

T H E
AMERICAN PREACHER;
O R, A
COLLECTION OF SERMONS
FROM SOME OF THE
MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,
NOW LIVING,
IN THE UNITED STATES,
O F
DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS
IN THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

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AN ORDINATION SERMON.

B Y

J O H N J O L I N E. A. B.

Minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Mendham, New-Jersey.

I T H E S S. V. 12, 13.

And 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.

IT hath pleased God, in his benevolence, to reveal in the scriptures, the way in which he can, consistently with his perfections, shew mercy to any of the fallen race of men. That this revelation may be the better understood, and more effectually answer the designs of his grace, he has instituted an order of men as his ambassadors, whose business it is, to open divine truths; and, by every moving consideration, to enforce them upon the minds of their fellow-creatures. The care of immortal souls is so far committed to them, that, if any, under their inspection, perish through their neglect, they must be accountable for it. Hence

arises a near and sacred relation between the people and their respective pastors. They are joined together by the ties and obligations of religion, which give them a mutual right in one another, in different respects.

Since the design of our assembling this day, is to constitute such a relation and union between a minister and this congregation, it will not be improper, to open the several duties, which will, in consequence of it, be incumbent on each. To do which, I have chosen, as the foundation of my discourse, the words of the apostle now read, where we have a brief view of the duty of ministers to their people, and of people to their ministers. *And 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.* These words were indeed intended by the apostle, only to shew the duty of people to their ministers; but, as in doing this, he has at the same time, given the character of faithful ministers, we may, with propriety, from the words, speak of their duty towards their people.

And here we may take notice, *First*, Of the duties to which ministers are called. And,

1. They must *labor* among their people. *Know them which labor among you.* They are elsewhere said to *labor in word and doctrine.*

The discharge of ministerial duties is a laborious work. There is need of great activity and di-

ligence to perform them. Every power of the body, and the mind, must be exerted, and all little enough.

2. They are to rule their people. They are *over them in the Lord*. The same original word, which is here rendered *over*, is translated *rule*, in 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well*. They are not to exercise dominion as temporal lords; but to rule as spiritual guides. They are to superintend the flock, and lead them in the ways of God, by explaining the scriptures to them, and applying divine truths to their several cases. They are not to make and enforce laws of their own; but to interpret and enforce, by various arguments, and their pious examples, the laws of God: for they are *over them in the Lord*. This may be intended, not only to distinguish them from civil magistrates; but to denote also that they are but ministers under Christ, receiving their appointment from him, and obliged to govern the church agreeably to his laws, and with a view to his glory.

3. They must also *admonish* the people.

It belongs to them to put their people in mind of their duty, and not only to give them good counsel, and commend what is virtuous in them; but to reprove them for whatever they see amiss in their temper or conduct.

Secondly, We have in the text the duties of people to their ministers.

1. They are to *know* their minister, by which in general is meant, that they are to *to own him in his office*;—particularly, they are duly to attend upon and regard his teaching—submit to his good government and discipline—reward his labors, and affectionately remember him at the throne of grace. To *know* a person is often in scripture to be taken for both the exercise of the will and affections, and the external actions.

2. They are fervently to love their minister. Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. They ought always to set a great value on the office of the ministry, and if a minister faithfully discharges it, they ought to love his person, and manifest their affection to him in all proper ways; but especially are they to love him on account of *his work*: because the work is in itself honorable, and tends to their own best good both here and hereafter.

Having thus briefly explained the text, we shall now proceed to a particular illustration of the several duties contained in it. And we shall, *first*, consider the leading duties which ministers owe to the people of their charge. In the

First place, it is their duty faithfully and frequently to preach the word of God to them.

This is the chief and most important duty of a minister towards his people. We find that this is the first thing mentioned by our Lord in the com-

mission which he gave his disciples. *Go and teach all nations.* Matt. xxviii. 19.—or as it is in Mark, *Preach the gospel to every creature.* And the apostle Paul says, that Christ sent him, *not to baptize, but to preach the gospel;* that is, it was not chiefly to baptize, but to preach.

Whoever undertakes this work, he is bound, from a regard to the glory of God, and the best good of his fellow creatures, to do it *faithfully.* He is to deliver nothing but what, according to his best judgment, is agreeable to the word of God; and he is to do this in such plain terms as may be understood, by, at least, the generality of his hearers. Indeed, he is to endeavor to adapt his discourses in a great measure to the meanest capacity. And he is not only to preach the truth, but as far as his time and health will admit, he should try to make his people acquainted with the *whole truth;* or, as the apostle said of himself, he should *not shun declaring to them all the counsel of God.*

Those doctrines of the gospel which are humbling to the pride of man, he must insist upon with all plainness. He must reprove, with becoming boldness and faithfulness, all sorts of vices, and oppose such errors as he knows to be prevalent. He who wilfully conceals any truth of God's word, or refuses to publish it because it might be displeasing to some, or on the same principle, connives at prevailing immoralities and heresies, is chargeable with great unfaithfulness to his Lord and master, and with high injustice to his fellow creatures.

He defrauds them of the truth, or attempts to do it, and withholds that sincerity and honesty, which every man has a right to expect of every man, especially, of a preacher of the gospel.

And as a minister is bound to be thus faithful in dispensing the word, so, according to his ability and opportunity, he is to do it *frequently*. *Line* must be *upon line, and precept upon precept*. The great and leading doctrines of the gospel should be often inculcated and urged upon the heart and conscience. Considering the weakness of most people's memories, and the need that all stand in of having their affections quickened, the same truths may be often insisted upon, agreeably to the example of the apostle Peter. *Wherefore, says he, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth; yea I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.* 2 Pet. i. 12, 13. And also the example of the apostle Paul—*To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* Phil. iii. 1. To the same purpose our Saviour observes, that *the scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, is like an householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

That preaching may lawfully be *frequent*, appears not only from reason, but from the practice of the apostles, and from Paul's injunction on Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 2. *Preach the word, be instant*

in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. No reasonable objection can be made against much preaching, but that a minister may not be able to perform it, consistently with his duty in other respects. Some no doubt are bound in duty to preach more than others, as they may have more knowledge, greater gifts and talents, and more time and health to devote to this business than others: for *to whom much is given, of them shall much be required*:—but the right of people to claim of a minister abundant preaching, and other duties of his office, does not arise so much from his knowledge, gifts, health and time, unless he owes these, under God, to them, as from the *ample support* they give him.

If they free him from all necessity of entangling himself with worldly labors and cares, he ought in justice to them, to give himself *wholly* to the work of the ministry, that is; to study, meditation, preaching, catechising, and all other ways in which he may promote their spiritual and eternal happiness, according to the best of his abilities: but if they afford him only a scanty maintenance, they can reasonably expect no more than labors in proportion; especially, if he be obliged to apply to worldly business in order to procure a subsistence; for then, his labors in the ministry must necessarily be less than otherwise they might be.

2. It is the duty of ministers to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and

to carry into effect the regular exercise of church discipline; and the people, over whom they are set, have a right to expect the due discharge of these duties; for otherwise they are deprived of those privileges which God has given the Christian church, and in the proper observance of which, they have reason to hope for spiritual blessings to themselves and their offspring. But then it must be observed, that these ordinances are not to be administered to all without distinction. There are certain qualifications necessary in order to give men a right, in the view of the church, to a participation of them. This is plain from those instances where persons were admitted to divine ordinances by the apostles. Of these qualifications, ministers are to judge, and as door-keepers of the church, to deny admittance to those who appear to be destitute of them; for they are not to suffer men, if they can prevent it, to profane those holy ordinances; but when men, who in appearance are qualified, or are visible Christians, apply for admission to ordinances, they ought to be received by the church.

3. It is the duty of ministers sincerely to love and esteem their people, according to their apparent excellency, and to pray for such blessings to descend upon them as they may respectively need.

As the creatures of God, endued with rational and immortal souls, however bad may be their moral characters, and whatever abuses he may re-

ceive from them, a minister is bound to wish them well—to pray that God would bring them to repentance and forgive them—to warn and admonish them of their dangers, and direct them to the remedy in the gospel; but if they treat him according to the dignity of his office—duly attend his ministrations, and appear to embrace the truths which he delivers—if they cheerfully contribute to his support, and are kind and affectionate towards him, he is bound by the laws of gratitude and religion, as well as justice, to esteem them highly, and to do them all the good that lies in his power. In the

4th and last place, it is the duty of a minister to visit his people in their sickness, when they send for him, if he can attend them: I say when they send for him; for though as a friend and acquaintance; or out of mere humanity and charity, he may visit them unasked, yet he is not, I conceive, obliged to do it by virtue of his office. The sick, according to the express direction of the apostle James, are to send for the minister. *Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, that is, for the pastors or teachers, and let them pray over him.* This order, it is true, was given when the apostles had the gift of healing bodily disorders; but it does not hence follow, that it is not as necessary to send for those who may be instrumental in healing the maladies of the soul; for pardon of sin, and peace with God are of much greater importance, and of consequence, deserve

more regard; and if men had as much concern for their souls as they have for their bodies, they would be as ready, in sickness, to apply to a minister for his advice and prayers, as to a physician for bodily relief. And besides, if he makes a general practice of visiting the sick without being asked, it may eventually be the source of prejudice and ill-will to the minister; for when he does not know of the sickness of some, which will, no doubt, frequently be the case when people do not send for him, his not visiting these, as well as others, will be imputed to partiality and neglect. It may also be very useful, and therefore a duty, for a minister who has time, health, and a talent for it, to visit his people from house to house, and seriously to converse with them upon religious subjects—to examine into their spiritual state, and give them such advice, reproof, or comfort, as may appear to him expedient.

Thus we have pointed out the principal duties incumbent upon ministers towards their people.

We proceed, *secondly*, to consider the duties of people towards their ministers. And,

1. It is the duty of the people cordially to love, and highly to honor and esteem their faithful ministers.

Not to mention that love and respect which is due to them, considered as believers in Christ, which is common to them with other believers, I

shall urge two things, on account of which, they are worthy of honor, love, and esteem.

I. On account of the commission and authority, with which Christ has invested them, as his ambassadors.

The office of the ministry is an institution of Christ, and not a human device. It is he who raises up, qualifies, and sends forth men to publish the glad tidings of salvation. Thus we find that he commissioned his apostles, and bid them go forth and preach the gospel to every creature, and promised to be with them alway, even to the end of the world, which must be understood of their successors in the ministerial office, because the first preachers of the gospel were not to continue always in this world. The true and faithful ministers of the gospel now, receiving their commission to preach from Christ, are, therefore, on account of the dignity and sacredness of their office, to be highly respected by men. Hence Christ told his disciples, when he sent them out to preach—*He that despiseth you despiseth me.* The reason why the despisers of these disciples, would be considered as the despisers of Christ himself, was, because they were HIS AMBASSADORS, as they are expressly called, 2 Corin. v. 20, and went forth in his name, and by his authority, proclaiming his laws. Thus we know it is among men. He, that contemns an ambassador from a king, in the execution of his office, is considered as contemning the king who sends him. Now surely to be an ambassador of the

king of kings, and lord of lords, is the highest office that can be sustained by any mortal, and therefore, seeing ministers are so honored by Christ, they ought to be honored by men, and treated according to the dignity of their station.

2. Faithful ministers ought to be loved and esteemed on account of the excellency of the work in which they are employed.

This is expressly asserted in my text. *And esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.* Their work is the most noble and important of any thing in which men can be engaged; for it is to teach men the principles of true religion—to lead them to the right knowledge of God and themselves, and thus, under God, to make them wise and good, and prepare them for the enjoyment of himself, both in this world and the next. As therefore their great business is to plead the cause of God—to vindicate his perfections and the truths of his word, and to promote the best good of their fellow creatures, it plainly follows, that as far as they exert themselves upon proper principles to bring about these great ends, they deserve the affectionate love of mankind. That faithful ministers do promote the best interests of their fellow creatures, and indeed, generally do more towards this than any other persons, seems evident from scripture and experience. The apostle tells us, that God sent him *to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God;* and elsewhere, that it had pleased God, *by the foolish-*

ness of preaching, to save them that believe. This is so much the ordinary way in which God gives men faith, that the same apostle asks, *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?* Rom. x. 14. And experience has abundantly shewn, that the preaching of the gospel, in all ages, has been signally blessed for the conversion of sinners. Three thousand were brought to repentance and faith by the first public sermon after Christ's ascension; and five thousand more soon after, on another occasion; and probably since that time, there have been vast numbers converted by the instrumentality of the preached word, where there has been one converted in any other way. And as ministers are ordinarily the most useful in promoting the spiritual, and, of consequence, the eternal interests of men, so they are also of their temporal interests: for nothing so much conduces to the peace of the mind—the health of the body—honesty and industry, and, of course, the increase of worldly wealth, as true religion. This teaches men to govern their appetites and passions, and to refrain from anger, lust and intemperance; which vices destroy many lives. This gives them composure in all circumstances, and saves from that anxiety of spirit which wastes the constitution, and makes men always unhappy. This makes men just and honest in their dealings, and excites to that application to business, which, with the blessing of the Lord, as Solomon observes, *maketh*

rich. This promotes national prosperity; for the same wise man says, that *righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people.* Seeing then, that gospel ministers are thus necessary and useful, it is but just and reasonable that they should be honored and loved by all, and especially by those who enjoy the benefit of their stated labors.

2. It is a duty which people owe their ministers to attend diligently upon the word preached, and sacraments administered by them.

The duties of preaching and hearing are reciprocal. The former necessarily implies the latter: for if Christ has appointed an order of men to preach the gospel, people must be bound to give it a hearing, otherwise their preaching would be in vain and insignificant. To hear the word, is indeed a duty that people owe principally to God and themselves. He has commanded them, *not to forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is.* And if they forsake this, they neglect their own mercies. They put themselves out of the ordinary way in which God gives repentance and faith: for *faith cometh by hearing,* says the apostle. For any then, who are able to attend upon the preaching of the word, to refuse to hear it; or for Christians to neglect the sacraments, is dishonoring God, injuring themselves, and despising their minister, and through him, despising Christ himself; for *he that heareth you, says Christ, heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.* Surely, if

people believed that in hearing the ministers of Christ, they hear Christ himself, and in neglecting them and their ministrations, they neglect him, they could not so many of them, with quiet consciences, withdraw from public worship and divine ordinances. In the

3d place, it is the duty of the people to obey the doctrines and submit to the counsels and reproofs of their ministers, so far as these are agreeable to the word of God.

This is expressly enjoined by the apostle, in Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account.* And reason itself points out the same; for if God has invested ministers with a sacred office, and constituted them the ambassadors of Christ, then certainly, not only their persons ought to be honored; but their ministrations obeyed for Christ's sake. As then ministers in the execution of their office, are not acting in their own name, and by their own authority; but in the name, and by the authority of Christ, not publishing their own laws and doctrines, but the laws and doctrines of Christ, it is plain that, while they preach the doctrines which Christ has revealed, and reprove and exhort agreeably to his commands, and exercise that discipline which he has appointed, they ought to be obeyed and submitted to from a regard to Christ; for it is Christ himself speaking by them. *As though*

God did beseech you by us, says the apostle, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.



S E R M O N XXII.

AN ORDINATION SERMON,

CONTINUED.

B Y

J O H N J O L I N E, A. B.

Minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Mendham, New-Jersey.

I T H E S S. V. 12, 13.

And 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.

4. **T**HE faithful ministers of Christ have a right to a comfortable temporal maintenance, from those whom they serve in the gospel.

As there is no duty towards ministers more generally neglected at this day than this, and even denied by many to be a duty; and as nothing tends more to the decay of piety in our churches, I shall endeavor, somewhat largely, to illustrate and confirm this particular.

It is indeed very disagreeable for a minister to speak upon this subject, as, in some respects, it may

be considered as pleading his own cause; but since it is a part of *the counsel of God*, none of which we are to shun declaring, and since it is an important part of the subject upon which I am discoursing, and is suitable to the present occasion, I can by no means pass it by unnoticed. Being conscious of doing my duty, I shall therefore, without regarding the reproaches of the ignorant and the profane, now attempt to prove and enforce this point.

I shall begin with the New Testament, and from some passages in it, shall be led to consider what the Old Testament offers on the same subject.

Our blessed Lord, when he sent out his twelve apostles to preach the gospel, let them know that they must be supplied with whatever was necessary for their subsistence, by those among whom they labored. Matt. x. 9, 10. *Provide, says he, neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat;* that is, he deserves a suitable maintenance for the work he doth. And so when he sent the seventy disciples to preach, he encouraged them to expect a support, by telling them, that *the laborer is worthy of his hire.* Luke x. 7. The apostle Paul enlarges upon what our Saviour has briefly asserted. See the 9th chap. of his 1st epistle to the Corinthians, from the 3d to the 14th verse, where he plainly claims a right to subsist by his ministry, and defends it by *natural reason*, the *Mosaic law*, and the *institution of Christ*.

As we are laborers in the gospel, have we not, says he, *power to eat and to drink?* that is, have we not a right to require sustenance of you? *Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife as well as other apostles who are married?* that is, have I not a right, when I please, to take a wife, and lead her with me, and demand a maintenance for her, as well as for myself, from the churches to whom I preach?

The apostle then proceeds by several arguments to prove his claim. And he does it in the first place from reason and the common practice and expectations of mankind.

Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?
Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or, who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

Those who apply themselves to any way of business in the world, expect their living by it. Soldiers, for instance, expect pay for their services. Husbandmen when they plow and sow, plant vineyards or orchards, and dress or cultivate them, it is in hopes of reaping fruit, and obtaining a livelihood of their labors. Shepherds expect to be fed and clothed by the flocks which they raise or tend; and so it is with other laborers. If then it be fit and reasonable that such as these should be recompensed for their services, the apostle concludes, that it is as reasonable ministers should be recompensed for theirs; in which he contradicts

those who scoffingly object it as a reproachful thing, 'that ministers should be paid for their services as tradesmen for their labors and goods;' insinuating, that they hereby make the office of the ministry a mere mercenary thing. The apostle, it seems, thought otherwise, and therefore argues from what is thought just and reasonable in other callings, to that of the ministry, with regard to their maintenance by them. It is no more reasonable that a minister should bestow all his time and strength, in studying, preaching, and other duties of his office without a recompense, than any other person; nay, the obligation on the people to reward their minister honorably, is greater than it is to reward other laborers, because the ministers' calling is higher and more noble, and more advantageous to mankind than any other calling, as has been shewn. Therefore, the apostle says, *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* As much as to say, there is a great difference between spiritual and temporal, or worldly things; the former is of as much more importance than the latter, as the soul is worth more than the body, and therefore, those who promote the interests of the former, are more deserving of esteem and a reward, than those who only promote the interests of the latter. And it plainly shews that people set no great value on spiritual blessings, when they are unwilling to part with a little of their worldly substance to obtain them, and think it a *great thing* to contribute a few

shillings or pounds yearly, to have the inestimable privilege of hearing the gospel preached every sabbath, and of attending upon divine ordinances.

The apostle having proved the right of ministers to a maintenance, *from reason and common equity*, proceeds to do it from some precepts in the JEWISH LAW. *Say I these things as a man? or saith the law the same also?* Is this merely a dictate of reason, and according to common usage only? No, it is likewise agreeable to the law of God: *For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?* As much as to say, the divine intention in giving that law was not so much to provide for oxen, as to teach mankind that all due encouragement should be given to those who are employed by us, or labor for our good. *Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thresketh in hope should be partaker of his hope.* The great design of this law was to teach us humanity towards all with whom we have any dealings, and not to frustrate their hopes of receiving a reward according to the value of their labors; and more especially to encourage the ministers of the gospel in their arduous work, and to intimate that no one should weaken or dishearten them by refusing to contribute cheerfully to their maintenance.

The apostle then argues from the practice under the law, or the old Jewish establishment. *Do ye*

not know, saith he, that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar?

The argument here used is this.—The Priests and Levites who were the ministers of the Jewish church, had their living by their services in holy things, which was allowed them by God's own appointment; and, therefore, it is not to be supposed, that he has left those destitute of a living who are employed in dispensing the word, and the ordinances of the gospel. If those were well maintained who served the tabernacle and temple, shall not the servants of Christ be taken care of, and as well recompensed for the pains which they take about the spiritual and evangelical sacrifices?

It may not be amiss, here, to give a short account of the ample revenues of the Levites and Priests, which were assigned them by God himself. They were to have the first fruits of every thing that the earth produced, which the Jews say were a fiftieth part. They were also to have the first-born of all cattle; and the first-born of men were appropriated to them, which were to be redeemed after the rate of five shekels, which is more than twenty shillings of our money each. Of all the creatures that were killed for sacrifices, which were very numerous, they had a considerable part for their own use. They had a certain portion in the meat-offerings, sin-offerings, wave-offerings, and thank-offerings, besides their vows and free-will

offerings. Moreover, they had the one-tenth of all the earth produced, which must have amounted to a vast income yearly. See Num. xviii. They had also a considerable advantage from the males appearing three times in a year at the tabernacle or temple, at which times none were to come empty handed. Exod. xxiii and xxxiv chapters.

When the children of Israel were come to Canaan, and settled, God appointed that forty-eight cities should be given to the Levites, with large suburbs annexed to them, for keeping and grazing their cattle, as we may see in the beginning of the xxxvth chap. of Numbers. This was a great proportion of land for one single tribe, which was not the twenty-seventh part of the twelve tribes, to possess in that small country.

If we put all these advantages together, we shall find, on a moderate computation, that the Levites had a more plentiful income than any families whatever among the other tribes.

And since God himself appointed them such ample provision, is it not rational to conclude that it is his will, that his ministers under the gospel dispensation, should have a liberal maintenance? for there is the same reason for it still remaining. The reasons why the Jewish priests were so well provided for, were, that they might be freed from all worldly cares, and be entirely at leisure to devote themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, and live in such a manner, as that they might be

respected, according to the dignity of their office, and not be looked upon with contempt by their neighbors. And these reasons still subsist; for ministers are now required, if practicable, to give themselves wholly to meditation, studying, preaching, and other such duties as you have heard; and they are not, if they can prevent it, to suffer any man to despise them.

The duty of supporting ministers, being thus proved by the apostle, from *reason, common equity*, and the *Mosaic law*, he concludes the argument, by asserting it to be also the institution of Christ. *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.* Even so, that is, according to the equity of the Jewish law, Christ also himself hath ordained or appointed, that gospel ministers should be supplied with a comfortable livelihood in the discharge of their office. Our Lord himself enjoined this, when he sent his disciples out to preach, as before observed, and here again by his inspired apostle; and consequently it is the indispensable duty of the people to allow their ministers such an income, as may be, at least, sufficient for the comfortable support of themselves, and of their families too, if they have any; and even for their exercising liberality to the distressed, and hospitality to strangers. This is not a matter of indifference, or what people may do, or omit, as they please; unless Christ's command is of no importance, and we are at liberty to obey, or reject it, at our pleasure.

Among other passages of scripture which might be mentioned, I shall cite only one more for the proof of this doctrine, viz. Gal. vi. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.* Here we see that the apostle enjoins it upon every one who hears the word, to contribute for the support of their teachers. They must communicate to them in *all good things*; that is, they must give their proportion of those temporal things with which God has blessed them, towards making up the teacher's necessary support. And that it highly concerns them to do this, we learn from what the apostle adds in the next verse. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;* as much as to say, do not flatter and delude yourselves, by imagining that you may safely withhold from your teacher a due proportion of your substance; for though you may deceive yourselves, and, by plausible pretences, excuse to your fellow-creatures this neglect, yet, you cannot deceive God by any false pleas; nor will he suffer any to mock, or attempt to impose upon him, with impunity. As you deal with his minister, so he will deal with you—what you sow, you shall reap—your recompense shall be according to your deeds.

Thus I think it appears from the writings both of the *Old and New Testament*, as well as reason, that the ministers of Christ have a right to a sufficient temporal maintenance from those among whom they labor in the gospel, and, therefore, that it is

the indispenfible duty of the people, if they are able, fo to maintain them.

But notwithstanding the fcriptures afford us fuch clear proof of this duty, there are fome who quote fcripture againft it. I muft folicit your patience while I examine a few of their moft weighty objections. The words of our Lord in Matt. x. 8. are often urged in favor of a free gofpel. *Freely ye have received*, fays he to his difciples, when he commiffioned them to preach, *freely give*, by which the objector fupposes is meant, that, as they received freely the gifts of the fpirit, by which they were enabled to preach, therefore they muft *freely give*; that is, *preach without any reward*. But any unprejudiced perfons may fee, if they look into the context, that this is not the fenfe of thefe words. For,

1ft. It is plain that our Saviour is fpeaking of the miraculous gifts of the fpirit. Thefe are mentioned in the former part of this very verfe, *Heal the fick*, fays he, *cleanfe the lepers*, *raife the dead*, *caft out devils*, and then adds, *freely ye have received*, *freely give*. Thefe we fee were miraculous gifts, and they were, indeed, beftowed freely on the apoftles, that is, they had them without any coft or pains; but as minifters now have not thofe gifts, thefe words are not applicable to them.

2. If we fhould grant that our Saviour has a reference to their preaching, neither then do the words apply, in the fenfe of the objector, to mini-

sters at this day; for at that time, the apostles had an uncommon inspiration and assistance of the spirit to assist them in preaching. Both the matter and manner of their discourses were often immediately suggested to them, so that they *spake as the spirit gave them utterance*, and, therefore, needed not to think before hand what they should speak. But now these extraordinary influences of the spirit having ceased, ministers are obliged to spend many years in study, before they can be suitably qualified to preach, and, therefore, cannot be said to receive *freely*, that is, without charges, and, consequently, it is not to be expected, that they should bestow their labors in the gospel freely, or for nothing, whatever the apostles, under inspiration, might be able to do.

3. It is evident from the 10th verse of this same chapter, that our Saviour encouraged his disciples to go forth and preach, by assuring them, that they should be maintained. For *the workman*, says he, *is worthy of his meat*, or as it is in the parallel place, *of his hire*. And, accordingly, he tells them to make no provision for themselves, to *take no money, nor two coats, nor shoes*; but to depend on receiving what was necessary from those among whom they should labor. I therefore add,

4. That if the words *freely give*, be restricted to preaching, they can mean nothing different from what the apostle Peter says, 1 Pet. v. 2. *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the over-*

fight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; that is, ministers should perform the duties of their office, not because they are compelled to it, but freely or of choice, having pleasure in the work--not merely or chiefly for the sake of a living, or any temporal gain, but from a regard to the honor of God and the best good of mankind; but in this sense it does not at all favor the objector.

Again, some seem to suppose that our Saviour meant to disapprove of such ministers as received pay for their labors, where he speaks of *hirelings*, in the xth chapter of John. But it is evident that our Saviour does not call those persons hirelings, because they received hire, or a reward, but because they *utterly disregarded the sheep*, and aimed at nothing but the fleece. Observe his words—*But he that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep.* This surely is not applicable to those who do sincerely regard the honor of God, and the happiness of their flock, and desire a maintenance only that they may be enabled to promote those excellent ends to the best advantage.

Again, it is objected by some that the apostle Paul refused to receive any maintenance for preaching, and, therefore, other ministers ought to follow his example. To this purpose is brought his de-

claration in Acts xx. 33, 34. *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.* And 1 Cor. ix. 12. *We have not used this power, that is, of demanding a recompence for our preaching.*

As to the former of these texts, it is no doubt true, that the apostle did not covet or inordinately desire any man's wealth; but it does not hence follow, that he did not ever desire, on good principles, a supply of his necessities from others; for we find, that *he did actually require and take wages for preaching the gospel*, of which I shall take notice presently. But having no certain subsistence, as he was travelling from one place to another, he was sometimes obliged to apply himself to worldly business, in order to support himself and his companions. And this any minister may lawfully do, in similar circumstances, or where the people, through covetousness, or extreme poverty, do not afford him a maintenance. And in some cases a minister, for particular reasons, may recede from his right of insisting upon a support from those to whom he preaches, though they may be able to give it. This is what the apostle did, when he told the Corinthians, that he had *not used this power*, that is, he had not demanded of them a maintenance, which he had a right to do, as he had been shewing them at large in that chapter: but lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ, or render his preaching ineffectual among them he waved his

right, and chose rather to get a supply from Macedonia. Of this he tells them, 2 Cor. xi. 8, 9. *I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service; and when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren that came from Macedonia supplied.* The reason why the apostle declined taking any thing of the Corinthians was, because there were at that time among them false teachers, who preached without any reward, and gloried in it. Had he received wages of them, those false teachers would have made use of this to his disadvantage, by persuading the people that he was selfish, and preached merely for the sake of worldly gain. He therefore prudently gave up his right, and thereby stopped the mouths of those imposters in that respect, or as he expresses it in the words following those just cited: *But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them, which desire occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.* This was the true reason why he used not his power in the church of Corinth; but his saying he used not his power, implies that he had a power, and might use it, if it were prudent, and so we find, in other cases, he did use it, as has been already observed. In the

5th and last place, it is the duty of the people constantly and fervently to pray for their ministers.

We find that the apostle Paul frequently enjoined this upon those to whom he wrote. Thus in

Rom. xv. 30. *Now I beseech you brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.* Ephes. vi. 18, 19. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.* And again, 1 Thes. v. 25. *Brethren pray for us;* and 2 Thes. iii. 1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.* If Paul, and the other inspired apostles, needed this duty from their people, much more do ministers now. It is for the interest of the people, as well as for the honor of God, for them to bear their minister upon their minds at the throne of grace, and earnestly to pray, that God would bless them in their persons, studies and labors, and endue them with wisdom from above, to win souls to Christ, that he would make them *able ministers of the New Testament, workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work*—that he would animate them with zeal and resolution to reprove all sorts of vices and errors, and boldly to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear, or forbear; and that he would succeed their labors with a divine blessing, and make them effectual for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the comfort and edification of his own people. If they were thus engaged in praying for their ministers, they might hope, that God would

make them the instruments of much good to their souls, and that they would come to them from time to time, *in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

Thus we have, particularly, illustrated the several leading duties which are binding on ministers and people towards each other.

I shall now conclude the whole, by briefly exhorting both ministers and people, cheerfully and faithfully to put them in practice. This is the great end of all our knowledge. *If ye know these things, says Christ, happy are ye if ye do them.*

My reverend fathers and brethren! we are called to the most excellent, important and arduous work, and above all persons, stand in need of special divine assistance. If we are the true servants of Christ, we are his ambassadors, sent to publish his will to guilty creatures, and in his name, and by his authority, *to beseech them to be reconciled to God.* What wisdom and prudence, what zeal, industry, watchfulness and resolution, are necessary, to enable us to discharge our embassy in such a manner as shall be for the honor of God, the good of our fellow-creatures, and the salvation of our own souls. In the view of the great difficulty of the work of the ministry, even the inspired apostle cries out—*Who is sufficient for these things!*—who is worthy to be employed in such a weighty work—a work of such vast importance; because so much is depending upon it, even the eternal

happinefs, or the eternal mifery of immortal fouls; for the word difpenfed by us will be to thofe who hear it, either a *Savor of life unto life, or of death unto death.*

The great queftion is, whether we do honeftly endeavor, according to the beft of our abilities, to difcharge the facred truft committed to us. Do we fincerely ftudy to find out the truth, and faithfully publifh it to our hearers, without refpect of perfons? Can we fay with the apoftle Paul, that *we have not fhunned to declare to them all the counfel of God?* If we have done this from a regard to God, whatever may have been our fuccefs, we fhall in no wife lofe our reward; for we fhall be accepted of God, and recompensed, not according to our fuccefs, but according to our faithfulness and diligence in his work. *Though Israel be not gathered,* fays the Prophet, *yet fhall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God fhall be my ftrength.*

Let us remember that we are fet as watchmen on the walls of the fpiritual Jerufalem, and muft give the people warning of the leaft approaching danger. If we fee any clafs of men offend God, and live in the breach of his holy laws, we muft not pafs it by unreprieved. If we fee any hurtful errors prevailing, we muft bear proper testimony againft them, and vindicate divine truths. In a word, we muft, with all earneftnefs, *reprove, rebuke and exhort, in feafon and out of feafon, with all long-fuffering and doctrine,* warning men to flee from the

wrath to come, and urging them to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. To excite us to this, we are awfully admonished, that if they perish, through our unfaithfulness or neglect, though they shall die in their iniquity, yet *their blood will be required at the watchman's hands*. Let us, therefore, at all times, depend upon Heaven for strength to perform the various and difficult duties to which we are called, *and watch for souls as those who must give an account*.

The particular application of this subject to the minister now to be ordained, and to the people over whom he shall be set, does not fall to my part in the service of this day; and, therefore, I shall only observe, with reference to any congregations, which are blessed with faithful ministers, that, if they habitually and wilfully violate those duties, of which I have been speaking, towards their ministers, they are exceedingly guilty before God.

In not loving and esteeming, or, which is the same, despising their ministers, they despise Christ who sent them: in refusing to attend upon the word and ordinances dispensed by them, they reproach Christ and his institutions: in resenting their admonitions and censures, which are agreeable to scripture, they rebel against the discipline and government of Christ: in withholding a due proportion of their worldly substance for the support of their ministers, they break the express commands of Christ—they abuse the talent with

which they are intrusted—are chargeable with high ingratitude to God for some of the richest blessings that he ever bestowed on men, to wit, the gift of ministers, and the tidings which they bring; and do, as far as their not helping to promote the cause of God can have influence, attempt to stop the progress of the gospel, and, of consequence, to propagate ignorance, error, and all kinds of vice and immorality. They are also, by this conduct, chargeable with injustice to their fellow-members of society, and injustice to the minister who serves them in the gospel; and no wonder if a sin so atrocious, should bring down the judgments of Heaven upon their heads. Hereby they provoke God to leave them to spiritual deadness and barrenness, and, like the heath, or shrub in the desert, not to see when good comes; and not only this, but often times to inflict upon them temporal calamities. *Ye are cursed with a curse*, said God to the Jews, *for ye have robbed me in tithes and in offerings*; that is, they had withheld the one tenth of the produce of the earth for the maintenance of the priests. Therefore, God had a controversy with them, and punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects, that ate up the fruit of the earth, and blasted or blew off the fruit of the vines and the trees, as you may see in the iiiid chapter of Malachi. And moreover, this is a sin, which, if not repented of, must and will issue in eternal destruction; for no sin is more heinous, and more severely threatened in scripture,

than making light of Christ and his gospel; and this is done, as has been shewn, when men make light of his ministers, and deny his institutions. That you may avoid this sin, and the judgments consequent upon it, let me beseech you to recollect and sincerely regard the instructions which have been given you in this discourse. In doing this you will have reason also to hope for divine blessings, particularly, that God will pardon all your iniquities, pour out his spirit upon you, and give you temporal prosperity. If you love the gospel, you will love the cause of Christ, and endeavor, by your prayers, advice, example, and estate, to promote it. Animated with this disposition, you will join with the church, and say, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*



S E R M O N XXIII.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

B Y

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I CORIN. i. 2.

Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth; to them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

THAT we may better understand the apostle's idea of a church of God, we must bear in mind, that the Corinthians, before the gospel was preached among them, were *gentiles carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were led*. Those of them who received the doctrine preached by the apostles, renounced the idolatrous forms and places of worship, and united together to worship God through Jesus Christ, in the manner which the gospel prescribes. *These* are called a church, which in the original language, properly signifies a *select*

company, or an assembly called forth from the rest of mankind for some particular purpose, more especially for the purpose of religious worship. The church in Corinth was that number of persons, who, had come out from among their idolatrous fellow-citizens for the true worship of God in Christ.

The apostle describes them, *as sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints*. We cannot suppose, that, by this description, he intended to represent all the members of the Corinthian church to be *gracious, godly* persons: many passages, in this and his second epistle to them, import that he thought otherwise; but these phrases rather signify, that they had been called out of the world, and separated from others, that they might be a peculiar people to God. *They were called to be holy*. The words, *sanctified, saints, and holy*, applied to bodies of men, are usually to be taken in the same general sense, as *christians, disciples, and brethren*; to express their *visible* relation and *professed* character, rather than a certain judgment concerning their habitual temper. The sabbath, the temple, its utensils, and the ground on which it stood, are called *holy*, and said to be *sanctified*, because they were separated from a common to a sacred use. The nation of the Jews, in which, at its best state, were great numbers of ungodly men, is called *holy*, as being separated from other nations for the service of the true God. Moses says—*Ye are a holy people to the Lord, a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests*. So the

Christian church is called *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*. The word *saints*, in many places stands opposed, not to unsound Christians, but to the heathen world, particularly in the passages which speak of persecution against the *saints*, of ministering to the *saints*, and of distributing to the necessities of the *saints*; and in that remarkable passage, which denominates the children of a believer *holy*, in distinction from the children of the unbelieving, who are called *unclean*.

The apostle farther describes the Corinthian church, as consisting of those, who *call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*; who own him to be their Lord and Saviour, profess to hope for salvation through him, and worship God in his name.

He directs his epistle *to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Christ Jesus the Lord, both theirs, and ours*. In this address, he signifies, that there is a sacred relation subsisting among all Christians in every place, and that, as they profess subjection to one common Lord, so they ought to maintain communion one with another.

The words of our text will naturally lead us to consider,

- I. The *nature* of a church of God.
- II. The *end* of its institution.
- III. The relation which *children* bear to it.
- IV. The *qualifications* requisite for admission into it. And,

V. The *fellowship* which ought to subsist among its members.

I. We are to consider the *nature* of a church of God.

Its general nature, as a select company, called forth from the world, for the worship and service of God, we have already stated in the opening of our text.—Some further illustrations, however, will be necessary.

The church is sometimes distinguished into the *invisible*, and the *visible* church. By the *invisible* church, is intended the whole number of real saints in all places and ages; the whole family in Heaven and earth; those whom Christ will gather together in one body in Heaven. This is that MOUNT SION, the CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, which consists of an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are enrolled in Heaven. By the *visible* church are meant, all those who have been visibly dedicated to God in Christ, and have not, by infidelity, heresy, or scandal, cut themselves off from the society of Christians; or, in the words of our apostle, *all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The visible church is again distinguished into the *catholic* or *general* church, and into *local* or *particular* churches. The word is often used to denote all the *professed* people of God in all nations

and ages. In this large sense it is to be understood, when Christ is said to be made head of the church, and the church is described as subject to him. The whole Jewish nation, which was chosen of God to be a peculiar people to himself, is called *the church*. It is said of Moses—*He was in the church in the wilderness.*

When this people, by their great and increasing corruption, were ripening apace for destruction, God sent his own Son, the promised Redeemer, to rescue from ruin his sinking church, and place it on a larger and surer establishment. By his teaching, and the ministry of his apostles, who were trained up under his immediate discipline, a considerable number of subjects were gained over to his kingdom, while he was on earth. Just before his ascension, he gave these apostles a commission to go forth, and spread his doctrine, and collect subjects among all nations. His church, which before stood on the foundation of the prophets, now stands on the foundation of the apostles also, he himself being the corner stone, in which both parts of the foundation meet and are united. The church was formerly limited to one nation, but now it is indiscriminately extended to all. In the city of Jerusalem there were many, who, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, conformed for the worship of God in Christ. To these were soon added multitudes, who continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. They were called *the church*. Af-

ter the gospel was spread to such an extent, that it was no longer possible for all the believers to attend the worship of God in the same place, particular religious societies, in divers places, were formed for the convenience of worship, each of which had the name of *a church*.

These societies of Christians, united in different places for mutual edification in the joint worship of God, are what we mean by *particular churches*, in distinction from the *catholic* or *universal church*. Thus the Christians in Corinth, those in Galatia, those in Ephesus, those in Thessalonica, are called *a church*. But as all these particular churches received the same gospel, maintained the same form of worship, and professed subjection to the same Lord, so they are often considered as *one church*. Though we read of many churches, yet these are only so many different parts of the same universal church—They are members of the same great body, apartments of the same house, provinces of the same empire. With regard to their several jurisdictions and places of worship, they are distinct; but yet one in the main, as they call on the same Jesus, their common Saviour and Lord.

As there was in the apostolic times, so there is now, frequent occasion for new churches to be formed: but from the preceding observations it appears, that, whenever a new church is erected, careful regard should be had to her communion with other churches, as well as to the communion

of her own members among themselves ; otherwise the body of Christ is divided, and the bond of peace is broken.

Among the members of every particular church, there is always supposed to be a solemn covenant and agreement to walk together in the commands and ordinances of Christ, to watch over one another in meekness and love, and to be fellow-helpers to the kingdom of God. The church in Corinth is said to *come together into one place*. The church in Jerusalem is cautioned *not to forsake the assembling of themselves together*; and required, to *exhort one another, and to consider one another, that they may provoke to love and to good works*. And Christians are enjoined to *be subject one to another*.

The covenant between the members of a particular church, to walk together in the ordinances of Christ, is of sacred obligation; and when any of them have occasion to remove to another church, they should do it in a manner consistent with Christian order, peace and communion. When a number of Christians unite in a new church, still they must consider themselves as members of the general body, and seek, not merely their own profit, but the profit of many.

II. The *end* for which a church was instituted, and the purpose for which we are called into it, is what we proposed, in the second place, to consider.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. As the nature, so the design of it is purely spiritual; it is,

that in the enjoyment of fuitable means we may be trained up in knowledge and holinefs; and thus formed to a meetnefs for future glory.

It is faid, *the Lord added to the church daily fuch as fhould be faved.* This is not to be underftood as importing, that all who joined themfelves to the church were finally faved. There were in that, as there are in all ages, many who call Chrift their Lord, and eat and drink in his prefence, but ftill are workers of iniquity. But they are called *the faved*, becaufe they are admitted to the offers and means of falvation. In this fenfe alfo baptifm is faid to *save us*; not as conveying an immediate right to falvation, but as being the appointed way of introduction into the vifible church, where the means of falvation are afforded. In the fame fenfe we are to underftand thofe paffages, where falvation is promifed to whole families on the faith of the head. Not that *his* faith entitles *them* to eternal life, but that it brings them into the vifible church, and to the enjoyment of the means of falvation. *Noah, by faith, prepared an ark to the faving of his houfe; the like figure whereunto, even baptifm doth now fave us.*

As without holinefs, none can be admitted into God's heavenly kingdom, *Chrift gave himfelf for the church, that he might fanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himfelf a glorious church, not having fpot or wrinkle, or any fuch thing; but that it fhould be holy and with-*

out blemish. The church, in our text, is described, as consisting of those *who are called to be holy.* Christ has set in his church teachers for her edification, that we might all come *in the unity of faith and knowledge, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;* and professing the truth in love, might grow up into him in all things.

Love is a most important branch of gospel-holiness. Christians *are chosen in Christ, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love;* and might *purify their souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.* Christ has, therefore, appointed that his disciples, dwelling together in social connection, and maintaining fellowship in religious duties, should increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. They are directed to *forbear one another in love, and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, because there is one body, or church, of which they are all members, and one spirit, one Lord, one faith and one baptism.* In order to their enjoying the grace of God, for their increase and edification, they must, like the parts of a building, be *fitly framed into each other, and be builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit.*

Having illustrated the nature and design of a church of God, we will now attend to the next proposed inquiry.

III. What relation *children* bear to the church?

This will be necessary, previously to our stating the qualifications of adult profelytes.

When first the apostles went forth to preach the gospel, and erect churches in the world, mankind in general, were in a state of *heathenism*, or *judaism*; and, either had not heard of the gospel, or did not believe it to be divine. From among these, were they to make profelytes to Christianity.

What they required of the profelytes, whom they admitted into the church of God, was a professed belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. This profession of faith in Christ, necessarily implied a promise of obedience to him.

Now as the apostles admitted adult profelytes into the church by baptism, so there is sufficient ground to believe, that they admitted to this ordinance the children of profelytes, in token of God's merciful regard to them, and of their parents' obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In this general sense, the baptised offspring of believers are within the church; having God's covenant-seal upon them, and being under the care of those who have covenanted to bring them up for him.

As many as are comprehended within God's covenant, and are the subjects of its gracious promises, undeniably belong to the church; for this is founded on the covenant. That the children of professed believers are within the covenant, is evident from passages of scripture, too numerous to be here particularly recited. The promise to Abraham was made also to his infant seed, who

were to receive the seal and token of the promise, as well as he; and as many as received it not, were said to have broken God's covenant; and these were to be cut off, or excluded from among their people. Had they not been within the covenant, and among the people of God, their want of the seal could not have been a breach of the covenant, or an exclusion from the people. Moses says to the congregation of Israel, *Ye stand all of you before the Lord your God—all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives—that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, that he may establish thee for a people to himself, as he hath sworn to Abraham.* Express promises are made to children, as the seed of those who are in covenant; particularly the promise of God's word, and of his spirit. *God established a testimony in Jacob, which he commanded the fathers, that they should make it known to their children, that the generation to come might also know it. Circumcision has much the advantage every way, chiefly because to them are committed the oracles of God. To Jacob his servant, and to Israel his chosen, God promises, I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water-courses.* This is God's covenant with them who turn from transgression in Jacob, *My spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed.* Infants are called the children of the church; and the gentiles are described in prophecy, as coming

to the church with their children in their arms. *All these gather themselves together and come to thee; to Zion, God's church, they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.* The children of those who are in covenant, are distinguished from others as God's children, born unto him. God says to his ancient church, *I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine—but thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, which thou hast born unto me, and hast sacrificed them: thou hast slain my children.* It is foretold, that in the time of the church's prosperity, *the people shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.* The Redeemer is described by Isaiah, as one *who shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom.* When he appeared on earth, he commanded that children should be brought to him: those who were brought, he took into his arms, and blessed, declaring them subjects to his kingdom. But in what sense are they such, if they belong not to his church, but to the kingdom of Satan? When Christ instituted the ordinance of baptism, he pointed out the subjects of it in such general terms, as might naturally be supposed to include children; and his apostles, who knew how he had ever treated children, who had heard his directions concerning them, and who could not be ignorant, that, under former dispensations of the covenant, children were

comprehended with their parents, must understand them to be included in this instruction, *disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Accordingly, in the first instance of their administering baptism, after this commission, they placed the reason of it, and the right to it, on a basis which alike supports the baptism of believers, and of their children. *Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children.* They considered the children of believers as holy, in distinction from the children of unbelievers. And it appears to have been their practice, when they baptized a believing householder, to baptize also his household—those who were *his*, and under his government. And it is observable, that among all the instances of baptism, mentioned in the New Testament, we find not one baptized at adult age, who appears to have been born of Christian parents; but they were all profelytes from judaism, or from heathenism.

Our English word CHURCH, signifies the house, or family of the Lord. It is a well-chosen word; for the church is often called a *family* or *household*. But who needs to be told, that children are members of the family in which they are born? It is often called a *city*, a *nation*, a *people*. But who ever imagined that these terms excluded children? If a city is incorporated, are not children members of the corporation, as well as their parents? If a privilege is granted to a people, do not children be-

come intitled to it? If a form of government is settled in a nation, do not children come under the form.

