






S E R M O N S

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.



VOL. II.

Printed by W. Nicholson, Warner Street.

SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

Sometime President of the College in New Jersey.

Fifth Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

To which are now added,

THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORMER EDITIONS,

MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR,

AND

TWO SERMONS ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

BY THE

REV. DRS. GIBBONS AND FINLEY.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. BAYNES, 54, PATERNOSTER ROW; VERNOR AND
HOOD, POULTRY; AND D. OGILVY AND SON, HOLBORN.

1804.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME II.

SERMON XX.

The Universal Judgment.

ACTS xvii. 30, 31.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Page 1

SERMON XXI.

The one Thing needful.

LUKE x. 41, 42.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

30

SERMON XXII.

Saints saved with Difficulty, and the certain Perdition of Sinners.

1 PET. iv. 18.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

52

CONTENTS.

SERMON XXIII.

Indifference to Life urged from its Shortness and
Vanity.

1 COR. vii. 29, 30, 31.

But this I say, brethren, that the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

Page 70.

SERMON XXIV.

The Preaching of Christ crucified the Mean of Sal-
vation.

1 COR. i. 22—24.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

90

SERMON XXV.

Ingratitude to God an heinous but general Iniquity.

2 CHRON. xxxii. 25.

But Hezekiah rendered not again, according to the benefit done unto him.

118

SERMON XXVI.

The Sufferings of Christ, and their consequent Joys
and Blessings.

ISAIAH liii. 10, 11.

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

132

CONTENTS.

SERMON XXVII.

Life and Immortality revealed in the Gospel.

2 TIM. i. 10.

And hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

Page 152

SERMON XXVIII.

Jesus Christ the only Foundation.

ISAIAH xxviii. 16, 17. c

Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.

167

SERMON XXIX.

The Necessity and Excellence of Family-Religion.

1 TIMOTHY v. 8.

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

187

SERMON XXX.

The Rule of Equity.

MATT. vii. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

209

SERMON XXXI.

Dedication to God argued from redeeming Mercy.

1 COR. vi. 19, 20.

What! know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

224

CONTENTS.

SERMON XXXII.

The Christian Feast.

1 COR. v. 8.

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Page 245

SERMON XXXIII.

The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God.

1 JOHN iii. 1, 2.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

273

SERMON XXXIV.

A Sermon on the New Year.

JER. xxviii. 16.

This year thou shalt die.

292

SERMON XXXV.

An Enrolment of our Names in Heaven the noblest Source of Joy.

LUKE x. 20.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

307

SERMON XXXVI.

The Success of the Gospel by the Divine Power upon the Souls of Men.

2 COR. x. 4, 5.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds; casting

CONTENTS.

down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Page 319

SERMON XXXVII.

The Divine Perfections illustrated in the Method of Salvation through the Sufferings of Christ.

JOHN xii. 27, 28.

Now my soul is troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. 339

SERMON XXXVIII.

Religion the highest Wisdom, and Sin the greatest Madness and Folly.

PSALM cxi. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments. 361

SERMON XXXIX.

Rejection of Christ a common but most unreasonable Iniquity.

MARK xii. 6.

Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 378

SERMON XL.

The Doom of the Incurable Sinner.

PROVERBS xxix. 1.

He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. 398

. CONTENTS.

SERMON XLI.

The Nature of Looking to Christ opened and explained.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. Page 416

SERMON XLII.

Arguments to enforce our Looking to Christ.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. 427

SERMON XX.

The Universal Judgment.

Acts xvii. 30, 31.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

THE present state is the infancy of human nature; and all the events of time, even those that make such noise, and determine the fate of kingdoms, are but the little affairs of children. But if we look forwards and trace human nature to maturity, we meet with events vast, interesting, and majestic; and such as nothing but divine authority can render credible to us who are so apt to judge of things by what we see. To one of those scenes I would direct your attention this day; I mean the solemn, tremendous, and glorious scene of the universal judgment.

You have sometimes seen a stately building in ruins; come now and view the ruins of a demolished world. You have often seen a feeble mortal struggling in the agonies of death, and his shattered frame dissolved; come now and view universal nature severely labouring and agonizing in her last convulsions, and her well compacted system dissolved. You have heard of earthquakes here and there that have laid Lisbon, Palermo, and a few other cities in ruins; come now and feel the tremors and convulsions of the whole globe, that blend cities and countries, oceans and continents, mountains, plains, and vallies in one promiscuous heap. You have a thousand times beheld the moon walking in brightness, and the sun shining in his strength; now look and see the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.

It is our lot to live in an age of confusion, blood, and slaughter; an age in which our attention is engaged by the clash of arms, the clangor of trumpets, the roar of artillery, and the dubious fate of kingdoms; but draw off your thoughts from these objects for an hour, and fix them on objects more solemn and interesting: come view

“ A scene that yields
 A louder trumpet, and more dreadful fields;
 The World alarm'd, both Earth and Heav'n o'erthrown,
 And gasping Nature's last tremendous groan;
 Death's ancient sceptre broke, the teeming Tomb,
 The righteous Judge, and man's eternal Doom.” YOUNG.

Such a scene there certainly is before us; for St. Paul tells us that *God hath given assurance to all men he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained*; and that his resurrection, the resurrection of him who is God and man, is a demonstrative proof of it.

My text is the conclusion of St. Paul's defence or sermon before the famous court of Arcopagus, in the learned and philosophical city of Athens. In this august and polite assembly he speaks with the boldness, and in the evangelical strain, of an apostle of Christ. He first inculcates upon them the great truths of natural religion, and labours faithfully, though in a very genteel and inoffensive manner, to reform them from that stupid idolatry and superstition into which even this learned and philosophical city was sunk, though a Socrates, a Plato, and the most celebrated sages and moralists of pagan antiquity had lived and taught in it. Afterwards, in the close of his discourse, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of Christianity, particularly the great duty of repentance, from evangelical motives, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment. But no sooner has he entered upon this subject than he is interrupted, and seems to have broken off abruptly; for when he has just hinted at the then unpopular doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, we are told, *some mocked*, and others put it off to another hearing: *We will hear thee again of this matter.*

In these dark times of ignorance which preceded the

publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink or connive at the idolatry and various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world; that is, he seemed to overlook* or take no notice of them, so as either to punish them, or to give the nations explicit calls to repentance. But now, says St. Paul, the case is altered. Now the gospel is published through the world, and therefore God will no longer seem to connive at the wickedness and impenitence of mankind, but publishes his great mandate to a rebel world, explicitly and loudly, *commanding all men everywhere to repent*; and he now gives them particular motives and encouragements to this duty.

One motive of the greatest weight, which was never so clearly or extensively published before, is the doctrine of the universal judgment. This the connection implies: *He now commandeth all men to repent, because he hath appointed a day for judging all men.* And surely the prospect of a judgment must be a strong motive to sinners to repent:—this, if any thing, will rouse them from their thoughtless security, and bring them to repentance. Repentance should, and one would think must be as extensive as this reason for it. This St. Paul intimates. *He now commandeth all men to repent, because he hath given assurance to all men that he has appointed a day to judge the world.* Wherever the gospel publishes the doctrine of a future judgment, there it requires all men to repent; and wherever it requires repentance, there it enforces the command of this alarming doctrine.

God has *given assurance to all men*; that is, to all that hear the gospel, that he has appointed a day for this great purpose, and that Jesus Christ, God-man, is to preside in person in this majestic solemnity. He has given assurance of this; that is, sufficient ground of faith; and the assurance consists in this, that *he hath raised him from the dead.*

The resurrection of Christ gives assurance of this in several respects. It is a specimen and a pledge of a general resurrection, that grand preparative for the judgment: it is an incontestible proof of his divine mission; for God would never work so unprecedented

* *ὑπερβου.*

a miracle in favour of an impostor: it is also an authentic attestation of all our Lord's claims; and he expressly claimed the authority of supreme Judge as delegated to him by the Father: *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* John v. 22.

There is a peculiar fitness and propriety in this constitution. It is fit that a world placed under the administration of a Mediator should have a mediatorial Judge. It is fit this high office should be conferred upon him as an honorary reward for his important services and extreme abasement. *Because he humbled himself, therefore God hath highly exalted him.* Phil. ii. 8, 9. It is fit that creatures clothed with bodies should be judged by a man clothed in a body like themselves. Hence it is said that *all judgment is given to the Son, because he is the Son of man.* John v. 27. This would seem a strange reason, did we not understand it in this light. Indeed, was Jesus Christ man only, he would be infinitely unequal to the office of universal Judge; but he is God and Man, *Immanuel, God with us*; and is the fittest person in the universe for the work. It is also fit that Christ should be the supreme Judge, as it will be a great encouragement to his people for their Mediator to execute this office; and it may be added, that hereby the condemnation of the wicked will be rendered more conspicuously just; for if a Mediator, a Saviour, the Friend of Sinners, condemns them, they must be worthy of condemnation indeed.

Let us now enter upon the majestic scene. But, alas! what images shall I use to represent it? Nothing that we have seen, nothing that we have heard, nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and grovelling, all is faint and obscure that ever the sun shone upon, when compared with the grand phænomena of that day; and we are so accustomed to low and little objects, that it is impossible we should ever raise our thoughts to a suitable pitch of elevation. Ere long we shall be amazed spectators of these majestic wonders, and our eyes and our ears will be our instructors,

But now it is necessary we should have such ideas of them as may affect our hearts, and prepare us for them. Let us therefore present to our view those representations which divine revelation, our only guide in this case, gives us of the person of the Judge, and the manner of his appearance; of the resurrection of the dead, and the transformation of the living; of the universal convention of all the sons of men before the supreme tribunal; of their separation to the right and left hand of the Judge, according to their characters; of the judicial process itself; of the decisive sentence; of its execution, and of the conflagration of the world.

As to the person of the Judge, the psalmist tells you, *God is Judge himself.* Psalm l. 6. Yet Christ tells us, *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; and that he hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.* John v. 22, 27. It is therefore Christ Jesus, God-man, as I observed, who shall sustain this high character; and for the reasons already alledged, it is most fit it should be devolved upon him. Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in him, and render him more fit for this office than if he were God only, or man only. This is the august Judge before whom we must stand; and the prospect may inspire us with reverence, joy, and terror.

As for the manner of his appearance, it will be such as becomes the dignity of his person and office. He will shine in all the uncreated glories of the Godhead, and in all the gentler glories of a perfect man. His attendants will add a dignity to the grand appearance, and the sympathy of nature will increase the solemnity and terror of the day. Let his own word describe him. *The Son of man shall come in his glory, and in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels with him; and then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.* Matt. xxv. 31. xvi. 27. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. And not only with the angels, those illustrious ministers of the court of heaven, at-

tend upon that solemn occasion, but also all the saints who had left the world from Adam to that day; for *those that sleep in Jesus*, says St. Paul, *will God bring with him.* 1 Thess. iv. 14. The grand imagery in Daniel's vision is applicable to this day; and perhaps to this it primarily refers: *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, or rather set up**, and the *Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.* Dan. vii. 9, 10. Perhaps our Lord may exhibit himself to the whole world upon this most grand occasion, in the same glorious form in which he was seen by his favourite John, *clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle: his head and his hairs white like wool, as white as snow: his eyes as a flame of fire: his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: his voice as the sound of many waters, and his countenance as the sun shining in his strength.* Rev. i. 13, &c. Another image of inimitable majesty and terror the same writer gives us, when he says, *I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.* Astonishing! what an image is this! the stable earth and heaven cannot bear the majesty and terror of his look: they fly away affrighted, and seek a place to hide themselves, but no place is found to shelter them; every region through the immensity of space lies open before him. † Rev. xx. 11.

* This sense is most agreeable to the connection, and the original word will bear it; which signifies *to pitch down, or place, as well as to throw down, or demolish.* And the LXX translate it, *the thrones were put up, or fixed.*

† This is the picture drawn by the pencil of inspiration, We may now contemplate the imagery of a fine human pen.

From his great abode
Full on a whirlwind rides the dreadful God;
The tempest's rattling winds, the fiery car,
Ten thousand hosts his ministers of war,

This is the Judge before whom we must stand; and this is the manner of his appearance. But is this the babe of Bethlehem that lay and wept in the manger? Is this the supposed son of the carpenter, the despised Galilean? Is this the man of sorrows? Is this he that was arrested, was condemned, was buffeted, was spit upon, was crowned with thorns, was executed as a slave and a criminal upon the cross? Yes, it is he; the very same Jesus of Nazareth. But O how changed! how deservedly exalted! Let heaven and earth congratulate his advancement. Now let his enemies appear, and shew their usual contempt and malignity. Now, Pilate, condemn the King of the Jews as an usurper. Now ye Jews, raise the clamour, *crucify him, crucify him.*

“ Now bow the knee in scorn, present the reed;

“ Now tell the scourg'd Impostor he must bleed.” YOUNG.

Now, ye Deists and Infidels, dispute his divinity and the truth of his religion if you can. Now, ye hypocritical christians, try to impose upon him with your idle pretences. Now despise his grace, laugh at his threatenings, and make light of his displeasure if you are able. Ah! now their courage fails, and terror surround them like armed men. Now *they hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;* for the lamb that once bled as a sacrifice for sin now appears in all the terrors of a lion; and *the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Rev. vi. 15. O!

The flaming Cherubim, attend his flight,
 And Heaven's foundations groan beneath the weight.
 Thro' all the skies the forky lightnings play,
 And radiant splendors round his head display.
 From his bright eyes affrighted worlds retire;
 He speaks in thunder, and he breathes in fire.
 Garment of heavenly light array the God;
 His throne a bright consolidated cloud—
 Support me Heaven, I shudder with affright;
 I quake, I sink with terror at the sight!

*The Day of Judgment, a Poem,
 a little varied.*

could they hide themselves in the bottom of the ocean, or in some rock that bears the weight of mountains, how happy would they think themselves. But, alas!

“ Seas cast the monsters forth to meet their doom,

“ And rocks but prison up for wrath to come.” YOUNG.

While the Judge is descending, the parties to be judged will be summoned to appear. But where are they? They are all asleep in their dusty beds, except the then generation. And how shall they be roused from their long sleep of thousands of years? Why, *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God* 1 Thess. iv. 16. *The trumpet shall sound, and they that are then alive shall not pass into eternity through the beaten road of death, but at the last trumpet they shall be changed, changed into mortals in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. Now all the millions of mankind, of whatever country and nation, whether they expected this tremendous day or not, all feel a shock through their whole frames, while they are instantaneously metamorphosed in every limb, and the pulse of immortality begins to beat strong in every part. Now also the slumberers under ground begin to stir, to rouse and spring to life. Now see graves opening, tombs bursting, charnel-houses rattling, the earth heaving, and all alive, while these subterranean armies are bursting their way through. See clouds of human dust and broken bones darkening the air, and flying from country to country over intervening continents and oceans to meet their kindred fragments, and repair the shattered frame with pieces collected from a thousand different quarters, whither they were blown away by winds, or washed by waters. See what millions start up in company in the spots where Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, and London once stood! Whole armies spring to life in fields where they once lost their lives in battle, and were left unburied: in fields which fattened with their blood, produced a thousand harvests, and now produce a crop of men. See a succession of thousands of years rising in crowds from grave-yards round

the places where they once attended, in order to prepare for this decisive day. Nay, graves yawn, and swarms burst into life under palaces and buildings of pride and pleasure, in fields and forests, in thousands of places where graves were never suspected. How are the living surprised to find men starting into life under their feet, or just beside them; some beginning to stir, and heave the ground; others half-risen, and others quite disengaged from the incumbrance of earth, and standing upright before them! What vast multitudes that had slept in a watery grave now emerge from rivers, and seas, and oceans, and throw them into a tumult! Now appear to the view of all the world the Goliaths, the Anakims, and the other giants of ancient times; and now the millions of infants, those little particles of life, start up at once, perhaps in full maturity, or perhaps in the lowest class of mankind, dwarfs of immortality. *The dead, small and great, will arise to stand before God; and the sea shall give up the dead which were in it.* Rev. xx. 12, 13. *Now the many that sleep in the dust shall awake and come forth; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* Dan. xii. 2. *Now the hour is come when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28. *Though after our skin worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh shall we see God, whom we shall see for ourselves; and these eyes shall behold him, and not another.* Job. xix. 26, 27. *Then this corruptible [body] shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

As the characters, and consequently the doom of mankind will be very different, so we may reasonably suppose they will rise in very different forms of glory or dishonour, of beauty or deformity. Their bodies indeed will all be improved to the highest degree, and all made vigorous, capacious, and immortal. But here lies the difference: the bodies of the righteous will be strengthened to bear *an exceeding great and eternal*

weight of glory, but those of the wicked will be strengthened to sustain an heavier load of misery; their strength will be but mere strength to suffer an horrid capacity of greater pain. The immortality of the righteous will be the duration of their happiness, but that of the wicked of their misery: their immortality, the highest privilege of their nature, will be their heaviest curse; and they would willingly exchange their duration with an insect of a day, or a fading flower. The bodies of the righteous will *shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever*; but those of the wicked will be grim and shocking, and ugly, and hateful as hell. The bodies of the righteous will be fit mansions for their heavenly spirits to inhabit, and every feature will speak the delightful passions that agreeably work within; but the wicked will be but spirits of hell clothed in the material bodies; and malice, rage, despair, and all the infernal passions will lower in their countenances, and cast a dismal gloom around them. O! they will then be nothing else but shapes of deformity and terror! they will look like the natives of hell, and spread horror around them with every look*.

With what reluctance may we suppose will the souls of the wicked enter again into a state of union with these shocking forms, that will be everlasting engines of torture to them, as they once were instruments of sin! But O with what joy will the souls of the righteous return to their old habitations, in which they once served their God with honest, though feeble endeavours, now so gloriously repaired and improved! How will they congratulate the resurrection of their old companions from their long sleep in death, now made fit to share with them in the sublime employments and fruitions of heaven! Every organ will be an instru-

* How weak, how pale, how haggard, how obscene,
 What more than death in every face and mien!
 With what distress, and glarings of affright
 They shock the heart, and turn away the sight!
 In gloomy orbs their trembling eye-balls roll,
 And tell the horrid secrets of the soul.
 Each gesture mourns, each look is black with care;
 And every groan is loaden with despair.

YOUNG.

ment of service and an inlet of pleasure, and the soul shall no longer be encumbered but assisted by this union to the body. O what surprising creatures can Omnipotence raise from the dust! To what an high degree of beauty can the Almighty refine the offspring of the earth! and into what miracles of glory and blessedness can he form them*!

Now the Judge is come, the judgment-seat is erected, the dead are raised. And what follows? Why the universal convention of all the sons of men before the judgment-seat. The place of judgment will probably be the extensive region of the air, the most capacious for the reception of such a multitude; for St. Paul tells us, the saints shall *be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.* Thess. iv. 17. And that the air will be the place of judicature, perhaps may be intimated when our Lord is represented as coming in the clouds, and sitting upon a cloudy throne. These expressions can hardly be understood literally, for clouds which consist of vapours and rarified particles of water, seem very improper materials for a chariot of state, or a throne of judgment; but they may very properly intimate that Christ will make his appearance, and hold his court in the region of the clouds; that is, in the air; and perhaps that the rays of light and majestic darkness shall be so blended around him as to form the appearance of a cloud to the view of the wondering and gazing world.

To this upper region, from whence our globe will lie open to view far and wide, will all the sons of men be convened. And they will be gathered together by the ministry of angels, the officers of this grand court. *The Son of man, when he comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, shall send forth his angels with a great sound of the trumpet; and they*

* Mark, on the right, how amiable a grace!
 There Maker's image fresh in every face!
 What purple bloom my ravish'd soul admires,
 And their eyes sparkling with immortal fires,
 Triumphant beauty! charms that rise above
 This world, and in blest angels kindle love!—
 O! the transcendent glories of the Just!

