful Bloom,  
And spread over all a cheerless sullen Gloom;  
Snow, Rain and Frost commixt, and savage Storms  
Ravage and bluster in a thousand Forms;  
The smiling World with baleful Influence blast,  
And turn these charming Scenes to a rueful Waste.  
Here see your mournful Fate, ye blooming Fairs;  
Stern Death nor Youth nor Strength nor Beauty spares.  
The Young, the Old, the Wise, the Fair, the Gay,  
All fall a common undistinguished Prey.  
The Tyrant, senseless of the Power of Charms,  
Hurries the Beauty to reside with Worms;  
Covers with mortal Pale the rosy Cheeks,  
And dooms the Dust with Fellow-Dust to mix:  
Hurries the Soul at once to Worlds unknown,  
Doomed by the Sentence of the Eternal Throne  
To shine with Angels, or with Fiends to groan.  
Then catch the fleeting Hour before 'tis past;  
The present Now perhaps may be your last.  
For barren Winter early lay-up Store,  
That joyful you may meet the fatal Hour.  
Survey the Garden, where the fragrant Rose,  
In all the Pride of youthful Beauty glows;  
Go, pluck the tempting Flower, and pensive say,  
"So cruel Death may cut me off to-day."  
And when the Sun withdraws his quickening Ray,  
And Evening Shades shut up the cheerful Day;

See! How the flowery Tribes their Beauties hide,  
And fade and languish in their gayest Pride;  
Shrivel their Leaves, and bend the drooping Head;  
"So (let your Heart suggest) so I may fade,  
"And sudden sink among the moldering Dead."  
O! May the Luster of your Minds surpass  
The withering Beauties of the fairest Face:  
May every shining Virtue deck your Youth,  
And every heavenly Grace grow with your Growth;  
Life's fleeting Moment's glide delightful by,  
With every Grace adorned, and every Joy;  
Till Death, far distant, finding you mature  
for Heaven, convey you up to Joys more pure.



### *III. PHILOSOPHIC DEVOTION.*

1     With Rapture winged, my eager Soul  
Through Thy unbounded Empire roves,  
Great Author of this Glorious All!  
And lost in Wonder, still approves.

2.

Thy Works with Pleasure and Surprise  
Overwhelm this weak enquiring Mind;  
Wonders in long Succession rise,  
Yet more and greater lie behind.

3.

Fixt in Astonishment, my Eyes,  
Intense, attempt the vast Survey;  
But Glories too transparent rise,  
And dim them with excessive Day.

4.

The Rays of Wisdom, Goodness, Power,  
So sweetly blend and brightly shine,  
My Soul, overcome, can but adore,  
And own the Workmanship Divine.

5.

Struck with the Sight, I shrink away,  
Conscious how weak and blind I am:  
Despair to finish the Survey,  
And silent dread Thy awful Name.

6.

Mean though I am, (not wholly so,  
Since wisely framed by Skill Divine)  
Permit me at Thy Throne to bow,  
While round me all Thy Glories shine.

## *IV. SOLOMON.*

**W**hy should I, anxious after Happiness,  
Pursue wrong Ways, or right without Success?  
Why fret and toil in Searches long and vain,  
Since a Director I with Ease may gain?  
A skillful Guide, made by Experience wise,  
That costly Medicine for mis-judging Eyes.  
The Traveler bewildered asks the Way,  
And cautious shuns the Path where others stray:  
Come then, My Soul, exempt from every Care,  
Come, to the Royal Preacher lend an Ear;  
Attend the Monarch, whose unbounded Mind  
Made one Experiment for all Mankind,  
Past through the Labyrinths that ensnare the Wise,  
Tried all that's charming in the Miser's Eyes,  
Undaunted climbed bright Honor's steep Ascent,  
And through the Round of sensual Pleasures went;

Listen, while grey Experience tells the Truth;  
Nor fear Deception from her faithful Mouth.  
In happy Canaan, the World's Paradise,  
Where constant Harvests of rich Plenty rise;  
Where candid Milk and pleasant Honey flows  
In luscious Streams, and every Pleasure grows:  
In sacred Salem, the beloved and great,  
Where Canaan's Blessings all collected meet;  
Where He who Empires crushes and sustains,  
Tremendous in His awful Temple reigns,  
And Clouds of sacred Incense early rise,  
Breathing Perfumes to the propitious Skies;  
Where foreign Merchants vend their richest Store,  
And Ophir-Ships import their golden Oar;  
The Fear and Wonder of the Nations round,  
Profuse in Wealth with endless Honors crowned;  
Where, yearly, tributary Princes meet,  
To pay their Homage at their Sovereign's Feet;  
There first my Lungs the vital Ether drew,  
And there the Light of Life first blest my View.  
Sprung from a Royal Sire, a Glorious Crown  
By heavenly Designation was my own;  
Millions of loyal Heroes through the Land  
Confirmed my Throne, and stooped to my Command;  
The Sons of Jacob, Favorites of the Skies!  
At whose dread Name each Tyrant shrinks and dies,  
Moved at my Nod, their Sovereign Law, my Will,

The Dictates of my Tongue, their Oracle:  
While neighboring Scepters yielded to my Sway,  
Ambitious of the Honor to obey;  
And gentle Peace her downy Pinions spread,  
Shadowing the Throne, and hovering round my Head,  
Nature and Art with Emulation strove,  
To advance my Bliss, and every Grief remove.  
My Mind enlightened with a heavenly Ray,  
Was calm as midnight Hours, and bright as Day,  
Deep as the vast Abyss, and vigorous as May;  
Freed from the Freaks of young Impertinence,  
And ripened by Experience into Sense.  
Thrice happy State! Below but seldom found!  
A Heavenly Paradise on earthly Ground!  
Come then, My Soul, this Season sure was lent  
To qualify me for Experiment;  
That Men from my Experience may discern,  
Where lies their Bliss, and what to follow learn:  
Come, in this happy Juncture, let us try  
Wherein the Happiness of Man does lie;  
Pursue that unknown Something, whether hid  
She in the Bosom of the Wise abide,  
Or lie concealed in the enchanting Stream  
Of sensual Joys, where the Luxurious swim:  
Extend thy Searches wheresoever the Ray  
Of yon' bright Sun extends, and kindles Day:  
The dear, coy Nymph, which Mortals never saw,

Wherever she lurks, from her Retirements draw.  
I said—And as an Eagle, Hunger-smit,  
Pours all his nimble Vigor into Flight,  
And through aerial Fields pursues his Prey,  
Swift as a Sun-Beam in the Blaze of Day:  
So flew my curious Mind through all the Plains,  
Where, in alluring Glory, Science reigns;  
With contemplative Eyes the Works explored,  
With which this spacious Universe is stored;  
The hidden Causes and the Ends of Things,  
And Order which from their Contexture springs;  
The Powers of immaterial Essences,  
And puzzling intellectual Mysteries;  
The Properties of Matter and its Laws,  
And each Phenomenon from unseen Cause;  
The Wonders of the Planetary World,  
The Rules by which their ample Orbs are hurled;  
The boundless Regions of the fixed Stars,  
And Comets scattering Pestilence and Wars.  
Descending thence, I took a wide Survey  
Of this vast Earth, and the unbounded Sea;  
From the tall Cedars that luxuriant spread  
Their stately Branches on Libanus' Head,  
To the small Hyssop blooming on the Wall  
Moldering to Dust, and nodding to its Fall,  
My Search extended: — While each studious Sage  
As my Assistant gladly did engage;

To their learned Lectures eager I attend,  
Embrace what's right; what's corrigible, mend;  
Hypotheses upon Hypotheses  
They raise, and the well-framed Illusions please.  
My Enquiries thus finished I begun  
To view the extensive Circuit I had run;  
If haply in the Maze of studious Thought  
True Happiness may with Success be sought:  
When struck, amazed, I called my Mind aside,  
And pausing deep—thus cried;  
In tiresome Labors of the busy Brain  
I seek for Bliss; but ah! I seek in vain.  
Insinuating Sorrows still pervade  
The knowing Heart, and contemplative Head.  
This curious Itch is never satisfied  
With what is known, if aught continues hid,  
But eager pants and reaches after more,  
Pronouncing all in vain it knew before.  
Alas! What Glooms still hover over my Soul!  
And blended Clouds in close Succession roll!  
The clearest of my vast Discoveries lie  
Involved in Doubts and dark Uncertainty;  
And most of Things are wrapped in solid Glooms,  
Where a bright Beam of Knowledge never comes,  
Concealed forever from the enquiring Sight  
In Caverns of imperviable Night.  
The anxious Mind intense in the Pursuit,

Faints with the Toil, but never tastes the Fruit;  
Perplexing Thoughts still ravage through the Brain,  
And twinge the Spirit with acutest Pain;  
And Melancholy, nursed with studious Care,  
Often erects her sooty Banner there;  
Hollow and sunk the poring Eye appears,  
And the dull Image of her Sorrows wears.  
In Parts superior, then, what Profit lies?  
Alas! How small the Pleasure to be wise?  
'Tis but to know how little can be known,  
To see our Ignorance and Weakness shown;  
To chase a Phantom, which our Chase outflies,  
And leaves us lagging, distant from the Prize.  
This failed; I tried one more Experiment,  
Still in Pursuit of Happiness intent.  
Delicate Mirth arrayed in tempting Smiles,  
Pleasures surrounding in delicious Rills,  
Facetious Jests, and Laughter opening wide  
Her sprightly Jaws, with Hands on every Side,  
Present themselves, and promise perfect Bliss:  
I tried,—but found them lying Vanities.  
This empty Mirth tends but to make me sad,  
And thou, unthinking Laughter! Too, art mad.  
Her Vigor next the generous Grape bestowed,  
And sprightly Wine in liberal Glasses glowed:  
My Palate I indulged; yet, lest Excess  
Should cloy my Taste, and make the Pleasure less,



Or Wisdom with intemperate Vapors blind,  
And in luxurious Puddles drown the Mind,  
My Reason still her Government maintained,  
And the bold License of the Taste restrained.  
But Happiness in Luxury and Wine  
I seek in vain, and Bliss is too Divine  
To lurk in Grapes: the Pleasures of the Taste  
Degrade the Man, and only suit the Beast.  
To Architecture next I turned my Mind,  
And Palaces magnificent designed.  
Columns were raised, which spacious Roofs overspread;  
Sculpture and Paint their various Charms displayed:  
Marble was taught to live, and Shade and Light  
With fair Illusions pleased the ravished Sight.  
And shining Gold its yellow Radiance spread  
Through all the Buildings: Burnished Brass displayed  
Its rougher Glories: All the Charms of Art  
Blazed on my Eye, and sought to win my Heart.  
But all the Pomp of glittering Roofs and Walls,  
Of stately Chambers and embellished Halls  
Is nought but Vanity and empty Shew,  
And never free from rude, intrusive Woe.  
Shy Happiness abhors this useless State,  
And shuns the gaudy Buildings of the Great.  
Wood, Brass and Gold, by all the Powers of Art  
However formed, can never ease the Heart.  
Then in the sylvan Scene I sought for Bliss;

I made me Vineyards, and I planted Trees.  
Unwithering Verdure, and eternal Blooms  
Formed lovely Prospects, and diffused Perfumes.  
Perpetual Spring her numerous Beauties strewed  
Through all my Groves, and blest the waving Wood.  
Refreshing Rills, through various Pipes conveyed,  
Their cheering Moisture through the Forest spread,  
And, murmuring, soothed the Ear; while Zephyrs mild  
Panted and breathed through all the pleasant Wild.  
Here oft' I walked in sacred Solitude,  
And, unmolested, Happiness pursued;—  
In vain; for Happiness could not be found  
Among the Groves in this delightful Ground.  
I tried the Pomp and Equipage of State.  
Obsequious Crowds did in long Order wait  
Around my sumptuous Table, and abroad  
When Pleasure called me, dazzled all the Road:  
Domestics home-born, and from every Clime,  
Of either Sex the Beauty and the Prime,  
Formed my illustrious Retinue, and stood  
Waiting my Will, observant of my Nod.  
But ah! This proud Magnificence of State  
Can never make my Happiness complete.  
But Music, sure, that calms the boisterous Breast,  
And soothes tumultuous Passions into Rest;  
That charms deep-fixt Anxieties away,  
Makes even moping Melancholy gay;

The Hero's Breast with martial Ardor fires,  
And dire Despair herself with Ease inspires:  
Music will breathe refined, exalted Bliss  
Into my Soul, and lull me into Peace:  
I said, The Masters of the tuneful Art  
The utmost Powers of Harmony exert.  
In sweetly-varying Strains the Music floats,  
While various Instruments try various Notes.  
But all these Strains are useless; I despair  
To find true Bliss in modulated Air.  
Hitherto disappointed, I'll behold  
My vast Possessions, and unnumbered Gold.  
The Riches of the World are in my Hand;  
Surrounding Monarchs, awed at my Command,  
With Wealth immense my spacious Treasures fill,  
And yield their choicest Blessings to my Will.  
My Cattle graze upon a thousand Hills,  
And feed unnumbered in the fertile Vales.  
So various, so unbounded is my Store,  
The greediest Wish can comprehend no more.  
But still unsatisfied, from the Survey  
Scornful I turned my weary Eyes away,  
And cried, Bliss is not made of Dust and glittering Clay.  
Thus freely I indulged my Eyes to roll,  
And gave unbridled License to my Soul.  
Whatever insatiate Appetite could crave,  
With liberal Hand, without Restraint, I gave.

Not to indulge a Lust, was my Design,  
But act the Philosophic Libertine:  
I paused, I reasoned, and with Eye intense  
Observed the Issue of the Experiments.  
But when the tedious Circuit I reviewed,  
And all the anxious Labors I pursued,  
In which my restless Spirit toiled with Pain,  
Seeking for Bliss with eager Wish in vain;  
I saw that all beneath the lower Skies  
Is abstract Vanity of Vanities.  
Oppressive Sorrows and Vexations grow  
In every State, in every Clime below.  
Nor for themselves need future Ages try  
The Experiment; for all is Vanity.  
Anxieties in all Things earthly dwell,  
Which All alas! Can feel, but none can tell.  
No Novelties present themselves to View,  
To tempt succeeding Ages to renew  
The Experiment, or Bliss below pursue.  
In dull Succession earthly Pleasures run  
In the same tedious Circle ever on.  
The Ear with antiquated Harmonies  
Is cloyed, and with accustomed Sights the Eyes.  
The ever-moving Wheels of Nature run  
In the same Tract; in the same Tract the Sun  
Rolls on his tiresome, everlasting Round;  
And still we tread the same old-fashioned Ground.

Besides; the Intervals of Bliss we find  
Are short, uncertain, varying as the Wind.  
Death unsuspected in close Ambush lurks,  
And undermining still, our Ruin works.  
Whether we laugh or weep, or wake or sleep,  
He haunts us, ready on his Prey to leap.  
So the unthinking Rovers of the Air,  
Caught unexpected, flutter in the Snare.  
So finny Shoals rush heedless into Death,  
Dragged to the Land, and gasp in vain for Breath.  
But see! Above the Earth, beyond the Skies,  
What charming Scenes, what brighter Prospects rise!  
There the Paternal Mind, the Source of Good,  
Feeds His own Offspring with immortal Food.  
There Happiness in full Perfection grows;  
And restless Souls enjoy a calm Repose;  
A Bliss proportioned to the widest Wish;  
Ever enjoyed, yet ever new and fresh.  
Hail happy Realms! The Bliss we seek below  
In vain, is only to be found in you.  
Soon (welcome Prospect!) the bright Hour will come  
That wafts us to our blest celestial Home:  
Soon into Dust this brittle Frame will fall;  
The Soul return to her Original;  
Return exulting from her long Exile  
In this dark Dungeon, and laborious Toil:  
There dwell forever with her Father-God,

And find the Bliss before not understood.  
Then since the Happiness of Mortals lies  
Beyond the Bounds of these inferior Skies,  
The only Happiness they here can share,  
Is for those blissful Regions to prepare.  
Through various Mazes then at length we come  
To this Conclusion as the total Sum.  
Fear thy Creator God with filial Awe,  
And all thy Life observe His holy Law.  
Choose as thy constant Path this heavenly Plan;  
'Tis the whole Duty, the whole Bliss of Man;  
The only Point where Happiness is fixed,  
Pleasures in this World, greater in the next.  
Tired of my fruitless Searches, here I rest,  
With this Discovery pleased, content and blest.

*V. I SAID, I WILL BE WISE:  
BUT IT WAS FAR FROM  
ME.*

**H**ow rough, how steep, and intricate the Way  
To Knowledge, and the Worlds of mental Day!  
How thick the Gloom, how dark the dismal Night  
That stops the Dawn of Intellectual Light!  
Through what vast Labyrinths my Feet must rove,  
Ere I obtain the shining Pearl I love!  
At first it seems at Hand, just in Embrace;  
And thus allures me to the endless Chace:  
But as I run, new Wonders strike my Eyes;  
"Hills peep over Hills, and Alps on Alps arise."  
As Knowledge, so new Objects still increase;  
The more I know, I seem to know the less.  
One Thing presents another quite unknown;  
A third starts up in View, ere that be gone;  
'Till endless Crowds in long Succession rise,  
And spread Amazement over my gazing Eyes.

So the ethereal Bow, of various Dye,  
Immensely distant, shews its Colors nigh:  
The witless Traveler, fond of rearer Views,  
With fruitless Steps the illusive Shade pursues,  
'Till tired, bewildered, hopeless of his Aim,  
He rests, and blushes with ignoble Shame.  
While one Idea dances in my Brain,  
Another rising drives it out again.  
I lose the Treasures of Conceptions past:  
The Gain is lost, but studious Labors last.  
So while on Sand a Man his Foot-steps guides,  
One Foot makes Way, the other backward slides.  
Wasted in fruitless Toils, thus pass my Hours;  
And sacred Truth overcomes these feeble Powers.  
Long last the Glooms of native Ignorance,  
And by slow Steps to Knowledge we advance.  
But this dark State will not forever last,  
This Infancy of Being soon is past:  
The Soul matured, and freed from cumbrous Clay,  
Shall then rejoice in everlasting Day:  
Serene employ her elevated Powers  
On Truths too dazzling for this World of ours.  
If Darkness, then, must still surround my Head,  
'Till heavenly Light succeed to Death's dark Shade;  
Be it my Study and my constant Care  
For that important Moment to prepare,  
Lest then, secluded from the Realms of Light,



I sink forever in more dismal Night.  
O may the Sun of Righteousness arise,  
On a bewildered Wretch! Then shall my Eyes  
Discern the happy Path that leads to Bliss,  
Where perfect Knowledge, and where Jesus is.

# *VI. OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS.*

**T**hou only Good! Eternal All!  
What am I when compared with Thee!  
A Piece of animated Clay;  
An Atom sporting in thy Ray —  
The Loss would be but small,  
Should I again to Non-Existence fall:  
Nay, if thy Glory might but rise,  
Cheerful my Being I'd resign,  
And fall a willing Sacrifice  
To gain a Purpose so divine,  
So much more worthy than this little Life of Mine!

## *VII. ANOTHER.*

1     What is great God! And what is Not,  
Should be, and not be, to thy Praise:  
Then, if my Non-Existence should but raise,  
Thy Glory, I'm content thy Hand should blot  
Me from the Rank of Being, and conclude my Days.  
'Tis owing to thy Glory that I AM,  
And fit I should not be, if that might raise thy Name.  
Should I relapse to Nothing, scarce  
Would it appear a Blank in thy vast Universe.

2.

Thou art the eternal Source and Spring  
Of Being and of Possibility:  
Thy wise omnific Hand can bring  
Non-Entity to be:  
Then with a Sovereign Nod Thou can'st remand

The vast Productions of thy Hand,  
To dreary Nothing whence they came,—  
And be it so, if that might glorify thy Name!

3.