You will ask, how can children be brought within the church without their own consent?— But as well may you ask, how they should be born under the gospel; or how they should be created rational beings, without their own consent? If it is a privilege to enjoy the example, instruction and prayers of good men, and to be placed under the care of those who are solemnly bound to give them a pious education, then it is a privilege to be born within the church, and to receive in childhood the seal of the covenant. And will any complain, that God bestows on them mercies, before they had consented to take them.

Certain religious duties are incumbent on children, as soon as they arrive to a natural capacity to perform them. But has not God a right to injoin such duties as his wisdom sees fit? Must he consult his creatures, to know what laws he may make for them? Was not the covenant in the plains of Moab, made with little ones, as well as with the men of Israel? With those who were not, as well as with those who were then present? Are there not moral obligations which result from our rational nature, and from our place in the creation, as well as from our special covenant-relation to God? Shall we conclude that all these obligations are void, for want of our previous consent? To contract between man

foot of equality, mutual consent is necessary: But God is a sovereign. When he promises us certain blessings, and enjoins particular duties, as conditions of the blessings, he takes us into covenant, whether we had previously consented or not.

Now if the children of believers are under the covenant, and within the church of God, they ought to receive the seal and token of their relation to him; to be taught, as soon as they are able to understand, the nature of religion; and to be considered, when they come forward in life, as under the watch of the church. They should be nursed at her side; and, when they have competency of knowledge, should be invited to her actual communion. If they behave in a manner unworthy of their relation, they should be treated with, and exhorted to repentance. If they prove contumacious and incorrigible, they are, after due patience, to be cut off from their people. Such appears to be the state of children.

IV. We proceed to enquire, what qualifications are requisite for the admission of adults into the church, and for their enjoyment of all gospel ordinances?

The question is twofold: *First*, What a church ought to require of those whom she admits to her communion? And, *Secondly*, What qualifications a person must find in himself to justify his coming to the communion?

The first question is, What a church ought to require of those whom she admits to her communion?

The answer in general is, She is to require the same as the apostles required.

Those whom the apostles admitted to fellowship with them in breaking of bread, and in prayer, being first instructed in the doctrines and evidences of Christianity, professed to believe, that *this* was a divine religion.

The Jews, who were baptized on the day of pentecost, gladly received the word of the gospel. The eunuch, who was baptized by Philip, declared his belief, that Jesus was the Son of God. The heart of Lydia was opened to attend to the doctrine of Paul; and she was judged faithful to the Lord. The jaylor is said to have believed in God. When the people of Samaria believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were baptized, both men and women.

The churches were enjoined to put away from among them, those wicked persons who would not be reclaimed. We may, therefore, conclude, that such were not received without a profession of repentance.

A Christian church is, then, to require of those, whom she admits to her communion, these three things; a competent knowledge of the essential doctrines and precepts of religion; a professed be-

lief of, and subjection to them; and a blameless conversation; or, where this had been wanting, a profession of repentance. These things are, in the nature of the case, necessary; for it is palpably absurd for a man to join himself to a Christian church, and attend upon its ordinances, unless he understands the nature, and believes the truth of that religion on which it is founded; and has such a sense of its importance, as to resolve that he will be governed by it. And every person of competent knowledge, a good profession, and a correspondent life, has a right, in the view of the church, to the enjoyment of gospel ordinances, whenever he claims it.

Whatever may be the opinion of a church, concerning the necessity of saving grace to qualify one, in the sight of God, for Christian communion, she cannot justly exclude the person we have described; because a good profession, and a conversation agreeable to it, is all the evidence which she can have in his favor. She can judge the heart only by visible fruits. The controversy concerning the necessity of internal holiness, in the present case, can have no reference to the real practice of the church, in admitting members; for whether she judges this to be a necessary qualification or not, still she must conduct in the same manner, and admit the same persons. Namely, those, and only those, who have sufficient knowledge of the gospel, profess a belief of, and subjection to the gospel, and contradict not that profession by an un-

godly conversation. She may, perhaps, think proper to require of her members, a particular relation of their Christian experiences. But be this relation ever so full, still it is but the evidence of words—of a good profession. The real sincerity of the heart, after all, is known only to him, who seeth not as man seeth.

A church has no right, *on mere jealousy*, to exclude from her communion, any one who offers himself. She must first make it appear, that he is, by ignorance, heresy or wickedness, disqualified for communion. It is not incumbent on him to demonstrate his inward grace; but on the church to prove his want of it. The burden of proof, in this case, lies wholly on the church; not on the claimant. If one claims privileges, the church is not to reject him, in a sovereign, arbitrary manner, of her own will, without offering reasons: She is either to admit him, or shew cause why she refuses. If she shall convict him of any disqualification, still she is not to treat him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother: She is not to abandon him at once, but labor for his amendment. To reject claimants, in any other way, than by conviction on fair and open trial, is to set up a tyranny in the church, which Christ has no where warranted. It is to subvert that liberty with which Christ has made us free. The church ought to caution all against hypocrisy and dissimulation in their approaches to divine ordinances; but she is not to assume the judgment of men's hearts, rashly in-

truding into things, which she has not seen, and which belong only to God.

We are to aim at perfection, both as private Christians, and as churches. But we are to pursue this aim in a scriptural way: not by usurping God's prerogative, or by excluding from our charity and fellowship, all who hope humbly and speak modestly; all who cannot give the highest proof of their godly sincerity; but by cleansing *ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and by considering one another to provoke unto love and good works.

After all, there will be bad, as well as good, in Christian societies. *The kingdom of Heaven is like a net cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind; and when it was full, they drew it to shore, and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So shall it be in the end of the world; then the wicked shall be severed from among the just.*

Having shewn what a church is to require of those whom she admits to her communion, we proceed to the second question;

What qualifications a person must find in himself to justify him in entering into the church, and attending on all gospel ordinances?

That we may bring this question within a narrow compass, and reduce it to a single point, it will be necessary to remove some things, which have often been blended with it, and occasioned much confusion in thinking and arguing upon it.

1. The question is not, Whether every person, educated under the gospel, is *in duty bound* to attend on all divine ordinances in some Christian church? For this is universally granted.

Religion, in all its branches, is indispensibly enjoined on all men. Christ calls all men to be his disciples, to profess themselves such, and to act accordingly, on pain of final rejection from his presence. No man can free himself from his obligation to enter into the church, any more than he can free himself from his obligation to prayer, or any other duty. His wickedness may be a *bar* in the way of his admission; but it cannot be an excuse for his voluntary neglect. It is absurd to suppose, that one's sins should vacate his obligations to obedience. They who apprehend that they have no right to the communion of saints, ought, by no means, to make themselves easy in this state. The command still extends to them; and their immediate concern should be, to repent of that sinfulness, which obstructs their compliance with it.

2. The question is not, Whether one ought to come to the communion in an *impenitent, unconverted* state; for no man is allowed to continue in such a state. The scripture never proposes, or answers this question, Whether a man may attend on this, or that ordinance, while he remains impenitent in his sins? because it grants no man permission to remain so; but commands all men, every where,

to repent. It requires them to perform every duty in a pious and holy manner. It allows no neglect of, or hypocrisy and formality in duty. The man, who calls himself a sinner, is not to imagine, that the same duties, or the same tempers, are not required of him, as of others; for all are required to be holy in all manner of conversation, and to be deeply humble for all the corruptions of their heart, and errors of their life. But,

3. It will be said, though no man ought to remain in a sinful state, yet there are many who know themselves to be in such a state—many who evidently find, that they have no governing regard to God and his commands, but are under the prevailing love of sin and the world: Now, ought they, while they perceive themselves to be in this state, to come into the church and attend on the holy communion?

If any ask this question, my answer is, it is a question in which no body is concerned. It cannot possibly be a case of conscience with any man. The person here supposed is one, who knows himself to be an habitual sinner; one who has no governing regard to his duty; but is prevailingly bent to wickedness; and, therefore, he cannot be supposed to have any conscientious solicitude about his duty in this matter. It is absurd to imagine, he should be solicitous to know and do his duty here, and yet have no regard to it in any thing else. If in other external acts of duty he is influ-

enced by unworthy motives, the same unworthy motives, and not a regard to the will of God, would influence him in coming into the church. The question is merely a matter of speculation; it concerns no man's practice. One, who lives regardless of the will of God in general, is just as regardless of it in the case under consideration. He does not wish to be instructed in the matter, that he may conform to the divine will; if he did, he would be as careful to conform to it in things which are already plain. The scripture puts no such case, for it is not a supposable case, that a man, whose heart is set in him to do evil, should have any conscientious scruples in this point, or any other. The proper answer to such an enquirer will be, you are in a most awful state, under the power and guilt of sin. So long as you live in subjection to the flesh, you cannot please God. You are exposed to everlasting condemnation. Repent, therefore, of your wickedness, seek God's forgiveness, and henceforward walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless.

4. The only question which can be a case of conscience, and which it concerns us to answer, is this—What a *serious* person ought to do, who is in doubt concerning his spiritual state?

He believes the gospel to be divine, has some sense of its importance, and feels a concern to obtain the salvation which it brings. It is his desire to know, and his purpose to do, the will of God. But still he finds so many corruptions in his

heart, and deviations from duty in his practice, that he dares not conclude himself in a state of grace. If he has hopes, they are mingled with painful fears.—Now ought such a person to come within the church, and participate in all divine ordinances? Or is he to delay till his fears are dispelled?

This is the real state of the question; and can any hesitate what answer to give?

We have before shewn, that the purpose for which men are called into a church-state is that, in the enjoyment of suitable means, they may be trained up in knowledge and holiness, to a preparation for future glory. And if we have the same end in attending on ordinances, as God had in instituting them, it cannot be doubted but we are qualified for the enjoyment of them. If then we can say, our end in coming to the communion is, that we may conform to God's will, may be in the way of his blessing, and may be directed and quickened in his service, we are undoubtedly warranted to approach it.

For a person to judge whether he may come to the communion, the question rather is, what are his present views, desires and purposes; than what is the habitual state of his soul? The former may be known by immediate inward reflection: the latter is to be discovered only by a course of examination and experience.

Let us now attend to the practice of the apostles.

The Jews, who assembled at the temple on the day of pentecost, to celebrate that festival, beheld with indignation, and treated with mockery, the miraculous gifts of the spirit, then bestowed on the disciples of Jesus, in confirmation of his divine authority. Peter, on this occasion, rose up, and, in a pertinent discourse, laid before them such striking evidence of Jesus being the promised Messiah, that thousands were convinced of their great guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory, and anxiously enquired, what they must do? Being told, that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, they gladly received the word, and were baptized, and admitted to the apostles' fellowship. It is the doctrine of this same Peter, that believers must make their calling and election sure, by adding to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and every other grace. But does Peter tell these new converts, that, because they had not had time thus to prove the sincerity of their conversion, it was not safe to receive baptism, and enter into the church? Does he advise them to wait awhile till they could manifest the reality of their repentance by its fruits? No, he admits them to fellowship immediately; but with this important caution, *save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

In the same manner the apostles conducted in the baptism of Cornelius, the people of Samaria, the Jaylor, Lydia, and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Had they considered assurance, as a qualification necessary to justify persons in coming into the church, would they not, on these occasions, have cautioned their profelytes against receiving baptism immediately? Would they not have advised them to a greater trial of themselves than could have been made in a few hours?

It cannot be pretended, that these profelytes had a certain knowledge of their own sincerity. Much less can it be supposed, that the apostles knew them to be sound converts. *They* knew men's hearts no otherwise, than *we* may know them, by a view of what appears in their lives. They could only, hence, form a rational judgment, a charitable presumption. The disciples at Jerusalem believed not Paul to be a disciple, nor did even the apostles venture to receive him as such, till they had evidence from the testimony of Barnabas. Yea, we find in fact, that they admitted into the Christian church, many, who afterward appeared to be ungodly. Simon, the forcerer, is a remarkable instance. We learn from Paul's epistles, that in most of the churches to which he wrote, there were great numbers of unsound professors. The apostles, therefore, did not know, that all, whom they received into the church, were savingly converted; for it is manifest, that many of them were not so. And since they received new profelytes, whose sincerity must, at present, be doubtful to themselves, as well as others, without the least intimation of a necessity of delaying for the remov-

al of doubts, we may, with great safety, conclude, that a serious person, who believes the gospel, and desires to be found in the way of duty, and of the divine blessing, though still in doubt concerning the gracious sincerity of his heart, has a right to come to the communion of the church.

And indeed, if Christians were to delay, till all their doubts were removed, I am afraid few would come to it at all. And perhaps these few would not be of the better sort. While the self-confident hypocrite drew near, the meek, the modest, the humble, would stand afar off.

The members of the church in Corinth, as we learn from Paul's first letter to them, ran into most scandalous disorders in their attendance on the Lord's supper. They behaved in such a riotous manner, as made it evident that they discerned not the Lord's body; distinguished not this ordinance from a common meal, or even from a Pagan festival. One took before other his own supper; and one was hungry, having eaten nothing before he came to it; and another was drunken, having indulged to excess there; and the poorer members were despised. This unworthy partaking the apostle rebukes in the severest terms; and warns them, that they were eating and drinking judgment to themselves, of which they had melancholy proof in the sickness and mortality which had been sent among them.

But what advice does he give them in the case? Does he direct them to withdraw from the Lord's table? No, he shews them the danger of coming in this manner, and exhorts them to come better prepared and disposed. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.* He does not say, let a man examine himself and withdraw; but let him examine and partake. *And when ye come together, tarry for one another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to condemnation.* This passage, far from being a just ground of discouragement, proves the point which we have stated, that such as have a desire to comply with a divine institution, are not to delay, on account of their humble doubts concerning their conversion. If the fear of unworthy partaking were a reason for not partaking at all, as well might the fear of praying, or reading and hearing the word, in an unworthy manner, be a reason for omitting these; for it is evident that the scripture enjoins the same temper of heart in *these* duties, as in *that*. The truth is, we are required to attend on every ordinance with godly sincerity; and a suspicion of our insincerity is not an excuse for neglect; but a reason for examination, repentance and amendment.

Some perhaps will say, for some have said, we have sensible desires to approach to God in all his ordinances; but there may be desires which are not gracious; and we fear *ours* are such; we, therefore, dare not approach, for we think less guilt is incurred by abstinence, than by attendance.

But consider, God requires your attendance; and you must either attend or forbear—comply or refuse: There is no medium; and certainly there can be no more grace in your *fears*, than there may be in your *desires*. If your desires to attend an ordinance are not spiritual, neither can the fears, which restrain you from attending, be called spiritual: You can, therefore, be no better accepted in your neglect, than in your compliance; for you act on no better principles in the former, than in the latter.

It is vain to enquire, in what way you shall contract least guilt: Your business is not to contrive how you can sin at the cheapest rate:—Your care should be not to sin at all.

If you say, you decline the communion through fear of offending God; examine whether you are not deceived. Are you as conscientious in every thing else, as you would seem to be in this? Are you as much afraid to offend God in other matters, as you pretend to be in this? If you allow yourselves in any sin, or in the neglect of any duty, be assured it is not the fear of offending God, but something else, that hinders your approach to his table. But if you really have such a fear running through all your conduct, and operating in all your deliberate actions, you have a very good evidence of your right to the holy communion; for, in all acts of worship, you serve God acceptably, when you serve him with reverence and godly fear.

The man found at the marriage-feast without a wedding garment, fell under the awful censure of the king, who commanded, that he should be bound and cast into utter darkness.

Will you say then, it is the safer part not to come to the marriage-feast at all, lest being found unworthy, we share the fate of this guest? Remember, they who made light of the king's invitation, and refused to come to his son's marriage, were treated with no more lenity than the unworthy guest. He sent forth his armies and destroyed them, and burnt up their city. What then shall we conclude? Why, that a wicked man is safe no where. He who will not forsake iniquity, is secure neither in the church, nor out of it.

The crime of this guest was, not that he was found at the *feast*; but that he was found *unsuitably attired*. The same dirt and rags would have been offensive elsewhere.

The servants were ordered to go out into the highways, and call to the marriage as many as they found; and they accordingly gathered together both bad and good. The man, you see, was a poor beggar, called into the king's house, from out of the street. How should he obtain a wedding-garment? He had none of his own. He must come to the king's house to receive one; for there was clean raiment, as well as meat and drink. Where then lay his great crime? Surely not in coming to the king's house, for he was bidden to come; and

such as refused were destroyed; but in sitting among the guests in his ragged and defiled condition, and refusing to wear the pure raiment provided for him. And such will be the condemnation of false professors at the last day; not simply that they have come within God's church, and attended on his ordinances; but that, while they have sat under the gospel-dispensation, made a good profession, and enjoyed all the means of holiness, they have continued in the love and practice of their sins; that while they have heard Christ teach in their streets, and have eaten and drunk in his presence, they have been workers of iniquity. We are not to imagine that we may safely work iniquity, if we will only keep out of the church. Such will be condemned wherever they are found. The kingdom of God is come nigh to us; his word and ordinances are given to us. We cannot place ourselves in the condition of heathens, if we would; for God has placed us in a very different condition. The light has risen upon us; the word of salvation is sent unto us. And now what choice shall we make? If we treat God's ordinances with utter contempt, we are condemned; if we attend upon them in such a manner as to receive no benefit from them, still we are condemned. Our only safety then is, to profess the gospel, and obey it; name the name of Christ, and depart from iniquity; this is to come to the marriage-supper, and put on the wedding-garment.

Let us fear lest we receive the grace of God in vain, Let us beware lest our privileges, instead

of being the means of our salvation, serve only to aggravate our final condemnation.

You see how the case stands. All are required to come within God's church, and attend on his appointed ordinances; and none are allowed to do this in a hypocritical and ungodly manner.

Your duty lies plain before you; study no evasions; God's commands are express; your obligation to obey is indispenfible. Attend on the ordinance in question, and every other, as you have opportunity; keep in view the end of their institution, which is the promotion of faith and purity. Imagine not that ordinances operate by a kind of charm, to do you good without making you better; you will only be accepted in hearing Christ teach, and in eating in his presence, when you also depart from iniquity. For his kingdom is not merely *meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*



S E R M O N XXIV.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

B Y

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I CORIN. i. 2.

Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

WE have already considered the *nature* of a Christian church—the *purpose* of its institution—the relation of *children* to it—and the *qualifications* necessary to an attendance on its ordinances.

What now lies before us is,

V. To explain that *fellowship*, or *communion*, which does, or ought to subsist among professing Christians, whether in the same or in divers churches.

To this subject, we are led by the last clause in our text: *Grace and peace to the church of God in*

Corinth, with all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

We are here taught, that, as all Christians, in whatever place they may dwell, or may worship, are disciples of the same Lord, and call on God in the name of the same Mediator, so there is an important relation, and ought to be a sacred fellowship among them.

For the illustration of this matter, I would observe,

1. There is a *virtual* fellowship or communion among all true saints, whether near or remote; whether known or unknown to each other. They are all engaged in the same design, united in the same interest, and partakers of many of the same things.

This is the sense in which the word is most frequently used in scripture; and this is analogous to the sense which it ordinarily bears in common life. Particularly,

Real saints have *fellowship in the gospel*. They have received one and the same rule of faith and practice. Though they may differ in their opinions concerning some particular things contained in the gospel, yet their sentiments in the essential doctrines and precepts of it, are the same.

They have received one *common faith*—like *precious faith*. Though their faith may differ in its extent and degree, yet, in its object, nature and

influence, it is one and the same. The object of it is divine truth; the nature of it is receiving the love of the truth; the influence of it is purifying the heart.

They are all formed to the same *holy temper*. They are renewed after the image of God—are joint partakers of a divine nature. There may be great variety in the time, manner and circumstances of their renovation, and in the strength and degree of the Christian temper; but holiness, in its general nature, is the same in all. It is a conformity to God's moral character.

They are all partakers of the same divine *spirit*. There are diversities of gifts and operations; but it is the same spirit that worketh all in all. Hence the apostle speaks of *the fellowship of the spirit*, and *the communion of the Holy Ghost*.

They are engaged in the same *good work*--in the same *great design*. They are working out their salvation, and promoting, in their respective places, the interest of Christ's kingdom. They are fellow-laborers in the same service, the service of God and their own souls. They are fellow-workers in the same holy calling. They are fellow-soldiers in the same spiritual warfare; fighting against the same enemies, sin, satan, and the world; applying the same armour, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breast-plate of righteousness, and the sword of the spirit; and they act under the same leader, Jesus the captain of their salvation.

They have one common *interest*. They have a joint interest in the blessed God; for there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in them all. They bear the same relation to Jesus Christ; for there is one Lord and Saviour, by whom are all things, and they by him. There is one common salvation, in which they all are sharers. They are all justified by the same atonement, washed in the same blood, sanctified by the same grace, and saved by the same intercession. They have an interest in the same promises, and a title to the same inheritance. They are called in the same hope, and are joint-heirs of the same glory. They are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

In these respects, there is a fellowship among all sincere Christians. In many of these things, saints on earth have communion with those in Heaven.

One cannot but remark here, how diverse this fellowship is, from that which some boast of; *a mutual sympathy, or fellow-feeling, between sincere Christians, by which one immediately perceives the grace, and knows the character of another.* The scripture never uses the word *fellowship* in this sense, nor does it speak of any such thing in other terms. It is certain, that the apostles and first Christians were not acquainted with such a sympathetic intercourse of spirits. If they were, why did not the eleven disciples discern, that Judas was a hypocrite? Why did not the Christians of Jerusalem believe Paul to

be a disciple? Why did not they feel his graces, when, after his conversion, he essayed to join himself to them? Why could not the apostles themselves be satisfied of his conversion, without the testimony of Barnabas? What occasion was there, that Christians should carry with them letters of commendation, as we find they did, when they travelled to places where they had not been known.

As the gospel knows no such correspondence of heart between Christians; and never once uses the word fellowship, or communion, in any such sense, it is a perversion of scripture, as well as reason, to pretend to such a thing now, and call it by a scripture name. I proceed to observe,

2. Besides the *virtual* communion, before described, among sincere Christians, there is an *actual* communion among those who are known to, and have intercourse with, one another. This consists in mutual regards and good offices.

The good Christian extends his benevolence to all, to strangers, heathens and enemies; and, from this principle, shews kindness to all, as far as their occasions require, and his circumstances permit. But for them who appear to him in the character of saints, he has a love, not only of benevolence, but also of esteem and approbation. He wishes well to all, whether good or bad; but he values men chiefly according to their virtuous conversation. While he is disposed to do good to all, he reckons himself under some superior obligations to

those who are of the household of faith. He delights in the saints as the excellent of the earth, and is the companion of them who fear God. He loves the brethren, and such he esteems all Christians, whether they belong to the same society with him, or to another. He confines not his regard to those of his own sect, or his own particular community; but, like the apostles, extends it to all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ, *their* Lord, as well as *his*, and the common Saviour of them who believe.

In order to the exercise of true Christian love, it is not necessary to know the sincerity of men's hearts. It is enough that, by their profession and conversation, they appear to us in the character of Christian brethren; and by their works give us reasonable ground to think they have faith. We may, in a proper sense, have this *actual* fellowship, with one who is not a sincere Christian; and may not have it with one who is such. So long as Judas appeared in the character of a disciple, his brethren had fellowship with him; they esteemed him, placed confidence in him, and even thought him better than themselves. But with Paul, the disciples at Jerusalem had not this *actual* fellowship; they confided not in him, nor believed him to be a disciple, till he produced some proper evidence of a change in his sentiments and practice.

3. There is also a *special* communion, which does, or ought to take place among those Christi-

ans, who are united in the same particular church, or religious society.

As they have explicitly covenanted together for social worship and common edification, so they are under peculiar obligations to each other, unitedly to pursue this important purpose.

This *special* communion principally consists in a joint attendance on the ordinances of Christ.

It is said of those who received the word preached by Peter, on the day of pentecost, *that they continued stedfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.—They were together, and continued daily with one accord in the temple—praising God.* The apostle to the Hebrews exhorts the professors of religion, *that they consider one another, to provoke to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together.* St. Paul speaks of the Corinthian believers, as *coming together in the church, and into one place.* He represents *the whole church as coming together in one place,* for breaking of bread, for social prayer, and for attendance on the preaching of the word. These expressions teach us, that the members of a particular church ought to walk together in the ordinances, and unitedly to attend on the stated worship of God, as they are able, without unnecessary neglect. And, indeed, it is included in the very idea of a particular church, that they worship God together, at the same time, and in the same place. The apostle directs the Corinthians, *when they come*

together, to tarry for one another; for which surely there could be no reason, if they might disperse here and there, and some worship in one place, and some in another, and some no where.

The acceptableness of worship, indeed, depends not on the place where it is performed. But it much depends on a spirit of peace and union among the worshippers. For this reason, the church is to come together into one place, that there may be no schism, but all her members may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God. They must be builded together, that they may become an habitation of God through the spirit; must be fitly framed together, that they may grow into an holy temple in the Lord.

There may be frequent occasions for the members of the same church to meet for social worship in different places, and even in private houses. Paul, when he abode in Ephesus, preached and taught both publicly, and from house to house. We are not to imagine a temple, or public house, so peculiarly sacred, that divine worship can no where else be useful to men, or pleasing to the Deity. The private meetings of Christians, conducted with a real view to peace and edification, are much to be commended. But when any of the members of a church withdraw from the usual place of worship, and assemble elsewhere, either with an intention to cause division, or in a manner which tends to it, they violate the order of Christ's

house, and interrupt the communion which ought to subsist in it. Though Paul taught from house to house, yet he approved not those teachers, who *crept* into houses to lead the simple captive, and disturb Christian fellowship. He warns Christians to mark and avoid those who cause divisions, for such serve not the kingdom of Christ, but their own private designs. One great end of social worship is peace and union; and it ought always to be conducted in a manner which tends not to defeat, but promote this end. It is not the sacredness of one place rather than another, but the common edification, which obliges the whole church to come together in one place. The members no longer walk in fellowship, than they thus unitedly attend the sacred orders of Christ's house.

Among divine ordinances, the *Lord's supper* deserves particular attention; for one main design of this was to be a mean of brotherly communion. Eating and drinking together, at the same table, is a *natural* act of fellowship. Doing this at the LORD's table is an act of *Christian* fellowship. *The cup which we bless, and the bread which we break, is the communion of Christ's blood, and of his body: and by our joint participation of them, we acknowledge ourselves to be one family, the children of one parent, the disciples of one Lord. We being many are one body, and one bread, or loaf; for we are all partakers of that one loaf.* This ordinance is a love-feast, and ought to be kept, *not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread*

of sincerity and truth. No trifling causes should divert or detain us from it; and no evil passions accompany us in it.

And here I cannot but take notice of a practice too common among the professors of religion; *their withdrawing from the Lord's table, because a particular brother has injured, or offended them;* for which I find no foundation in the gospel. We are, indeed, to *withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly.* But how? By breaking up the communion? No, but by *putting away the wicked person from among us; and by purging out the old leaven, that we may be a new lump.* We may think our brother unworthy of the privilege which he assumes; but shall *his* unworthiness deprive *us* of the privilege? We are, in proper season, to take the measures prescribed in the gospel, for his reformation; but, in the mean time, we are neither to absent ourselves from the table, nor to forbid his attendance; for we can justly exclude him only by conviction in a regular process. If the case is so circumstanced, that sufficient evidence for his conviction cannot be produced, he must be left to the judge of all men. Whatever our opinion may be of his guilt, we are not to withdraw on account of his attendance. Judge nothing before the time.

You will say, *Charity is necessary in our attendance at Christ's table: but with such a brother, how can we sit down in charity?* People often confound themselves in this matter, by their partial notions of

charity. If by charity were intended an opinion of others as good Christians, you could not sit down in charity with those of whom you thought otherwise. But where do you find this description of charity? or where is this good opinion of all your fellow-communicants required, in order to your sitting at Christ's table? It is the effect, not the essence of charity, to hope all things. If you have a benevolent, meek, forgiving temper toward those whom you think not to be true Christians, you can sit down in charity with them; for this is the scriptural idea of charity. If you remember a brother hath ought against you, go and be reconciled to him. If you have ought against a brother, go and tell him his fault. If he repent, forgive him; if he repent not, still indulge no rancor nor hatred in your heart. Thus sit down at the feast in charity, in kind affection, to your brethren and to all men.

Perhaps some will say, 'We withdraw from the table when a brother has injured us, because his presence awakens in us unsuitable passions,

But remember, the indulgence of malevolent passions is your sin; and you are not to absent yourselves from communion, but to dismiss *them*; and so keep the feast in sincerity and love. Malice and ill-will indulged in the heart are wrong, whoever is the object, whether a brother, or a heathen. And on this plea, you might as well withdraw, when the latter, as when the former, had done you an injury.

Consider also, you are required to pray, and to hear the word, with the same charity, which is required in the supper. *When you stand praying, you are to forgive, if you have ought against any man.* And you are to *lay apart all guile, malice and envy; and thus to desire the sincere milk of the word; receiving it with meekness.* Your plea, therefore, might as well be urged for neglecting public worship, or even family prayer, before, if the offender happens to be present, as for absenting from the supper.

The truth is, you are never to excuse yourselves from acts of duty, on account of evil passions working in you; but immediately to war against them.

It will be asked, *How can I have communion with a church, while she tolerates ungodly and scandalous members?*

But let me ask you, my friend, does she tolerate them? If she does, whose business is it to take the first step toward rectifying the disorder? It is yours, as much as any man's. It is yours principally. You pretend, that you see such persons in the church. Others perhaps see them not, or have not evidence against them. Have you reprov'd them? Have you taken a brother or two to assist you? Have you brought your complaint to the church? If you have done none of these things, you are the most reprehensible of any member; for you see the sin, and bewray it not. Go first, and do your own duty. You can have no pretence for withdrawing, till you know that the church

actually tolerates vicious characters; and this you cannot know till you have taken the measures which Christ enjoins.

But though I may think a church to be, in the main, a true church, yet if I see errors in her, ought I not to testify against them by withdrawing from her? By no means. Your withdrawing is no testimony against her particular errors; it is only a general, indiscriminate charge. It signifies that you are displeas'd at something; but points out nothing. You are to commune with her; but not adopt her errors; then, your conduct will speak an intelligible language. Christ testified against the errors of the Jewish church, and labored for her reformation; but still he held communion with her as a church of God. Let his example be your rule.

This leads me to observe farther, that special fellowship among the members of a particular church must include mutual watchfulness, reproof and exhortation.

As Christians, in the present state, are but imperfect, one end of their covenanting and associating together is, that they may afford mutual assistance in the great concerns of religion, and be fellow-helpers in the work of their common salvation. Accordingly they are required to consider and admonish, comfort and encourage one another, as there is occasion; to be all subject one to another, and to be clothed with humility. By

virtue of our special relation, as members of one church, we are to rebuke our brethren, and not suffer sin upon them. Those who offend, we are first to address in a more private manner: them who are deaf to private exhortations, we are to bring before the church; such as contemn the counsels of the church are to be cut off from her communion; but the penitent are to be restored in the spirit of meekness. Once more.

Our special fellowship requires mutual candor, condescension and forbearance.

We are to consider ourselves, and our brethren, not as sinless, but imperfect beings, attended with infirmities, subject to temptations, liable to offend, and to be offended. While we are cautious not to give offence by doing things grievous to them, we should make all reasonable allowance for them, when they do things grievous to us. We should neither stiffly oppose, nor zealously urge indifferent matters. We should not severely animadvert on smaller faults, nor magnify accidental failings into heinous crimes; but give every one's conduct the most favorable turn it will bear. Such is the apostle's advice. *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. Him who is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful disputation. Let us not judge one another; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way. Be of the same*

mind one toward another. Condescend to men of low estate. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Follow the things which make for peace and edification. Let all your things be done with charity.

4. The last branch of Christian fellowship which I shall mention, is that which ought to subsist among different churches; among all who, in every place, call on the name of our common Lord.

As all Christian churches are united under, and subject to one head, so they are members one of another, and therefore ought, like the members of the natural body, to preserve a reciprocal intercourse. The apostle says, *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 are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free. Care, therefore, should be taken, that there be no schism, or division in the body, but all the members should have the same care one for another.*

A particular church ought to consider herself, not as an unconnected society, but as a part of Christ's general kingdom: her care must not be confined to herself, but extended to her sister-churches: She is to seek, not merely her own profit, but the profit of many.

Some diversity of sentiment and practice may take place in different churches, and yet all remain true churches of Christ; as there may be divers

opinions among the members of the same church, and they still be real Christians. We are neither to reject a church, nor to exclude a particular Christian from our fellowship, for supposed errors, which appear not to be of such a nature and magnitude, as to subvert the foundation of Christianity. Our apostle teaches us, 'that we are to regard all as our fellow-christians, and all churches as sister-churches, who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; who profess one body, one spirit, and one hope of their calling; and who hold the same head from which all the body is knit together.' In a word, he cautions us, that 'we reject not those whom God has received.' If we know a particular church, in which errors are admitted, we are to afford our assistance for her amendment. But so long as we believe God owns her, by continuing to her his word and ordinances, and blessing them for her spiritual benefit; it is arrogance—it is impiety, for us to disown her. We have no warrant to withdraw our fellowship from a church, unless she has essentially departed from the gospel; or imposes on us terms of fellowship, which we cannot in conscience comply with.

If it be asked, in what actions different churches are to have fellowship? I answer;

They ought occasionally to commune with each other in the word, prayer, and breaking of bread; to admit each other's members to occasional com-

munion with them; to recommend their own members to other churches, into whose vicinity they may remove; and to receive members of other churches on their recommendation. When Apollos passed from Ephesus into Achaia, the brethren in Ephesus wrote to the disciples in Achaia to receive him. When Phebe went from Cenchrea to Rome, Paul wrote to the Roman church, that they should receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints.

Churches are also to have fellowship, by mutual counsel and advice, when difficulties arise.

Though no church, or number of churches have an absolute jurisdiction over other churches, yet they should always be ready to afford help and assistance, at the request of sister-churches, as occasions may require. We find in the history of the Acts, that the church of Antioch, on a difficulty which arose there relating to circumcision, sent Barnabas and Paul, and certain others with them, to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles and elders of the church there, and to ask their advice upon the matter. When those messengers from Antioch came to Jerusalem, they were received by the apostles and elders, and by the church. And when the apostles had determined the matter in question, they, together with the church, sent messengers, and by them, a letter to the Antiochean and other churches in the vicinity, declaring their opinion and advice in the case referred to them.

This example, as well as the reason of the thing, shews the propriety and necessity of mutual assistance among churches by counsel and advice, in order to the common edification and comfort.

I have now distinctly illustrated the several matters proposed to your consideration. Permit me, before I conclude, to point out to you the proper improvement of this subject.

We who have made an open profession of religion, and have joined ourselves to the church of God, with an explicit engagement to walk together in his commandments and ordinances, are now called upon to consider the obligations we are under, and the duties especially incumbent upon us.

I. Let us be well settled in the principles of that religion which we profess.

We are called into a church state, that, being edified in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we may be no more children, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and the cunning craftiness wherewith they lie in wait to deceive. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His gospel is ever the same; not variable like the humors and opinions of men. Therefore, be ye not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, as if religion was sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. We ought not indeed to be stiff and inflex-

ible in our own sentiments and usages, merely because they are our own. We should give up former opinions, and adopt others, when evidence is offered sufficient to justify the change. But then a fickleness of temper, a versatility of sentiment, a disposition to fall in with every novel opinion, and to follow every impulse of fancy, is utterly unbecoming a Christian. Such unsteadiness indicates either the want of competent knowledge, or the want of any fixed principles in religion.

Amidst the various opinions which are propagated and maintained, an honest Christian, I am sensible, may often be perplexed to determine, what is truth. But then, I would observe, it is by no means necessary, that he should be able to answer every argument adduced in support of error. There are certain great and leading principles, in which every Christian must be supposed to be settled; and by these he may try the doctrines proposed to him, and judge whether they are of God.

There are two grand points which the gospel always keeps in view. One is the indispensable necessity of holiness in heart and life, in order to eternal happiness. The other is, our entire dependance on the grace and mercy of God, through the Redeemer, for pardon, sanctification and glory. Every man, who professes to be a Christian, must be supposed to be settled in these grand points. The man, who imagines that he is not indebted to, nor dependent on a Saviour, or that there is no

need of a conformity to his holy pattern and precepts, in order to final salvation, can, with no consistency, pretend to be a Christian.

All such doctrines, as plainly contradict either of these principles; such, on the one hand, as exalt men above a dependence on Jesus Christ, and the influences of the divine spirit; and such, on the other hand, as confound the difference between virtue and vice, and obstruct the influence of the divine commands, must be rejected, whatever specious arguments may be urged in their favor.

2. Let us maintain a constant, devout attendance on the appointed ordinances of Christ.

If we carelessly neglect these, we contradict the design of a church, and our own character as members of it.

Christians are bound to attend on all ordinances, one as well as another. The gospel makes no distinction. The primitive Christians continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.

There are among us some, who profess the religion of Christ, and who, by their regular attendance at the sanctuary, as well as by their general conversation, express a regard for the religion which they profess; but yet absent themselves from the Lord's table. Such was not the practice of Christians in the apostolic times. The celebration of the supper was then a part of the stated

worship of the Lord's day; and in this, as well as in other parts, all professors joined. They continued stedfast in fellowship with the apostles, as well by breaking bread, as by prayer and doctrine. The disciples at Troas, we are told, came together, on the first day of the week, not only to hear Paul preach, but also to break bread.

I urge none to come blindly, or against his conscience, to the holy table. Every one must judge for himself, and be persuaded in his own mind. One man cannot see with another's eyes, nor act on another's faith. But then, it is a plain fact, Christ calls all to be his disciples, and commands all his disciples to shew forth his death by an attendance on his supper. And, therefore, such as are hindered by scruples concerning their fitness, must not make themselves easy with them, but take pains for the removal of them. They must seek light, that, if they are in an error, they may rectify it; and if they are under sin, they may repent of it. They must humbly apply to God for his grace to lead them into truth, and to purify their souls; and, whatever doubts they have about a particular ordinance, they must diligently attend on all those means which they think themselves warranted to use. The meek, God will guide in judgment; the meek, he will teach his way.

3. We are called to brotherly love, peace and unity.

The gospel urges love as the bond of perfectness, as a virtue of the first importance. Paul, in his epistles to the churches, never forgets to recommend to them, that they be joined together in the same mind—that they speak the same things—that they have the same love—that there be no divisions among them—that they avoid such as cause divisions and offences. To shew how essential unity is to the being of a church, he compares it to a household, which subsists by love, and in which all the members have one interest, and are guided by one head—To a building, all the parts of which are framed and compacted together—To a natural body, all whose limbs are animated by the same vital principle, and feel for each other.

Brotherly love is an extensive grace. It is not confined to those of our own society; but reaches to all Christians, and Christian societies, in every place. The apostle wishes grace and peace to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus. We are to consider all as our brethren, who appear to hold the essentials of the Christian faith, and to maintain a practice agreeable to it; and to all such brotherly love must extend. If our love reaches no farther than to those of our own sect, or those who usually worship with us, it is only a party-spirit; it has nothing of the nature of Christian love.

Against such a contracted idea of love, the apostle, in our context, carefully guards us. 'It has

been declared to me,' says he, 'that there are contentions among you. Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' They were puffed up for one teacher against another. One admired this preacher; another that; and another a third; and, by their party-attachments, raised troublesome disputes and dangerous contentions in the church. But, says he, 'Is Christ divided?' Were ye not all baptized in his name? Have ye not all professed his religion? Why then run ye into parties, as if Christ was divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Why say ye, 'we are of Paul?' Do ye expect salvation through him? He was not crucified for you. He only preaches Christ crucified; and Peter and Apollos do the same. 'Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Do ye imagine that baptism was designed to form you into distinct sects? or that every one ought to follow the minister who baptized him, in opposition to others? And do ye think, that ye ought to love and esteem, as brethren, those only who were baptized by the same apostle, or in the same place and manner as ye were, as if ye were baptized into the name of the man, who baptized you? No, ye were baptized in the name of Christ, and are become members of his body, and, therefore, ye are the brethren of all Christians, by whomsoever baptized; for ye are all baptized into one body.

You see, that baptism, a Christian profession, and a relation to a particular church, are not de-

signed to unite one company of Christians here, and another there, in opposition to each other; but rather to unite the whole Christian world. This then, and this only, is true Christian love, which extends its good wishes to the whole household of faith; regards, as Christ's disciples, all who, in every place, call on his name; and pursues, not merely its own private ends, but the general interest of Christ's kingdom, and the common welfare of his subjects.

True Christian love to those of our own society cannot stop short of a general love of saints. The love of the brethren, as such, is a love of their holy and virtuous character; and if, on this account, we love our nearest brethren, for the same reason we shall love all, who exhibit the same character. The good Christian desires the prevalence of religion every where; he would rejoice that all men were virtuous and happy. He will not, therefore, pursue the religious interest of his own community, family, or person, in ways prejudicial to the general interest of religion. He will not consult merely his own edification, or that of those with whom he is immediately connected; but will seek the profit of many, that they may be saved.

This love of the brethren leads to a more general love of the human race. Christians are required 'to add to their brotherly kindness charity'— 'to increase and abound in their love one toward another, and toward all men.'

One who loves the brethren, because they have the temper and obey the laws of Christ, must be supposed himself to have the same temper, and to obey the same laws. Christ exemplified, and has enjoined a universal philanthropy. He did good to enemies, as well as friends; he prayed for his crucifiers, as well as for his disciples; and he has enjoined on us the same extensive benevolence.

Whatever pretensions we make to Christian fellowship, if our love is confined to any particular community, or even to Christian professors, and does not, in suitable expressions of meekness, goodness, and moderation, extend itself to others; it is not that love of the brethren which Christ enjoins, for where is brotherly kindness, there will be charity. The brotherly love, which Christ has taught, will make us meek, and gentle toward all men. It will tame and soften the passions, correct and sweeten the temper, and dispose us to shew kindness to all men, whether they be Christians or heathens, good men or sinners.

4. As members of the church of God, we are called to an exemplary holiness.

Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify it, and finally present it glorious. We are called to be saints; separated from the world, that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; placed under gospel-light, that we may be the children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining among

them as lights in the world. The honor of religion, and our own profession, oblige us to walk circumspectly among men. Those, whom the apostles admitted to their fellowship, were exhorted to keep themselves from an untoward generation. The loose and unguarded conversation of Christian professors, gives occasion to others to speak reproachfully of religion itself. They are, therefore, to walk in wisdom toward them who are without; to provide things honest in the sight of all men, that the enemies of truth may be put to silence, having no evil thing to say of them.

5. Let us exercise a mutual watchfulness in our Christian relation.

We are called into this relation, that we may by love serve one another, and be fellow-workers to the kingdom of God. Let us be ready to receive, as well as to give, counsel and reproof, as there is occasion; and in this imperfect state occasions will be frequent. Much allowance is indeed to be made for human weakness, for misapprehension, and for wrong report. We expect such allowance from our brethren, and they are intitled to it from us. Too great forwardness to remark, and too hasty a zeal to reprove every trivial fault, and every unguarded action in our brethren, will tend rather to vex, than reform them; rather to hurt our influence, than to mend their tempers. Reproof is a delicate matter. It is not to be omitted, when occasion calls for it; but it should be given with

tenderness and prudence, that it may be received with meekness and gratitude.

6. Our subject reminds us of the duty which we owe to our youth.

If the children of professing Christians are within God's visible church, they are entitled to our particular notice and regard. Though it may be conceded, that baptism denominates them members of the catholic church only, and they become not members of any local church, till, by their own act, they join themselves to it, yet there is a duty which that church peculiarly owes to them, in which they were publicly given up to God, of which their parents are members, and under the immediate inspection of which they live and act. If they are members of the church at large, those Christians, among whom providence places them, and who are witnesses of their conduct, are especially bound to watch over them.

We ought then to admonish and reprove them, whenever we see them behave in a manner unsuitable to the relation, which they bear to Christ; to rebuke their levity, impiety and profaneness, that we may restrain them from making themselves vile; to put them in remembrance of the sacred obligations, which they are under; and call their attention to that solemn day, when every work will be brought into judgment.

While they are under the immediate government of parents or others, it becomes us, in the

most tender and friendly manner, to give those, who have the care of them, information of their misbehavior, when it is gross and repeated, and appears to proceed from a perverse disposition. If Christians would thus assist each other in the government of their families, at the same time exhibiting an example worthy of their character, much service might be done to the rising generation, and to the general interest of religion.

When youth have arrived to competent age, it would be proper that the church, as a body, should deal with them for open immoralities, obstinately persisted in against more private admonitions; unless they disavow their relation to the church, and her authority over them. In this case she may, in a formal manner, cut them off from among their people, and declare them no longer under her care.

7. Our subject deserves the serious attention of the youth.

My children; God, in his good providence, has ordered the place of your birth and education, under the light of the gospel, within his church, and in Christian families. The most of you have been solemnly dedicated to God in baptism, and have received the visible seal of his covenant. See then, that you walk worthy of the privileges to which you are born, and of the character which you bear, as God's children, set apart to be his. Receive, with filial reverence and obedience, the instructions and counsels of your parents, who have bound

themselves to God for your virtuous behavior. Attend on the appointed means of religious knowledge, converse with the holy scriptures and other instructive books, seriously regard the stated services of the sanctuary, and endeavor, in the use of these advantages, to become wise to salvation, and to furnish yourselves unto every good work. As you have been consecrated to God, live to him. *Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.* Let your hearts be impressed with a sense of your sinful and helpless condition; look to Jesus as the only Saviour of a lost and guilty world; go to God in his name, and humbly implore the renewing and sanctifying influences of his holy spirit. Make an actual dedication of yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, deliberately resolving on a course of pure religion, and let all your conversation be as becomes the gospel. Keep up a daily correspondence with God in secret. Think and speak of him with reverence, detesting and avoiding every species of profanity. Cease to hear the instructions which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Entertain no licentious opinions, such as would encourage vice, or pacify the conscience under guilt. Say to evil doers, depart from us, for we will keep the commandments of our God. Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And rest not till you have actually taken the covenant-bonds on yourselves, by a public profession of religion, and have come up to all gospel ordinances. Do not this rashly and thoughtlessly, but

humbly and feriously in the fear of God, and in obediēce to him. Think not that you have a right to live at large. You are bound to confess Christ's name before men, and to submit to the government of his church. It was foretold by the prophet, that, when God should pour out his spirit on the offspring of his people, one would say, I am the Lord's, and another would subscribe with his hand to the Lord. Thus the church would increase by the accession of the young; her sons would come from far, and her daughters be nursed at her side. You cannot be said to have fulfilled the obligations of your baptism, so long as you live in a careless neglect of any of the ordinances of Christ. There is reason to believe, that, in the institution of the supper, Christ had a primary regard to the young, who were always the objects of his particular attention. This ordinance was instituted immediately after the celebration of the passover, which was a figure of the suffering Saviour. In allusion to that festival, Christ is called our passover, sacrificed for us. And in allusion to the manner in which the passover was eaten, we are required *to keep the feast of the holy supper, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Now the special reason assigned for the passover was, that *when children in time to come should enquire, what mean ye by this service?* The parent might thence take occasion to instruct them, *how the Lord saved his people from Egypt.* Accordingly the youth were to attend on the passover, in the appointed place, as soon as they were able to *bring an offering in their*

band. Now if the supper succeeds in the place of the passover, was not this one intention of it, that the young, on seeing this service, might be led to enquire, what was meant by it, and thus open the way for instruction in the glorious redemption by Jesus Christ. Come then, my children, attend a festival appointed for *you*. Here behold what your affectionate Saviour has done and suffered for such lost and helpless creatures as *you*. Behold, admire and love; smite your breasts and return with new sentiments of the evil of your sins, and new resolutions of future obedience. Remember that all ordinances, and this in particular, were instituted as means of promoting a holy life; and *let every one, who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

8. The invitation given to the young shall now be addressed to others. Come, join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, which shall not be forgotten.