YOUNG.

shall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other. Matt. xxiv. 30, 31. Their ministry also extends to the wicked, whom they will drag away to judgment and execution, and separate from the righteous. For *in the end of the world, says Christ, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Matt. xiii. 40, 41, 42.

What an august convocation, what a vast assembly is this! See flights of angels darting round the globe from east to west, from pole to pole, gathering up here and there the scattered saints, choosing them out from among the crowd of the ungodly, and bearing them aloft on their wings *to meet their Lord in the air!* while the wretched crowd look and gaze, and stretch their hands, and would mount up along with them; but alas! they must be left behind, and wait for another kind of convoy; a convoy of cruel, unrelenting devils, who shall snatch them up as their prey with malignant joy, and place them before the flaming tribunal. Now all the sons of men meet in one immense assembly. Adam beholds the long line of his posterity, and they behold their common father. Now Europeans and Asiatics, the swarthy sons of Africa and the savages of America, mingle together. Christians, Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, the learned and the ignorant, kings and subjects, rich and poor, free and bond, from one promiscuous crowd. Now all the vast armies that conquered or fell under Xerxes, Darius, Alexander, Cæsar, Scipio, Tamerlane, Marlborough, and other illustrious warriors, unite in one vast army. There, in short, all the successive inhabitants of the earth for thousands of years appear in one assembly. And how inconceivably great must the number be! When the inhabitants of but one country met together, you are struck with the survey. Were all the inhabitants of a kingdom convened in one place, how much more striking would be the sight! Were all the

inhabitants of all the kingdoms of the earth convened in one general rendezvous, how astonishing and vast would be the multitude! But what is even this vast multitude compared with the long succession of generations that have peopled the globe, in all ages, and in all countries, from the first commencement of time to the last day! Here numbers fail, and our thoughts are lost in the immense survey. The extensive region of the air is very properly chosen as the place of judgment; for this globe would not be sufficient for such a multitude to stand upon. In that prodigious assembly, my brethren, you and I must mingle. And we shall not be lost in the crowd, nor escape the notice of our Judge; but his eye will be as particularly fixed upon every one as though there were but one before him.

To increase the number, and add a majesty and terror to the assembly, the fallen angels also make their appearance at the bar. This they have long expected with horror, as the period when their consummate misery is to commence. When Christ, in the form of a servant, exercised a God-like power over them in the days of his residence upon earth, they almost mistook his first coming as a Saviour for his second coming as their Judge; and therefore they expostulated, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* Matt. viii. 29. That is to say, We expect thou wilt at last appear to torment us, but we did not expect thy coming so soon. Agreeable to this, St. Peter tells us, *God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them as prisoners into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.* 2 Peter ii. 4. To the same purpose St. Jude speaks: *The angels which kept not first their estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.* Jude 6. What horribly majestic figures will these be! and what a dreadful appearance will they make at the bar! angels and archangels, thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers blasted, stripped of their primæval glories, and lying in ruins; yet majestic even in ruins, gigantic forms of terror and deformity; great

though degraded, horribly illustrious, angels fallen, gods undeified and deposed*.

Now the Judge is seated, and anxious millions stand before him waiting for their doom. As yet there is no separation made between them; but men and devils, saints and sinners, are promiscuously blended together. But see! at the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion; they part, they sort together according to their character, and divide to the right and left. *When all nations are gathered before the Son of man, himself has told us, he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* Matt. xxv. 32, 33. And O what strange separations are now made! what multitudes that once ranked themselves among the saints, and were highly esteemed for their piety by others as well as themselves, are now banished from among them, and placed with the trembling criminals on the left hand! and how many poor, honest-hearted, doubting, desponding souls, whose foreboding fears had often placed them there, now find themselves, to their agreeable surprise, stationed on the right hand of their Judge, who smiles upon them! What connections are now broken! what hearts torn asunder! what intimate companions, what dear relations, parted forever! neighbour from neighbour, masters from servants, friend from friend, parents from children, husband from wife; those who were but one flesh, and who lay in one another's bosoms, must part for ever. Those that lived in the same country, who sustained the same denomination, who worshipped in the same place, who lived under one roof, who lay in the same womb, and sucked the same breasts, must now part for ever. And is there no separation likely to be made then in our families or in our congregation? Is

* ————— the foe of God and man,

From his dark den, blaspheming, drags his chain,

And rears his brazen front, with thunder scarr'd;

Receives his sentence, and begins his hell.

All vengeance past, now seems abundant grace!

Like meteors in a stormy sky, how roll

His baleful eyes! he curses whom he dreads,

And deems it the first moment of his fall.

YOUNG.

it likely we shall all be placed in a body upon the right hand? Are all the members of our families prepared for that glorious station? Alas! are there not some families among us who, it is to be feared, shall all be sent off to the left hand, without so much as one exception? for who are those miserable multitudes on the left hand? There, through the medium of revelation, I see the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the liar, the defrauder, and the various classes of profane, profligate sinners. There I see the unbeliever, the impenitent, the lukewarm formalist, and the various classes of hypocrites and half-christians. There I see the *families that call not upon God's name*, and whole nations that forget him. And O what vast multitudes, what millions of millions of millions do all these make! And do not some, alas! do not many of you belong to one or other of these classes of sinners whom God, and Christ, and scripture, and conscience, conspire to condemn? If so, to the left hand you must depart among devils and trembling criminals, whose guilty minds forebode their doom before the judicial process begins. But who are those glorious immortals upon the right hand? They are those who now mourn over their sins, resist and forsake them; they are those who have surrendered themselves entirely to God, through Jesus Christ, who have heartily complied with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel; who have been formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the most earnest persevering endeavour of their lives to work out their own salvation, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. These are some of the principal lineaments of their character who shall have their safe and honourable station at the right hand of the sovereign Judge. And is not this the prevailing character of some of you? I hope and believe it is. Through the medium of scripture-revelation then I see you in that blessed station. And O! I would make an appointment with you this day to meet you there. Yes, let us this day appoint the time and place where we shall meet after the separation and dispersion that death will make among us: and let it be at the right hand of the Judge at the last day. If I be so

happy as to obtain some humble place there, I shall look out for you, my dear people. There I shall expect your company, that we may ascend together to join in the more exalted services and enjoyments of heaven, as we have frequently in the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth. But O! when I think what unexpected separations will then be made, I tremble lest I should miss some of you there. And are you not afraid lest you should miss some of your friends, or some of your families there? or that you should then see them move off to the left hand, and looking back with eagerness upon you as if they would say, "This is my doom through your carelessness; had you but acted a faithful part towards me, while conversant with you or under your care, I might now have had my place among the saints." O! how could you bear such significant piercing looks from a child, a servant, or a friend? Therefore now do all in your power to *convert sinners from the error of their way, and to save their souls from death.*

When we entered upon this practical digression, we left all things ready for the judicial process. And now the trial begins. Now *God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.* Rom. ii. 16. All the works of all the sons of men will then be tried; *for, says St. Paul, we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things done in the body according to what he hath done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* 2 Cor. v. 10. St. John in his vision *saw the dead judged according to their works.* Rev. xx. 12, 13. These works immediately refer to the actions of the life, but they may also include the inward temper, and thoughts of the soul, and the words of the lips; for all these shall be brought into judgment. *God, says Solomon, will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Eccles. xii. 24 And though we are too apt to think our words are free, he that is to be our Judge has told us, that *for every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment; for by thy words, as*

well as thy actions, *thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* Matt. xii. 36, 37.

What strange discoveries will this trial make? what noble dispositions that never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes; what generous purposes crushed in embryo for want of power to execute them; what pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty, or misconstrued by ignorance and prejudice; what affectionate aspirations, what devout exercises of heart, which lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, are now brought to full light, and receive the approbation of the supreme Judge before the assembled universe? But, on the other hand, what works of shame and darkness, what hidden things of dishonesty, what dire secrets of treachery, hypocrisy, lewdness, and various forms of wickedness artfully and industriously concealed from human sight, what horrid exploits of sin now burst to light in all their hellish colours, to the confusion of the guilty, and the astonishment and horror of the universe? Sure, the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell, or the biography of devils! Then the mask of dissimulation will be torn off. Clouded characters will clear up, and men as well as things will appear in their true light. Their hearts will be as it were turned outwards, and all their secrets exposed to full view. The design of the judicial inquiry will not be to inform the omniscient Judge, but to convince all worlds of the justice of his proceedings; and this design renders it necessary that all these things should be laid open to their sight, that they may see the grounds upon which he passes sentence. And may not the prospect of such a discovery fill some of you with horror? for many of your actions, and especially of your thoughts, will not bear the light. How would it confound you, if they were now all published, even in the small circle of your acquaintance? How then can you bear to have them all fully exposed before God, angels, and men! Will it not confound you with shame, and make you objects of everlasting contempt to all worlds?

These are the facts to be tried. But by what rule shall they be tried? From the goodness and justice of

God we may conclude that men will be judged by some rule known to them, or which at least it was in their power to know. Now the light of reason, the law of nature, or conscience, is an universal rule, and universally known, or at least knowable by all the sons of men, Heathens and Mahometans as well as Jews and Christians: and therefore all mankind shall be judged by this rule. This the consciences of all now forebode; *for when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.* Rom. ii. 14, 15. By this rule their consciences now acquit or condemn them, because they know that by this rule they shall then be judged: this seems to be a kind of innate presentment of human nature. As the heathens were invincibly ignorant of every rule but this, they shall be judged by this only. But as to those parts of the world that enjoyed or might enjoy the advantages of revelation, whether by tradition with the Ante-Mosaic world, or in the writings of Moses and the prophets with the Jews, or in the clearer dispensation of the gospel with the christian world, they shall be judged by this revealed law. And by how much the more perfect the rule, by so much the stricter will their account be. That which would be an excusable infirmity in an African or an American Indian, may be an aggravated crime in us who enjoy such superior advantages. This is evident from the repeated declarations of sacred writ. *As many as have sinned without the law, (that is, without the written or revealed law) shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel.* Rom. ii. 12, 16. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, says the blessed Jesus, they would not have had sin; that is, they would not have had sin so aggravated, or they would not have had the particular sin of unbelief in rejecting the Messiah: but now they*

have no cloke for their sin, John xv. 22.; that is, now when they have had such abundant conviction, they are utterly inexcusable. This, says he, is the condemnation; that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. John iii. 19. That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes (observe, ignorance is no sufficient excuse, except when invincible) shall be beaten with few stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. Luke xii. 47, 48. Upon these maxims of eternal righteousness, the Judge will proceed in pronouncing the doom of the world; and it was upon these principles he declared, in the days of his flesh, that it should be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, than for those places that enjoyed the advantages of his ministry, and misimproved it. Matt. xi. 21, 24. Whether upon these principles sinners among us have not reason to expect they will obtain an horrid precedence among the millions of sinners in that day, I leave you to judge, and to tremble at the thought.

There is another representation of this proceeding, which we often meet with in the sacred writings, in allusion to the forms of proceedings in human courts. In courts of law law-books are referred to, opened, and read for the direction of the judges, and sentence is passed according to them. In allusion to this custom, Daniel in vision saw *the judgment set, and the books were opened. Dan. vii. 10.* And St. John had the same representation made to him: *I saw the dead, says he, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. Rev. xx. 12.*

Should we pursue this significant allusion, we may say, then will be opened the book of the law of na-

ture; and mankind will be tried according to its precepts, and doomed according to its sentence. This is a plain and vast volume, open and legible now to all that can read their own hearts; that have eyes to look round upon the works of God, which shew his glory and their duty; and who have ears to hear the lectures which the sun and moon, and all the works of creation, read to them night and day. Then too will be opened the book of scripture-revelation, in all its parts, both the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ; and according to it will those be judged who lived under one or other of these dispensations. Then it will appear that *that* neglected old-fashioned book called the Bible is not a romance, or a system of trifling truths, but the standard of life and death to all who had access to it. Then will also be opened the book of God's remembrance. In that are recorded all the thoughts, words, actions, both good and bad, of all the sons of men; and now the immense account shall be publicly read before the assembled universe. Then likewise, as a counterpart to this, will be opened the book of conscience; conscience which, though unnoticed, writes our whole history as with an iron pen, and the point of a diamond *. Then also, we are expressly told, will be opened the book of life, Rev. xx. 12. in which are contained all the names of all the heirs of Heaven. This seems to be an allusion to those registers which are kept in cities or corporations, of the names of all

* O treacherous Conscience! while she seems to sleep
 On rose and myrtle, lull'd with Syren song;
 While she seems, nodding o'er her charge, to drop
 On headlong appetite the slacken'd rein,
 And give us up to licence unrecall'd,
 Unmark'd—as from behind her secret stand
 The sly informer minutes ev'ry fault.
 And her dread diary with horror fills—
 Unnoted notes each moment misapply'd,
 In leaves more durable than leaves of brass,
 Writes our whole history; which Death shall read
 In every pale offender's private ear;
 And Judgment publish, publish to more worlds
 Than this; and endless age in groans resound.
 Such, sinner, is that sleeper in thy breast;
 Such is her slumber; and her vengeance such
 For slighted counsel ————— YOUNG.

the citizens or members who have a right to all the privileges of the society. And I know not what we can understand by it so properly as the perfect knowledge which the omniscient God has, and always had from eternity, of those on whom he purposed to bestow eternal life, and whom he has from eternity, as it were, registered as members of the general assembly and church of the first born, who are written in heaven, or as denizens of that blessed city. These, having been all prepared by his grace in time, shall be admitted into the New Jerusalem in that day of the Lord.

Farther, the representation which the scripture gives us of the proceedings of that day leads us to conceive of witnesses being produced to prove the facts. The omniscient Judge will be a witness against the guilty. *I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the swearers, and against the adulterers, and against those that oppress, and against those that fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Mal. iii. 5. And he will no doubt be a witness for his people, and attest their sincere piety, their interest in Christ, and those good dispositions or actions which were known only to him.

Angels also that ministered to the heirs of salvation, and no doubt inspected the affairs of mankind, will be witnesses. Devils too, who once tempted, will now become accusers. Conscience within will also be a witness; it shall acquit the righteous of many unjust imputations, and attest the sincerity of their hearts and their many good actions. But O it will be the most terrible witness against the ungodly! They will be witnesses against themselves (Josh. xxiv. 22.); and this will render them self-tormentors. Conscience will re-echo to the voice of the Judge, and cry, Guilty, guilty, to all his accusations. And who can make the wicked happy when they torment themselves? Who can acquit them when they are self-condemned? Conscience, whose evidence is now so often suppressed, will then have full scope, and shall be regarded. Whom conscience condemns, the righteous Judge will also

condemn: *for if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 20.; knoweth many more grounds for condemning us than we, and therefore much more will he condemn us. In short, so full will be evidence against the sinner, that the scripture, which is full of striking imagery to affect human nature, gives life to inanimated things upon this occasion, and represents them as speaking. Stones and dust shall witness against the ungodly. The dust under the feet of their ministers shall witness against them. Matt. x. 14. *The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.* Hab. ii. 11. The rust of their gold and silver shall be a witness against them, and shall eat their flesh as it were fire. James v. 3. Nay, the heavens shall reveal their iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against them. Job xx. 27. Heaven and earth were called to witness that life and death were set before them, Deut. xxx. 19. and how they will give in their evidence that they chuse death. Thus God and all his creatures, heaven, earth and hell rise up against them, accuse, and condemn them. And will not sinners accuse and witness against one another? Undoubtedly they will. They who lived or conversed together upon earth, and were spectators of each other's conduct, will then turn mutual witnesses against each other. O tremendous thought! that friend should inform and witness against friend; parents against children, and children against parents; ministers against their people, and people against their ministers! Alas! what a confounding testimony against each other must those give in who are now sinning together!

Thus the way is prepared for the passing sentence. The case was always clear to the omniscient Judge, but now it is so fully discussed and attested by so many evidences, that it is quite plain to the whole world of creatures who can judge only by such evidence, and for whose conviction the formality of a judicial process is appointed. How long a time this grand court will sit we cannot determine, nor has God thought fit to inform us; but when we consider how particular the trial will be, and the innumerable multitude to be

tried, it seems reasonable to suppose it will be a long session. It is indeed often called a day; but it is evident a day in such cases does not signify a natural day, but the space of time allotted for transacting a business, though it be an hundred or even a thousand years. Creatures are incapable of viewing all things at once, and therefore since the trial, as I observed, is intended to convince them of the equity of the divine proceedings, it is proper the proceedings should be particular and leisurely, that they may have time to observe them.

We are now come to the grand crisis upon which the eternal states of all mankind turn; I mean the passing the great decisive sentence. Heaven and earth are all silence and attention, while the Judge with smiles in his face and a voice sweeter than heavenly music, turns to the glorious company on his right hand, and pours all the joys of heaven into their souls in that transporting sentence, of which he has graciously left us a copy: *Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Every word is full of emphasis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the desires of those to whom it is addressed. They desired, and longed, and languished to be near their Lord; and now their Lord invites them, *Come near me, and dwell with me for ever.* There was nothing they desired so much as the blessing of God, nothing they feared so much as his curse, and now their fears are entirely removed and their designs fully accomplished, for the supreme Judge pronounces them blessed of his Father. They were all poor in spirit, most of them poor in this world, and all sensible of their unworthiness. How agreeably then are they surprised to hear themselves invited to a kingdom, invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood-royal born to thrones and crowns! How will they be lost in wonder, joy, and praise, to find that the great God entertained thoughts of love towards them before they had a being, or the world in which they dwelt had its foundation laid, and that he was preparing a kingdom for them, while they were nothing, unknown even in idea, except to himself? O!

brethren, dare any of us expect this sentence will be passed upon us? Methinks the very thought overwhelms us. Methinks our feeble frames must be unable to bear up under the extatic hope of so sweetly oppressive a blessedness. O! if this be our sentence in that day, it is no matter what we suffer in the intermediate space; that sentence would compensate for all, and annihilate the sufferings of ten thousand years.

But hark! another sentence breaks from the mouth of the angry Judge, like vengeful thunder. Nature gives a deep tremendous groan; the heavens lower and gather blackness, the earth trembles, and guilty millions sink with horror at the sound! And see! he whose words are works, whose fiat produced worlds out of nothing; he who could remand ten thousand worlds into nothing with a frown; he whose thunder quelled the insurrection of rebel-angels in heaven, and hurled them headlong down, down, down to the dungeon of hell; see, he turns to the guilty crowd on his left hand; his angry countenance discovers the righteous indignation that glows in his breast:—his countenance bespeaks him inexorable, and that there is now no room for prayers and tears. Now the sweet, mild, mediatorial hour is past, and nothing appears but the majesty and terror of the Judge. Horror and darkness frown upon his brows, and vindictive lightnings flash from his eyes. And now (O! who can bear the sound!) he speaks, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* O the cutting emphasis of every word! Depart! depart from Me; from Me, the author of all good, the Fountain of all good, the Fountain of all happiness. Depart with all my heavy all-consuming curse upon you. Depart into fire, into everlasting, into everlasting fire, prepared, furnished with fuel, and blown up into rage, prepared for the devil and his angels; once your companions in sin, and now the companions and the executioners of your punishment.

Now the grand period is arrived in which the final everlasting states of mankind are unchangeably settled. From this all-important æra their happiness or misery runs on in one uniform uninterrupted tenor; no change,

no gradation, but from glory to glory, in the scale of perfection, or from gulph to gulph in hell. This is the day in which all the schemes of Providence carried on for thousands of years terminate.

“ Great day ! for which all other days were made :
For which earth rose from chaos ; man from earth ;
And an eternity, the date of gods,
Descended on poor earth-created man ! ” — YOUNG.