Ah! What are Worlds compared with Thee,  
Great everlasting All!  
But Atoms hovering in the Air,  
Bubbles and Vanity,  
That at thy great Command appear,  
And at thy Word to nothing fall,  
Whose Pleasure gives them Leave to be.  
Thou viewest, independent, from on high,  
A Sparrow or a Hero die,  
Atoms or Systems molder into Dust,  
And now a World, and now a Bubble burst.

4.

Yet since Thy Hand did build my Frame  
With Power and Skill Divine,  
And in my Life Thy glorious Name  
Does more illustrious shine;  
O! Let me still exist,—But to Thy Praise,  
That out of Nothing did me raise.

# *VIII. SINFUL IMMORTALITY WORSE THAN NON-EXISTENCE.*

1    Thou only Holy! To Thy Name  
     'Tis fit eternal Praise be given,  
     By all the Things Thy Hands did frame,  
     Through the wide Earth, and wider Heaven.

2.

Being itself becomes a Curse,  
When not employed, Great God! For Thee:  
And Life estranged from Thee is worse  
Ten thousand Times than not to Be.

3.

Better to Non-Existence sink,  
Or turn to elemental Clay,  
Than sleep and laugh, and eat and drink  
My precious Hours in vain away.

4.

Were there no Ground to hope and plead  
Thy Grace may form my Soul a new,  
How should I wish to be unmade,  
And drop to Nothing from Thy View!

5.

For Oh! The dire Disease of Sin  
Has cankered all my active Powers;  
Corrodes my languid Soul within,  
And all her vital Strength devours.

6.

The Vigor of my Soul is spent  
On low Pursuits and empty Toys:  
But ah! How feeble, cold and faint,  
When to my God I try to rise!

7.

Sin chills Devotion's sacred Fire,  
Makes Wisdom's Path a tiresome Road;  
Cumbers the Pinions of Desire,  
That flutter to ascend to God.

8.

If, contemplative, I retire  
With Things eternal to converse;  
My Heart, that restless Wanderer,  
Rambles through the wide Universe.

9.

Or if before Thy Gracious Throne,  
I humbly bend the suppliant Knee,

Languor's oppress my Spirit down,  
I cannot, cannot rise to Thee!

10.

And when in some celestial Song,  
I pay my Homage to Thy Name;  
The Anthem dies upon my Tongue;  
Nor feels my Breast the heavenly Flame.

11.

So when I view the sacred Page,  
Where Love and Light united shine,  
Cold Criticisms my Thoughts engage,  
Quite blind to Beauties more Divine.

12.

Almighty God! With pitying Eye,  
Behold these useless Faculties!  
Restore Thy fallen Progeny,  
That deep immersed in Ruin lies.

13.

Say, shall my Being still be vain!  
Oh! Shall I never serve my God!  
Then Life itself's a tedious Pain;  
And gladly I'd lay down the Load.

14.

Oh! Shall my Immortality  
Be spent to offend Thy dearest Name!  
No! Rather let me cease to Be,  
And sink to Nothing whence I came.

15.

But if Thy Grace renew my Soul,  
‘Twill be my Privilege to Be;  
And while eternal Ages roll,  
Joyful I’ll live and act for Thee.

16.

When Nature dies, and Day and Night  
Measure the Flux of Time no more,  
In brighter Worlds, with long Delight,  
The Hands that made me I’ll adore.



*IX. A CLERGYMAN'S  
REFLECTIONS ON  
HEARING OF THE  
DEATH OF ONE OF HIS  
PIOUS PARISHONERS.*

1    One more of my Dear Flock is gone  
To appear before the Eternal Throne,  
And pass the grand decisive Test:  
"Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust."  
Surviving Friends with Tears entrust,  
There 'til the General Doom to rest.

2.  
The Soul, dismissed from cumbrous Clay,  
Expatiates in eternal Day,  
And with the Great Immortals dwells:  
The Dawn of Immortality  
With Scenes unknown surprise the Eye,  
And Wonders vast and new reveals.

3.

Thus while I'm dreaming Life away,  
Or Books and Study fill the Day,  
My Flock is dying one by one;  
Conveyed beyond my warning Voice,  
To endless Pains, or endless Joys,  
Forever happy, or undone!

4.

I too 'ere long must yield my Breath;  
My Mouth forever shut in Death;  
Nor sound the Gospel Trumpet more:  
Then may I, while they're in my Reach,  
With Fervor pray, with Fervor preach,  
And eager catch the flying Hour!

5.

Almighty Grace! My Zeal enflame;  
Oh! Free me from this sluggish Frame;  
And fire my Breast with vigorous Love.  
Oh! Teach me that divinest Art,  
To reach the Conscience, warm the Heart,  
And all the tender Passions move.

6.

Then when I must resign my Trust,  
And at Thy Word relapse to Dust,  
Undaunted I shall meet Thy Throne;  
Joyful present, without a Spot,  
The Children by Thy Word begot,

And hear Thy Voice pronounce, "Well Done."

## *X. THE SOUL RELEASED BY DEATH.*

1     Active Spark of heavenly Fire,  
In a Clod of Earth confined,  
Ever fluttering to aspire  
To the Great Paternal Mind;  
Struggling still with upward Aim  
To mingle with thy native Flame!  
Death soon will break this Prison of Clay,  
And give thee Leave to spring away;  
Then to thy native Regions go,  
There with the Ethereal Flames to glow.

2.

Come, thou shining Hour, appear!  
Happy Moment, Oh draw near!—  
'Tis come! — I feel the purple Stream  
Stagnate; in misty Darkness swim

My dizzy Eyes confused and dim;  
Bedewed with cold and clammy Sweat;  
The dancing Pulses cease to beat;  
In vain I gasp for Breath —  
Strange! Can this be Death?

3.

Hark! The Angelic Envoy say,  
"Sister Spirit, come away,  
"Drop the Cumber of the Clay,  
"And with thy Kindred join"—  
Angels, I come; conduct me on:  
Instruct me in a World unknown,  
In Mysteries Divine:  
Instruct an unexperienced Stranger how  
To act as the Immortals do;  
To think, and speak, and move like you:  
Teach me the Senses to supply,  
To see without the Optics of an Eye;  
The Music of your Songs to hear  
Without the Organ of an Ear.

4.

Yes! Now Blest Angels, now I find  
The Powers of an unfettered Mind!  
How active and how Strange!  
O happy Place! O blissful State!  
Welcome Felicity complete!  
Welcome amazing, happy Change!

5.

And is this then Eternity!

And am I safely landed here!

No more to Sin, no more to die,

No more to sigh, or shed a Tear! —

My Soul! Can this be I?

I, who just now imprisoned dwelt

In yonder World of Woe and Guilt!

Just now shuddering, trembling, sighing,

Startled at the Thought of dying!

Am I indeed the same?

Or is it all a pleasing Dream?—

The very same! — Ye heavenly Choirs!

Cherubic and Seraphic Fires!

Come, assist my laboring Tongue;

Sound aloud the grateful Song;

Assist a Stranger to express

His Thanks to rich unbounded Grace —

Jesus! The unbounded Grace was thine,

Who bled and languished on the Tree,

And bore infinite Pains for me,

To raise me thus to Joys Divine.

And do I see Thy Face at last,

O my Dear, incarnate God!

And has Thy Love Thy Servant placed

In this Thy shining, blest Abode!

Enough! — Thy Bounty gives me more

Than I could think or wish before.

## *XI. GRATITUDE AND IMPOTENCE.*

**N**ot all the shining Saints on high  
Owe so much Gratitude as I;  
Not all the mourning Saints below  
A Debt so vast and boundless owe.  
From me the highest Praise should rise,  
Obliged by such unequalled Ties.  
My Breast with warmer Zeal should burn,  
With deeper tenderer Sorrows mourn,  
Than Gabriel that surrounds the Throne,  
Than any Wretch beneath the Sun.  
For I of all the Race that fell,  
Deserve the lowest Place in Hell;  
And I of all the ransomed Race,  
Am most in Debt to Sovereign Grace.  
Ye Saints, no more yourselves abase,  
But yield to me the lowest Place:



No more my rightful Claim contest  
To offer Praise above the Rest.  
Yet, Oh my God! There's not a Saint,  
That sobs in secret his Complaint,  
That calls himself the very First  
Of Sinners, and his Case the worst;  
There's not a Saint, but (to my Shame)  
Presents more Glory to Thy Name,  
But serves Thee with a warmer Zeal,  
And with more Fervor does Thy Will.  
Kind Angels! Will You raise on high  
His Praise, and my Defects supply!  
Oh! Will You pay, in nobler Song,  
The Debt of my unskillful Tongue!  
And you, Dear Saints! Will you below,  
Help me to pay the Debt I owe!  
No doubt the Blessings You receive,  
Exceed the highest Thanks you give;  
Yet sure, You can't refuse to join  
To pay a Debt so vast as mine.  
All-gracious God! The Thanks receive,  
From others, which these Lips should give.  
And Oh! Forgive a Worm that mourns,  
Because he can make no Returns.

## *XII. THE UNIVERSAL LAMENTATION.*

1     When Heaven with a vindictive Frown  
Throws an aspiring Monarch down,  
The trembling Nation takes the Alarm.  
And when we view the wide Champaign  
Soaked with the Blood of Heroes slain,  
The softest Passions wake, and every Bosom warm.

2.  
The softest Passions wake and mourn,  
When Sons of Honor, nobly born,  
Are sold for Slaves in barbarous Climes.  
The Wretch that on the Gibbet hangs  
Moves in us sympathetic Pangs,  
Though self-destroyed he dies for his own scarlet Crimes.

3.  
The importunate and helpless Poor,

Naked and famished at our Door;  
The Widow and the Fatherless;  
The melancholy House where Pain,  
Sickness and Death and Sorrows reign,  
Dissolve the generous Heart to softest Tenderness.

4.

But from our Hearts if Death should rend  
Some darling Relative or Friend,  
How we bewail the moldering Dust!  
Our Life is Grief, our Breath is Sighs,  
Our Days are Glooms, and from our Eyes  
Torrents of ever-flowing Sorrows burst.

5.

But what are Thrones or Monarchs sunk,  
Or Fields with Blood of Heroes drunk,  
Or Lords in barbarous Climes confined!  
Ah! What are Lumps of breathing Clay,  
That into Ruin pine away,  
What, when compared with one immortal Mind!

6.

The immortal Mind! A heavenly Spark,  
Lost and extinguished in the Dark!  
By Sin seduced, by Sin undone!—  
Let all superfluous Sorrows cease;  
And Deluges of Tears, for this,  
For this alone! Gush forth and unremitted run!

7.

Souls formed for Immortality,  
The Eternal Father's Progeny,  
Forgetful of their noble Birth,  
Despise the Great Paternal Mind,  
So bright, so fair, so good, so kind,  
And lose their heavenly Essence in ignoble Earth!

8.

Souls ransomed by the vital Blood  
And Death of an incarnate God,  
Insult his dying Groans and Cries;  
And still, remorseless, dare commit  
The Sins that pierced His Hands and Feet,  
And racked his tortured Soul with twinging Agonies!

9.

The mild, propitious, heavenly Dove  
Descends from his own Realms of Love,  
To strive with unrelenting Souls:  
In vain;—the Rebels love their Chains,  
And Sin, the Tyrant, Sovereign reigns,  
And every heavenly Tendency controls.

10.

The Voice of Mercy sounds aloud,  
And offers a Redeemer's Blood,  
Eternal Joys, and heavenly Crowns:  
But still, with stiff unyielding Neck,  
The gracious Offer they reject,  
And rather perish of their mortal Wounds.

11.

Eager with full Career they run  
In Chase of Pleasures, 'til undone,  
Nor pause at Mercy's loudest Call:  
Dancing with inadvertent Feet  
Round the dire Borders of the Pit,  
'Till helpless, unexpected, down they fall.

12.

There are (delightful Thought!) a Few  
Who the unbeaten Path pursue,  
That leads to purer Joys on high:  
Transporting Sight! But Oh! How rare!  
While mournful Prospects every where  
Glare on our Eyes, and Thousands round us die!

13.

And shall they unlamented die!—  
Come every tender Heart and Eye,  
Join in the Lamentation, join!  
From both my Eyes let Rivers flow,  
And Floods of sympathetic Woe  
Gush from this adamant Heart of mine.

14.

Ye Sons of Levi! Sacred Train!  
That spend your Breath and Strength in vain,  
That toil and sow, but seldom reap;  
See thoughtless Mortals, in your Eye,  
Deaf to your loudest Warnings, die!

Behold the mournful Scene, ye sacred Tribe! And weep!

15.

See your dear Fellow-Men undone,  
While shocked, astonished, you look on,  
But can, alas, yield no Relief!  
Yet sure you may indulge your Tears,  
And even over those that stop their Ears,  
Vent your full Hearts in Streams of useless Grief.

16.

Come every tender-hearted Saint,  
Give all the mournful Passions vent,  
Or are your Bowels formed of Stone?  
See how ungrateful Worms despise  
Jesus the Darling of your Eyes!  
See the dear Souls you love by their own Hands undone!

17.

Ye generous Souls! Whose Bosoms bleed  
Over some dear Creature cold and dead,  
Some dearer Self torn from your Heart;  
Forbear your useless Tears, and turn  
The Stream from them, and only mourn  
The cruel Hands that kill their own immortal Part.

18.

Come all ye Sons of Adam, join;  
Mingle your flowing Grievs with mine;  
Let Groans tumultuous heave your Lungs.  
But you alas! Refuse your Tears;

And waste them on inferior Cares;  
Or lull yourselves to Ease with Luxury and Song.

19.

Angels! That charm the listening Skies  
With everlasting Harmonies,  
Say, Have Ye never a mourning String?  
O! While your Songs transport the Poles,  
Raise one sad Note for Kindred-Souls,  
Your Kindred lost to you, revolted from your King!

20.

Fountain of Day and cheerful Light  
Why should the Gloomy Sons of Night,  
The Radiance of thy Beams abuse?  
The Mourner's sable Dress assume,  
And wrap the Globe in Midnight Gloom;  
Why should they see the Light who Works of Darkness choose?

21.

Ye Lamps of Heaven that nightly burn,  
Over brighter Flames extinguished mourn,  
As wakeful you survey the World.  
Regent of Night! Resplendent Moon!  
Bewail the Scenes of Lewdness done,  
While through the silver Shades thy ample Orb is whirled.

22.

Ye Winds that gently fan the Air,  
Or ravage in fierce Tempests there,  
Expend your Breath in Groans and Sighs:

Disgusting Joys of heavenly Kind,  
Immortal Spirits feed on Wind,  
And eager pant for airy Vanities.

23.

Ye Thunders groan from Cloud to Cloud,  
Roar your majestic Sorrows loud,  
Over Worms that scorn Jehovah's Voice.  
Tempests, and Hurricanes and Storms,  
Bewail in all your dreadful Forms,  
The more pernicious Storm that Human Kind destroys.

24.

Ye Clouds that lightly float in Air,  
Or roll in heavy Oceans there,  
Weep on a wretched World below.  
Soft Dews and fruitful Showers, bewail  
The ungrateful Plants, that constant feel  
The Showers of Grace distil, but never fruitful grow.

25.

Ye Rivers rapid, rough and strong,  
And Streams that gently glide along,  
And in Meandrine Circuits flow;  
Exhaust in Tears your liquid Store,  
And murmur Grief; or swell and pour  
Your useless Channels dry in Deluges of Woe.

26.

And thou immense, majestic Main,  
Let not thy Billows roll in vain;



But swell each Billow to a Tear;  
Mortals the Pleasures disesteem  
That roll their plenteous Chrystal Stream  
In Paradise; and thirst for sordid Pleasures here.

27.

Sweet Mourner! Melancholy Dove,  
And all ye Songsters of the Grove,  
Let tuneful Sorrows swell your Throats;  
You warble grateful Songs of Praise,  
And join with heavenly Choirs to raise  
Your Maker's Name; but Mortals will not join the Notes.

28.

Ye fierce, rapacious Beasts of Prey,  
That in the horrid Desert stray,  
Through the rough Wild your Sorrows roar:  
Men put your Savage Natures on,  
Renounce the Mildness of their own,  
And Tyger-like, their Fellow-Men devour.

29.

Ye Cattle that on Mountain's feed,  
Or graze in the luxuriant Mead,  
Low forth your Sorrows as you roam:  
Lament the wretched Animal,  
Fashioned by Nature rational,  
Degraded by himself, and one of you become.

30.

Let all Things mourn: Let Rocks and Stones

Learn Sympathy, and burst to Groans,  
And senseless Marble learn to melt:  
Marble will weep, and Rocks relent  
Sooner than stubborn Hearts repent,  
And contrite wail their own oppressive Guilt.

31.

O Thou All-Good, Paternal Mind!  
Pity the Crowds of Human Kind,  
Whose Hearts are heartened from Thy Fear.  
The Madness of the Wretch control,  
Who ruins his immortal Soul,  
Without acute Remorse, without a pitying Tear.

32.

Jesus! Thy tender Grievs did stream  
Over Obstinate Jerusalem,  
Thy dying Breath implored "Forgive:"  
O! May Thy soft Compassions move,  
And Thy unconquerable Love  
Constrain a dying World to turn and live!

33.

Then shall the glad Creation smile,  
New Pleasures every Bosom fill,  
And Sin and Death and Sorrow die:  
Angels with sevenfold Ardors flame,  
And sound new Praises to Thy Name,  
While Mortals join below, and to their Song reply.

## *XIII. THE ASPIRATION.*

1  
Eager, craving, hungry Soul,  
All thy loose Desires control:  
Anxious, restless Spirit, cease  
To search inferior Skies for Bliss:  
Fluttering, panting, wild Desires,  
Recall, abate your sprightly Fires:  
Upward guide the quivering Flame,  
There unremitted let it glow:  
There purer Joys than Wealth or Fame,  
Lasting, satisfying, grow.

2.  
Sparks with natural upward Aim,  
Wheeling, quivering, still aspire,  
To mix with elemental Fire:  
Come then, active heaven-born Flame,

Hovering, trembling, restless Spark,  
Still twinkling, sparkling in the Dark,  
Heavenward, Homeward active tend,  
And to thy Kindred Flames ascend.  
Conscious of thy superior Birth  
Generous spurn ignoble Earth;  
Exert thy Vigor, spring away  
To Regions of eternal Day:  
No more obscured in Glooms below,  
Soar with thy kindred Flames to glow.

3.

There the blest Immortals shine,  
Brightened with Luster all divine,  
Fired with heavenly Life within,  
Active, vigorous, never tired:  
Once they were struggling here below,  
Fainting, oppressed, as thou art now;  
Yet to their native Element aspired.  
O! The Bliss, the Joy they feel!  
Raptures succeed to Raptures still,  
And in their Bosoms ever burn:  
Then my Soul with soaring Wing,  
To thy great Companions spring;  
Nor linger here to weep and mourn.

# *XIV. THE SOUL EARLY ESTRANGED FROM ITS DIVINE PARENT.*

Father of Spirits! Why, ah! Why  
Should thy own Offspring be so shy?  
This Soul inspired by thee so late,  
Her bright Original forget?  
So soon forget her heavenly Birth,  
And basely grovel in the Earth?  
But a few Years their Rounds have run,  
Since first my Infant-Life begun:  
‘Till then, in native Nothing’s Shade  
I lay infinite Years unmade;  
And but for thy creating Will,  
Had slept in dreary Nothing still.  
"Let Nothing spring to Life," Thy Tongue  
Pronounced, and straight to Life it sprung.  
Thou only art my Father, Thou  
My Author and Preserver too.