The Son of God has come down from Heaven, and has purchased a church with his own blood. Here he offers that salvation which guilty mortals need. He prescribes the terms on which it may become yours. He has appointed ordinances, in the use of which you may be made meet for the enjoyment of it in Heaven. He has particularly instituted the ordinance of the supper, to remind you of his dying love, and the rich blessings purchased by his blood. He has required your attendance, to awaken your remembrance of him, warm your love to him, and strengthen your faith in him.

Have you any sense of your guilt and unworthiness, and of his wonderful goodness and love? Any desire to become conformed to his image, attuned to his gospel, and entitled to his salvation? Any gratitude to your Divine Benefactor for all the great things which he has done and suffered for you? Any purpose of heart to honor and obey your glorious Redeemer and Lord? Any concern to promote peace and unity among his disciples, to excite and encourage them to love and good works, and to advance the general interest of his kingdom? Then come and confess his name, declare your regard to his religion, subscribe with your own hand to him, attend on the ordinances of his house, walk in fellowship with his professed disciples, join your influence to promote his cause, and shew by your holy conversation, that you really believe, and heartily love the religion which you profess.

To conclude, let us all unite our endeavors to make Christ's church glorious. Let us, as workers together with Christ, and with one another, contribute, in our respective places, and according to our several abilities, to edify and enlarge it. Let us not content ourselves with appearing as members of the visible church here below; but be concerned to become real members of the invisible church above, that when the time of our departure is come, we may go to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are enrolled in Heaven.

S E R M O N X X V .

ON THE CONNEXION BETWEEN PIETY
AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

B Y

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J O H N v i i . 1 7 .

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

AT the time when our Saviour commenced his public ministry, the Jewish nation were expecting the promised Messiah. There were some traits in the character of Jesus of Nazareth, which, on particular occasions, commanded the attention, and even the applause of the people; but through an unhappy misconception of their prophecies, they had long entertained an idea, that when the Messiah came, he would assume the rank and power of a temporal prince—emancipate their nation, and exalt it to the highest grade of political glory. Very contrary to this were the views and professions of Christ himself; so that, notwithstanding the

purity of his conversation—the amiableness of his life, and the lustre of his example, he passed the greatest part of his days under the most pointed notices of neglect and scorn. In the perusal of the sacred history, the sympathetic heart is wounded by the insults he received from those, whose duty and interest were to have bid him welcome as their benefactor and friend; and every patron of true science is ready to recoil at the representation, that *he*, who was emphatically the instructor of mankind, and great light of the world, should be considered as one who perverted knowledge, and was actually engaged in deceiving the people.

This contumely, however, was by no means universal; for whilst there were many who opposed, and even sought to kill him, others were so frank as to say, *When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these, which this man hath done?*

By the context, we are informed of a particular conversation which Jesus had with the Jews, on this interesting subject. His remarks are few, but admirably well applied. For the proofs of his mission from Heaven, he refers them to his works; but previously declares, that if they would do the will of his father, they should know of the doctrine which he preached, whether it was of God, or whether he spake of himself. This, in substance, is the same as if he had said, that, if from virtuous desires to serve their maker, they made enquiry concerning his personal character and profession,

they should escape all danger of deception by him; and, with the advantages they enjoyed, be readily able to discern, whether he was an impostor who preached in his own name, and was endeavoring to palm on them a doctrine which had no foundation in truth; or, whether he spake as the messenger sent from God, and respecting things which were of infinite weight.

As it is evident the same observation may, in all ages, apply to the various nations or classes of men by whom the Bible is perused, it will be natural to consider the text, as containing in it an unequivocal acknowledgment of a real *connexion* existing *between piety and religious knowledge*; and intended to promote the contemplation and belief of the serious doctrine.

The design in the following discourse is, therefore, to illustrate the principles on which this connexion depends, in order to shew that every pious and good man is entitled to a full persuasion, that, in the use of proper endeavors, he may, at all times, acquire a competent knowledge of religious truth; and this, whether he examines the scriptures in their high claim of a divine revelation, or, as I shall have reference to in a more particular manner, contemplates them as including a system of doctrines, the belief of which, among Christians, is essential to salvation.

In the *first place*, This connexion will appear, if we consider the influence of the affections on the human judgment.

There is something in moral truth, most admirably congenial with the taste and temper of the good man. It is the food by which his soul is nourished, as much as the body is by meat and drink: In proportion to the degree acquired, it improves in greatness, and takes its rank in the happy world of minds. The reason of this is immediately seen on the recollection that moral truth, is friendly and conducive to moral virtue. Such is the complexion of the sacred writings, in which the laws and doctrines are eminently according to true godliness. In enjoining holiness and condemning sin—in proffering pardon to the penitent, but pronouncing the impenitent to be obnoxious to divine anger, they embrace the feelings of each reformed person, who humbly longs for the benediction of God, at the same time that they reproach the refractory and hardened sinner. On this account, they are studied by the one, but more generally avoided by the other. As the polished steel, or common mirror, represents the form and features of each one who beholds it, so the word of God exhibits to the reader the features or complexion of his soul. The good man rejoices in the image; for however faintly, it is really the image of his maker, and must, of consequence, be beautiful. The bad man starts back with shame: He is ready to suspect the justness of the mirror; and perceiving the vast contrast between the amiableness of moral rectitude, and the disordered state of his own mind, he cometh not to the light, fear-

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in kind, and beneficial in effect, he will view as
possessing the signatures of divine authenticity,
and be immediately prepared to admit that the
messenger who brings them, can come from none
but God.

It was on this principle that our Saviour addressed the Jews, in the words of the text: And on this principle, every religious person may be assured that, admitting the writings of the old and new Testaments to be authentic, he shall not only be preserved from dangerous mistakes respecting their doctrines, but acquire a sufficient knowledge of all the truths included in them, which are essential to salvation.

Secondly, The same sentiment will be further illustrated and confirmed, if, in perusing the sacred scriptures, we consider their general complexion and design.

It is presumed to be a well established point, that they contain an infallible rule for life, adapted to the various circumstances of men, and sufficient, in all things, to answer the end of introducing penitents to a state of reconciliation and acceptance with God. This being the case, are we not to suppose that the primary doctrines, on the hearty belief of which the salvation of the reader turns, are really very *few*, and likewise very *comprehensible* and *plain*?

The Bible may emphatically be characterized a message of good news to men in general. As such, it comprises in its composition, a serious address to the unlearned, as well as the learned; and to children or youth, as really as to those of riper years. It could not, however, be described in this style, if its first principles, or essential truths, were either very considerable in number, or in nature so obtruse, as to require of those who examined them, a course of years, aided by no small strength of genius, before they could be understood. How many examples have we known of firm believers in revelation, and pious Christians, where their natural capacities, or degrees of acquired knowledge, have even been proverbially small? That there is one infinitely powerful, wise, and good God—that this glorious being has made known his will to men, and in particular informed them of his disposition to forgive their sins—that he has even promised this, through the Messiah, on their repentance, reformation, and grateful belief

in his word—that there is another world—will be a general resurrection and future judgment by Jesus Christ, the head over all things to the Church;—these are points, of which every serious and upright man may readily be convinced, without the aids of human learning and philosophy: He who reads, may comprehend them; and yet, obvious as they appear, they at least so far include the fundamentals of religion, as that he who cordially believes them, however unenlightened, as may providentially be the case, in other heads of doctrine, shall certainly be saved.

To prevent misconceptions, let it be observed that when I say the essential truths of the Bible, and in particular of the new Testament, are both few and plain, I would add, they are not the less important on this account.—When Columbus was sent from Europe in search of other countries, and returned with the relation of the discovery of America, then called the new world, the fact declared was perfectly obvious. Every person could understand it. But it was as truly important, as if its comprehension had required the utmost stretch of mental genius. Thus it is with a great part of the doctrines of the gospel: They contain discoveries or revelations from Heaven to mankind, respecting things which otherwise would have been unknown: But however important in their nature, yet when once revealed, they are as intelligible as most other truths, with which the human mind is commonly conversant.

Another observation may be of consequence here, which is, that however plain and intelligible the principal truths of revealed religion may be deemed, there are, notwithstanding, many others connected with them, and equally belonging to the system, in the study of which, the talents of the Christian philosopher may find ample employment through the whole period of human life. Even in the defence of the gospel as a divine revelation, in reply to the objections offered by professed sceptics, a degree of genius, and fund of knowledge may be requisite, when the unlearned Christian may be in no want of what is necessary for the support and comfort of his own mind; but knowing how desirable it is that there should actually be such a revelation—contemplating the news of pardon which it brings, to the abounding honor of divine grace, and at the same time, perceiving his soul to be attracted in love and praise to God for the inestimable gift, it is possible for him, in a good degree, to attain the same persuasion of its authenticity, as if an angel were despatched from above renewedly to preach it to him. In the article of knowledge, there will always be a wide difference among Christians, whilst their capacities and means for improvement, continue to be dissimilar. It is, however, eminently characteristical of the scriptures, that they embrace a system of truths, in which the *wisdom*, as well as *goodness* of God, harmoniously unite. The angels desire to look into them. They open to the intellectual eye, a prospect as transport-

ingly extensive, as it is beautiful and fine; and will probably serve to the saints as the essential principles, or first rudiments of knowledge, to assist their enquiring minds through eternity itself. We have sufficient reason to believe that a capital object, in the gospel plan, is to improve our *mental* as well as *moral* powers—to make us *wise* as well as *virtuous*—*great* as well as *good*—and exalt our pleasures by the increase of *knowledge* as assuredly as by the increase of *grace*.

Nor is this to be considered solely as a distant object, or having a limited relation to our existence in the future world. Frequently it is realized in the present. As far as Newton excelled more humble scholars in researches into the laws of the natural world, so far do many Christian Philosophers surpass great numbers of their brethren, soaring in intellectual enquiries, as the eagle in his flight above the common birds that perch upon the branches. *He* truly, is a very indifferent Christian who wishes not to improve in religious knowledge; and affords but slender evidence of the cordiality of his faith, when he neglects to apply himself to the study of the gospel, so far as his means and ability will admit. Is it not more than probable, that the happiness of good men in Heaven, will be in great proportion to the degrees of their acquired knowledge of the scriptures on earth? To this consideration it may be added, that, next to piety, there is nothing more essential than knowledge, to the tranquility of the believer in the pre-

sent life. By enriching his mind with just ideas of God, it elevates his spirits—preserves him from the illusions of religious melancholy and despair—shews him in what manner he must live, and teaches him how to die, in humble confidence in the redemption of the gospel, and in hope of a glorious resurrection to everlasting joy.

The complexion of these sentiments, it may possibly be thought, is dissimilar to what was exhibited in the commencement of this head of discourse. In maintaining that the essential truths of Christianity were few and plain, it seemed necessary however to treat the subject in some measure at large, and consider the system of divine revelation in the several degrees of light in which it may properly be viewed, by the different minds employed in its contemplation.

I confess for myself, that I receive a strong impression in favor both of the authenticity and excellency of the gospel, when I find it to contain a suitable address to men in all conditions whatever, and to be equally operative of the salvation of the learned and unlearned, on the terms which it describes. If it were a message only to the learned, requiring either great time or talents for the comprehension of its fundamental principles, it could not be esteemed to be a *universal* blessing. If to the unlearned only—that is, if it included no other truths but what might be fully perceived and understood immediately, and by all persons alike, it

would seem to be wanting in the signatures of dignity and strength. By accommodating its blessings to the circumstances of both, it more fully corresponds with our ideas of the benignity of its author, and appears to be eminently calculated to answer the design for which it was given, which is, to bring all the virtuous, the humble and the faithful, whatever may be their conditions in other particulars, into a state of favor with Heaven, and the complete enjoyment of eternal redemption.—Conforming to this design, we are to conclude, sufficient care has been taken that its primary doctrines, on the belief of which the enjoyment of salvation depends, should decidedly be within the reach and compass of every rational mind to which they are addressed. Were the certainty of a reception to the divine favor and blessing, supposed to turn essentially, at any period of the world, on the degrees of knowledge to be acquired, innumerable difficulties would rise to view, for which it would not be easy to find a solution. It might be asked, how it happens that this, by no means, has been a constant or universal rule? In what manner then, shall we account for the facts, that the ancient patriarchs were saved, when they entertained very few ideas respecting the intended Messiah—that the pious class of Jews obtained acceptance, though their religious economy and worship was confessedly imperfect—and that the disciples of our Lord were assured of his favor, when, until the time that he actually rose from the dead, they ap-

pear to have been greatly unacquainted with the chief end of his mission into the world? In reality, they are accounted for on this obvious principle, and no other, viz, that piety is before knowledge, in the estimation of the divine mind;—they prove that, in the plan of grace, devised long before the Messiah came, it has uniformly been the object to which the Almighty has had a primary respect in the distribution of his favors—they confirm us in the sentiment, that the same degrees of piety, in every age, will be accepted;—the conclusion we are to draw from all which is, that the belief of what is necessary to salvation, according to the gospel scheme, is perfectly attainable by every humble, sincere, and enquiring mind.

This brings me to observe, in the *last place*, that the certainty of each person's attaining the degree of knowledge which is essential to salvation, is confirmed by the explicit promises made in the gospel, to this effect.

Of this nature is the text. In a direct view, it is a promise that all good people, who do the will of God, shall know whether the scriptures are from Heaven, or not. But surely no person will be ready to allow the influence of piety in directing to the discovery of the authenticity of the scriptures, and yet deny the same influence in promoting an acquaintance with the leading articles which they contain.

There are, however, many passages of the New Testament in which *the knowledge of the truth*, is

expressly promised by our Saviour, through the teaching of the holy spirit. It must be confessed that the greatest part of these have an appropriated reference to the apostles of our Lord, by whom the New Testament was written, when they were miraculously inspired. In many of them there are, notwithstanding, perspicuous intimations to private Christians universally, that if they apply to God, with proper dispositions, he will teach them what is needful. Not that they are to expect a communication of knowledge, in the intuitive or miraculous manner which was experienced by the apostles. Vast mistakes, it is well known, have often existed in the Christian world, on this subject; nor have examples been wanting of different sectaries in religion, as well as different persons, who have equally supposed themselves to have been taught by the spirit, when the doctrines they have professed to maintain under this instruction, have been wholly contradictory of each other.

But admitting the affections, as we have already seen, to have an influence on the human judgment, and in great degree, to direct the views of the understanding, it appears to be perfectly consonant to reason, as it surely is to revelation, that the improvement of the mind in religious science, should follow as the natural consequence of its improvement in moral virtue. Without judging, therefore, of the particular degree, in which the private Christian may expect the aids of the spirit, to illuminate and confirm him in the belief of the

truth, I conceive the fact in general, may be plead-
 ed for, on the same principle, that we admit the
 sanctification of every believer's heart to be through
 the good will, and animating power of that God,
 who, as he governs in the kingdoms of providence
 and nature, according to the wisest laws, and in
 perfect harmony with the moral agency of his
 subjects, has an indubitable right to govern, in the
 same manner, in the great and glorious kingdom
 of grace. Encouraged by this thought, *If any man
 lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men
 liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given to
 him.*

Having thus endeavored to explain the doctrine
 in the text, and illustrate the principles on which
 it is founded, there are now several deductions
 which come to view, on account of their intimate
 connexion with the subject; to which, will you
 permit me, in the following part of the discourse,
 to request your candid attention.

The *first* is, that as every man, agreeably to com-
 mon consent, is accountable to Almighty God,
 for his moral affections—so, for the same reasons,
 he is accountable to him, for his religious senti-
 ments and opinions.

I am well aware that this assertion is disconso-
 nant to the prevailing belief of many persons, at
 the present time. It has become fashionable to
 speak of it, as a matter of little consequence, what
 our religious sentiments are, or whether we have

any, or none. The spirit of free enquiry, and right of private judgment, it is to be hoped, will ever be maintained in this country, among the inviolable and sacred blessings, which belong to man. If such a wish, however, beguile us into the supposition, that the great author of truth, after giving us a revelation, is quite indifferent in regard to our opinions respecting it, we certainly offer him a great affront, and turn our liberty into dangerous licentiousness.

Should it be here enquired, how far, as Christians, we must really agree, and in what particular points of doctrine it may be safe to differ, it is readily acknowledged that no explicit answer can be given to such a question. In ascertaining what belongs to the Christian character, there are a variety of circumstances to be considered, far above the reach of any human skill, and fitly to be judged of, by God alone. That a great diversity of religious sentiments may happen in the Christian world, in perfect agreement with a state of real virtue in the minds of their various abettors, is evinced by what often occurs among men, who are remarkably eminent for their piety, genius, and close application to the study of divine truth. Undoubtedly we have remarked that there are thousands of other persons, who, through various means, may be said to be strictly *passive* in the adoption of their opinions; and owing to the imbecility, and not the badness of their minds, are more properly to be compared to certain curious

machines designed to be acted on, than to the agents who are employed to put them into motion. True candor, therefore, will always incline us to make great allowances for our disagreements in religious doctrines. It is not supposed, by any thing which has been advanced, that absolute demerit is, in all cases, associated with the errors of our creed. The single point professedly maintained, is the responsibility to which we are subject before the Almighty, for our sentiments in religion, whatever they may be—a point which cannot readily be denied whilst we believe in revelation; for if, according to its express language, we are to give an account for all the thoughts and words which relate to our common dealings in human life, and our intercourse with men, surely it is as consonant to sacred truth and reason, that we should render the same account for those thoughts or sentiments, which have relation to the more important article of our religion, or, as it may be termed, our intercourse with God.

And let it be remarked, that this responsibility becomes more truly important, when the doctrines on which we pass opinion, are clearly among the essentials in religion. As these are few, it may be thought perhaps, that, with those who believe in Christianity, there is but little danger that they will ever be denied. In a direct and professed manner, they are indeed, less frequently brought into dispute, than any others. May it not, however, be made a very serious question, whether by

the constructions sometimes annexed, or the articles either maintained or denied to belong to them, they are not often as virtually given up, as by a positive and entire renunciation? The human mind, often dazzled by the false colorings of deception, is subject perhaps to no greater evil than that of deceiving itself. Every palpable denial of truth is, at once, perceived to be dangerous. Where a genuine doctrine is disrelished, the abilities of men are fully equal to the invention of sophistical arguments to depreciate or counteract it, which bearing, in some particulars, the semblance of truth, operate like magic influence on the minds of the inventors, producing a kind of conviction that they are, in fact, engaged in supporting and raising it to honor. How often has the work of mediation by Jesus Christ, been so treated of, by false reasoning, as in effect to stamp on our Saviour the character of a minister of sin—the article of justification by faith, been explained in such a method, as by implication to countenance a real laxness in morals—and the gospel itself, considered as containing what may emphatically be called the doctrines of grace, been denied this its distinguishing glory, when, whatever might appear to be the case *consequentially*, it would be difficult to affix on the abettors of these explanations, the *direct* renunciation of any one of its fundamental truths?—Making, therefore, all the proper allowances which charity suggests, I imagine it must be granted, without reserve, *that the corruption of the human heart, has a vast influence in the production of*

all false creeds on the subject of religion. The fact is, that in whatever instances the opinions of men, are the result or offspring of their affections, they may, so far, be said to form a part of their moral characters—occupying, in this respect, the same place with their actions, which however indifferent, if considered abstractedly from the motives, yet, as in almost all cases they naturally result from them, are therefore, without any scruple, acknowledged to be the proper objects of praise or blame.

Nor let it be thought that these ideas concerning the future responsibility of mankind for the articles of their creed, apply not with equal force to those who even boast in having no established sentiments of any kind. In former centuries, the contention in the Christian world was for points of orthodoxy. One extreme is often followed by another. At present, the prevailing excess seems to be for candor and liberality. There is a spirit of candor, which is in pure conformity with the gospel: It is the product of refined—of humble, and of virtuous love. There is a false species of it, professing equal regard for the different systems of religious opinions, but generated in the want of proper regard for any. It is the candor of the vacant and unstable mind—afraid explicitly to renounce the truth, but too indolent to examine it—uniting complacency in the Deist, as well as in the believer in the Christian system, and to be accounted for, hereafter, on the same principles with infidelity itself.

This leads me seriously to ask, whether there is any plea, on which the professed Deist, can rest a comfortable hope of judicial acceptance or excuse before his judge, on supposition he is in an error? If the scriptures be of divine original, it is to be inferred that they contain all those evidences of their authenticity, which though they were not intended to enforce belief, yet, in the circumstances of mankind, are sufficient to produce it, in the enquiring and uncorrupted mind. Whatever apologies, therefore, may be offered for the fallibility of the human judgment, certainly it must be a very solemn process, when at the appearance of the judge, enquiry is made concerning the faith, as well as the conduct of men, and the infidel must stand confessed as one, who, by renouncing the gospel, has impeached the wisdom of the Saviour, in not giving sufficient proof, as the allegation implies, of his mission from the father—denied his goodness in undertaking the office of a redeemer, and disowned the grace, which to the astonishment of the assembled universe, will now be known to be the power of God, to the everlasting salvation of his saints.

The *second* remark which I shall make, in consequence of its relation to the subject of discourse, is this—that whatever value is to be put on a good creed, or system of religious affections, the preference, without controversy, is ever to be given to the pious regulation of the heart.

The regulation of the heart is of the first importance, because it frequently goes before our sentiments, and greatly governs in their final choice. It is of the first importance, because, if our sentiments were wholly true, they would do nothing to recommend us to the favor of the Almighty, on the gospel plan, without the addition of this most excellent ingredient. A great measure of purity in doctrine may arise from adventitious circumstances: Possibly, it may be the mere effect of education: But purity of mind, must be the effect of an higher cause, even the love of God, experienced in its spirituality and power. It is easy for any person to avow and talk highly of orthodoxy, when the motives may be altogether unworthy the Christian and the man. It is not so easy to express the internal graces of religion, and in life as well as conversation, to recommend the gospel, by the lovely and energetic exhibition of its charms.

Should we apply these sentiments to a great part of the history of mankind, especially in former ages of the world, what indubitable, and alas! in many cases, what melancholy evidence should we receive of their truth! Of all the evils which have disturbed the peace and happiness of society, none have been more pregnant, than the influence of professed orthodoxy, destitute of true religion. To this has been owing the rise of dungeons, and racks, and gradual fires for heretics—in one word, of the inquisition itself, that engine of cruelty in

the extreme, with horror plumed on its head. We shall never, it may be, have imputed to us the perpetration of the same actions; but it will be well to remember that, at least in some degree, the same unhallowed passions may at an unguarded time, find admission into our breasts, though we are ready now so heartily to condemn them. In the study of human nature, have we not often observed that there is the pride of opinion, as well as of rank or fortune, which, like other species of this vice, in many circumstances, produces distance between man and man, engendering mental, though it may not arise to open or declared strife.

Unhappy is it, when this pride is connected with the subject of religion. He who, Pharisee like, is puffed up from the apprehensions of his orthodoxy, is exposed to the most imminent danger. Indulging the passion under the pretext of a virtue, the means of detection are consequently taken away. The fascination becomes powerful, through the effect of indulgence; and the secret hints of reason, are overborne by the more agreeable suggestions, arising from vanity and self-applause.— With the wise and religious man, no employment therefore, will be judged of more importance, than that of a careful inspection into the state and temper of his mind. He will wish ardently to improve in the knowledge of truth; but he will wish more to improve in holiness and conformity to the will of Heaven. He will be desirous, at proper times, and in a proper manner, even to contend

earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints; but he will consider it a more glorious contest, the object of which is the enlargement of *the virtues of the heart*;—more glorious, because more opposed to the corrupt passions of human nature—improving the mind to better purpose, in sentiments of humility—increasing its capacity for discernment, and exalting it to God. Engaged in such a combat, he will enjoy a world of pleasures, undiscoverable by the self-righteous, and the proud will more easily learn, what are the pure affections, as well as practical duties, which he owes his fellow-men and fellow-christians—and, in fine, will know of the doctrine of Christ, which, coming from God, will appear every way, to be worthy of him, and truly divine.

As an *improvement* of the past discourse, let us reflect on the importance of examining the scriptures, with seriousness and impartiality.

It is not only observable that true seriousness, in conjunction with piety, is an assistant in acquiring the knowledge of moral truth, but by reciprocal influence, the knowledge of moral truth is in like manner an auxiliary in the progression of real piety. Crediting the New Testament, the time *was*, when the Son of God appeared in a humble form on earth, as a teacher of the truth, and was despised and rejected of men, for no other reason than that he declared it. This was occasioned by their want of piety. The time *will be*, when the same

personage will appear again, but in a very different manner, and the evidences in favor of his doctrines will be so highly exalted, as that whether we are deficient in piety or not, we shall be utterly unable to withstand them.

If like the Jews, we have discredited his instructions—passed contempt upon his cross, and refused his love, with what justice may that energetic language apply, which he once delivered on earth, for our admonition, *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy angels?*—But if we have studied his gospel—understood its doctrines, and relished its truths, the second advent of our Saviour will be the grand era to introduce us unto glory. We shall then be instructed to more advantage than our present humble situation can possibly admit—the doctrines we have here begun to admire, will unfold themselves to our intellectual capacities, in their highest energy and beauty—our rapture will be in proportion to our augmented knowledge, and our piety receive additional strength from our perception of refined truth.—Oh! glorious and resplendent day, which will introduce us as the citizens of Heaven—advance us to the company of angels—of them to be informed of the perfections of their divine author—with them to converse on the nature of his works and word, and in their mode, unite in the celebration of his love!

Then shall we find that our present reverence for truth and desire of improvement, will be gratified above our most sanguine hopes. Admitted into the celestial paradise, we shall no longer be absent from the Saviour; but approaching his throne, or walking with him by the side of living fountains of water, shall be taught the sublime doctrines of Christian philosophy from his own lips, whilst wrapt in admiration at his words, we shall, at solemn seasons, unite with thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of like happy beings, saying, *Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.*



S E R M O N XXVI.

THE INFLUENCE OF APPLAUSE.

B Y

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P R O V. xxvii. 21.

*As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold,
so is a man to his praise.*

THE various passions implanted in human nature, are necessary to animate the soul, in the service of God, and our generation. In a state of innocency, there was no danger of undue direction, or inordinate use. Since the entrance of sin, true religion claims the office of regulating the passions, by exhibiting suitable objects for their exercise, and wholesome rules for restraint. The poet sung 'love of fame the universal passion.' The wisest of mere men beheld this principle in human nature; he saw the effect of praise upon mankind.

Our text is a rule, grounded upon the observable effect of it upon man—a refined rule for trial

of our true moral character, or religious state, drawn in grandeur of stile, and eastern dress. A rule, when understood, as profitable for the lowest Christian, as for the monarch on the throne.

The text may be literally rendered, a fining pot for silver, and a furnace for gold, and a man to the mouth of his praise. The moral instruction here designed, may thus be expressed—The conduct of men, in regard of their praise, may be as sure trial of their moral and religious character, as the fining pot is of silver, and the furnace of gold. Since this is evidently designed for religious instruction, in a virtuous and holy life, or reproof to the ungodly, it becomes necessary, to determine with precision, what the writer intended by a man's praise—and what will be the conduct of persons of different moral characters upon the bestowment of their praise. The reason also, why praise has this different effect, on persons of different moral characters—Whence the certainty of this rule will appear.

By praise understand, not the plaudit of individuals, or of the multitude, for actions which they, and all who hear, judge highly unworthy of commendation, spoken in the tone of sarcastic irony. This may have as different effect upon persons, as they have different conceptions. Some are confounded by it; others held in suspense whether it were designed for raillery, or applause. Others may be filled with resentment, thinking the man,

tle of charity much more divine than such *coals of juniper*.

Neither by praise, are we to understand, that given by mistake, as when another's conduct is ignorantly, yet innocently ascribed to us, with the praise of his commendable behavior. Persons conscious such praise belongs not to them, are not tried by it. The text saith not, *so is a man to another's praise*.

By a man's praise, we are to understand, real unfeigned praise, bestowed for actions or conduct commendable in the sight of men—useful to community. Many actions are materially good, which however proceed not from an heart right with God.

Were no other than such ever made the subject matter of praise, there had been no ground for this refined rule of trial—no praise of men, without the concurrent praise of God; unless by mere mistake, which comes not within the meaning of this rule. Praise may be given by men for actions which may not receive, *well done good and faithful servant*, from the righteous judge. *The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*. Praise for actions, which have a beneficent aspect on community, answers valuable purposes; but if a man's praise, for such actions only as are virtuous, serve *as the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold*, fondness of the praise of men, would be one of the best evi-

dences of a right to *enter in through the gates into the city*; which yet is so far from being an evidence of a right to the tree of life, that it becomes, in some instances, an effectual hindrance to faith in Jesus Christ. *How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?* All of us, then, whether godly or ungodly, may have our praise, which ascribed to us, will have the same effect as the fining pot has on metals, which have the appearance of silver, and the furnace on those which have the appearance of gold. Therefore, to observe how a man is to his praise, is a matter of serious importance to every soul of man.

Let us, therefore, consider the conduct of persons of different moral characters, when their praise is given them. Behold a person of real unfeigned piety, under the bestowment of his praise due from men. His praise refines him, as the fining pot does silver—renders him thankful to God for a good name among men. Gratitude first lifts up his soul to God; for *a good name is better than precious ointment*. He receives it as a talent bestowed, whereby he is enabled to do more service for God, and become more extensively useful to mankind. He is animated in his labors, he becomes more zealous in the cause of truth, that his talent be not wrapped in a napkin. He becomes studious, to behave wisely in the fear of God, that he may be the subject of that blessed sentence, *well done good and faithful servant*. Praise to a righteous soul will

render it seriously inquisitive, whether its conduct really deserves praise—the praise not of men only, but of God also. Such will improve the praise of men, bestowed on them, to render them more emulous of that praise infinitely more precious. *He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.* Praise bestowed on the righteous produces humility. Sensible that great imperfections attend their best services, even such as men may applaud; they yet remember, *when they have done all, they are but unprofitable servants.* Such fear, lest the praise of men should move them^o from their guard—make them vain in the sight of God, and render them undeserving his favor. Praise therefore renders them more watchful against every thing which might give just offence to God, or man. Their desire and prayer to God is, that their *path may shine more and more unto the perfect day.*

Praise renders the righteous respectful toward those who bestow it. True gratitude is found in God's children, if any where, among men. Gracious souls rejoice to requite a kind disposition toward them. In an evil world, where there is much strife of tongues, where many delight more in reviling, than blessing, it discovers a kind disposition to reward virtuous actions, with their just praise.

The righteous view this, as a demand upon their gratitude. The righteous, when modestly

commended for good, merciful, and beneficent actions, become more diligent to improve in well-doing, that they may answer the expectation of their friends, the honorable of the earth, but especially of God, who requires us to be perfect, as he is perfect. It is a part of Christian attainment to approve ourselves by good report, as well as evil report—to acquire the mastery of ourselves so, as to be able to pass through good report, without being vainly puffed up thereby. It is the wholesome instruction of an inspired apostle, to *every man among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.* Thus praise serves to refine the righteous in Christian virtues, and makes him shine as gold purified in the furnace. He is led to faithful examination of his own conduct, that he may reject all which would be found to be *wood, hay and stubble.* He is solicitous to cast out every thing, which, upon trial, is found to be but mere dross. His praise, through grace, eventually purges out much, which would otherwise have been burnt at the last day. Praise to a righteous man is a fiery trial, where he needs humility and sober thoughts. It is a furnace, in which every grace will be needed to support a shining character. There is great danger lest vanity be kindled; for remainders of corruption await the children of God, in this imperfect state. Humility, prayer, sober thinking, and watchfulness, will help him to endure the trial.

As the furnace for gold, so is a man to the mouth of his praise.

Not so is it with the ungodly. Praise bestowed on him renders him vain, self-confident, and self-conceited. His praise puffs him up with pride. He becomes haughty and insolent toward all who neglect to offer the incense of his praise. He views himself exalted upon the pinnacle of honor, above the attainments of any of his equals, worthy to receive, honor and applause, from all around him. Instead of continuing patiently in the way of well-doing, seeking glory, honor, and immortality, he is impatient, when any neglect to sound the trumpet of his praise. His heart, bound up in self-applause—in the honor that cometh from man, becomes insensible to the honor that cometh from God only. Self-applause is the idol of his soul; and he esteems every one greatly wanting in duty, who refuses to bow the knee, or who withholds this grateful incense. He esteems one commendable action, fully sufficient to cover a multitude of sins. He thinks not of continuing patiently in the way of well-doing; or should a few other instances be found, where praise may be given him, this is all his salvation, and all his desire. Jealous of his honor, he is impatient to hear another praised, lest his glory should be eclipsed thereby. Should his praise be founded on as high a key as Herod's was—*It is the voice of God and not of a man*; neither would he be concerned to give God the glory. The language of his heart when

contemplating his praise, is in the very spirit of that proud monarch, *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?* Destitute of humility, and void of thankfulness to the God of all his mercies, praise tries him, proves him, and destroys him.

Persons of this character become careless—regardless of the praise of God. The praise of men is the grand prize of their ambitious pursuit. This is their idol. To this they bow the knee. Here they rest. This *is their chief good*. They have obtained their highest wish. Their dependance hence forward is, upon the applause already received, to gain them influence with the multitude. Negligence, sloth and carelessness come upon them. A supposed superiority over others, and envy toward such as share a larger portion, render them haughty and insolent. Their conduct, at the mouth of praise, shews them light as chaff, and viler than dross; *reprobate silver shall men call them*. Praising them, consumes the little appearance of something commendable. Praising persons for such conduct as is praise-worthy, is an effectual way to discover the principle whereby they are influenced. By attention to the operation of our own minds at the mouth of praise, we may as certainly discover whether we are gold or silver, or but mere dross; as the furnace and fining pot will determine the character, and value of metals. That striving to excel, though upon a low principle,

that seeking the praise of men, for actions commendable among men, is turned into glorying in what they have already attained. Not having any intrinsic value in them, praise consumes them, even as the furnace burns up the dross, they are devoured as stubble fully dry. Light as chaff, they are driven away by the breath of applause.

The reason of the different effect of praise upon persons of these different characters, becomes manifest, from their different state in the inner man of the heart, and their different qualities. The reason of the different effect of the fining pot and furnace, upon metals, is the different nature and quality of metals, cast into them. Silver and gold are fine and pure. There is nothing for the fire to consume. Grosser metals are constituted of grosser matter than fire. Fire, therefore, calcines them; some, still more gross, are burnt up. The reason why the furnace of praise has a different effect upon persons of different characters, is their different nature and quality. The righteous is the Jew inwardly, *whose circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit*. His heart has been circumcised, with the true circumcision—born of God—renewed by the spirit; a principle of holiness is formed which is pure, Gross corruptions are cut off—vain-glorying cast out—no object is suffered to engross his affections but God and the Redeemer. God's glory is his aim, and to become meet to enjoy him, his principle concern. He rests not in circumcision which is in the letter—a bare seal of the cove-

nant—not in a bare profession. The furnace of affliction or of praise, may refine, but cannot destroy holiness. His praise is of God. The heart of the ungodly man is not circumcised; it is the cage of every unclean bird. Self-love reigns there, and blinds the mind. The understanding is darkened. And though light is come into the world, he loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. He rests in that circumcision which is in the letter—in a bare seal of the covenant, or visible relation to God, without the true circumcision of the heart in the spirit of his mind. His praise is of men. This is the idol of his heart. The Jew inwardly, whose circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, looks at the praise of God, and acceptance in the beloved, as the mark, the prize of his high calling, in Christ Jesus. The praise of men, is the distinguishing characteristic of one, whose circumcision is not of the heart, in the spirit, but in the letter. The praise of men gratifies his uncircumcised heart. By denying him this, you take away his God, and what has he more? The circumcised in heart and spirit, and the uncircumcised in heart and spirit, have different natures and qualities. The one has a renewed nature—renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. The other has an unrenewed and unholy nature. The distinguishing characteristic mark of the one is, *whose praise is not of men, but of God.* Of the other, whose praise is of men. Praise, therefore, has this different effect

upon them, according to their different nature and qualities. Whence this rule becomes as certain, as that different natures and qualities are not the same; or that different effects will flow from different causes.

The natural improvement of this subject is, to determine our moral and religious character, by the effect, which the praise of men has upon us. If we are refined, if made more humble, vigilant, active and sober, yet ardent in our pursuit, after an eternal weight of glory, we have the true circumcision, whose praise is not of men but of God. The furnace of praise will render us more fit for our master's service.

But if the praise of men renders us vain, haughty, insolent, slothful and envious, *reprobate silver shall men call them*. Such may see the necessity of *circumcision, that is of the heart, and in the spirit*—the necessity of being born again—of being renewed in the spirit of their minds—of having the vanity of their minds subdued by grace. Let such consider how miserable they must be after death, who have no better inheritance than the breath of human praise, when on earth. How will such wish in vain, when too late, for that praise of God, *well done good and faithful servant*. Such, therefore, the true circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise will then be of God. Hence also see, that the furnace of praise is a fiery trial to the righteous, as well as the unrighteous. The remainders of vanity, even in godly men, are in danger of be-

ing set on fire in the furnace of praise. Humble minds, sensible of the danger, see the need of vigilance, prayer, and sober thinking of themselves. They, therefore, rejoice in good report, with humility and trembling. Happy they who improve the praise of men, to press them on to secure the praise of God.

The furnace of praise, is a more fiery trial to the ungodly. Their vanity is set on fire. They appear vile as the dross; yet like distempered patients, hanker after that which destroys them. The religion of the gospel, presents a suitable object for the gratification of this universal passion. *Well done good and faithful servant.* The applause of the omniscient, heart-searching God, will fill the soul with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; but faithful service, flowing from circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, must evidence the heart right with God. That *well done* will never be pronounced by the judge, but only where there has been a patient continuance in well-doing. Let the subject be improved to engage every soul of man to seek the honor that cometh from God only—to compare actions by the unerring rule—to watch in simplicity and godly sincerity, that the testimony of conscience may be matter of rejoicing. Let every one study to approve himself by good report and evil report. If called to suffer wrongfully, endure with patience. Praise from the mouth of the judge will fully compensate all sufferings in this life. With this will commence that crown of glory that fadeth not away.

S E R M O N XXVII.

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

B Y

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PROV. xxxi. 29.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

INSTRUCTIONS, exceedingly useful for our conduct in life, are found in this chapter. They are given by his mother, to Lemuel, a foreign prince, of considerable prospects. Sobriety, chastity, and justice are chiefly insisted upon from the beginning of the chapter. At the tenth verse, the style is greatly changed. It assumes a poetic dress. The iambic measure generally prevails. Each verse begins with a distinct letter of the alphabet. This was a favorite species of composition among the ancients. It is found in some of the psalms. Greatly it aids the memory. This little poem assists Lemuel in fixing upon a partner for life. The qualities in the female, necessary to

bles the husband, and to promote domestic happiness and respect, are illustrated in simple, but expressive language. Their praise, who possess such qualities, are celebrated in my text, *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.*

In discoursing from these words, I shall endeavor, through divine assistance, to place, in as clear a light as possible, the whole character referred to in my text.

The object of this sacred poem, is a *virtuous woman*. Interpreters observe, that the same word is used by Jethro, when he characterizes good judges. *Able men* is our translation. In what their ability consists immediately follows; *such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness*. The word has the same meaning in my text. *A virtuous woman*, in the tenth verse, is explained in the thirtieth, as a *woman that feareth the Lord*. This principle inspires her with heroic courage. The feats are not shewy, but real. She regulates her temper, and governs her tongue. She marks the path of piety and virtue. The path she treads with a steady and unvarying step. A name may lead one—the general practice another; in becoming conduct she persists. From it she cannot be diverted by the laugh of the giddy, or the scorn of the thoughtless. In this there is true greatness. The man who takes a city has not more praise—You may call her unpolite, but she will be indus-

trious—You may think her whimsical, but she will be pious:—No degrading epithet can dissuade her from managing her affairs with economy. Where is this heroine to be found? *Rubies* are not so valuable to the possessor. *Rubies* are not so ornamental to the wearer. Such qualities dignify the character. They diffuse a refreshing influence far around. In reference to these, the apostle Peter speaking to wives, earnestly exhorts, *Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*

From a general description, this sacred poem descends to particulars. A whole group of good qualities come in view. *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.* No lightness in her carriage to awake his jealousy: No inattentions to make him solicitous—modest in her appearance—frugal in her management—her eye every where, and on every thing—the husband pursues his business abroad, at the senate, in the shop, without one distrustful thought. No disorder, no negligence, no waste: Every thing laid in its place—every work

done in its season—every article of diet or dress applied to its particular use—confusion, hurry and deficiency are not known. The man whose domestic affairs are conducted in so regular, so peaceful, and so frugal a manner, needs not *the spoil* of others to increase either his happiness or his wealth. A little, in such hands, renders a man independent. Ordinary fare with such company, has the relish of the most delicious repast.

His happiness is not the breeze variable in itself, and in the quarter from whence it proceeds; it is not the swelling tide, whose waters, in a few hours, forsake the shore which they had overflowed. No, my brethren, his virtuous partner *will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life*. She accommodates herself to his humor, and studies his interest. It is her ambition in all things to please. Some are amiable enough at one time—The common resemblance to good angels can be fully justified; but, at another time, the appearance is disgusting; no feature of the good angel can be recognized. Uniform is the character here celebrated. The temper is always even; the behavior always obliging. Is the husband dejected? A cordial is at hand. Is he rugged in his disposition? Here is a constant polish. If the world frown and persecute; at home he is sure of smiles, and of a *sacred asylum*. Not only is his reputation, his happiness, and his interest dear, during his own life; but he leaves one behind who will respect his memory, and will persecute with the same unremit-

ring care, as if he were yet alive, his favorite views.

The intemperate, and the unchaste often hear from this place, that their conduct is disgraceful and dangerous. I am happy in having it in my power to prescribe an antidote to the evil. Choose a partner for life, in whom you can confide, and from whom you shall receive constant benefit. Soon will you forsake your wicked courses. Soon will you despise what has hitherto been your reproach. A state of celibacy is ensnaring. The man is an enemy to himself. He transgresses an original law of nature. He is unprofitable to society. That such may become sensible, not of their insignificance to society, but of their own loss—I proceed in the description of the virtuous woman.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. Idleness she cannot endure. In what is useful she employs herself, rather than in what is ornamental. She sets up a linen and woollen manufacture. She is not satisfied with giving orders, or merely with overseeing; she puts her own hands to the work. She performs it with dexterity. In such employments, the ancients of the highest rank thought it an honor to engage. For this, cotemporary writers speak in their commendation. The example merits imitation. Can moderns view it and not blush? Can Americans review it and receive no improvement? If a prin-

cess, and a queen, for of such this sacred poem speaks, made her boast of the robes, which her own hands had manufactured and prepared, shall America prescribe to her daughters, an education dignified as fashionable; where exercises comparatively trifling, are substituted in the place of what would always be useful, and greatly to the honor of a young, but rising empire. Let America be cautious of receiving a wrong bias. Let her circumstances dictate her habits. Let her cast off with indignation, the fetters of prejudice, which in an old country, are too strongly revitted to be easily removed. In her industry, the virtuous woman finds her account. *She is like the merchant's ships, she bringeth her food from afar.* Her labor is not in vain. Her manufactures are exchanged for foreign commodities. A domestic supply through this traffic was easily procured. Her industry affords her as great a variety as the merchant's ship affords the owner. The produce of distant countries is seen on her table. Sweet is the meal which industry earns. The sluggard must submit to inconvenience; he must be satisfied with any thing. But labor is rewarded with whatever is found in the East or West Indies—in the countries of Europe, or continent of America, calculated to promote convenience, refreshment, or health.

The character, so honorably mentioned in this chapter, cannot be attained without much self-denial: *She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.*

No enemy so dangerous, either to a pious or a prosperous life, as a slothful disposition. Over it, a virtuous woman has obtained the mastery. It is yet dark, when she shakes of her slumber; she provides for those who labor in the field. To the maidens who continue under her immediate eye, she assigns their respective tasks.

If she be attentive to the present, she provides also for the future. *She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.* Rich fields are valuable property. Their produce are always in demand. Other articles of commerce ever fluctuate. But from the fields, the greatest must continually be supplied. It is also a property which descends through many generations. Realizing the gain of her labor in this manner, was prudent. Beside, the principal was still accumulating. Her crops this year, enabled her to purchase a vineyard next year; and her vines next year still put more in her power.

This variety of employment left no place for the complaints, which the degeneracy of latter ages render so common. Her nerves were always braced; her body always healthy. *She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.* She tucks up the flowing garments which might impede her motions. She bestows not one thought, unseasonably, on finery. Labor she prefers to ease, strength to ornament. In the hours of business she is diligent, the work is dispatched. It is done with all

her might. Nothing is neglected, and nothing superficially performed.

Working with spirit, she acquires a taste for it. She considers it not as a task, but as a pleasure. The further she proceeds, the stronger the attraction by which she is drawn—*She perceiveth that her merchandize is good ; her candle goeth not out by night.* Her course of life, was found by experience, to be healthful. It also procured the conveniences of life. She thinks nothing, therefore, of making encroachments upon the night. The time we sleep is all lost. The less we indulge in this, the better, both for the body and the mind. In a hurry of business, the virtuous woman can continue at labor during the whole night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. In such labor, the lower ranks are usually engaged. But the labor is necessary. By practice, therefore, she acquires of this a clear knowledge. In it she becomes expert. She twists the thread or yarn with her own fingers; she winds them with her own hands. In a princess, this was condescending, but it lessened not her importance, she is the more dignified and the more beloved. It is a weakness of mind which deserves no countenance, when any are withheld from useful employments, because they happen to engage our inferiors, or our slaves. A virtuous woman rises above this weakness. It is enough to her that a work be useful to induce her to become, by

information and practice, expert in the performance.

No unworthy motive prevails upon her to be so industrious. She indeed turns her gain to the greatest advantage. But she is neither uncharitable nor mean. *She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.* If any be in distress, she gives them her helping hand. She is much concerned for their relief. Both her hands are ready to extricate them from danger and from straits. She employs those who are capable of labor. An abundant supply is made for those whom sickness has incapacitated. It gives her peculiar satisfaction, to have it in her power to do good. It rewards her self-denial and her toil. The Pharisees, in our Saviour's lifetime, thought, by certain ceremonial observances, to merit the divine blessing. These the Saviour overlooks. *Give alms of such things as you have,* is his direction. This, as the first fruits under the law, sanctifies a man's substance. It is acceptable to God, and beneficial to man. It enhances greatly the character in my text.