Time was ; but is no more ! Now all the sons of men enter upon a duration not to be measured by the revolutions of the sun, nor by days, and months, and years. Now eternity dawns, a day that shall never see an evening. And this terribly illustrious morning is solemnized with the execution of the sentence. No sooner is it passed than immediately the wicked *go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* Matt. xxv. 46. See the astonished thunder-struck multitude on the left hand, with sullen horror and grief and despair in their looks, writhing with agony, crying and wringing their hands, and glancing a wishful eye towards that heaven which they lost ; dragged away by devils to the place of execution ! See Hell expands her voracious jaws, and swallows them up ! and now an eternal farewell to earth and all its enjoyments ! Farewell to the cheerful light of Heaven ! Farewell to hope, that sweet relief of affliction !

———“ Farewell happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells ! Hail horrors ! hail
Infernal world ! and thou profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessors ! ” MILTON.

Heaven frowns upon them from above, the horrors of hell spread far and wide around them, and conscience within preys upon their hearts. Conscience ! O thou abused exasperated power, that now sleepest in so many breasts, what severe ample revenge wilt thou then take upon those that now dare to do thee violence ! O the dire reflections which memory will then suggest ! the remembrance of mercies abused ! of a Saviour slighted ! of means and opportunities of salvation neglected and lost ! this remembrance will sting

the heart like a scorpion. But O eternity! eternity! with what horror will thy name circulate through the vaults of hell! eternity in misery! no end to pain! no hope of an end! O this is the hell of Hell; this is the parent of despair! despair the direst ingredient of misery, the most tormenting passion which devils feel.—But let us view a more delightful and illustrious scene.

See the bright and triumphant army marching up to their eternal home, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, where they *shall ever be with the Lord*, 1 Thess. iv. 17, as happy as their nature in its highest improvements is capable of being made. With what shouts of joy and triumph do they ascend! with what sublime hallelujahs do they crown their Deliverer! with what wonder and joy, with what pleasing horror, like one that has narrowly escaped some tremendous precipice, do they look back upon what they once were! once mean, guilty, depraved, condemned sinners! afterward imperfect, broken-hearted, sighing, weeping saints! but now innocent, holy, happy, glorious immortals!

“ Are these the forms that moulder’d in the dust?
O the transcendant glories of the just!” YOUNG.

Now with what pleasure and rapture do they look forward through the long, long prospect of immortality, and call it their own! the duration not only of their existence, but of their happiness and glory! O shall any of us share in this immensely valuable privilege! how immensely transporting the thought!

Shall we, who some few years ago were less
Than worm, or mite, or shadow can express;
Were nothing; shall we live, when every fire
Of every star shall languish or expire?
When earth’s no more, shall we survive above,
And through the shining ranks of angels move?
Or, as before the throne of GOD we stand,
See new worlds rolling from his mighty hand,
All that has being in full concert join,
And celebrate the depths of love divine!

YOUNG.

O what exploits, what miracles of power and grace, are these! But why do I darken such splendors with

words without knowledge? The language of mortals was formed for lower descriptions. *Eye hath not seen, ear has not heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath laid up for them that love him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

And now when the inhabitants of our world, for whose sake it was formed, are all removed to other regions, and it is left a wide extended desert, what remains, but that it also meet its fate? It is fit so guilty a globe, that had been the stage of sin for so many thousands of years, and which even supported the cross on which its Maker expired, should be made a monument of the divine displeasure, and either be laid in ruins, or refined by fire. And see! the universal blaze begins! *the heavens pass away with a great noise; the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth and the works that are therein are burnt up.* 2 Pet. iii. 10. Now stars rush from their orbits; comets glare; the earth trembles with convulsions; the Alps, the Andes, and all the lofty peaks or long extended ridges of mountains burst out into so many burning Ætnas, or thunder, and lighten, and smoke, and flame, and quake like Sinai, when God descended upon it to publish his fiery law! Rocks melt and run down in torrents of flame; rivers, lakes, and oceans boil and evaporate. Sheets of fire and pillars of smoke, outrageous and insufferable thunders and lightnings burst, and bellow, and blaze, and involve the atmosphere from pole to pole*. The whole globe is now dissolved into a shoreless ocean of liquid fire. And where now shall we find the places where cities stood, where armies fought, where mountains stretched their ridges, and reared their heads on high? Alas! they are all lost, and have left no trace behind them where they once stood. Where art thou, O my country? Sunk with the rest, as a drop into the burning ocean. Where now are your houses, your lands, and those earthly possessions you were once so fond of? They are no-

* See all the formidable sons of Fire,
Eruptions, Earthquakes, Comets, Lightnings play
Their various engines; all at once discharge
Their blazing magazines; and take by storm
This poor terrestrial citadel of man.

where to be found. How sorry a portion for an immortal mind is such a dying world as this! And O!

“ How rich that God who can such charge defray,

“ And bear to fling ten thousand worlds away!” YOUNG.

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a view of the solemnities of the last day which our world shall see. The view has indeed been but very faint and obscure: and such will be all our views and descriptions of it, till our eyes and our ears teach us better. Through these avenues you will at length receive your instructions. Yes, brethren, those ears that now hear my voice shall hear the all-alarming clangor of the last trumpet, the decisive sentence from the mouth of the universal Judge, and the horrid crash of falling worlds. These very eyes with which you now see one another shall yet see the descending Judge, the assembled multitudes, and all the majestic phenomena of that day. And we shall not see them as indifferent spectators; no, we are as much concerned in this great transaction as any of the children of men. We must all appear before the judgment-seat, and receive our sentence according to the deeds done in the body. And if so, what are we doing that we are not more diligently preparing? Why does not the prospect affect us more? Why does it not transport the righteous with *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. 1 Peter i. 8. And why are not the *sinner in Zion afraid? Why does not fearfulness surprise the hypocrites?* Isaiah xxxiii. 14. Can one of you be careless from this hour till you are in readiness for that tremendous day?

What do the sinners among you now think of repentance? Repentance is the grand preparative for this awful day; and the apostle, as I observed, mentions the final judgment in my text as a powerful motive to repentance. And what will criminals think of repentance when they see the Judge ascend his throne? Come, sinners, look forward and see the flaming tribunal erected, your crimes exposed, your doom pronounced, and your hell begun; see a whole world demolished, and ravaged by boundless conflagration for your sins! With these objects before you, I call you to repent?—I call you! I retract the words: God, the

great God whom heaven and earth obey, commands you to repent. Whatever be your characters, whether rich or poor, old or young, white or black, wherever you sit or stand, this command reaches you; *for God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.* You are this day firmly bound to this duty by his authority. And dare you disobey with the prospect of all the awful solemnities of judgment before you in so near a view? O! methinks I have now brought you into such a situation, that the often-repeated but hitherto neglected call to repentance will be regarded by you. Repent you must, either upon earth or in hell. You must either spend your time or your eternity in repentance. It is absolutely unavoidable. Putting it off now does not remove the necessity, but will only render it the more bitter and severe hereafter. Which then do you choose? the tolerable, hopeful, medicinal repentance of the present life, or the intolerable, unprofitable, despairing repentance of hell? Will you choose to spend time or eternity in this melancholy exercise? O! make the choice which God, which reason, which self-interest, which common sense recommend to you. Now repent at the command of God, *because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given you all full assurance in that he raised him from the dead.* Amen.

SERMON XXI.

The One Thing needful.

LUKE X. 41, 42.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

FOR what are we placed in this world? Is it to dwell here always? You cannot think so, when the millions of mankind that have appeared upon the stage of time are so many instances of the contrary. The true notion therefore of the present state is, that it is a state of preparation and trial for the eternal world; a state of education for our adult age. As children are sent to school, and youth bound out to trades, to prepare them for business, and qualify them to live in the world, so we are placed here to prepare us for the grand business of immortality, the state of our maturity, and to qualify us to live for ever. And is there an heaven of the most perfect happiness, and an hell of the most exquisite misery, just before us, perhaps not a year or even a day distant from us? And is it the great design, the business and duty of the present state, to obtain the one and escape the other? Then what are we doing? What is the world doing all around us? Are they acting as it becomes candidates for eternity? Are they indeed making that the principal object of their most zealous endeavours, which is the grand design, business, and duty of the present state? Are they minding this at all adventures whatever else they neglect? This is what we might expect from them as reasonable creatures, as creatures that love themselves, and have a strong innate desire of happiness. This a stranger to our world might charitably presume concerning them. But, alas! look upon

the conduct of the world around you, or look nearer home, and where you are more nearly interested, upon your own conduct, and you will see this is not generally the case. No; instead of pursuing the one thing needful, the world is all in motion, all bustle and hurry, like ants upon a mole-hill, about other affairs. They are in a still higher degree than officious Martha, *careful and troubled about many things*. Now to recal you from this endless variety of vain pursuits and direct your endeavours to the proper object, I can think of no better expedient than to explain and inculcate upon you the admonition of Christ to Martha, and his commendation of Mary upon this head.

Martha was the head of a little family, probably a widow, in a village near Jerusalem, called Bethany. Her brother and sister, Lazarus and Mary, lived along with her. And what is remarkable concerning this little family is, that they were all lovers of Jesus: and their love was not without returns on his side; for we are expressly told that *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*.—What an happy family is this! but O how rare in the world! This was a convenient place of retirement to Jesus, after the labours and fatigues of his ministry in the city: and here we often find him. Though spent and exhausted with his public services, yet when he gets into the circle of a few friends in a private house, he cannot be idle: he still instructs them with his heavenly discourse; and his conversation is a constant sermon. Mary who was passionately devout and eager for instruction, would not let such a rare opportunity slip, but sits down at the feet of this great Teacher, which was the posture of the Jewish pupils before their masters*, and eagerly catches every word from his lips; from which dropt knowledge sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. Though she is solicitous for the comfort of her heavenly guest, yet she makes no great stir to provide for him an elegant or sumptuous entertainment; for she knew his happiness did not consist in luxurious eating and drinking: it was his *meat and his drink to*

* Hence St. Paul's expression, that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

do the will of his Father; and as for the sustenance of his body, plain food was most acceptable to him. He was not willing that any should lose their souls by losing opportunities of instruction, while they were making sumptuous provision for him. Mary was also so deeply engaged about her salvation, that she was nobly careless about the little decencies of entertainments. The body and all its supports and gratifications appeared of very small importance to her when compared with the immortal soul. O! if that be but fed with the words of eternal life, it is enough. All this she did with Christ's warm approbation, and therefore her conduct is an example worthy of our imitation: and if it were imitated it would happily reform that pride, luxury, excessive delicacy, and multiform extravagance which have crept in upon us under the ingratiating names of politeness, decency, hospitality, good œconomy, and I know not what. These guilty superfluities and refinements render the life of some a course of idolatry to so sordid a god as their bellies, and that of others a course of busy, laborious, and expensive trifling.—But to return.

Martha, though a pious woman, yet like too many among us, was too solicitous about these things. She seemed more concerned to maintain her reputation for good œconomy and hospitality than to improve in divine knowledge at every opportunity; and to entertain her guest rather as a gentleman than as a divine teacher and the Saviour of souls. Hence, instead of sitting at his feet with her sister in the posture of a humble disciple, she was busy in making preparations; and her mind was distracted with the cares of her family. As moderate labour and care about earthly things is lawful, and even a duty, persons are not readily suspicious or easily convinced of their guilty excesses in these labours and cares. Hence Martha is so far from condemning herself on this account, that she blames her devout sister for not following her example. Nay, she has the confidence to complain to Christ himself of her neglect, and that in language too that sounds somewhat rude and irreverent. "Carest thou not that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" Art thou so

partial as to suffer her to devolve all the trouble upon me while she sits idle at thy feet?

Jesus turns upon her with just severity, and throws the blame where it should lie. *Martha, Martha!* There is a vehemency and pungency in the repetition, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.* "Thy worldly mind has many objects, and many objects excite many cares and troubles, fruitless troubles and useless cares. Thy restless mind is scattered among a thousand things, and tossed from one to another with an endless variety of anxieties. But let me collect my thoughts and cares to one point, a point where they should all terminate; *one thing is needful*; and therefore dropping thy excessive care about many things, make this one thing the great object of thy pursuit. This one thing is what thy sister is now attending to, while thou art vainly careful about many things; and therefore, instead of blaming her conduct, I must approve it. She has made the best choice, for she *hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* After all thy care and labour, the things of this vain world must be given up at last, and lost for ever. But Mary hath made a wiser choice, the portion she hath chosen shall be hers for ever; it shall never be taken away from her."

But what does Christ mean by this one thing which alone is needful?

I answer, We may learn what he meant by the occasion and circumstances of his speaking. He mentions this one thing in an admonition to Martha for excessive worldly care and the neglect of an opportunity for promoting her salvation; and he expressly opposes this one thing to the many things which engrossed her care; and therefore it must mean something different from and superior to all the pursuits of time. This one thing is that which Mary was so much concerned about while attentively listening to his instructions. And what can that be but salvation as the end, and holiness as the means, or a proper care of the soul? This is that which is opposite and superior to the many cares of life:—this is that which Mary was attending to and pursuing; and I may add, this is that good part which Mary had chosen, which

should never be taken away from her; for that good part which Mary had chosen seems intended by Christ to explain what he meant by the one thing needful. Therefore the one thing needful must mean the salvation of the soul, and an earnest application to the means necessary to obtain this end above all other things in the world. To be holy in order to be happy; to pray, to hear, to meditate, and use all the means of grace appointed to produce or cherish holiness in us; to use these means with constancy, frequency, earnestness, and zeal; to use them diligently whatever else be neglected, or to make all other things give way in comparison of this; this I apprehend is the one thing needful which Christ here intends: this is that which is absolutely necessary, necessary above all other things, and necessary for ever. The end, namely, salvation, will be granted by all to be necessary, and the necessity of the end renders the means also necessary. If it be necessary you should be for ever happy, and escape everlasting misery, it is necessary you should be holy; for you can no more be saved without holiness than you can be healthy without health, see without light, or live without food. And if holiness be necessary, then the earnest use of the means appointed for the production and improvement of holiness in us must be necessary too; for you can no more expect to become holy without the use of these means, than to reap without sowing, or become truly virtuous and good by chance or fatality. To be holy in order to be happy, and to use all the means of grace in order to be holy, is therefore the one thing needful.

But why is this concern which is so complex called One Thing?

I answer: Though salvation and holiness include various ingredients, and though the means of grace are various, yet they may be all taken collectively and called one thing; that is, one great business, one important object of pursuit in which all our endeavours and aims should center and terminate. It is also said to be one, in opposition to the many things that are the objects of a worldly mind. This world owes its va-

riety in a great measure to contradiction and inconsistency. There is no harmony or unity in the earthly objects of men's pursuits, nor in the means they use to secure them. Riches, honours, and pleasures generally clash. If a man will be rich he must restrain himself in the pleasures of gratifying his eager appetites, and perhaps use some mean artifices that may stain his honour. If he would be honourable, he must often be prodigal of his riches, and abstain from some sordid pleasures. If he would have the full enjoyment of sensual pleasures, he must often squander away his riches, and injure his honour to procure them. The lusts of men as well as their objects, are also various and contradictory. Covetousness and sensuality, pride and tranquillity, envy and the love of ease, and a thousand jarring passions, maintain a constant fight in the sinner's breast. The means for gratifying these lusts are likewise contrary; sometimes truth, sometimes falshood, sometimes indolence, sometimes action and labour are necessary. In these things there is no unity of design, nor consistency of means; but the sinner is properly distracted, drawn this way and that, tossed from wave to wave; and there is no steadiness or uniformity in his pursuits. But the work of salvation is one, the means and the end correspond, and the means are consistent one with another; and therefore the whole, though consisting of many parts, may be said to be one.

It may also be called the one thing needful, to intimate that this is needful above all other things. It is a common form of speech to say of that which is necessary above all other things, that it is the one or only thing necessary; so we may understand this passage. There are what we call the real necessities of life; such as food and raiment: there are also necessary callings and necessary labours. All these are necessary in a lower sense; necessary in their proper place. But in comparison of the great work of our salvation, they are all unnecessary; if we be but saved, we may do very well without them all. This is so necessary, that nothing else deserves to be called necessary in comparison of it.

This shews you also, not only why this is called one thing, but why or in what sense it is said to be necessary.

It is of absolute and incomparable necessity. There is no absolute necessity to our happiness that we should be rich or honourable; nay, there is no absolute necessity that we should live in this world at all, for we may live infinitely more happy in another. And if life itself be not absolutely necessary, then much less are food, or raiment, or health, or any of those things which in a lower sense we call the necessaries of life. In comparison of this, they are all needless. I add farther, this one thing may be said to be necessary, because it is necessary always, or for ever. The necessaries of this life we cannot want long, for we must soon remove into a world where there is no room for them; but holiness and salvation we shall find needful always: needful under the calamities of life; needful in the agonies of death; needful in the world of spirits; needful millions of ages hence; needful to all eternity; and without it we are eternally undone. This is a necessity indeed! a necessity, in comparison of which all other necessaries are but superfluities.

I hope by this short explication I have cleared the way through your understandings to your hearts, and to your hearts I would now address myself. However solemnly I may speak upon this interesting subject, you will have more reason to blame me for the deficiency than for the excess of my zeal and solemnity. I hope I have entered this sacred place to day with a sincere desire to do some service to your immortal souls before I leave it. And may I not hope you have come hear with a desire to receive some advantage? If not, you may number this seeming act of religion among the sins of your life; you have come hear to-day to sin away these sacred hours in hypocrisy, and a profane mockery of the great God. But if you are willing to receive any benefit, hear attentively; hear, that your souls may live.

My first request to you is*, that you would make this passage the test of your characters, and seriously inquire whether you have lived in the world as those that really and practically believe that this is the one thing of ab-

* Many of the following sentiments, as to the substance of them, are borrowed from Mr. Baxter's excellent discourse, intitled, *A Saint or a Brute*; and I know no better pattern for a minister to follow in his address to sinners than that flaming and successful preacher.

solute necessity? Are not all the joys of heaven and your immortal souls worth the little pains of seriously putting this short question to your consciences? Review your life, look into your hearts, and inquire, has this one thing lain more upon your hearts than all other things together? Has this been above all other things, the object of your most vehement desire, your most earnest endeavours, and eager pursuit? I do not ask whether you have heard or read that this one thing is necessary, or whether you have sometimes talked about it. I do not ask whether you have paid to God the compliment of appearing in his house once a week, or of performing him a little lip-service morning and evening in your families, or in your closets, after you have served yourselves and the world all the rest of your time without one affectionate thought of God. Nor do I enquire whether in a pang of horror after the commission of some gross sin you have tried to make your conscience easy by a few prayers and tears, of which you form an opiate to cast you again into a dead sleep in sin. I do not ask whether you have performed many actions that are materially good, and abstained from many sins. All this you may have done, and yet have neglected the one thing needful all your lives

But I ask you, whether this one thing needful has been habitually uppermost in your hearts, the favourite object of your desires, the prize of your most vigorous endeavours, the supreme happiness of your souls, and the principal object of your concern above all things in the world? Sirs, you may now hear this question with stupid unconcern and indifferency; but I must tell you, you will find another day how much depends upon it. In that day it will be found that the main difference between true christians and the various classes of sinners is this:—God, Christ, holiness, and the concerns of eternity are habitually uppermost in the hearts of the former; but to the latter they are generally but things by the by; and the world engrosses the vigour of their souls, and is the principal concern of their lives. To serve God, to obtain his favour, and to be happy for ever in his love, is the main business of the saint, to which all the concerns of the world and the flesh must give way;

but to live in ease, in reputation, in pleasure, or riches, or to gratify himself in the pursuit and enjoyment of some created good, this is the main concern of the sinner. The one has made an hearty resignation of himself and all that he is and has to God through Jesus Christ: he serves him with the best, and thinks nothing too good for him. But the other has his exceptions and reserves: he will serve God willingly, provided it may consist with his ease, and pleasure, and temporal interest; he will serve God with a bended knee and the external forms of devotion; but with the vigour of his spirit he serves the world and his flesh. This is the grand difference between a true christian and the various forms of half-christians and hypocrites. And certainly this is a difference that may be discerned. The tenor of a man's practice and the object of his love, especially of his highest love and practical esteem, must certainly be very distinguishable from a thing by the by, and from the object of a languid passion or mere speculation. Therefore if you make but an impartial trial, you have reason to hope you will make a just discovery of your true character: or if you cannot make the discovery yourselves, call in the assistance of others. Ask not your worldly and sensual neighbours, for they are but poor judges, and they will flatter you in self-defence; but ask your pious friends whether you have spoke and acted like persons that practically made this the one thing needful. They can tell you what subject you talked most seriously about, what pursuit seemed to lie most upon your hearts, and chiefly to exhaust your activity. Brethren, I beseech you, by one means or other to bring this matter to an issue, and let it hang in suspense no longer. Why are you so indifferent how this matter stands with you? Is it because you imagine you may be true christians, and obtain salvation however this matter be with you? But be not deceived: no man can serve two masters whose commands are contrary; and *ye cannot serve God and Mammon* with a service equally devoted to both. *If any man love the world with supreme affections, the love of the Father is not in him.* 1 John ii. 15. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap; if you sow to the flesh, of the*

flesh you shall reap corruption: a miserable harvest indeed! *But if you sow to the spirit, you shall of the spirit reap everlasting life.* Gal vi. 7; 8. Therefore you may be sure that *if you live after the flesh, you shall die*; and that you can never enjoy the one thing needful unless you mind and pursue it above all other things.