Yet, Father! Thy own Progeny  
Was soon, alas! Estranged from Thee:  
Cast forth to Earth's remote Abode,  
Forgot her Father, lost her God:  
Enslaved to Flesh, and Lust and Sense,  
Reluctant to aspire from thence:  
With gilded Toys familiar grown,  
Her Father lost, unsought, unknown.  
Not so my Child: His Infant Tongue,  
Owns me the Parent whence he sprung:  
His little fondling Actions show  
What grateful Passions inward glow:  
Toying he rests in my Embrace,  
Or fondling round me smiles and plays:  
From real or imagined Harms,  
Flies for Protection to my Arms;  
And thus, with undesigning Tongue,  
Upbraids me of ungrateful Wrong.  
Ah! Shall this Child return to me,  
A warmer Love than I to Thee!  
To Thee the universal Cause,  
Whence Nature her Existence draws.  
Thou gracious Author of my Frame,  
A wandering Prodigal reclaim.  
From glittering Toys my Soul recall,  
To Thee her bright Original.  
Allure me to my Father's Arms

By Thy own uncreated Charms.

# *XV. A SURVEY OF HUMAN NATURE.*

**T**he Introduction.

While inconsiderate here I play  
The uncertain Trifle, Life, away,  
Let me indulge a solemn Hour,  
And view the Race of Adam over;  
On Contemplation's Pinions rove  
To Worlds below and Worlds above.  
What different Scenes around me rise!  
What different Prospects strike mine eyes!  
What strange, what various Characters  
The self-same human Nature wears!

## PART. I. HEAVEN.

See in the fair celestial Plains,  
Released from Sin, and Death, and Pains,  
How, clad in Robes of Light Divine,  
Human Immortals glorious shine!



The mean, inglorious Sons of Earth,  
With Angels of celestial Birth,  
On Ever-Green, in blissful Bowers,  
Pass their eternal social Hours.  
No more exposed to lurking Snares,  
No more perplexed with trifling Cares,  
No more the eager starving Mind  
Would feed on Vanity and Wind;  
But Chrystal Springs of Pleasure burst,  
And gently flow, and quench the Thirst.  
The Tree of Life luxuriant spreads  
Its fragrant Shade above their Heads;  
And shook with gentle Breezes, pours  
Its Fruits around in golden Showers.  
Still eager, still uncloyed, the Blest  
The immortalizing Apples taste.  
Grim Death with all his ghastly Train  
Attempts to enter there in vain,  
Heart-bursting Groans and heaving Sighs  
No more attempt to swell and rise.  
But Oh! The higher Joys they feel!  
Immortal, pure, ineffable!  
While the bright Deity displays  
The unveiled Glories of his Face:  
While, lost in Wonder still, they see  
The God that bled upon the Tree?  
Fired with immortal Transports rove

Over all the Wonders of his Love:  
Unwearied the dear Theme pursue;  
Still viewed, yet still beyond their View:  
From Wonders still to Wonders rise,  
‘Till lost in vast Infinities:  
Dazzled with sweet Excess of Light,  
For strong Seraphic Eyes too bright.  
Their Knowledge brightens more and more;  
And what they know not, they adore.  
The high celestial Arches ring  
With Hallelujahs while they sing;  
The Hills, the Dales, the Fountains round  
With sweetest Harmony resound.  
Say, my bright kindred Spirits, say,  
Dare an Inhabitant of Clay,  
Direct his Hope and wishful Eye,  
To share with you in Joys on high?  
Hope in some humble Place to sit  
Amongst your Thrones, or at your Feet?  
Or does his flagrant Guilt deny  
The Ambition of a Wish so high?  
Once You, in dull Mortality,  
Were struggling and oppressed, like me;  
Allured with tempting Vanities,  
And the false World’s ensnaring Lies:  
Unruly Passions in your Hearts;  
Wounded with Satan’s fiery Darts:

Through thousand Dangers fought your Way;  
Trembling to fall a helpless Prey:  
Trembling to lose the glorious Prize,  
You now enjoy above the Skies.  
Say, Human Angels! By what Art  
Did you subdue the unruly Heart?  
Over the ensnaring World prevail,  
And all the Stratagems of Hell?  
O! Tell me whence your Victory came?—  
And was it from the bleeding Lamb!—  
Blest Jesus! Be my Guide, my Strength;  
And I shall triumph too at length.  
O! Did the Sons of Men below,  
The perfect Bliss above but know;  
O could they dart a piercing Eye  
Through the blue Curtains of the Sky;  
And view in what Perfection there  
Some of their Family appear;  
To what Degrees a human Mind,  
May be exalted and refined;  
How would they nobly soar, and spurn  
This Earth, and all its Trifles scorn;  
With brave Ambition Heavenward aim,  
And all inferior Joys disclaim;  
Generous break through the narrow Rounds  
Of Time and all created Bounds;  
Break through, and winged with strong Desire,

To pure celestial Joys aspire!  
But they, alas! With sordid Aim,  
All Kindred with the Skies disclaim:  
Ignobly sink the heaven-born Mind  
To Pleasures of the brutal Kind.  
Eternal God! Erect our Souls;  
Nor let them grovel here like Moles.  
O! Teach a downward World to rise;  
And seek to gain their native Skies.

PART. II. HELL.

But Oh!—what dismal Scenes of Woe  
Open in yonder Gulph below!  
See! How the fiery Surges swell,  
And dash against the Cope of Hell.  
The sulphureous undulating Flames  
Through the thick Gloom shed awful Gleams;  
Pale Gleams that but expose to Sight  
The Horrors of eternal Night.  
Ah! There, forever, ever lost,  
On these dire Billows ever tossed,  
Some of my wretched Kindred roar,  
Feeling the Flames they scorned before.  
When Mercy called, they would not turn;  
Now Mercy frowns, and they must burn.  
Now Justice makes the Rebels feel  
The Tortures of the restless Wheel.  
Now nailed to Racks of endless Pain,

They cry for some Relief in vain.  
Deep Groans and Screams torment the Air,  
The horrid Language of Despair.  
The Vulture, Conscience, preys within;  
Once charming, now tormenting Sin  
In all her hellish Colors glares,  
And pays her Slaves the long Arrears  
For all the painful Drudgery done—  
Sad Wages! Worse by far than none.  
Ah! How they writhe, and agonize!  
How wildly stare their flaming Eyes!  
No Heart can think, no Language tell,  
No Fancy paint the Pains they feel.  
Yet in their greatest Pains they own  
The Justice of the Eternal Throne.  
"Justice! All Justice! Still they cry;  
"By our own Folly here we lie.  
"Where should we lie but in this Pit,  
"Who made ourselves for Heaven unfit?  
"Alas! Should Heaven her Gates display,  
"And take us to the Realms of Day;  
"We Sons of Darkness, back to Night  
"Would shrink, confounded with the Sight.  
"And in these Glooms make our Abode,  
"Rather than see a holy God.  
"While sinful Passions rule our Breast,  
"Not Heaven itself can make us blest.

"Impossible we should be saved,  
"While thus corrupted and depraved.  
"Nor do these raging Flames refine  
"Our Spirits from the Dross of Sin;  
"But still we harden in the Fire,  
"And still our Lusts new Strength acquire,  
"The Bliss we would not have, we lose;  
"And have the Portion that we chose."  
O! Did surviving Mortals know  
The Pains their Kindred feel below;  
O! Did they know the dire Reward  
For all the Slaves of Sin prepared;  
How would they shrink from Vice's Charms,  
And thrust the Monster from their Arms!  
The smooth broad Road with Trembling shun,  
Where Thousands walked, and were undone!  
At the loud Call of Mercy stop,  
And eager catch the offered Hope!  
But all these real Terrors seem  
But frightful Tales and Dreams to them.  
Their Fellow-Sinners die around;  
They lay their Relics in the Ground:  
The ghastly Corpse they only view,  
But Oh! Could they the Soul pursue;  
Pursue her the other Side of Death,  
To her eternal Home beneath;  
What Terrors would alarm the Heart!

How would the thoughtless Sinner start!  
What Fear the Hypocrite surprise,  
And tear away his base Disguise!  
Or might abandoned Ghosts again  
Visit the Earth, and talk with Men:  
Might they in human Ears proclaim  
The Torture of infernal Flame:  
In Characters majestic draw  
The Honors of the insulted Law:  
Sin and its heavy Punishment  
In their infernal Colors paint:  
With flaming Tongues aloud expose,  
The crying scarlet Guilt of those  
Who dare neglect a dying God,  
And trifle with redeeming Blood:  
How would a sleeping World awake,  
And conscious Guilt confounded quake!  
Security should take the Alarm,  
And shudder at the impending Harm.  
Hardy Prophaneness learn to shrink;  
And thoughtless Luxury to think.  
Misers no more with Gold bewitched,  
Should damn themselves to be enriched.  
No more the Proud for empty Fame,  
Should sink in everlasting Shame.  
No more the insulted Heavens should hear  
The dull Formality of Prayer;

But flaming high, Devotion's Fire  
In Zeal importunate aspire.  
Spiritless Breath and languid Zeal  
No more eternal Truths reveal;  
Nor cold Harangues, or Trifles vain,  
The solemn Pulpit more prophane.  
The Thunders of the Law should sound,  
And hardy Sinners tremble round:  
Jesus allure with winning Charms  
Despairing Sinners to his Arms.  
So Fancy dreams.—But if the Law  
Fails to inspire a pious Awe,  
And even the Gospel cannot draw;  
In vain Apostles from the Dead  
Might Thunder Wrath, and urge and plead  
In vain infernal Messengers  
Would try to alarm presumptuous Ears.  
The trembling Fright would soon be over,  
And all ascribed to Fancy's Power.  
Or frequent Apparitions grow  
Familiar, and be treated so.

### PART. III. EARTH.

Now to the Earth I turn my Eyes:  
And strange! What different Prospects rise!  
Here Honor glitters, Riches shine,  
And Pleasure's various Forms combine:  
There meagre Poverty, Disgrace,



And sullen Griefs usurp the Place.  
Here Health her blooming Visage shews,  
Clad in the Lilly and the Rose:  
There Sickness groans and pines in Bed,  
And scarcely lifts his fainting Head.  
Here the unthinking jovial Crowd  
Dissolve in Mirth, and laugh aloud;  
While Music all her Charms employs  
To lull their Cares, and wake their Joys:  
But hark! How Melancholy moans,  
And solitary Sorrow groans,  
Here Luxury her Table spreads,  
And, squeamish, on her Dainties feeds:  
There Hunger gnaws, and starving Want  
Unpitied vents his vain Complaint.  
Prophaneness lifts her impious Eyes,  
And mocks the Thunder of the Skies;  
Presumes with daring Tongue invoke  
The Vengeance of the lingering Stroke  
While here and there a pious Sigh,  
And humble Prayer ascend the Sky;  
Jehovah hears, and with a Smile  
Lays the dread Thunder by awhile.  
The Ways of Vice are still pursued  
By the triumphant Multitude;  
Sin high-applauded walks the Street,  
And tramples Virtue with his Feet:

Yet an unfashionable Few  
Virtue's untrodden Path pursue.  
These are the Pillars of the Land,  
And by their Prayers whole Nations stand;  
When they are gone, Wrath shall be hurled  
To blast and burn a guilty World.  
Some now receive the vital Breath;  
Some gasping in the Pangs of Death.  
Some landing on the eternal Shore,  
The Dangers of Life's Ocean over;  
While others entering on the Stage  
Of Life, begin their youthful Age.

#### THE CONCLUSION.

But who can tell the various Views,  
The various Projects Man pursues?  
The States, Conditions, Characters,  
In which Humanity appears?  
O! Were our narrow Views more wide,  
Did human Race our Cares divide;  
The tender social Tear would rise;  
The social Bosom sympathize.  
The Heart of Charity would bleed,  
And round her gentle Influence shed.  
Benevolence would open wide  
The generous Wish, to none denied.  
Nay, Vice appalled in her Career,  
Should feel Remorse and drop a Tear.

Oppression break her Rod of Steel,  
And senseless Tyrants Pity feel.

## *XVI. WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE?*

**F**ountain of Good! From Thee incessant flow  
The Streams of Bliss that cheer the World below.  
The Charms of Nature in her fairest Dress  
Are but faint Copies of Thy fairer Face.  
As some sweet Flower, when vernal Suns infuse  
The vegetative Soul, and fertile Dews,  
Impearl the Grass, its painted Foliage spreads,  
Blooms fair and gay, and fragrant Odors sheds;  
But when the Sun withdraws his genial Ray,  
Contracts its Beauties, droops and pines away:  
So at Thy Smiles, the wide Creation blooms;  
But should'st Thou frown, Horrors and dismal Gloom  
Would cover All; Deformity would reign;  
All Nature die, and Chaos come again.  
Unnumbered Worlds, through boundless Aether lost,  
Are clad by Thee in all the Charms they boast.

Impelled by Thee, the mighty Spheres roll on,  
And Nature's ample Wheels harmonious run.  
Thy Glory twinkles through the Midnight Sky,  
From thousand Golden Lamps suspended high  
In azure Vaults. Yon' boundless Source of Day,  
That flames from Age to Age without Decay,  
That cheers surrounding Worlds with vital Rays,  
Is but a Gleam from Thee; whose brighter Face,  
Dazzles the Eyes of Angels as they gaze:  
Who sit'st enthroned, insufferably bright,  
In the Recesses of eternal Light.  
Thy Goodness in the vernal Seasons blooms;  
From Thee the Rose derives its rich Perfumes.  
By Thee the Groves are in their Verdure clad,  
And Plains and Vales with flowery Carpets spread.  
Eternal All! What is this lovely Frame  
But a faint Transcript of Thy glorious Name?  
The soft enchanting Smile, the sparkling Eye,  
The charming Voice, the Strains of Harmony,  
The graceful Conduct, the unbounded Aim  
Of noble Minds, the Patriot's generous Flame,  
The exalted Genius, the celestial Fire  
Of Piety, Thy Spirit did inspire.  
'Twas thou Fidelio formed in Friendship's Mold,  
And stamped the social Virtues on his Soul;  
The candid Temper, and the Heart sincere,  
Thee their divine Original declare.

When Chara, the Companion of my Life,  
The chastest, mildest, tenderest, kindest Wife;  
The Honor and the Beauty of her Sex;  
Whom every Grace and every Virtue decks:  
When she blooms on my Sight in all her Charms,  
And every correspondent Passion warms;  
I farther look; and through this radiant Glass  
Gaze on the brighter Beauties of thy Face.  
Thus Mortals read some Letter of thy Name,  
On every Pin in this amazing Frame:  
View some reflected Beams of Charms Divine  
Break through Thy Works, and with bright Radiance shine  
But O! How far the loveliest Creatures fall  
Beneath the immensely bright Original!  
Thou Excellence unknown, divinely fair!  
Shew us what uncreated Beauties are.  
Reveal Thyself! Let trembling Mortals see  
The unrivaled Glories that beam forth in Thee.  
The borrowed Beauties of Thy Works but raise  
The restless Pant to view Thy brighter Face;  
But warm the eager Wish, that breaks through all  
The Ranks of Creatures to the Original:  
But O! 'tis Thou, 'tis Thou alone canst fill  
The boundless Wish, and bid the Pant be still.  
Without Thee, every Charm insipid grows,  
And the aspiring Soul finds no Repose.  
In Quest of Thee she flies; in Quest of Thee

Roves through the Mazes of Immensity,  
Restless, bewildered. O my only Joy!  
Reveal Thyself; these Cravings satisfy:  
Fill this unbounded Void; nor let me more  
For solid Bliss created Bounds explore  
Oh! If Thy Goodness will not satisfy  
These boundless Aims, why were they raised so high?  
Why was I cursed with this immortal Mind,  
This Dignity of Thought, these Powers refined;  
O! Why, if Thou wilt ever, ever hide  
Thyself, and leave them still unsatisfied?  
Far better had I flourished for a Day  
A fading Flower beneath the quickening Ray  
Of vernal Suns; or with my Fellow-Brutes  
Roamed over the trackless Waste in low Pursuits,  
Grazed the green Mead, or unmolested lain,  
And stretched my careless Bulk in some wild Den,  
Sleeping dull Life away; nor feared my Doom  
From Evil past, or present or to come.  
O envied Lot to mine! If I must pass  
My Immortality far from Thy Face;  
Whether on Earth, in Air, or Heaven I dwell,  
If Thou art absent, every Place is Hell.  
Advance me to the Grandeur of a Throne,  
And let me call the Universe my own;  
Let Planetary Worlds my Nod obey,  
And Earth and Ocean reverence my Sway:

Yet, if deprived of Thy auspicious Smile,  
I shall be curst, abandoned, wretched still.  
Let Heaven her sparkling Portals wide display,  
And take me to the Realms of endless Day;  
Angelic Harps their sweetest Notes employ,  
And round me River's flow of heavenly Joy;  
My Soul would sicken at the hateful Sight,  
If hid from Thee, sole Spring of my Delight!  
The Light offensive to my Eyes would glare,  
And heavenly Notes grate harsh upon my Ear.  
But if refreshed with Thy propitious Face,  
My Soul would find a Heaven in every Place.  
Thy Presence would eternal Pains beguile,  
And cause the Realms of Desolation smile.  
A Beam from Thee would kindle into Light  
The solid Glooms of everlasting Night;  
Not even infernal Horrors could affright.  
O! Then, where ever Thou fix my last Abode,  
Be it in Reach of Thy sweet Smiles, my God!  
Be Thou my Portion, Thou my Bliss, my All;  
I care not to whose Share the Creatures fall;  
I have enough in Thee, the immense Original.