She attends to the destitute abroad, but neglects not her family at home. *She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet:* A variety of cares overpower the slothful, and distract the weak—they are life to the industrious—Her eye is abroad and at home, on the present, and on the future. The weather

need not give her domestics any uneasiness. They have change of raiment. *Thus*, some interpreters render the last clause. In summer, all is light and airy. In winter, all close and warm. The dress is suited to their rank. The garment is indeed convenient. It is also rich and splendid.

Her house and person indicate her circumstances, and station in life. *She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple.* Tapestry gave her house a noble look; silk and purple were a princely wear. Such magnificence attracts the eye. For it, the female sex have a delicate taste. In obtaining it, no considerable sacrifice ought to be made. It is dearly purchased, at the loss of honor, of justice, or of humanity. But to this distinction is she, and she alone, fully entitled, whose easy circumstances are the consequence of her known industry, and uniformly attended with extensive beneficence.

In her attention to her domestics and her house, *her husband* is not overlooked. *He is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.* His robes are always so rich and so neat, and his general appearance so unexceptionable, that it cannot escape the notice of any, under what prudent management his domestic affairs are conducted. Beside, a man's situation at home, gives an impression to the whole of his conduct. Disappointed there, it depresses the spirit. He has not vigor. He loses relish for every thing; but do-

domestic enjoyment cheers the countenance, invigorates the mind, and disposes a man for business and for beneficence.

In providing for her household, the overplus she disposeth of to the greatest advantage. *She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.* In her other employments, the necessity and convenience of her own family, were immediately consulted. Here, her ingenuity and taste are employed to meet the public approbation. She prepared the finest linen, and curious girdles for the merchant. Her other traffic supplied the house with conveniences, this the coffers with current money. In her gains and industry, so well managed, and so well applied, she seemed entrenched against any surprize from change or accident. However much she is to be commended for both, in this is she particularly celebrated—*Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.* Silk and purple had formerly been mentioned, but these have no excellency, compared with the constancy and purity of her mind. An uncommon steadiness, a modest deportment, and a generous turn, are spoken of according to the Hebrew idiom, as an ornamental garment, with which she was invested. These qualities of mind, joined with industrious habits, early acquired, and long persevered in, secured a happy old age, and a peaceful end.

Her conversation is the transcript of her mind and conduct—*She openeth her mouth with wisdom,*

and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She weighs well all her words. Neither is she talkative, nor yet silent. Her remarks are judicious. Good are they for the use of edifying. They minister grace unto the hearers. Soft is the language. It sooths the melancholy. It encourages the stranger. It calms the enraged. In no other instance is eloquence so pleasing—so irresistible—so well directed. The ear is charmed, as if listening to the harp of Gabriel. The heart yields to conviction, as if the former of the heart himself, communicated instruction.

This heavenly eloquence is never subverted to mischievous purposes: *She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.* Her first care is to instruct her own family. She corrects what she sees amiss. She gives wholesome advice. She insists upon ready and exact obedience. Amidst such a variety of concerns, she finds herself usefully and entirely employed. An opposite behavior is severely reflected upon by the apostle. *They learn to be idle.* For such a tattling, fauntering life, a virtuous woman finds no time. She has business enough of a suitable and profitable nature, in her own family. She meddles not with the families and concerns of others.

Happy the children of such a mother; as they arise, thus educated, and thus provided for, they revere her memory, and bless her name. Happy the husband who has such a wife; he knows not

how sufficiently to commend her. *Many daughters, he confesses, have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.—Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.* However taking a handsome shape and graceful behavior—however amiable a fair complexion and regular features—these are fading qualities, and many times conceal under them, what is the bane of domestic peace—but the fear of the Lord is a steady principle. It cherisheth a peaceful and obliging disposition. It excites to vigilance. It produceth industry. If any thing be true, it enables her to think of these things, and to do them.

Speak not of her parentage—speak not of her prospects—speak not of her beauty—she has something more solid of which she can boast—the qualities of her mind—the charms of her conversation—the industry of her life, celebrate her worth better than mortal tongue can pretend.

After placing in as clear and precise a manner as possible, the whole character referred to in my text, I ought to go on to apply my subject, in an address to the younger part of my audience of both sexes; and then to those who are more advanced in life; but this I must leave until God shall give another opportunity. May he bless his word. Amen.

The first part of the history is a general account of the
 state of the world at the beginning of the world. It
 describes the creation of the world, the fall of man,
 and the dispersion of the human race. It also
 mentions the various nations and kingdoms that
 were founded in the world, and the progress of
 the human race towards the present time.

The second part of the history is a particular
 account of the history of the British nation. It
 describes the various kings and queens that
 reigned in Britain, and the various events that
 happened in the history of the nation. It also
 mentions the various wars and battles that were
 fought in Britain, and the progress of the
 nation towards the present time.

The third part of the history is a particular
 account of the history of the British nation. It
 describes the various kings and queens that
 reigned in Britain, and the various events that
 happened in the history of the nation. It also
 mentions the various wars and battles that were
 fought in Britain, and the progress of the
 nation towards the present time.

The fourth part of the history is a particular
 account of the history of the British nation. It
 describes the various kings and queens that
 reigned in Britain, and the various events that
 happened in the history of the nation. It also
 mentions the various wars and battles that were
 fought in Britain, and the progress of the
 nation towards the present time.

S E R M O N XXVIII.

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN,

B Y

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PROV. xxxi. 29.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

I N discoursing formerly from these words, I proposed, through divine assistance, to place in as clear a light as possible, the whole character referred to in my text. I am fully sensible of the delicacy of the subject. It treats of domestic virtues, These it greatly enhances, as rendering a family happy, respectable, and independent. Upon the character destitute of these, it severely reflects—Whilst a preacher confines himself to general topics, the hearer is satisfied. But let real life be brought in view, if the discourse be amusing to one, it is irksome to another. An unbiafed and serious attention can hardly be commanded. Impressed with a sense of the necessity of declaring

the whole counsel of God, however it be received; and happy in your indulgence and attention, I sometimes enter on the most delicate, as well as common subjects—of the first kind is the subject before us. My observations hitherto, tended chiefly to illustrate the character in my text, by explaining the verses in this chapter, as they lie in order. The application of the subject still remains. From it, I would address my young friends of both sexes, with a view, to induce them to practice uniformly, *industry, economy, prudence, charity and piety*, as the brightest features in a virtuous character.

Industry, is the first virtue I recommend. Upon man, in a state of innocency, was imposed, the delightful task to dress the garden of Eden, and to keep it. Inactivity is repugnant to human happiness. The sluggard is not only contemptible, but also wretched. Suitable employment was a considerable part of the felicity of Adam in Paradise itself. From the earthly Paradise ascend the other step: Look through the heavenly. Angels are on the wing ready for instant service. Quick as thought, is their obedience. Fervent as *a flame of fire*, their devotions. The spirits of the just made perfect, rest not day nor night. Unwearied is their diligence. Transporting the service in which they engage. Nay, my friends, God our Saviour declares, *my father worketh hitherto*. He created the heavens and the earth. He upholds all things by the word of his power—*O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the*

earth is full of thy riches: So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

When the Son of God was on earth, he led an active and laborious life—his work was his meat and his drink—He went about all Judea, *teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people.* God the spirit, ever moves upon the animal and spiritual world. He renews the face of nature: He invigorates the minds of men: If we descend from this sublime view, and only look around, every bird in the air, every beast in the field, every fish in the sea, pursue an employment suited to their respective natures. The heavenly bodies in their courses—*fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind, fulfilling his word,* praise his name. Indolence is a monster in nature. It resembles nothing in heaven or on the earth, or under the earth—Disobedience laid the human powers asleep. Our vineyard is too often like the sluggard's, destitute of a fence, and overgrown with weeds. As our nature possesses a secret spring, which impels to action, if we are not well employed, we are in danger of being employed ill. Evil spirits are not idle. Idleness would be preferable. Their example is likely to

be followed by those who have nothing to do. I would, therefore, my young friends, pre-engage your attention, and your time. I would point out to you the duties of life. This I would have you prosecute with vigor. In doing so, you resemble God and angels. You secure happiness for yourselves. You guard against evil, and serve usefully your day and generation.

Economy, is the second virtue I recommend to my young friends. Economy is generally applied to the due management of one's substance; I would extend it also to our time and talents. *That* person is always in a hurry and bustle, and yet little apparently is done: Upon *this* person, abundance seems to flow, and yet he is poor: A third man is not destitute of natural abilities, but he never becomes eminent. The matter is puzzling. We are in a labyrinth from whence we cannot disengage ourselves. But there is a clue, which will return us safe, through every winding. The first person is all hurry and bustle, and performs little, because time is not properly arranged. Nothing is done seasonably. The whole weight of secular, or spiritual concerns falls upon him at once; he struggles, but is crushed under the pressure. Were there hours for devotion; a time for this business, and a time for that, they would come in course; one moment would not be overburdened, nor another unoccupied. The business of life would proceed in a smooth, expeditious, and an effectual manner; but without such economical

management of time, embarrassment and difficulty will ever occur.

On the same principle we account for a man's being poor in the midst of wealth. If he be inattentive to his private affairs—if he never carefully weighed the expences incident to his circumstances in life; the income may be very considerable, but it will disappear in the gulph of confusion and irregularity. Habits of attention, and exactness in these matters ought early to be formed. For either sex are they necessary. Without them no family can be happy or prosperous. If retrenchments are to be made, you will hereby know at once, where to begin. If you may extend your views, you can proceed with certainty and boldness. In either the most limited or most enlarged sphere, attention, exactness, and management are necessary, for preserving peace of mind and domestic repose.

As much time and much wealth have been lost through mismanagement, so also have the finest abilities. Some have mistaken the pulpit for the bar; have followed the sword for the plough-share, have attended to politics instead of mechanics: There are certain habits of body, there are certain dispositions of mind, there are certain providential occurrences, which ought to determine the young in fixing upon a course of life. This management of our talents, this divine economy, is as essential to our usefulness, as any branch of manage-

ment, or economy which has yet come in view. Industry puts the human powers into action: Economy arranges properly these actions.

Nearly connected is it with *prudence*, the third virtue I meant to recommend.

He who estimates with judgment, whatever is connected with the present life, and regulates his conduct accordingly, is a prudent person. Some things are necessary; some things are useful; some things convenient; some things ornamental.—What is necessary for the welfare of soul and body, is the object of first and general concern. The kingdom of God and his righteousness, has a claim preferable to any beside; the next is *food convenient*, or such provision as the sustenance and health of the body require. When claims of such magnitude are answered, let the circumstances of individuals and societies be considered. The conveniencies of life may afterwards be enjoyed. What is merely ornamental and shewy, is the last thing which claims the attention. By such an estimate, and by correspondent conduct, are the prudent distinguished. For this was the character marked in the chapter before us, very eminent. The cultivation of the mind was first attended to, then the necessities of the family. The eye next glanced upon others;—what conveniencies and splendor became an elevated station, was an after consideration of the least magnitude. On different principles, many very foolishly proceed. They

must adorn the body before they have cultivated the mind; they must aspire after conveniencies, before what is absolutely necessary is easily in their reach; they must please themselves without thinking of the difficulties of others. It is a common error—Let my young friends guard against it. Be early conversant with what is essential for your present and future happiness—afterwards you may cast a glance upon objects of meaner concern. Connecting the present with the future, and allowing this to have its weight on conduct, is as essential to prudence, as estimating things according to their real value. To eat and drink were very proper employment during life, were we animals, whose existence was only momentary. To squander all *to-day* is a good enough maxim, were there *no to-morrow* to succeed. But if existence be prolonged beyond the limit of this visible world, nay, if we may even be here to-morrow, as well as to-day, a prudent person will have respect to his happiness in the future moment, whether it may find him in the visible, or the invisible world, as much as to the moment which is immediately passing over. If industry puts the human powers in action: If economy makes proper arrangements: Prudence distinguishes what actions are most necessary—where the chief strefs must lie—and when a preference is to be given upon what the choice must fix.

To industry, economy, and prudence, let me add *charity*. Charity is a divine virtue. God

takes pleasure in doing his creatures good. In charitable actions you resemble God. To these the young ought to be habituated. If the young acquire a small stock—it is laid out on trifles—on something to please the eye—on something to gratify the taste—on something to amuse the moment. I have no objections to their acquiring a property, which they may call their own; but let it be managed for their advantage—Let them hear the cry of the hungry, and purchase a meal for their relief—Let them see the tears of the destitute, and from their stock bring consolation to wipe away these tears—Let them observe the naked shivering with cold, and throw in their mite to procure warm and necessary clothing. Thus, O parent! you nurture them for God. The impression of such conduct will remain when the trifles of the day are lost—You shall quit your station on earth, but leave in your room a humane, a charitable and godlike race. To excite their charity, let images suited to their tender years, often rise before them. Let them view the infant entering the world—naked is it, and helpless: It cannot look around for safety; nor move one step from danger: The tongue cannot tell its necessity; nor the hand bring any relief: It cries, as if conscious that unassisted it must die—and die it would, were it not for the bowels of the mother, and the care of the attendant. Who is this infant? This infant, my young friend, was you. Understanding the danger you have escaped, through the assistance of

others, be ready with your assistance to all who are in need. But no where can children be taught charity so effectually, as at the foot of the cross—Cast your eye around, and behold an insulting multitude: Look up—see a bleeding, dying man. On your right hand, stands wo in its most agonizing form, in the character of the weeping Mary. The crucified Jesus, overlooking every other object, cast down a pitying eye. Sympathy suspends his torment—he wipes away the tear of wo—he provides for the destitute Mary—Then in triumph he gives up the ghost. Never forget this last and memorable act. In his life and death, the Saviour sought the comfort and relief of mankind. In this, my young friends, resemble the Saviour. Tread his steps, even when marked with blood. Be industrious, be economical, be prudent, that you may have it in your power, in word and in deed, to be beneficial unto others, loving them, as Christ also has loved you.

Once more, let me recommend *piety*, as what gives spring and efficacy to every other virtue. The fear of the Lord is a noble principle. It was probably the first impression which human nature ever received. Under its influence only can men expect to be happy. The power which brought us, and all creatures into existence, demands our reverence. If we are happy in these bodies, and their members; in these minds and their faculties; in our connections in life, or in our respective allotments, the author of this happiness has the best

claim upon our affection. If forgiving a presumptuous crime; if restoring a forfeited privilege; if bestowing the most valuable blessings, can excite gratitude and obedience, gratitude and obedience are due unto God. The mind is never so suitably employed, as when he is the object. From regard to him, proceeds all the amiable and social virtues. What this man thinks, or that man doeth, is no object. The mode of living, dignified by the world as fashionable, is not attended to. For the government of little and trifling minds, only, are such considerations suitable. If an action pleases God; if it becomes the children whom he has distinguished; if it promote their peace, and honor, and health, who hold an eminent rank in creation, no other enquiry is made. Such an action must be right, let men scorn and deride it as they please; the opposite of it must be wrong, be it in never such reputation. Destitute of piety, the principles of conduct are mean and degrading. I would have my young friends early to feel their importance. You are the offspring of God. You can love and serve him now. In heaven you may be happy in his friendship and blessing. Let this ever be in view. It would have a happy effect on all your lives. Ornaments indeed you would seek after, but they would principally be the ornaments of the mind. Highly ambitious would you be to please; but it would be to please God. Reproach you would greatly dread, but it would be the reproach of wasting your days in trifling and

folly. Without piety, you can never act with a spirit truly independent. You may think the pious a mean-spirited race; but the imputation falls indeed on *you*. In the face of scorn and contempt, they act a wise and godly part, because it is their duty; but you would not for the world be unlike others, in the mode of living and of conduct, should you even be persuaded of the impropriety of your behavior. In this instance, we recognize a meanness altogether unworthy. In the other, a greatness which is highly exemplary. When I recommend piety, therefore, to my young friends, I consult their honor as well as their happiness.— Without you are pious, my other advices are all lost. Industry, without piety, is busily doing nothing, since you neglect the great duty of life: Economy, without piety, is making your arrangements, and omitting what ought to appear in the first rank: Prudence, without piety, is guarding your safety in smaller instances, but overlooking altogether where you are most exposed. Charity without piety, is an empty name which can profit you nothing. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

I have now endeavored to reduce the character in my text, to its first principles. The operation of these principles in high life, is described in this chapter, and was formerly explained. When the

principles are known, the application of them to every rank cannot be difficult. I have addressed myself particularly to the young, because their habits are not yet formed; and I would have them early to habituate themselves to walk in wisdom's ways. But what is required in them is necessary in all; but especially in you who have named the name of Christ. By your industry, your economy, your prudence, your charity, your piety, you must shine as lights in the world--you must adorn your profession—you must recommend the ways of God unto others, and induce them to receive the Saviour's yoke, and to take upon them his burden. May God bless his word. Amen.



S E R M O N XXIX.*

A SYNODICAL DISCOURSE.

B Y

J E D E D I A H C H A P M A N, A. M.

Minister of a Presbyterian Church, Orange, New Jersey.

E P H E. iv. 3, 4.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace—there is one body.

MANIFOLD are the works of God, by which he has displayed his glorious perfections, and commands the admiration and love of all holy beings. The work of creation how wonderful! The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly to be seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead. On this occasion, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

But, my brethren, this is followed, yea, exceeded by the more glorious and astonishing work of

* Preached at Philadelphia, before the old Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, at their last session, May 1788.

redemption, and on this occasion, the heavenly host sang glory to God in the highest—in this the great Jehovah designs to give the brightest display of his glorious perfections, as the inspired apostle says—*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*

The church of Christ, therefore, is an honorable body, the dearest interest, the most important cause on earth; this is Christ's kingdom, founded by his own blood on the ruins of satan's empire; the glorious cause which God has supported in all ages of the world, and which he will support against the united force of earth and hell.

The interest and welfare of the church of Christ have been ever dear to all the friends of God, and as uniformly opposed by all his enemies. Thus angels are said to be *ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation*; and all saints, and good men of old, cheerfully gave their interest, influence and affection to this cause—Thus breathes the pious psalmist—*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!* The apostles and primitive Christians possessed the same affection in the highest degree, and counted not their lives dear, but freely gave up all for the promotion and defence of this glorious cause—Thus the apostle declares—*For this I suffer all these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed.* In the church of Christ, the promises, and all the distinguishing blessings and privileges of God's people are realized

and enjoyed—here, they enjoy the blessings of children in nonage, and are trained up for glory, honor, and immortality in a future state.

And since Christ Jesus came in the flesh, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the door of entrance into this kingdom is open to all nations—*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. Now whosoever will, may come, and take the water of life freely.* It is true, as these privileges and blessings are spiritual, none can enjoy them, but those who are spiritually minded, *for the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. And none are welcome but those who come in by Christ the door.* As these are the disciples of Christ professedly separated from the rest of the world, so they are a distinct body agreeably to the declaration of Christ before Pilate, *My kingdom is not of this world;* and to the design of his death, which was *to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* As good subjects of his kingdom, they are bound by a new and special command to love one another as brethren, and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, *with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, striving with the utmost diligence and activity, as the word signifies in the original, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

What is further proposed by divine assistance, in the prosecution of the subject agreeably to our text, is,

I. To shew, that the church of Christ, on earth, is one body.

II. To shew, that there is a glorious foundation in the church of Christ for unity and peace.

III. To point out some of those ways by which we are to endeavor to keep in the church of Christ the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. And lastly, make some reflections on the subject.

I. That the church of Christ on earth is one body.

It may, perhaps, cast some light on this subject, to look back to the first institution of the church of Christ, and there we shall find the brethren *with one accord, together in one place*, when the church consisted only of about one hundred and twenty souls, and then it immediately increased to above three thousand, and soon after to five thousand, then it arose even to a multitude. Still it was but one church, one body in the strictest sense; and we are soon informed, that multitudes, both of men and women, were added to the Lord; and we are still instructed that they were together with one accord as one body, for the multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul, and had all things common. And when the number of believers was so increased, that for the sake of ac-

commodation, they were obliged to meet in different places, and under different ministers, they were as really one body as when they all met in an upper room.

And it is also evident, that when by reason of the persecution, believers were scattered abroad, and the church of Christ appeared in different places, it was one great body or spiritual community. Thus it appears, agreeably to the original constitution of the church, that however great the number of believers, and though they assemble in different places for worship, and inhabit distant climes, they are one church, and make one body.

And we are confirmed in this by many passages of the sacred scriptures—see our blessed Saviour's address to Peter, when he had confessed the true foundation of the church—*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.* To the same purpose is our Saviour's prayer—*And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.* So 1 Cor. xii. 13. *For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body,*

whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.

It is readily granted that the church of Christ is spoken of in a more limited sense, when only a particular part of this body is designed—as the *church of God at Corinth*—the *church in thy house*. The plain fact is this; the church in this or that place is considered as a particular branch of this one body; for as every particular church of Christ consists of many individual Christians, as members, so this one body is made up of many particular churches, as branches of this great community of believers.

It must also be granted, as a fact too evident to be denied, that there are societies of men under this character, which do not belong to this body; their foundation and policy being essentially different, owning another head, they cannot, with propriety, be called churches of Christ, and must of course belong to another body.

But as it is a point of no small importance, whether all the particular churches of Christ on earth, however separated by land or sea, or distinguished by denominations, are in fact one body: I beg leave a little further to consider and illustrate this matter. And here if we attend to the analogical representation of the sacred scriptures on this head, we shall be invariably led to the same conclusion.

The church is called a kingdom. There is but one king and head Christ Jesus, who is the only Lord and law-giver, as God hath exalted him to be a Prince and Saviour, and made him head over all things to the church, to whom every branch owes, and every member professes supreme love, absolute submission and obedience.

Thus also we find the church compared to the natural body, *But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.* Eph. iv. 15, 16. *For 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.* In this we see all the various parts, limbs and members harmonizing in one head, governed by one general law, quickened by one spirit, nourished and supported from one common source, making one natural body.

Again it is compared to a beautiful house—*Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*—and I Cor. iii. 9. *For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building, which is composed of various materials, as gold, silver and precious stones; which hath distinct courses, different apartments, many utensils and yet one building, as it has one general enclo-*

sure and common foundation. This also brings to our view the church as one body, built on Christ Jesus, its only foundation, agreeably to what the apostle says—*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.* And though some unskilful builders should introduce wood, hay, stubble, which shall be burnt up, yet it remains, in all its various parts, one entire distinct body or spiritual building.

II. Thing proposed is, to shew that there is an ample and proper foundation in the church for unity and peace.

Whoever attends to the original constitution of the church of Christ, will readily see that it is a society of a peculiar nature, as its foundation and policy, laws and maxims, are very different from the kingdoms of this world. There is, therefore, doubtless something special in the unity spoken of in the text; especially as the apostle calls it *the unity of the spirit*, and qualifies this, by adding, *in the bond of peace*, i. e. holy love, which was enjoined by Christ himself on all his disciples, under the form of a new command, which elsewhere is called the *bond of perfection*. There is a kind of unity by natural ties and social connexions, which is but a shadow of this. There is a unity of a civil nature, which is very different—there is also a sort of agreement in wickedness, as the poet expresses, ‘Devil with devils damned, firm concord hold;’ but this also is not only different; but directly op-

posite in its very nature. The unity we are speaking of is wrought in the Christian church by the holy spirit; and as the fruit of the spirit, it is that sacred tie which makes holy beings one in the most cordial affection; by which also in faith, Christians are united to Christ the head, and as members of the church his body, become also members one of another; and being made *to drink into one spirit*, they have an affectionate fellow-feeling and communion one with another, which the apostle most beautifully expresses in his 1st epistle to the Cor. xii. 12. and onward—*As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; for by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit—that there should be no schism in the body, but the members should have the same care one for another, and whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it: Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

Now, my brethren, this is that unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, which is designed in our text; and you also see in the view, the inspired apostle here gives of the matter, that there is a proper foundation for it in the constitution of the church of Christ. And this will further appear if we attend to, certain facts the apostle gives us in our text and context.

1. There is one body and one spirit. If particular churches of Christ, or the churches of Christ under distinct Presbyteries or Synods, or even of different denominations, were really different separate bodies, as bigotry and party-zeal seem to suppose, their duty, as well as several interests, might necessarily clash and counter-act each other, as we often see in the kingdoms of this world. But now hath Christ Jesus so constituted his church one body, and made all its true members drink into one spirit, as to lay a proper basis for the most perfect unity and peace, amidst all possible variety.

2. There is one king and head. The church of Christ universally owns, according to its nature and constitution, one king and head Christ Jesus. As all the members of the natural body are united under one head, so all the particular churches of this body being united to Christ by faith, have in him their glorious king and head, a most ample foundation for union and peace; for he is the *chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.*

3. There is one faith and one baptism, the rule of both sufficiently clear and express in all essential matters, to every honest and unprejudiced mind. Under the influence of the same spirit—the peace and unity of the church is to be preserved, though it be to the exclusion of those who, in doctrine or practice, may oppose the truth, agreeably to Titus iii. 10, 11.—*A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

And so here also, there is a proper foundation for unity and peace in this body.

Again. *There is one God and Father of all*, says the apostle, *who is above all, and through all, and in all*—one common cause and hope of their calling, the same interest and portion for all; the glory of God, the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, the good of immortal souls, or in a word, the knowledge, service, and enjoyment of the blessed God for ever.

III. To point out some of those ways by which we are to endeavor to keep in the church of Christ, the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

That Christians and Christian churches ought to live in love and peace, no one pretends to doubt. And that offences will come is also certain; and that Christians sometimes have grossly erred with regard to the way and means by which they are to preserve the unity of the spirit, is most evident. Some have supposed uniformity absolutely necessary to unity; yea, some lay such stress upon this, that because of the great variety in the church in this respect, they reject Christianity by wholesale, as nothing but priestcraft and delusion; while others are so bigoted to certain rites, modes and forms of their own, that with them, all non-conformists are unchurched as schismatical heretics, with whom it is unlawful to hold any Christian communion.

But, my brethren, this is so far from being necessary to Christian unity and peace, that every at-

tempt to reduce the church to uniformity has produced the contrary effect, has been invariably attended with scandalous feuds, bitter animosities, which have most commonly issued in rents and divisions. And the enforcing of this measure, by various denominations of Christians in their turns, by iniquitous acts of uniformity, has been, perhaps, the most successful engine the devil ever played against the church.

It is likewise evident to every one who is acquainted with the history of the church in ages past, or has attended to facts in his own time, that when religion has been the most flourishing, and the unity of the spirit most perfect, the least stress has been laid on modes and forms, which are not expressly enjoined by Christ.

And on the other hand, when the life and power of religion have been the weakest, and the love of many waxen cold, then rites and ceremonies, modes and forms, have been made essential to communion, enforced by baneful acts of uniformity, followed by disorder and confusion, and the birth of new sects and denominations of Christians.

Nor can I join with those who think it necessary to reduce the church of Christ to one denomination, and make it subject to one form of government.

We dare not deny that there are churches of Christ of different denominations, and under different forms of government.

And, my dear brethren, where is the inconsistency in our keeping the unity of the spirit with every church of Christ of any denomination, since all make one body. And who can say there are not some errors or imperfections attending every Christian, and churches of every denomination of Christians. Therefore, in order to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, the inspired apostle so warmly recommends humility and meekness, with long-suffering and forbearing one another in love. For as these are the certain fruits of that one spirit, which is in all the churches of Christ, so no way or measure whatever, without the exercise of these graces, can keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

It is easy to see, without this heavenly temper, and in the exercise of the opposite disposition of bigotry and party-zeal, nothing but envy, strife and contention will follow. Of the truth of this observation, we too often have the sad experience. Nor can it be otherwise expected in this imperfect state of things, when there is such a great disparity in knowledge, gifts and grace, as well as vast difference in the customs, habits, modes of education, and natural tempers of Christians.

But in the due possession and exercise of these graces of the spirit, while humility and meekness keep good order at home, long-suffering and forbearance toward others will follow of course, and the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, will

be preserved in the church of Christ, where there is a glorious foundation for strictest harmony, amidst a most surprising variety. But to be a little more particular, with all due submission to my dear brethren in the ministry, and respect to this numerous assembly, I would hazard a few thoughts further on this heard. *First*, In order to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, great care should be taken with regard to the admission of members into the church of Christ.

Many of the real friends of union and peace, behold with no small concern and distress, the growing laxity in some parts of the church in this respect. Deviations from the rule in admission of members into the church, must very materially effect the unity and peace of the body, but no one perhaps more essentially than this.

And though particular churches may not be fully agreed, as to the internal qualifications for Christian communion, yet I believe there is no difference among us respecting the moral characters of those who are to be admitted into the church.

If, therefore, ministers and churches act from carnal, worldly and selfish motives, and admit into the church men of heretical principles, or immoral lives, is not the unity of the spirit, and the peace of the church necessarily broken; for as the apostle says—*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.*

2. We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit, by the regular and proper exercise of the discipline Christ hath appointed in his church.

This, my brethren, is a matter of great importance, but very difficult, if not impossible, in churches where no proper care is taken, as to the admission of members.

For if persons are admitted into the church without religion or morals, with what propriety, I ask, or even consistency, can they be disciplined and cut off, for irreligious and immoral lives? And if such are allowed to live in the church, what is the unity, and what the bond of peace?

Is it not most evident, my brethren, that agreement in this, is not only subversive of that holy unity, the apostle recommends, but also very destructive to the prosperity and peace of the household of faith? Whereas, should the discipline of the church be kept up in the spirit the apostle here recommends, it would have a powerful tendency to heal divisions, to remove scandals, correct disorders, promote holiness and purity in the church, and preserve the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*.

Discipline will nip error and schism in the bud, and prevent the growth of those bitter roots, which springing up, have so often interrupted the peace and unity of the church.

And *lastly*, great care should be taken, that a general intercourse of brotherly love should be kept

up as much as possible, among the members and branches of Christ's church. And as the church is one body, and has one spirit, head and common interest, one God and Father of all, there most certainly is a proper foundation for this, not only among those who are under one form of church government, but also those of different denominations.

This will greatly promote unity and peace many ways, and most effectually destroy the contracted spirit of bigotry and party-zeal, the pest of society, and bane of the church.

From such an intercourse of brotherly love and mutual good offices, among the various members and branches of the church of Christ, great good may be expected to the common cause, not only as it directly promotes the unity and peace of the body; but also, as it gives the most striking practical evidence of the truth of the Christian religion in general, and of the reality of it in the church, to the no small terror and confusion of the common enemy.

And permit me just to observe here, that this remark has great weight in it, when applied to the clergy of all denominations. And in order to reduce it to practice, we need only comply with the pathetic address of the apostle in our text, which under the commanding force of inspiration, he introduces in the most affecting manner thus: *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you,*

that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I would beg leave just to suggest here, should some general plan of mutual intercourse, in brotherly love, with all the churches of Christ throughout the world, be formed and carried into execution, in the spirit of our text, whether it would not have a most happy tendency to heal the present divisions of the church, preserve the peace and unity of the body, and greatly promote the prosperity and welfare of the common cause?

A brief improvement shall now close the discourse. We may hence learn.

1. That all the particular members and branches of the church of Christ, have their use and importance in the common cause, from the highest to the lowest, from the greatest to the least, and from the first to the last. For if the church, which has many members, be one body, and God hath set all the members in this body, as it hath pleased him, then none can say to others, we have no need of you; for as in the natural body, the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you, so it is in this body, every member has his particular place, or office in the church.

2. That we should all have the same affectionate care and tenderness toward all the members

in to the whole church of Christ. And as there is such an ample foundation for union and peace, let us all here unite, and now honestly consult the good of the whole body, and in this view, take the most tender care of that part of the flock, which comes under our particular watch, either in our synodical or presbyterial capacity, or as individual ministers of Jesus Christ: remembering always, that we are to *do good to all men, as we have an opportunity; but especially to the household of faith.*



C A N D I D R E A D E R,

IT is necessary to advertise thee, that the following Sermon was originally wrote for, and delivered to my own congregation, the first church and society in Norwalk, in time of harvest; but being afterwards on a visit at Jamaica, on Long-Island, and invited to preach to the Presbyterian church in that place, of which I had formerly been for more than ten years minister, and to the pastoral charge of which, the Rev. George Faitoute, had, within a few months before, been installed, as my successor—My thoughts naturally directed me to this discourse, as most suitable. Accordingly (omitting those parts which were only applicable to my present congregation in Norwalk) I delivered the rest of it on this occasion; and as the subject, compared with our circumstances, naturally lead to it, I ventured, in the conclusion of the Sermon, upon an extempore address to minister and people; the substance of which I have endeavored to recollect, as far as my memory would serve, and have subjoined it thereto.

I have only to add my sincere wishes, that the great Lord of the harvest, who sendeth forth laborers, and worketh, by whom he pleaseth, may bless the whole to the good of souls.

S E R M O N X X X .

MORAL REFLEXIONS UPON THE
SEASON OF HARVEST.

B Y

MATTHIAS BURNET, A. M.

Pastor of the first Congregational Church, Norwalk, Connecticut.

JOHN iv. 35, 36, 37, 38.

Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest; and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together: and herein is that saying true, one soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.

IT was the great and excellent character of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he went about doing good. Into whatever place or company he came, in the house and by the way, at the table and in his walks, among friends and enemies, he embraced every opportunity of glorifying God and bene-

sing mankind. To promote these important and benevolent ends, the method which he took was the wisest and best adapted to attract attention, and impress the mind, that can be imagined.

He collected images, and drew a lesson of instruction from all the productions of nature, and all the objects around him. The luminaries of Heaven, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea: The vicissitudes of the seasons, with their productions—the lilies arrayed in their beautiful attire; the trees putting forth their leaves; the vine bearing fruit; the barren fig-tree; the living fountain and refreshing stream; the ploughing of the ground; the sowing of the seed; the springing up and growing of the grain with the tares; the whitening harvest; the joy at in gathering; the separation of the wheat from the chaff; the laying up the one in the granary of the husbandman, and the burning the other with fire, as was the custom in eastern countries—These, together with the different occupations, common occurrences, and remarkable transactions of human life, proverbial sayings, Jewish types and ceremonies, were all laid hold on and improved as occasion offered, or they presented to his view and observation, to convey some useful instruction in doctrine and morals, to his disciples and followers.

The truth of these observations, the whole history of our Lord's life and method of teaching fully evinces, and a most beautiful illustration of se-

veral of them, is contained in our text and context.

In the beginning of this chapter, we read, that passing from Judea to Galilee, through Samaria, and being wearied with his journey, Jesus sat himself down to rest by Jacob's well, near the city Sychar, while his disciples went into the city to purchase provision for his, and their own refreshment. While he sat thus at the well, waiting their return, there came a Samaritan woman out of the city to draw water—of her, asking a drink, and receiving an answer, which imported a denial, because he was a Jew, between whose nation and her own, there was the most inveterate hatred, he took occasion, from the water, which she had drawn from this well, to discourse to her, and make her a free offer of the water of eternal life; or as the figure is elsewhere explained, under the emblem of water, to describe to her the nature, and invite her to partake of the influences of the holy spirit—which, like water to a man parched with thirst, cools the heat and fervency of earthly desires, refreshes the heart with divine joy and comfort in the present state, and will be the source of complete never-ending felicity in Heaven; where none of the continually returning wants, which here create so much trouble and uneasiness, will ever be felt or known—*Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living*

water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life. After these remarks upon the nature and effects of that water of life, which Jesus had to give and now offered to this woman of Samaria, he embraced the opportunity which her interrogatories in the sequel of their discourse, gave him first to explain to her the nature of God, and the worship which is to be paid him, and then upon her expressing her belief and expectation of the coming of the Messiah, to declare unto her that he himself was the very person. *I know, said she, that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he hath come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he—*of which being now fully convinced, from the extraordinary knowledge which he discovered of her own circumstances and conduct, and feeling something of that benevolent spirit which the gospel ever breathes and imparts to those who submit to its influence, she is anxious that her friends and acquaintance should partake of the same good news. In the joy of her heart, therefore, she hastes away to them saying, come see a man who hath told me all things I ever did, is not this the Christ? Soon after her departure from Jesus, the disciples returned to him from the city, with the provisions they had purchased, and prayed him, saying, master eat: To which invitation, alluding

to the discourse in which he had been employed, and the success of his instructions to the Samaritan woman in their absence, he answered—*I have meat to eat that ye know not of; my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and finish his work.* At this moment, while in the midst of his discourse with his disciples, upon a subject which by reason of their absence, they did not so well understand, the Samaritan woman, with numbers of others to whom she had carried the joyful news of the Messiah, appeared in sight, with speed hastening to see the man of whom she had told such wonderful things. Upon this, as is probable Jesus stretching out his hand and pointing towards them, addressed his disciples in the figurative but striking and beautiful language of the text.

Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest; and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto eternal life, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together: and herein is that saying true, one soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that on which ye bestowed no labor; other men labored and ye are entered into their labors. Some suppose that the phrase, *say ye not there are yet four months and then cometh harvest,* was a proverbial expression used for the encouragement of husbandmen, at the time of sowing, and that the meaning of our Lord, in his allusion to it on this occasion, is as if he had said, “In your common harvest

“you usually say—after your seed is sown, four
“months hence will be the harvest or the time
“when you shall reap the seed sown—but in this
“spiritual harvest it is otherwise, for the seed sown
“in the heart of the woman of Samaria, but an
“hour or two ago, hath made those Samaritans,
“whom ye see coming yonder with such eager
“haste, already ripe for the harvest or gathering
“into my kingdom.” But though this interpreta-
tion makes a very profitable sense, yet as no an-
cient author gives any account of such proverb,
prevalent among the Jews, and as the time be-
tween sowing and harvest is different with differ-
ent kinds of grain, I rather choose to take the words
in their literal signification, supposing them to
mean, that at the time our Lord delivered this dis-
course, it was actually four months from their
common harvest; and as Jacob’s well was with-
out the city Sychar, according to Mr. Maundrell,
near one third of an hour’s travel distant; it might
be surrounded with sown fields, whose then state,
compared with the distance from harvest, might
very naturally, according to our Lord’s usual meth-
od of improving the objects around him, give
rise to the figurative language of the text which
applied to the Samaritans, who struck with the re-
port of the woman, were coming to enquire into,
and see for themselves the truth of the thing she
had told them, means, that though it was then,
indeed, four months before their earthly harvest
would come on, yet the spiritual harvest in these

Samaritans, was in a sense, now fully ripe, and numbers ready to be gathered into the Christian church. In this view, the whole passage is thus, or to this effect, excellently paraphrased by Dr. Doddridge. Do not you say there are *yet four months and then cometh harvest*, that is, “ Is it not now four
“ months before you expect to reap the harvest of
“ your fields? But behold, I say unto you, lift up
“ your eyes and survey the multitude coming yon-
“ der—who are already laden with a plentiful crop
“ and appear like a field of grain white to the harvest
“ —and it is your happiness to be employed in the
“ blessed work of gathering in this harvest—for he
“ that faithfully reaps the harvest of which I now
“ speak, receiveth far more valuable wages than
“ man can give, and has the great additional satis-
“ faction of thinking he gathers in the fruit unto
“ eternal life, in the salvation of himself, and those
“ that hear him; so that on this account, both he
“ that sows, and he that reaps, may rejoice toge-
“ ther; and those souls, to whose salvation they
“ have in different ways contributed, will be both
“ a crown of honor, and objects of everlasting com-
“ placency and delight. And in this sense, may
“ it be justly said, herein is that proverbial saying
“ true, one soweth and another reapeth; for after
“ he has sown his field, it often happens that a man
“ dies or removes before he gathereth in the har-
“ vest, and so leaves it to another, who enjoys the
“ advantage of his pains; and thus I have sent you
“ to reap the fruit of that on which ye have not

“ labored, either to till or sow the ground—the
 “ prophets, and other holy men of former ages,
 “ having toiled, as it were, to cultivate the field,
 “ and thereby made your work much easier than
 “ otherwise it would have been—so that my preach-
 “ ing this day in your absence, is an emblem of
 “ what God has wisely ordered in the course of his
 “ providence. Others have labored, and you have
 “ entered into the field on which their labors
 “ have been carefully employed—Let this then
 “ engage your diligence, with a becoming spirit
 “ and ready cheerfulness, to apply to your work,
 “ and great shall be your reward.” From the
 words thus introduced, the four following observa-
 tions naturally arise.

I. That the ready attention of multitudes to hear and obey the gospel, is fitly compared to harvest.

II. That when such a season comes, or such a disposition appears, it is the duty, and will be the pleasure and delight of every true friend of souls, and especially of every faithful minister of the gospel, to be remarkably engaged in reaping and gathering in this harvest.

III. That even though the seed sown does not appear to spring up and grow to a fruitful harvest in our day, yet it may in another's, who may succeed, or as the text expresses it—afterwards enter into our labors, and therefore, we should not be discouraged; but persevere in the same laudable work

of sowing the seed, however little fruit may at present appear to spring from it, not knowing when or how it will prosper. And because,

IV. Whether we are successful, and have the satisfaction of seeing the fruit of our labors in our own day or not; if we are faithful, we shall nevertheless receive wages, and rejoice with them who are so favored as to reap from what we or others have sowed.

To each of the above observations, I shall say a few things in their order. And as to the

I. That the ready attention of multitudes to hear and obey the gospel is fitly compared to harvest, will appear from the consideration of the following particulars, wherein there is a resemblance.

1. That as harvest is the time when grain is ripe and fit for in-gathering and use, so a ready and willing mind to hear and obey the gospel, is that which renders men fit for in-gathering into the church and kingdom of Christ. While they are careless and inattentive, there is little prospect of any good being done them, or any fruit from the preaching of the word unto them; it falls like seed by the way side, which the fowls of the air, every vain thought and temptation, catches away and devours; or like seed on a rock where it makes no impression, nor can take root, and so perishes for want of a proper soil or foundation for it to grow in; but when the minds of men are

roufed to hear and attend—when their hearts are pricked with a fenfe of their fins, and opened to receive the word, then, like a flourishing field of ripening grain, there is a profpect of a plentiful harveft—that numbers of fouls will be gathered in from the field of the world, where fatan reigns in the hearts of the children of difobedience, to the church and kingdom of Chrift, as fheaves bound up in the bundle of eternal life.

2. Harveft implies an actual in-gathering of the fruit and grain from the field into the barns and granaries of the husbandman for ufe; fo when great and general attention to the word of God prevails among a people, then commonly numbers are gathered in from the world into the church, who will be finally ftored, if I may fo exprefs it, in the garner of that heavenly husbandman, whose husbandry they are, and in whose houfe, we are told, there are many manfions prepared, fufficient room to receive them all. Some, indeed, who at fuch a time, put out fair, and appear green and flourishing for a while; yet like fields whose grain is blafed, and trees, whose fruit drops off before it comes to maturity, they foon fall away, and all the blooming profpects of future fruitfulness, which they gave, fuddenly vanifh—*The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the love of pleasure, choke and ftop their growth, or the fcorching fire of perfecution withers their verdure that they die.*

But though this is the cafe with fome, and alas! with too many who appear to fpring up fair, and

bloom and grow well for a time—yet blessed be God, there are others who like grain and fruit matured by the gentle moisture of the dew, the enriching showers of falling rain, and the genial influence of the enlivening sun, continue to grow till they are ripe for the harvest—till they are actually gathered into the visible church, and planted in the garden and vineyard of God on earth, from whence they shall be gathered and translated to his kingdom and glory above.

And when there are great numbers, who thus attend to the word, gladly receive it—submit unto it, and grow thereby to maturity—this most properly answers to the idea of harvest—This seems to be the sense in which the phrase is used in the text, in allusion, not only to the readiness with which numbers of the Samaritans came to Christ on this occasion; but to the vastly superior numbers, which were afterwards to be converted to the faith of the gospel, by the preaching of the apostles and others, to what there ever were before, by all the labors of the patriarchs and prophets. These holy men, comparatively speaking, did but sow the seed and prepare the way for that abundant harvest which the apostles and others have since reaped—when we read of three thousand converted in one day by the preaching of Peter; of five thousand at another, by Peter and John, and of the sudden and extensive spread of the gospel, and the numerous churches gathered not only throughout Judea, but throughout the whole Ro-

man empire, which then extended to almost every part of the known world, truly we may say, this was harvest indeed!

3. The time of harvest is a time of joy. Hence in the sacred scripture, any great joy is compared to the joy of harvest. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the birth of Christ, the happy change wrought thereby—and the great joy that should, or ought to spring up in the hearts of men thereupon, saith, they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. God's ancient people, the Jews, by divine appointment observed a feast, which they called the feast of harvest, when as an expression of their gratitude, they offered up the first fruits of their fields to God, and with joyful hearts participated in the plenty, with which he had increased their store, and in some parts of our own country, it is usual at the conclusion of wheat harvest, to express their joy by some extraordinary good cheer. In all parts of the world, a fruitful or plentiful harvest is considered as a just subject of joy.