But I shall not urge you any farther to try yourselves by this test. I take it for granted the consciences of some of you have determined the matter, and that you are plainly convicted of having hitherto neglected the one thing needful. Allow me then honestly to expose your conduct in its proper colours, and tell you what you have been doing while you were busy about other things, and neglecting this one thing needful.

I. However well you have improved your time for other purposes, you have lost it all, unless you have improved it in securing the one thing needful. The proper notion of time is, that it is a space for repentance. Time is given us to prepare for eternity. If this is done we have lived long enough, and the great end of time and life is answered, whatever else be undone. But if this be undone, you have lived in vain, and all your time is lost, however busily and successfully you have pursued other things. Though you have studied yourselves pale to furnish your minds with knowledge; though you have spent the night and the day in heaping up riches, or climbing up to the pinnacle of honour, and not lost an hour that might be turned to your advantage, yet you have been most wretchedly fooling away your time, and lost it all, if you have not laid it out in securing the one thing needful. And, believe me, time is a precious thing. So it will appear in a dying hour, or in the eternal world, to the greatest spendthrift among you. Then, O for a year, or even a week, or a day, to secure that one thing which you are now neglecting. And will you now waste your time while you enjoy it? Shall so precious a blessing be lost? By this calculation how many days, how many years, have you lost for ever? for is not that lost which is spent in crossing the end for which it was given you? Time was given you to secure an eternity of happiness, but you have spent it in adding sin to sin, and consequently in treasuring up wrath

against the day of wrath. And is not your time then a thousand times worse than lost? Let me tell you, if you continue in this course to the end, you will wish a thousand times either that you never had one hour's time given you, or that you had made a better use of it.

2. Whatever else you have been doing, you have lost your labour with your time, if you have not laboured above all things for this one thing needful. No doubt you have been busy about something all your life; but you might as well have been idle: you have been busy in doing nothing. You have perhaps toiled through many anxious and laborious days, and your nights have shared in the anxieties and labours of your days. But if you have not laboured for the one thing necessary, all your labour and all the fruits of it are lost. Indeed God may have made use of you for the good of his church or of your country, as we make use of thorns and briars to stop a breach, or of useless wood for firing to warm our families; but as to any lasting and solid advantage to yourselves, all your labour has been lost.

But this is not all. Not only your secular labour is lost, but all your toil and pains, if you have used any in the duties of religion, they are lost likewise. Your reading, hearing, praying, and communicating; all your serious thoughts of death and eternity, all your struggles with particular lusts and temptations, all the kind offices you have done to mankind, all are lost, since you have performed them by halves with a lukewarm heart, and have not made the one thing needful your great business and pursuit. All these things will not save you; and what is that religion good for which will not save your souls? What do those religious endeavours avail which will suffer you to fall into hell after all? Certainly such religion is vain.

And now, my hearers, do you believe this, or do you not? If you do, will you, dare you still go on in the same course? If you do not believe it, let me reason the matter with you a little. You will not believe that all the labour and pains you have taken all your life have been quite lost: no, you now enjoy the fruits of them. But shew me, now if you can, what you have gotten by all that stir you have made that will follow one step be-

yond the grave, or that you can call your own to-morrow? Where is that sure immortal acquisition that you can carry with you into the eternal world? Were you to die this hour, would it afford you any pleasure to reflect that you have lived a merry life and had a satiety of sensual pleasures, or that you have laboured for riches and honours, and perhaps acquired them? will this reflection afford you pleasure or pain? will this abate the agony of eternal pain, or make up for the loss of heaven, which you wilfully incurred by an over-eager pursuit of these perishing vanities?

Do you not see the extravagant folly, the distracted phrensy of such a conduct? Alas! while you are neglecting the one thing needful, what are you doing but spending your time and labour in laborious idleness, honourably debasing yourselves, delightfully tormenting yourselves, wisely befooling yourselves, and frugally impoverishing and ruining yourselves for ever? A child or an idiot riding upon a staff, building their mimic houses, or playing with a feather, are not so foolish as you in your conduct, while you are so seriously pursuing the affairs of time and neglecting those of eternity. But,

3. This is not all: All your labour and pains have not only been lost while you have neglected this one thing, but you have taken pains to ruin yourselves, and laboured hard all your lives for your own destruction. To this you will immediately answer, "God forbid we should do any thing to hurt ourselves! we were far from having any such design." But the question is not what was your design, but what is the unavoidable consequence of your conduct, according to the nature of things, and the unchangeable constitution of heaven. Whatever you design in going on in sin, *the wages of sin is death, eternal death.* You may indulge the carnal mind, and walk after the flesh, and yet hope no bad consequence will follow; but God has told you that *to be carnally minded is death*, and that if you live after the flesh you shall die. The robber on the highway has no design to be hanged; but this does not render him a jot safer. Therefore, design what you will, it is certain you are positively destroying yourselves while your labours about other things hinder you from pursuing the one thing

needful. And does not this thought shock you, that you should be acting the part of enemies against yourselves, the most pernicious and deadly enemies to yourselves in the whole universe? No enemy in the whole universe could do you that injury without your consent which you are doing to yourselves. To tempt you to sin is all the devil can do; but the temptation alone can do you no injury; it is consenting to it that ruins you: and this consent is your own voluntary act. All the devils in hell could not force you to sin without your consent, and therefore all the devils in hell do not injure you as you do yourselves. God has not given them so much power over you as he has given you over yourselves: and this power you abuse to your own destruction.

O! In what a distracted state is the world of the ungodly! If any other men be their enemy, how do they resent it! But they are their own worst enemies, and yet never fall out with themselves. If another occasion them a disappointment in their pursuits, defraud them of an expected good, or lay schemes to make them miserable; what sullen grudge, what keen revenge, what flaming resentments immediately rise in their breasts against him? And yet they are all their lives disinheriting themselves of the heavenly inheritance, laying a train to blow up all their own hopes, and heaping a mountain of guilt upon themselves to sink them into the bottomless pit; and all this while they think they are the best friends to themselves, and consulting their own interest. As for the devil, the common enemy of mankind, they abhor him, and bless themselves from him; but they are worse to themselves than devils, and yet never fall out with themselves for it.

This, sinners, may seem an harsh representation of your conduct, but alas! it is true. And if it be so shocking to you to hear it, what must it be to be guilty of it! And O think what must be the consequences of such a conduct, such unnatural suicide!

4. If you have hitherto neglected the one thing needful, you have unmanned yourselves, acted beneath and contrary to your own reason, and in plain terms behaved as if you had been out of your senses. If you have

the use of your reason, it must certainly tell you for what it was given to you. And I beseech you tell me what was it given to you for but to serve the God that made you, to secure his favour, to prepare for your eternal state, and to enjoy the supreme good as your portion? Can you once think your reason, that *divinæ particula auræ*, was given you for such low purposes as the contrivances, labour, and pursuits of this vain life, and to make you a more ingenious sort of brutes? He was master of an unusual share of reason who said, "There is very little difference between having reason and having none, if we had nothing to do with it but cunningly to lay up for our food, and make provision for this corruptible flesh, and had not another life to mind." Therefore I may safely affirm that you have cast away your reason, and acted as if you were out of your wits, if you have not employed your rational powers in the pursuit of the one thing needful. Where was your reason when your dying flesh was preferred to your immortal spirits? was reason your guide when you chose the trash of this perishing world, and sought it more than the favour of God and all the joys of heaven? Can you pretend to common sense, when you might have had the pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, and a title to heaven secured to you ere now? But you have neglected all, and instead of having a sure title to heaven, or being prepared for it, you are fitted for destruction, and nothing else; and are only waiting for a fever, or a flux, or some other executioner of divine vengeance, to cut the thread of life and let you sink to hell by your own weight. Thither you gravitate under the load of sin as naturally as a stone to the center; and you need no other weight to sink you down. What have you done all your life to make a wise man think you truly reasonable? Is that your reason, to be wise to do evil, while to do good you have no knowledge; or to be ingenious and active about the trifles of time, while you neglect that great work for which you were created and redeemed? Can you be wise and yet not consider your latter end? Nay, can you pretend to so much as common sense, while you sell your eternal salvation for the sordid pleasures of a few flying years? Have you common sense, when you will not keep yourselves out of everlasting

fire? What can a madman do worse than wilfully destroy himself? And this you are doing every day.

And yet these very persons are proud of their madness, and are apt to fling the charge of folly upon others, especially if they observe some poor weak creatures, though it be but one in five hundred, fall into melancholy, or loose their reason for a time, while they are groaning under a sense of sin, and anxious about their eternal state; then what a clamour against religion and preciseness as the ready way to make people run mad! then they even dare to publish their resolution that they will not read and pore so much upon these things, lest it should drive them out of their senses. O miserable mortals! is it possible they should be more dangerously mad than they are already! Do you lay out your reason, your strength, and time in pursuing vain shadows and in feeding a mortal body for the grave, while the important realities of the eternal world, and the salvation of your immortal souls are forgotten or neglected! Do you sell your Saviour with Judas for a little money, and change your part in God and heaven for the sordid pleasures of sin, which are but for a season! and are you afraid of seriously reflecting upon this course that you may reform it, for fear such thoughts should make you mad? What greater madness than this can you fear? Will you run from God, from Christ, from mercy, from the saints, from heaven itself, for fear of being mad? Alas! you are mad in the worst sense already. Will you run to hell to prove yourselves in your senses? He was a wise and good man who said, "Though the loss of a man's understanding is a grievous affliction, and such as I hope God will never lay upon me, yet I had a thousand times rather go distracted to Bedlam with the excessive care about my salvation, than to be one of you that cast away the care of your salvation for fear of being distracted, and will go among the infernal Bedlams into hell for fear of being mad." Distraction in itself is not a moral evil, but a physical, like those disorders of body from which it often proceeds, and therefore is no object for punishment, and had you no capacity of understanding you would have a cloke for your sin; but your madness

is your crime, because it is voluntary, and therefore you must give an account for it to the Supreme Judge.

It would be easy to offer many more considerations to expose the absurdity and danger of your conduct in neglecting the one thing necessary; but these must suffice for the present hour. And I only desire you to consider farther, if this be a just view of the conduct of such as are guilty of this neglect, in what a miserable, pitiable condition is the world in general! I have so often tried the utmost energy of my own words upon you with so little success as to many, that I am grown quite weary of them. Allow me therefore for once to borrow the more striking and pungent words of one now in heaven; of one who had more success than almost any of his contemporaries or successors in the important work of *converting sinners from the error of their way, and saving souls from death*; I mean that incomparable preacher Mr. Baxter, who sowed an immortal seed in his parish of Kidderminster, which grows and brings forth fruit to this day. His words have, through the divine blessing, been irresistible to thousands; and O that such of you, my dear hearers, whose hearts may have been proof against mine, may not be so against his also!

— “ Look upon this text of scripture, says he, and look also upon the course of the earth, and consider of the disagreement; and whether it be not still as before the flood, that *all the imaginations of man's heart are evil continually*? Gen. vi. 5. Were it possible for a man to see the affections and motions of all the world at once, as God seeth them, what a pitiful sight it would be! What a stir do they make, alas, poor souls! for they know not what! while they forget, or slight, or hate the one thing needful. What an heap of gadding ants should we see that do nothing but gather sticks and straws! Look among persons of every rank, in city and country, and look into families about you, and see what trade it is they are most busily driving on, whether it be for heaven or earth? And whether you can discern by their care and labours that they understand what is the one thing necessary? They are as busy as bees; but not for honey, but in spinning such a spider's web as the besom of death will presently sweep down. Job viii. 14. They labour

hard; but for what? *For the food that perisheth, but not for that which endureth to everlasting life.* John vi. 27. They are diligent seekers; but for what? Not first for God, his kingdom and righteousness, but for that which they might have had as an addition to their blessedness, Mat. vi. 33. They are still doing; what are they doing? Even undoing themselves by running away from God, to hunt after the perishing pleasures of the world. Instead of providing for the life to come, they are making *provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts.* Rom. xiii. 14. Some of them hear the word of God, but they presently choke it *by the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life.* Luke viii. 14. They are *careful and troubled about many things*; but the one thing that should be all to them is cast by as if it were nothing. Providing for the flesh and minding the world is the employment of their lives. They labour with a canine appetite, for their trash; but to holiness they have no appetite, and are worse than indifferent to the things that are indeed desirable. They have no covetousness for the things which they are commanded *earnestly to covet.* 1 Cor. xii. 31. They have so little hunger and thirst after righteousness, that a very little or none will satisfy them. Here they are pleading always for moderation, and against too much, and too earnest, and too long; and all is too much with them that is above stark nought, or dead hypocrisy; and all is too earnest and too long that would make religion seem a business, or engage them to seem serious in their own profession, or put them past jest in the worship of God and the matters of their salvation. Let but their children or servants neglect their worldly business (which I confess they should not do) and they shall here of it with both their ears; but if they sin against God, or neglect his word or worship, they shall meet with more patience than Eli's son did: a cold reproof is usually the most; and it is well if they be not encouraged in their sin: it is well if a child or servant that begins to be serious for salvation be not rebuked, derided, and hindered by them. If on their days of labour they oversleep themselves, they shall be sure to be called up to work (and good reason); but when do they call them up to prayer? when do they urge them to con-

sider or converse upon the things that concern their everlasting life? The Lord's own day, which is appointed to be set apart for matters of this nature, is wasted in idleness or worldly talk. Come at any time into their company and you may talk enough, and too much of news, or other men's matters, of their worldly business, sports, and pleasures, but about God and their salvation they have so little to say, and that so heartlessly and by the by, as if they were things that belonged not to their care and duty, and no whit concerned them. Talk with them about the renovation of the soul, the nature of holiness, and the life to come, and you will find them almost as dumb as a fish. The most understand not matters of this nature, nor much desire or care to understand them. If one would teach them personally, they are too old to be catechised or to learn, though not too old to be ignorant of the matters they were made for and preserved for in the world. They are too wise to learn to be wise, and too good to be taught how to be good, though not too wise to follow the seducements of the devil and the world, nor too good to be the slaves of Satan and the despisers and enemies of goodness. If they do any thing which they call serving God, it is some cold and heartless use of words to make themselves believe that for all their sins they shall be saved: so that God will call that a serving their sins and abominations, which they call a serving of God. Some of them will confess that holiness is good, but they hope God will be merciful to them without it; and some do so hate it, that it is a displeasing irksome thing to them to hear any serious discourse of holiness; and they detest and deride those as fanatical, troublesome precisians that diligently seek the one thing necessary: so that if the belief of the most may be judged by their practices, we may confidently say that they do not practically believe that ever they should be brought to judgment, or that there is any heaven or hell to be expected; and that their confession of the truth of the scriptures and the articles of the christian faith are no proofs that they heartily take them to be true. Who can be such a stranger to the world as not to see that this is the case of the greatest part of men. And, which is worst of all, they go on in this course

against all that can be said to them, and will give no impartial considerate hearing to the truth, which would recover them to their wits, but live as if it would be a felicity to them in hell to think that they came thither by wilful resolution, and in despite of the remedy."

This, sinners, is a true representation of your case, drawn by one that well knew it and lamented it. And what do you now think of it yourselves? What do you think will be the consequence of such a course? Is it safe to persist in it? or shall I be so happy as to bring you to a stand? Will you still go on, troubling yourselves with many things? or will you resolve for the future to mind the one thing needful above all? I beseech you to come to some resolution. Time is on the wing, and does not allow you to hesitate in so plain and important an affair. Do you need any farther excitements? Then I shall try the force of one consideration more contained in my text, and that is Necessity.

Remember necessity, the most pressing absolute necessity, enforces this care upon you. One thing is needful, absolutely needful, always needful, and needful above all other things. This, one would think, is such an argument as cannot but prevail. What exploits has necessity performed in the world! What arts has it discovered as the mother of invention! what labours, what fatigues, what sufferings has it undergone! What dangers has it encountered! What difficulties has it overcome? Necessity is a plea which you think will warrant you to do any thing and excuse any thing. Reasoning against necessity is but reasoning against a hurricane; it bears all before it. To obtain the necessities of life, as they are called, how much will men do and suffer! Nay, with what hardships and perils will they not conflict for things that they imagine necessary, not to their life but to their ease, their honour, or pleasure! But what is this necessity when compared to that which I am now urging upon you? In comparison of this, the most necessary of those things are but superfluities; for if your ease, or honour, or pleasure, or even your life in this world be not absolutely necessary, as they cannot be to the heirs of immortality, then certainly those things which you imagine necessary to your ease, your honour,

your pleasure, or mortal life, are still less necessary. But O! to escape everlasting misery, and to secure everlasting salvation, this is the grand necessity! This will appear necessary in every point of your immortal duration; necessary when you have done with this world for ever, and must leave all its cares, enjoyments, and pursuits behind you. And shall not this grand necessity prevail upon you to work out your salvation, and make that your great business, when a far less necessity, a necessity that will last but a few years at most, sets you and the world around you upon such hard labours and eager pursuits for perishing vanities? All the necessity in the world is nothing in comparison of that which lies upon you to work out your salvation; and shall this have no weight? If you do not labour or contrive for *the bread that perisheth*, you must beg or starve? but if you will not labour for the bread that endureth unto everlasting life, you must burn in hell for ever. You must lie in prison if your debts with men be not paid; but O! what is it to the prison of hell, where you must be confined for ever if your debts to the justice of God be not remitted, and you do not obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can make satisfaction for them! You must suffer hunger and nakedness unless you take care to provide food and raiment; but you must suffer eternal banishment from God and all the joys of his presence if you do not labour to secure the one thing needful. Without the riches of this world you may be rich in faith and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. Without earthly pleasures you may have joy unspeakable, and full of glory in the love of God, and the expectation of the kingdom reserved in heaven for you. Without health of body you may have happiness of spirit; and even without this mortal life you may enjoy eternal life. Without the things of the world you may live in want for a little while, but then you will soon be upon an equality with the greatest princes. But without this one thing needful you are undone, absolutely undone. Though you were as rich as Cræsus, you *are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*. Your very being becomes a curse to you. It is your curse that you are a man, a reasonable creature. It had been infinitely better for you if you had

been a toad or a snake, and so incapable of sin and of immortality, and consequently of punishment. O then let this grand necessity prevail with you!