## *XVII. CONJUGAL LOVE AND HAPPINESS.*

**C**onjugal Love my joyful Heart inspires,  
And warms a languid Muse with active Fires.  
The pleasing Impulse the glad Muse obeys;  
And as a pious Monument of Praise,  
Grateful she consecrates these humble Lays.  
Nor can she stray in trackless Wilds unknown;  
Since to describe the Bliss, I need but tell my own.  
But hence! Far hence! Ye wild lascivious Fires:  
To purer Themes the modest Muse aspires,  
Hence banished, to your native Hell return!  
There with your loose degenerate Bards to mourn;  
There with your kindred Flames to rage and burn.  
Hail, gentle Love! Thou sacred Heaven-born Flame!  
Pure Spark, that from the eternal Godhead came!  
Who clad in Glories infinitely bright,  
Does in this mild Perfection most delight;

In Love rejoices as this darling Name,  
And breathes through Nature the celestial Flame.  
'Tis Love adjusts this fair harmonious World;  
On Wheels of Love the heavenly Spheres are whirled,  
Ten Thousand Systems round Ten Thousand Suns,  
Impelled by Love, each in its Orbit runs.  
What's the Attractive or Projectile Force,  
But Love well-balanced, to direct their Course?  
Love, the great Cement of the Universe,  
That hinders Worlds to conflict and disperse.  
'Tis Love that tunes the harmonious Harps above;  
And the blest Voices sing immortal Love.  
There in its native Element it glows;  
There from the uncreated Fountain flows,  
Diffusing Heaven where ever its Current goes.  
Of firm Societies Love formed the Plan,  
"And Creature linked to Creature, Man to Man."  
Blest the rude World with Friendship, downy Peace,  
And humanized a wild, barbarian Race.  
The kindest Gift indulgent Heaven bestowed,  
To sweeten Life, and ease the crushing Load;  
To sooth Anxieties, to lull to Rest  
The Hurricanes that ravage through the Breast;  
To double scanty Bliss, and multiply  
The rare celestial Plants of Peace and Joy,  
So apt in this unnatural Soil to die.  
Could Hell extinguish this celestial Spark,

The Universe would fall, the Sun grow dark;  
Infernal Horrors through the World prevail:  
And Heaven itself would sadden into Hell:  
Men changed to Savages, forsake their Home,  
And with fell Tigers, the wild Desert roam:  
The screaming Infant die as soon as born,  
By his own Father's Rage to Pieces torn.  
But Thou, All-gracious Maker! Hast impressed  
This heavenly Stamp upon the human Breast;  
Mixt in the tender Embryo of our Frame,  
Some gentle Sparks of Thy essential Flame.  
O! Early may the sacred Fire return  
To Thee its Source, and there divinely burn!  
Every soft Passion to Thy Name aspire,  
And Love to Thee the whole Creation fire!  
But chiefly, may thy Praises be expressed,  
By those whom gentle Love has rendered blest!  
Ye Parents, whose kind Bowels melt and move  
With all the Endearments of paternal Love;  
Who feel the silken Bands of Nature tie  
Your yearning Souls to your fond Progeny;  
O! Praise Him, who a feeble Spark imparts  
Of his paternal Kindness to your Hearts.  
Ye grateful Infants, whose young Souls begin  
To feel the soft Emotions work within;  
In thousand little fondling Actions shew  
The filial Duty that begins to glow;

O! While you toy in your fond Mother's Arms,  
Lisp to his Honor who your Bosom warms:  
O! Consecrate the imperfect rude Essays  
Of your first Language, to your Maker's Praise.  
Ye Youths and Nymphs, who feel the pleasing Flame  
Pant in your Breast, and throb through all your Frame;  
Who lost in anxious, pleasing Transports prove  
The charming wild Extravagance of Love;  
Let human Beauties claim their proper Share,  
But Oh! Supremely love The Everlasting Fair!  
Friendship, thou sacred Name! May every Mind  
Whom thy soft Fetters in sweet Bondage bind;  
Who melted into Union coalesce,  
And but one Joy, one Grief, one Life possess;  
O may their warmest Gratitude ascend  
In Ecstasies to their celestial Friend!  
Praise Him, ye happy Pairs, who no more sigh  
For absent Bliss, but all your Wish enjoy:  
Your Hands conjoined, congenial Souls commixed;  
And not a jealous Thought intrudes betwixt;  
While mutual Confidence, and Peace serene  
Smile in your Looks, and still the Storms within:  
Your mutual Virtues mutual Wants supply;  
Your Burden shared, and multiplied your Joy;  
Adore His Name who joined two kindred Souls,  
And fashioned you in correspondent Molds.  
Connubial Love! Thrice happy was the Hour

I fell a willing Captive to thy Power.  
Oppressed I panted underneath my Load,  
While I, a single Individual stood:  
But, Chara, since with thee I coalesced,  
And joined thee to my maimed imperfect Breast,  
I grew into a finished Man, complete,  
And hardly feel the huge unwieldy Weight—  
So when a marble Pillar singly tries  
To bear the Weight of some vast Edifice,  
The Pillar trembles, and the tottering Wall  
Horrendous nods, and threatens a thundering Fall.  
But if the prudent Architect bestows  
A Set of Columns in proportioned Rows,  
The Building stands indissolubly firm,  
And mocks the blustering Hurricane and Storm.  
Nor will my Other Self refuse to own  
She finds her Soul to perfect Stature grown,  
And two conjoined but make a finished One  
The rougher Virtues of a manly Mind  
With her more tender female Virtues joined,  
Form a well-tempered Compound.—So unite  
The Glooms of Black, and the mild Streaks of White,  
And form a well-mixed Picture, pleasing to the Sight.  
The Mildness of her Temper seemed to court  
Masculine Boldness for its kind Support;  
Unfit, alone, to avert impending Harms,  
And face Life's Terrors and outrageous Storms.—

So creeps the noble Vine along the Ground,  
When no supporting Elm is near her found:  
No generous Clusters her rich Boughs adorn,  
Smothered with noxious Weeds and overborn.  
But place some kind Support within her Reach,  
Her marriageable Arms you'll see her stretch;  
Round the rough Trunk with loving Tendrils twine,  
And bloom on high, a fair prolific Vine.  
Chara, beneath thy Influence I felt  
The charming Flame; my Soul was taught to melt  
In Ecstasies unknown, and soon began  
To put the Stoic off, and soften into Man.  
The Veil of Modesty, in vain confined  
The alluring Beauties of thy lovely Mind:  
The shining Charms beamed through the fair Disguise;  
Blushed in thy Aspect, dazzled in thy Eyes;  
In every Word, in all thy Conduct known,  
And in thy artless Face, well-copied, shone—  
So through refulgent Clouds breaks the bright Morning Sun.  
I saw, I loved, I sought to gain,  
The blooming Fair; nor sought in vain.  
Thy yielding Bosom soon began to glow  
With the same Flame thy Charms taught me to know.  
Thy Soul, unskilled in those inhumane Arts,  
Thy Sex affect to torture captive Hearts,  
A constant Lover did disdain to vex,  
Or with unkind Delays and treacherous Wiles perplex.

Thy Soul, that knew not what dissembling meant,  
With modest soft Reluctance, blushed Consent.  
In Transport lost the joyful News I heard;  
And vowed my Life the Favor to reward.  
A solemn Rite the willing Contract sealed,  
To stand, 'til Death divide us, unrepealed.  
'Twas gracious Heaven presided over our Choice—  
Come, Chara, then, assist my grateful Voice.  
To Thee, Great God! To Thee alone we owe  
This mutual Bliss, this Paradise below.  
And dost Thou, Sovereign Ruler of the Spheres!  
Stoop down to Worms, and manage our Affairs!  
Thou, in Whose Sight Arch-Angels are but Nought,  
And highest Heaven beneath Thy meanest Thought!  
Compared with Whom, ten thousand Worlds appear  
But Vanity, unworthy of Thy Care!  
Oh! What are we, or what our Father's House,  
That Thou should'st condescend so low to us,  
And with peculiar Favors crown us thus!  
O! Never, never be Thy Grace forgot  
That destined for us a distinguished Lot.  
While wretched Thousands, formed of different Clay,  
In nuptial Fetters fret their Days away;  
Jangle and murmur in eternal Strife,  
And gnawed with Jealousies consume their Life;  
In mutual Love, in mutual Confidence,  
Unconscious of Suspicion or Offence,

In Fondness, Peace and melting Tenderness,  
The calm unclouded Day of Life we pass:  
Pitying survey the angry jarring World,  
Contentious, loud, in boisterous Passions whirled:  
Then into sweet Society retire,  
And find the peaceful Calm our Souls desire.  
Love charms the Heart, and in the Aspect smiles,  
Our anxious Griefs and fretting Cares beguiles;  
Doubles our Pleasures, while the impartial Scale  
Of Sympathy divides the Woes we feel.  
Thus over Life's tempestuous Sea we sail,  
When Storms blow fierce, and the rough Surges swell;  
With equal Hands ply the tough yielding Oar,  
And fly triumphant to the wished for Shore.  
O! May our Days, Eternal God! Be Thine;  
And every Passion yield to Love Divine.  
Oh! In our Hearts still do Thou reign supreme;  
Nor let us steal the Love thy Glories claim.  
But here, ah! Here a guilty Scene appears!—  
Oh! Break my senseless Heart, and flow my Tears!  
How manifold and strange my Frailties be!  
Chara, I find Temptations even in thee!  
When fondly in thy loving Arms I rest,  
And thy resistless Charms enflame my Breast,  
The pleasing Tempter seizes all my Heart,  
Or leaves my God but the inferior Part.  
Almighty Grace the Extravagance control



Of this unruly Power that captivates my Soul.  
From all created charms my Heart recall,  
To the All-Perfect Fair, The Eternal All!  
My lovely Chara! Help me to restrain  
The wild Excesses of the Love you gain.  
With Horror, shun the sacrilegious Theft,  
And though I give, yet Oh! Refuse the Gift.  
Far from my Breast expel each human Fair;  
But Oh! Let Jesus reign unrivalled there:  
Jesus! Thou sacred and unrivalled Name!  
My warmest Love thy matchless Glories claim.  
Ah! Shall this Spark Thy Spirit did inspire,  
From Thee, its Origin, my Heart ensnare!  
No! Claim my tenderest Passions for Thy own;  
Or tear them from my Heart, and change me into Stone.  
Another pleasing Scene, my Muse, disclose—  
Love multiplied in blooming Branches grows.  
These smiling Infants with a thousand Arts  
To fond parental Love dissolve our Hearts.  
In our fond Arms the pretty Triflers toy,  
And overwhelm us with oppressive Joy.  
Young Reason blooms, and shews its tender Flowers,  
And importunes Instruction's gentle Showers.  
Delightful Task! To rear the tender Thought;  
To teach the young Idea how to shoot;  
To form the pliant Mind in Virtue's Mold,  
Before it hardens, and stiff Vice grows old.

Eternal God! To whom ourselves we owe,  
To Thee we dedicate our Offspring too.  
O! May Thy Conduct guide them over the Stage  
Of slippery Youth to Manhood's soberer Age;  
And if Thou crown their Heads with hoary Hairs,  
May they devote to Thee their aged Years;  
Proclaim Thy Praise, when we resign our Breath,  
And lie forgotten in the Dust of Death.  
Then in Thy kind Embraces let them die,  
And people the celestial Colony.  
Chara, thou dear Partaker of my Heart,  
The Hour approaches, when even we must part:  
We though in strongest Bonds of Union joined,  
Must feel the painful Rupture of the Mind.  
When on the Bridal Day I took thy Hand,  
And clasped thee to me in the nuptial Band,  
This Thought did moderate my Excess of Joy.  
" Resistless Death this Union will destroy:  
" This splendid Jewel must not still be mine;  
"But cruel Fate will force me to resign."  
I shudder at the Prospect!—Ah! My Dear,  
How could I leave you solitary here!  
Leave you, like the poor widowed Dove, to mourn!  
Oppressed with Cares, in the wide World forlorn!  
With all the Mother yearning in your Breast,  
To see your helpless Orphan-Babes distressed!  
Methinks I see you weeping over my Clay,

And drowned in Sorrow, my pale Corpse survey:  
"There all my Comfort, all my Joy lies dead,  
(You cry) "Each smiling Prospect now is fled.  
"My Love, alas! Was impotent to save  
"The Man I loved from the all-conquering Grave.  
"To Thee, Great God! The Widow's Friend, I flee;  
"I've no Support, no Refuge now, but Thee."  
Methinks I see you sad and solemn tread  
The Place where I lie moldering among the Dead  
"Here the dear Relics lie, the Dust lies here,"  
You say, and sob, and drop a tender Tear,  
"The Dust of that dear Man, who once possessed  
"My Soul, whom these fond Arms have oft embraced.  
"Here silent, senseless, now he lies; nor hears  
"His Chara's Sighs, nor minds her flowing Tears."  
O Chara! Could the iron Bands of Death  
Be bursted, and its Slaves resume their Breath;  
Thy Sorrows would revive my moldering Clay,  
And Death's eternal Stupor drive away.  
My senseless Dust with thee would sympathize,  
And spring to Life to wipe thy streaming Eyes.  
But ah! The Tyrant Death will not dismiss  
His Captives, nor grant one poor Hour's Release.  
Yet now at least my pitying Tears can flow,  
In Prospect of the approaching Scenes of Woe,  
And now anticipate the Sympathy I owe.  
Your Grief at my own Funeral I share,

And since I cannot then, now drop a Tear.  
But Oh! The Prospect overwhelms my Minds—  
I cannot, cannot leave my Fair behind.  
No!—Hear, Indulgent Heaven! This humble Prayer;  
" Let her not mourn for me, but me for her!  
" Doom me to live to close her dying Eyes,  
" And see her struggling in Death's Agonies.  
" The pale cold Clay with last Embraces clasp,  
" And from her Lips receive the expiring Gasp.  
" Attend her Relics to her clay-cold Bed,  
" And over her Grave my dewy Sorrows shed.  
" In pensive Solitude oft thither rove,  
" To view the Mansion of the Dust I love.  
" In melancholy Crape myself array,  
" And darken with the Pomp of Grief the Day.  
" Thus mourn away the sad Remains of Life,  
" "Till friendly Death restore me to my Wife."—  
Ah no! Ah no! Kind Heaven! Refuse to hear;  
Nor curse me with the Answer of my Prayer.  
My Heart would break, my Spirit faint away,  
To see my Chara pallid lifeless Clay.  
To hear the Clods with hollow murmuring Sound  
Fall on thy Coffin, would my Soul confound.  
And when the important, solemn Hour draws nigh,  
When I must bow my fainting Head and die,  
How could I face the Terrors, if thou wert not by?  
May I expire in thy kind Arms embraced,

And Guardian Angels take me from thy Breast,  
And guide my Soul to everlasting Rest!  
May thy dear Voice some cheering Thought suggest,  
And teach me on my Savior's Arm to rest;  
Whisper some Promise from the sacred Writ,  
That through Death's Glooms may dart a cheerful Light.  
Above for thee I'll wait, 'til gentle Fate  
Waft up thy Soul, and make our Bliss complete.  
But here again the dismal Views return,—  
I see my Chara pine and weep and mourn.  
The moving Sight my Spirit cannot bear;  
And here again I must retract my Prayer.  
Straitened, perplexed, I know not what to crave;  
A longer Life than she, or earlier Grave.  
Propitious Heaven! Direct my doubtful Vow,  
And what is best, asked or unasked, bestow.  
Thus the best Blessing does perplexing prove;  
These are the wild Anxieties of Love.  
The senseless Stoic seeks the Bliss in vain,  
'Tis true — but then, he pines not with the Pain,  
His little Self is all his narrow Care,  
And all his Fears and Wishes center there.  
But this fond Soul with various Passions tossed,  
Is in a Maze of Contradictions loft.  
Now could I almost wish from Love to flee,  
And harden into quiet Apathy.  
But Oh! Is there no Cure, no heavenly Art

To ease this twining Anguish of my Heart?  
To arm this coward Soul, and make her smile  
At all the Terrors of approaching Ill?  
To teach these Specters no more to affright,  
That stalk in future Time's impenetrable Night?  
O yes there is!—My anxious Soul be still;  
Calmly submit to Heaven's all-ruling Will.  
His Will be done! Refuse to choose thy Lot;  
And leave that Trust to His unerring Thought.  
He rules unnumbered Worlds with Skill Divine;  
And can't He rule these mean Affairs of thine?  
What's best for us, His Wisdom only knows;  
And what is best, His boundless Grace bestows.  
Here will I rest: And here, my Chara too,  
Appears a Rock in every Storm for you.  
But Nature, perverse Nature, will rebel,  
And over my calm and settled Thoughts prevail.  
The rising Waves will dash me from my Rock;  
And all my firmest Resolutions shock.  
Father! Forgive these Ravings of my Love;  
These lawless Passions that rebellious rove.  
O! To this Fondness proper Limits set,  
And its Extravagancies regulate.  
If my wild Pen one guilty Word has writ,  
Pity my Weakness, and that Word remit.  
Be Thou my Bliss, be Thou my All, in Life;  
My Strength, my Comfort, in the dying Strife.

If 'tis Thy Will that I should pine alone,  
Bereft of Chara, may Thy Will be done!  
Or if I first relapse to native Dust,  
And leave her here to mourn, Thy Will is just.  
Thy Right it is, the Knot Thy Hands have tied  
When, where, and as Thou pleasest, to divide.  
Yet O! Forgive Thy Servant if he speaks,  
And Dust and Ashes this one Prayer makes:  
If Thou consent, thankful before Thy Feet  
I fall! If not, I'm silent and submit.  
"O! May we both at once resign our Breath,  
"And sink together in the Arms of Death.  
"One humble Tomb preserve our mingling Dust,  
"Till the all-rousing Trump demand the Trust.  
"Conducted by one heavenly Convoy rise,  
"And soar together to the upper Skies.  
"There in eternal Union praise Thy Name,  
"And Love Divine our mingled Souls enflame."  
Chara, this humble Monument I raise  
Of our fond Passion, in my youthful Days;  
That if you're doomed the mournful Day to view,  
When I shall cease to speak or write to you;  
When my dull Muse shall silent lie in Death,  
Or in celestial Strains employ her tuneful Breath;  
To still, or rather vent your Grievs, you may  
With gushing Eyes these tender Lines survey,  
And as you pore upon them, sigh and say,

"Well; once I had a Friend, whose loving Soul  
"Did antedate these Sorrows to condole;  
"That early wailed my then uncertain Doom,  
"And mourned in Prospect what I mourn as come.  
Or if grim Death first tear you from my Breast;  
And waft you earlier to eternal Rest;  
I may at least enjoy that poor Relief,  
To find a Help to vent my bursting Grief;  
To raise the Sluices of overwhelming Woe,  
That Deluges of easing Tears may flow.  
But Oh! Why does the cruel Muse repose  
So early, Treasures for our future Woes?  
Nor you nor I can then endure to view  
These sad Predictions then so sadly true.  
Again perplexed, I wish my Work undone;  
But the resistless Passion pushed me on.  
I doom these dire Predictions to the Fire;  
Yet would the sad Accomplishment appear;  
Therefore I check my Ravings, and forbear.



## *XVIII. THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.*

**D**escend, Celestial Dove! My Voice inspire  
O thou that tipped Isaiah's Tongue with Fire!  
Teach me like him to feel the ecstatic Flame,  
And raise my Numbers equal to my Theme.  
"Rapt into future Times, the Bard begun,—  
"A Virgin shall conceive, a Virgin bear a Son."  
His Names Divine His Dignity declare!  
Immanuel, the wondrous Counsellor:  
The eternal Father, the pacific Prince,  
The God armed with His own Omnipotence.  
The eternal Spirit shall profusely shed  
His richest Uncion on his sacred Head:  
Wisdom and Knowledge, Piety and Might  
Descend, and on His sacred Temples light.  
The radiant Beam of His all-piercing Eyes  
Shall dart through lurking Frauds obtruse Disguise.