So when the word has due course, and numbers are gathered in by it, it is matter of great joy both to them who sow the seed or preach the word; and to them who receive it, or are gathered in by it. They who receive and are gathered in by the word, rejoice in the happy change which is made in their present circumstances, and future prospects—

Their enjoyments are now so much more excellent and noble—their views and hopes of future good, so elevating and transporting, that they some times know not how to repress or contain their joy. They are ready to say with the psalmist, *come all ye that love the Lord, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul:* and with the woman when she had found her piece of silver, *come rejoice with me.* They, indeed, rejoice before God according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil; with a joy, as St. Peter expresses it, *unspeakable and full of glory.* They who sow the seed, or preach the word, rejoice in being made the honored instruments of so much good to them—thus they that sow, and they that reap, may be said to *rejoice together*, even in this world, and much more will they do so in the world to come. And if a rich harvest, or plentiful ingathering of grain from the field, for the support of our perishing bodies, is just matter of joy and thankfulness, much more is the ready reception of the word of God, and hearty subjection of souls to Jesus Christ, who is the bread of life, the food that nourisheth and supporteth the immortal life of the soul—This is matter of joy, not only to all the good and benevolent on earth, but to the angels of God in heaven; for we are told *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*, and much more may we suppose over numbers who repent. In view of this and its happy consequents, they are represented at the birth

of our Saviour, who is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, in joyful anthems, proclaiming *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to man.*

II. This brings me to the *second* observation, viz. That when such a season comes, or such a ready disposition is manifested to hear the word, then it is the duty, and will be the pleasure and delight of every true friend of souls, and especially of every faithful minister of Christ, to be doubly engaged in forwarding the work, and assisting in gathering in this spiritual harvest. If what Solomon says of him who sleepeth when the harvest of the field is gathering, is true, that he is *a son that causeth shame*, much more is he who sleepeth, is indolent and inactive, or useth only a common diligence in this harvest of souls. For as the harvest of the field has its particular season, and when it comes every hand is required to gather and get it in, so there are some seasons which seem to be peculiarly favorable to the in-gathering of this spiritual harvest. Particularly, when the mind is impressed—the attention roused, and the heart deeply affected—when the word falls with weight—when conscience smites the sinner, and the general cry is, *what shall we do to be saved?* Then may we say in the words of the divine husbandman, *lift up your eyes and behold! the fields are white for the harvest.* Souls are then ready and ripe for the spiritual reaper's hand, and then, to keep up the metaphor, all hands should be engaged, and every nerve

exerted to gather in the loaded sheaves, and bring home the precious harvest. This Christ and his apostles have commanded and urged by the most powerful motives, and their own most shining examples in this great work. *My meat, said Christ, is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.* This is my chief delight: I have greater pleasure in it, than in any sensual enjoyment; more satisfaction than even my necessary food can afford, when received to allay the extremities of hunger. Very eminently was this temper displayed on this occasion, when though our Lord was wearied and spent by the fatigues of his journey, he was yet so intent upon his Father's business, the great work upon which he was sent, to save ruined souls, that he postponed his immediate and needed refreshment, from the provision which his disciples had brought from the neighboring town, till he had conversed with, and instructed the Samaritans in the nature of his own character and kingdom. Thus the apostle discovered an extraordinary pleasure and diligence, according to the more extraordinary calls of providence, and the greater readiness to hear and attend their instructions, which appeared in those among whom they labored. And thus it is more or less with every faithful minister and true disciple of Jesus Christ. Not only a sense of duty urges, but sincere joy and pleasure give new spring to their exertions, and animate them with double diligence in all their work. When the benevolent minister of Jesus

beholds a multitude of precious immortals, all attentive to the important message he has to deliver, hanging upon his lips, greedily catching at, and drinking in the sincere milk of the word as it flows from his mouth, by a sort of sympathy and virtuous contagion, if I may so express it, his heart is melted, yea, his whole soul is moved and attracted, and as though touched with a live coal from off the divine altar, his tongue is loosed, and then, if ever, he will preach and pray with the spirit of his divine and compassionate master. That deadness, languor and indifference which before sealed his lips, or as it were, chilled his words as they fell from his mouth; will now be removed, and holy ardent love to God and the souls of men, will warm his heart, give volubility to his tongue, and energy to his discourse—it will fall with almost irresistible force, and like the electrical fire, communicate and spread the divine flame with which it is filled, to every heart and soul of the audience. O then it is easy preaching! it is easy praying! *The fire is in the midst of the wheels, and like the chariots of Amminadib*, the thoughts and affections run sweetly and swiftly in the work of the Lord. But alas! this is a happiness that the best and most faithful of Christ's ministers do not always enjoy. On the contrary, they are often straitened with languor, want of life and freedom in themselves. Their spirits are often damped, and their hearts discouraged by the deadness and lukewarmness of others—that after much labor and toil, little visible suc-

cess appears there is no in-gathering, but great stupidity and security reigns among those whose good they sincerely wish and labor for. Painful consideration this to the faithful laborer in Christ's vineyard, to see all his labors lost, or turn to so little effect in his master's service: But under such a melancholy and discouraging case. Our

III. Observation is proper to afford direction and comfort, to wit, That though ministers and christians do not at present see the good effects of their pious intentions and labors, they are not thence to conclude that their labors are entirely useless, and without effect, nor to sit down in despondence, as though no good would ever arise from them, but persevere in their earnest prayers and pious endeavors, not knowing which is to prosper, the seed sown in the morning or in the evening, and assuring themselves, that whatever be the present appearances, they shall in due time reap if they faint not. Though little or no desirable effects appear to arise from their labors at present, yet even now they may answer an important purpose, to check and restrain the overflowings of ungodliness, which might otherwise, to much greater degrees, prevail; or to lay a foundation and prepare the way for a yet glorious harvest in some future time, either in their own day, or the days of those who are to come after and succeed them in their labors, when they are perhaps dead and gone. This seems plainly to be intimated by our Lord in the text—*Herein, saith he, is that saying true, one soweth and*

another reapeth. I sent you to reap that on which ye bestowed no labor. Other men labored and ye are entered into their labors. God is the sovereign dispenser of his own favors, and confers them in what manner, and at what time to him seems best. The labors of some men, though they make little or no appearance as to any good effect in their own day, yet they often prepare the way for joyful and glorious events in the days of those who come after them. Thus the preaching of the patriarchs and prophets prepared the way for great and glorious things in the days of Christ, and the preaching of Christ prepared the way for yet greater and more glorious effects from the preaching of the apostles; and thus one minister is no doubt often made the harbinger or forerunner to prepare the way and usher in great and glorious things in the days of his successor. Though little or no visible good effect appears from his ministry in his own day; yet the seed is not lost, it may take root, spring up and bear fruit to the glory of God, when he is laid in his grave; so that both he that soweth and he that reapeth, may yet rejoice together with exceeding great joy; the one in having sown the seed, and the other in having reaped the harvest. This is a most animating and encouraging argument for ministers, after having put their hands to the gospel plough, not to look back or sit down discouraged under present ill success; and also for pious parents and friends, who have hitherto seen all their prayers and pious counsels of

little effect for any good to their children or others, still to persevere in fervent prayer and unwearied endeavors for their conversion and salvation, not knowing what or when will be the effect. Great and glorious effects may yet attend their labors, even in their own days, or if not, yet in the days of those who succeed them, when they are laid in the grave. The sermons of faithful ministers, and the counsels of pious parents and friends, have in a multitude of instances, been known to take such hold of the minds of their hearers and children, that though in the heat of youth, the pursuits of pleasure, or hurry of business, they may, for a time, be oppressed and buried in oblivion, that no good effect of them is seen in their lives and conversation, perhaps for years; yet after all, these same pious instructions, counsels and exhortations of their ministers, parents and friends, have been brought to remembrance; like a barbed arrow pierced them to the heart, with the bitter remembrance of their sin and folly, for rejecting these counsels so long, and under the influence of the spirit of God, have been blessed to a real change of heart and life. Is not this an argument sufficient to encourage us all to go on in this benevolent work; the prospect of being the happy and honored instrument of gathering and bringing others to the participation of that eternal life, which we wish and hope for as our own supreme, complete and never-ending felicity? Sure if any thing can animate our hearts, and set our souls on fire, it

must be this—Love to our neighbor and ourselves, their interest, and our own honor, all conspire to encourage and engage us in it, for they that turn many to righteousness, the wise man saith, *shall shine forth as the sun in the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.* But

IV. Should we be so unhappy as to be wholly unsuccessful, and neither in our own, nor in the days of those who follow us, any visible good effects appear from our labors (but be like seed that rots under the clods and never comes up at all) yet if we are truly faithful laborers, we shall not miss of our reward in the world above, however unsuccessful we may be in this. *Though Israel be not gathered,* said the Prophet, *I shall be glorious in the sight of the Lord.* Was it not for this reflexion, I know not how many serious, conscientious minister of Christ, who sincerely wishes the salvation of the souls committed to his charge, could have heart to preach under long-continued visible ill success. With all the supports and comfortable assurance, which the word of God affords in the case to the faithful laborer, he oft feels the discouragement so great, as almost to sit down in dispondence, and in the anguish of his soul, bemoan his case in the plaintive language of the Prophet, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?* I have toiled all the day; I have spent my strength for nought; they are not, they will not be gathered. He is hence led to serious enquiry and deep humiliation, with

respect to his own views and conduct in the discharge of this great work; but when upon careful and humble examination, he can, notwithstanding his many imperfections and defects, find that he does sincerely aim at, study and strive for the promotion of God's glory, and the good of souls, when with Peter, he can say, *Lord thou knowest that I love thee*, and with Paul—*That in simplicity and godly sincerity, I have had my conversation in the world*. Then upon the assurance of the word of God, he may have confidence, and take comfort in the darkest hour. Happy is the minister; happy the Christian who has this testimony of a good conscience towards God and man! It is worth more than the applause of the whole world without it. O! that we may all know its worth, by its comforting testimony in our own souls! I, as the minister or sower, sent to sow the seed, to reap and gather in this spiritual harvest, and you as those to be gathered in—This will be to our mutual comfort here, and our mutual everlasting joy hereafter. That this may be the case, it is not of importance that we all enquire how we have and do discharge the several trusts reposed in us, and duties incumbent upon us? I, in sowing the seed of the word, and you in hearing, receiving and assisting in bringing it forward to the harvest. This is an enquiry proper and important for you as well as for me, and that in proportion to all the advantages you have had, and the number of laborers in, or sowers of the word that have been among

you. The seed of the word which was sown by Christ and his apostles, hath been continued down to you.* Numbers have been sent in Christ's stead, from time to time, to sow and reap among you, who have been called one after another out of the field, and others sent to succeed in their place and labors; and last of all, I also am sent to sow the word, and labor in the vineyard of Christ among you. O that it may be the seed and favor of eternal life to many, to all your souls! O that I may be able to say with my blessed master, when he beheld the forward and eager disposition of these Samaritans pressing to see him, and hear his gracious word—*lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are already white to harvest*; that as your fields are now ripe for the sickle, and ye preparing to gather the joyful harvest into your barns, so there may be a willingness to hear, and a readiness or ripeness to be reaped and gathered in by the gospel of Christ in every soul in this congregation—and a rich and glorious harvest ensue by my ministry among you. I have already been these three years and more laboring in the ministry of the word among you—What increase have ye yielded? What fruit have ye borne to the master of the vineyard, the

* 1. Rev. Thomas Hanford, who came from Old England, and settled as minister of this church, as near as can be determined by the town records, in 1653, and died 1693.

2. Rev. Stephen Buckingham, installed 1697, dismissed 1726, or 1727.

3. Rev. Moses Dickinson, installed 1727, died 1778.

4. Rev. William Tennant, ordained and installed as a colleague to Mr. Dickinson, 1765, dismissed and removed to Charleston, South-Carolina, 1772.

heavenly husbandman? I blame you not, nor charge you with any want of attention, or respect to myself or ministry. Nay, on this account, I have reason hitherto to speak well of you as a congregation; ye have ever treated me with respect, and regularly attended upon my public instructions—but yet, this notwithstanding, may I not ask, have these my instructions and labors among you, answered their designed end? Have they been the means of any in-gathering? Have they been blessed to awaken, convince, convert and bring home any soul to the divine husbandman? This is surely a question of great importance to you all, and which I assure you sometimes seriously exercises my own mind—What will it signify, that ye treat me with respect, and in general attend regularly upon my ministry among you, which is indeed pleasing, and merits commendation from me, if after all, ye be not gathered into Christ by a cordial acceptance of, and submission to him in the characters and offices in which he is exhibited in the gospel? Shall I study, labor and toil for your salvation, and yet be the honored and happy instrument of saving none of you? Where then will be my crown, which ye must be in the Lord? Will the bare civility and respect with which you treat me, or the supply of my necessities which you grant me, satisfy me without any further wish or concern for your good? I must be basely ungrateful to, and unworthy of that all-gracious master, whose servant I am, if this can be the case. I trust I

have a witness in your consciences, that it is not the case; and I think I can truly say, that my heart's desire, and fervent prayer to God concerning you is, that you may all be saved. On this occasion, when your ripened harvest—the ears loaded with grain, bend down their heads in your fields, to invite the sharp sickle of the in-gatherer; I cannot but express a wish—I cannot but devoutly pray, that so your hearts might yield to the impression of God's word, which is the sword of the spirit, and that there may be a glorious harvest, or in-gathering to Jesus Christ among you—this would rejoice my heart, even mine; and believe it, my friends, you must be gathered to Christ, with his friends in this world, or with his enemies in the world to come; for there is a very different, an awful harvest approaching, in which if you are not reaped and gathered in mercy and joy; you must in judgment, sorrow and pain, to be burned and tormented for ever—they who are not reaped and gathered to Christ, by the ministry of his word and servants in this world, the scripture informs us, shall be finally reaped, *bound in bundles and burned as chaff in unquenchable fire.* Read the account, and let every sinner, who has never yet been gathered into Christ, or become a true member of his kingdom, tremble. And in the time of harvest, saith our Lord, *I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. The tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy*

that sowed them is the devil—the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world, 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 he shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear. Let these solemn truths sink deep into all your hearts. Let them dwell with you in your houses—carry them with you into your fields, and when you are plowing and sowing—when you are reaping, binding up, and carrying your harvest into your barns, remember the time is fast approaching when you must all take your part in a far more important and interesting harvest; when you must be bound up in bundles for eternal life, or severed as chaff from the wheat for eternal burnings. Let me then intreat you now, while you stand in the field, where the seed, the blessed word of life, is sown, the culture of divine ordinances, and the influences of the holy spirit are offered and afforded, that ye see to it that ye remain not still tares; but that the seed of the word take deep root in your hearts, and bear fruit unto eternal life; so shall ye, as good wheat, be gathered into the garner of the heavenly husbandman, and with the righteous shine like the sun in the kingdom of your Father, for ever and ever. And while you are thus careful for your own interest and salvation, in that solemn day, for-

get not, I pray you, the concern you ought to have for the interest and salvation of others also—you are in some respects to be fellow-laborers with me in the field of Christ. Though it is my work principally and more publicly to sow the seed, to cultivate and gather in the precious harvest for the divine husbandman; it is yours also, according to your several places and abilities, in a subordinate way, to assist me herein. Ye who are placed in families, whom God hath blessed with children and servants, are in an especial manner called to this important work—to bend the tender mind, and “teach the young idea how to shoot.” Much depends upon your aid in this particular, to prepare these young and tender growths for fruitfulness in the garden of God, by early seasoning their minds with religious instruction, training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and like faithful Abraham of old, commanding your children and household to keep the way of the Lord. This greatly assists and alleviates the ministerial laborer, in bringing prepared and understanding minds to the public instructions of the church; but where family government and family instruction are neglected, or little attended to, there is commonly less good to be expected from public instruction. Ye have all, then, to whom the government and direction of families are committed, an important work to attend to in this spiritual husbandry. Nor are those exempt who are not thus connected: None can say I have nothing to do, and so sit down quiet and unconcern-

ed about the welfare of others, because he is not the head and master of a family. Here is work for all. Every man has friends, connexions and acquaintance, if not children and servants, whose spiritual interest he is bound by all proper and prudent methods to promote, before whom he is commanded to let his light so shine as to lead them to glorify their Father who is in heaven. None then have a right to say with selfish Cain—*Am I my brother's keeper?* And rest unconcerned and take no care about the souls of others; but are to pray for, and by all proper means strive to promote their eternal welfare. And especially, if any of you hope that God has been gracious to your souls, that you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good; let me exhort you to imitate your divine master, of whose goodness you have tasted, and by whose spirit you profess to be actuated. Let it be with you as it was with him, your *meat and drink to do the will of him who hath sent you into the vineyard*, and employed you according to your several stations, to labor in gathering in his harvest, to do his will and finish his work. Evidence, the sense you have of his divine goodness, and the supreme excellency of Jesus Christ this way. Imitate the conduct of the Samaritan woman, who, as soon as she was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, immediately hastened away to call her friends and fellow-citizens to his acquaintance, saying, *I have found a man who hath told me all that ever I did, is not this the Christ?* Thus go to your children and domestics, your friends and acquaintance, with

words of love and kindness, invite them to come, taste and see how good the Lord is; set before them the beauty and loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the pleasure and delight, the safety and happiness there is in his service; shew them their absolute, their perishing need of an interest in his favor; and enforce the whole with a conduct which shall demonstrate your own belief of these truths, and which shall shew them how tenderly you love them; how much you have their best interest at heart. Should you be so happy as with the woman of Samaria, to prevail with them, like the Samaritans, to whom she spake of Christ, to come and see, taste and believe on their own experience, what an everlasting source of joy and consolation will it be to you! It will be a source of great joy and consolation even in this world; but O! how much greater in the world to come! Ye who are parents, think what an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction it will be for the beloved husband and wife to meet the dear pledges of their mutual love, in complete happiness and glory in heaven. What higher wish can enter? What greater joy can swell the parent's heart than this? How happy will be the meeting of dear and long-separated friends in that world of joy and felicity? How agreeable and transporting the interview of the beloved husband and wife, the honored parent and his dear children—affectionate brothers and sisters, and the faithful minister and his dear people, who have died in the Lord? Then will they welcome and congratulate each other on the heavenly shore,

Then will they sweetly mingle souls in continued rapture of eternal love and joy. I am lost in the prospect; the language of mortals cannot paint the tender, the transporting scene. *Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him.* Angels and spirits in happiness only can describe it in perfection—to this happiness let us all aspire; for this, let us all incessantly labor, and be assistant to each other.

And now reverend and dear sir, as the subject compared with our circumstances, so naturally leads to it, permit me to address a few words to you on this occasion. Herein, saith our Lord to his disciples, *Is that saying true, one soweth and another reapeth; other men labored and ye have entered into their labors.* Behold! this scripture literally fulfilled in you and me. In the days of my youth I was, by the laying on of the hands, and particular designation of the presbytery, placed in this part of the great field of Christ's church, where numbers of faithful laborers had been before, with a solemn charge to labor in it, and watch over it. For several years I devoted myself to this my charge; and though with many imperfections, I acknowledge I did it, yet never with a dishonest heart—In troublous and perilous times,* I kept it, labored in it, and watched over it—readily contributing both by word and deed, whatever was in my power for its protection, cultivation and

* The late war,

growth, in the fruits of truth and righteousness—But the great Lord both of the field and the harvest, that universal governor by whom the fate of empires, and the sparrow's fall are equally directed, has, in his all-wise and righteous providence, called me from this, to labor in another part of the vineyard; and you from another to labor in this—May we both be enabled to discharge our respective trusts with fidelity, and each have the unspeakable satisfaction to see much fruit of our labors, many souls gathered in by our instrumentality, who, in that last great and general harvest, in which the angels of God are to be the reapers, shall be as seals of our ministry, and crowns of our rejoicing; with whom, and with all the faithful, gathered from the four corners of the earth, may we rejoice together in presence of God and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

And you, my brethren of this congregation, once the dear people of my charge, receive my congratulations on this occasion, and suffer the word of exhortation—I rejoice that ye are again settled in the order of the gospel, under the care of a pastor of acknowledged probity and worth, to instruct and gather you—submit yourselves to him as to the servant of Christ, sent to watch for your souls, as one that must give an account—that he may do it with joy, and not with grief, which would be unprofitable to you. Reverence and respect him as the ambassador and messenger of the Lord—honoring him for his office and work's sake. Exercise a spirit of candor and tenderness in all your

thoughts of, and conduct towards him—spread a mantle of love over his failings, if any he should have, remembering that perfection is not the lot of mortals—Never suffer the baneful principle of prejudice, or groundless jealousy and suspicion to take possession of your breasts—Like the fly in the pot of ointment, it will spoil a thousand otherwise commendable qualities—Like the fever, it will destroy your sense, and taste of that which is just and good—Like the jaundice, it will present all objects in false colors. As it was said of our Lord, that he could not do many mighty works in a certain place, because of their unbelief, so it is morally impossible that any great good should be done among that people where prejudice reigns; should a man live like a saint, and preach like an angel, it would be all lost upon those whose minds are thus shut and fast barred from beholding it—Would you then wish to be benefited by the labors of your minister, ever beware of and guard against this baneful principle.

While he is sowing to you in spiritual things, think not much to impart of your worldly things, but communicate liberally an honorable and comfortable support, that, free from the distracting care how he shall provide for the necessary subsistence of his family, he may give himself wholly to his ministry; bring beaten oil into the sanctuary, and feed your souls with divine wisdom and knowledge. And to all your other kindness and respect, add also your daily fervent prayers to the throne of grace, for the gifts of the holy spirit, to

descend, to furnish him to, and render him successful in his great work. Prayers for a minister, are like the hands of Aaron and Hur, supporting the arms of Moses. A praying people, saith one, will make a preaching minister. To engage you to the performance of all these duties, frequently consider the solemn account you must one day give of his, and the labors of all others, who have been from time to time among you. You have been a highly privileged people. Many laborers, in succession, have been sent among you—and yet the Lord of the harvest hath sent another*—May a glorious harvest, indeed, arise from his labors, and you with him, and all those before sent to labor among you, rejoice together in the kingdom of glory.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

* 1. Rev. Mr. Magnish, or M'Nish.

2. Rev. Mr. Cross, who was dismissed and removed to Philadelphia.

3. Rev. Mr. Wilmot.

4. Rev. David Bostwick, who was dismissed to take the charge of the Presbyterian church in New-York.—The time of settlement and death, or removal of the above, unknown.

5. Rev. Isaac Mills, ordained and installed 1762, died in the spring 1774.

6. Rev. Matthias Burnet, received their call and went to reside with them in the fall of 1774, was ordained and installed April 1775, dismissed May 1785, and re-settled at Norwalk, in Connecticut, November 2, 1785.

7. Rev. George Fایتoute, their present minister, installed December 15, 1789.

S E R M O N XXXI.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF
GOOD WORKS.

B Y

GEORGE FAITOUTE, A. M.

Minister of a Presbyterian Church, Jamaica, Long-Island.

PSALMS CXVI. 9.

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

BRETHREN, if the tree be good, its fruit will be good also; and if the heart of any man be right with God, so will the tenor of his life be.

Whatever pretences men may make of love, or regard to God, they cannot be accounted his sincere friends, but by an answerable external conduct. The reality of our faith cannot be well proved or ascertained, without good works; for *faith without works is dead, being alone*, saith the apostle James; and *these things*, saith St. Paul to Titus, *I will, that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men.* Consonant to this is the promise, or solemn

vow of the Psalmist, in the words just read in your hearing; *I will, saith he, walk before the Lord in the land of the living.* Here we may take notice,

1. Of the matter of the duty in which the Psalmist promiseth to engage, expressed in the words, *I will walk.* This phrase is taken differently by commentators; some take it for an expression of his confidence in the continuance of God's favor towards him; that God, who had freed him from the jaws of death, would now continue him in the land of the living.

And so they interpret the passage thus, *I shall walk*; that is, *I shall be preserved, and continue some time longer on earth, to advance the glory of God.* By others, it is understood as expressing a duty on man's part, rather than a kindness on the part of God; in this sense of the word, I would rather acquiesce, as this phrase is most commonly in scripture, used to express a duty. It was required of Abraham, as a duty, to walk before God, *I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect.*

The psalmist in this place, by expressing his purpose under a solemn promise, binds himself to perform the duty promised; the word *walk*, implies motion, and a proceeding on in that motion, step by step, and from one place to another. Taken metaphorically, it signifies the practice of what is good and lovely, as the words following intimate.

2. The manner in which he purposed to walk before the Lord, that is, in such a manner, that

God, the searcher of hearts, would be pleased with it, and approve of it.

3. The *place* and *time*, while he continued on earth, and remained among the living.

The single doctrine from the words, to which I shall speak at this time, is this, that our inward affection to God must be declared, or manifested, by our outward conversation. I shall,

I. Confirm the proposition.

II. Shew you why our inward affection to God, must be declared by our outward conversation.

III. Consider the necessity of good works.

First, I will endeavor to confirm the proposition, that inward affection to God must be declared, by our outward conversation.

That inward affection to God, is to be manifested by an outward walk with God, may be proved by that connexion which there is between them: The one cannot be without the other; so in scripture, walking in God's ways, and keeping his commandments, is inferred from the fear and love we have of him. *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways. Fear God and keep his commandments, saith Solomon; and St. John tells us, This is the love of God that we keep his commandments.*

Moreover, this duty is frequently pressed in the scriptures. We find God commanding Abraham

to walk before him. *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect—And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways. And this kind of walking is highly commended—These are the generations of Noah; Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walketh with God.* To the same purpose is that declaration, concerning Zacharias and Elizabeth; *they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

Besides, walking before the Lord, has been abundantly rewarded, and therefore, says the psalmist, *great is their peace who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them; and in keeping thy commandments there is a great reward.* How distinguished a reward did the righteous Lord bestow on the pious Enoch. *And Enoch walketh with God, and he was not, for God took him.* And such will be the reward of all, who walk before the Lord in the land of the living. Sooner or later God will take them home to himself.

Secondly, I am to shew, why our inward affection to God, must be declared by our outward conversation. This will appear from the following considerations.

1. In this way, God is glorified. By a holy practice, *we shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light; and thus Men may see our good works, and glorify our Fa-*

ther who is in Heaven. The more fruitful we are in good works, the more is God our maker glorified; *for herein says our Lord, is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* Now, what can be more desirable than to honor the glorious Father of our spirits? *A son honoreth his father, saith a Prophet, and a servant his master.* Shall we then call those men sons of God, and servants of the Most High, who are regardless of the glory of God, and remain unmoved by a motive so good and powerful? Since walking piously, glorifies God, all who have an inward affection for him, will carefully maintain good works. A due esteem of God is manifested only by making him our supreme end.— And so we are directed by the apostle Paul, to aim in all we do, at the glory of God, *whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

2. By an holy and righteous walk, others are benefited.

We know not how much good those around us, sometimes reap, from an observation of the purity, benevolence, and zeal, of their fellow-christians.

Those who are called of God, are stirred up to an holy emulation at the view; saith the apostle to the Hebrews, *wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience, the race that is set before us.* All those who walk aright, become patterns with others, *so that ye were,* saith the apostle

Paul, *ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.* And those who are not yet effectually called by the grace of God, may be brought over to the love of the truth, by a conversation becoming the gospel. Thus speaks the apostle Peter, *Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives; having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil doers, they may be ashamed, who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.* To promote the spiritual good, the best interest of all around us, is an object worthy of men, and of Christians; and the probability that we may, by any just means effect this, should induce us to make it our endeavor; but their best good cannot be promoted so successfully any other way, as by a patient continuance in well-doing, and manifesting our love to God by a holy practice.

3. In this way too our own good is promoted.

It is by a good conversation, that the security of our hearts, the integrity of our consciences, the soundness of our faith, and in a word, the truth of all our graces are clearly manifested, cherished and increased. If we content ourselves with saying, *Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he saith,* our profession is plainly insincere; it is hypocrisy. If we maintain not a conversation becoming the gospel, our consciences are defiled, our faith is dead, inactive and useless.

By a good conversation, the presence of the holy spirit in us, is testified to our own peace and comfort. All the various graces of the Christian are so many fruits of the spirit, wrought in him by the Holy Ghost; and therefore, a holy practice, proves the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

In this way too, is gained the assurance of God's love, and outward evidence is given of our election and salvation.

Besides, by such a walk many judgments are either prevented or removed, softened or sanctified; and what is still a greater blessing, destruction from the Almighty will be happily avoided:— Hereby shall we escape from deserved and unutterable despair, and get into the path of life, the way of peace, and the happy road to joys unspeakable and full of glory. How great, my hearers, will be the gain of piety, both here and hereafter!

Thirdly, I come now to consider a little, the necessity of good works.

The importance and necessity of good works can be easily maintained without ascribing to them any merit or any influence in our justification, and although we press not the doing of good works as being meritorious, yet there are forcible reasons or arguments, from which we may urge the great necessity of them. And,

I. They are highly necessary, as being commanded and expressly required by God himself.

Whatever God requires in his word, must be done. Obedience is necessary, and therefore, holiness of heart and life, is indispensibly necessary. That good works are required of Christians, will not be doubted by any, who are in the least acquainted with the Bible. *Let ours also, faith an apostle, learn to maintain good works for necessary uses;* and faith the same inspired writer, *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works, these things are good and profitable unto men.* Where the word of a king is, there is power; and is there no authority in the precepts of Heaven? No obedience due to the commands of the living God? How dwelleth the fear and love of God in those men who violate the divine law, and trample on the dread authority of the Most High? Surely a holy walk with God is necessary since it is enjoined by himself.

2. Good works are the way to the kingdom of God.

For though they are by no means to be considered as the cause of our reigning in Heaven, yet without them we shall never attain to the kingdom; we shall never see God; so speaks the apostle Paul—*without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* The sum of felicity consists, in the enjoyment of the ever blessed God. They who being born of God by the regenerating influences of the holy spirit, live a holy and humble life, shall know by sweet and happy experience, that in the pre-

sence of God, *there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, to which distinguished honor, they shall soon be happily advanced, there are pleasures for ever more.*

3. Good works are an evidence or demonstration of our faith.

The apostle James, speaking of the faith of Abraham, and how it was proved to be genuine, says, *seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?* And a fruitless inactive faith, which produceth not the fruits of righteousness, is by the same apostle denominated, *a dead faith.* Works are therefore necessary, as *evidences of our faith,* and in this way only, can it be proved to be genuine, a true and living faith.

To evidence our faith is of great importance, and highly necessary, as without it, it is impossible to please God, *or to escape eternal wo—be that believeth not shall be damned.* How vastly necessary then, are good works, as they are a demonstration of the truth and reality of our faith?

4. The not doing of them merits eternal death.

For although we must disagree with those who suppose that doing good works merits everlasting life, yet we know that the most exquisite torments of the damned, will be no more than the just reward of their impious deeds.

Whatever stores of wrath are reserved for the wicked, they are but the treasures which guilty sinners have hoarded up for themselves—*But after*

thy hardness and impenitent heart, saith St. Paul, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God;— and the same inspired writer tells us that, *the wages of sin is death.* If then *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,* shall be upon them who obey not the truth, and on every soul of man that doth evil, how necessary are good works? How careful should we be to walk in the way of God's commandments? With what diligence and zeal ought all men to serve the Lord in their day and generation?

5. The necessity of good works will appear if we consider them as expressions of our gratitude. It is indeed true that when we have done all those things which are commanded, we may still say, we are unprofitable servants. However, by doing what we are commanded, according to our ability, we show ourselves grateful children of our Father, who is in Heaven. And I think this is an argument of more weight with an ingenuous child of God, than any motive which can be drawn from *merit*, or the *supposed worth* of our obedience. For when the Christian pondereth on the free grace, and boundless mercy of God, in giving his own son, in accepting the returning sinner for Christ's sake, in pardoning all his sins, and in reserving for him everlasting life, it tends so to inflame his heart with love and gratitude, that he is always ready to do whatsoever he thinks may be well-pleasing in the sight of God, even to the utmost of his power.

Gratitude to God is our duty ; it is a delightful and necessary duty ; it is, and will be performed by all that love God. But good works are the genuine fruits of a grateful disposition, and without them, it will never be suitably expressed. Hath the blessed God loaded us with benefits, and followed us with loving kindness and tender mercies, and shall his people, shall any who call themselves Christians, break his laws and trample on the authority by which they are enacted ? Can any suppose that such conduct will be a grateful return to the Father of our mercies ? Oh ! what a rich gift was that, when God gave us his own son ? Is it for this, that poor sinners despise and disobey him, and rush on the bucklers of the Almighty ?

I shall now proceed to make some application of the subject.

1. This subject teacheth us, that those who walk not in God's ways, cannot be esteemed his affectionate people. For whoever hath a due regard to the Supreme Jehovah, whoever truly fears and loves him, will testify his regard to him by a devout and holy conversation. Inward affection to God, will make us fear, and fly from the very appearance of evil. No sin will be indulged nor permitted to dwell in *that heart*, where love to God is predominant. If we do indeed love Christ, we shall keep his commandments. These will not be grievous, but most pleasant and delightful ;—*Oh ! how love I thy holy law ; it is my meditation all the day*, said pious David ; and St. Paul says, *I de-*

light in the law of God after the inward man. And who can help loving and delighting in the law of God, when he considers that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good?

2. The knowledge, affection and profession of persons who walk not before the Lord, are all in vain. For those things will be so many evidences against them, will render them the more inexcusable, and aggravate their final judgment. I confess that the knowledge of God, an esteem of him, and an outward profession, are all necessary and useful. For a religion without knowledge, must needs be preposterous and erroneous; without affection, mere hypocrisy; and without an open and free profession, no better than cowardice. But though these things are necessary, yet they are not sufficient, and the truth of them all may be justly questioned, where they are not ratified and confirmed by an answerable conduct.

3. That walking with God, in the external duties of religion, will best stop the mouths of the adversaries of the truth. The enemies of our religion take the more occasion to slander it when they see Christians walking carelessly, and untenderly. Oh! take heed that you give no occasion to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme. Make conscience of good works; study to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world.

4. Lastly, we learn from what has been said, that those who walk not before the Lord in the land of the living, are exposed to the most dread-

ful ruin. O sinners ! deniers of God ! deniers of Christ the saviour of the world ! rejecters of Heaven, and travellers to hell ! what can be said to you to stop you in your dangerous career to ruin ?—What can be done, what would I not do, to snatch you from the strokes of Almighty vengeance ? O stop for a moment, and look forward to that gulph of despair into which you are just ready to plunge ! Methinks I see some of my hearers already tottering on the brink of damnation, and yet fearless, yet unconcerned ! *Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light.* Fly, poor thoughtless soul, from the wrath to come ; instantly fly, lest wrath come upon you to the very uttermost, and your never-dying soul be for ever lost ! The God of the spirits of all flesh is your enemy ; devils are your enemies, and the whole herd of the ungodly will shortly become *mutual tormenters*. Not a single friend will you meet with, in all the regions of misery—no, nor in heaven itself, shall so much as one be found to pity or relieve you ; but you must lie down in overwhelming sorrows, and welter in flames unquenchable for ever ! But alas ! the forlorn condition of careless disobedient mankind, shall exceed all the powers of description ! Perhaps nothing but the groans of the damned, which may none of you, dear brethren, ever hear, could give even a faint view of *their* wretched state, whom Christ the Lord will disown and cast off for ever ! Be entreated therefore, to come to God through Jesus

Christ. Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, and thus glorifying your Father in Heaven, you may hope, in due time, to dwell for ever with the Lord. Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the throne, be ascribed all honor, praise and glory, henceforth and for ever, Amen.



S E R M O N XXXII.

O N C H A R I T Y.

B Y

A B I E L H O L M E S, A. M.

Pastor of a Church of Christ at Midway, in Georgia.

L U K E X. 33, 34, 35.

—*But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*

IT was an observation of an ancient heathen, that in nothing do men approach nearer the gods, than in doing good. If the light of nature dictated so noble a sentiment, what should be the views of Christians on this subject, with all the advantages of the light of revelation? Lamentable, indeed, will it be, if their views do not rise higher than those of the heathen, and if their hearts do

not lie more open to the exercises of benevolence and charity. If, however, this be not the case with those who wear the Christian name, it is by no means the fault of the Christian religion.— This breathes, throughout, a spirit of benevolence and love to mankind, and inculcates charity among the foremost of its precepts. The amiable, the divine author of this holy religion, most beautifully illustrated this branch of Christianity, in his preaching, and in his practice. What he enjoined on others, he took special care to observe himself; for it was a distinguishing trait in his character, that he *went about doing good*. In this respect, considered merely as a man, he eclipses the glory of the most distinguished benefactors, recorded in the annals of fame. How honorable, how happy, would it be for ourselves, how happy for society, did we, in this particular, follow the example of the benevolent Jesus! Did we, uniformly, with the profession of piety towards God, take care to *love our neighbour as ourselves!*—“ By all means,” saith one, “ this is a most important, a most excellent branch of religion; but *who is my neighbour*, whom, by this precept, I am obliged to love?” The same question was once put to our blessed Lord, and you will find his answer to it in what follows:—*A certain man of the Jewish nation went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and, passing through those wild and dangerous roads, fell among some of those cruel robbers, who so often assault such as travel that way; and these merciless*

wretches, having plundered him, *stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him* most barbarously, went off, *leaving him half dead.* And, while he lay in this unhappy condition, *a certain priest* happened to come along that way; and though, by virtue of his sacred profession, he ought to have been forward to relieve the distressed, yet, seeing him lying at a little distance, he passed along by, without pretending to take any notice of him. In like manner, *a Levite* also, as he was journeying that way, just came to the place where this poor object lay, and looked on him, and, with the most unfeeling neglect, *passed by on the other side*, without doing any thing at all for his relief; and thus the distressed man might have lain and perished. But a certain Samaritan, as he was travelling the same way, came to the place *where he was*; and, when he saw him in this miserable situation, though he might readily know, or at least presume, that he was a Jew; yet, notwithstanding the hatred which subsisted between these two nations, *he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds.* After he had *poured in* some of the oil and wine which he had by him among the provisions of his journey; and *setting him on his own beast*, because he was unable to walk, he *brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* And, the next morning, when he departed from the inn, *he took out two denarii, or Roman pence, and gave them to the innkeeper, and said unto him, Take all possible care of this poor wounded stranger, and see that he wants for nothing, and*

whatever more thou shalt have occasion to spend, on his account, *I will repay thee*, when I return.—Excellent Samaritan! Who can read this story of thy humane, compassionate behavior towards this poor distressed Jew, without tears of admiration? And will any one still ask, *Who is my neighbor?* It is submitted to thyself, *which of these three persons, the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves. He that shewed mercy on him*—thou wilt doubtless say. Why, then, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

That we may rightly understand the nature, and the extent of this duty of charity, and may be excited to the conscientious performance of it, I propose,

I. To shew who are the proper objects of charity.

II. To shew what is the proper measure of charity.

III. To recommend the duty of charity.

I am, in the *first* place, to shew who are the proper objects of charity.

The dictates of reason, and the oracles of God, may convince us, that any one of the human race, who is in a suffering condition, is a proper object of charity. A distressed neighbor, surely, calls for our charitable assistance. But every person, as the text intimates, must be considered as our neigh-

bor. Therefore, every distressed person, be he who he may, is a proper object of charity. The parable, of which the text is a part, was expressly “intended to shew, that every human creature, who needs our assistance, is to be considered by us as our neighbor, of whatever nation, or faith, or profession, he may be.” And one would think it hardly possible to illustrate this truth in a more striking and beautiful manner, than it is here done by our blessed Lord.—It is well known, that the Jews had an inveterate hatred against the Samaritans. Various causes contributed to this. The Samaritans were of foreign extraction.—There was, at an early period, a great mixture of superstition and idolatry in their religion. They treated the Jews very injuriously after their return from the captivity. They built a temple on Mount Gerizim, in opposition to the temple at Jerusalem. And what, perhaps, incurred the hatred and contempt of the Jews, more than all the rest, they made an infamous offer to Antiochus of dedicating that temple to Jupiter, and of admitting the rites of his idolatrous worship, at a time when the Jews were suffering the utmost extremities in defence of their religion. From these, and other causes, the Jews had no friendly intercourse with the Samaritans. Indeed, the jealousy, on both sides, was most violent, and the enmity implacable. But, notwithstanding all this, no sooner does the Samaritan meet with this poor distressed Jew, than he lays aside all party feelings, and resent-

ments, and immediately undertakes to relieve him. It was enough, that he was in a suffering condition, just ready to perish. No matter who, or what he is; this benevolent man sees he is a proper object of charity, and so *has compassion on him*; and, without hesitation, does all in his power to help him. What if he is a Jew? It is no time to think of that now.—Some writers tell us, that the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans rose so high, “that if a Jew and a Samaritan met in a narrow way, they were exceedingly solicitous that they might pass without touching each other, for fear of pollution on each side.”—If this was fact, how beautifully does it illustrate the humanity of this good Samaritan! Instead of avoiding to touch the Jew, he took pains to dress his wounds, and to set him on his own beast, supporting him in his arms as he rode, as well as to make a generous provision for him at the inn.—Hence we see that every man, let his nation, or country, or religion, be what it may, must be considered as our neighbor, and treated accordingly. If we find any one in distress, he is a proper object of our charity.—Even if our *enemy hunger, we must feed him; if he thirst, we must give him drink*—or, whatever may be his sufferings, we must do what we can to relieve him.

I proceed, in the *second* place, to shew what is the proper measure of our charity.—Two things are to be considered in determining this;—the necessity of the suffering object, and our own ability.

1. We must consider the necessity of the object which requires our charity.

In a case of great necessity, our charity should be extended farther than where the necessity is small. If we find a person just ready to perish, we should not fail to deny ourselves our own ease and pleasure, and to go a great length to relieve him. Thus the good Samaritan acted. The very distressing condition of this poor Jew absorbed all other considerations, and, in order to relieve him, he did not hesitate a moment to lay aside his enmity and prejudice, to forego his own ease and comfort; and to expend a part of that money, and of those provisions which he had by him as necessary to his journey. As the Jew was robbed of his clothes, it is probable enough the Samaritan used some of his own garments for binding up his wounds. It is likely he could not well spare the oil and wine—but it was a case of necessity, and he did not regard himself. Just so ought we to consider the real necessity of the person whom we are about to relieve by our charity. The measure of this ought to be proportioned to the degree of that. Not, indeed, that we are, by any means, to be unmindful of the smallest distresses of any of our brethren; but they should claim our attention and charity, in proportion to their extremity.

2. We must consider our own ability.

If there be first a willing mind, saith the apostle on this subject, it is accepted according to that a man

bath, and not according to that he bath not. This is the proper rule by which our charity should be dispensed. After duly considering the real case of the distressed, we ought fairly and impartially to consider how far we can consistently contribute towards relieving them. The good Samaritan, besides attending to the present distressing necessity of the unfortunate Jew, and helping him to an inn, consulted also his own ability, and opened his purse for his farther relief. He gave the landlord, for taking care of him, two Roman pence, which were in value about fifteen pence sterling. And it is very probable, that a man, who was now travelling a considerable distance from home, would not have more to spare; especially as he was to pass through so dangerous a road, and so it would have been imprudent to take more money than he was likely to want in his journey; and this would be the less, as it was usual for travellers in those parts to carry their provisions with them.* It is to be presumed, then, that the good Samaritan measured his charity by his ability. He gave what he could reasonably spare. Thus ought we to do— And here it may be observed, that we may, at least, always sympathize with the distressed, even when we have it not in our power to relieve them by our charity; and how great an alleviation to distress, even sympathy alone is, let the afflicted say. But if we really have it in our power to afford a farther relief, it is only mocking the distressed, to say—

* Doddridge's Family Expositor.

Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled, and comforted, without giving them those things which are needful.

To sum up, in one word, the directions for the proper measure of our charity, take the golden rule of Christ, which is applicable to all cases. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*; that is, "Treat men in every instance, just as you would think it reasonable to be treated by them, if you were in their circumstances, and they in yours."

I now proceed, in the *third* place, to recommend the duty of charity.

If the character of this excellent Samaritan does not charm us into a charitable temper and conduct, there are several weighty considerations in favor of this amiable virtue, which deserve our serious attention. Let us,

1. Consider—it is expressly enjoined as a religious duty by the authority of God.—The practice of charity is much insisted on among the laws of God, published by Moses, under the Jewish dispensation. *If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates—thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that*

which he wanteth: For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. How often are similar precepts of charity inculcated in the gospel of Christ? The disciple of Jesus is commanded—*Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. He that hath two coats must impart unto him that hath none; and he that hath meat must do likewise. When thou makest a feast, the gospel direction is, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.*—But it is needless to multiply texts of scripture on this occasion. The Bible is full of them. The New Testament, especially, every where inculcates charity as a most indispensable duty. And, lest any should imagine that this has but a subordinate place in the class of duties, be it remembered, that the Most High himself considereth it as a more weighty and essential thing than an attendance on the ordinances of worship. *I desired mercy, saith he, and not sacrifice.*

Is this duty, then, so strictly enjoined on us by the authority of God; how can we, how dare we, overlook or neglect it? In vain do we make pretensions of love to God, if we disregard so weighty a precept, and refuse relief to our distressed brethren. *He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* As, therefore, we profess any regard to God, any obedience to his authority, or any hope of his favor,

let us be kind, compassionate and charitable to the distressed.

2. Consider the example of Christ.

Never was this most excellent virtue of charity so conspicuously displayed as in the life and conduct of the benevolent Saviour. What is his whole history, but a record of the most humane and charitable actions? How tenderly did he sympathize with the afflicted, and make their sorrows his own! How forward was he to relieve all manner of distress, wherever he found it! Where was known the instance of his refusing to heal any disease of body, or to mitigate any anguish of mind? What poor object of charity ever sought compassion from him, without finding certain relief? *The blind received their sight, the lame were enabled to walk, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and, to crown all his charity, the poor had the gospel preached unto them.* How sweetly ought the love and compassion of Christ to constrain us to the practice of charity! Hath he not *left us an example, that we should follow his steps?* And shall we presume to call ourselves his followers, without imitating this most amiable part of his example? Let Christians too, consider how much he hath done for them in particular. *We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.* Hath Christ shewn such unparalleled, such astonishing love towards you, and will you shut up the bowels of

compassion from your suffering brother? God forbid.

3. Consider, the frailties of our natures, and of our state require the exercise of charity.

Very feeble and helpless are we born into the world, and our frailties, in a greater or less degree, remain with us through life. *We dwell in houses of clay, and our foundation is in the dust.* Such are our weaknesses, that we are obliged to unite together in society for mutual safety, as well as for mutual comfort. So that we are allied to one another as brethren, from necessity, as well as from choice. In the view, then, of our helpless and dependent state, and of the intimate relation we stand in one to another, can we withhold the exercises of compassion and charity from our brethren? Shall we forget all those tender ties which unite man to man, and by which alone we are kept together in society? Shall we forget that it is the common lot of all men to be frail and dependent? And shall we hide ourselves from our own flesh?

4. Consider, we ourselves may, one day, stand in need of charity.

What is more precarious than the good things of life? We have nothing which, for a single day, we can properly call our own. If to-day we are in the height of worldly prosperity, to-morrow we may find ourselves in the depth of distress. Are

we now in circumstances of wealth and affluence? Before night, we may be reduced to beggary and want; for how common is it for *riches to make to themselves wings and fly away*? Are we now in places of dignity, where we meet with human applause? Another day, we may lie low in obscurity and disgrace. Frequent are such changes as these. *Folly, saith Solomon, is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low places. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.* Are we now in health and ease? This night we may be groaning on a bed of sickness. Are we now surrounded with relatives and friends? How soon may we be stripped of these dear comforts, and left friendless? Amidst all this uncertainty then, attending the comforts which we now enjoy, it surely becomes us to bear it in remembrance that, one day or another, we ourselves may stand in need of the sympathy or charity of others. But how can we expect this, unless, while it is in our power, we are kind and charitable? *A man that bath, or would have friends, must shew himself friendly.* If we would make any provision for a day of calamity, now is the time. The truly compassionate and charitable man takes the directest way to secure the friendship and favor of others against a time of need. How readily may we suppose that Jew would have relieved this excellent Samaritan, had he afterwards found him in distress? Nay, who that had ever heard this story of his compassion and charity, could help relieving him?

Do we wish to secure the friendship and charity of others, for a time of exigence? Then let us go *and do likewise.*

5. Consider the ill effects of uncharitableness.

As our uncharitable conduct argues a hardness of heart, so the exercise of an uncharitable temper renders the heart still harder. Every time we shut our ears against the cries of the distressed, we become more *dull of bearing* their complaints; and every time we shut the bowels of compassion against them, we become less susceptible of the impressions of tenderness and of sympathy. To live, therefore, in the habitual neglect of charity, is the direct way to become hard-hearted and cruel as the ostrich of the wilderness. And is not this a very shocking evil? To be contracted entirely into one's self—to lose all fellow-feeling for one's distressed brethren—to have a heart like adamant—What more to be dreaded in the world than this?

And, besides the ill effects of uncharitableness on the heart, it is extremely pernicious to the character. He that feels for no one in distress, and cares for no one but himself, will generally find that nobody has any regard for him. Uncharitableness throws a black and a deep stain on his character, which he may wear off, when *the Ethiopian changes his skin, or the leopard his spots.* He revolts against human nature itself; he affects to

detach himself from his kind, and is punished with the hatred of the world.