I know you have other wants, which you should moderately labour to provide for, but O how small and of how short continuance! If life and all should be lost, you may more than find all in heaven. But if you miss at this one thing, all the world cannot make up the loss.

Therefore, to conclude with the awakening and resistless words of the author I before quoted, "Awake, you sluggish, careless souls! your house over your head is in a flame! the hand of God is lifted up! If you love yourselves prevent the stroke. Vengeance is at your backs, the wrath of God pursues your sin, and woe to you if he find it upon you when he overtaketh you. Away with it speedily! up and begone; return to God! make Christ and mercy your friends in time, if you love your lives! the judge is coming! for all that you have heard of it so long, yet still you believe it not. You shall shortly see the majesty of his appearance and the dreadful glory of his face; and yet do you not begin to look about you, and make ready for such a day? Yea, before that day, your separated souls shall begin to reap as you have sowed here. Though now the partition that stands between you and the world to come do keep unbelievers strangers to the things that most concern them, yet death will quickly find a portal to let you in: and then, sinners, you will find such doings there as you little thought of, or did not sensibly regard upon earth.—Before your friends will have time enough to wrap up your pale corps in your winding-sheet, you will see and feel that which will tell you to the quick, that one thing was necessary. If you die without this one thing necessary, before your friends can have finished your funerals, your souls will have taken up their places among devils in endless torments and despair, and all the wealth, and honour, and pleasure that the world afforded you will not ease you. This is sad, but it is true, sirs; for God hath spoken it. Up therefore and bestir you for the life of your souls. Necessity will

awake even the sluggard. Necessity, we say, will break through stone walls. The proudest will stoop to necessity: the most slothful will bestir themselves in necessity: the most careless will be industrious in necessity; necessity will make men do any thing that is possible to be done. And is not necessity, the highest necessity, your own necessity, able to make you cast away your sins, and take up an holy and heavenly life? O poor souls! is there a greater necessity of your sin than of your salvation, and of pleasing your flesh for a little time than of pleasing the Lord and escaping everlasting misery?" O that you would consider what I say! and the Lord give you understanding in all things! Amen.

SERMON XXII.

Saints saved with Difficulty, and the certain Perdition of Sinners.

I PET. iv. 18.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

THIS text may sound in your ears like a message from the dead; for it is at the request of our deceased friend* that I now insist upon it. He knew so much from the trials he made in life, that if he should be saved at all, it would be with great difficulty, and if he should escape destruction at all, it would be a very narrow escape; and he also knew so much of this stupid, careless world, that they stood in need of a solemn warning on this head; and therefore desired that his death should give occasion to a sermon on this alarming subject. But now the unknown wonders of the invisible world lie open to his eyes; and now also he can take a full review of his passage through this mortal life; now he sees the many unsuspected dangers he narrowly escaped, and the many fiery darts of the devil which the shield of faith repelled; now, like a ship arrived in port, here views the rocks and shoals he passed through, many of which lay under water and out of sight; and therefore now he is more fully acquainted with the difficulty of salvation than ever. And should he now rise and make his appearance in this assembly in the solemn and dread attire of an inhabitant of the world of spirits, and again direct me to a more proper subject, methinks he would still stand to his choice, and propose it to your serious thoughts, that *if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

* The person was Mr. James Hooper; and the Sermon is dated Aug. 21, 1756.

The apostle's principal design in the context seems to be to prepare the Christians for those sufferings which he saw coming upon them, on account of their religion. *Beloved*, says he, *think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, verse 12. but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: it is no strange thing that you should suffer on account of your religion in such a wicked world as this, for Christ the founder of your religion met with the same treatment; and it is enough that the servant be as his master, ver. 13.: only he advises them, that if they must suffer, that they did not suffer as malefactors, but only for the name of Christ, ver. 14, 15. But, says he, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, ver. 16. for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.* He seems to have a particular view to the cruel persecution that a little after this was raised against the christians by the tyrant Nero, and more directly to that which was raised against them everywhere by the seditious Jews, who were the most inveterate enemies of christianity. The dreadful destruction of Jerusalem, which was plainly foretold by Christ in the hearing of St. Peter, was now at hand. And from the sufferings which christians, the favorites of heaven, endured, he infers how much more dreadful the vengeance would be which should fall upon their enemies the infidel Jews. If judgment begin at the house of God, his church, what shall be the doom of the camp of rebels? If it begin at us christians who obey the gospel, what shall be the end of them that obey it not? Alas! what shall become of them? *Them that obey not the gospel of God*, is a description of the unbelieving Jews, to whom it was peculiarly applicable; and the apostle may have a primary reference to the dreadful destruction of their city and nation which was much more severe than all the sufferings the persecuted christians had then endured. But I see no reason for confining the apostle's view entirely to this temporal destruction of the Jews: he seems to refer farther to that still more terrible de-

struction that awaits all that obey not the gospel in the eternal world; that is to say, if the children are so severely chastised in this world, what shall become of rebels in the world to come, the proper state of retribution? How much more tremendous must be their fate!

In the text he carries on the same reflection. *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* The righteous is the common character of all good men or true christians; and the ungodly and the sinner are characters which may include the wicked of all nations and ages. Now, says he, "if the righteous be but scarcely saved, saved with great difficulty, just saved, and no more, where shall idolaters and vicious sinners appear, whose character is so opposite?"

The abrupt and pungent form of expression is very emphatical. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear* I need not tell you, your own reason will inform you: I appeal to yourselves for an answer, for you are all capable of determining upon so plain a case. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* Alas it strikes me dumb with horror to think of it: it is so shocking and terrible that I cannot bear to describe it. Now they are gay, merry, and rich; but when I look a little forward I see them appear in very different circumstances, and the horror of the prospect is hardly supportable."

St. Peter here supposes that there is something in the condition and character of a righteous man that renders his salvation comparatively easy; something from whence we might expect that he will certainly be saved, and that without much difficulty: and, on the other hand, that there is something in the opposite character and condition of the ungodly and the sinner that gives us reason to conclude that there is no probability at all of their salvation while they continue such. But he asserts that even the righteous, whose salvation seems so likely and comparatively easy, is not saved without great difficulty; he is just saved, and that is all: what then shall we conclude of the ungodly and the sinner, whose character gives no ground

for favourable expectations at all? If our hopes are but just accomplished with regard to the most promising, what shall become of those whose case is evidently hopeless? Alas! where shall they appear?

The method in which I intend to prosecute our subject is this:

I. I shall point out the principal difficulties, which even the righteous meet with in the way to salvation.

II. I shall mention those things in the condition and character of the righteous which render his salvation so promising and seemingly easy, and then show you that, if with all these favourable and hopeful circumstances he is not saved but with great difficulty and danger, those who are of an opposite character and whose condition is so evidently and apparently desperate, cannot be saved at all.

1. I am to point out the principal difficulties, which even the righteous meet with in the way to salvation.

Here I would premise, that such who have become truly religious and persevered in the way of holiness and virtue to the last, will meet with no difficulty at all to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. The difficulty does not lie here, for the same apostle Peter assures us, that if we give all diligence *to make our calling and election sure* we shall never fall: but so *an entrance shall be administered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Peter i. 10, 11. But the difficulty lies in this, that, all things considered, it is a very difficult thing to obtain, and persevere in real religion in the present corrupt state of things, where we meet with so many temptations and such powerful opposition. Or, in other words, it is difficult in such a world as this to prepare for salvation; and this renders it difficult to be saved, because we cannot be saved without preparation.

It must also be observed that a religious life is attended with the most pure and solid pleasures even in this world; and they who choose it act the wisest part with respect to the present state: they are really the happiest people upon our globe. Yet, were it otherwise, the blessed consequences of a religious life in the

eternal world would make amends for all, and recommend such a course, notwithstanding the greatest difficulties and the severest sufferings that might attend it.

But notwithstanding this concession, the christian course is full of hardships, oppositions, trials, and discouragements. This we may learn from the metaphorical representations of it in the sacred writings, which strongly imply that it is attended with difficulties which require the utmost exertion of all our power to surmount. It is called a warfare, 1 Tim. i. 18.; fighting, 2 Tim. iv. 7. The graces of the christian, and the means of begetting and cherishing them, are called weapons of war: there is the shield of faith; the hope of salvation, which is the helmet; the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. 2 Cor. x. 4. Eph. vi. 13—17. The end of the christian's course is a victory after conflict. Rev. ii. 7. And christians are soldiers; and as such must endure hardships. 2 Tim. ii. 3. Now a military life you know is a scene of labour, hardships, and dangers; and therefore so is the christian life, which is compared to it in these respects. It is compared to a race, Heb. xii. 1, 2. to wrestling and the other vigorous exercises of the Olympic games, Eph. vi. 12. Luke xiii. 24.; to walking in a narrow way, Matt. vii. 14.; and entering at the strait gate, Luke xiii. 24. This, my brethren, and this only, is the way to salvation. And is this the way in which you are walking? Or is it the smooth, easy, downward road to destruction? You may slide along that without exertion or difficulty, like a dead fish swimming with the stream; but O! look before you, and see whither it leads!

The enemies that oppose our religious progress are the devil, the world, and the flesh. These form a powerful alliance against our salvation, and leave no artifice untried to obstruct it.

The things of the world, though good in themselves, are temptations to such depraved hearts as ours. Riches, honours, and pleasure spread their charms, and tempt us to the pursuit of flying shadows, to the neglect of the one thing needful. These engross the thoughts and concerns, the affections and labours

of multitudes. They engage with such eagerness in an excessive hurry of business and anxious care, or so debauch and stupify themselves with sensual pleasures, that the voice of God is not heard, the clamours of conscience are drowned, the state of their souls is not enquired into, the interests of eternity are forgotten, the eternal God, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell are cast out of mind, and disregarded; and they care not for any or all of these important realities, if they can but gratify the lust of avarice, ambition, and sensuality. And are such likely to perform the arduous work of salvation? No; they do not so much as seriously attempt it. Now these things which are fatal to multitudes throw great difficulties in the way even of the righteous man. He finds it hard to keep his mind intent upon his great concern in the midst of such labours and cares as he is obliged to engage in; and frequently he feels his heart estranged from God and ensnared into the ways of sin, his devotion cooled, and his whole soul disordered by these allurements. In short, he finds it one of the hardest things in the world to maintain an heavenly mind in such an earthly region, a spiritual temper among so many carnal objects.

The men of this world also increase his difficulties. Their vain, trifling or wicked conversation, their ensnaring examples, their persuasions, false reasonings, reproaches, menaces, and all their arts of flattery and terror have sometimes a very sensible effect upon him. These would draw him into some guilty compliances, damp his courage, and tempt him to apostatize, were he not always upon his guard; and sometimes in an inadvertent hour he feels their fatal influence upon him. As for the generality, they yield themselves up to these temptations, and make little or no resistance; and thus are carried down the stream into the infernal pit. Alas! how many ruin themselves through a base, unmanly complaisance, and a servile conformity to the mode! Believe it, sirs, to be fashionably religious and no more, is to be really irreligious in the sight of God. The way of the multitude may seem easy, pleasant, and sociable; but alas! my brethren, see where it ends! it leadeth down into destruction. Matt. vii. 14.

But, in the next place, the greatest difficulty in our way arises from the corruption and wickedness of our own hearts. This is an enemy within; and it is this that betrays us into the hands of our enemies without. When we turn our eyes to this quarter, what vast difficulties rise in our way! difficulties which are impossibilities to us, unless the almighty power enables us to surmount them. Such are a blind mind, ignorant of divine things, or that can speculate only upon them, but does not see their reality and dread importance; a mind empty of God and full of the lumber and vanities of this world. Such are a hard heart, insensible of sin, insensible of the glory of God, and the beauties of holiness, and the infinite moment of eternal things. Such are an heart disaffected to God, and his service, bent upon sin, and impatient of restraint. Such are wild, unruly passions thrown into a ferment by every trifle, raised by vanities, erroneous in the choice of objects, irregular in their motions, and extravagant in the degree of attachment. Such difficulties are strong ungovernable lusts and appetites in animal nature, eager for gratification, and turbulent under restraint. And how strangely does this inward corruption indispose men for religion! Hence their ignorance, their security, carelessness, presumptuous hopes, and impenitence. Hence their unwillingness to admit conviction, their resistance to the holy spirit and their own consciences, their love of ease and impatience of sorrow for sin, and of solicitude about their eternal state. Hence their contempt of the gospel, their disregard to all religious instructions, their neglect of the means of grace, and the ordinances of Christ, or their careless, formal, lukewarm attendance upon them. Hence their earthly-mindedness, their sensuality, and excessive love of animal pleasures. Hence it is so difficult to awaken them to a just sense of their spiritual condition, and to suitable earnestness in their religious endeavours: and hence their fickleness and inconstancy, their relapses and backslidings, when they have been a little alarmed. Hence it is so difficult to bring their religious impressions to a right issue, and to lead them to Jesus Christ as the only

Saviour. In short, hence, it is, that so many thousands perish amidst the means of salvation. These difficulties prove eventually insuperable to the generality; and they never surmount them. But even the righteous, who is daily conquering them by the aid of divine grace, and will at last be more than a conqueror, he still finds many hinderances and discouragements from this quarter. The remains of these innate corruptions still cleave to him in the present state, and these render his progress heavenward so slow and heavy. These render his life a constant warfare, and he is obliged to fight his way through. These frequently check the aspirations of his soul to God, cool his devotion, damp his courage, ensnare his thoughts and affections to things below, and expose him to the successful attacks of temptation. Alas! it is his innate corruption that involves him in darkness and jealousies, in tears and terrors, after hours of spiritual light, joy, and confidence. It is this that banishes him from the comfortable presence of his God, and causes him to go mourning without the light of his countenance. Were it not for this, he would glide along through life easy and unmolested; he would find the ways of religion to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. In short, it is this that lies upon his heart as the heaviest burden, and renders his course so rugged and dangerous. And such of you as do not know this by experience, know nothing at all of true experimental christianity.

Finally, the devil and his angels are active, powerful, and artful enemies to our salvation: their agency is often unperceived, but it is insinuating, unsuspected, and therefore the more dangerous and successful. These malignant spirits present ensnaring images to the imagination, and no doubt blow the flame of passion and appetite. They labour to banish serious thoughts from the mind, and entertain it with trifles. They give force to the attacks of temptations from the world, and raise and foment insurrections of sin within. And if they cannot hinder the righteous man from entering upon a religious course, or divert him from it, they

will at least render it as difficult, laborious, and uncomfortable to him as possible.

See, my brethren, see the way in which you must walk if you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. In this rugged road they have all walked who are now safe arrived at their journey's end, the land of rest. They were saved, but it was with great difficulty: they escaped the fatal rocks and shoals, but it was a very narrow escape: and methinks it is with a kind of pleasing horror they now review the numerous dangers through which they passed, many of which they did not perhaps suspect till they were over*. And is this the way in which you are walking? Is your religion a course of watchfulness, labour, conflict, and vigorous exertion? Are you indeed in earnest in it above all things in this world? Or are not many of you lukewarm Laodiceans and indifferent Gallios about these things? Your religion (if it may be so called) is a course of security, carelessness, sloth, and formality. Alas! if all the vigour and exertion of the righteous man be but just sufficient for his salvation, where, O where shall you appear? Which leads me,

II. To mention those things in the character and condition of the righteous which render his salvation so promising and seemingly easy, and then shew that if with all those hopeful circumstances he shall not be saved but with great difficulty, that they whose character is directly opposite, and has nothing encouraging in it, cannot possibly be saved at all. And this head I shall cast into such a form as to exemplify the text.

1. If those that abstain from immorality and vice be but scarcely saved, where shall the vicious, profligate sinner appear?

* There, on a green and flow'ry mount,
Their weary souls now sit;
And with transporting joys recount
The labours of their feet.
Eternal glories to the King
That brought them safely thro';
Their lips shall never cease to sing,
And endless praise renew.

It is the habitual character of a righteous man to be temperate and sober, chaste, just, and charitable; to revere the name of God and every thing sacred, and religiously observe the holy hours devoted to the service of God. This is always an essential part of his character, though not the whole of it. Now such a man looks promising; he evidently appears so far prepared for the heavenly state, because he is so far conformed to the law of God, and free from those enormities which are never found in the region of happiness. And if such shall scarcely be saved, where shall those of the opposite character appear? Where shall the brute of a drunkard, the audacious swearer, the scoffer at religion, the unclean, lecherous wretch, the liar, the defrauder, the thief, the extortioner, the Sabbath-breaker, the reveller, where shall these appear? Are these likely to stand in the congregation of the righteous, or to appear in the presence of God with joy? Is there the least likelihood that such shall be saved? If you will regard the authority of an inspired apostle in the case, I can direct you to those places where you may find his express determination. I Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* So Gal. v. 19—21. *The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, heresies, seditions, envyings, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before; that is, I honestly forewarn you, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Rev. xxi. 8. *The fearful (that is, the cowardly in the cause of religion) the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.* You see, my brethren, the declarations of the scripture are express enough and repeated on this point. And are there not some of you here who indulge your-

selves in one or other of these vices, and yet hope to be saved in that course? that is, you hope your Bible and your religion too are false; for it is only on that supposition that your hope of salvation can be accomplished. Alas! will you venture your eternal All upon the truth of such a blasphemous supposition as this? But,

2. If those that conscientiously perform the duties of religion be scarcely saved, where shall the neglecters of them appear?

The righteous are characterized as persons that honestly endeavour to perform all the duties they owe to God. They devoutly read and hear his word, and make divine things their study; they are no strangers to the throne of grace; they live a life of prayer in their retirements, and in a social capacity. They make their families little churches, in which divine worship is solemnly performed. Let others do as they will; as for them and their houses, like Joshua, *they will serve the Lord*. Joshua xxiv. 15. They gratefully commemorate the sufferings of Christ, and give themselves up to him at his table; and seriously improve all the ordinances of the gospel. In short, like Zecharias and Elizabeth, they *walk in all the statutes and ordinances of God blameless*. Luke i. 6. This is their prevailing habitual character. And there is something in this character that gives reason to presume they will be saved; for they now have a relish for the service of God, in which the happiness of heaven consists; they are training up in the humble forms of devotion in the church below, for the more exalted employments of the church triumphant on high. Now, if persons of this character are but *scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly appear*, who persist in the wilful neglect of these known duties of religion? Can they be saved, who do not so much as use the means of salvation? Can those that do not study their Bible, the only directory to eternal life, expect to find the way thither! Can prayerless souls receive answers to prayer? Will all the bliss of heaven be thrown away upon such as do not think it worth their while importunately to ask it? Are they likely to be admitted into the general assem-

bly and church of the first-born in heaven, who do not endeavour to make their families little circles of religion here upon earth? In a word, are they likely to join forever in the devotions of the heavenly state, who do not accustom themselves to these sacred exercises in this preparatory state? Will you venture your souls upon it that you shall be saved, notwithstanding these improbabilities, or rather impossibilities? Alas! are there any of you that have no better hopes of heaven than these? Where then will you appear?

3. If they that are more than externally moral and religious in their conduct; that have been born again, created in Christ Jesus to good works, as every man that is truly righteous has been: if such, I say, be but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who rest in their mere outward morality, their proud self-righteous virtue, and their religious formalities, and have never been made new creatures, never had the inward principle of action changed by the power of God, and the inbred disorders of the heart rectified? Where shall they appear who have nothing but a self-sprung religion, the genuine offspring of degenerate nature, and never had a supernatural principle of grace implanted in their souls? Has that solemn asseveration of the amen, the faithful and true witness, lost all its force, and become falsehood in our age and country? *Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3. Is there no weight in such apostolic declarations as these? *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new:* and all these new things are of God. 2 Cor. v. 17. *Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision,* Gal. vi. 15.; that is to say, a conformity to the rituals of the Jewish or Christian religion availeth nothing, but the new creature. Can men flatter themselves they shall be saved by the Christian religion, in opposition to these plain, strong, and repeated declarations of the Christian revelation? And yet are there not many here who are entirely ignorant of this renovation of the temper of their mind, of this inward heaven born religion?