Sly Hypocrites with all their artful Shews  
On His Omniscience try in vain to impose.  
His Shoulders shall the Government sustain,  
And He triumphant over the Nations reign:  
His growing Empire over the World extend,  
And know no Bounds but Nature's utmost End.  
To his illustrious Ensign, high in Air,  
The numerous Tribes of Adam shall repair:  
Thither the Gentiles with unwearied Feet  
Shall tend, and there in endless Armies meet;  
With the Messiah's peaceful Conduct blest,  
Shall, undisturbed enjoy eternal Rest.  
The scattered Remnant of the sacred Stock,  
Shall to their own Messiah's Standard flock;  
With eager Haste in endless Orders crowd  
From foreign Climes and barbarous Servitude.  
Impartial Justice shall erect her Scale,  
And weak, insulted Innocence prevail:  
The Meek, the Poor defy impending Harm,  
And smile secure beneath His Guardian Arm.  
Eternal Righteousness shall rule the Globe,  
The glorious Girdle of His royal Robe.  
Confusion, Anarchy, with wild Dismay,  
Shall fly afar from his well-ordered Sway:  
Serene and steady his Affairs shall run  
In calm, harmonious Order ever on.  
Nor shall His Reign those Revolutions know

That toss the petty Monarchies below;  
But while eternal Years their Circuits run,  
Triumphant He shall sit on David's Throne.  
Soft Peace shall bloom in His auspicious Reign;  
The Olive flourish in eternal Green.  
He into Peace the jarring World shall look,  
And still their Contests with his dread Rebuke:  
The jarring World, obedient to His Eye,  
Shall lay their useless martial Weapons by.  
The bloody Sword new formed shall learn to plow,  
And mortal Spears to Pruning-Hooks shall bow:  
No more shall Fields drink in heroic Gore,  
Nor brazen Trumpets kindle Fury more,  
Nor deadly War with usual Thunder roar.  
The Tribes that savage and rapacious rove  
In Quest of Prey, shall soften into Love;  
And weary of their former sullen Joy,  
Shall in the sacred Mount no more destroy,  
"The Lambs with Wolves shall graze the verdant Mead.  
"And Boys in flowery Bands the Tyger lead.  
"The Steer and Lion at one Crib shall meet,  
"And harmless Serpents lick the Pilgrim's Feet.  
"The smiling Infant in his Hand shall take,  
"The erected Basilisk, and speckled Snake;  
"Pleased the green Luster of the Scales survey,  
"And with their forked Tongue and pointless Sting shall play."  
The proud Rebuke, the big insulting Frown

Shall on the smiling Earth no more be known.  
"No Sigh, no Murmur the wide World shall hear;  
"From every Face He wipes off every Tear."  
Then shall the Earth, the Air, the Sea, the Sky  
Echo with Praise and grateful Harmony.  
To Thee Jehovah! Every Tongue shall sing;  
And with loud Praise the wide Creation ring.  
Though late Thy Wrath did with dread Fury glow,  
The Flame is quenched, and now Thy Mercies flow.  
The Hand that wounded, now affords Relief,  
And endless Joy succeeds to transient Grief.  
Behold a God vouchsafes to be my Aid!  
Why should I, thus protected, be afraid?  
The Omnipotent becomes my Strength and Guard,  
And His Salvation my immense Reward.  
Therefore my Tongue, the Glory of my Frame,  
Exulting shall His grateful Praise proclaim.  
My Soul with liberal Draughts be satisfied,  
Where living Streams of pure Salvation glide:  
In parched Deserts copious Streams shall burst,  
And flow, and quench the Pilgrim's raging Thirst.  
Then various Tongues shall say with one Accord,  
Come jointly let us praise the Almighty Lord;  
With reverent Lips invoke His awful Name,  
And round the astonished World His wondrous Works proclaim.  
Let thousand Tongues with glad Submission own,  
Jehovah reigns exalted on his Throne;

Let thousand Voices in loud Accents sing  
The vast Exploits of the eternal King;  
Exploits to Earth's remotest Limits known,  
Vast as his Power, and boundless as his Throne.  
As some besieged City, when they spy  
Their kind Deliverer's welcome Flag draw nigh,  
With Shouts triumphant stun the echoing Skies,  
And shock the Courage of their Enemies:  
So sacred Zion! With exulting Voice,  
Shout loud through Heaven and Earth thy boisterous Joys;  
For great in Majesty, and great in Arms,  
Clad in fair Holiness with all its Charms,  
Great in the Midst of thee Jehovah reigns,  
And the fierce Rage of hostile Power restrains.  
Thy Arm, Great God! Has leveled to the Ground  
Proud Cities that proclaimed Defiance round;  
Laid in rude Heaps the strong aspiring Tower,  
And Palaces to be repaired no more.  
These mighty Works conveyed on Wings of Fame,  
Shall teach the World to reverence Thy Name.  
Conquerors shall lay their Laurels at Thy Feet,  
And savage Nations tremble and submit.  
Tyrants shall feel the Terror of his Rod,  
And own, reluctant, a superior God.  
Oppression, blasted with his vengeful Breath,  
Wither and sink in everlasting Death;  
Through Rebel Crowds the Terror of his Word

Shall pierce resistless like a griding Sword.  
Aspiring-Mortals! Hide you in the Rock  
From the majestic Terror of His Look:  
Into the Dust, abased, confounded sink,  
And struck with Awe from his dread Presence shrink.  
The supercilious Look, the lofty Brow,  
The stubborn Haughtiness of Man shall bow;  
And in that Day the Unutterable Name,  
Shall reign unrivalled on His Throne supreme.  
The proud, aspiring Monarchs of the World  
Shall from their fancied Dignity be hurled.  
His vengeful Thunder with destructive Strokes  
Shall rend and blast proud Bashan's sturdy Oaks,  
The stately Cedars of Libanus scathe,  
And blend their Fragments with the Shrubs beneath.  
The towering Mountains and aspiring Hills  
Adoring fall and sink to humble Vales.  
The Tower impregnable, the fenced Wall  
Crumble to Dust, and with loud Ruin fall  
The Ships of Tarshish, fraught with golden Store,  
Founder in the rough Deep and float no more.  
Struck with the Terror of Jehovah's Look,  
Aspiring Worms shall creep into the Rock;  
To gloomy Clefts and Caves, with wild Dismay,  
From His majestic Presence shrink away,  
When He with Terror shall Himself enrobe,  
And rises to affright the trembling Globe.

With pious Boasts then shall the insulted Just  
Proclaim the Issue of their patient Trust.  
Ye impious Scoffers of our Patience, see!  
Our God appears! The Incarnate Deity!  
Our God appears! For Him, for Him we sought;  
And lo! Our patient Tears are not forgot.  
This is our God! And lo! The God appears!  
Exult our Hearts! And flow no more our Tears!  
Salvation on this glad Approach attends,  
And grants the largest Wishes of his Friends.  
Here shall Omnipotence itself exert,  
And His right Hand shall never hence depart:  
With wrathful Majesty His Feet shall tread  
On Zion's Foes, and Heaps of hostile Dead;  
Insult the Rebels prostrate struck with Awe;  
So heavy Oxen tread the rotting Straw.  
Then shall He scatter the dark Glooms of Hell,  
And from benighted Nations tear the Veil,  
The universal Veil that now excludes  
The cheerful Light from groping Multitudes.  
So bright a Glory shall He dart around,  
The dazzling Deluge shall the Sun confound,  
Absorbed and lost in the superior Light,  
The Sun shall hide his Face, in everlasting Night:  
The Moon confounded, through the midnight Shade  
Shall gleam no more, nor feeble Radiance spread.  
For as the accumulated Waters crowd

The unbounded Deep, old Ocean's vast Abode;  
The unbottomed Cavity compactly fill  
With Waves on Waves, Billows on Billows still:  
So shall the Dawn of bright celestial Light  
Overflow the World, and banish ancient Night;  
Through thickest Glooms of Ignorance shall pierce,  
And dart its Luster round the Universe.

The wretched Tribes that walk in Death's dark Shade,  
With Clouds of Ignorance and Guilt overspread,  
Observe the heavenly Ray, with glad Surprise,  
Dart through the hideous Gloom and bless their Eyes.  
(Not so the Tribes beneath the Artic Bear,  
Immured in Ice and Darkness half the Year,  
Rejoice to see the Stranger-Sun appear.)

With brighter Splendors fired, the languid Moon  
Shall shine the Rival of the Noon-day Sun;  
The Noon-day Sun with sevenfold Luster glow,  
And seven Days Light at once the World overflow.

The heavenly Branch from Jesse's sacred Root,  
To bless the World shall germinate and shoot;  
See clad in vernal Beauty, how it blooms!  
And breathes among the Nations rich Perfumes:  
Blest with its Fruit the expiring World revives,  
And Death avoids the Fragrance of its Leaves. §

Overcome with sultry Heat, the fainting Head,  
Reclined beneath its fragrant cooling Shade,  
Shall fresh returning Life and Vigor feel,



And in the Blaze of Noon himself regale.  
When ruptured Clouds in rapid Torrents burst,  
And rush overwhelming with outrageous Gust,  
The verdant Shelter guards the Tempest off,  
That raves in vain around the arborous Roof.  
As with a Cloud Thou dost the Earth regale,  
When Noon-day Beams and scorching Suns prevail;  
As cooling Streams in barren parched Lands  
Refresh the Traveler on the burning Sands;  
As some great Rock with its propitious Shade  
Protects from piercing Beams the drooping Head;  
So shall Thy Grace relieve the helpless Poor,  
When round them Crowds of hostile Strangers roar;  
Their fiercest Rage shall ineffectual fall,  
Like Blasts that ravage round a brazen Wall.  
The Lord of Armies shall his Table spread  
On Zion Mount, and famished Nations feed;  
With heavenly Dainties form the sumptuous Feast,  
Where luscious Marrow shall delight the Taste;  
The generous Grape her vigorous Juice bestow  
And veteran Wine in copious River's flow;  
Wine well refined, extracted from the Lees,  
Seasoned by Time, and ripened fit to please.  
The expiring World shall take what He prepares,  
Appease their Hunger and renew their Years.  
On barren Wastes the eternal Spirit pours  
His sacred Influence in prolific Showers;

The Desart flourishes a fruitful Field,  
And verdant Groves adorn the horrid Wild.  
The Desert blossoms like the fragrant Rose,  
And there sweet Lebanon's flowery Beauty glows.  
There a new Sharon breathes its sweet Perfumes,  
Fresh Lilies spring, and sudden Verdure blooms.  
"The Traveler starts amidst the Wilds to hear  
"New Falls of Water murmuring in his Ear."  
Through the wide Wastes eternal Justice reigns,  
And Judgment blooms through all the dismal Plains;  
Celestial Splendors from the Source Divine  
Through the sad Realms of Desolation shine. \*  
The barren Rocks, the bleak unwatered Hills  
Shall with irriguous Streams refresh the Vales;  
From parched Mountains copious River's flow,  
And on their barren Peaks eternal Verdure grow!  
Surprising Event! Yet we rest assured;  
A God, a God has spoke the solemn Word;  
Even jealous Unbelief shall own it true,  
For what his Lips declare His Power can do.

## *XIX. THE INVISIBLE WORLD.*

Proud Mortal! To what narrow Bounds confined  
Are the most ample Prospects of his Mind!  
Impenetrable Mists and Clouds surround  
His Reason, and its boasted Powers confound.  
He roves, though fixt to this contracted Spot,  
In all the Extravagance of boundless Thought.  
Behind, Before, from the precarious Now,  
(His only Time) he turns his eager View.  
Behind, Eternity's unbounded Main  
Extends infinite Lengths beyond his Ken,  
Before, the same vast Ocean swells again.  
Our Time is but a little floating Isle;  
For wide Discoveries we look round and toil,  
In vain; the Isle lies wrapped in thickest Glooms,  
Where scarce a Gleam of shining Knowledge comes.  
If back we turn our Eyes, we only see

‘Twas some Almighty Power gave us To Be;  
Some bright Invisible, some great Unknown  
Spoke us to Life But a few Years ago.  
Whatever Thou art, Thou Dear Unknown! Receive  
The humble Praise and Love Thy Offspring aims to give:  
For O! Thy innate Glories must outshine  
Their fairest Copies in these Works of Thine.  
Duration, ere that Hour, a Blank appears;  
We’re lost in Mazes of unbounded Years.  
A thousand Contradictions press us round,  
And our unequal Faculties confound  
Yet through the vast Obscure, we see and own  
The Maker reigned on His eternal Throne,  
Self-happy, self-sufficient, Ages unbegun:  
Rich in unmoved Benevolence, planning Schemes  
To vent His Goodness in overflowing Streams  
To Worlds unborn; or then perhaps employed  
In new Creations through the boundless Void  
In long Succession; Worlds beyond our Ken,  
Or to their native Nothing turned again.  
Before me, What unbounded Prospects lie  
Wrapped in the Darkness of Futurity!  
I feel the Pulse of Immortality  
Beat, and assure me I must ever Be;  
But where! Or how!—Here feeble Reason fails,  
The Gospel too but glimmering Rights reveals;  
Assures the good of Joys in Paradise,

And thunders Vengeance to the Slaves of Vice;  
Enough to give fair Virtue winning Charms,  
And shock the Libertine with dire Alarms:  
Yet hides those Scenes, in which with humble Eye  
A Philosophic Mind aspires to pry.  
Eternity! We daily walk upon  
Its slippery Brink, and yet it lies unknown;  
Seems an unbounded Void, a dismal Waste,  
With Shadows, Clouds, and Darkness overcast.  
Fain would we plunge into the vast Abyss,  
And trace ourselves these boundless Mysteries;  
But dark Suspicion gives a sudden Check,  
And strait the Soul recoils and startles back.  
Some daily make the Experiment around,  
But none return to inform us what they've found:  
They leap impetuous from this mortal Shore,  
And dive; and we behold them rise no more;  
As though absorbed in the unbounded Deep,  
Or sunk and lost in everlasting Sleep.  
Some, whose dear Memories now dissolve my Mind,  
Once to my Heart in closest Friendship joined,  
Have gone before, and left me here behind.  
Now in the immortal Colonies they dwell,  
And people Worlds to us invisible;  
Hold Converse with the Tennant's of the Sky,  
The various Nations of Eternity;  
The various Tribes with which Omnipotence

Has peopled Regions through the vast Immense.  
Robinson! Once my Father, Patron, Friend,  
Thy painful Labors now the Prize have gained.  
Now in a happy Somewhere dwells thy Soul,  
Where Rivers of immortal Pleasures roll.  
Though Heaven no doubt is thy blest Residence  
Yet, where, O! Where, through the unknown Immense,  
Dost thou reside? How live, and act, and move?  
And through what blissful Regions dost thou rove,  
Transported still?—O could I soar to thee,  
My Robinson! How happy should I be!  
Is Jesus still the Matter of thy Song?  
The Theme below of thy harmonious Tongue.  
O yes! His Name diffuses Heaven to thee  
Through all the Apartments of Immensity.  
Thy Voice on Earth to Mortals taught His Name;  
Now Angels listen to the glorious Theme.  
Or does thy Soul delight, as when below,  
To attend as Guardian to conduct us through  
This dangerous Wild? With Fellow-Angels wait  
To guide departing Saints to the heavenly Gate?  
Then in thy Turn the generous Care resign,  
And hymn the eternal Throne with Songs Divine?  
Converse with Seraphs, and in equal Lays  
And equal Zeal, proclaim thy Maker's Praise?  
There Carnwath shines, who won the rich Reward  
Ere for the sacred Service quite prepared;

Obtained the Prize before he felt the Toil,  
And reaped his Harvest ere he tilled the Soil.  
He left the Theologic Subtilties  
Of Schoolmen, to be taught above the Skies;  
Blest Change! Where one bright Hour instructs him more  
Than all his painful Studies could before.  
O! Could'st, thou now thy Thoughts to me relate,  
As oft thou did'st, while in this mortal State;  
What wondrous Lessons would my Ears surprise,  
What unexpected Scenes before me rise,  
And in one shining Moment make me wise!  
Or were the Curtains of the Flesh withdrawn,  
That Immortality might round me dawn;  
What Prospects wonderful, immense and new  
Would instantaneous crowd into my View!  
Beings, and Worlds, and Regions hid before,  
And the Great Author, whom those Worlds adore!  
Well; I ere long the Experiment must try,  
And launch into unknown Eternity.  
The moldering Bank that now supports my Weight,  
Ere long must fall, and sink beneath my Feet:  
Then though I catch and hold and strive to stay,  
My Doom is fixed, my Soul! Thou must away;  
Thou must away, some distant Worlds to explore,  
And see the Vanities of Earth no more;  
Must howl with Fiends, or with blest Angel's shine,  
In endless Torments, or in Joys Divine.

The Interval, at most, is short between  
The present fleeting Now, and Worlds unseen.  
Forty or fifty Years, perhaps a Day,  
Or Hour, will break this tottering House of Clay.  
Alarming Thought! Almighty Grace prepare  
My shuddering Soul to fly she knows not where.  
All-gracious God! Be Thou my Resting-Place;  
Heaven flows exuberant from Thy smiling Face  
Through the Immensity of unknown Space.  
O! Be Thou mine; and wheresoever I dwell  
All will be Heaven, though in the Gloom of Hell.



## *XX. THE TRIUMPHS OF CHRIST'S DYING LOVE.*

1     Thee, Great Incarnate Godhead, Thee  
The Almighty Father's equal Progeny,  
Thee, Jesus! Dear and venerable Name,  
Partaker of our frail Humanity,  
Thee shall my Voice, my Harp, my Muse and Quill proclaim.

2.  
Wake my Harp! Melodious sing  
On each sweetly-sounding String  
The illustrious Conquests of the Savior-King:  
In loud majestic Accents sound  
His Triumphs over the Powers below,  
When He gave Death his everlasting-Wound,  
Led the infernal Monsters bound,  
And crushed the direst Terrors of His Foe.

3.

While Ages unbegun  
Their vast, their boundless Circuits run,  
On His eternal Father's loving Breast,  
Self-happy, infinitely blest,  
Lay the coeval Son;  
In the immense Jehovah satisfied,  
And the entire Divinity enjoyed.

4.

There lay the filial Godhead, till He saw  
From the superior Sky,  
Adam transgress his Maker's Law,  
Hell yawn with greedy Jaws to draw  
Into one Ruin all his wretched Progeny.  
He saw the Flashes of vindictive Fire  
Break out impatient from the Throne,  
And the Angelic Messenger  
Wave his dread Weapons, that high-brandished shone,  
Thirsting for human Blood; while Hell grew proud  
With Hopes of Prey, and laughed prophanelly loud.

5.

He saw, and (O amazing Grace!) He loved,  
With Pity all his inmost Bowels moved,  
And Love omnipotent began to glow:  
"Shall all the human Race, He cries,  
"Fall an eternal Sacrifice,  
"And grace the Triumphs of the insulting Foe?  
"What! Shall Hell's Tyranny destroy

"My Father's Image, Work and Boast,  
"And riot in malicious Joy  
"To see His favorite Creature lost?  
"No! Rather confounded,  
"With Chaos surrounded,  
"Be Heaven, Earth, Ocean and all!  
"The Wheels of Nature break,  
"The Universe to horrid Wreck,  
"Blended, disjointed, fall!  
"I will overcome, or be overcome,  
"Wrench from the Tyrant's Hand his royal Rod,  
"Or yield him mine, and own him God:  
"My chosen Race shall live, or I will share their Doom.  
"By the dread Life of the Divinity,  
"Possessed by the eternal Three,  
"I swear and ratify the firm Decree."

6.

He said; He rose, and bowed  
The crystal Heavens, and down he came:  
Aside He threw the Grandeur of a God,  
In mortal Regions fixed his low Abode,  
And clothed Himself in feeble human Frame.

7.

He gave His Heart to the vindictive Sword  
Without a murmuring Word;  
Patient, His sacred Breath  
At the Arrest of Death

Resigned—O! The dire Terrors of the Thunderer's Wrath!  
O! The immense Severity  
Of the dread Law! The dire Reward  
Of Sin! The Vengeance of the flaming Sword  
Of Justice! O! Dire Fruits of the forbidden Tree!

8.

Come, Sinners, see your Savior dead,  
And weep around His Tomb:  
Your Hope, your Joy, your All is fled;  
For Oh! Your Champion's overcome.  
For you in Conflict with the Powers of Hell  
He nobly fought, but ah! He fell.

9.

But whither, raving Muse? Refrain;  
Nor with ignoble Tears profane  
The Triumphs of the God.  
The Dying Champion overthrows  
The united Force of all His Foes;—  
In louder Strains proclaim His Victories abroad:

10.

Sing how through the Shades of Death  
He entered the dark Realms beneath,  
Where Hell and Horror rage:  
The infernal Powers perceived the God,  
And the grim Monsters roared aloud,  
Nor durst the well-known Arm engage.

11.

Old Chaos trembled, Satan fled,  
And in Hell's deepest Pit sought to conceal his Head.  
"In vain thou fleest, the Conqueror cries,  
"Fly to the Bottom of the Abyss,  
"This vengeful Thunder-Bolt shall dart thee through,  
"And to the lowest Deep pursue."

He said, and strait the glowing Bolt He threw:  
New Horror seized the trembling Host,  
Blasted with vengeful Flame;  
For well they mind the Day when Heaven they lost,  
And Thunder drove them to the infernal Coast,  
To Darkness, Pain and Shame.

12.

He broke the Instruments of Pain,  
Engines to torture, guilty Ghosts;  
And strewed them over the gloomy Coasts;  
The Rack, the Wheel, the adamant Chain  
He tore and scattered over the infernal Plain,  
Unstung the Monster Death, and bid him hiss in vain

13.

But see! The Conqueror leaves the Glooms  
Of Hell, and climbs His native Sky:  
Around His Head victorious Laurel blooms,  
And Triumph sparkles in His Eye:  
He drags the Tyrant of the Gulf profound  
At His triumphant Chariot bound.

14.