But, what is infinitely more dreadful than this, by our uncharitableness we shall certainly incur the wrath and vengeance of God. If we refuse to help others in their distress, he will leave us helpless in the time of our calamity. This he hath expressly threatened. *Who so stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself, and not be heard.* Our Lord and Judge will consider our uncharitableness to the poor as an injury done to himself, and will punish it accordingly. Remember, ye uncharitable! the final sentence of your Judge stands upon record: *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire! For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.* This may seem a strange charge; and you may be ready to say, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*—*Verily,* replied the Judge, *inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

6. Consider the happy effects of a charitable temper and practice.

As this virtue implies a generosity of soul; so every exercise of it enlarges the soul, and improves it in goodness. By frequent acts of charity

and beneficence, besides the benefit which one confers on the distressed, and on society, he derives great benefit to himself. He, in this way, cultivates the humane and social affections; he softens the roughness of his nature, and learns to think, to feel, and act, as a human creature ought to do. And there is a luxury of satisfaction in relieving the distressed, which none but the truly charitable enjoy. They experience a higher delight in bestowing charity, than others do in taking it; and find the saying of Christ literally true, *It is more blessed to give, than to receive. He that bath mercy on the poor, happy is he.*

The charitable man is generally favored with the love and esteem of his fellow-men, who will readily assist him in distress, who hath so often contributed to the relief of others.

By the practice of charity, instead of losing, we shall be in the direct way to gain greatly, in our temporal interest. However strange this doctrine may appear to those who never ventured to make the experiment, it is a doctrine most fully established by the word of God. *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.*—God hath expressly promised his blessing on our affairs, as a graci-

ous reward of our charity. *Thou shalt surely give thy poor brother, saith he, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.—*

There is no room to doubt of an ample return for all that we lay out for truly charitable purposes; for, *he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.*

But, what is infinitely more valuable than any of these temporal advantages, charity shall be graciously rewarded with an everlasting inheritance in heaven. If we give to the poor with a spirit of true charity, for a part of our earthly substance thus bestowed, we shall receive heavenly riches, on which we may live in the greatest fulness, honor and happiness, to eternity. In return for feeding with some of our bread, or any way relieving those who cannot recompence us, we shall be rewarded at the resurrection. *When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompence thee; for thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just.* Our blessed Lord, on the great day of accounts, will graciously reckon every sincere act of charity as done to himself, and will reward it accordingly. *Come ye blessed of my Father, will he say to those on his right hand, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me*

drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. And though, in humble amazement, at this most gracious declaration, they may be ready to say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee, or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee? Or, when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?—Yet the reply of their Judge will be: Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Would we, then, avoid the ill effects of uncharitableness; such as hardness of heart—infamy of character—and, above all, the dreadful wrath of God: Would we, on the other hand, secure the happy fruits of a charitable temper and practice; such as the sublime pleasure of the very exercise itself—the favor and esteem of men—the blessing of God on our temporal affairs—and, what is infinitely more, an everlasting inheritance in heaven? Let us then, *put on bowels of mercies, kindness, long-suffering—and, above all these things, let us put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, sympathizing always with our brethren in all their distresses, and contributing all in our power to relieve them. The example of the good Samaritan is before us, let us go, and do likewise.*

S E R M O N XXXIII.*

O N P U B L I C S P I R I T :

B Y

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New-York.

E X O D U S xxxii. 32.

*Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not,
blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast
written.*

REAL saints and true patriots are rare in our world. Were all the secret springs of human actions known to men, private interest would, doubtless, appear to rule in the hearts of most.

Merely selfish principles may, and often do induce many to put on the mask of zealous Christians, and flaming patriots—they may sacrifice their private interest in one way the better to promote it in another—there may be such an artful resemblance of real zeal both for religion and the public good, that the fallacy cannot be detected, unless brought to strictest trial.

VOL. II.

I i

* Preached on a Public Occasion, during the late War:

That a disinterested regard for the honor of God and the public welfare, may exist in the human heart, is evident from the illustrious instance before us. It is recorded of Moses, the Jewish legislator, when God threatened to destroy the whole body of the Israelites, for their sin in worshipping the resemblance of a calf, and promised to build up his family on their ruin, his disinterested regard for the divine honor, and the good of his people, induced him most devoutly to intercede with God for their deliverance—he acknowledged they had been guilty of a great sin in setting up that golden idol to worship, and, therefore, deserved to be cut off without remedy. Yet he pleads the honor of God in their behalf. *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? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, for mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.*

A sense of the divine honor, a disposition to guard it against the reproaches of the ungodly, so deeply affected his heart, that he had rather die, and have his name buried in oblivion, than that such an event, as he feared, should take place.

Though the prayer of Moses seems in part to be granted; yet, for a while, he was kept in suspense,

and therefore, after he had ordered those who would engage on the Lord's side, to become the executioners of divine vengeance on their brethren; he maketh a second attempt to intercede with God for the survivors—and faith in our text to the Almighty; *Ye know, if thou wilt, forgive their sin*—that is, 'since vengeance in thy name, hath
' in some measure been executed, may the punishment inflicted suffice—O pardon this offence
'—if thou wilt, thy name shall be praised, and I
' shall be satisfied—--but if not; if it is the irrevocable decree of heaven utterly to destroy them
' for this sin, *blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.* Let my name be erased
' from the divine records, and my family become
' extinct and not advanced on their ruin.'

Had a contracted, selfish spirit possessed the heart of Moses, he doubtless would have closed with the offer which God made him, of advancing him and his family to be a great nation, if he would not interpose for the deliverance of this people, from the hand of vindictive justice—*Now therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation.*

This proposal was, doubtless, to try the temper of his mind; and he was found of such a noble, benevolent, and generous disposition, that he could not endure the thought of the destruction of that public body as the condition of his family's ad-

vancement, and especially when the divine honor appeared to be so nearly concerned in the event.

Some have supposed that the book, mentioned in my text, out of which Moses prayed to be blotted, was the book of eternal life.—I conceive this opinion to be repugnant both to reason and to revelation. To desire happiness in the enjoyment of God, was an original endowment of nature. A contrary temper could not prevail without sin. Every truly pious person hath desires of the same kind, that possessed the parents of our race, in the days of their unspotted innocency—therefore, Moses, as an holy person could not desire to be blotted out of the book of eternal life—for in so doing, he must have been willing to be deprived of the enjoyment of God, and be an eternal blasphemer of his holy name; for such all must be, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life.

Is it not absurd, on the other hand, to suppose that a person, under the influence of an unholy temper, should be willing to sacrifice his eternal happiness to the glory of God, and the good of his fellow-creatures? If so, then, neither as an holy, nor as an unholy person, could Moses desire to be blotted out of the book of eternal life.

Besides, it is contrary to all the injunctions of revealed religion, which expressly or implicitly require us to desire, and to seek eternal life in the enjoyment of God—and this is the way, in which

we may be said actively to glorify him. But it is perfectly consistent with reason, and the revealed will of God, that men should be willing to sacrifice their private, temporal interests and worldly honor; nay, their lives to the glory of God, and the public good.

Is it not then reasonable to conclude, that Moses designed, by being blotted out of God's book—that he might not be reckoned amongst the living in this world; and his name be erased from the records of his nation?

Ezekiel, speaking of false prophets, saith, *they shall not be written in the writing of the house of Israel.* And those that should be marked out for preservation in Jerusalem, are said, by the prophet Isaiah, *to be written among the living.*

Our text being thus understood, and taken in its connection, exhibits the following truth, which, by divine assistance, I shall further attempt briefly to illustrate, viz,

That the honor of God, and the public good, ought to be preferred to our private temporal interest.

That the divine honor ought to be preferred to every temporal interest, is evident from this consideration—If God is possessed of every possible perfection, natural and moral, to an infinite degree; *then* his own glory must be an object of greater importance than any thing, yea, than every thing else in the universe.

Ought not rational creatures to esteem and treat persons and things according to their real worth? Doth not then, the honor of a being of infinite dignity and excellency claim supreme regard? The Deity hath his own glory ultimately in view, in all he doth. He is the first cause, and his glory the last end of creation, providence and redemption. In the latter, the glory of all the divine perfections is displayed in meridian brightness. In the former, God hath illustrated his power, wisdom and goodness. The royal psalmist saith—*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work: Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

This they do, *passively*; but the all-wise creator requires man, *actively*, to glorify him, as is evident from his having given him natural powers, capable of acting to this most noble end. To suppose, he designed we should not act to the most noble ends of which he hath made us capable, is a reflection on his infinite wisdom. If, then, God hath designed us for, and made us capable of acting to his glory, and this is the most important object we can have in view, will it not follow, that we ought to prefer this to every other end?

Is not this clearly illustrated and strongly confirmed in the holy scriptures, both by precept and example? Is it not required, that *whether ye eat or or, drink whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?*

Must we not then subordinate every end in life to this most important one; and cause, that even our dearest temporal interests should give way, when they interfere with this?

The examples of the apostles of Christ, and many of the primitive Christians, are striking illustrations of this observation.

How willingly did they give up their temporal interests, when the honor of God required it! Nay, with what cheerfulness and invincible fortitude, did they meet death in its most trying forms! And how readily offer their lives a sacrifice to the honor of God, and to the testimony of his word.

Their supreme regard to God, and to the duty they owed him, made them count their most important worldly interests, not dear to them.

My brethren, is this true, in respect to each of us? Do we prefer the glory of God, the promotion of his cause, and the interest of truth in general, to every partial private interest? Are we ready to sacrifice the latter, whenever it comes in competition with the former?

Those who thus regard the divine honor, will also feel disposed to promote the public, political good, though it be to the injury of their private interests.

This sentiment stands upon the same ground with the former, and springs from the same bene-

volent temper of mind; and I am bold to say, without a supreme respect to the one, we shall pay no proper regard to the other.

If it is proper, that we should ultimately regard the glory of God, on account of his infinite dignity, greatness and excellency, must it not be reasonable also that we respect the good of our fellow-men, in proportion to their importance in the intelligent system?—Is not the good of public bodies of men of more consequence than the private interests of individuals, who compose those bodies?—Ought not the less to give way to the greater, when they interfere?—Do not men commonly act thus in the pursuit of their private occupations and businesses in life?

Ought we not then to prefer the public good to our private interest?—Yes, my brethren, it surely is the highest principle of nature, or of grace; and such, as I trust, may, at present, be found glowing in some of your breasts. May it be encouraged—may it be increased, and, in due time, it shall meet a reward, as ample, as the exercise is noble.

Men may talk in ever so high strains of love to their country—of a disinterested attachment to its political and religious interests—to the rights of civil and religious liberty—yet, if they are not willing to put forth a helping hand, for the acquisition or preservation of these invaluable blessings—if they are not willing to sacrifice their case—

their private interest—nay, their lives too, their pretensions to patriotism are vain, and their noise is empty sound.

Self-love and private interest being the ruling principles in the minds of all such; as soon as these are crossed, their zeal abates—it cools—it dies. But true patriotism springs from a principle more generous and diffusive; such an one as subordinates private interest to the public good. On the presumption of the propriety and justness of this sentiment, almost all nations have proceeded to seize, or to confiscate private property, and even to take the lives of those who have appeared irreclaimable enemies to their country; or have violated the fundamental laws of their kingdom. Indeed, every criminal, executed by the hand of public justice, is a confirmation of this doctrine.

On the same principle, must every conscientious, discerning man proceed, when he voluntarily engages in the defence of his injured country, and exposes his life in the field of battle. On any other principle, it is impossible to justify those whose names are immortalized, and shine in the annals of fame, for having fought, and bled, and died in their country's cause. Would not they have been guilty of the most egregious folly and madness, to have rushed on death in pursuit of something less valuable than their lives? But the superior importance of the cause, in which they were engaged, to their dearest private interest,

makes that a virtue which otherwise would have been a crime of the blackest die.

The example of the Saviour of men, in his human nature, when on earth, confirms the truths I have attempted to illustrate. What a voluntary sacrifice did he make of his earthly comforts, nay, of his life, for the honor of his heavenly father, and the happiness of mankind!

We ought, also, to keep in view the spiritual, as well as the temporal interest of our fellow-men—the latter is only a subordinate one, and designed by heaven to advance the former. This is an object of such magnitude, that it swallows up every temporal concern.

That the public good ought to be preferred to our private interest, is evident from the reason and nature of things—it is supported by the universal consent of mankind in their national capacities—by the example of the most illustrious heroes, who have voluntarily risked their lives in the cause of their country, and by the most glorious example of our blessed Lord, which illustrates and enforces both parts of my position.

The use we shall make of this subject will be, to establish an infallible criterion, by which to determine the character of the saint and of the patriot.

If we do not habitually regard the honor of God above every temporal interest, all our shew

in religion is as a *sounding brass, and a tinkling symbol*. If we are not disposed cheerfully to contribute a share of our services and property, when necessary for the public good, it is an evidence that we are neither real christians, nor true patriots. They who sincerely love God and their fellow-men, will proportionably regard the interests of each. Our most important rights, as citizens, are invaded. Now is the time to distinguish ourselves, and manifest our regard to our country, and to our posterity. Perhaps no time ever called louder for firm resolutions, and for prudent and vigorous exertions. On the present may depend not only every thing dear and valuable to us in life, but to millions yet unborn. Let us not forget, that a regard to the honor of God, and the interests of our country, ought to go hand in hand—and that the latter cannot be promoted by disregarding the former.

Our subject enables us easily to account for the conduct of those who have once appeared zealous for the honor of God, and warm friends to the interests of their country, but afterwards grew cold, and perhaps changed their ground. They were under the prevailing influence of self-love, and private interest, and never had a sincere regard for the cause of God, or the good of their fellow-men. The person who acts on principles well founded, will be steady, uniform and persevering. Through want of such principles it is, that we see so many act so inconsistently and absurd, both in the re-

ligious and civil life—They are *unprincipled*. It is no evidence of the badness of a cause, or against the truth and reality of religion, that there are hypocrites on one part, and apostates on the other.

To conclude.—

Let us enquire, what is the prevailing bent of our minds, and the general tenor of our lives?

Have we a sincere regard for the divine honor, and the best good of our fellow-men? If so, be assured, it is the way to answer the noblest ends of living—to form noble and honorable characters—to attain sublime satisfaction in life, support in death, and the complete enjoyment of the fountain of happiness, to all eternity.



S E R M O N XXXIV.

A CAUTION AGAINST DECLENSION IN THE
WAYS OF PRACTICAL PIETY.

B Y

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GALATIANS vi: 9.

*Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season
we shall reap, if we faint not.*

THE intimate knowledge of human nature,
that shines through the whole religion of
Jesus, deserves to be numbered among the evi-
dences of its divinity.

It hereby appears that its author is none other
than the author of our nature. This knowledge
is conspicuous among other things, in that apti-
tude there is in the doctrines, the precepts, the
promises, and the threatenings of the gospel, to-
gether with the facts recorded in the sacred ora-
cles, to govern the will and regulate the passions,
as well as inform the understanding. For this
purpose, every power of the human mind is ad-

ressed, and every principle of action in the soul is touched in the manner best calculated to accomplish these ends.

Among these principles, none more powerful and operative, than the desire of happiness. A principle planted by the author of nature in every human breast; and which, therefore, is a rational and scriptural source of action. It is not, indeed, the principle from which true love to God flows, nor ought it to be the primary source of our obedience. These are the transcendent excellence of the divine character, and a conscientious regard to God's governing authority.

But though a regard to our own happiness ought not to be the primary source of our obedience, yet it is a source, and we may, we ought to be influenced by it, in the whole of our Christian deportment. It ought to have a chief place among the motives of our conduct, though not *the* chief. This is evident from the address to it in the words of our text. *Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

There are two things in the text that deserve our special notice.

An evil against which we are guarded. *Be not weary in well-doing.* And the argument whereby we are guarded against this evil; and the contrary temper and conduct recommended and enforced, which you have in these words; *for in due season*

we shall reap, if we faint not: Reap a harvest of eternal joy. There is a manifest allusion in our text, and the two preceding verses, to those remarkable seasons of the year, seed-time and harvest. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.—Here the apostle compares this life to the season in which the farmer sows his seed, and the future state, to the succeeding harvest. He, hereby, teaches us this important truth; that our temper and conduct in this life, bear the same relation to a coming judgment and an eternal state, that the farmer's sowing his seed does to the following harvest. This life is the seed time, eternity the season for reaping the fruit of our doings, whether they be good or bad.

What I propose from the words, by the aids of the spirit of grace, is,

I. Briefly explain the evil against which we are guarded in the text.

II. Shew why we should guard against this evil, and pursue a contrary line of conduct.

Let us enquire, *first*, what is the nature of the evil against which we are guarded in the text—*Be not weary in well-doing.* And for this purpose it

is not improper we should briefly touch upon the nature of the *well-doing* here intended, that we may be enabled the more easily to understand, what it is to be *weary* of it.

By well-doing here, we are to understand, in general, the duties we owe to God, our neighbor, and ourselves. These are of great extent; they are many in number, and important in their nature. There is not a single relation we sustain to God, or to each other, but what is fruitful of a variety of these duties. You will not expect I should enter into a particular consideration of them in this place. This would constitute a system of practical divinity. Let it suffice, at present, to observe, that they include all that the sacred oracles mean by piety towards God; by justice, benevolence, and humanity towards our neighbor, and by sobriety and temperance in our conduct towards ourselves. These the gospel of Christ teaches us with great care. It teaches us, *that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

These duties are called *well-doing*, because in a conscientious observance of them we do well; we comply with the approving will of God. But, though this phrase may be taken in this large extent, the connexion of our text with the preceding part of the chapter, would seem to point us to

some particular duties, as more especially designed by the term; those that have for their more immediate object, the happiness of our fellow-creatures: Such as mutual love and forbearance one towards another; compassion to the distressed; humility of deportment and acts of beneficence to all. The apostle also appears to have an eye to those duties, which more immediately tend to the advancement of the cause of God in the world; particularly the support of the gospel of Christ. Thus in the sixth verse of our context; *Let him, that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.* And it is not improbable but that the apostle may distinguish these duties by the title of *well-doing*, because of their influence on the order and happiness of society; and the particular honor they reflect upon the religion of the divine Redeemer.

The *weariness* in well doing, against which we are here guarded, ordinarily begins in the loss of that relish for divine things, and that pleasure in the ways of God, which the person may have had in days past.

In proportion as we take pleasure in any duty, we are guarded against being weary in it. And this want of relish for the ways of God, flows from the loss of those views of divine things, with which he may have been blest in the preceding course of his life.

The native consequence of this is, the frequent omission of the duties of religion.

Thus, when the person who has accustomed himself to secret or family prayer, frequently neglects these great duties; he has become weary in well doing. And thus the man who has been wont to attend the public ordinances of God's worship, and contribute to their support, when he becomes negligent of them; when every trifle will keep him from the house of God, or serve as an excuse for his refusing to support the gospel, he is weary in well-doing. Or suppose a person who has given himself away to God at his holy table, to become negligent of this ordinance; and repeatedly omit an attendance upon it; that person hereby shews he is weary in well-doing. God holds such conduct as a practical contempt of him, his Christ, and his gospel, whatever those guilty may think of it. This also is the case of the man who relaxes in the practice of any virtue, especially if it be a virtue in which he may have studied to excel in days past. And it is eminently the case of the man, who is less careful to be useful than once he was, by filling up the duties of the station which God has assigned him in life. In a word, the allowed omission of any known duty, to God or man, especially the frequent omission of it, is an evidence of being weary in well-doing, too decided to admit of a doubt.

The like may be said of the person who renounces the great doctrines of the gospel, and either embraces those errors which corrupt their simplicity, and defeat their efficacy, or discarding

all religion, avows the principles of infidelity. This prepares the way for that profaneness in life, which but too frequently follows upon such apostasy from the truth. The man who having made a profession of religion, and had in some measure escaped from the pollutions of the world, when he associates with the profane; drinks with the drunkard; throws off the restraints which were wont to guard his lips from impious language; indulges to the gratifying his criminal passions; prostitutes holy time to the purposes of worldly business or amusements; and indulges himself in any species of iniquity, be it what it may, that man gives the most fatal evidence of his being weary in well-doing. This is in the fullest sense of the term, *having put his hand to the plough, to look back*, and therefore, *he is not fit for the kingdom of God*. Thus much, briefly, for the nature of the evil, against which we are guarded in the text. And you see from what has been said, there are several degrees in it; against the lowest of which, we are carefully to guard. Which leads us to enquire,

II. Why we should guard against being thus weary in well-doing, and pursue the contrary line of conduct.

I. Because this evil, as described, is a fatal symptom of an unregenerate state.

True grace is a living principle, and wherever it is found in the heart, it always tends towards perfection. Thus we read that, *the path of the*

just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. I do not mean to tell you that true grace does not admit of decays; that God's people may not decline far from their former life, and activity in the ways of holiness; or that they may not fall into sin to the great dishonor of their profession.

We have many melancholy evidences that this may be the case. Witness a Joseph swearing by the life of Pharaoh; a David, in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah; a Solomon, in turning aside after strange Gods, when he had grown old; a Peter, in denying his Lord; with others on sacred record,

And have no instances of this kind fallen under your own observation? Therefore, though the first degrees of weariness in well-doing, do not certainly evidence the want of grace in the heart, yet the last do; and the first suggest just cause of fear that the heart may not be right with God; and if they be indulged and persisted in, they assuredly evince the person to be *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* For though the true believer suffers his decays in grace, he has his times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and though he may fall into sin, by the strength of his internal corruptions, or the power of temptation; yet he rises again, repents of his iniquity, and doubles his watch; as you may see in the several cases I have just mentioned,

Would you then, my brethren, assure yourselves of the truth of grace in your hearts; would you make your calling and election sure, see that you guard against this evil in all its several stages. For even where the truth of grace is; yet in proportion as you grow weary in well-doing, and that in the lowest degree, the evidences of your grace diminish, and you loose the comforts of the divine life.

2. Those who grow weary in well-doing, so as to forsake the ways of practical godliness, loose all their former labor and pains in religion. It is not enough that we begin in the ways of God, that we set out in the paths of piety; but we must *persevere* in them—we must endure to the end; for he alone *that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved*. And our Lord assures us, that *no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*. And God himself elsewhere declares that, *if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*. To the same purpose you read, Ezek. xviii. 24. *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: In his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die*. And is there no backslider in heart and way, in my audience this day?—None who having begun in the spirit, are

now ending in the flesh? See the folly of your conduct, and attend to that awful threatening. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.* And this is just; for your conduct while it brings assured ruin upon yourselves, highly reflects on the honor of God, as a master.

The language of your conduct is, that you have tried his service, and found by experience, that it is unjust, impracticable, or destructive of your comfort. But can there be a representation of God and his ways, more false in itself, or dishonorable to the Supreme Jehovah?

3. We ought not to grow weary in well-doing, for God is not weary in doing good to us. He not only gave us our being, but he holds our souls in life. By his visitation alone we are preserved. In him we live and move; by him we are fed, and cloathed, and preserved. *He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*— In a word, he is a God *full of compassion and gracious; long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.* Nor are these mercies purely of a temporal nature; they not only supply the wants of our bodies, and provide for our comfortable accommodation in life; but they provide for the comfort, the holiness, and the eternal happiness of our precious souls. Of this kind is all the rich provision of the gospel, with all its ordinances and graces.

O! the rich plenty and variety, the divine profusion with which Jehovah pours his blessings, spi-

ritual and temporal, upon us, and that with all the unremitting care, tenderness and assiduity of a God! It is base ingratitude then for us to be weary in well-doing.

4. We have many bright examples of patience and perseverance in well-doing, to encourage us not to be weary in it. This argument is urged by the apostle, in this very point of view, in the following words. *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.* Many have trod this path in every age of the world. It hereby appears to be practicable; and when we are exhorted not to be weary in well-doing, we are only exhorted to be *followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.* It is a duty in which many have gone before us, and some of them in circumstances unspeakably more difficult, than those in which we are called to it. Witness the many martyrs who have bled and burnt for Christ in one age and another of the world; but we are not called to *resist unto blood, striving against sin.*

5. There is a glorious reward before us, if we do not grow weary in well-doing. This is the argument urged by the apostle in our text; *for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* This reward is not unfrequently conferred upon the peo-

ple of God, in some degree, when they come to lie on a dying bed. Of this nature is that composure of spirit, and that serenity of mind, which they often enjoy in that solemn hour. Of this same kind is that holy triumph over death and the grave, with which many of his people have taken their leave of time.

These arise sometimes from the review of a life humbly devoted to God; at other times, from a sweet sense of his love shed abroad in their souls, or it may be from both; but more generally they flow from a lively and a sure hope of everlasting life, through the atonement and intercession of their divine Redeemer. Thus David, when lying on the verge of time, could say: *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.* And have none of you witnessed the triumphs of a dying disciple of Jesus?

But this reward principally consists in that glorious immortality, which commences immediately on our departure from the body. Then it is the believer's experience demonstrates the truth of that declaration; *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* This reward shall be conferred in part in the resurrection of the just. All true believers in Jesus shall then rise in honor and great glory; but this is not all; there will be degrees of honor conferred upon them, according to the nature of

the services they have done for their Lord in this life. For as *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.* It will be no less conspicuous in the judgment of the great day. *Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?* And the king shall answer, and say unto them, *Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

This reward will not, indeed, be conferred upon the score of merit. Our best services are deeply stained with guilt, and wholly unprofitable to the Most High; but it will be nevertheless sure. It is rendered so by the unfailing promise of the God of truth. *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* It is on this account, that it is re-

presented as an act of *righteousness* in God. Hebrews vi. 10. *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.* Nor can any thing more strongly evince its certainty, than its being urged as a motive both to obedience and diligence in the ways of God; as in the following words: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* To which we may add the words of our text. *Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Again. It will be a full reward.

Never did the most plenteous harvest reward the labors of the husbandman more certainly or fully, than the joys and glories of the future world shall reward the faithful, persevering and diligent disciples of Jesus. They shall enter into the joy of their Lord: the joy unspeakable and full of glory which he purchased for them upon the cross, and of which he took possession in their name, when he ascended up on high, and sat down at the right hand of God: *And they shall ever be with their Lord.*

Once more. This reward will bear some proportion to our faithfulness and diligence in our Lord's service here. It is one evident design of the

parable of the *ten pounds*, entrusted by their Lord, to the *ten servants*, to teach us this truth. You have this instructive parable, Luke xix. from the 13th to the 26th verse inclusive. *And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, occupy till I come. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.— Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be*

taken away from him. You will perceive the sums entrusted by their Lord to these servants, were the same—to each man one pound; but the improvement is represented as different. By one it is tenfold—by an other five; and you are carefully to remark, that the difference in the reward is proportioned to the difference in the improvement.

The man who had improved his one pound into ten, was made ruler over ten cities; and the man who had gained five pounds, was made ruler over five cities. Seeing then there is such a glorious reward in sure reserve for us, *let us not be weary in well-doing.* We have only to await God's appointed time for the full enjoyment thereof: for our text assures us, that *in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

I shall conclude with the few following directions.

1. As ever you would desire not to be weary in well-doing; beware of sloth in the ways of God. This is a sin natural to us; but there are few greater enemies to vital godliness than it is.

2. Beware of venturing on known sin; especially the sin to which you are most inclined. This we are particularly cautioned against in the fore-cited—Heb. xii. 1. This is what David calls by way of eminence, *his iniquity.* *I kept myself from mine iniquity.*

3. Keep close to God in the way of duty. God deals with us as rational creatures, and, therefore,

requires that we should cleave to him in the various duties of his appointment; this is the gracious institution of heaven.

4. Endeavor to keep the end of your course full in view. Be much in the exercise of that faith, which *is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.*

Lastly. Look to Christ for strength to preserve you from being weary in well-doing. Remember that *it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell:* therefore, we may of *his fulness receive grace for grace.* Be strong, therefore, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And thus strengthened, may you be preserved from fainting, endure to the end, and in due season reap a rich harvest of eternal joy.



S E R M O N XXXV.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

B Y

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R O M A N S iv. 16.

Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

IN the next preceding chapter, St. Paul inculcates the divine doctrine of justification by grace through faith. He proceeds in this chapter to exemplify and further establish this doctrine, from the instance of Abraham. As the Jews professed to build their hopes on the Abrahamic covenant, it was most pertinent to remind them how Abraham was justified. Having shewn that it was not by works, but by faith, the apostle adds, he is the father of all believers, whether they be circumcised or not. *For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to him or his seed through*

the law, but through the righteousness of faith. To maintain, with the Jews, justification by the law is to make faith void, and the promise of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: For where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace, and sure to all the seed.

We will distinctly examine the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith—his argument in support of it—and the reasoning which concludes in this doctrine.

First, Of the doctrine itself. It is of faith, that it might be by grace.

The words refer to the promise made to Abraham, which, as the apostle saith, was through the righteousness of faith.

In speaking of justification, the apostle alludes to a judicial process: It is the sentence of a judge, pronouncing a person acquitted. There are but two constitutions on which such sentence can be founded; law and grace. *If of the law, it is no more by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.* Admitting the universal guilt and depravity of mankind, *no flesh can be justified in the sight of God by the deeds of the law. Every mouth must be stopped.* Doth God justify the ungodly? It is freely by his grace.

Whether the guilty might be absolved by an *absolute* act of grace? is a question, the discussion

of which belongs not to us. By the same means that we know there is forgiveness with God, we also know, that he *hath sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and is in him reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses. God is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Faith receives the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ, and rests in him as the only medium of reconciliation.

Grace and faith have the same relation to each other as work and debt. If it is through grace and faith that any are justified, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* Though the imputation of sin and righteousness doth not mean a transfer of *personal* qualities; yet the doctrine of imputation is clearly taught by St. Paul—I mean, the derivation of pollution and condemnation from the first Adam, and the hope of righteousness and life through the second. If you are not a sinner, you have no need of the grace of the gospel. If you are a sinner, in vain do you seek justification, except through Jesus Christ—in vain attempt to blend any thing with the ransom he gave of himself. For God *hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* The spirit of prophecy described the Messiah as *the Lord our righteousness*, who should *make reconciliation for*

iniquity by making his soul an offering for it, and thus justifying many. Our apostle declares, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness—that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us—that God hath set him forth to be a propitiation—to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Consider this ransom provided by God, the unspotted character, personal dignity and divine glory of the offerer, GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH—consider his active and passive obedience in connexion, and the invitation to the whole guilty world, to be reconciled to God in him.

Sacrifice was a part of the religion of the *heathen*. *Almost all things were by the law purged with blood. And without shedding of blood is no remission.* The doctrine of atonement, or the justification of a sinner through the expiatory death of the holy and just one, is the glory of the gospel, the only foundation of hope and comfort to offenders against heaven. Ignorant of the righteousness of the Lord, the heathen sought to be reconciled to him by giving the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls. Ignorant of this righteousness, the Jews trusted to the sacrifices of the law, which, separate from their typical reference, could no more take away sin, than those the Gentiles offered. The Christian doctrine of atonement is indeed as much above human discovery as the heavens are higher

than the earth. My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. But because our reason could not discover, or cannot comprehend, the redemption in the blood of Christ, is it therefore to be rejected, and treated with contempt? In the administration of providence, and under every human administration, the ill-deserving escape just punishment, and derive special benefits, through the mediation of some eminent character. The labors and sufferings of the innocent prevail much in behalf of the guilty. It is no objection, that Christ suffered in a much higher sense, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God—that the free gift cometh unto justification of life by the righteousness of one, as judgment came to condemnation by the offence of one.

The atonement, and justification by the free grace of God, are inseparably connected in the scriptures. God hath shewn the exceeding richness of his grace in delivering up his own Son for our offences. This gift of his love comprehends all others. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Such, in general, are the plain instructions of scripture in regard to our justification through the sacrifice of the Mediator. The term *righteousness*, as used by St. Paul, when treating on this subject, imports the same as justification, which consists in imputing righteousness, or not imputing sin.

But on whom cometh this blessedness? The apostle saith, *It is of faith.* Righteousness is imputed unto them that *believe.* The righteousness of God without the law—even the righteousness which is *by faith* of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that *believe.* It is *through the faith* of Christ, the righteousness which is of God *by faith.* By such different modes of expression the apostle intended the same thing. For *the righteousness of God, the righteousness of faith, the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ,* do not mean different things, but mutually explain the same sentiment.

The righteousness which is of the *law*, and that which is through *the faith of Christ*, are frequently contrasted by St. Paul. In opposition to the cross of Christ, Israel sought justification by the law of Moses. The Jewish converts were zealous for the incorporation of their ancient rites with the Christian institution, and for the exclusion of other nations from its benefits, except on condition of a compliance with those rites. The apostle therefore took much pains to distinguish the way of acceptance through Christ, from every mixture of Judaism. He would lead us to seek righteousness in that cross at which the Jews stumbled. He was once full in the confidence of his countrymen; and intimates, that he had every reason, which any of them could have, for that confidence. He closeth the account of himself thus; *Touching the righteousness which is in the law*

blameless. What a change of sentiments and affections was wrought in him, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in our apostle? He then saw that those things were opposed to God and righteousness, which he till then had made his boast. Thenceforward he determined to glory only in a crucified Saviour. His concern then was to be found in HIM, *not having mine own righteousness, as he expresseth it, but that which is through the faith of Christ.* Thus he observes that the infidel Jews went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. Their opposition to the atonement, and the great importance of this doctrine, designed equally to give Jews and Gentiles access to God, engaged St. Paul to an explicit, constant and pathetic declaration of it. It excludes every thing else from being, in any respect, the purchase of a sinner's justification. The highest and most meritorious act of obedience, when Jesus hung on the cross, and said, *It is finished,* may be pleaded for the remission of all sin.

The Jews considered not, that the appendages of their religion were given to direct their views to the Messiah for justification, whom their scriptures described as *wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, a man of sorrows.* They considered not, that *the righteousness of God without the law was witnessed by the law and prophets: Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ,*

without respect of nations. Their dependance on the atonements of the law, the apostle calls their *own* righteousness. God never appointed these as a *medium* of acceptance with him, but as *shadows, patterns* of the sacrifice of the Messiah, on whom, it was foretold, *the iniquities of all should be laid. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire—Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, lo, I come—I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.* If the observation of the Jewish ritual could justify, what valuable purpose could the death of the Messiah answer? And why did that ritual prefigure a more excellent sacrifice? Or if the sacrifice which they prefigured is the only meritorious ground of justification, why should the merit of it be depreciated, by retaining the shadow after the substance appeared? Why was the shadow ever regarded any otherwise, than as a means of pointing to the substance?

But St. Paul, in his debate with the Jews, useth the term *law* in a latitude which appears to comprehend both the *moral* and *ritual* law.—Particularly Romans, chapter vii. Sometimes he may especially intend the former, and sometimes the latter. Or if by law we should understand the *whole* Mosaic dispensation, it would not militate with the apostle's leading doctrine of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law. The ritual law was abolished by the coming of Christ.

The moral law obliged us, as it is adopted into the institution of a greater law-giver than Moses—an institution not appropriated to one nation, but designed for all people. The faithful in Israel were not justified by the moral law, any more than by the ritual. The just lived by faith in the Messiah promised: He was the object of their hopes; and they were heirs of the righteousness by faith. The law was not against the promises: It did not frustrate grace. Neither do grace or faith make void, but establish the law. Justifying faith, under the law or gospel, denotes a dependence on the promises in Christ, renouncing confidence in law, or works of obedience to law.

In the last place, taking this term *law* in the most *large* and *general* sense, justification is without the deeds of law. Righteousness by the moral law none of mankind could attain, because *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*. In consequence of the universal corruption of the world, the heathen knew that they were worthy of death. The prevalence of sacrifice among them shews, that they did not look for justification by the law of nature, but had an idea of atonement. Righteousness could not be by the ritual law. This would be to grasp the shadow, and lose the substance. Righteousness could not be by the dispensation of Moses. This would be to suppose an imperfect institution in force, after a perfect one is set up. If ever there had been a law, which

could give life to sinners, righteousness might have been by law. But no such law was ever given. Therefore justification must be of faith by grace.

We proceed to examine the apostle's argument in support of his doctrine of justification by faith. *To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.*

The promise to Abraham was, that in his *seed all nations should be blessed*. That this promise might be sure to the Gentiles, it was necessary that they should be accepted on the condition of faith, not of works done in obedience to law. Not having the law, they were in no capacity of attaining justification by it. The promise then could not be intended to be fulfilled through the law. For the word of promise was express, that *all* nations should be blessed in Abraham's seed; whereas but *one* nation had received the law. The law therefore could not be the *medium* of justification—not even to the Jews. For if other nations might obtain justification *without* the law, the Jews could not obtain it *by* the law; since God had not appointed different ways of justification for Jews and Gentiles, but one and the same; that is, by grace through faith. The admission of the Gentiles into the household of God, without a compliance with Jewish rites, was conformable to the tenor of the promise to Abraham. Abraham became heir of the promise by faith. All his seed are heirs in the same way; not only his natural descendants, but

persons of all nations, possessing the same faith.—
To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

We proposed in the next place, to consider the apostle's reasoning in the preceding context, from which he makes the inference in the text.

The whole turns on the promise to Abraham, and the way in which he was justified. The apostle had said, *that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law—that God will justify the circumcision and uncircumcision by faith—that we do not make void the law through faith, but establish it.* He proceeds to demand of his countrymen, *What hath Abraham our father found, as pertaining to the flesh? You boast that you are his descendants, and heirs of the promise made to him. What was there in his justification that favors your expectation of it by law? Was he justified by works? The scripture saith, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Was this before he was circumcised, or after? Before. For he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised. For the promise that he*

should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or his seed, through the law; but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect. Because the law worketh wrath: For where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, &c.

In his epistle to the Galatians, the apostle is equally clear in his language and argument on the same subject. He tells the Jewish converts, that the law could not disannul a covenant confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before; that as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse—that Christ, in order to redeem us from the curse of the law, was made a curse for us—that the law was a school-master to bring to Christ—that the Jews under it were in the condition of children under age—that the Christian church was not like the Jewish in bondage—that in Christ Jesus there is no distinction of Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female; but all believers are one, Abraham's seed, and heirs of promise—that the law was superceded by the gospel—that nothing availeth but a new creature, faith working by love.

The case of Abraham then, far from favoring the Jewish prejudices, clearly refutes them. No alternative was left the Jews, but either to disclaim their relation to Abraham, or look for justification in the same way. *The scripture hath con-*

cluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

It is of importance that we attend more particularly to the *nature* of justifying faith, as explained by St. Paul. As we have seen, he was addressing men who trusted to the Mosaic law for justification. In opposition to them he means by *faith* the gospel of the grace of God, an unreserved acceptance of Christ, and submission to the way of salvation declared in the gospel, excluding Judaism, and every other dependance. By *works*, or deeds of the law, he means works, or deeds of the Mosaic law, or any law which interferes with grace and faith. *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, faith working by love. If any man be in Christ, old things are past away; behold, all things are become new. He walketh not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death. With respect to himself the apostle saith, 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, who loved me, and gave himself for me. He thus defines justifying faith; With the heart man believeth unto righteousness: This faith therefore implies, that the heart feels interested in its object, and prizeth it according to its excellence. Christ is precious to believers: He dwelleth in their hearts by faith: They are rooted*

and grounded in love. St. Paul's esteem of the excellency of Christ was such, that for his sake he suffered the loss of all things.

In this view faith is an act of the *will*. The believer unto righteousness hath committed his soul to Christ, is constrained by his love, crucified to the world, and the world to him. Whatever immediate and special reference justifying faith hath to Christ's *priestly* office, it equally involves a conformity to him, a submission to his government, as the reception of him in the character of THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Art thou *justified by grace, and an heir according to the hope of eternal life?* Then thy God and Saviour are the objects of thy supreme reverence and love, gratitude, affiance and submission. It is the character of them that *perish*, that *they receive not the love of the truth*, *For this cause God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye, that they might be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.*

The true believer then is a lover of truth, rejoiceth in the discovery of it, obeys it from the heart, and hath a good report of the truth itself. Many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, his love to Christ. He denies himself, and takes up his cross, looking to Jesus who endured the cross.

Had faith no influence in forming the disciples of the gospel to the spirit of love, where would be

the propriety, or what the meaning, of the expression, *Faith which worketh by love?* The original might have been rendered *inwrought* faith. The word is the same as is used Col. ii. 12. *The faith of the operation of God;* and 1 Thes. ii. 13. *The word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe.* This faith therefore implies a *divine energy* on the heart, purifying and forming it to the spirit of love which God hath given. Faith, separate from love, availeth nothing. Love, separate from faith, is not Christian love, not the love of new creatures, of those who keep the commandments of God. Charity, on the basis of faith in the Mediator, supposeth that we *love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind.* *He who loveth God, loves his brother also.* The love of God being shed abroad in his heart, all within the reach of his good offices will experience its benign influence. He will love his enemies, bless them that curse him, do good to them that hate him, and pray for his persecutors. On the good Samaritan came the blessing of the Jew ready to perish. They who are *followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ loved us,* are friends to all mankind, while they esteem the saints the excellent of the earth. Without this flame of love, the zeal of a martyr must be vain. How unhappy hath it been for the church, that its members have been so much occupied in doubtful disputation and angry debate, to the violation of charity, and subversion of the faith of some? The doctrine of the gospel hath, in all

ages, been most corrupted by attempts to disturb its professors in the exercise of private judgment.

However Christians may differ in regard to the nature of faith, or its connexion with justification, they must at least acknowledge that faith is essential to the Christian character. The apostle hath connected faith and love in Christ Jesus. If then we possess the precious faith of the called, and chosen, and faithful, we shall *above all put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. St. Paul quotes this scripture, and points to the father of the faithful, in order to establish his conclusion, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* He observes thus on the nature of Abraham's faith: *Who against hope believed in hope. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.* The quality and strength of his faith appeared in his leaving his country on the divine call; relying on the promise of a son, and in him a numerous posterity, and the seed to bless all nations, when his period of life forbid any such expectation; and in offering up the child of promise, which seemed to be a sacrifice both of his earthly and heavenly hopes. Such was the faith of Abraham, and such its fruits. He rejoiced to see Christ's day. If we have the same spirit, and do the works of Abraham, if we believe in Jesus,

who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, righteousness will be imputed unto us also. The gospel is a constitution full of grace: It hath connected faith and holiness with grace and the atonement. Justification is of faith. By faith the atonement is received. To BELIEVE on him whom God hath sent, is the great work which God hath appointed us. The unbeliever under the gospel abideth in death, and hath an enhanced condemnation. He rejecteth the counsel of God against himself.

St. Paul assigns this reason for his not being ashamed of the gospel: *It is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.* When he saw that JUST ONE, he yielded to the governing influence of the doctrine of the cross. His only wish was, *to be found in Christ, to know the power of his resurrection, and fellowship of his sufferings.* While his confidence was in the Redeemer's merits, his heart was opened to admit the king of glory; and every thought was brought into captivity to Christ. Such is justifying faith. The subject of it hath such a view of his own condemnation and impotency, and so apprehends the character and sacrifice of the Mediator, that he in his heart consents to the record God hath given of his Son. Hence the apostle speaks of *them that are sanctified by faith.* Justifying faith therefore is a *practical* faith. Such was the faith of Paul and Abraham. Such is the faith of all the heirs of promise.

There is a faith which is not unto righteousness? Such was their faith, who *loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*. Such was their faith, who fell away when tribulation arose. Paul supposeth there may be faith without charity. But such a believer is *as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*. He declares charity to be greater than faith and hope. Without a *practical* faith, we believe no otherwise than those do, who are in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. For Christ is not the minister of sin. He *gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity*. The grace of God that bringeth salvation, *teacheth to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world*.—Such was the faith Paul preached.

St. James, writing to men who expected justification by an inoperative faith, who did not consider gospel-faith as a principle of holiness, expresseth himself thus: *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness—Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*. Paul and James addressed different characters. Paul combats the confidence of *self-justiciaries*, men who rested in the law, who frustrated grace and the atonement. James combats

the opinion of men, who turned grace into lasciviousness, and denied the necessity and obligation of holiness. Perhaps the abuse of Paul's epistles might give occasion to some things James hath said on justification. We have seen, that Paul hath sufficiently guarded his doctrine of grace and faith against such as might think of taking occasion therefrom to continue in sin. We are now to attend to St. James. He saith nothing of the *Mosaic* law, nor once refers to the deeds of it. He speaks of the Christian *law of liberty*; *the wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*—perfectly agreeable to St. Paul's observations on charity, and the intent of the grace of God. St. James speaks of the works of ABRAHAM, which evidenced the nature and strength of *his* faith. *Faith wrought with his works; by works was faith made perfect*. There would have been no excellence in his works, had not faith wrought with them. Faith was the foundation of the works by which itself was perfected. He believed, or he would not have offered up Isaac. Now what are such works, but *the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God?* St. James recommends an *operative* faith, such as Abraham's. He would not have works separated from faith, any more than faith from works; and equally condemns those who might pretend to works without faith, as those who pretended to faith without

works. He maintains the necessity of an unreſerved obedience, without which, he afferts, that pretensions to faith are like professions of charity without the fruits. *Faith only*, *faith being alone*, means a superficial, empty faith, ſuch as devils have. Uſing the term in this *abſtract* ſenſe, he aſks, *Can faith ſave him?* Thus diſconnected from the ſpirit and graces of the goſpel, it is *dead as is the body without the ſpirit*. There have been in all ages ſpeculative believers among the worſt characters. Whoever can diſtinguiſh credible teſtimony, and judge of moral evidence, may thus believe. He who indulgeth an hope of ſalvation, while he knowingly and cuſtomarily violates the moſt important precepts of the goſpel, hath no better faith than thoſe, who think they do God ſervicé, in the things wherein they are found fighting againſt him.

We have ſeen that the violaters of God's law have no other foundation of hope than mercy; and that the faith which is imputed for righteouſneſs, hath ſpecial reference to the perfect character and atonement of the Mediator; that it involves a conviction of our condemnation, by law, our inability to make amends for our deviations from moral rectitude, the corruption of our nature, the fulneſs of Chriſt, and cordial aſſiance in his terms. Had the law given by Moſes been deſigned to furniſh ſinners with a juſtifying righteouſneſs, one or other of theſe two things would ſol-

low: Either, first, it was not fitted to answer its design. Or, secondly, there was no occasion for the atonement by Christ. On the former supposition, we impeach the *wisdom* of God: On the latter, we frustrate his *grace*. But if the law was given to convict, not to justify—if it was given to direct sinners to a Redeemer, who hath magnified the law, and can save from the penalty and dominion of sin, then the gospel establisheth the law. The same rank is assigned to the various duties of the first and second table, as they had before. What regard is due to positive institutions, we learn from our Lord's declaration and correspondent example, *It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*. From his putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, we see the end of the law sacrifices, what the righteousness of the saints was before his coming, and where our only dependance is for acceptance. Would we not reject his atonement, let us not substitute any thing in the room of it, or intermix any thing with it, as means of absolution from sin. If we are once well established in this point, that by the works of the law no flesh can be justified, we shall readily admit the doctrine of atonement, and place our whole confidence in it.