4. If they that are striving to enter in at the strait gate, and pressing into the kingdom of heaven, do but just obtain admission; if they who forget the things that are behind, and reach after these that are before them, and press with all their might towards the goal, do scarcely obtain the prize, what shall become of those lukewarm, careless, formal, presumptuous professors of christianity who are so numerous among us? Where shall they appear who have *but a form of godliness without the power*, 2 Tim. iii. 5, and have no spiritual life in their religion, *but only a name to live*? Rev. iii. 1. If those whose hearts are habitually solicitous about their eternal state, who labour in earnest for the immortal bread, who pray with unutterable groans, Rom. viii. 26. who in short make the care of their souls the principal business of their life; and in some measure proportion their industry and earnestness to the importance and difficulty of the work; if such are but scarcely saved with all their labour and pains, where shall they appear who are at ease in Zion, Amos vi. 1. whose religion is but a mere indifferency, a thing by the by with them? If we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven unless our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, Matt. v. 20. where shall they appear whose righteousness is far short of theirs? And are there not many such in this assembly? Alas! my brethren, where do you expect to appear?

5. If they that have believed in Jesus Christ, which is the grand condition of salvation, be but scarcely saved, where shall the unbeliever appear?

Faith in Christ is an essential ingredient in the character of a righteous man: and faith cannot be implanted in our hearts till we have been made deeply sensible of our sins, of our condemnation by the law of God, and our utter inability to procure pardon and salvation by the merit of our repentance, reformation, or any thing we can do. And when we are reduced to this extremity, then we shall listen with eager ears to the proposal of a Saviour. And when we see his glory and sufficiency, and cast our guilty souls upon him, when we submit to his commands, depend en-

tirely upon his atonement, and give up ourselves to God through him, then we believe. Now if they who thus believe, to whom salvation is so often ensured, be not saved but with great difficulty, where shall those appear who never have experienced those exercises which are the antecedents or constituents of saving faith? who have never seen their own guilt and helplessness in an affecting light; who have never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; who have never submitted to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and who do not live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God? Alas! are they likely to be saved who are destitute of the grand prerequisite of salvation? And yet is not this the melancholy case of some of you? You may not be avowed unbelievers; you may believe there is one God, and that Jesus is the true Messiah: in this you do well, but still it is no mighty attainment, for the devils also believe and tremble, and you may have this speculative faith, and yet be wholly destitute of the faith of the operation of God, the precious faith of God's elect; that faith which purifies the heart, produces good works, and unites the soul to Jesus Christ. Certainly the having or not having of such a faith must make a great difference in a man's character, and must be followed by a proportionally different doom. And if they that have it be but scarcely saved, I appeal to yourselves, can they be saved at all who have it not?

6. If true penitents be scarcely saved, where shall the impenitent appear?

It is the character of the righteous that he is deeply affected with sorrow for his sins in heart and practice; that he hates them without exception with an implacable enmity; that he strives against them, and would resist them even unto blood; that his repentance is attended with reformation, and that he forsakes those things for the commission of which his heart is broken with sorrows. Now repentance appears evidently to the common reason of mankind an hopeful preparative for acceptance with God and eternal happiness: and therefore if they who repent are saved with great difficulty, where shall they appear who persist impenitent in sin?

Where shall they appear who have hard unbroken hearts in their breasts, who are insensible of the evil of sin, who indulge themselves in it, and cannot be persuaded to forsake it? Can you be at any loss to know the doom of such, after Christ has told us with his own lips, which never pronounced an harsh censure, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Luke xiii. 3, 5. And are there not some of this character in this assembly? Alas! there is not the least likelihood, or even possibility of your salvation in such a condition.

7. The righteous man has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and it produces the usual sentiments and conduct of love towards him. God is dearer to him than all other things in heaven and earth; the *strength of his heart, and his portion for ever.* Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26. His affectionate thoughts fix upon him, Psalm lxxiii. 6.; he rejoices in the light of his countenance, Psalm iv. 7. and longs and languishes for him in his absence. Psalm xlii. 1, 2, and lxxiii. 1. Can. iii. 1. His love is a powerful principle of willing obedience, and carries him to keep his commandments. 1 John v. 3. He delights in the law and service of God, and in communion with him in his ordinances. Now such a principle of love is a very hopeful preparative for heaven, the region of love, and for the enjoyment of God. Such an one would take pleasure in him and in his service, and therefore he certainly shall never be excluded. But if even such are but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who are destitute of the love of God? There are few indeed but pretend to be lovers of God, but their love has not the inseparable properties of that sacred passion. Their pretence to it is an absurdity, and if put into language, would be such jargon as this, 'Lord, I love thee above all things, though I hardly ever affectionately think of thee; I love thee above all, though I am not careful to please thee; I love thee above all, though my conduct towards thee is quite the reverse of what it is towards one I love.' Will such an inconsistency as this pass for genuine supreme love to God, when it will not pass for common friendship among

men? No, such have not the least spark of that heavenly fire in their breasts, for their carnal mind is enmity against God. And are these likely to be saved? likely to be admitted into the region of love, where there is not one cold or disloyal heart? likely to be happy in the presence and service of that God to whom they are disaffected? Alas! no. Where then shall they appear? O! in what forlorn, remote region of eternal exile from the blessed God?

I shall now conclude with a few reflections. 1. You may hence see the work of salvation is not that easy, trifling thing which many take it to be. They seem mighty cautious of laying out too much pains upon it; and they cannot bear that people should make such ado, and keep such a stir and noise about it*. For their part, they hope to go to heaven as well as the best of them, without all this preciseness: and upon these principles they act. They think they can never be too much in earnest, or too laborious in the pursuit of earthly things; but religion is a matter by the by with them; only the business of an hour once a week. But have these learned their religion from Christ the founder of it, or from his apostles, whom he appointed teachers of it? No, they have formed some easy system from their own imaginations suited to their depraved taste, indulgent to their sloth and carnality, and favourable to their lusts; and this they call christianity. But you have seen this is not the religion of the Bible, this is not the way to life laid out by God, but it is the smooth downward road to destruction. Therefore,

2. Examine yourselves to which class you belong, whether to that of the righteous, who shall be saved, though with difficulty, or to that of the ungodly and the sinner, who must appear in a very different situation. To determine this important inquiry, recollect the sundry parts of the righteous man's character which I have briefly described, and see whether they belong to you. Do you carefully abstain from vice and im-

* I here affect this low stile on purpose, to represent more exactly the sentiments of such careless sinners in their own usual language.

morality? Do you make conscience of every duty of religion? Have you ever been born again of God, and made more than externally religious? Are you sensible of the difficulties in your way from Satan, the world, and the flesh? And do you exert yourselves as in a field of battle or in a race? Do you work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and press into the kingdom of God? Are you true believers, penitents, and lovers of God? Are these or the contrary the constituents of your habitual character? I pray you make an impartial trial, for much depends upon it.

3. If this be your habitual character, be of good cheer for you shall be saved, though with difficulty. Be not discouraged when you fall into fiery trials, for they are no strange things in the present state. All that have walked in the same narrow road before you have met with them, but now they are safe arrived in their eternal home. Let your dependence be upon the aids of divine grace to bear you through, and you will overcome at last. But,

4. If your character be that of the ungodly and the sinner, pause and think, where shall you appear at last? When, like our deceased friend, you leave this mortal state, and launch into regions unknown, where will you then appear? Must it not be in the region of sin, which is your element now? in the society of the devils, whom you resemble in temper and imitate in conduct? among the trembling criminals at the left hand of the judge, where the ungodly and sinners shall all be crowded? If you continue such as you now are, have you any reason at all to hope for a more favourable doom?

I shall conclude with a reflection to exemplify the context in another view, and that is, "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?" If the righteous, the favourites of heaven, suffer so much in this world, what shall sinners, with whom God is angry every day, and who are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, what shall they suffer in the eternal world, the proper place for rewards and punishments, and where an equitable Providence deals with every man accord-

ing to his works? If the children are chastised with various calamities, and even die in common with the rest of mankind, what shall be the doom of enemies and rebels? If those meet with so many difficulties in the pursuit of salvation, what shall these suffer in enduring damnation? If the infernal powers are permitted to worry Christ's sheep, how will they rend and tear the wicked as their proper prey? O that you may in *this your day know the things that belong to your peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes.* Luke xix. 42.

SERMON XXIII.

Indifference to Life urged, from its Shortness and Vanity.

I COR. vii. 29, 30, 31.

But this I say, brethren, that the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

A CREATURE treading every moment upon the slippery brink of the grave, and ready every moment to shoot the gulph of eternity, and launch away to some unknown coast, ought to stand always in the posture of serious expectation; ought every day to be in his own mind taking leave of this world, breaking off the connections of his heart from it, and preparing for his last remove into that world in which he must reside, not for a few months or years as in this, but through a boundless everlasting duration. Such a situation requires habitual constant thoughtfulness, abstraction from the world, and serious preparation for death and eternity. But when we are called, as we frequently are, to perform the last sad offices to our friends and neighbours who have taken their flight a little before us; when the solemn pomp and horrors of death strike our senses, then certainly it becomes us to be unusually thoughtful and serious. Dying beds, the last struggles and groans of dissolving nature, pale, cold, ghastly corpses,

“ The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave;

“ The deep damp vault, the darkness, and the worm;

these are very alarming monitors of our own mortality: these outreach the loudest preacher, and they must be deaf and senseless rocks, and not men, who do not

* This Sermon is dated, at Mr. Thompson's Funeral, Feb. 16, 1759.

hear and feel their voice. Among the numberless instances of the divine skill in bringing good out of evil this is one, that past generations have sickened and died to warn their successors. One here and there also is singled out of our neighbourhood or families, and made an example, a *memento mori*, to us that survive, to rouse us out of that stupid sleep, to give us the signal of the approach of the last enemy, death, to constrain us to let go our eager grasp of this vain world, and set us upon looking out and preparing for another. And may I hope my hearers are come here to-day, determined to make this improvement of this melancholy occasion, and to gain this great advantage from our loss? To this I call you as with a voice from the grave; and therefore *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

One great reason of men's excessive attachment to the present state, and their stupid neglect to the concerns of eternity, is their forming too high an estimate of the affairs of time in comparison with those of eternity. While the important realities of the eternal world are out of view, unthought of, and disregarded, as, alas! they generally are by the most of mankind, what mighty things in their esteem are the relations, the joys and sorrows, the possessions and bereavements, the acquisitions and pursuits of this life? What airs of importance do they put on in their view? How do they engross their anxious thoughts and cares, and exhaust their strength and spirits? To be happy, to be rich, to be great and honourable, to enjoy your fill of pleasure in this world, is not this a great matter, the main interest with many of you? is not this the object of your ambition, your eager desire and laborious pursuit? But to consume away your life in sickness and pain, in poverty and disgrace, in abortive schemes and disappointed pursuits, what a serious calamity, what an huge affliction is this in your esteem? What is there in the compass of the universe that you are so much afraid of, and so cautiously shunning? Whether large profits or losses in trade be not a mighty matter, ask the busy anxious merchant. Whether poverty be not a most miserable state, ask the poor that feel it,

and the rich that fear it. Whether riches be not a very important happiness, ask the possessors; or rather ask the restless pursuers of them, who expect still greater happiness from them than those that are taught by experience can flatter themselves with. Whether the pleasures of the conjugal state are not great and delicate, consult the few happy pairs here and there who enjoy them. Whether the loss of an affectionate husband and a tender father be not a most afflictive bereavment, a torturing separation of heart from heart, or rather a tearing of one's heart in pieces, ask the mourning weeping widow, and fatherless children, when hovering round his dying bed, or conducting his dear remains to the cold grave. In short, it is evident from a thousand instances, that the enjoyments, pursuits and sorrows of this life are mighty matters! nay, are all in all in the esteem of the generality of mankind. These are the things they most deeply feel, the things about which they are chiefly concerned, and which are the objects of their strongest passions.

But this is a just estimate of things? Are the affairs of this world then indeed so interesting and all important? Yes, if eternity be a dream, and heaven and hell but majestic chimeras or fairy lands; if we were always to live in this world, and had no concern with any thing beyond it; if the joys of earth were the highest we could hope for, or its miseries the most terrible we could fear, then indeed we might take this world for our all, and regard its affairs as the most important that our nature is capable of. *But this I say, brethren* (and I pronounce it as the echo of an inspired apostle's voice) *this I say, the time is short*; the time of life in which we have any thing to do with these affairs is a short contracted span. Therefore *it remaineth*, that is, this is the inference we should draw from the shortness of time, *that they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it, or using it to excess; for the fashion of this world*, these tender relations, this weeping and

rejoicing, this buying, possessing, and using this world, *passeth away*. The phantom will soon vanish, the shadow will soon fly off: and they that have wives or husbands in this transitory life, will in reality be as though they had none; and they that weep now, as though they wept not; and they that now rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that now buy, possess, and use this world, as though they never had the least property in it. This is the solemn mortifying doctrine I am now to inculcate upon you in the further illustration of the several parts of my text; a doctrine justly alarming to the lovers of this world, and the neglecters of that life which is to come.

When St. Paul pronounces any thing with an unusual air of solemnity and authority; and after the formality of an introduction to gain attention, it must be a matter of uncommon weight, and worthy of the most serious regard. In this manner he introduces the funeral sentiments in my text. *This I say, brethren;* this I solemnly pronounce as the mouth of God: this I declare as a great truth but little regarded; and which therefore there is much need I should repeatedly declare: this I say with all the authority of an apostle, a messenger from heaven; and I demand your serious attention to what I am going to say.

And what is it he is introducing with all this solemn formality? Why, it is an old, plain, familiar truth universally known and confessed, namely, That the time of our continuance in this world is short. But why so much formality in introducing such a common plain truth as this? Because, however generally it be known and confessed, it is very rarely regarded; and it requires more than even the most solemn address of an apostle to turn the attention of a thoughtless world to it. How many of you, my brethren, are convinced against your wills of this melancholy truth, and yet turn every way to avoid the mortifying thought, are always uneasy when it forces itself upon your minds, and do not suffer it to have a proper influence upon your temper and practice, but live as if you believed the time of life were long, and even everlasting? O! when will the happy hour come when you will think

and act like those that believe that common uncontroverted truth, that the time of life is short? Then you would no longer think of delays, nor contrive artifices to put off the work of your salvation; then you could not bear the thought of such negligent, or languid, feeble endeavours in a work that must be done, and that in so short a time.

This, I say, my brethren, the time is short; the time of life is absolutely short; a span, an inch, a hair's breadth. How near the neighbourhood between the cradle and the grave! How short the journey from infancy to old age, through all the intermediate stages! Let the few among you who bear the marks of old age upon you in grey hairs, wrinkles, weakness, and pains, look back upon your tiresome pilgrimage through life, and does it not appear to you, as though you commenced men but yesterday? And how little a way can you trace it back till you are lost in the forgotten unconscious days of infancy, or in that eternal non-existence in which you lay before your creation! But they are but a very few that drag on their lives through seventy or eighty years. Old men can hardly find cotemporaries: a new race has started up, and they are become almost strangers in their own neighbourhoods. By the best calculations that have been made, at least one half of mankind die under seven years old. They are little particles of life, sparks of being just kindled and then quenched, or rather dismissed from their suffocating confinement in clay, that they may aspire, blaze out, and mingle with their kindred flames in the eternal world, the proper region, the native element of spirits.

And how strongly does the shortness of this life prove the certainty of another? Would it be worth while, would it be consistent with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity to send so many infant millions of reasonable creatures into this world, to live the low life of a vegetable or an animal for a few moments, or days, or years, if there were no other world for these young immortals to remove to, in which their powers might open, enlarge, and ripen? Certainly men are not such insects of a day: certainly this is not the last stage of

human nature: certainly there is an eternity; there is a heaven and a hell:—otherwise we might expostulate with our Maker, as David once did upon that supposition; *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Psalm lxxxix. 47.

In that awful eternity we must all be in a short time. Yes, my brethren, I may venture to prophecy that, in less than seventy or eighty years, the most, if not all this assembly, must be in some apartment of that strange untried world. The merry, unthinking, irreligious multitude in that doleful mansion which I must mention, grating as the sound is to their ears, and that is hell!* and the pious, penitent, believing few in the blissful seats of heaven. There we shall reside a long, long time indeed; or rather through a long, endless eternity. Which leads me to add,

That as the time of life is short absolutely in itself, so especially it is short comparatively; that is, in comparison with eternity. In this comparison, even the long life of Methuselah and the antediluvians shrink into a mere point, a nothing. Indeed no duration of time, however long, will bear the comparison. Millions of millions of years; as many years as the sands upon the sea shore, as many years as the particles of dust in this huge globe of earth; as many years as the particles of matter in the vaster heavenly bodies that roll above us, and even in the whole material universe, all these years do not bear so much proportion to eternity as a moment, a pulse, or the twinkling of an eye, to ten thousand ages! not so much as a hair's breadth to the distance from the spot where we stand to the farthest star, or the remotest corner of the creation. In short, they do not bear the least imaginable proportion at all; for all this length of years, though beyond the power of distinct enumeration to us, will as certainly come to an end as an hour or a moment; and when it comes to an end, it is entirely and irrecovera-

* Regions of sorrow! doleful shades! where Peace
And Rest can never dwell! Hope never comes,
That comes to all: but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd.

MILTON.

bly past: but eternity (O the solemn tremendous sound!) eternity will never, never, never come to an end! eternity will never, never, never be past!

And is this eternity, this awful all-important eternity, entailed upon us! upon us the offspring of the dust! the creatures of yesterday! upon us who a little while ago were less than a gnat, less than a mote, were nothing! upon us who are every moment liable to the arrest of death, sinking into the grave, and mouldering into dust one after another in a thick succession! upon us whose thoughts, and cares, and pursuits, are so confined to time and earth, as if we had nothing to do with any thing beyond! O! is this immense inheritance unalienably ours! Yes, brethren, it is; reason and revelation prove our title beyond all dispute. It is an inheritance entailed upon us, whether we will or not; whether we have made it our interest it should be ours or not. To command ourselves into nothing is as much above our power as to bring ourselves into being. Sin may make our souls miserable, but it cannot make them mortal. Sin may forfeit an happy eternity, and render our immortality a curse; so that it would be better for us if we never had been born: but sin cannot put an end to our being, as it can to our happiness, nor procure for us the shocking relief of rest in the hideous gulph of annihilation.

And is a little time, a few months or years, a great matter to us? to us who are heirs of an eternal duration? How insignificant is a moment in seventy or eighty years! but how much more insignificant is even the longest life upon earth, when compared with eternity! How trifling are all the concerns of time to those of immortality! What is it to us who are to live for ever, whether we live happy or miserable for an hour? whether we have wives, or whether we have none; whether we rejoice, or whether we weep; whether we buy, possess, and use this world, or whether we consume away our life in hunger, and nakedness, and the want of all things, it will be all one in a little, little time. Eternity will level all; and eternity is at the door.