Heaven celebrates a Jubilee,  
And shouts aloud His glad Return;  
The heavenly Choirs proclaim His Victory,  
And with unusual Rapture burn.  
His Triumphs all the Harps on high,  
His Triumphs Mortals grateful sing;  
The Universe joins in the Harmony,  
And Stars, and Earth, and Seas, with His loud Triumphs ring.

# *XXI. THE OBSTINATE SECURITY OF SINNERS LAMENTED.*

1     Unhappy Man, allured by Sin,  
Still drinks the deadly Poison in;  
And though exposed to endless Woes  
Still lolls secure in dull Repose.  
Though Thousands daily from his Side  
Are snatched by Death's resistless Hand,  
And hurried to the infernal Land;  
Yet still he lets his fleeting Moments glide  
Unheeded by; still busily employed  
In Chase of Toys; and while bright Prospects rise  
Through false Futurity, and charm his Eyes,  
Death unexpected comes; the Prospects fly  
Like vanished Smoke that once allured his Eye,  
And all his flattering Expectations die.—  
Not so the deathless Soul; but torn

Reluctant, from her ancient Seat,  
She sinks tormented and forlorn  
Into the Flames she once could scorn,  
But now bewails, alas, too late!

2.

What Eye can view the mournful Scene,  
And not dissolve in Tears!  
Ah! Who shall warn unthinking Man,  
And fill his Breast with useful Tears?  
Warn him!—'Tis all in vain;  
He scorns the Tears that human Pity sheds;  
Nay, laughs at all the melting Arguments  
Which Love Divine itself invents;  
Nor loves the Savior though for him he bleeds,  
And dies in Tortures, Agonies and Pain!

3.

Ah! What can Thy poor Servant do?  
See, here he sits in fruitless Grief!  
While thoughtless Mortals all around  
Perish with Mercy's charming Sound  
Loud in their Ears; perish just in his View,  
And he looks on, but can give no Relief!  
A feeble Mortal's Breath  
Cannot speak Life to them that sleep in Death.

4.

Then since I can't prevail  
To snatch my Fellow-Men from Hell!



Since heedless of Dissuasives, down  
The dread Descent with full Career they run,  
Nor pause at Mercy's loudest Call;  
Let me retire, and over them weep  
As down they sink into the fiery Deep,  
And my poor Tears pursue them as they fall!  
5.

Maker of Souls! To Thee, once more to Thee  
I turn my interceding Cry!  
See how Thy wretched Progeny  
Madly destroy themselves and die  
By Thousands in Thy Sight!  
O! Let Thy Sovereign Grace appear,  
And stop them in their mad Career;  
Turn them from the frequented Path  
That leads unerring down to Death  
And everlasting Night.

## *XXII. PENITENTIAL SORROWS.*

1     With bleeding Hearts, and gushing Eyes,  
With deep Repentance and Surprise,  
We take a tedious, sad Survey  
Of Sins of Heart and Lip and Way.

2.

Early we lest the sacred Road  
That leads to Bliss, prescribed by God;  
And rashly run a long Career  
Toward the dark Regions of Despair,

3.

Our very Nature's all unclean,  
All ruined and defiled by Sin:  
And filthy Currents from that Source  
Have flowed with an incessant Course.

4.

The God that taught our Lungs to heave,  
And still gives Rebels Leave to live;  
Whose Bounties have perpetual flowed;  
Ah! We have grieved that Gracious God.

5.

The Terrors of the fiery Law  
Could not alarm our Hearts with Awe:  
Nor would these stubborn Hearts be won  
Even by the Gospel of the Son.

6.

Our guilty Ears heard all around  
His melting Invitations sound;  
And Jesus too, with Groans and Blood,  
Such unrelenting Rebels wooed.

7.

And yet we live! Amazing Grace!  
Nor yet quite desperate in our Case;  
The Savior still, with heavenly Charms,  
Stands calling Sinners to his Arms.

8.

Jesus! We yield! No more, no more  
Will we offend Thee, as before,  
Here, Lord! Submissive at Thy Feet,  
We for Thy sovereign Pleasure wait.

9.

O Thou Almighty, injured Name!  
Overwhelmed with Grief, and flushed with Shame,

Prostrate before Thee, see we lie!  
Frown us not from Thee, lest we die.

10.

O may that Blood we once could slight  
Wash our polluted Spirits white!  
Then shall Thy Praise sound loud in Heaven  
For guilty Worms on Earth forgiven.

## *XXIII. SELF-DEDICATION.*

1 To Him that formed this mortal Frame,  
And still inspires my Lungs to heave,  
From whom my nobler Spirit came,  
My Flesh, my Soul, my All I give.

2.

When Heaven, and Life, and All were lost,  
Jesus redeemed them, with his Blood;  
Great was the Ransom, vast the Cost,  
The Blood of an incarnate God!

3.

And can my stubborn Heart withstand  
The Invitations of His Love!  
No; I resign me to His Hand,  
And to His soft Embraces move.

4.

Yes, my dear Jesus, here I give  
All that I am and have to Thee;  
To Thee I'll die, to Thee I'll live;  
No other Lord shall govern me.

5.

Let not a Motion of my Heart,  
From Thee once venture to depart;  
But bound with lasting Bands of Love,  
O! Let me, let me never remove.

## *XXIV. SIGHT THROUGH A GLASS, AND FACE TO FACE.*

**T**he Channel of Thy Word conveys  
The sweet Instructions of thy Grace;  
And sacred Emblems, through the Sense,  
Strengthen our Faith with Evidence.  
My infant Days were wholly Thine,  
Devoted by an early Sign;  
And at Thy holy Table still  
I bind myself to do Thy Will.  
Once more I purpose to renew  
The Tie, and promise to be true.  
Once more beneath Thy Cross I'll sit  
Weeping, and gladly dedicate  
My Soul, my Days, my All to Thee,  
Who groaned away Thy Life for me.  
Through various Types and Shadows dart  
Thy Glories on my ravished Heart;

While far above created Sight,  
Thou sit'st enthroned on Hills of Light.  
But say, shall Types and Figures still  
The Glories of Thy Face conceal?  
While these thick Shades Thy Beauty shroud,  
It breaks but faintly through the Cloud.  
I love Thine Image in a Glass;  
But Oh! To see Thy naked Face!  
Thyself I long, I pant to see;  
I turn mine Eyes in Quest of Thee.  
Where is that dear, incarnate God,  
That once on Earth made His Abode?  
That Jesus, who upon the Tree  
Languished, and bled, and died for me?  
Ah! Will my Savior now be shy,  
Whose Love excited Him to die?  
He found me when I sought him not;  
And will he not be found, when sought?  
The Glories of Thy Face display,  
Though Life should for the Vision pay.  
O! Let me die, oppressed with Light,  
Rather than live without the Sight.



## *XXV. THE LAW AND GOSPEL.*

1     With conscious Fear and humble Awe,  
I view the Terrors of the Law;  
Condemned at that tremendous Bar,  
I shrink, I tremble, and Despair.

2.

But hark! Salvation in my Ears  
Sounds sweetly, and dispels my Fears:  
Jesus appears, and by His Cross  
Fulfils His Father's broken Laws.

3.

Jesus! A Savior! Dearest Name!  
By Him alone Salvation came;  
Terror, Destruction and Despair,  
Where ever I look besides, appear.

4.

Adam, my Head and Father fell,  
And sunk his Offspring down to Hell:  
And the dread Sword of Justice waits,  
To guard me from the heavenly Gates.

5.

Unnumbered Crimes of dreadful Names  
Call loud for everlasting Flames;  
And all the Duties I have done  
Can neither merit, nor atone.

6.

Yet weak and guilty as I am,  
I fix my trust on Jesus' Name.  
Jesus, whose Righteousness alone  
Can for the deepest Crimes atone.

7.

On Him, my Soul, on Him rely;  
The Terms are fixed—Believe, or Die.  
Thee let the Glorious Gospel draw,  
Or perish by the fiery Law.

# *XXVI. CHRIST THE BELOVED AND FRIEND OF HIS CHURCH.*

1. Let Others let their Passions rove  
Round all the Earth, from Shore to Shore;  
Since Jesus is my Friend and Love,  
My utmost Wish can grasp no more.

2.  
His Glories have allured my Eye  
And into Love transformed my Heart;  
To Him my tenderest Passions fly;  
Jesus! Nor shall they ever depart.

3.  
Upon His Friendship I rely,  
Still of His tender Care secure;  
My Wants are all before His Eye!  
Nor can they overcome His Power.

4.

His Presence fills unbounded Space;  
My heavenly Friend is always nigh:  
Full of Compassion, rich in Grace;  
Touched with the tenderest Sympathy.

5.

Faithful and constant is His Love,  
And my ungrateful Conduct hides:  
Safe to the happy World above  
The meanest of His Friends He guides.

6.

Amid the Agonies of Death,  
And Terrors of the Final Doom,  
He saves them from Almighty Wrath,  
And leads the helpless Pilgrims home.

7.

O may an everlasting Flame  
Of Love possess my grateful Mind!  
And my last Breath adore His Name  
Who condescends to be my Friend!

## *XXVII. THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE.*

1     Arm thee in Panoply Divine,  
My Soul, and fired with Courage rise;  
A Thousand Enemies combine  
To obstruct thy Progress to the Skies.

2.

Infernal Darts perpetual Fly,  
And scatter various Deaths around;  
Around thee Thousands daily die,  
And none escape without a Wound.

3.

The World presents her tempting Charms,  
And wears the Aspect of a Friend,  
Yet ah! She carries deadly Arms,  
And all her Smiles in Ruin end.

4.

But Oh! The Flesh! That latent Foe!  
That treacherous Enemy in my Breast!  
'Tis hence proceeds my Overthrow,  
And hence I'm conquered by the rest.

5.

Through Troops of potent Enemies,  
Through hostile Snares, and Fields of Blood,  
If I expect the Glorious Prize,  
I must pursue my dangerous Road.

6.

But ah! How can a feeble Worm  
Obtain so hard a Victory?  
Alas! I perish in the Storm,  
And helpless fall, and bleed, and die.

7.

The glorious Prize stands full in View,  
But Deaths and Dangers stop my Way:  
Thou glorious Prize! Adieu, adieu!  
Here, Cruel Foes! Come, seize your Prey.

8.

But hark! An animating Voice  
Majestic breaks from the upper Sky:  
"Courage, frail Worm! Live and rejoice;  
"I have procured the Victory.

9.

"Suspended on the accursed Tree,  
"I crushed the Might of all thy Foes:

"Dying, I spoiled their Tyranny,  
"And triumphed over them when I rose.

10.

"This Arm that props the Universe,  
"And holds up Nature's tottering Frame,  
"Can all surrounding Harms disperse,  
"And safe protect the feeblest Name.

11.

"The Captain of Salvation deigns  
"To lead the Van, and guard thy Way:  
"And since thy conquering Leader reigns,  
"The infernal Powers shall miss their Prey.

12.

"In Me confide; from Me derive  
"Courage and Strength to keep the Field:  
"In Crowds of Death then Thou shalt live,  
"And all thy stubborn Foes shall yield.

13.

"The Spirit's Sword victorious wield,  
"And steel thy Breast with Righteousness;  
"Let Faith be thy Triumphant Shield;  
"Thy Helmet, Hope of heavenly Bliss.

14.

"See in my Hands the glorious Prize;  
"This Crown the Conqueror shall wear:  
"Rise then with dauntless Courage rise,  
"And bid adieu to every Fear.

15.

Though sharp the Combat, 'tis but short;  
Victory with active Wing draws nigh:  
"And my brave Soldiers, all unhurt,  
"Ere long shall triumph in the Sky."

16.

Blest Jesus! Fired with martial Zeal  
I arm, and rush into the Fight;  
And though my Weakness still I feel,  
I am Almighty in Thy Might.

17.

Thy gracious Words my Heart inspire  
With generous Zeal for noble Deeds;  
Let Hell and all her Hosts appear,  
My Soul, undaunted, now proceeds.

18.

Satan, affrighted at thy Frown,  
Retreats, despairing of his Prey;  
And all the Flatteries Earth has shewn,  
In vain their treacherous Charms display.

19.

The Flesh, subdued by Grace Divine,  
No more shall triumph over the Man.  
Now, Glorious Prize! I call thee mine,  
Though Earth and Hell do all they can.



## *XXVIII. A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.*

1     Ah! Who can bear this twinging Smart,  
That tortures and corrodes my Heart!  
These guilty Horrors, that molest  
This self-condemned, self-torturing Breast!

2.  
Tremendous Prospects strike mine Eye,  
Through vast, unknown Futurity:  
Grim Death a thousand Terrors wears,  
And ready to arrest appears.

3.  
I view with a distracted Stare,  
The dread eternal Regions near;  
Tortures, and Racks, and quenchless Fire,  
And Shrieks, and Groans, and Torments dire!

4.

The wrathful Heavens vindictive frown,  
And Thunders murmur to be down,  
To blast a Worm that durst provoke  
Omnipotence to give the Stroke.

5.

Surmises, Fears and Jealousies  
In this self-conscious Bosom rise;  
And pressed with Guilt my Spirits sink,  
When I allow myself to think.

6.

But ah! This giddy rambling Soul,  
Ere a few fleeting Moments roll,  
Some vain enchanting Toy admits,  
And her unhappy Case forgets.

7.

Amusements or the intrusive Care  
Of this vain World, my Thoughts ensnare:  
My solemn Resolutions fly,  
All lost in thoughtless Levity.

8.

But ah! The Agony returns;  
Again my Spirit pines and mourns;  
Again dire-boding Fears surround  
My shuddering Soul, and deeply wound.

9.

A frightful Thought will sudden dart,  
And, unexpected, pierce the Heart.

Fain would I shun these shocking Views,  
But Conscience restless still pursues.

10.

A cheerful Aspect I assume,  
But all within is dismal Gloom:  
Or if I lose the inward Pain  
A Moment, ah! It gnaws again.

11.

I leave this gloomy Solitude,  
And mingle with the unthinking Crowd;  
There trifle, talk, and laugh awhile;  
But ah! The Anguish will recoil.

12.

In Crowds and Noise the guilty Mind  
Some anxious Intervals will find:  
Guilt whispers Terror in the Breast,  
And interrupts the transient Rest.

13.

Oh! Misery 'til now unknown!  
I am a Self-Tormenter grown:  
Nor can I my Accuser shun,  
Unless I from myself could run.

14.

Oh Sin! Is this the dire Reward  
For all thy wretched Slaves prepared!  
Are these, alas! Are these the Fruits  
Of all my pleasing vain Pursuits!

15.

Ah! Had I kept the narrow Road,  
Where the blest Few enjoy their God:  
Then all serene, unmoved with Guilt,  
These Horrors I had never felt.

16.

Oh! Can a guilty Wretch obtain  
A Balm to ease this twinging Pain?  
Or must he always feel the Rod  
Of Conscience, and an angry God?

17.

Jesus! If any Help remains,  
It flows from Thy dear bleeding Veins:  
Nothing can please an angry God,  
Or angry Conscience, but Thy Blood.

18.

Oh! Dare I yet with wishful Eyes,  
Look for Salvation from the Skies?  
Oh! Will that Blood my Sins have spilt,  
Relieve my Mind, and wash my Guilt?

19.

All gracious Savior! Oh! Remit  
A Rebel prostrate at Thy Feet:  
He has no other Place to fly;  
If die he must, here let him die!

20.

Say, shall that Hand that patient bore

To be by Nails and Torments tore,—  
Oh! Wilt Thou now, vindictive stretch  
That Hand to crush a humble Wretch!

21.

No! Blessed Jesus! Rather slay  
These Sins that led my Soul astray:  
O make my Heart and Conscience clean,  
And give me Heaven and Peace within!

## *XXIX. LOVE TO GOD FOR HIS HOLINESS.*

1    Come, Holy Spirit! Come, enflame  
Our lukewarm Hearts with sacred Fire:  
May all our Passions, to Thy Name,  
In Transports most refined, aspire.

2.  
May Love sublime our Hearts possess,  
From every selfish Mixture free,  
Fired with the Charms of Holiness,  
The Beauty of Divinity.

3.  
We see the Beauty of Thy Grace,  
That saves rebellious Worms from Hell:  
But ah! The Charms of Holiness  
We dimly see, and faintly feel.

4.

Selfish and mercenary Views  
Are with our purest Passions mixt:  
A nobler Passion, Oh! Infuse,  
On Holiness supremely fixed.

5.

Thus in the glorious Worlds on high,  
Where Holiness is most adored,  
The Angelic Choirs incessant cry,  
"Thrice Holy, Holy, Holy Lord!"

6.

Refine our Hearts, inspire our Tongue,  
And We in humble Notes below  
Will imitate the heavenly Song,  
And echo "Holy, Holy," too.

## *XXX. BROTHERLY LOVE.*

1      Descend, Thou mild, pacific Dove!  
Thine Image on our Hearts impress;  
Transform our Passions all to Love,  
And sooth our Discords into Peace.

2.

In Arms of warm Benevolence,  
Teach us to embrace all Human Kind;  
And like the Sun, around dispense  
The Wishes of a generous Mind.

3.

We are but Parts of one great Whole,  
And may our Hearts, enlarged, exult  
To scatter Bliss from Pole to Pole,  
And still the General Good consult!

4.



But may the beauteous Sons of Grace,  
Attract a more peculiar Love;  
And the fair Charms of Holiness  
A more exalted Passion move.

5.

Where over our Father's Image shines,  
And his dear Lineaments appear,  
May we approve the heavenly Lines,  
And our Affections center there.

6.

May sympathetic Sorrows fill  
Our Hearts, to view another's Grief;  
And may our Hands be open still  
To bless the Needy with Relief.

7.

May we our Brother's Fault conceal,  
And mild and inoffensive live;  
And may our Bosoms ever feel  
That God-like Pleasure, to forgive.

8.

O gentle Love! Celestial Guest!  
Visit a jarring World again;  
Come dwell forever in our Breast,  
And there triumphant ever reign.

9.

Then while the noisy Sons of Strife  
Are with tumultuous Passions whirled,

We shalt enjoy a peaceful Life,  
Amid a murmuring, jangling World.

# *XXXI. THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN.*

1     Happy the Man whose peaceful Breast  
A smiling Conscience charms to rest;  
Whose pious Heart and Life express  
The living Characters of Grace!

2.

He humbly claims the Promises,  
And calls their richest Blessings his:  
In Peace he lives, and dies in Peace,  
And peaceful soars to heavenly Bliss.

3.

Thrice happy he! But ah! I feel  
The Twinges of Suspensions still;  
Dark boding Fears and wild Surmise,  
And Jealousies perpetual rise.

4.

Perplexed with various Characters,  
My Mind is tossed 'twixt Hopes and Fears:  
Here some kind Tokens rise, but there  
The dismal Counter-Tokens glare.

5.

I humbly hope, in some bright Hour,  
My State is safe, my Heaven secure:  
But soon the shining Moment flies,  
And soon tremendous Glooms arise.

6.

Thus in a dubious Twilight lost,  
With various Waves, alternate, tossed,  
Over Life's tempestuous Sea I roam,  
Uncertain where shall be my Home:

7.

Uncertain where my Soul must go,  
To Fields of Joy, or Lakes of Woe:  
Before me the vast Prospect lies,  
But covered with Uncertainties.

8.

I view the Ocean vast and wide,  
Where Time unites its ebbing Tide;  
Now, hoping, would the Adventure make,  
Now trembling, shuddering startle back.

9.

Confounded, now back shrinks my Soul,  
To see the fiery Billows roll:

Now Rivers of immense Delight  
Glide copious by, and tempt her Flight.

10.

O! If these Doubts were chased away,  
How calmly then, without Dismay,  
I'd launch into the boundless Deep,  
And fearless take the final Leap!

11.

But what if in some dark Abode,  
Banished forever from my God,  
My Soul should pine in endless Pain!—  
Ah me! This Fear returns again.

12.