Reflections on our state by nature, as children of disobedience and wrath, without righteousness and strength, teach us humility. *How can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer*

thee. Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself. If by the law is the knowledge of sin, what cause have we to smite on our breast, and plead, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* Who art thou that maintainest the doctrine of *perfection*? That goest about to establish thine own righteousness? That turnest the gospel of grace into a *legal* dispensation? The religion of Emmanuel admits not of human additions and amendments: It must be received as a complete system, or we make it another gospel.

Some have no more honorable ideas of Christianity, than as an excellent *moral* system, superior indeed to what Socrates, or Plato, or Epictetus gave the world. Is the Lord that bought us entitled to no higher estimation? Is the spirit of life in him, which quickeneth those who are dead in trespasses, worthy of no higher regard? Is Christianity no other than an improved edition of natural religion? Such conceptions of the gospel debase it, and greatly sink our obligations to our Redeemer and sanctifier. Any common prophet might have taught good doctrines and given good maxims. An angel might have dwelt among us, and been our example. But could an angel have *made reconciliation for our iniquities*? If Christianity only exhibits good morals, and a good example, the death of its author was to no purpose. If it supercedes our obligations to holiness, it interferes with moral rectitude. Wo to them who thus stum-

ble at the cross of Christ, and are an occasion of stumbling to others.

Again, if grace, faith and holiness are connected, those err who deny the necessity of inherent, personal holiness. Faith is a vital spring of holiness in all manner of conversation. The good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things. We do not establish our own righteousness, by maintaining the necessity and importance of obeying the gospel, possessing the spirit, and exemplifying the virtues of Jesus Christ. Those who add to, or take from, his terms, do not submit to the righteousness of God. The qualifications of the gospel are wrought in its disciples by the spirit of God, and as essential, in their place, as the atonement. We declare the counsel of God, when we testify *repentance towards him, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*—that *he who doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*—that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

Our profession of Christ obligeth us to defend the honor of his cross, and endeavor, in all possible ways, the extension of his gospel—neither to be offended in him ourselves, nor to give occasion of offence, either to his friends or foes. By this profession we disclaim all other righteousness, save that which is of God by faith. We declare our intention, by his grace, to *stand fast in the Lord*. Are we tempted at any time to disown him? Unwilling to bear reproach, relinquish any worldly

prospects, or endure any cross for him? When ready to halt, or turn back, let us call to mind the reply, made by the twelve, to the demand of Christ, *Will ye also go away? Lord, said they, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* Professors may have a fervent zeal, not according to knowledge. They cannot adorn the gospel, unless they are zealous of good works. Paul, who was dead to the law, that he might live unto God, readily sacrificed his dearest earthly prospects, to secure an interest in Christ, and advance the gospel. A like sense of our necessities, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, will lead us to do likewise.

Professors are wont to build on a sandy foundation. Such are the hopes of those who trust to knowledge and privileges misimproved; to the externals of religion; to transient impressions, and a temporary faith. The faith of the justified in Christ Jesus cannot be shaken; nor can any thing separate them from the love of Christ: For he is faithful, and will keep them from total apostacy. Hence they are steadfast, and always abound in the work of the Lord. The purpose of God according to election, justification by faith, sanctification, perseverance in faith and holiness, and final salvation, are all connected by St. Paul.

Should one doomed to death by an human judicatory, refuse a pardon, we should pronounce him mad. Yet what numbers refuse the gospel-pardon, and treat with neglect and derision the

minister and purchaser of it? Human authority can remit no other than *civil* penalties. But they who reject the pardon God offers by his Son, despise the remission of *spiritual* and *eternal* penalties. While life and death are set before them, they continue under condemnation, slaves of sin and Satan, and exposed to an eternal banishment from the society of angels and just men, from the presence of God and the Lamb. How sad is the case of sinners, alienated from the life of God, and unconcerned about their state!

On the other hand: Most blessed are they who are reconciled to God in Christ. *Who shall lay any thing to their charge? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died, and rose again, and maketh continual intercession for them.* Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and are heirs to the inheritance reserved in heaven. God in Christ is their everlasting friend. All things are theirs. They daily mortify indwelling sin. The Saviour's yoke is easy to them. They find rest to their souls.

Some may ask, what will become of those who never heard of Christ? A more proper enquiry is, how shall they, who have heard of him, express their thanks to him, and to the Father who sent him? Do we hope that our debt of ten thousand talents will be forgiven? What returns then shall we make to our creditor? Shall we increase the score by continuing in sin? Or shall we, by new-

ness of life, make it evident that we feel our infinite obligations? If indeed God hath, for Christ's sake, forgiven us all trespasses, we then love much. Whom should we love more than the God of grace, and the Redeemer of the world? They require only this return, that we have compassion on our own souls, and part with the sin that easily besets us—that we have compassion on our fellow-servants, even as compassion hath been shewn us.

By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God—the faith of his operation. He fulfilleth the work of faith with power. It is inwrought, maintained and perfected by his spirit in the inner man. The excellency of the power is of God, without whose agency the best means, and most assiduous application to them would be ineffectual. Success in our secular and spiritual concerns depends on him. He will be enquired of to succeed our labor in each of these. Wait at wisdom's gates. For faith cometh by hearing. Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. Being made perfect, Christ became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. Obedience grounded on the principles, aided by the grace, and enlivened by the motives of the gospel, is the obedience of faith. Where sin abounded, grace hath much more. Sin hath reigneth unto death. Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

INIQUITY ITS OWN ACCUSER.

B Y

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M A R K vi. 16.

But when Herod heard thereof, he said, it is John whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead.

OUR Saviour not only performed many benevolent miracles himself, but imparted the same supernatural power to others. Thus we are informed, just before the words of the text, *that he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.* The name of Jesus was thus spread abroad, and reached the court of Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee. It was natural for him to enquire, who should this extraordinary personage be? Some of the courtiers said, it is Elias; and others said it is

a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But Herod repeatedly affirmed, *it is John whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.*

And why was it, that the image of John haunted the anxious heart of Herod? For no other reason, but that a guilty conscience is ever fertile in creating phantoms of terror. Herod had been convinced that John was a just and holy man. He had, nevertheless, wantonly murdered him; and was now perplexed with the perpetual apprehension of feeling the resentment of the person whom he had so cruelly injured.

In this transaction, the baseness and cruelty of the human heart are exposed in the most odious light. Herod, the principal actor in the tragical scene, was the son of Herod the Great. And as the father had stained his hands with the blood of the infants of Bethlehem, so the son defiled himself with that of the holy Baptist. He was seduced into this enormous wickedness in the following manner. Being captivated with the beauty of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, he had prevailed upon her to forfeit her faith and desert her husband; to prefer the splendors of a court, with the loss of virtue, before innocence in a private station, to which the circumstances of her husband confined her. This flagrant deviation from the path of decency and virtue, did not escape the notice, nor pass unreprieved by the

honest zeal of the Baptist, for he took an opportunity to remonstrate to the king, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.* We do not find that Herod resented this freedom of well-meaning reproof any farther, than, at the instigation of his paramour, to lay hold on John, and put him in prison. For, we are told, *that he feared him, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy; and, although his obedience was far from being complete; yet, when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.* But, as weakness and cruelty frequently go together, and as the most guilty are apt to be the most revengeful, the vindictive spirit of Herodias was not to be appeased by so slight a punishment. While John lived, she was ever liable to be branded with ignominy and scorn. She, therefore, resolves to satiate her vengeance, and to secure herself from farther reproach, by taking away his life. Whether injuries be real or supposed, in such malevolent bosoms, resentment never sleeps. She, therefore, seizes the first favorable opportunity to effect her purpose, when Herod, in an unguarded moment of mirth and festivity, had rashly promised, with an oath, to give her daughter whatsoever she asked of him. The damsel, being instructed by her mother, said, *I will that thou give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist.* And the king was exceeding sorry; yet, foolishly supposing himself bound by a precipitate and wicked oath, he complied with her request, and sent an executioner, who went and beheaded him in the prison. The triumph of

vengeance seemed now to be complete. What effect this atrocious crime had upon the mind of Herodias, we are not informed; but we find, that the king, by murdering the good man, murdered his own peace. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. His guilty heart was ever foreboding mischief—he was afraid, where no fear was. So true is the observation of the wise man; *The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion.* Who is this that performs these mighty works in Galilee? It is Elias; or, it is one of the prophets, say other men. No! *it is John*, says the guilty, trembling heart of Herod—He is come from the dead to requite me for my injustice and inhumanity.

From this portion of holy scripture, I shall request your serious attention to the following observations.

It ought, in some measure, to suppress the murmurs of the good man, who is suffering from the unjust resentment of the wicked, to remember, *that no temptation hath taken him, but such as is common to man; and that the things which have befallen righteous men of old, happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.* John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way of Christ, was a person rough and austere in his manners, but of strict integrity and undaunted perseverance in virtue; careful to show an example of sobriety, righteousness

and godliness; and bold to reprove vice, in whatever station he met with it. In our blessed Lord we find the same love of goodness and abhorrence of iniquity, blended with greater gentleness and condescension of mind. The bruised reed he would not break. So far was he from distressing the weakest or the poorest mortal, that his whole life was spent in doing good to all men. Yet, you see, the one lost his head at the unjust command of a tyrant, through the intrigues of a profligate woman; and the other fell a sacrifice to the resentful pride of the hypocritical Pharisees. And which shall we prefer, suffering virtue, or successful villany? Let not the righteous man expect to escape the common lot of humanity. However we may exaggerate our own misfortunes, and fret ourselves at the ungodly, sun-shine and storm will still succeed each other; prosperity and adversity will alternately be our portion. Have the servants of God, in all ages, been exposed to various indignities and misfortunes? Has your Redeemer himself endured the most unjust and cruel treatment? Then, think not, O afflicted Christian, that you alone are abandoned of God, and given up a prey to unceasing misery! It is the fate of every righteous man, through tribulation more or less severe, to enter into joy.

Not to mention, at present, the strong consolation which must necessarily spring up in our bosoms, from a consciousness of sincerity and recti-

tude, in all our intentions—not to urge the argument of a future and eternal happiness, which will far more than compensate all our present sufferings; it ought to be a source of comfort and encouragement to reflect, that, however the abandoned sinner may persecute, and affect to despise the lowly Christian; there is a beauty in an uniform character of integrity—there is a mild, yet awful lustre that surrounds unaffected goodness, which must strike the attention and command the respect of the most obdurate. Herod was, indeed, instigated to take away the life of the man who had reproved him; we, nevertheless, find that he *feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man.* Uncontrolled as he was in power, while he lifted up his hand against him, his heart sank down with terror. And is it not better to take the stroke of unjust resentment, than to be in the situation of those, who tremble even while they give the blow, and are ever after condemned to smart under the lashes of a guilty conscience?

Obedience to the law of God will ever be defective, unless it spring from a real principle of virtue and religion. In some instances, Herod attended to the preaching of the Baptist. *He heard him gladly,* and did many things in compliance with his admonitions. But when the dispute arose between passion and reason, we know the fatal issue. Human nature is still the same. You may rejoice to hear your duty inculcated from the voice

of reason and the words of revelation—you may even be induced to do many things, in obedience to the divine command; but, if you are not directed by a single eye to truth and piety, when some worldly interest on the one hand, or some sensual appetite on the other, spreads an allurements, you will immediately turn from the right way. Let Christians frequently and seriously reflect upon their lost estate by nature; let them remember the wonderful loving-kindness of Christ in the redemption of a ruined world; and surely the love of God will constrain them, in every circumstance of life, to yield a chearful and uniform obedience. This divine principle, like the sap springing from the root, will invigorate every branch of their duty. Like the sun at the centre of the system, it will enlighten and animate every part of their holy conversation.

But, with all the aids which God has been pleased to afford us in the performance of our duty—with all the powerful incitements to the practice of virtue and holiness, there is need of incessant caution and vigilance. Relaxation from the business and cares of life is indeed necessary; yet, without perpetual watchfulness, we imperceptibly slide into vicious and excessive indulgences. You need not be told, your own observation has taught you, how many rash engagements—how many foolish, precipitate actions, have sprung from the fallies of heedless jollity, fraught with consequences ever to

be deplored, but perhaps never remedied. It was at such an unguarded hour, in the time of his impious feast, that Belshazzar was attacked and slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom from him. And the history of Herod's birth-day, recorded in the scriptures, stands as a perpetual warning to the great, the gay, and the young, to beware of dissolute mirth. Admonished by so fatal an example, they ought to maintain, even in the midst of their festivity, an habitual recollection of spirit, lest reason, enervated by the pleasures of sense, should slacken the rein of wisdom, or for a moment let it drop. Their headstrong appetites, ever impatient of the curb, will seize the opportunity, and hurry them into excesses, the effects of which may be perpetually distressful. Thus verifying the words of Solomon, *I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it? Even in the midst of such laughter, the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.*

Among other reasons for this constant recollection and sobriety of mind, the following is not the least; that in the hour of heedless gaiety, the heart is more open to the suggestions, more easily biassed by the persuasions of vicious companions. And such will always be at hand, full of insidious stratagems to make you the instrument of their pleasures, or their resentments. From the time of his virtuous rebuke, *Herodias had a quarrel against John, and would have killed him, but she could not.* In a cool moment of reflection, by the way of direct application,

Herod was not to be wrought upon to answer her purposes. And, perhaps, she seized the only favorable opportunity that would ever have been afforded her, to effect her wicked design. So dangerous is it to let the guard of reason be lulled to sleep! so wakeful, so perpetual is resentment in the breast of conscious wickedness!

But let the impious schemes of vice be carried into execution—let its pernicious stratagems be crowned with complete success, what is commonly the consequence? A momentary satisfaction may arise—a sudden gleam of joy may dart thro' the mind; but it is soon succeeded by a settled and universal darkness. Let Herodias view with exultation the victim of her vengeance, bleeding before her! Let her gaze, with secret complacency, upon the head of him who had provoked her, now rendered speechless and inoffensive! May she now persist in her crimes without hesitation? Is she now any more secure from disgrace and reproach?—This very circumstance of her treatment of the Baptist, has branded her name with infamy, and transmitted it down to posterity, the object of universal detestation to all who read the gospel.—*Only they that walk uprightly, walk securely.—The wicked are trapped in the works of their own hands; while the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

Such is commonly the *end* of iniquity; nor is its *progress* free from numberless disquietudes and an-

xieties. Virtue is ever steady and uniform, but vice is always absurd and inconsistent. The voice of reason and conscience is not to be entirely suppressed. Let some surprising adventure in life, or some sudden shock of misfortune, call them off, for a moment, from their pleasures and follies; and the most dissipated will begin to think and speak rationally. Herod was of the sect of the Sadducees, *who say there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit*; yet you see, his conscience is no sooner alarmed, than, in contradiction to his own principles, he begins to assert, *John is risen from the dead*. Ye deluded sinners! who stifle, as far as may be, the voice of reason, and affect to despise the terrors of religion; who say there is no God to call you into judgment, and no hell to punish your crimes; walk on in the sight of your own eyes, and in the ways of your own evil hearts! Yet be assured, when the pangs of death begin to lay hold upon you, and a fearful eternity to open on your view, you will shrink with inexpressible dismay from the dreadful prospect! Horrible forebodings will seize your hearts, and fearful visions will distract your imagination! And then *you* will confess—and then it will be evident to every by-stander, that the end of the *upright man* only is peace—that we must come unto Jesus, and learn of him, in meekness and humility of heart, if we would find rest to our souls! In this last extremity of nature, the mistaken tenderness of friends may attempt to discredit these objects of terror, and to

palliate the afflicted sinner's distress. *It is Elias, or it is one of the prophets, say the soothing courtiers—it is no messenger of wrath sent to alarm the king.* Still the force of reason will recoil—there is a God, who rules in the armies of heaven, and over the inhabitants of the earth. There is a place of reward and punishment. Those who have done good *shall* go into everlasting life, and those who have done evil into everlasting misery.

And what remains, my beloved brethren, but to ask, if the words that have been now spoken, are the words of truth and soberness? Do they not deserve your most serious consideration? If such be the joys which attend sincere religion, and such the distressing effects of vice, can you hesitate a moment which to prefer? The prophet expostulated with the Jews, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* With how much more propriety may we address the same affectionate admonition to *you* Christians? Why should you choose the death of sin, rather than a life of holiness? Are the ways of sin more peaceful and pleasant, than those of religious wisdom? Is the present service of Satan more easy, than that of your Lord and Saviour; or are the future prospects of wickedness more satisfactory, than those of pure religion? Your own hearts at once decide the question; and you are ready to exclaim—*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!* Follow the virtuous impulse! And God grant, that you may grow in grace, and advance from one degree of strength and resolution to another, till you grow up to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

S E R M O N XXXVII.

THE CHARACTER OF HAMAN*.

B Y

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ESTHER V. 13:

Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

A CONSIDERABLE part of the scripture consists in history. This, though it may not seem so useful and important as other parts, affords much instruction, and teaches us many excellent lessons. The lives and characters of great and good men furnish us with examples of faith, of patience, and of holiness, highly worthy our

* Since this discourse came to hand, the Editors have received a line from the Author, informing, that since he forwarded the manuscript, he has understood that Dr. Hugh Blair has published a discourse upon the same subject, and expresses his doubts respecting the propriety of publishing the present. In comparing the two, the Editors are convinced that there will be no ground of charge against the Author, either upon the score of integrity, or delicacy; they therefore commit it to the press as a valuable acquisition to the work. EDITORS.

imitation, and excite us to walk in their steps. Nor is the account of wicked men which we have recorded in the word of God, without its use. They exhibit in their lives, a striking proof of the depravity of human nature; and by viewing their characters, drawn agreeably to truth and nature, and painted in their proper colors; we are led to abhor their vices, and shun those wicked courses, which, if persisted in, must end in misery and ruin.

Among the many wicked men, whose characters are handed down to us in the scripture-history, Haman is one of the most remarkable, as well on account of the bold and bloody attempt which he made to destroy the people of God, as the signal vengeance which overtook him as the just punishment of his pride and cruelty. In him we have a striking instance of man's corruption, and a pregnant example of the instability of temporal things. He was suddenly raised to the highest pitch of preferment, and as suddenly tumbled down. One day he is the first favorite and prime minister of the most powerful and magnificent prince in the world; the next, he dies ignominiously upon the gibbet, which he had erected for his enemy.

The sketch which the scriptures give us of Haman's history is short, but sufficient to develop his true character.

In the beginning of the third chapter we are informed of his promotion. *After these things did king Abasuerus promote Haman, the son of Hammeda-*

tha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. He is here said to be an Agagite, from which it is probably conjectured, that he was of the race of the Amalekites, who, for reasons too obvious to mention, were mortal enemies to the Jews. And this made him more ready to attempt the utter destruction of that nation. The king who promoted him, is here called Ahafuerus. In profane history, according to some chronologers, he is known by the name of Artaxerxes Longimanus; but by others, with greater probability, supposed to be Darius Hystaspes, one of the seven Persian noblemen who slew Smerdis the Magician, who had usurped the throne of Persia, under pretence, that he was the son of Cyrus, and brother of Cambyfes. His dominions were very extensive; for we are told in this book of Esther, that *he reigned over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia.*—How he came to set his affections on Haman, or for what reasons he promoted him, we are not informed. It is plain he was not advanced on account of his merits; for he was a man void of truth, honor and integrity. He was probably an adroit courtier, expert in flattery, and by falling in with the king's humours, and ministering to his pleasures, artfully wrought himself into favor.—This is the common road to preferment with favorites, who, in all ages, have been the curse of courts, of kings, and of kingdoms. But by what means soever he rose, he was suddenly advanced,

and became the second man in the kingdom; and Darius issued orders, that all the other courtiers should *bow down to him, and do him reverence.*

All who wished to pay their court to the favorite readily complied with the order. But Mordecai, a captive Jew, refused; *for he bowed not, nor did him reverence.*

For what reason Mordecai refused to comply with the king's commandment, is not very clear. It is most probable, that he thought himself prohibited by his religion, from giving those extravagant honors to Haman which were required, and amounted to a kind of adoration. That this was due to God alone, Mordecai rightly judged; and he chose rather to incur the displeasure both of the king and Haman, than offend his God. Here the good man affords us an example of holy courage and confidence in the divine protection, well worthy of our notice and imitation—for we should always remember, that God is to be feared more than man.

This behavior of Mordecai soon reached the ears of Haman, who being elated with pride, on account of his late preferment, thought it an unpardonable insult upon him, and *was full of wrath.* Inwardly chafed and fired with indignation, he meditated revenge. *But he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone.* This he reckoned a paltry revenge for the contempt which had been thrown

upon him. He determines to strike a bold stroke, and take vengeance in a way which he thought worthy of so great a man, by utterly exterminating the whole nation of the Jews; for he was informed that Mordecai was of that race.

In order to accomplish his bloody design, he makes application to the king; and, by calumniating the Jews, prevails upon him to pass a decree, that they should be all destroyed. The king, it seems, never enquired into the merits of the cause. He took his favorite's word for the justice and propriety of the measure; and in this discovered his extreme weakness and temerity. He was wholly under the government of his minister, who had obtained an entire ascendant over him. Without hesitation or deliberation he signs the death-warrant, by which millions of innocent persons were to perish. For the decree extended to the Jews who had returned to their own land, which was a province of the Persian empire.

And now Haman thought himself secure of the most ample revenge. But mark, with what infinite ease God can frustrate the wicked purposes of proud aspiring mortals, turn their counsels into foolishness, and bring their mischief upon their own heads! Haman falls into the net, which he himself had spread for others. It seems he did not know that the queen was of the Jewish nation.— Her God makes an instrument for the deliverance of his people. She, by the advice and direction

of her uncle Mordecai, who seems still to have retained the authority of a father over her, puts her life in her hands, and interposes in behalf of her people—She succeeds. In order to bring about the destruction of their enemy, she desires the king to invite Haman to a banquet, which she had prepared for him. The king grants her request, and the invitation is repeated. Haman thinking this a high distinction, and a mark of particular favor, comes home to his wife and his friends with a heart elated with pride, and overwhelmed with joy, and informs them of the *glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him.* He adds, *moreover, that queen Esther had let no man come in with the king to the banquet which she had prepared, but himself;* and that he was invited to come again to her on the next day. *Yet all this, says he in the words of the text, availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.*

As he returned from the banquet, he observed that Mordecai did not show him that respect which was required; and this dashed all his pleasure. In order, therefore, to administer comfort, his wife and friends, who, it seems, were nothing behind himself, either in ambition or cruelty, advise him to have a gallows raised fifty cubits high, and speak to the king next day, that Mordecai might be hanged thereon. The hint pleased him, and he gave orders that the gallows should be,

made; little thinking that he was providing a gibbet for himself.

This remarkable piece of history affords much useful instruction, which we shall now endeavor to point out.

I. From this passage of history we may learn, that ambition is insatiable and cruel in the highest degree.

Could ambition be satisfied, Haman might have been contented with the profusion of recent honors, which were heaped upon him, and that pitch of power and greatness to which he was raised.—No subject could be more highly advanced. He was the second man in one of the greatest empires in the world. He was the chief favorite in the Persian court, so much celebrated for its riches and splendor; and the darling of the most magnificent monarch upon earth. His wealth was immense; for he offered the king *ten thousand* talents for executing his decree against the Jews. He had a numerous offspring to inherit his riches and honors; and nothing seemed to be wanting to render him as happy as the things of this world could make him. *Yet all this availed him not while Mordecai was at the gate.* And suppose Mordecai had been taken out of the way—suppose he had succeeded in his bloody purpose of cutting off the whole Jewish nation; do you think he would have been satisfied? No—there would still have been a Mordecai in the gate; something or other to di-

sturb his restless mind. In all probability he would have next aspired to the kingdom. He would have *thought scorn* to be any longer a subject, and endeavored to make his way to the throne of Persia. Suppose him seated on the throne—would he have been contented with his *hundred and twenty-seven provinces*? Far from it. He would have been for adding more, and subduing the whole world; and even then, would have been as far from being satisfied as ever. Where do we read that the greatest conquerors, or most absolute monarchs were ever satisfied with their power? Was an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Tamerlane, or any other of the scourges of God, and butchers of the world, contented with their acquisitions? Alexander conquered the world; was he satisfied? No such matter. The tear of Ambition flowed, because there were no more worlds to conquer. Ambition never says enough—it always cries, *give, give*. The more ambitious men have, the more they want. Let them be elevated to the highest pitch of power and grandeur imaginable, their wild restless souls are still aspiring at something greater. There is always something to agitate their minds; so that they cannot rest in contentment and tranquillity. There is always a *Mordecai in the gate*. Ambition is as cruel, as it is insatiable. How cruel was the ambition of Haman?—Because Mordecai, from some religious scruples, refused to bow down to him, nothing but his blood could extinguish the rage of the ambitious tyrant. Nor did he think

that sufficient. The whole Jewish nation must be immolated to appease his anger and glut his revenge. He thought it beneath such a great man, as he was, to reek his vengeance on Mordecai alone. The blood of innocent millions must atone for the neglect of one man. He resembled Nero, who wished that all the Romans had one neck, that he might have the pleasure of cutting them all off at one blow. Ambition sticks at nothing to compass its designs. It wades to empire through seas of blood. No principles of religion, virtue or humanity can restrain the wretch, whose ruling passion is the lust of power. He will sacrifice all these to his beloved object. Hold up a crown, or a kingdom, or even an inferior object to such a man, and he will stop at no act of cruelty, however horrid, which he thinks may forward his designs. Treachery, poison, daggers, and all the instruments of death, are employed without remorse. He cares not how much blood he spills, nor how much misery he causes, if he can only gain his point.—Neither the desolation of countries, nor the sacking of cities—neither the cries of widows, nor the tears of orphans, nor the weeping voice of nature itself, can restrain him in his ambitious career. After the bloody decree was passed which doomed a whole nation, *both young and old, little children and women*, to fall a sacrifice at the shrine of ambition, we are informed, that the *king and Haman sat down to drink*. Having issued orders for a general massacre of the whole nation, and dispatched messen-

gers into all the provinces, without remorse, they sit down to regale themselves at the banquet.—Hardened monsters! who never seriously reflected on the horrid consequences of their bloody mandate; or reflecting, did not relent at the complicated miseries they were about to bring upon an innocent people. This is a specimen of what cruel and ambitious princes, and their cruel and ambitious ministers can do. What seas of blood have been shed—what havock of the human race has been made by the kings and Hamans of the earth! Goaded on by ambition, and prompted by the lust of power, what devastation have they spread over the earth! How many, instigated by the thirst of dominion, have violated all the tender ties of nature! Sons have dethroned and slain their fathers, that they might seize their kingdoms and possess their power! Fathers have murdered all their sons, lest they should conspire against them, and rob them of their dominions. Brothers have butchered brothers; and it is a common thing in eastern countries, for the reigning prince to put to death all his relations, and, in short, all the persons in his kingdom, who can be supposed to have the most distant claim to the crown. There is no need to produce particular instances of the cruel and tragical effects of pride and ambition. The scriptures abound with them—the history of the world is full of them, and exhibits a picture of human nature as lamentable as it is painful and shocking to a humane and benevolent heart!—The history

of the human race is, in fact, a history of human guilt; and whatever may be said of the dignity of our nature, this affords a clear evidence of its depravity.

II. From the history of Haman we may learn, that no man can be happy, while he is under the dominion of pride, malice, and other malevolent passions.

Haman's external circumstances were such, as seemed to promise all the happiness which this world could bestow. He had not only *food to eat, and raiment to put on*, but lived in great elegance and splendor. He was immensely rich—he had honors sufficient to satisfy any man who could be satisfied. But was he contented and happy? Far from it. And what was the reason? Mordicai, a poor captive Jew, was at the gate, and would not be as mannerly as he desired. This was the cause of all his chagrin—this disturbed his proud spirit, and destroyed all that satisfaction which he might have enjoyed from his opulence, and the fresh honors which were heaped upon him. *What availt' all these things, says he, so long as Mordecai the Jew sitteth at the king's gate?* His pride would not suffer him to rest. Rage and envy had taken possession of his heart. His soul was inwardly torn with indignation, malice and hatred. Mordecai was in the gate. This destroyed his peace, and threw a dark shade over his prosperity.

Thus it is with all those who are under the dominion of malevolent and diabolical passions. Let

a man be as happy as he will in other respects, if his mind be a prey to pride, malice, hatred, and other inimical passions, he can enjoy no true peace. How can peace and tranquillity reign in the breast corroded with malice, which, like a vulture, preys upon the mind, and even emaciates the body? How can that man, who continually pines with envy at the prosperity of others, enjoy any true felicity himself? These are all painful passions—the poison of them drinks up the spirits—and, while we are under their dominion, all the power, riches and honors in the world, cannot make us happy. The proud man will always find enow to mortify him, by refusing that honor and respect, which his high opinion of his own importance leads him to expect. There will always be some Mordecai in the gate, who will refuse to bow down before him, however great he may think himself. He who is of a wrathful, envious, or malicious disposition, will never want an object for his hatred and malice. Every Haman will find a Mordecai to excite his indignation, and provoke his envy; and while he is under the government of these restless and malignant passions, he never can be happy, though he were lord of the whole earth.—All Haman's wealth and honors availed him nothing while he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate.

III. Another lesson, which we are taught by this passage of history, is, that those things which men most desire, often prove their ruin.

Haman was a man of unbounded ambition.— Accordingly, there was nothing he so much desired as honor and preferment. He obtained what he so vehemently desired; and it proved his ruin. Had he not been so highly advanced, he would not have been so much elated with pride, nor borne it so hardly, that Mordecai did not bow down to him; nor consequently would have fallen upon those cruel measures, which finally brought him to the gallows. So intent was Haman to obtain the decree against the Jews, that he offered the immense sum of ten thousand talents; and yet this very decree brought destruction on himself, and his whole family. Thus it often happens to blind mortals. They eagerly pursue those very things which, in the end, prove their ruin. With what ardor do many desire and pursue riches? And how frequently do they issue in the perdition both of soul and body, in time and eternity? When men become rich, they commonly become proud; their hearts are lifted up, and they look down upon the poor with contempt. They grow arrogant and tyrannical; and thus incur the resentment of their neighbors, and bring a load of hatred upon themselves, under which they frequently sink. Filled with self-confidence and self-sufficiency, they forget God, become insensible of their dependence upon him, and unthankful for his mercies. Whilst eager in the pursuit of wealth, religion is neglected, and the all-important concerns of their precious immortal souls disregarded. Thus their riches which they

so anxiously desire, at last prove the destruction of their immortal and better part, and overwhelm them in eternal misery and despair. How many are there who consider honor and preferment as the most desirable objects, and the attainment of them, the summit of human felicity? Their supreme wish is to be elevated to high rank and power—to be conspicuous in the eyes of mortals—to be respected, revered, courted and flattered. Like Haman, they would have all men to bow down to them. But when they have obtained all this, how often does it pave the way to their ruin? The higher men rise, the more precarious and dangerous their situation is, and the more liable they are to fall. There is a certain levelling principle in human nature, which leads men to pull down those who are above them, especially if they become haughty and arrogant by their elevation. This, all know, is a very common case: There are few who can bear preferment with moderation; especially, if it be great and sudden. Like persons suddenly elevated to a great distance from the earth, their heads turn—they become intoxicated with their power—and commonly use it in such a manner, as to create to themselves many powerful enemies, who are eager to drag them down from their exalted station. And they often find means to compass their designs. Haman is but one of many favorites who have suddenly fallen from the zenith of power and prosperity, and ended their lives on a gibbet or a scaffold. Poverty, ignominy, and

even death itself oft-times quickly follow the acquisition of those honors, to which the votaries of power and pre-eminence aspire with so much ardour. How often is the arbitrary tyrant, who, urged by ambition, made his way to a throne, suddenly stripped of his crown, and reduced to the condition of the meanest slave? Exulting in the plenitude of his recent power, he knows not how to use it with moderation; and that which he so eagerly pursued, as the completion of his wishes, plunges him in the deepest misery.

IV. We learn from this passage of history, that men are often taken in their own toils; or as the scripture expresses it, *their feet are taken in the net which they had hid*

Haman was at much pains to erect a gallows for Mordecai, and he was hanged on it himself.— He was literally caught in his own snare. While he was using all his address in planning the destruction of Mordecai and the Jews, he was planning his own utter ruin. *God turned his iniquity upon his own head, and his violent dealings upon his pate.* Such instances are frequent. How many have themselves drunk the deadly draught which they had prepared for another? How many, who have treacherously lain in wait to assassinate others, have fallen in the attempt? How many, whilst endeavoring by treachery, calumny, and every hellish art, to undermine and destroy the innocent, have been detected and suffered the deserved punish-

ment? Such is the enmity and malice of the wicked, that they often overshoot themselves, and while they are laying trains for the ruin of the righteous, are themselves blown up. They may, indeed, often succeed against them, as we see they do; but they shall not escape unpunished. *Verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth.* There is a righteous judgment to come, when the proud oppressors of the earth shall stand trembling at the bar of heaven, and suffer the due punishment of their violence and injustice. Even in this world, the Almighty often makes bare his arm against them—arrests them in the midst of their crimes, and turns their violence on their own heads. Thus he did with Haman, causing him to fall into his own snares. But however it may be in this world, they shall hereafter most certainly *receive the reward of their iniquity, and eat the fruit of their own doings.* God will at last plead the cause of the innocent, and take vengeance on their oppressors. Let all such, therefore, remember, that while they are plotting against the righteous, they are plotting their own ruin, and, like Haman, bringing down perdition on themselves, either in this or a coming world. However great and powerful they may be—how weak and helpless soever the righteous may appear, they cannot injure them with impunity.—They have a powerful protector—the Almighty is their defence, and declares, that *he who toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye.* How weak and contemptible did Mordecai appear in the eyes of

Haman? He had no apprehension that one so great and powerful as he was, could be in the least danger from such an insignificant creature, as a captive Jew. But yet God so ordered it, that this same Mordecai was the instrument of his ruin.—He dragged him down from his lofty pinnacle of honor—stripped him of all his wealth and grandeur, and brought him to an ignominious death. Though weak in himself, he had an almighty protector; and the God whom he served, delivered him from all the machinations of his adversary, and turned his devices upon his own head.

Let us improve this subject.

1. In the first place, by guarding against a cruel and ambitious temper.

Ambition is not confined to heroes and conquerors, kings and courtiers. It is frequently found among the lower orders of men. Here, indeed, it is not so conspicuous, because it is confined within a narrower sphere, and has not a field so ample to display itself. It discovers itself, however, plainly enough. It does not, indeed, aspire at crowns and kingdoms—it does not destroy nations, or spread havock and desolation over cities and countries. These exploits of wickedness are beyond the reach of the ambitious in lower rank. but it does a great deal of mischief in families, neighborhoods, and societies, by exciting hatred, wrath, strife, and many other inimical passions,

which destroy peace and concord, and produce the most pernicious effects in civil and religious societies. You may often see a whole neighborhood thrown into a flame by two or three men, whose ambition, perhaps, rises no higher than some paltry civil office, or petty commission, which they think will do them honor, or give them a little more power. And they make no scruple at all to lie, calumniate, undermine and betray each other, in order to gain their point. Want of power, and dread of punishment, restrain them from going further, otherwise, like those who are above all law, they would proceed to destroy all who oppose them, and lay waste the world with fire and sword. Every man is by nature a tyrant. There are little tyrants as well as great ones. Our country is full of petty *basbarws*, who exercise a tyranny as cruel and absolute in the small circle of their own plantations, and over their miserable slaves, as the most arbitrary *despot* in Asia. And if interest and custom had not steeled their hearts, and shut their ears to the voice of nature, and the dictates of reason, religion and humanity, they might soon be made sensible of it. We are all so prone to abuse power when once we have gotten it into our hands, that we should be jealous of ourselves, and watch against the cruel effects of a tyrannical temper towards those who are wholly in our power. For my own part, I cannot help trembling for my country as often as I reflect, that God is just, and has declared, that *he will vindicate the oppressed, and*

punish the oppressor. Let us all then learn to guard against a cruel and ambitious temper. It becomes us, as Christians, to renounce the pomps and vanities of this world, and not to aim at earthly power and pre-eminence. *The fashion of this world passeth away.* All its glory, pomp and power must soon vanish like a dream. Let us then seek that honor which cometh from God—which is substantial and permanent, and not covet the praise of men. *In honor let us prefer one another,* and learn of our heavenly master to be meek and lowly in heart. *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* He exalts the humble Mordecai, but humbles the proud Haman, and brings down his honor to the dust.

2. From what has been said, let us learn to shun malice, envy, and all the malevolent passions.

While we indulge a malicious, envious or vindictive temper, all genuine peace and comfort must be banished from our breasts. These and similar passions are as inconsistent with our own happiness as they are repugnant to the spirit and precepts of the gospel, to which we are bound as Christians to conform our lives and tempers. It is the peculiar glory of our religion that it reprobates all the malignant passions, and inculcates a benevolent, meek, gentle, and forgiving spirit. However rich, powerful and prosperous we may be, if we are under the government of malice, hatred, envy, and other diabolical passions, we cannot fail

to be wretched and miserable. Mordecai in a state of poverty and captivity, enjoyed more genuine satisfaction and tranquillity of mind, than Haman in the midst of all his riches and honors. It is our duty, therefore, as well as our happiness, to mortify those angry and hateful passions, and cultivate a kind and benevolent disposition. Let charity then, with all her mild and gentle train, take possession of our hearts, and reign and triumph there. Thus shall we be conformed to the spirit, and governed by the precepts of that holy religion which we profess. Finally, let us learn, agreeably to the command and example of our Redeemer, not only to love our friends, but even our enemies; *to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us; that we may be the children of our Father in heaven, who maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*



S E R M O N XXXVIII.

ON THE PURITY OF THE HEART.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

PROVERBS XXX. 7, 8, 9.

Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.—

My Brethren,

OUR dependent condition as creatures, and much more our dangerous condition as sinners, exposed to daily temptation, renders prayer a duty of the most absolute necessity. You must all be sensible, how frequent and pressing the exhortations to it are in the holy scriptures. And, indeed, there cannot be a better evidence of a right temper of mind, than an habitual disposition to the exercise of this duty.

But as prayer is a necessary duty, we ought to give the greater attention to the manner in which it is performed. We ought to ask only for such things as are truly safe and useful. We ought also to offer up our prayers with importunity, or reserve, according to the nature and comparative importance of those blessings we desire to obtain. All our wants are perfectly known to God ; he is also the best judge of what is fit for us, and therefore, our petitions should be well weighed, and expressed in such terms, as, at the same time that they intimate our desires, leave much to himself, as to the measure and manner of satisfying them.

We have an excellent example of this pious and prudent conduct, in the prayer of the prophet Agur, just read in your hearing. All his requests are summed up in two general heads. These he seems to insist upon, as absolutely necessary to ask, with that humble, holy confidence which is founded on the divine promise, that if we ask any thing agreeable to his will, he heareth us. He seems also to ask them, as what would fully satisfy him, and be sufficient for the comfort of the present life, and the happiness of the life to come. *Two things, says he, have I required of thee, deny me them not before, or, as it ought rather to be translated, until I die.*

These two requests are conceived in the following terms. *Remove far from me vanity and lies, give me neither poverty nor riches.* The first, viz. *remove*

far from me vanity and lies, evidently relates to the temper of his mind, and the state of his soul. The second, viz. *give me neither poverty nor riches*, relates to his outward condition or circumstances in the present life. There are two things in the general structure of this comprehensive prayer, that merit your particular attention. *First*, The order of his request; beginning with what is of most importance, the temper of his mind, and his hope towards God; and then adding, as but deserving the second place, what related to his present accommodation.

Secondly, The connection of his requests. The choice he makes as to his temporal condition, is in immediate and direct subserviency to his sanctification. This is plain from the arguments with which he presses, or the reasons which he assigns for his second petition. *Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain,*

My brethren, I am persuaded that this subject can hardly be, at any time, unseasonable to a Christian assembly, as our misplaced, excessive, and unreasonable desires are the greatest enemies to our progress in holiness, as well as to our comfort and peace. Perhaps, however, there are some circumstances that render it peculiarly proper for this auditory. Young persons are very apt to cherish vast and boundless desires as to outward

things; and having not yet experienced the deceitfulness of the world, are apt to entertain excessive and extravagant hopes. The truth is, rich and poor, young and old, may here receive a lesson of the utmost moment.

Let me therefore intreat your attention, while I endeavor to open and improve this passage of the holy scriptures; beginning, at this time, with the first request—*Remove far from me vanity and lies.*

In discoursing on which, I will endeavor,

I. To explain the import of it, or shew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be supposed to extend.

II. Apply the subject for your instruction and direction.

I. I am to explain the import of the prophet's prayer, or shew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be supposed to extend, in the petition, *Remove far from me vanity and lies.* The word *vanity*, especially when it is joined, as it is frequently in scripture, with *lying*, or *lies*, is of a very large and comprehensive signification. The word in the original, translated *vanity*, properly signifies *lightness* or *emptiness*; and *lies* signify *falsehood*, in opposition to *truth*.

I imagine we shall have a clear conception, both of the meaning and force of this phrase, if we make the following remark: God himself is the

great fountain of life and existence ; the great I AM, as he emphatically styles himself to Moses ; the *original* and the *only reality*, if I may so speak. All other beings have only a dependent and precarious existence ; so that the creation itself, tho' his own work, compared to him, is vanity. *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* Therefore, in a particular manner, the word is often used to denote the folly of all idolatrous worship ; or the giving the respect and honor to any thing else, which is due to God alone. *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles, that can cause rain ; or can the heavens give showers, art thou not he, O Lord our God ?*

Sometimes it is used to denote the *folly*, or *unprofitableness* of any vice, and particularly of an ill-founded conceit of ourselves, as well as of all fraud and dissimulation, in word or action. So that this prayer for our souls, short as it appears to be, when considered in its full extent, will be found to contain a great variety of important matter.— This I shall endeavor to give you a brief account of, under the following particulars.

1. We are hereby taught to pray, that we may be preserved by divine grace, from all false and erroneous principles in religion ; so as we may neither be deceived by them ourselves, nor any way instrumental in deceiving others. This, by

what has been said of the use of the words in scripture, appears to be implied in the request, and it is of more moment than some are willing to allow. The understanding being the leading faculty, an error *there*, spreads its unhappy influence through the whole temper and life. Whereas, on the contrary, light in the mind, produces fidelity and security in the conscience, and tenderness in the conversation. You may observe, that through the whole history of the old testament, idolatry, or a departure from the knowledge and worship of the true God, is the leading sin, and the fruitful source of every other vicious practice. We sometimes, indeed, seem to stand astonished at the excessive proneness of the ancient Jews to this sin. But we need only a little reflection to discover, that an evil heart of unbelief continues the same at bottom, and daily produces the like dangerous effects. How prone have men been in all ages, to depart from the simplicity of the truth! In how many different shapes have they perverted it! One age, or one country, has been polluted by one error; and another by an opposite; impelled by the unstable and irregular fancies of men of corrupt minds. In the last age, the great theme of the carnal reasoner was, to attempt to expose the scripture-doctrine of God's certain knowledge, and precise ordination of all events; and in this, fate and necessity, have become the strong hold of infidelity, and are embraced, or seem to be embraced, by every enemy of true religion without ex-

ception. Error, shifting its ground, indeed, is but natural; for lying vanities are innumerable; but the true God is the same *yesterday, to day, and for ever.*

At this very time, how abounding and prevalent is infidelity, calling in question the most important and fundamental principles, both of natural and revealed religion! And how properly is this described, by the expression in the text, *vanity and lies*; for it always takes its rise from the pride and vanity of the human heart? Sometimes a pride of understanding, which aspires to pass judgment on things far above its reach, and condemn things long before they are examined and understood: Sometimes, also, from a pride of heart, or self-sufficiency, that is unable to endure the humbling and mortifying view, given us in scripture, of our character and state. Oh how readily do men turn aside from the truth! With what greediness do they drink in the flattering but destructive poison! Need I point out to you the fatal effects of such principles taking place? It loosens the obligations to obedience, takes off the edge of the reproofs of conscience, and thus removing restraints, leaves men, in the emphatical language of the holy scripture, *to walk in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes.*

But in this request, *remove far from me vanity and lies*, I would not have you confine your views to the most gross infidelity and avowed opposition to

God. Pray also, that you may be preserved from error, or mistake of any kind; but especially such as have the greatest influence on the substance of religion.

A clear apprehension of the holy nature, and righteous government of God—the infinite evil of sin—the foundation of our peace in the blood of the atonement—and the renewing of our natures by the Holy Ghost, seem to me absolutely necessary to true and undefiled religion. And they are the truths, which particularly serve to exalt the creator, and lay the creature in the dust. When, therefore, we consider how grateful to corrupt nature every thing is, that tends to foster pride—to create security, and set the mind at ease, in the indulgence of sin; we must be sensible of how great importance it is, to pray for divine direction, and divine preservation. Nothing is more dangerous to men than confidence and presumption—nothing more useful, in faith and practice, than humility and self-denial.

2. This prayer implies, a desire that we may be preserved from setting our affections on such objects, as are but vain and unsatisfying, and will, in the end, disappoint our expectation. I take this to be not only a part, but a very important part of the prophet's meaning. The world is the great source of temptation; the powerful and unhappy influence of which we may daily see; or rather, all of us daily and sensibly feel. What is it possesses

the fancy, misleads the judgment, inflames the affections, consumes the time, and ruins the soul, but these present enjoyments, of which the wisest of men, after a full trial of them, hath left us their character *vanity of vanities*.

I am sensible that I have now entered upon a subject, which is far from being difficult to enlarge upon, and yet, perhaps, very difficult to treat with propriety, or in such a manner, as to have the intended effect. There is nothing more easy than, in a bold declamatory way, to draw pictures of the vanity of human life. It hath been done by thousands, when, after all their broken schemes, and disappointed views, they have just suffered shipwreck upon the coast of the enchanted land of hope. But from such men we may expect to hear the language of despair, rather than of experience; and as it is too late for the instruction of the sufferers, so it very rarely has any effect in warning others to avoid the danger. What I would, therefore, willingly attempt, is, to consider this matter in a sober scriptural light; if so be, that it may please God to carry conviction to our hearts, and make it truly useful, both to speaker and hearers.