And how shall we spend this eternal duration that is thus entailed upon us? Shall we sleep it away in a

stupid insensibility or in a state of indifferency, neither happy nor miserable? No, no, my brethren; we must spend it in the height of happiness or in the depth of misery. The happiness and misery of the world to come will not consist in such childish toys as those that give us pleasure and pain in this infant state of our existence, but in the most substantial realities suitable to an immortal spirit, capable of vast improvements, and arrived at its adult age. Now, as the apostle illustrates it, we are children, and we speak like children, we understand like children; but then we shall become men, and put away childish things. 1 Cor. xiii. 11 Then we shall be beyond receiving pleasure or pain from such trifles as excite them in this puerile state. This is not the place of rewards or punishments, and therefore the great Ruler of the world does not exert his perfections in the distribution of either; but eternity is allotted for that very purpose, and therefore he will then distribute rewards and punishments worthy himself, such as will proclaim him God in acts of grace and vengeance, as he has appeared in all his other works. Then he will *shew his wrath, and make his power known on the vessels of wrath who have made themselves fit for destruction, and nothing else; and he will shew the riches of the glory of his grace upon the vessels of mercy, whom he prepared beforehand for glory.* Rom. ix. 22, 23. Thus heaven and hell will proclaim the God, will shew him to be the Author of their respective joys and pains, by their agreeable or terrible magnificence and grandeur. O eternity! with what majestic wonders art thou replenished, where Jehovah acts with his own immediate hand, and displays himself Godlike and unrivalled, in his exploits both of vengeance and of grace! In this present state, our good and evil are blended; our happiness has some bitter ingredients, and our miseries have some agreeable mitigations: but in the eternal world good and evil shall be entirely and for ever separated; all will be pure, unmingled happiness, or pure, unmingled misery. In the present state the best have not uninterrupted peace within; conscience has frequent cause to make them uneasy: some mote or other falls into its tender eye,

and sets it a weeping: and the worst also have their arts to keep conscience sometimes easy, and silence its clamours. But then conscience will have its full scope. It will never more pass a censure upon the righteous, and it will never more be a friend, or even an inactive enemy to the wicked for so much as one moment. And O what a perennial fountain of bliss or pain will conscience then be! Society contributes much to our happiness or misery. But what misery can be felt or feared in the immediate presence and fellowship of the blessed God and Jesus (the friend of man); of angels and saints, and all the glorious natives of heaven? But, on the other hand, what happiness can be enjoyed or hoped for, what misery can be escaped in the horrid society of lost, abandoned ghosts of the angelic and human nature; dreadfully mighty and malignant, and rejoicing only in each other's misery; mutual enemies, and mutual tormentors bound together inseparably in everlasting chains of darkness! O the horror of the thought! In short, even an heathen* could say,

“Had I an hundred tongues, an hundred mouths,
An iron voice, I could not comprehend
The various forms and punishments of vice.”

The most terrible images which even the pencil of divine inspiration can draw, such as *a lake of fire and brimstone, utter darkness, the blackness of darkness, a never-dying worm, unquenchable, everlasting fire*, and all the most dreadful figures that can be drawn from all parts of the universe, are not sufficient to represent the punishments of the eternal world. And, on the other hand, *the eye*, which has ranged through so many objects, *has not seen*; *the ear*, which has had still more extensive intelligence, *has not heard*; *nor has the heart*, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, *conceived the things that God hath laid up*

* Non, mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,
Ferreæ vox, omnes scelerum comprehendere formas,
Omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina possum.

VIRG. ÆN. VI. l. 625.

for them that love him. The enjoyments of time fall as much short of those of eternity as time itself falls short of eternity itself.

But what gives infinite importance to these joys and sorrows is, that as they are enjoyed or suffered in the eternal world, they are themselves eternal. Eternal joys! eternal pains! joys and pains that will last as long as the King eternal and immortal will live to distribute them! as long as our immortal spirits will live to feel them! O what joys and pains are these!

And these, my brethren, are awaiting every one of us. These pleasures, or these pains, are felt this moment by such of our friends and acquaintance as have shot the gulph before us; and in a little, little while, you and I must feel them.

And what then have we to do with time and earth? Are the pleasures and pains of this world worthy to be compared with these? *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;* the enjoyments and sufferings, the labours and pursuits, the laughter and tears of the present state, are all nothing in this comparison. What is the loss of an estate or of a dear relative to the loss of an happy immortality? But if our heavenly inheritance be secure, what though we should be reduced into Job's forlorn situation, we have enough left more than to fill up all deficiencies. What though we are poor, sickly, melancholy, racked with pains, and involved in every human misery, heaven will more than make amends for all. But if we have no evidences of our title to that, the sense of these transitory distresses may be swallowed up in the just fear of the miseries of eternity. Alas! what avails it that we play away a few years in mirth and gaiety, in grandeur and pleasure, if when these few years are fled, we lift up our eyes in hell, tormented in flames! O what are all these things to a candidate for eternity! an heir of everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery!

It is from such convictive premises as these that St. Paul draws his inference in my text; *It remaineth therefore that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;*

and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it.

The first branch of the inference refers to the dear and tender relations that we sustain in this life. *It remaineth that those that have wives,* and by a parity of reason, those that have husbands, parents, children, or friends dear as their own souls, *be as though they had none.* St. Paul is far from recommending a stoical neglect of these dear relations. That he tenderly felt the sensations, and warmly recommended the mutual duties of such relations, appears in the strongest light in other parts of his writings, where he is addressing himself to husbands and wives, parents and children. But his design here is to represent the insignificancy even of these dear relations, considering how short and vanishing they are, and comparing them with the infinite concerns of eternity. These dear creatures we shall be able to call our own for so short a time, that it is hardly worth while to esteem them ours now. The concerns of eternity are of so much greater moment, that it is very little matter whether we enjoy these comforts or not. In a few years at most, it will be all one. The dear ties that now unite the hearts of husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend, will be broken for ever. In that world where we must all be in a little, little time, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are in this respect like the angels. And of how small consequence is it to creatures that are to exist for ever in the most perfect happiness or misery, and that must so soon break off all their tender connections with the dear creatures that were united to their hearts in the present transitory state! of how small consequence is it to such, whether they spend a few years of their existence in all the delights of the conjugal state and the social life, or are forlorn, bereaved, destitute, widowed, childless, fatherless, friendless! The grave and eternity will level all these little inequalities. The dust of Job has no more sense of his past calamities than that of Solomon who felt so few; and their immortal parts are equally happy in heaven, if they were equally holy upon earth. And of how small consequence is it to Judas now, after

he has been above seventeen hundred years in his own place, whether he died single or married, a parent or childless! This makes no distinction in heaven or hell, unless that, as relations increase, the duties belonging to them are multiplied, and the trust becomes the heavier; the discharge of which meets with a more glorious reward in heaven, and the neglect of which suffers a severer punishment in hell.

Farther, the apostle, in saying that *they who have wives should be as though they had none*, intends that we should not excessively set our hearts upon any of our dearest relatives so as to tempt us to neglect the superior concerns of the world to come, or draw off our affections from God. We should always remember who it was that said, *He that loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children more than me, is not worthy of me. He that is married, says St. Paul in the context, careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife.* verse 33. But we should beware lest this care should run to excess, and render us careless of the interests of our souls, and the concerns of immortality. To moderate excessive care and anxiety about the things of this world is the design the apostle has immediately in view in my text; for having taught *those that have wives to be as though they had none, &c.* he immediately adds, *I would have you without carefulness*; and this is the reason why I would have you form such an estimate of all the conditions of life, and count them as on a level. Those that have the agreeable weights of these relations ought no more to abandon themselves to the over-eager pursuit of this world, or place their happiness in it; ought no more to neglect the concerns of religion and eternity than if they did not bear these relations. The busy head of a numerous family is as much concerned to secure his everlasting interest as a single man. Whatever becomes of him and his in this vanishing world, he must by no means neglect to provide for his subsistence in the eternal world; and nothing in this world can at all excuse that neglect.

O that these thoughts may deeply affect the hearts of such of us as are agreeably connected in such relations! and may they inspire us with a proper insensibility

and indifference towards them when compared with the affairs of religion and eternity! May this consideration moderate the sorrows of the mourners on this melancholy occasion, and teach them to esteem the gain or loss of an happy eternity as that which should swallow up every other concern!

The next branch of the inference refers to the sorrows of life. *It remaineth that they that weep be as if they wept not.* Whatever afflictions may befall us here, they will not last long, but will soon be swallowed up in the greater joys or sorrows of the eternal world. These tears will not always flow; these sighs will not always heave our breasts. We can sigh no longer than the vital breath inspires our lungs; and we can weep no longer than till death stops all the fountains of our tears; and that will be in a very little time. And when we enter into the eternal world, if we have been the dutiful children of God here, his own gentle hand shall wipe away every tear from our faces, and he will comfort the mourners. Then all the sorrows of life will cease for ever, and no more painful remembrance of them will remain than of the pains and sickness of our unconscious infancy. But if all the discipline of our heavenly Father fails to reduce us to our duty, if we still continue rebellious and incorrigible under his rod, and consequently the miseries of this life convey us to those of the future, the smaller will be swallowed up and lost in the greater as a drop in the ocean. Some desperate sinners have hardened themselves in sin with this cold comfort, 'That since they must be miserable hereafter, they will at least take their fill of pleasures here, and take a merry journey to hell.' But, alas! what a sorry mitigation will this be! how entirely will all this career of pleasure be forgotten at the first pang of infernal anguish! O what poor relief to a soul lost for ever, to reflect that this eternity of pain followed upon and was procured by a few months or years of sordid guilty pleasure! Was that a relief or an aggravation which Abraham mentions to his lost son, when he puts him in mind, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things.* Luke xvi. 25. Thou hadst then all the share of good which

thou ever shalt enjoy; thou hadst thy portion in that world where thou didst choose to have it, and therefore stand to the consequences of thine own choice, and look for no other portion. O who can bear to be thus reminded and upbraided in the midst of remediless misery!

Upon the whole, whatever afflictions or bereavments we suffer in this world, let us moderate our sorrows, and keep them within bounds. Let them not work up and ferment into murmurings and insurrections against God, who gives and takes away, and blessed be his name! Let them not sink us into a sullen dislike of the mercies still left in our possession, How unreasonable and ungrateful, that God's retaking one of his mercies should tempt us to despise all the rest! Take a view of the rich inventory of blessings still remaining, and you will find them much more numerous and important than those you have lost. Do not mistake me, as if I recommended or expected an utter insensibility under the calamities of life. I allow nature its moderate tears; but let them not rise to floods of inconsolable sorrows; I allow you to feel your afflictions like men and christians, but then you must bear them like men and christians too. May God grant that we may all exemplify this direction when we are put to the trial!

The third branch of the inference refers to the joys and pleasures of life. *The time is short, it remaineth therefore that they that rejoice be as if they rejoiced not*; that is, the joys of this life, from whatever earthly cause they spring, are so short and transitory, that they are as of no account to a creature that is to exist for ever; to exist for ever in joys or pains of an infinitely higher and more important kind. To such a creature it is an indifferency whether he laughs or weeps, whether he be joyful or sad, for only a few fleeting moments. These vanishing uncertain joys should not engross our hearts as our chief happiness, nor cause us to neglect and forfeit the divine and everlasting joys above the skies. The pleasure we receive from any created enjoyment should not ensnare us to make it our idol, to forget that we must part with it, or to fret and mur-

mur, and repine when the parting hour comes. When we are rejoicing in the abundance of earthly blessings, we should be as careful and laborious in securing the favour of God and everlasting happiness as if we rejoiced not. If our eternal All is secure it is enough; and it will not at all be heightened or diminished by the reflection that we lived a joyful or a sad life in this pilgrimage. But if we spend our immortality in misery, what sorry comfort will it be that we laughed, and played, and frolicked away a few years upon earth? years that were given us for a serious purpose, as a space for repentance, and preparation for eternity. Therefore let “those that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not;” that is, be nobly indifferent to all the little amusements and pleasures of so short a life.

And let *those that buy be as if they possessed not.*—This is the fourth particular in the inference from the shortness of time, and it refers to the trade and business of life. It refers not only to the busy merchant, whose life is a vicissitude of buying and selling, but also to the planter, the tradesman, and indeed to every man among us; for we are all carrying on a commerce, more or less, for the purposes of this life. You all buy, and sell, and exchange in some form or other; and the things of this world are perpetually passing from hand to hand. Sometimes you have good bargains, and make large acquisitions. But set not your hearts upon them; but in the midst of all your possessions, live as if you possessed them not. Alas! of what small account are all the things you call your own upon earth, to you who are to stay here so short a time; to you who must so soon bid an eternal farewell to them all, and go as naked out of the world as you came into it; to you who must spend an everlasting duration far beyond the reach of all these enjoyments? It is not worth your while to call them your own, since you must so soon resign them to other hands. The melancholy occasion of this day may convince you that success in trade, and a plentiful estate, procured and kept by industry and good management, is neither a security against death nor a comfort in it. Alas! what service can these houses, and lands, and numerous do-

mestics perform to the old clay that moulders in yonder grave, or to the immortal spirit that is fled we know not where! Therefore buy, sensible that you can buy nothing upon a sure and lasting title; nothing that you can certainly call yours to-morrow. Buy, but do not sell your hearts to the trifles you buy, and let them not tempt you to act as if this were your final home, or to neglect to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; treasures which you can call your own when this world is laid in ashes, and which you can enjoy and live upon in what I may call an angelic state, when these bodies have nothing but a coffin, a shroud, and a few feet of earth.

Finally, let “those that use this world, use it as not abusing it.” This is the fifth branch of the inference from the shortness of time; and it seems to have a particular reference to such as have had such success in their pursuit of the world, that they have now retired from business, and appear to themselves to have nothing to do but enjoy the world, for which they so long toiled. Or it may refer to those who are born heirs to plentiful estates, and therefore are not concerned to acquire the world, but to use and enjoy it. To such I say, “Use this world as not abusing it; that is, use it, enjoy it, take moderate pleasure in it, but do not abuse it by prostituting it to sinful purposes, making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, indulging yourselves in debauchery and extravagance, placing your confidence in it, and singing a *requiem* to your souls. “Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; for thou hast much goods laid up in store for many years.” O presumptuous fool, this night thy soul may be required of thee. Luke xii. 19, 20. Do not use this world to excess* (so the word may be translated) by placing your hearts excessively upon it as your favourite portion and principal happiness, and by suffering it to draw off your thoughts and affections from the superior blessedness of the world to come. Use the world, but let it not tempt you to excess in eating, drinking, dress, equipage, or in any ar-

* *καταχρηματις*. So it is rendered by Doddridge, and others.

ticle of the parade of riches. Religion by no means enjoins a sordid, niggardly, churlish manner of living; it allows you to enjoy the blessings of life, but then it forbids all excess, and requires you to keep within the bounds of moderation in your enjoyments. Thus *use this world as not abusing it.*

The apostle's inference is not only drawn from strong premises, but also enforced with a very weighty reason; *for the fashion of this world passeth away.* The whole scheme and system of worldly affairs, all this marrying, and rejoicing, and weeping, and buying, and enjoying *passeth away*, passeth away this moment; it not only will pass away, but it is even now passing away. The stream of time, with all the trifles that float on it, and all the eager pursuers of these bubbles, is in motion, in swift incessant motion, to empty itself and all that sail upon it, into the shoreless ocean of eternity, where all will be absorbed and lost for ever. And shall we excessively doat upon things that are perpetually flying from us, and in a little time will be no more our property than the riches of the world before the flood? *O ye sons of men, how long will you follow after vanity? why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth not?*

Some critics apprehend this sentence, *the fashion of this world passeth away*, contains a fine striking allusion to the stage, and that it might be rendered, "the scene of this world passeth away," 'You know,' says a fine writer* upon this text, 'that upon the stage the actors assume imaginary characters, and appear in borrowed forms. One mimics the courage and triumphs of the hero; another appears with a crown and a sceptre, and struts about with all the solemnity and majesty of a prince; a third puts on the fawning smile of a courtier, or the haughtiness of a successful favourite; and the fourth is represented in the dress of a scholar or a divine. An hour or two they act their several parts on the stage, and amuse the spectators; but the scenes are constantly shifting: and when the play is concluded, the feigned characters are laid aside, and

* Dunlop's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 212, 213, 214.

the imaginary kings and emperors are immediately divested of their pretended authority and ensigns of royalty, and appear in their native meanness.

‘Just so this world is a great stage that presents as variable scenes, and as fantastical characters; princes, politicians, and warriors, the rich, the learned, and the wise: and, on the other hand, the poor weak and despised part of mankind possess their several places on the theatre; some lurk obscurely in a corner, seldom come from behind the scenes, or creep along unnoticed; others make a splendid show and a loud noise, are adorned with the honours of a crown, or possessed of large estates and great powers; fill the world with the glory of their names and actions; conquer in the field, or are laboriously employed in the cabinet. Well, in a little time the scene is shifted, and all these vain phantoms disappear. The king of terrors clears the stage of the busy actors, strips them of all their fictitious ornaments, and ends the vain farce of life: and, being brought all upon a level, they go down to the grave in their original nakedness, are jumbled together undistinguished, and pass away as a tale that is told.

Farther: ‘Upon the Greek or Roman theatres, to which the apostle alludes, the actors, if I mistake not, frequently, if not always, came upon the stage in a disguise, with a false face, which was adapted to the different person or character they designed to assume; so that no man was to be seen with his real face, but all put on borrowed visages. And in allusion to this, the text might be rendered, “The masquerade of the world passeth away,” pointing out the fraud and disguises which mankind put on, and the flattering forms in which they generally appear, which will all pass away when the grave shall pull off the mask; and they go down to the other world naked and open’, and appear at the supreme tribunal in their due characters, ‘and can no more be varnished over with fraudulent colouring*.’

Others apprehend, the apostle here alludes to some grand procession, in which pageants or emblematical figures pass along the crowded streets. The staring

* Dunlop's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 215.

crowd wait their appearance with eager eyes, and place themselves in the most convenient posture of observation; they gape at the passing shew; they follow it with a wondering gaze;—and now it is past; and now it begins to look dim to the sight; and now it disappears. Just such is the transitory world. Thus it begins to attract the eager gaze of mankind; thus it marches by in swift procession from our eyes to meet the eyes of others; and thus it soon vanishes and disappears*.

And shall we always be stupidly staring upon this empty parade, and forget that world of substantial realities to which we are hastening? No; let us live and act as the expectants of that world, and as having nothing to do with this world, but only as a school, a state of discipline, to educate and prepare us for another.

O! that I could successfully impress this exhortation upon all your hearts! O! that I could prevail upon you all this day to break off your over-fond attachment to earth, and to make ready for immortality! Could I carry this point, it would be a greater advantage than all the dead could receive by any funeral

* Thus Dr. Doddridge understands the text, *Family Expositor*, in a loc, and thus he beautifully describes it in his Hymns;

- ‘ The empty pageant rolls along;
- ‘ The giddy unexperienc’d throng
- ‘ Pursue it with enchanted eyes;
- ‘ It passeth in swift march away,
- ‘ Still more and more its charms decay,
- ‘ Till the last gaudy colours dies. See HYMN 268.