Say, my dear God, and ease my Heart,  
O wilt Thou frown, and say Depart!  
Depart!—ah! Where, Lord! Shall I flee?  
I have no other Bliss but Thee.

13.

Thou seest my Passions to Thy Name  
Kindle, though with a feeble Flame  
And shall a Spark of heavenly Love  
From its own native Regions move?

14.

O! Shall the meanest of Thy Friends,  
Forever dwell with hateful Fiends?  
No! Let me claim the humblest Place  
In the bright Mansions of Thy Grace.

## *XXXII. CHRIST'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN.*

**S**ee there, overwhelmed with Agonies,  
Prostrate, forlorn, my Jesus lies!  
Panting, moaning, groaning there,  
On the cold Ground, in midnight Air:  
No Friend, no kind Assistant near;  
No sympathizing Comforter;  
But all alone, unheard, unknown,  
To the dark Night He makes His Moan.  
Malignant Spirits glare around,  
And with their fiery Arrows wound:  
Trying to add, with spiteful Power,  
New Horrors to the dismal Hour;  
And in his tortured Soul to rear  
The gloomy Standard of Despair.  
The frowning Heavens tremendous lower,  
And murmuring Thunders dreadful roar;

Then shot by sudden Vengeance dart,  
And tear and ravage through His Heart.  
To his own Heavens He lifts his Eyes,  
Father, remove this Cup, he cries,  
This deadly Cup of bitter Dregs,  
Mingled with Wrath and Pains and Plagues;  
Dear Father, O! Remove this Cup;  
Or some kind Cordial in it drop:  
Yet if thy Will decree it just,  
That drink it I, or Sinners must,  
Rather than they should taste the Gall,  
See, Father; here I drink it all:  
Thy Will it is I should atone,  
And, Father! Let Thy Will be done!  
The Father hides his wonted Smiles,  
And all his Soul with Horror fills,  
Transferring on his darling Son  
The heavy Crimes by Mortals done.  
See! Pressed beneath the dismal Load,  
He sinks, he falls, although a God!  
A mortal Sweat bedews His Limbs,  
And down his sacred Body streams;  
See! How it bursts through every Pore,  
Mingled with Lumps of clotted Gore!  
His hollow Groans with mournful Sound,  
Echo through all the Garden round.  
While thus I view, with gushing Eyes,

My dear Redeemer agonize,  
With crushing Sorrows overborn,  
Methinks I see him wishful turn  
His Face, where Love and Anguish mix,  
And full on me His Aspect fix;  
And from His Tongue methinks I hear,  
These moving Accents strike my Ear.  
"See, Sinner! See the cruel Load  
"With which thy Sins oppress thy God!  
"Thy Sins extort these hollow Groans;  
"For thee, for thee thy Jesus moans!  
"Thee so ungrateful, so unkind!  
"So prone to cast Me from thy Mind!  
"And can thy stubborn Heart endure  
"To grieve, forget and slight Me more!  
"Oh! Canst thou hear these Groans and Cries,  
"And thy kind Savior still despise!  
"Come, Sinner, view these Clots of Gore,  
"And say, Wilt thou forget me more!  
"Say, Canst thou view this mournful Scene,  
"And strait return to Sin again!  
"What! Leave thy Savior bleeding here,  
"And go"—  
—Forbear! My Lord, forbear!  
Thy Words overcome me! Jesus, stay!  
Or here I faint and die away.  
It kills me, Lord! But to suppose



That ever I should treat Thee thus!  
No! Rather stop my guilty Breath!  
To treat Thee thus is worse than Death.  
If I such Love as this forget,  
Then let my Heart forget to beat:  
If ever I slight Thine Agony,  
In that cursed Moment let me die;  
Or if I cease to love Thy Name,  
Relapse to nothing whence I came:  
If Sin be any more my Joy,  
Me, with my own Consent, destroy.  
Sin!—When I hear the hated Name,  
With keen Revenge my Passions flame.  
Ah me! That ever my foolish Breast  
Indulged the Monster as a Guest!  
Caressed him in my dearest Part!  
Ah, this Reflection tears my Heart!  
What, blessed Lord! What shall I do?  
I own I have indulged Thy Foe;  
With my own Life the Monster fed,  
That made Thee groan, and sweat, and bleed,  
O could my Actions be undone!  
O were the Race of Life to run!  
Ye mis-improven Hours! Return,  
Which now with flowing Tears I mourn,  
Vain, fruitless Wish! The restless Wheel  
Of Time moves onward, onward still;

Nor can Entreaties bring it back  
To roll again its former Track.  
Blest Jesus! Take each future Hour;  
'Tis all the Amends within my Power:  
O may Thy Praise in grateful Song,  
Forever echo from my Tongue!  
O may Thy Love enflame my Soul,  
While everlasting Ages roll!

# *XXXIII. SPIRITUAL INACTIVITY LAMENTED.*

1. Jesus! What eager Zeal inspired  
Thy Heart to die for me!  
O that my languid Breast were fired  
With equal Flame to Thee!

2.  
But how has Sin benumbed my Soul!  
My Heart how hard and dead!  
My softest Passions, ah how dull!  
Heavy and cold as Lead.

3.  
Mean Time inferior Toys can charm,  
And all my Passions move:  
A Friend or Relative can warm,  
And melt my Heart to Love.

4.

My Thoughts refuse to soar to Thee,  
But full of Vigor spring  
To chase some gilded Vanity,  
Some useless trifling Thing.

5.

Blest Jesus! I would rather lose  
My thinking Faculty,  
Than waste my Thoughts on Trifles thus,  
And never think of Thee.

6.

If my soft Passions be not Thine,  
My Passions are a Pain;  
Let me the Power of Love resign,  
Rather than love in vain.

7.

Lord, 'tis a Curse to live and breathe,  
Unless I live to Thee;  
If I must lie thus stupid, Death  
Is better than to Be.

8.

Thy quickening Energy exert,  
Blest Jesus! And bestow  
A living Soul, a tender Heart  
To serve my God below.

## *XXXIV. ON A SUDDEN DEATH.*

1     How thin the separating Wall  
      'Twixt Time and vast Eternity!  
How sudden thoughtless Mortals fall  
Into that dark unbounded Sea!

2.

The Soul, this Moment vain and gay,  
Eager pursues the Trifles here;  
The next, reluctant torn away,  
In a dark Somewhere to appear.

3.

Death still pursues us every-where,  
And unsuspected haunts our Steps;  
And while we think no Danger near,  
Sudden upon his Prey he leaps.

4.

The Monster in close Ambush lurks,  
And steals upon us unawares:  
Still undermining ceaseless works;  
Still near, yet distant still appears.

5.

My sudden Fate perhaps may seal  
The melancholy Truth I write;  
And ever I farther move my Quill,  
The vital Pulse may cease to beat.

6.

How strange, how solemn the Surprise!  
Hurried at once to Worlds unknown!  
Snatched from this Scene of Vanities,  
And placed before the Eternal Throne!

7.

The lower Skies, the Earth and Men  
All in a Moment out of Sight!  
While Wonders of the World unseen  
In endless Prospects rush to Light!

8.

Great God! And do I heedless step  
On this tremendous Precipice,  
Perhaps to take the final Leap,  
Unwarned, ere this short Moment flies!

9.

And does Eternity depend,  
And all its infinite Affairs,

On every fleeting Hour I spend,  
And waste upon inferior Cares!

10.

Alarming Thought! My Soul, awake!  
Prepare, prepare to meet thy God!  
These mortal Regions soon forsake,  
And often view thy last Abode.

11.

Almighty Grace! In youthful Prime  
Teach me to improve my fleeting Time;  
That whensoever the Summons come,  
I may receive a joyful Doom.

12.

Then if perhaps a sudden Death  
Should unexpected stop my Breath,  
My Soul at once, with glad Surprise,  
Shall find herself in upper Skies.

13.

Thrice happy Death! To drop the Chain  
Of Life, without a lingering Pain!  
To spring at once to endless Life!  
Without a tedious dying Strife!

# *XXXV. THE CONFLAGRATION.*

1     Now Harmony adjusts the World,  
And charming Order round me smiles:  
Ere long Confusion shall be hurled,  
And break and shatter Nature's Wheels.

2.

The Day approaches, (dreadful Day!)  
When Chaos shall resume his Place?  
This mighty Frame of Things decay,  
And vanish in the general Blaze.

3.

Ye azure Arches, lost in Smoke,  
Shall shrink, affrighted, to a Scroll:  
The Pillars of high Heaven be broke,  
While Lightnings glare from Pole to Pole.

4.



Thou too, accursed terrestrial Ball,  
That saw the Son of God expire;  
Thou and thy Works shall perish all,  
And sink in universal Fire.

5.

Horrendous Sight! A World in Flames!  
Thunders loud rumbling through the Air!  
Dire Lightnings flashing fiery Streams,  
And glaring red and vengeful there!

6.

Mountains wide-bursting! Liquid Fire  
In glowing Torrents rushing down!  
Rocks, Stones, fierce Minerals, Sulphur dire  
Melting, the Plains and Valleys drown!

7.

Old Ocean of its Moisture dried,  
Receives the fierce descending Tide:  
Thither dissolving Worlds retire,  
And form a boundless Lake of Fire.

8.

With loud Atenean Thunders roars  
The Globe, with Earthquakes tossed and torn;  
Palaces, Cities, Castles, Towers,  
Towns, Woods and Plains united burn.

9.

And where! O where shall Sinners then  
Flee from the universal Wreck!

Aghast they view the burning Main,  
And plunge into the sulphureous Lake.

10.

There overwhelmed, the rebel Worms  
Lie ever, ever, ever lost!  
Beaten with everlasting Storms,  
On fiery Eddies whirled and tossed.

11.

But ye dear Saints, ye pious Few,  
Jesus shall screen your feeble Souls:  
Safe from on high your Eyes shall view  
The burning Earth and melting Poles.

12.

Jesus shall live when Nature dies;  
And while he lives, you must be blest:  
Behold he forms new Earth and Skies,  
Where you eternal Years shall rest.

13.

Let Earth and Skies, convulsed and torn,  
To common Desolation fall;  
Mountains dissolve, and Oceans burn,  
God is your Bliss, your Heaven, your All.

# *XXXVI. SEPARATION FROM GOD THE MOST INTOLERABLE PUNISHMENT.*

**F**ountain of Good! 'twas thy creating Breath  
Inspired the boundless Wish, the immense Desire,  
That gasps for perfect Bliss. The panting Soul,  
That still unsatisfied, still restless, breaks  
Through Nature's Bounds, with dark implicit Aim  
Unconscious points to Thee, the unbounded Source  
Of all Perfection? So young Ravens cry,  
And gape to catch the Bounty from Thy Hand,  
By Instinct taught, unconscious what they ask,  
And whence the Blessing comes. So the parched Earth,  
When brazen Skies deny the timely Rain,  
With silent Importunity implores,  
Unknowing, the soft Shower: her gaping Chinks  
Her withering Verdure, and dejected Flowers  
Mourning present the silent Prayer to Thee.

These innate Wishes, that impatient break  
Through all the Limits of created Joys,  
Direct their Flight to Thee: the Extravagance  
Of these immense Desires, proclaim aloud  
My Soul can never be happy but in Thee.  
In Thee alone her Faculties find Room,  
In Thee alone expatiate unconfined.  
Through all the Affluence that Earth can yield,  
Through all the Canopy of Heaven contains,  
Through all the Ranks of heavenly Forms, she breaks  
In Quest of Thee. In Quest of Thee she roves  
In all the Anxieties of Discontent,  
In all the distant Prospects Hope can shew,  
And all the wild Excursions of Desire.  
For Thee she heaves the Sigh; for Thee dilates  
The boundless Wish; Thee under some Disguise,  
Though oft deluded with fallacious Views,  
Restless pursues; and short of Thee despairs  
To find true Bliss, proportioned to her Wish.  
Let all the richest Blessings Nature yields  
Diffuse themselves around me, with Disdain  
My Soul would all the insipid Trifles spurn:  
Through all the gay Temptations still look out  
For some superior Bliss; look out to Thee,  
My only Happiness, with wishful Eyes,  
And find my Heaven in Thy propitious Smiles.  
O! May I hope, when the long Drudgery

Of Life is past, to rise and soar to Thee?  
There all my boundless Cravings satisfy,  
And fill my vast Capacities of Bliss?  
But gloomy Guilt obscures the glimmering Hope;  
Whispers a thousand Horrors, and forebodes  
Eternal Separation from Thy Face,  
In the waste Realms where Desolation frowns,  
Unconscious of Thy Smiles. Tremendous Thought!  
Oh! Horrors! Horrors!—An immortal Soul,  
With ever gnawing and immense Desires,  
Torn off from all the Pleasures Sense can yield,  
Without a God! Without a Drop of Bliss  
To quench her raging Thirst! Cursed from the Earth,  
A restless Fugitive through the dark Voids  
Of boundless Space, and the thick Glooms of Hell!  
Haunted with horrid Furies! Racked and torn  
With guilty, dire Reflections! Not an Eye  
To pity! Pining, panting, gasping still  
For Bliss in vain, with hungry wild Desires!—  
I sink beneath the Prospect! Horrors chill  
The vital Stream, and palpitate around  
My agonizing Heart!—My Maker God!  
My Father! Savior! Every dearest Name!  
Oh! Wilt Thou doom me to a long Exile  
From thy propitious Face, my only Bliss!  
See! Lord, a Supplicant before Thy Throne  
Importunate I bow; for Grace I cry!

For Grace to fit my Spirit to enjoy  
Thee as my final Portion and my All.

## *XXXVII. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES - I.*

**N**o! Never, never can this Heart  
From Thee her God, her All, depart.  
Indulge my Boldness; I protest  
In Thee alone I must be blest;  
I'm fixed, resolvedly fixed, in this  
Thyself, or nought shall be my Bliss:  
I swear by the eternal Three,  
I will accept no Bliss but Thee.  
Put me not off with golden Toys,  
With empty Honors, sensual Joys.  
O! Do not thy poor Servant doom  
To Crowns and Empires in Thy Room.  
I loath the Happiness that springs  
From these and all created Things,  
Sooner may Gold or Dust assuage  
The parched Pilgrim's thirsty Rage,

When under torrid Libyan Skies,  
On burning Sands, he faints and dies:  
Sooner, than these inferior Toys  
Can fill me with substantial Joys.  
Since of Thy Love I tasted first,  
All other Pleasures I disgust:  
Since first Thy Beauties charmed my Sight,  
Created Charms yield no Delight.  
O! If I'm doomed Thy Frowns to feel,  
Why didst Thou ever Thy Smiles reveal?  
Why with Thy Glories charm my Eye,  
If I must see and never enjoy.  
O! Why torment me with the Views  
Of Bliss I must for ever lose?  
O! If I must forever dwell  
Absent from Thee, why did not Hell  
Devour me, ever I felt this Flame?  
This ardent Passion to Thy Name?  
Then had my Soul never understood  
The Loss of an infinite Good;  
Nor languished in eternal Pain,  
Pleasures once tasted to regain;  
Nor in tormenting Anguish pined  
To call Thy once felt Smiles to Mind.  
But hence each dire Surmise! Away I  
My gracious God would not display  
His Glories to enflame my Heart,



If I were destined to depart.  
He would not cruelly deride  
My Soul with Bliss to be denied;  
Nor kindle Love to pant in vain,  
And rack me with augmented Pain.  
No! His own Self will satisfy  
The Wishes He has raised so high.

*EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES II. Illegible in the original text.*

## *XXXVIII. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES – III.*

**L**ife's but a Load, a tedious Pain,  
A Curse, if I must live in vain.  
Shall I my Hours inactive spend?  
Or thus be active to no End?  
O Thou who didst these Powers infuse,  
Exalt them to a noble Use.  
Direct my Thinking Faculty  
No more to rove, but fix on Thee:  
Allure my Will Thyself to choose,  
And all inferior Good refuse!  
O! Teach my Passions to aspire  
To Thee, and burn with heavenly Fire?  
My Conscience to perform its Part  
On Thy Tribunal in my Heart  
My Tongue to celebrate Thy Grace,  
And every Breath to utter Praise;

My Eyes to see Thy Glories shine  
Through this fair Universe of Thine;  
My Ears to hear with rapturous Joys,  
The charming Music of Thy Voice:  
This Spark of weak poetic Fire  
Refine, and teach it to aspire:  
Let all I have, and all I am  
Be sacred to Thy glorious Name,  
Thus train me to the Employ above,  
Ere to these Regions I remove.

## *XXXIX. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES – IV.*

**M**y God! I'm pleased that Thou art All in All,  
Should Nature totter, and to Nothing fall.

My Being sprung from thy creative Breath,  
And on Thy Will depend my Life and Death.

Let Heaven, Earth, Men and Angels cease to Be,  
I've Bliss enough, I've all I wish in Thee;

Thy single Self's complete Felicity.

I'm happy, since my God must always live,  
Though Vanity is my Prerogative.

This Spark of Being Homage pays to Thee,  
Thou boundless Fountain of all Entity;

Rejoices in the unbounded Plenitude  
Of Thy Perfections, Thou infinite Good!

## *XL. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES – V.*

O h! Be Thy glorious Name exalted high,  
Through all the Spaces of Immensity.  
Let the wide World, let Heaven and Earth and Hell,  
In various Ways, Thy wondrous Glory tell,  
And thy unbounded Excellence reveal.  
O! Raise me to the blissful Realms on high,  
Not to be glorified, but glorify;  
Not to be honored, but to honor Thee,  
Not there to reign, but bow the adoring Knee.  
Give me a Crown, to cast before Thy Feet,  
Raise me, to bow the lower at Thy Seat.  
Exalt and dignify a groveling Worm,  
A humbler Adoration to perform;  
For while my Situation is so low,  
I cannot with profound Prostration bow.

## *XLI. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES – VI.*

**T**hat I'm the vilest Sinner, Lord! I own  
In penitent Prostration at Thy Throne;  
Worthy an endless Monument to be  
To thousand Worlds not to revolt from Thee:  
But did not Jesus die? This is my Plea;  
And has that charming Name no Force with Thee?  
Insult my Groans, reject my loudest Cries;  
But Oh! Canst Thou the Savior's Blood despise?  
Say, are my Crimes to such a Vastness grown,  
That even the Blood of Jesus can't atone?  
O no! Then let Thy boundless Mercy shine  
With Splendors equal to these Crimes of mine.  
But if Thou doom me from Thy blissful Sight,  
And frowning say, "I've in him no Delight;  
"Lo, here I am!" —But oh! The most undone  
And wretched Thing Omniscience ever has known.

The Thought is Death! 'tis Hell! My Spirits break!  
I'm overwhelmed!—I'm lost!—I cannot speak!

## *XLII. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES – VII.*

**R**epulse me not; for whither shall I flee?  
The Words of Life are found alone with Thee.  
Here slay me at Thy Feet, if die I must;  
Dying, in Thee I'll fix my humble Trust:  
Dying, erect my Eyes to Thee in Prayer,  
And in a suppliant Agony expire.  
Repulse me not; 'tis in my Savior's Name,  
Not in my own, Thy Grace I humbly claim:  
And when in that prevailing Name I pray,  
Thou art obliged, Thou canst not say me nay.  
Hast Thou not bound Thyself with Thy own Mouth,  
In the Engagements of eternal Truth?  
And shall Hell's Powers have Umbrage to blaspheme  
Thy sacred Truth, and charge Thy spotless Name  
With Breach of Faith? No! Thy Veracity  
Shall shine from all infernal Censure free,



Exemplified, in Thy good Time, in me.

Thou wilt not let me seek Thy Face in vain,

Sigh to the Rocks, and to the Winds complain.

The Blessings Grace does wisely now deny,

Thou wilt in the most proper Hour supply.