Let me, therefore, my brethren, point out to you, precisely, wherein the vanity of the world lieth. The world, in itself, is the workmanship of God, and every thing that is done in it, is by the ordination, or permission of God. As such, it is good, and may be used in subserviency to his hon-

or, and our own peace. But through the corruption of our nature, the creature becomes the rival and competitor of the creator for our hearts.—When we place our supreme happiness upon it, instead of making it a mean of leading us to God, then its inherent vanity immediately appears.—When men allow themselves in the indulgence of vicious pleasures, how justly may they be called *vanity and lies*? They are smiling and inviting to appearance, but how dreadful and destructive in their effects? *Whoredom and wine, and new wine taketh away the heart.* Those who refuse to be confined by the laws of piety and sobriety, *vainly* think they are walking at liberty, when they are bringing themselves into subjection to the severest and most inflexible of all masters. Read the just and striking description, by Solomon, of the effects of whoredom; and reflect on the innumerable calamities brought, in every age, on persons and families by unbridled lust. See also the effects of intemperance and excess—*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.* And again; *the drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty.* *Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; at last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*

Think on the unhappy consequences, of dishonesty and fraud. *Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.*—

You may also see, in innumerable passages of scripture, that oppression of others, as it is a sin of the deepest dye, so it is often remarkably overtaken, and punished in the course of Providence, even in the present life. *Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward is abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*

But there is something more in this request, than being preserved from practices directly vicious; for the setting of our hearts upon worldly things, and making them our chief portion and delight, is certainly seeking after *vanity and lies*. They are far from affording that happiness and peace, which we demand of them, and expect from them. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.* Can there be any thing more comfortable to experience, than that strong expression — *Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.* You may else find in the word of God, many warnings of the folly of those, who travel in the path of ambition, and put their trust in man. *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. Happy is he, that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.* But the most comprehensive remark of all, upon this subject, is, that human

life itself is so exceedingly precarious, that it must write *vanity and emptiness* on every thing, the possession and use of which is confined to the present state. *Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.* What a striking picture does our Lord draw of the vanity of human happiness, in that parable of the ground of the rich man, which brought forth plentifully? *And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*—And while this man is sedulously employed in making provision for a long and happy life, *God said unto him, thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

The whole of the preceding representation may be summed up in this excellent sentence of the wise man: *The wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that soweth righteously shall be a sure reward.*

Now, my brethren, need I add, how prone we are to be led astray, in a greater or less degree, by such *vanity and lies*?—I do not insist upon the many victims, which, in every age, have been seen to fall by the destructive hand of vice. How many have been ruined by lust, slain by intemperance, or beggared by dishonesty! But I intreat you particularly to observe, that when we set our affections immoderately upon any earthly object or enjoyment, or when they are not truly sanctified; how much they disappoint our expectation in pos-

feſſion, and what ſcenes of diſtreſs we prepare for ourſelves by their removal.

3. This requeſt, *remove far from me vanity and lies*, implies, that God would graciously preſerve us from deceiving ourſelves, and thinking our character better, and our ſtate ſafer than it really is. When we take a view of the ſtate of the world, and the conduct of thoſe who have not yet caſt off all belief of eternity, and a judgment to come, it is impoſſible to account for their ſecurity, but by a great degree of ſelf-deceit. We may ſay of them with the prophet Iſaiah. *He feedeth of aſhes; a deceived heart hath turned him aſide, that he cannot deliver his ſoul, nor ſay, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* And from the representation given by our Saviour, it is plain, that many ſhall continue in their miſtake, and only be undeceived at the laſt day. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* How awful a reflection this! How dreadful a diſappointment to diſcover our miſery, only when there is no more hope of eſcaping it! Is there not a poſſibility of this being the caſe with many of you, my brethren; and do you not tremble at the thought? I would not wiſh any, in general, to give way to a ſpirit of bondage, or ſlaviſh fear; but the beſt of the children of God have often diſcovered this holy jealousy of themſelves. *Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins; let them not have dominion over me, then ſhall I be upright, and*

I shall be innocent from the great transgression. And again; Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

This leads me naturally to add upon this subject, that we ought to pray for preservation from self-deceit, as to particular branches of our character and conduct, as well as our general state.—Many, even upon the whole good men, are occasionally and insensibly brought, for a season, under the direction of sinful passions. They may be indulging themselves without suspicion, in what is, notwithstanding, really provoking to God, injurious or offensive to others, and, in the issue, hurtful to their own peace. They may be making an enjoyment a talent, a relation an idol, when they think they are keeping within the bounds of duty. They may be indulging a sinful resentment, when they think they are promoting the glory of God. Many an excuse for neglecting commanded duty, from prudence or difficulty, satisfies ourselves, which will not stand in the day of trial. What reason for the prophet's prayer in the sense just now assigned; *Remove far from me vanity and lies.*

4. In the next place, this request implies, a desire to be preserved from pride and self-conceit, upon any subject. There is not any thing that affords a stronger evidence of our being unacquainted with ourselves, and our own state, than that propensity to pride and vanity, which is so common

to us all. It is thought by many, that pride was the sin of the angels, that cast them down to hell. It is plain, that pride was the main ingredient in the first sin of man. And perhaps it is a just, and proper description of all sin as such, that it is a dethroning of God, and setting up self to be loved, honored and served in his room. This sin is by no means confined to the worst of men, in whom it hath an absolute dominion; but retains and discovers an unhappy influence in the very best.—Every thing may be the fuel of pride: our persons; our performances, our relations, our possessions; nay, so pliable, and at the same time so preposterous is this disposition, that men are found sometimes proud of their very vices and defects. But how ill do pride and vanity suit such poor mortals as we are, who seem born but to die?—Who, after passing through a longer or shorter series of weaknesses, disappointments and troubles, must, at last, be laid in the silent grave, to moulder in the dust. We are dependant creatures, who have nothing, and can have nothing but what we receive from the unmerited favor of God. We are unwise and ignorant creatures, who know nothing to the bottom, and therefore, are liable to continual mistakes in our conduct. Those among us, who have the greatest comprehension of mind, and know most; as it serves to shew the comparative ignorance of the bulk of mankind, so it serves to convince themselves how little they do know, and how little they can know after all, compared with what is to them unsearchable.

But above all, we are sinful creatures, who have rendered ourselves, by our guilt, the just objects of divine displeasure. Is there any who dares to plead exemption from this character? And do pride and vanity become those, to whom they manifestly belong? Can any thing be more foolish, than indulging such dispositions? There is a very just expression of one of the apocryphal writers: *Pride was not made for man, nor a high look for him that is born of a woman.* Indeed they are so evidently unsuitable to our state and circumstances, that one would think, we should need no higher principle than our own reason and observation to keep us free from them. We do, however, need the most earnest and assiduous addresses to the throne of grace, to have all pride and vanity removed from us.— How hateful is pride to God! We are told, *he resisteth the proud.* On the contrary, no disposition is more amiable in his sight, than humility. *He giveth grace to the humble.* And again: *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

It must, therefore, be the duty, and interest of every good man, not only to resist pride and vanity, but to make it a part of his daily supplication to God, that he may effectually be delivered from both.

5. In the last place: This request implies a desire to be delivered from fraud and dissimulation of every kind. It is one of the glorious attributes of God, that he is a God of truth, who will not, and who cannot lie. He also requires of all his servants, and is delighted with truth in the inward parts. But there seems to be some difficulty in this part of the subject, more than in the others. Some will say, why pray to be delivered from fraud and dissimulation? This might be an exhortation to the sinner, but cannot be the prayer of the penitent. If they are sincere in their prayer, it seems impossible there can be any danger of fraud. Fraud implies deliberation and design; and though it may be concealed from others upon whom it is exercised, it can never be concealed from the person in whom it dwells, and by whom it is contrived. This is the very language of some reasoners, who infer from it, that though there are many other sins to which a man may be liable without knowing it, yet this can never be the case with dissimulation.

But, my brethren, if we consider how apt men are, upon a sudden temptation of fear or shame, or the prospect of some advantage to themselves, to depart from strict veracity, and even to justify to their own minds, some kinds and degrees of deceptions, we shall see the absolute necessity of making this a part of our prayer to God. Nay, perhaps I may go further and say, that we are as rea-

dy to deceive ourselves in this point as in any other.

Upon this important subject, there is one consideration to which I earnestly intreat your attention. Thorough sincerity, simplicity and truth, upon every subject, have, in the world, so much the appearance of weakness; and on the contrary, being able to manage and over-reach others, has so much the appearance of superior wisdom, that men are very liable to temptation from this quarter. It is to be lamented that our language itself, if I may so speak, has received a criminal taint; for in common discourse the expression, *a plain well-meaning man* is always apprehended to imply, together with sincerity, some degree of weakness; although, indeed, it is a character of all others the most noble. In recommendation of this character let me observe, that in this, as in all the particulars mentioned above, *the wicked worketh a deceitful work; but he that walketh uprightly walketh surely.* Supposing a man to have the prudence and discretion not to speak without necessity; I affirm there is no end which a good man ought to aim at, which may not be more certainly, safely, and speedily obtained by the strictest and most inviolable sincerity, than by any acts of dissimulation whatever.

But after all, what signify any ends of present conveniency, which dissimulation may pretend to answer, compared to the favor of God, which

is forfeited by it? Hear what the Psalmist says. *Who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.—* Let us, therefore, add this to the other views of the prophet's comprehensive prayer—*Remove far from me vanity and lies.*

For the improvement of this part of the subject, observe,

1. You may learn from it how to attain, not only a justness and propriety, but a readiness and fullness in the duty of prayer.

Nothing is a greater hindrance, either to the fervency of our affections, or the force of our expressions in prayer, than when the object of our desires is confused and general. But when we perceive clearly what it is that is needful to us, and how much we do need it, this gives us, indeed, the *spirit of supplication*. Perhaps it is more necessary to attend to this circumstance, in what we ask for our souls than for our bodies. When we want any thing that relates to present conveniency, it is clearly understood, because it is sensibly felt.— There is no difficulty in crying for deliverance from poverty, sickness, reproach, or any other earthly suffering; nay, the difficulty here is not in exciting our desires, but in moderating them; not in producing fervor, but in promoting submission: But in what relates to our souls, because many or most temptations are agreeable to the flesh, we fore-

see danger less perfectly, and even feel it less sensibly; therefore, a close and deliberate attention to our situation and trials, as opened in the preceding discourse, is of the utmost moment, *both to carry us to the throne of grace, and to direct our spirit when we are there.*

2. What hath been said will serve to excite us to habitual watchfulness, and to direct our daily conversation. The same things that are the subjects of prayer, are also the objects of diligence.—Prayer and diligence are joined by our Saviour, and ought never to be separated by his people.—Prayer without watchfulness is not sincere, and watchfulness without prayer will not be successful. The same views of sin and duty—of the strength and frequency of temptation, and the weakness of the tempted lead equally to both. Let me beseech you then, to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Maintain an habitual diffidence of yourselves—Attend to the various dangers to which you are exposed. Watchfulness of itself will save you from many temptations, and will give you an inward warrant, and humble confidence, to ask of God support under, and deliverance from such as it is impossible to avoid.

3. In the last place, since every thing comprehended in the petition in the text, is viewed in the light of falsehood and deceit, suffer me, in the most earnest manner, to recommend to my hearers, and particularly to all the young persons under my care,

an invariable adherence to truth, and the most undisguised simplicity and sincerity in the whole of their conversation and carriage. I do not know where to begin or end in speaking of the excellency and beauty of sincerity, or the baseness of falsehood. Sincerity is amiable, honorable and profitable. It is the most shining part of a commendable character, and the most winning apology for any miscarriage or unadvised action. There is scarcely any action in itself so bad, as what is implied in the hardened front of him who covers the truth with a lie: Besides, it is always a sign of long practice in wickedness. Any man may be seduced or surpris'd into a fault, but none but the habitual villain can deny it with steady calmness and obstinacy. In this respect, we unhappily find some who are young offenders but old sinners.

It is not in religion only, but even among worldly men, that lying is counted the utmost pitch of baseness; and to be called a liar *the most insupportable reproach*. No wonder, indeed, for it is the very essence of cowardice to dare to do a thing which you have not courage to avow. The very worst of sinners are sensible of it themselves, for they deeply resent the imputation of it; and, if I do not mistake, have never yet arrived at the absurdity of defending it. There is scarcely any other crime, but some are profligate enough to boast of it; but I do not remember ever to have heard of any who made his boast, *that he was a liar*. To crown all, lying is the most wretched folly. Justly

does Solomon say ; *A lying tongue is but for a moment.* It is easily discovered. Truth is a firm consistent thing, every part of which agrees with, and strongly supports another. But lies are not only repugnant to truth, but repugnant to each other ; and commonly the means, like a treacherous thief, of the detection of the whole. Let me, therefore, once more recommend to every one of you, the noble character of sincerity.—Endeavor to establish your credit in this respect so entirely, that every word you speak may be beyond the imputation of deceit ; so that enemies may, themselves, be sensible, that though you should abuse them, you will never deceive them.



S E R M O N X X X I X .

SEEKING A COMPETENCY IN THE
WISDOM OF PROVIDENCE.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

PROVERBS XXX. 8.

*Give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with
food convenient for me.*

I PROCEED now to consider the second branch of the prophet's prayer, which regards his outward condition, or circumstances, in the present world. On this subject he expresses himself thus: *Give me neither poverty nor riches.*

Do not think, my brethren, that this is a subject of little importance; or that it is unconnected with the spiritual life. On the contrary, there are few things of more moment, than to have our desires of temporal blessings limited and directed in a proper manner. Not only is worldly mindedness the everlasting ruin of those who are entirely under its dominion; but even good men are liable

to many temptations from the same quarter. They may hurt their own peace, give offence to others, or lessen their usefulness by a sinful excess in their attachment to the world, or by a criminal negligence in not giving a prudent and proper attention to it. Be not surpris'd that I have mention'd the *last* of these as well as the *first*, for the prophet prays for deliverance from the temptation arising from both extremes. Idleness and sloth are as contrary to true religion, as either avarice or ambition; and the habit when once taken, is perhaps more difficult to remove.

In order to treat this subject with the greater distinctness, I shall *First* shew you what we may learn in general from this prayer: *Secondly*, explain the particular object of the prophet's desire; and in the *last place*, make applications of what may be said by recommending it to your choice.

I. In the first place then, we may learn in general from this request, that it is lawful to pray for temporal blessings. It is not unworthy of a Christian, whose conversation is in heaven, to ask of God, what is necessary to his support and preservation in the present life. If I were to mention all the examples of this in scripture, I should transcribe a great part of the Bible. Though inferior in their nature and value to spiritual blessings, they are necessary in their place; and it is upon this footing they are expressly put by our Saviour. *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye*

have need of all these things. They are needful to the prolonging of our natural life till we finish our work, and are fitted for our reward. Therefore, tho' miracles are a kind of suspension of the laws of nature, and the ordinary course of providence; yet we find God sometimes working a miracle to supply the wants of his servants. It had been no more difficult for God to have kept Elijah from hungering, than to have made the eagles fetch him provision; or to have made, as in another case, a barrel of meal, or a cruise of oil, the lasting and sufficient support of a whole family. But he chooses rather to supply the wants of his people, than cause them to cease, that he may keep their dependance constantly in their view, and that a sense of their necessities may oblige them to have continual recourse to him for relief.

Again, we may here learn, that God is the real and proper giver of every temporal, as well as of every spiritual blessing. A sentiment this, of the utmost consequence, to be engraven upon the heart. We have here an instance out of many, in which truths known and confessed by all, have notwithstanding little hold upon the mind. How few are truly sensible of their continual obligations to the God of life? Consider, I beseech you, that whatever you possess of any kind, it is the gift of God. He holdeth your soul in life, and guards you by his providence in your going out and in your coming in. He covereth your table and fil-

leth your cup. Have you riches? It is by the blessing of the God of heaven—*The blessing of the Lord, saith the psalmist, it maketh rich. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.* Have you credit and reputation? It is God that hideth you from the stripes of tongues. *Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.* Have you friends? It is he that giveth you favor in their sight. Have you talents and parts? It is the *inspiration of the Almighty* that giveth thee understanding.

II. Let us now explain the particular tenor of this petition, and point out the object of the prophet's desire; *Give me neither poverty nor riches.* It is plain we are not to suppose the prophet, in any degree, refusing submission to the will of God, by his thus making choice of a particular state of life—Doubtless he resolved to be at God's disposal, and believed that he was able to sanctify to him a state of the highest prosperity, or of the deepest adversity. It was no distrust on God, but self-denial and diffidence of his own strength that suggested this prayer. Therefore, in adjusting his desires and expectations, he pitches upon that state that appeared to him liable to the fewest snares. Thus our blessed Saviour, though it is his will that we should fear no enemy when going out in divine strength, yet teaches us to pray—*Lead us not into temptation.*

Poverty and riches are here mentioned as the two extremes; in neither of which we should wish to be placed, but in a safer middle between the two; so as, if it please God, we may neither be urged by pressing necessity, nor over-loaded with such abundance as we may be in danger of abusing.

But perhaps some will say, where is the middle? How shall we be able to determine what we ought to desire, since there is so immense a distance, and so many intermediate degrees between the extremity of want, and the countless treasures of the wealthy?

But, my brethren, if we do not hearken to the illusive calls of ambition, avarice and lust, it is by no means difficult to apprehend the meaning of the prophet, and apply it to persons of every rank. Regard, no doubt, is to be had to the various stations in which God hath thought fit to place us. This difference of station requires supplies of the conveniencies of life, suited to the part we are bound to act. That manner of life which would be decent and liberal in one station, would be reckoned mean and fordid in another. Therefore what would be plenty and fulness to persons in inferior stations, would be extreme poverty to persons placed, and called to act, in higher and more exalted spheres. But after we have taken in the consideration of every difference that may happen on this score, there is something in the prayer that belongs in common to *persons of all stations*, name-

ly, that we should be modest in our desires after temporal good things, and take care not to ask only to gratify a sensual inclination, but for what is really necessary or useful to us. The last is reasonable and allowable, the other is unreasonable, and justly condemned by the apostle James. *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

But the first part of this request is explained by the last, contained in the words, *feed me with food convenient for me.* That we may be able to enter into the true spirit of this petition, I shall just compare it with some other scriptural forms of prayer on the same subject, and then endeavor to point out what I take to be the chief instruction intended to be conveyed to us by it.

As to the scripture forms of prayer for temporal provision, the precedence is undoubtedly due to that excellent form left us by our Saviour, in which we find this petition, *Give us this day our daily bread.* You may next attend to the prayer put up by Jacob in ancient times. *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.* It is more than probable that the apostle Paul alludes to Jacob's expression, in his excellent advice to all Christians. *But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this*

world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition—for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It is obvious to remark, that all these prayers and this apostolic counsel run in the same strain. They all begin and are founded upon a regard to God, and a mind rightly disposed towards him: *If the Lord, says Jacob, will be with me—Remove, says Agur in my text, far from me vanity and lies.* Our Saviour begins his prayer with petitions for the glory of God, with which the happiness of our souls is inseparably connected; and the apostle maintains *godliness* as the great source of contentment with our portion in this life.

We may further observe, that there is the same method observed in all these prayers. The expressions vary a little, but the request is the same. Jacob wishes for the divine protection, with food to eat, and raiment to put on. Agur for food convenient for him; and in the Lord's prayer we ask for our daily bread. There is no specifying of any particulars—no mention made of this or the other quantity of provision. Their desires are summed up in this general request, and the quantity and quality wholly referred to the good pleasure of

God. It is certain that God hath sometimes granted to his own people, riches in great abundance; and, at the same time, has given his blessing to enjoy them, and honored the possessors, by enabling them to glorify him in the use and application of them. But the direct desire of riches, I do not think, hath any warrant from precept or example in his word. And when they are bestowed as a blessing, and not a curse, it is commonly on those who, by their superior concern about the better part, shew that they will put them to their proper use, as in the case of Solomon, recorded in the first book of Kings. *In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, ask what I shall give thee. And he said, give thy servant an understanding heart. And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding, to discern judgment: Behold I have done according to thy words; lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor.*

Now this I take to be the main instruction intended to be given us with respect to our prayers for temporal mercies; that we should not pretend to set bounds to God, but leave the measure of them to his determination.

For further explaining this truth, and, at the same time, recommending it to your regard, be pleased to attend to the following observations.

1. Consider that God, infinitely wise, as well as gracious, is certainly the best judge of what is most fit and convenient for us. We know so little of ourselves, that we really know not how we should behave, if placed in particular circumstances, until we are tried. The world has actually seen many examples of those, who were loud in their accusations of others, behaving worse when placed in the same stations. And, indeed, I should naturally expect, that an impatient, envious, disobedient subject would, if raised to power, be a cruel, insolent, unjust oppressor; that a petulant, peevish, obstinate servant would make a capricious, severe, unreasonable master.

If we were to carve out our own lot, and to have all our own desires gratified, there is great reason to presume, we would throw ourselves into the most disagreeable circumstances with regard to our souls, and probably consult but ill for our peace and comfort in this world.

Let me put a few questions to every one that secretly murmurs at his state. Are you sure, that if you were advanced to a place of power and trust, you would be able to carry with prudence, resolution and integrity? Are you sure, that if you were supplied with riches in great abundance, you would not allow yourselves to wander in pleasure, or to

swell in pride? Are you sure, that if you were raised to high rank, surrounded by flatterers, and worshipped by servants, you would, in that standing, behave with humility and condescension; or that pressed on all hands by business, company, or amusements, *you would still religiously save your time for converse with God?*

A life of piety in an exalted station, is a continual conflict with the strongest opposition. What says experience upon this subject? Solomon did not wholly, and to the end, resist the temptation of riches and dominion. In the whole compass of history, sacred and profane, I do not remember any example of a man's behaving better in point of morals, in a prosperous, than an afflicted state, excepting one that hath this appearance, viz. Cicero, the Roman orator. His conduct in prosperity was full of dignity, and seemed wholly directed to the public good; whereas in adversity, it was to the last degree mean and abject—But probably the reason of this was, that pride, or rather vanity, was his ruling passion, and the great motive to his illustrious actions; and when he fell into adversity, this disposition had no scope for its exercise.

Christians, the Lord knoweth our frame, and is well acquainted with what we are able to bear, and consequently what state of life will be upon the whole most convenient for us. It is, therefore, our interest, as well as duty, to refer ourselves en-

tirely to him, and leave him to choose for us. This is not only the doctrine of scripture, but so agreeable to reason and good sense, that it has been acknowledged by several of the Heathen Philosophers, who have expressed themselves in terms perfectly similar to those of the inspired writings. The prayer which Socrates taught his pupil Alcibiades, is very remarkable; that he should beseech the Supreme God to give him what was good for him, though he should not ask it; and to withhold from him whatever would be hurtful, though he should be so foolish as to pray for it.

2. As God is certainly the best judge of what is good for us, so resignation to him is a most acceptable expression both of our worship and obedience. Single duties are particular acts; resignation is the very *habit* of obedience. The wisdom and goodness of God are acknowledged in the most authentic manner, when his holy and sovereign Providence is humbly submitted to, and cordially approved. Every impatient complaint is an impeachment of Providence; every irregular desire is an act of rebellion against God. Therefore a submissive temper must be highly pleasing to God, and is the way to glorify him in the most unexceptionable manner. The rather indeed, as it is impossible to attain this temper, but by sincerely laying hold of the covenant of peace, which is ordered in all things and sure. This teaches

us the grounds of submission. This procures for us the grace of submission. This stains the pride of all human glory. This changes the nature of our possessions to us, and us to them. This spiritualizes a worldly mind, and makes us know, in our own experience, that all the paths of the Lord to his own people, are mercy and peace.

3. Such a temper of mind will greatly contribute to our own inward peace. It will be an effectual preservative from all unrighteous courses, and unlawful, or even dishonorable means of increasing our worldly substance, and consequently save us from the troubles or dangers to which men expose themselves by such practices. It will preserve us from perplexing anxiety, and many uneasy fears for futurity. It will bring us the near and sure way to the greatest of all earthly blessings—a contented mind.

Such will be the sweet and delightful effects of depending upon God, and leaving it to him to furnish our supplies as he sees most convenient for us. Whoever can pray with the prophet—*give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*—may be fully assured, that his desire shall be gratified, as it is perfectly agreeable to the will of God.

I conclude with reading to you our Saviour's exhortation on this subject—*Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or*

what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.



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S E R M O N XL.

THE DANGER OF PROSPERITY.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

PROVERBS XXX. 9.

*Let I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?
Or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my
God in vain.*

I PROCEED now to consider the arguments by which the prophet enforces his wise and well-conceived prayer. These, in connexion with the two branches of the prayer, stand thus: *Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? And give me not poverty, lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* If Agur's prayer is conceived in the most modest and humble terms, the reasons, with which he supports it, are every way becoming a truly wise and good man. You see in them a prevailing concern for the honor and glory of God, and his own preservation in the paths of piety and virtue. You see in them a humble sense of his own weakness, and the danger of temptation; he, therefore, desires to be

placed in such a state of life, as will expose him to the fewest trials. An excellent disposition this, and highly worthy of our imitation. How happy would it be for us all, if a desire to please God and preserve our integrity, lay always nearest our hearts, and had a constant and commanding influence on every step we took in our journey through life.

Neither riches nor poverty are bad in themselves. Neither of them is any recommendation, or hindrance to the favor of God, who is no respecter of persons—there are good and bad in all ranks. Men may be rich and yet pious, or poor yet strictly just and honest. It is, I confess, often done, yet it is highly criminal to look upon all that are rich in this world as profane; and it would be equally so to look upon all that are poor as destitute of integrity. Yet it is undeniable, that, from the corruption of the human heart, these two extremes do often become strong temptations to the particular sins mentioned in the text; which we shall now consider separately, in the order in which they lie in the passage before us.

Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?

As to the fact, that riches do often lead to profanity and contempt of God, experience, and the state of the world prove it in a manner too plain to be denied. We not only see that those, who are born and educated from their infancy in the higher ranks of life, are most prone to neglect the du-

ties of religion; but those who, from a low or mean condition, are remarkably raised in the course of Providence, do often change their temper with their state, and show the unhappy influence of riches in leading them to a forgetfulness of God. Are there not some, who were regularly in God's house when they but barely subsisted, who have not time for it now, when they are busy and wealthy? Are there not some families, where the worship of God was constant and regular in early life, while they were undistinguished, and now it is no more to be heard in their sumptuous palaces and elegant apartments? Shall I say, that any worm of the earth is become too considerable to fall down before the omnipotent Jehovah?

I may add, as being of great importance in the present subject, that such changes do often take place gradually and insensibly, very much contrary to men's own expectation; so that we really do not know ourselves, nor can we determine before trial, how far we would resist or yield to the force of temptation. The prophet Elisha foretold to Hazael, the cruelties he would be guilty of when raised to an higher station; to which he replied with disdain and abhorrence; *What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, the Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.* The conduct of the children of Israel in their prosperity, is but an emblem of the general conduct of the children of men. *But Jerusalem*

waxed fat, and kicked. Thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness: Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.

What hath been said might be sufficient to shew the propriety of the prophet's prayer; for if such hath been often, or generally, the influence of worldly greatness upon other men, why should any be so confident as to presume it would be otherwise with themselves? But perhaps it may afford matter of useful instruction, to enquire a little further into the subject—to trace the causes of this effect, and shew how, and why riches become an inducement to irreligion and profaneness, for this will best enable us to apply the remedy. When I speak of examining the causes of this effect, I confess that no reason can be given for it, but what reflects great dishonor upon human nature in its present state. Were we to judge of the matter by the dictates of sound reason, we should naturally expect to find it directly contrary. God is the author of every blessing which men possess, and his gifts should lead us to gratitude and acknowledgement. It seems natural then to suppose, that those who are most highly favored in the course of Providence, should discover the greatest sense of obligation, and be ready to make every dutiful return. One would think that though the poor should be impatient, surely the rich will be content and thankful. Is not this reasonable? Had any of you

bestowed many favors upon others, would you not expect that their gratitude should bear some proportion to the number and value of benefits received? Had any of them been remarkably distinguished from the rest, would you not expect from them the most inviolable fidelity and attachment? Strange, that our conduct should be so directly opposite in the returns we make for the goodness of our maker! That those who are distinguished from others by the largest possessions, and the greatest fulness of all temporal mercies, should be the most prone to wickedness of all sorts; but especially, that they should be peculiarly inclined to forgetfulness and contempt of God. Yet so it is in truth. But however dishonorable it is to human nature, let us search into it a little, and perhaps we may discover the cause of impiety in persons in affluent circumstances, and the danger the prophet would avoid, by attending to the following observations:

I. An easy and affluent fortune affords the means, not only of pampering our bodies, but of gratifying all our lusts and appetites. They are as strong probably in persons of inferior stations, but Providence has rendered the gratification more difficult, and in some cases impossible. Many work through necessity, who would be as idle and slothful as any, but for the fear of want. These will be the first and readiest to reproach the rich, and call them idle drones, who revel in that abun-

dance for which they never toiled; and to put to their own credit that, which is wholly owing to the restraints under which they are laid. Many are generally sober, because they cannot afford the charges of intemperance, who want nothing but the means, to riot in the most brutal sensuality. But to persons of great wealth, the objects of desire are always placed in full view, and are evidently within their reach; so that the temptation has uncommon force, and few are able entirely to resist it.

2. The indulgence of pleasure insensibly induces a habit, and leads men to place their happiness in such enjoyments. Habit you know is very powerful, and while the habit acquires strength, the power of resistance is gradually weakened. These gratifications consume so much time, that there is little left to reflect upon God, and our relation to him. I reckon it none of the least temptations to persons of high rank, that not only their self-indulgence, but the attendance and obsequiousness of others so engrosses their attention, and wastes their time, that they have few opportunities of calm and sober reflection; or at least, can easily escape from it, and take refuge in company and amusement. Add to this, that a great variety of sensible objects and enjoyments render the mind, not only less attentive to things of a spiritual nature, but indeed, less able to understand them.

3. Observe further, that when the better part is thus neglected, and no care taken of the cultiva-

tion of the mind, every vice will spring and shoot up in the soul, as briars and thorns do upon uncultivated ground. Sin, my brethren, is natural to us; it is the produce of the soil; if it is not destroyed, it will not die; if it is but neglected, it will thrive. Now when ever persons fall under the power of vice, they begin first to excuse, and then to vindicate it. Those who are under the government of lust, soon find it would be their interest that there was no such thing as religion and virtue. Whatever we wish, we are easily led to believe to be true. Loose and atheistical principles then find a ready admittance, and are swallowed down greedily. This is a short sketch of the steps by which people in affluent and easy circumstances, are often led to deny God, and to say: *What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?*— Loose principles are, at first, more frequently the effect, than the cause of loose practices; but when once they have taken deep root, and obtained full dominion in the heart, they have a dreadful and fatal influence on the devoted victim.

But, my brethren, I find a strong inclination to make another remark, though perhaps it may be thought of too refined and abstract a nature. It is, that the danger of affluence in leading to contempt of God, arises from the nature of all sin as such. The original and first sin of man was plainly affecting independence. They desired and

expected to be as Gods knowing good and evil. And still sin properly consists in withdrawing our allegiance from, and throwing off our dependance upon God, and giving, as it were, that esteem, love and service to ourselves, in one shape or another, that is due only to him. Now observe, that affluence nourishes this mistake, and suffering kills it. The more every thing abounds with us, the more our will is submitted to, and our inclinations gratified on every subject; the more we look upon ourselves as independent, and forget our obligations to God. Whereas, on the other hand, disappointments and calamities open our blind eyes, and make us remember what we are. Was not the proud monarch of Babylon inspired with this delusive sense of independence, when he expressed himself thus: *At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake and said, 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? But mark the more powerful word of the King of Kings. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee!* That this is the proper source of worldly greatness, may be seen in the temper, such persons usually acquire and settle in, which is pride, insolence and contempt of others. Nay, it appears still more clearly in some few instances, in which the intoxication comes to its height, and the poor de-

luded mortal literally aspired to be considered and treated as God. It may seem incredible, but we have the most authentic evidence that history can afford, that some men have demanded and received divine worship. This was the case, not only with Alexander the Great, who was really an illustrious prince, but with some of the later Roman emperors, who were the meanest and basest of all men. No wonder then, that prosperity makes men neglect God, when it prompts them to sit down upon his throne, and rob him of the service of his other subjects.

Before I proceed to the other part of the prophet's argument, suffer me to make a few remarks for the improvement of what has been already said. And,

1. See hence the great malignity and deceitfulness of sin. It hardly appears more strongly from any circumstance, than that which has been the subject of this discourse, viz. that the gifts of God, in the course of his Providence, are so far from exciting our gratitude, in proportion to their number and value, that, on the contrary, those who *receive most* are usually *most profane*. They make his favors instruments of rebellion against him, and return contempt for his indulgence, and hatred for his love.

Let us not take occasion from this to gratify our own envy, by particular or personal reproach

against those who are great, or have become rich amongst themselves; but let us act a far wiser and juster part, and be humbled for the sinfulness of our nature, and warned of the deceitfulness of sin. We may feel the seeds of this disposition in us all. You find the wise man charging a similar ingratitude upon man in general. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* And do you not observe every day, nay, has it not turned into a proverb, that we think light of our mercies, spiritual and temporal, when they are common and abundant? And what is the true and proper interpretation of this, but that the greater God's goodness is to us, commonly the less is our gratitude to him?

2. Let me beseech you to make a wise improvement of the advantages you enjoy over one another. Let them excite in you a holy emulation to testify your sense of superior blessings, by superior piety and usefulness. Do you excel others in any respect? Are you successful in trade? Have you risen to reputation? Are you exalted to offices of dignity? Are you endowed with capacity of mind? Can you remember the time when those were your equals who are now your inferiors? Do not look with insolence upon others, making odious, and perhaps unjust comparisons. Do not swell in pride and self-complacence, as if by your own power you had made yourselves to differ, but rather look the

other way to God, who is the maker both of rich and poor, and pray that your thankfulness and duty to him may exceed that of the poor man, as much as his liberality to you exceeds what he has thought proper to bestow upon him. This affords me an opportunity of relating a little piece of private history, that happened in Great Britain, and appears to me very worthy of remembrance, and very conducive to the ends of edification.

A gentleman of very considerable fortune, but a stranger to either personal or family religion, one evening took a solitary walk through a part of his own grounds. He happened to come near to a mean hut, where a poor man with a numerous family lived, who earned their bread by daily labor. He heard a voice pretty loud and continued. Not knowing what it was, curiosity prompted him to listen. The man, who was piously disposed, happened to be at prayer with his family. So soon as he could distinguish the words, he heard him giving thanks with great affection to God, for the goodness of his providence, in giving them food to eat, and raiment to put on, and in supplying them with what was necessary and comfortable in the present life. He was immediately, no doubt, by divine power, struck with astonishment and confusion, and said to himself, does this poor man, who has nothing but the meanest fare, and that purchased by severe labor, give thanks to God for his goodness to himself and family, and I, who en-

joy ease and honor, and every thing that is grateful and desirable, have hardly ever bent my knee, or made any acknowledgement to my maker and preserver. It pleased God that this providential occurrence proved the mean of bringing him to a real and lasting sense of God and religion.

Let all persons in health, quiet and plentiful circumstances, learn from the preceding discourse, what it is they ought clearly to guard against.—Pride, security, forgetfulness of God, are peculiarly incident to that state. *Lo this, saith the Lord to Jerusalem, was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.* A serious reflection on the obligation such lie under to God for what they have received in their continued dependence upon him, and the instability of all earthly things, would save them from the hurtful influence of worldly prosperity. To enforce this, I shall only read the apostolic charge to Timothy. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

S E R M O N XLI.

THE DANGER OF ADVERSITY.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

PROVERBS xxx. 9.

*Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God
in vain.*

I PROCEED now to consider the argument by which the prophet urges the second branch of his request, which, in connexion, runs thus—*Give me not poverty, lest I be poor and steal.* Having not only explained the general principle that runs through the whole of this subject, but also very particularly pointed out the dangers attending an opulent and wealthy state; I shall endeavor to do the same thing with respect to a state of poverty and straitness. While I attempt this, I am sincerely sorry that there is so much propriety in the subject; and that it is so well suited to the circumstances of the inhabitants of this place. You see the prophet considers the great and general temp-

tation to which the poor are exposed, to be dishonest, by using fraudulent means of relieving their wants, or bettering their condition. You see also, he considers this temptation in its progress, not only inclining them to act unjustly, but sometimes proceeding to the terrible degree of concealing or supporting the fraud by falsehood, and perhaps at last by perjury or false swearing; *lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Let us first consider a little the matter of fact, as it appears in experience, and then a few of its principal causes.

As to the first of these, shall I be afraid to affirm, that extreme poverty often inclines persons to dishonesty and fraud? Will it be thought harsh and severe to those already sufficiently depressed? As I would not seem to stand in this place and flatter the pride of the greatest, and most eminent of my fellow sinners, so neither will I dissemble the truth from a false compassion for the poor. This would indeed be doing them the greatest possible injury; it would be treating them, from mistaken tenderness, as the rich are often treated from the fear or partiality of those who are about them; fostering their self-deceit, and not suffering them to hear the most salutary truths, because they are not pleasing to the flesh.

It is undoubtedly matter of experience, that great poverty makes many take unjust and unwarrantable methods of procuring relief. Not only

fo, but they feem often difpofed to juftify and defend them, as if they had a title to rectify the miftakes of Providence, in the diftribution of worldly poffeffions. This, in the event, receives great encouragement from fome who feem to have imbibed a general falfe principle, and act upon it, both in their own conduct, and in their judgment of others. In the divifion of controverfy, or dividing difputed property, when one party is, or is fuppofed to be rich, and in eafy circumftances, and the other poor, and in a mean condition, they think that inftead of acting according to ftrict juftice, the advantage fhould always be made to fall to the poorer fide. This conduct is confidered by fome, not only as lawful, but as laudable. It is however a falfe principle, and is condemned in fcripture, which fays, *Neither fhalt thou countenance a poor man in his caufe.* It may be thought, perhaps, that the other is the more common and dangerous partiality, and probably it is fo; yet this alfo is blame-worthy, and when followed out, as I am afraid it too often is, muft involve numbers unawares in the guilt of ftcaling; for when they have once laid down this rule, that the poor have fome claim upon the rich, they are ready to apply it to their own cafe, and extend it very far. But in all matters of property, or right and wrong, whether a perfon is rich or poor, ought to be utterly out of the queftion; the only thing to be confidered is, what is juft and lawful. The rich are indeed, in point of confcience, bound to affift

the poor ; but this must be their own act ; no person can take the smallest part of their property, without their consent, but he is guilty of an act of injustice, and violation of the law of God. No person has a right to make them generous and charitable against their wills, or to exercise their own generosity and charity at their expence. This must be left to the Supreme Judge at the last day, who will say to them, *I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not.* But what will give us the most distinct view of the influence of poverty, as a temptation, is the too frequent conduct of those who are reduced from what was once their state, to poverty or debt, by misfortunes or extravagance, or mismanagement of their affairs. The temptation of poverty is not by far so great to those in the meanest ranks of life, whose income, though small, is not very disproportionate to what hath always been their condition ; as to those who are reduced from a higher to a lower state—The few, who in such a situation preserve their integrity inviolated, and their sincerity of speech unsuspected, deserve the highest honor. Nay, I am persuaded that, bad as the world is, every person in reduced circumstances, would meet with compassion and assistance, if all about him were sensible that he had neither lost his substance by neglect, nor wasted it by riot, nor concealed it by fraud. But though we cannot help ascribing some measure of what is laid to the charge of persons

in this unhappy state, to the rage and resentment of those who have suffered by them; yet alas, there is too great reason to affirm, that they are too often guilty of prevarication and fraud, the sins mentioned in the text.

I will dwell no longer upon the fact, but will consider a little the reasons of it, which will directly serve to promote the design of this discourse, by exciting men to concern and sollicitude, as well as pointing out the proper means of avoiding the temptation. The general reason of this, to be sure, is obvious to every body, that persons in poverty, being strongly solicited by the appetites common to all men, and not having of their own wherewith to gratify their desires, are tempted to lay hold of the property of others. They grudge to see that others have the enjoyments from which they are debarred; and since they cannot have them in a lawful, make bold to seize them in an unlawful way. But this I do not insist on, that I may mention one or two particular reasons, which will suggest suitable exhortations to duty.

1. The first I shall mention, is ignorance. This is peculiarly applicable to those in the lowest ranks of life. Through poverty they are not so well instructed as they ought to be, in the principles of religion, and the great rules of duty. An ignorant state is almost always a state of security.— Their consciences are less tender, and they are less sensible of the great evil of prevarication and fraud.

I am obliged, in fidelity, to say, that in the private inspection of my charge, though I have found some instances both of poverty and sickness borne with the most pious resignation, there are also some whose condition might move the hardest heart, living in the most sordid poverty, grossly ignorant, and, at the same time, so dispirited, so slothful, or so proud, that they will do little to obtain knowledge for themselves, or communicate it to their children. Many will not attend upon the public means of instruction, because they cannot appear in such a decent garb as thy could wish; and for the same reason, they keep their children from them, till they contract such habits of idleness and vice, that they come out into the world without principle, obstinate and intractable. Is not the duty here very plain? All such should exert themselves to obtain the knowledge of the things which belong to their peace. They should neither be unwilling nor ashamed to make application for supply; and even the coarsest raiment should not hinder them from appearing in the house of God. Thus they will find acceptance with him, if they worship him in the beauty of holiness, preferable to those who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and their hearts are after their covetousness.

2. Another great reason why poverty becomes a temptation to fraud is, that they are introduced to it insensibly, and led on by degrees. The sin

steals upon them by little and little. People involved in their circumstances; to get rid of importunity and sollicitation, make promises, more of what they hope or wish, than of what they are able to do. Necessity serves as an excuse for their failing to their own minds, and thus they are gradually brought into a breach of sincerity, and proceed from lower to higher degrees of falsehood. Little arts of evasion are first made use of, and doubtful practices are entered upon. One sin seems necessary to strengthen or conceal another, till at last the grossest fraud, and sometimes perjury itself, closes the unhappy scene. I have read an excellent observation, that there is hardly such a thing as a single sin; they are always to be found in clusters. I am sure, this holds in a particular manner as to sins of injustice. They are so interwoven and connected together, that you cannot receive any one without being obliged to admit the rest. This is one great branch of the deceitfulness of sin in general; with a view to which the apostle says; *But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

3. I only mention one other reason of poverty being a temptation to fraud, viz. that in time it destroys the sense of shame. I am not ignorant, that a sense of shame, which is nothing else but a fear of the censure of others, neither is, nor ought to be the main principle of a good man's actions.

But as there is no other principle at all in many, so it is a good assistant, and corroborative when justly directed: but now, through the corrupt maxims of the world, poverty is so much the object of contempt, and those who are in this state, meet every day with so many marks of neglect from all, that before their condition is known, they will do almost any thing to conceal it, and after it is known, they become in time so destitute of shame, that they are under no further restraint.

From this particular branch of the subject, let me put you in mind,

1. What reason many have to be thankful to the God of life, who hath given them their daily provision, if not in all the abundance of immense riches, yet in fulness and sufficiency. An humble, thankful disposition is not only your duty, in return for the divine bounty, but is itself the richest and sweetest ingredient in all temporal mercies.— It is that, indeed, which makes them mercies.— Envious persons do not taste what they have, their evil eye being fixed on what they cannot obtain. Things in this respect are just what they seem to be. Our comforts are as we are enabled to relish them. The same possessions which are despised by the impatient or ambitious are a treasure and abundance to the humble and grateful.

2. If poverty is a temptation, it ought to be an argument to all to avoid it, or seek deliverance from it by lawful means. Apply yourselves with

steadiness and perseverance to the duties of your calling, that you may provide things honest in the sight of all men. It is a duty of the land, and of the gospel; and it hath this promise, in general, annexed to it, that *the hand of the diligent maketh rich*. Read, I beseech you, that vast treasure of useful instruction, the book of Proverbs; where you will meet with many excellent counsels and wise observations upon this subject. Of these I shall mention, at present, but two passages, selected both for the soundness of the instruction, and the beauty of the illustration. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.* And again; *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down.*

3. Are any of you poor and reduced in your circumstances, set a double watch upon your conduct, and earnestly pray that God may preserve you from fraud and dissimulation of every kind. Rather suffer yourselves to be stripped of every thing, and apply to the charity of others, which is not sinful, and ought not to be shameful, than take any dis-

honest methods of bettering your state. O melancholy thought, that many, when they become desperate in their circumstances, become also desperate in their courses, and drown the reflection of their consciences in slothfulness and sensuality! Sincerity, integrity, patience and sobriety in a ruined fortune are doubly eminent, at least, whatever they may be in the sight of the world, they are honorable and precious in the sight of God, and of all good men.

Before concluding, suffer me to make one or two reflections on the subject in general; the several parts of which I have now explained. And,

1. On what hath been said on this subject, I would graft this important lesson; that you should not only study to preserve yourselves from sin, but from all such circumstances of temptation as are dangerous to human constancy. This was the very ground of the prayer of the prophet in my text, and is the substance of the reasons he assigns for his request. We are taught the same thing in the strongest manner, by the several instances of human frailty, and the folly of presumptuous confidence, recorded in scripture. *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* We are also taught the same thing by him who knew what was in man, as he has given us directions in the form of prayer which he taught his disciples, to say, *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

Are you really unwilling to do evil, you will be concerned to keep yourselves out of the way of every solicitation to it. This is constantly the effect of a judicious and solid piety, and those who act otherwise shew, that they either have no real goodness, or that they are very weak Christians, and little acquainted either with themselves, or this present evil world.

2. You may learn how necessary it is, that you should look for the divine assistance and direction, to avoid the temptation of every state of life. We are truly of ourselves unequal to the trials with which we are surrounded. Not that there is any thing unjust or oppressive in the measures of Providence; but because it seems good to our maker, to oblige us to a constant dependance upon himself and his promised help. *But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

The least temptation may prove too hard for us, if we neglect to apply for supreme aid; but in divine strength, we may bid defiance to the most formidable opposition. This temper is well exemplified and described by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians. *And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches,*

in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong.

3. From what hath been said, you may see what an inseparable connexion there is between true religion, and your employments, and state in this present world. They have a mutual, strong, and constant influence upon one another. It is a fatal, though a common error to separate them; entirely to confine religion to the times and places of immediate worship, and suppose that it hath nothing to do with the maxims of trade and commerce, or other worldly callings. On the contrary, your impressions of things spiritual and eternal, will direct and regulate your views as to the present life; and your success or misfortunes in worldly schemes, will have a certain and visible effect upon your Christian conversation, and the state of your souls. Therefore, let them never be separated in your own views, and let them still be kept in their proper order and subordination. Though the light and trivial use, not only of the name of God, but of scripture-language, is both sinful and dangerous; and though a forward ostentatious piety may sometimes look suspicious, yet it were to be wished we had more of a grave and habitual acknowledgement of God in all our ways. This was the language of the Patriarchs of old. In one of the former discourses upon this subject, I took notice of Jacob's prayer, when he set out for Padan-aram. See after the increase of

his family, how he expresses himself in answer to his brother Isaac. *And he lift up his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, who are those with thee? And he said the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.* See also the apostolical direction for the manner of projecting our future purposes. *Go to now, ye that say to-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.*

4. In the last place, let me beseech, in the tenderest manner, every one of you, rich and poor, to remember an approaching eternity. It will not be long till the honorable, and despised, the wealthy and the needy, the master and the servant, shall lie down in the dust. Lay hold of that covenant of peace which is ordered in all things and sure. Hear a great and constant truth. *What is a man profited, though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* How many a Lazarus is now in Abraham's bosom; and how many a rich man, that once lived delicately on earth, is at this moment tormented in hell-fire! The gospel of peace is now preached in your ears. Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved. I cannot promise that you shall be rich, but all things necessary are assured to you by the divine promise; food and raiment, support under trials, strength for duty, and in the world to come, everlasting rest.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