## *XLIII. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES – VIII.*

Ah! What avail these warm poetic Strains,  
These feigned Raptures of the fawning Muse  
If cold and languid still my Heart remains,  
And my soft Passions to concur refuse?  
O! If I love Thee not, I'm self-condemned,  
This Hand the Sentence has transcribed and sealed;  
Thee Greatest, Loveliest, Best, I've oft proclaimed,  
And Thy unrivalled Glories oft revealed.  
And am I still a Stranger to Thy Face?  
Are these ecstatic Flights affected Zeal?  
Forbid it Heaven! Or mine's the direst Case  
Of any perjured Wretch on this Side Hell.  
O! Let the Flame of pure Devotion rise  
Above the Muse's most exalted Flight;  
And mingle with the Ardors of the Skies;  
While my poor Lays in vain attempt the Height.

## *XLIV. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES - IX.*

**W**hy should I, in the Rage of wild Despair  
And Agony, my Flesh thus gnaw and tear?  
Why sink desponding under hopeless Grief,  
And in my trembling Hand repose my doubtful Life?  
O say, my God, may not a Sinner dare  
Confide in Thee, and sooth his wild Despair?  
O yes! Though Thou shouldst crush me in the Dust  
Like some vile Poison, still in Thee I'll trust,  
In Thee I'll trust, hope in Thy gracious Word,  
Though Thou should'st slay me with Thy vengeful Sword.  
But oh! So mean a Worm's beneath Thy Wrath;  
Unworthy by Thy Hands to suffer Death;  
Beneath a Look of Thy avenging Eye,  
Of Thy immense, exalted Majesty.  
Ah! Will Thy God like Vengeance condescend  
A fleeting Leaf, the Sport of Winds, to rend?

Or will the Majesty of Justice claim  
A wretched Victim of so mean a Name;  
And of dry Stubble form a feeble Flame?

## *XLV. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES - X.*

**T**hough luscious Figs no more shall bloom and grow,  
Nor bending Vines with juicy Clusters glow;  
Though the fat Olive should our Hopes beguile,  
And burst no more with usual Floods of Oil;  
Though Barrenness should blast the fertile Field,  
And Earth no more her vital Fatness yield;  
Though Death should plunder every crowded Stall,  
And Flocks and Herds in common Ruin fall;  
Though meager Famine stalk across the Land,  
And tear our Blessing from our grasping Hand:  
In Thee, my God, I'm blest, I'm happy still; §  
Nor should the Loss of these vain Trifles feel,  
But at the general Devastation smile.  
Abstract from these, Thou art sufficient Bliss,  
But without Thee, how poor a Portion these!

## *XLVI. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES - XI.*

1     Yes! Soon the iron Hand of Death  
Must seize my Frame, and stop my Breath,  
And snatch my Soul away.  
Methinks I feel its Agonies—  
Anhelant, panting, struggling lies  
The agonizing Clay.

2.  
Suffused with mortal clammy Sweat;  
Irregular the Pulses beat;  
The Lips hang quivering down;  
The Eyes, depressed and hollow, swim  
In dizzy Mists; the vital Stream  
Laggs in its mazy Round.

3.  
A deadly Cold from every Part

Benumbs my Limbs, invades my Heart;  
I feel it creeping on!  
A ghastly Pale deforms my Cheeks;  
And now my falling Jaws relax;  
And now I'm gone! I'm gone!

4.

In a deep Groan the Spirit flies,  
Unfettered by the former Ties  
Of cumbrous Flesh and Blood—  
But, oh! My Soul, what unknown Place  
Through the Immensity of Space  
Shall be thy last Abode?

5.

'Till this important Doubt is solved,  
My Soul in anxious Fears involved,  
No solid Rest can know:  
Ah! What's the World and all its Toys  
Compared to everlasting Joys,  
Or everlasting Woe?

6.

Oh, when I bid the World adieu,  
Should Guilt, the Fury, still pursue—  
Shocking, overwhelming Thought!  
Or should the infernal Tyrant, Sin,  
Forever reign and rage within—  
Intolerable Lot!

7.

Great God, though one continued Cloud  
My fleeting Day of Life should shroud,  
Yet be my Evening clear!  
Horror my shuddering Soul invades  
To enter Death's tremendous Shades,  
If Thou be absent there.

8.

Be Witness Heaven; I here protest  
My Mind shall never, never rest  
'Till I Thy Presence gain.  
I'll pray away my vital Breath,  
Begging Thy gracious Smiles in Death;  
Nor cease 'til I obtain.



## *XLVII. EXCLAMATIONS AND SOLILOQUIES - XII.*

O h! While eternal Ages roll,  
Be Thou supreme, above Control!  
Be absolute! Thy sovereign Will  
Be done! For oh! 'tis righteous still.  
Thy Favors where thou wilt, dispense;  
With calm, implicit Confidence,  
I own Thy Reasons just and good,  
Even where they are not understood  
By caviling Wit. Oh! Be Thy Will  
The Rule of Thy Procedure still.  
Though perverse Mortals, blind and vain,  
Thy Dispensations dare arraign;  
Yet self-approved, self-guided, rule  
The Affairs of this dependent Whole:  
Nor do Thou stoop to satisfy  
The haughty Worms that ask Thee why.

For me, behold! Helpless stand  
At the Disposal of Thy Hand:  
A Piece of mean polluted Clay,  
Thou may'st or choose or cast away:  
Thou may'st absolve my flagrant Guilt,  
Or bind it on me, as Thou wilt.  
Though Thou should'st blast me with Thy Frown,  
Thy sovereign Justice I must own;  
Thy Justice I must still acquit,  
Against myself Thine Advocate.  
But (Oh! How shall I praise Thy Name!)  
Submission here Thou dost not claim:  
The Wheels of Duty and Self-Love  
In the same Tract harmonious move.  
Thy dread Authority requires  
Me to escape eternal Fires:  
Thy Law commands me to be blest;  
My Duty is my Interest.  
My Misery is my willful Sin,  
Forbid by that kind Will of Thine.  
Accomplish then Thy sovereign Will,  
For oh! 'tis good and righteous still.  
Thou art just, whatever become of me,  
And all Thy Ways from Censure free.

## *XLVIII. A DESCRIPTION OF A STORM.*

1     Now when the War of Elements is over,  
And Heaven's Artillery cease to flash and roar;  
Calmed by His sovereign Nod, who bids  
The ethereal Forces rage or fall;  
Who in dread Majesty serenely rides  
On wild unruly Hurricanes and Storms;  
While all their most outrageous Forms  
Tamely obey His mighty Call,  
To purge the Air, or shake this guilty Ball,  
To scathe the sturdy Oak, or blast audacious Worms:  
Now recollect my Muse, the solemn Scene,  
And rouse the sleeping Tempest up again.

2.

The solemn Scene appears! My Eyes  
Behold the glomerating Deluge rise,

And heavy Oceans floating up the Skies:  
First, distant Murmurings from the West  
With rumbling Sound break through the Air,  
And bid the World, Prepare;  
Strait anxious Expectation heaves the Breast,  
Presaging Horror stares intense,  
And, shuddering, through the Window looks from whence  
The vapory Magazines advance:  
When lo! The aerial Oceans roll,  
Lour deeper still, and gain upon the Sky;  
And on the West-Wind's Wings, above Control,  
Draw nearer still, and nearer as they fly.  
Now Fear begins to palpitate,  
And looks, and looks with doubtful Eye,  
If haply the collecting Tempest yet  
May dissipate, or pass obliquely by.

3.

But faster still the thickening Clouds advance,  
And cast a darker Frown;  
With fiercer Glare the livid Lightnings glance,  
And blustering Winds rush on with hollow, solemn Sound;  
Now through the bending Forests sweep,  
And rock the trembling Dome;  
Blend Rows of stately Trees in one long shattered Heap,  
Whirl Clouds of Dusk on high, and wrap  
All Aether in a wide deep-louring Gloom.  
A dismal Twilight frowns; the Sun

Through the thick Dust in vain emits his Ray;  
Absorbed in all-surrounding Clouds, the Day  
Sickens and faints at Noon.

4.

And now above and all around  
Majestic Thunders roll with murmuring Sound,  
Convulse the Air, and rock the Ground.

Now rumbling in the dark aerial Hall,

Till scattering far away

The horrid Murmurings decay,

And die away and fall.

Now quick as Thought, to the keen Flash

Sudden succeeds the horrid Crash

Crushed terrible, shocking the Heart;

Amazed, aghast, and stunned we start,

Entranced, and doubtful if we live,

And the oppressive Shock survive.

5.

Still the dire Lightning with malignant Glare

In flaming Curves wheels through the Air;

Here a fierce Streak of angry Fire

Sudden in various Windings cuts the Cloud;

Another here, another there

Darts on the winking Eye, till all the Hemisphere

One wide-expanded Sheet of flashing Flame appear;

While Peals on Peals still undistinguished crowd,

And Heaven's eternal Cannons roar aloud.

6.

Now conscious Guilt the sudden Bolt awaits,  
And hardly hopes to escape;  
Struck with dire-boding Horror, palpitates,  
And startles at each bursting Clap.  
The Sword of Justice brandished high  
Draws fiery Circles through the Air;  
And as the curving Lightnings fly,  
And threatening Thunder murmurs through the Sky.  
The hardy Bosom pants, and thinks Destruction near  
Ye hardy Sinners, yield and bow;  
Nor dare Omnipotence to strike the Blow;  
Heavy, but O! Divinely slow!  
Say, are you able to withstand  
The almighty Vengeance of that Hand  
Which whirls the Bolt, and guides it where  
The flaming Embassy to bear,  
To rive the stately Pine, or burn and tear  
The aspiring Fabric, or with sulphureous Breath  
Blast the audacious Wretch with sudden Death.

7.

Happy the guiltless Conscience now!  
Serene he hears his Father's thundering Voice;  
Amid the Terrors calm, he dare rejoice,  
When loudest Thunders rear, and fiercest Tempests blow;  
His smiling Eyes with solemn Joy survey  
The harmless Lightnings flash along and play,

And his Almighty Guardian's Power display.  
Should angry Fire and Thunder rend  
Heaven's Convex, and in one Confusion blend  
Heaven, Earth, and Sea and Air:  
Should all the Wheels of Nature break,  
He undisturbed would view the general Wreck,  
Still safe and happy in the Thunderer's Care.

8.

Now toward the South the pregnant Clouds  
Retire and leave the middle Sky,  
Discharging still prolific Floods  
On Hills and Valleys, Fields and Woods,  
And drop down Fatness as they fly.  
The winding Curves worm through the distant Cloud,  
And Sheets of Flame expand abroad;  
Now shut and open, open still and shut,  
And an immense Effulgence flash about.

9.

Now safe from Harm, Presumption hears  
The distant Vengeance roar;  
Pale Guilt renounces all her Fears,  
And palpitates no more:  
Mistaken Guilt! To erect thy Crest,  
And proudly boast the Danger past;  
Behold a blacker Tempest gathering last,  
The Skies with deeper Horrors overcast,  
And louder Thunder roar in the last Trumpet's Blast;

Behold the Judge! He comes! He comes  
In vengeful Flames and stormy Glooms!  
The Clouds His Chariot, and the Winds His Wheels;  
See! How before him Lightnings flash and play!  
Hark! Thunders loud proclaim, Prepare The Way!  
As down He rides from the eternal Hills.

10.

Supreme, almighty, venerable Name!  
Proprietor of Earth and Sea and Sky,  
Commander of the Magazines of Flame,  
That in the aerial Regions lie;  
With Awe profound Thy Greatness I adore,  
Who wings the Storm, and bids the Thunder roar,  
And keeps the unruly Elements subject to Thy Power.



*XLIX. ON HEARING OF  
THE REV. MR. SAMUEL  
BLAIR'S DESPERATE  
ILLNESS BY COMMON  
FAME.*

What melancholy News does distant Fame  
To anxious Crowds and my shocked Ears proclaim!  
With what strange Panic is each Bosom struck,  
As though some Pillar of the Heaven's were broke!  
Alas! Is Blair, the great, unrivaled Blair,  
Most dear to All, but oh! To me more dear;  
My Father! Tutor! Friend! Each tender Name  
That can the softest, warmest Passions claim!  
My faithful Guide to Science and to Truth,  
In the raw Years of unexperienced Youth:  
Ah! Is the heavenly Man just on the Wing,  
And to his native Skies about to spring?  
About to leave us mourning here below,  
And among us share the Remnant of his Woe?

Ah! Does he pine away in hectic Fire,  
Anhelant, panting, ready to expire?  
Oh! Cruel Fame! Why didst thou haste thy Flight,  
To bring the inauspicious News to Light?  
Ah! Cruel Correspondents! To reveal  
The dismal Tidings Love would fain conceal.  
Why did not Tears blot out the Intelligence?  
Or your sad Hands tremble to guide your Pens?  
Oh! Had you not the dismal News divulged,  
My Mind had still the pleasing Dream indulged;  
Still feigned my Blair with Health and Vigor blest,  
With some grand Purpose laboring in his Breast;  
In studious Thought pursuing Truth divine,  
'Till the full Demonstration round him shine;  
Or from the sacred Desk, proclaiming loud  
His Master's Message to the attentive Crowd;  
While dubious Truth with bright Conviction glares,  
And coward Error shrinks and disappears;  
While Quick Remorse the hardy Sinner feels,  
And Calvary's Balm the bleeding Conscience heals.  
But now alas! The sweet Delusion's fled;  
My Blair is dying, or perhaps is dead;  
Or hastening to the calm celestial Shore,  
Or safe arrived, and all the Dangers over.  
Even now perhaps, released from cumbrous Clay,  
His Soul expatiates in immortal Day;  
Serenely basking in the Smiles of God,

With Fellow-Angels in their blest Abode.  
Pardon, Blest Shade! The Ravings of my Love,  
That would recall thee from the Bliss above;  
Would wish thee down in these sad Realms again,  
From Choirs of Angels to converse with Men;  
Ungrateful Men, who broke thy Heart, and long  
Withstood the strong Persuasion of thy Tongue;  
Baffled thy Love, and Vanity pursued,  
Deaf to thy Calls, deaf to a Savior's Blood!  
Oh! Might'st thou from the Dead return again.  
And that strange unknown World disclose to Men!  
Apostles from the Dead sure could not preach in vain.  
Superfluous Wish! What could'st thou teach us more,  
Than thy divine Discourses did before?  
But if in mortal Climes be still thy Stay,  
O! Can our Prayers the fatal Hour delay?  
Prevail with Heaven to spare thy sacred Breath,  
And snatch thee from the impending Hand of Death?  
Come, Saints, your Importunities renew;  
Try what the united Force of fervent Prayer can do.  
Believing Prayer, eternal Truth has sworn,  
Shan't pant in vain, but bring a rich Return:  
'Twill gain this Blessing from propitious Heaven;  
Or greater, if a greater can be given.  
"Thou sovereign Arbiter of Life and Death,  
"At whose almighty Nod we catch and yield our Breath;  
"Whose fiat organized our mortal Clay,

"And can repair it in its last Decay,  
"And from the greedy Grave snatch the expected Prey:  
"Oh! Hear the bursting, deep, united Groan,  
"That from ten thousand Hearts arises to Thy Throne;  
" Restore our Prophet!—Best for him, 'tis true,  
"To die; but oh! What shall poor Zion do?  
" Zion whose Foes are many, Friends are few!  
"See! How she languishes in plaintive Grief;  
"By Blair's Recovery only hopes Relief.  
"Where shall the wounded, tortured Conscience find  
"A healing Hand so skillful and so kind?  
"Where heavenly Truth so firm an Advocate?  
"Or dubious Minds so certain Conduct get?  
" Restore our Prophet, and his Health renew;  
"For oh! We need him more than Heaven can do.  
"There Myriads of Thy Ministers of Flame  
"Perform Thy Orders and adore Thy Name.  
"But here, alas! How few prepared like Blair  
"Thy sacred Message to the World to bear?  
"With equal Skill eternal Things to shew?  
"And guide Thy Churches militant below?  
" Restore our Prophet, Lord! And in his Stead  
"Let worthless me be to the Skies conveyed.  
"Thy earthly House such useless Lumber may  
"Resign; but oh! Snatch not our Blair away."  
But even his Worth now bids us to despair,  
And threatens the Denial of our Prayer;

His Worth that makes his sacred Life so dear.  
So great, so heavenly, so divine a Mind  
Demands Employment of a nobler Kind.  
What Earth could teach, he learned, and now must rise  
To a superior Class above the Skies.  
Too much refined, in this dark World to bear  
The humble Place of Zion's Minister;  
Heaven calls him to sustain some nobler Function there:  
With Gabriel to perform the Orders given,  
And bear Jehovah's Errands through the Vast of Heaven;  
Prompt as the angelic Armies to obey,  
Fervent and bright and vigorous as they.  
Heaven kind to him, will not consent to hear,  
Nor curse him with the Answer of our Prayer.  
Oh! Did my cruel Distance but allow,  
I'd pay the last sad Offices I owe:  
With tender Hand support thy fainting Head,  
Wipe off thy mortal Sweat, and weep around thy Bed;  
I'd view thee struggling in the Grasp of Death,  
And share the Anguish of thy parting Breath;  
Thy languishing Francisca's Grief allay,  
As drowned in Tears, she hovers over thy Clay;  
Thy sacred Relics to the Grave attend,  
And cry, "There softly rest, my Father, Brother, Friend!"  
But ah! These Eyes shall see my Blair no more,  
'Till my poor Pilgrimage, like his, is over,  
And we both meet on the eternal Shore.

Yet though this cruel Distance lies between,  
Officious Fancy paints the dismal Scene;  
Even now the mournful Images arise,  
And various shapes of Sorrow stalk before mine Eyes.  
There lies my Blair, suffused with clammy Sweat,  
Ghastly and pale; the Pulses cease to beat;  
The Springs of Life relax; the purple Stream  
Stagnates; his Eyes in misty Darkness swim;  
A deadly Cold creeps on from every Part,  
Benumbs his Limbs, and steals upon his Heart:  
And see at length in a long deep-fetched Groan  
The Soul's dismissed, and flies to Worlds unknown.  
Deluged in Sorrow, there Francisca stands,  
And twinged with parting Anguish, wrings her Hands;  
Like the poor widowed Turtle, vents her Grief,  
Her Tears indulges, and despairs Relief;  
Surveys the World, but sees no Refuge there,  
Her only Confidence in Heaven and Prayer.  
Thy infant Train, whose little Tongues had scarce  
Learned to pronounce thee Father, at thy Hearse,  
Or round thy Bed, burst their full Hearts in Sighs,  
While the big Tear sincere swells in their Eyes,  
And their loud filial Grievs break out in piteous Cries.  
Through thy once favored Flock the Sorrow spreads,  
And desperate Grief a thousand Hearts invades:  
Each fears lest 'twas his Guilt that did provoke  
Incensed Heaven to give the dreadful Stroke.

Now among the Remnant of the sacred Train  
They search for one to fill his Place in vain.  
Compared with him, the most exalted Tongue,  
But mangles Truth, and does the Subject Wrong.  
From others heavenly Truths insipid seem  
To them whose Relish was refined by him.  
Still farther spreads the extensive Grief around  
Each Bosom feels the Anguish of the Wound,  
And bursting Groans from Breast to Breast rebound  
Zion her Loss through all her Temples wails,  
And spreads the dismal Echo round her Hills.  
To this far Clime the mournful Sound shall roll,  
And with fresh Anguish twinge my bleeding Soul.  
His dear sad Memory on my Heart shall rest,  
While vital Breath inspires my heaving Breast;  
Mix with my tenderest Thoughts, and often move  
The doleful Anguish of bereaved Love,  
'Till our Reunion heals the Wound Above.

Since the Writing of this, I have received the melancholy News of the Reverend Mr. Blair's triumphant and joyful Transition through the Valley of the Shadow of Death— My Father! My Father! The Chariots of Israel, and the Horse-Men thereof!