Lucian has the best illustration of this passage, in this view, that I have seen, Dialogue XXXII. Murphy’s Edit.—

Ἐδόκει μοι ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίῃ πομπῇ τινι μακρᾷ προσοικεῖναι. χορηγεῖν δὲ καὶ διατάττειν ἕκαστα ἢ τύχη, διάφορα καὶ ποικίλα τοῖς πομπευταῖς σχήματα προσάπτεσσα. Τὸν μὲν γὰρ λαβῶσα ἢ τύχη, βασιλικῶς διεσκεύασε τιὰραν τε ἐπιδήσια καὶ δορυφόρους παραδῶσα, καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν γέφυρασα τῷ διαδήματι τῷ δὲ, οἰκίῃσι σχήμα περιέθηκε· τὸν δὲ τινα, καλὸν εἶναι ἐκόσμησε, τὸν δὲ ἄμορφον καὶ γελοῖον παρεσκεύασε· παντοδαπὴν γὰρ οἰμαι δεῖν γενέσθαι τὴν δειαν. Πολλὰς δὲ διὰ μεσῆς τῆς πομπῆς μετέβαλε τὰ εἰνῶν σχήματα ἐκ εἴωσα ἐς τὸ τέλος διαπομπεῖσαι, ὡς ἐταχθήσαν, ἀλλὰ μεταμφιέσασα — Ἐπειδὴ δ’ ὁ τῶς πομπῆς καιρὸς παρέλθη, τῆνικαὶντα ἕκαστος ἀποδῆς τῆ σκευῆν καὶ ἀποδυσάμενος τὸ σχήμα μετὰ τῷ σώματι, ὡσπερ ἦν πρὸ τῷ, γίγνεται μηδὲν τῷ πλῆσι διαφέρειν. κ.τ.λ.

panegyrics from me. I speak for the advantage of the living upon such occasions, and not to celebrate the virtues of those who have passed the trial, and received their sentence from the Supreme Judge. And I am well satisfied the mourning relatives of our deceased friend, who best knew and esteemed his worth, would be rather offended than pleased, if I should prostitute the present hour to so mean a purpose. Indeed many a character less worthy of praise, often makes a shining figure in funeral sermons. Many that have not been such tender husbands, such affectionate fathers, such kind masters, such sincere upright friends, so honest and punctual in trade, such zealous lovers of religion and good men, have had their putrifying remains perfumed with public praise from a place so solemn as the pulpit; but you can witness for me, it is not my usual foible to run to this extreme. My business is with you, who are as yet alive, to hear me. To you I call, as with the voice of your deceased friend and neighbour,—Prepare! prepare for eternity! O! if the spirits that you once knew, while clothed in flesh, should take my place, would not this be their united voice, ‘Prepare! prepare for eternity! ye frail short-lived mortals! ye near neighbours to the world of spirits! ye borderers upon heaven or hell; make ready, loosen your hearts from earth, and all that it contains: weigh anchor, and prepare to launch away into the boundless ocean of eternity, which methinks is now within your ken, and roars within hearing.’ And remember, ‘this I say, brethren,’ with great confidence, *the time is short: it remaineth therefore*, for the future,—*that they that have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as if they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world, all its schemes of affairs, all the vain parade, all the idle farce of life, passeth away.* And away let it pass, if we may at last obtain a better country; that is, an heavenly: which may God grant for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

The preaching of Christ crucified the Mean of Salvation.

1 COR. i. 22—24.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

IF we should consider Christianity only as an improvement of natural religion, containing a complete system of morality, and prescribing a pure plan of worship, it is a matter of the utmost importance, and worthy of universal acceptance. In the one view, it is necessary to inform the world in matters of sin and duty, and reform their vicious practices; and in the other, to put an end to that foolish and barbarous superstition which had over-run the earth, under the notion of religious worship. And these ends the Christian religion fully answers. Never was there such a finished system of morality, or such a spiritual and divine model of worship invented or revealed, as by the despised Galilean, and the twelve fishermen that received their instructions from him.

But this is not the principal excellency of the gospel! and did it carry its discoveries no farther, alas! it would be far from revealing a suitable religion for sinners. A religion for sinners must reveal a method of salvation for the lost; of pardon for the guilty and of sanctifying grace for the weak and wicked. And, blessed be God, the gospel answers this end; and it is its peculiar excellency that it does so. It is its peculiar excellency that it publishes a crucified Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour to a guilty perishing world. It is its glorious peculiarity that it reveals a method of salvation every way honourable to God

and his government, and every way suitable to our necessities; and that is by the sufferings of Christ, the Founder of this religion. This is the ground the substance, and marrow of the gospel; and it is this, above all other things, that its ministers ought to preach and inculcate. It should have the same place in their sermons which it has in that gospel which it is their business to preach; that is, it should be the foundation, the substance, the center, and drift of all.

This was the practice of the most successful preacher of the gospel that ever bore that commission: I mean St. Paul. And in this he was not singular; his fellow-apostles heartily concurred with him,—*We preach Christ crucified.* The sufferings of Christ, which had a dreadful consummation in his crucifixion, their necessity, design, and consequences, and the way of salvation thereby opened for a guilty world, these are the principal materials of our preaching; to instruct mankind in these is the great object of our ministry, and the unwearied labour of our lives. We might easily choose subjects more pleasing and popular, more fit to display our learning and abilities, and set off the strong reasoner, or the fine orator: but our commission, as ministers of a crucified Jesus, binds us to this subject; and the necessity of the world peculiarly requires it. Further, this was not the apostle's occasional practice, or an hasty wavering purpose; but he was determined upon it. *I determined, says he, not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified**. 1 Cor. ii. 2. This theme, as it were, engrossed all his thoughts; he dwelt so much upon it, as if he had known nothing else; and as if nothing else had been worth knowing. Indeed he openly avows such a neglect and contempt of all other knowledge, in comparison of this: *I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.* Phil. iii. 8. The crucifixion of Christ, which was the

* Or, *Christ Jesus, even that crucified one.* So Dr. Doddridge renders—*Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ τὸν ἑσταυρωμένον.* Christ Jesus, and that under the most ignominious circumstances possible, viz. as crucified, was the principal object of his study, and the substance of his preaching.

most ignominious circumstance in the whole course of his abasement, was an object in which he gloried; and he is struck with horror at the thought of glorying in any thing else. *God forbid, says he, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!* Gal. vi. 14. In short, he looked upon it as the perfection of his character as a christian and an apostle, to be a constant student, and a zealous indefatigable preacher of the cross of Christ.

But though a crucified Jesus was of so much importance in a religion for sinners; though this doctrine was the substance of the gospel, and the principal object of the apostle's ministry; yet, as it was not the invention of human reason, so neither was it agreeable to the proud reasonings, or corrupt taste of the world. *The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness.* However, there were some that had the same sentiment of it with St. Paul; even as many as were in the way of salvation. *Unto us that are saved, it is the power of God.* ver. 18. To such, that weak and contemptible thing, the cross, was the brightest display of divine power to be found in the universe.

Mankind had had time enough to try what expedients their reason could find out for the reformation and salvation of a degenerate and perishing world. The sages and philosophers of the heathen world had had a clear stage for many hundreds of years; and they might have done their utmost without controul. But alas! did any of them, amid all their boasted improvements, succeed in the experiment? Or could they so much as find out a method in which sinners might be reconciled to their God? No; in this most interesting point, they were either stupidly thoughtless, or all their searches issued in perplexity, or in the most absurd and impious contrivances. *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?* Let them appear, and produce their schemes upon this head. But *hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* (ver. 20.) Yes, indeed he has, by proposing a method most perfectly adapted for this end, which they not only never would have once thought of, but which, when revealed, their wisdom cannot relish.

Their wisdom appears but folly, in that when they had the world to themselves about four thousand years, they could not in all that time find out any successful expedient to amend and save it. And now, if any thing be done at all, it is time for God to do it; and how strange, how unexpected, how mysterious was his expedient! and yet how glorious and effectual! *For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* ver. 21. This was the contrivance for effecting what all the wisdom and learning of the world could never effect; the plain unadorned preaching of Christ crucified; which, both for the matter and manner of it, was counted foolishness.

But how did the world bear this mortification of their intellectual pride? And what reception did this bounteous divine scheme meet with when revealed? Alas! I am sorry to tell you: The prejudices of their education were different; but they were unitedly set against the gospel. The Jews had been educated in a religion established by a series of miracles; and therefore they were extravagant in their demands of this sort of evidence. Notwithstanding all the miracles Christ was working daily before their eyes, they were perpetually asking him, *What sign shewest thou?*—Those that are resolved not to be convinced, will be always complaining of the want of proof, and demanding more to vindicate their infidelity. As for the Greeks, their prejudices were of another kind; it was even a proverb among them, that “miracles were for fools*,” and therefore they did not desire that sort of evidence. But *they seek after wisdom.* They had been accustomed to fine orations, strong reasoning, and a parade of learning; and these were the evidences they desired to recommend a doctrine to them. And, finding the doctrine of Christ crucified had none of these embellishments, they despised and rejected it as foolishness and nonsense.

The method of salvation by the crucifixion of a supposed malefactor, was so extremely opposite to the

* Ολίματα μωρῶν.

reasoning, pride, and prejudices of Jews and Gentiles, that they could not bear it. The Jews expected the Messiah would appear as a victorious temporal prince, who, instead of falling a prey to his enemies, would subdue them all with an irresistible power, and advance the family of David to universal empire. And of all other deaths, that of crucifixion was the most odious and abominable to them, because, according to the custom of the Romans, it was the punishment only of slaves; and by their own law it was pronounced accursed; *for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* Gal. iii. 13. Deut. xxi. 23. Hence, by way of contempt, the Jews called the blessed Jesus, *the Hanged Man.*—Nay, this was a shock to the faith of the apostles themselves, until their Jewish prejudices were removed by better information. Finding that, instead of setting up a glorious kingdom, their Master was apprehended by his enemies, and hang upon a cross, they had nothing to say, but *We trusted this was he that should have delivered Israel:* we simply thought so; but alas! now we see our mistake. *Luke* xxiv. 21. No wonder the cross of Christ should be a stumbling-block to such as had imbibed such notions of the Messiah. When, instead of the power of signs and miracles, which they were extravagantly demanding, they saw him crucified in weakness, they could not admit the thought that this was that illustrious character of an universal king. They were so dazzled with worldly glory, and so insensible of their spiritual wants, that they had no notions of a spiritual Saviour, and a kingdom of grace; nor could they see how such prophecies were accomplished in one that only professed to deliver from the slavery of sin and Satan, and the wrath to come. Hence they stumbled at the cross, as an obstacle which they could not get over. When Christ called Lazarus from the dead, he had crowds of followers, who attended his triumphant procession into Jerusalem as a mighty conqueror: and when he had fed so many thousands with a few loaves, they were about forcibly to make him king; for they knew that one who could raise his soldiers to life after they had been killed, and support an army with so lit-

tle provisions, could easily conquer the world, and rescue them from the power of the Romans. But when they saw him seized by his enemies without making resistance, or working a miracle for his own defence, they immediately abandoned him; and the Hosannas of the multitude were turned into another kind of cry, *Crucify him, crucify him.* And when they saw him hanging helpless and dying upon the cross, it was demonstration to them that he was an impostor. It was this that rendered the preaching of Christ by his apostles so unpopular among the Jews: It seemed to them like a panegyric upon an infamous malefactor: and they thought it an insult to their nation to have such a one proposed to them as their Messiah. Thus Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block.

As to the Greeks, who were a learned philosophical people, it seemed to them the wildest folly to worship one as a God who had been crucified as a malefactor; and to trust in one for salvation who had not saved himself. Their Jupiter had his thunder, and according to their tradition, had crushed the formidable rebellion of the giants against heaven: their Bacchus had avenged himself upon the despisers of his worship; and the whole rabble of their deities had done some god-like exploit, if the fables of their poets were true: and would they abandon such gods, and receive in their stead a despised Nazarene, who had been executed as the vilest criminal by his own nation? Would they give up all their boasted wisdom and learning, and become the humblest disciples of the cross, and receive for their teachers a company of illiterate fishermen, and a tent-maker from the despised nation of the Jews, whom they held in the utmost contempt for their ignorance, bigotry, and superstition? No, the pride of their understandings could not bear such a mortification. If their curiosity led them to be St. Paul's hearers, they expected to be entertained with a flourish of words, and fine philosophic reasoning; and when they found themselves disappointed, they pronounced him a babbling fool (Acts xvii. 18.) and his preaching foolishness.-----Corinth, to which this epistle was sent by St. Paul, was a noted city among the Greeks;

and therefore, what he says upon this head was peculiarly pertinent and well applied.

The prejudices of the Jews and Greeks in this respect outlived the apostolic age, as we learn from the writings of the primitive fathers of the christian church, who lived among them, and were conversant with them. Trypho the Jew, in a dialogue with Justin Martyr, about an hundred years after St. Paul wrote this epistle, charges it upon the christians as the greatest absurdity and impiety, that they placed their hopes in a crucified man*. Justin after long reasoning, constrains him at length to make sundry concessions, as, that the prophecies which he had mentioned did really refer to the Messiah; and that, according to these prophecies, the Messiah was to suffer. 'But (says the Jew) that Christ should be so ignominiously crucified; that he should die a death which the law pronounces accursed, this we cannot but doubt; this I yet find a very hard thing to believe: and therefore if you have any further evidence upon this head, would willingly hear it†.' Here you see the cross was a stumbling-block, which the Jews could not get over in an hundred years; nay, they have not got over it to this day. Lactantius, about three hundred years after Christ's birth, observes, that the sufferings of Christ were wont to be cast upon christians as a reproach: it was thought a strange and scandalous thing that they should worship a man; a man that has been crucified, and put to the most infamous and tormenting death by men‡. An heathen,

*—'Ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων σαυρωθέντα τῶς ἐλπίδας ποιούμενοι. P. 227.

† The passage in full runs thus:—

Καὶ ὁ Τρύφων, ἔν Ἰσθι ἔφη, ὅτι καὶ πᾶν τὸ γένος ἡμῶν τὸν Χριστὸν ἐδέχεται, καὶ ὅτι πᾶσαι ἀγραφαὶ αἷς ἔφησ, εἰς αὐτὸν εἰρήνται, ὁμολογούμεν* καὶ ὅτι τὸ Ἰησοῦ, ὄνομα διδουσαπικέ με τῷ τῷ Ναυῆ υἱῷ ἐπικληθέν ἐκδοτῶς ἔχειν καὶ πρὸς τῆτό, καὶ τῆτό φημι εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀτίμως οὕτως σαυρωθῆναι τὸν Χριστὸν, ἀπορῶμέν' ἑπικατάσατο· γὰρ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λέγεται εἶναι· ὡς πρὸς τέτο ἄμην δυσπείτης ἔχω. παθῆτον μὲν τὸν Χριστὸν ὅτι αἱ γραφαὶ κηρύσσοσι, φανερόν ἐστιν. εἰ δὲ διὰ τῆ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κεκατηραμένῶς πάδους, βεβλόμεθα μαθεῖν, εἰ ἔχεις καὶ περὶ τῆτό ἀποδείξαι. P. 317. Apud Justinum Lutet. Parisior. 1615.

‡—Passionem quæ velut opprobrium nobis objectari solet: quod et hominem, et ab hominibus insigni supplicio affectum et excruciatum colamus—De ver. Sap. L. IV. c. 16.

in Minutius Fœlix, is introduced as saying, 'He who represents a man punished for his crimes with the severest punishment, and the savage wood of the cross, as the object of their worship, and a ceremony of their religion, ascribes a very proper altar to such abandoned and wicked creatures, that they may worship that which they deserve to hang upon*.' And referring to the many barbarous persecutions they then groaned under, he jeers them; 'See here,' says he, 'are threatenings for you, punishments, torture, and crosses, not to be adored, but endured †.' 'The calumniating Greeks,' says Athanasius, 'ridicule us, and set up a broad laugh at us, because we regard nothing so much as the cross of Christ.'

Thus, you see, the doctrine of the cross was, of all other things, the most unpopular among Jews and Gentiles, and the most disagreeable to their taste. A man could not expect to shine, or cut a figure as a man of sense and learning, by making this the subject of his discourses. But will Paul give it up, and display his talents upon some more acceptable theme? This, as a fine scholar, he was very capable of; but he abhors the thought.

'Let the Jews and Greeks desire what they please; we,' says he, 'will not humour them, nor gratify their taste: however they take it, we will preach Christ crucified; though to the Jews he should prove a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And there are some that relish this humble doctrine. To them that believe, both Jews and Greeks, whether learned or unlearned, whether educated in the Jewish or Pagan religion, however different their prejudices, or their natural tastes, to all that believe, notwithstanding these differences, Christ, that is, *Christ crucified, is the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

* Qui hominem summo supplicio pro facinore punitum, & crucis ligna feralia eorum Ceremonias fabulatur, congruentia perditis sceleratisque tribuit altaria, ut id colant quod merentur. P. 9.

† Ecce vobis minae, supplicia, tormenta, etiam non adorandae, sed subeundae cruces, P. 11.

The wisdom and power of God are not the only perfections that shine in this method of salvation by the cross; but the apostle particularly mentions these, as directly answering to the respective demands of Jews and Greeks. If the Jew desires the sign of power in working miracles, the believer sees in Christ crucified a power superior to all the powers of miracles. If the Greek seeks after wisdom, here in a crucified Christ, the wisdom of God shines in the highest perfection.—Whatever sign or wisdom the Jew or Greek desires and seeks after, the believer finds more than an equivalent in the cross. This is the greatest miracle of power, the greatest mystery of wisdom in all the world.

The prejudices of the Jews and Gentiles were not only confined to the early ages of Christianity; the same depraved taste, the same contempt of the humble doctrines of the cross may be found among us, though professed Christians: some resemble the Jews, who were perpetually demanding signs: they affect visions and impulses, and all the reveries of enthusiasm, instead of the preaching of Christ crucified. Others, like the Greeks, through an affectation of florid harangues, moral discourses, and a parade of learning and philosophy, nauseate this sort of preaching, and count it foolishness. It is therefore high time for the ministers of the gospel to stand up as advocates for the cross, and with a pious obstinacy to adhere to this subject, whatever contempt and ridicule it may expose them to. For my part, I know not what I have to do, as a minister of the gospel, but to preach Christ crucified. I would make him the substance, the center, the end of all my ministrations. *And if we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel—you know his doom—let him be accursed.* Gal. i. 9.

We are to consider the apostles as sent out into the world to reform and save the corrupt and perishing sons of men, and the preaching of Christ crucified as the mean they used for this important end. This is the formal view the apostle had of preaching Christ in this place, viz. as a mean found out by the wisdom of God to save them that believe, after that all the wisdom of

the world had tried in vain to find out a method for this end. This is evident from ver. 21. *After that the world by all its wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching; that is, by the preaching a crucified Saviour, which the world counts foolishness, to save them that believe.* This is the excellency of this preaching, this is the reason why the apostle could not be prevailed upon by any motive to desert it, that it is the only mean of salvation: and it is in this view I now intend to consider it. And if your everlasting salvation be of any importance to you, certainly this subject demands your most serious attention.

I have been the longer in explaining the context, because it is so closely connected with the subject I have in view, and reflects light upon it. And I shall only add, that preaching Christ crucified is the same thing as preaching salvation through the sufferings of Christ. His sufferings were of long continuance, even from his conception to his resurrection; and they were of various kinds, poverty, weariness, and labour, hunger and thirst, contempt and reproach, buffeting, scourging, and a thorny crown. But there are two words, which by a synecdoche are often used in scripture to signify all his sufferings of every kind, from first to last; viz. his blood, and his cross. And the reason is, the shedding of his blood, and the death of the cross, were the worst kind and highest degree of his sufferings. In his crucifixion all his other sufferings were united and centered: this was a complete summary and consummation of them all; and therefore, they are frequently included under this. In this latitude I shall use the word in this discourse; which I hope you will take notice of, that no part of the meaning may escape you.

Our inquiry shall be,

What are the reasons that the preaching of Christ crucified is, above all others, the best, and the only effectual mean for the salvation of sinners?

These reasons may be reduced under two general heads; namely, That through the crucifixion of Christ, and through that only, a way is really opened for the

salvation of sinners; and that the preaching of Christ crucified makes such a discovery of things, as has the most direct tendency to bring them to repentance, and produce in them that temper which is necessary to salvation. Or, in other words, in this way salvation is provided, and sinners are made fit to enjoy it; both which are absolutely necessary. Our world is deeply and universally sunk in sin. Men have cast contempt upon the divine government, broken the divine law, and so incurred its penalty; they have forfeited the favour of God, and rendered themselves liable to his displeasure. Had mankind continued innocent, there would have been no difficulty in their case. It would be very plain what would be fit for the divine government to do with dutiful subjects. But, alas! rebellion against God has made its entrance into our world; and all its inhabitants are up in arms against Heaven. This has thrown all into confusion, and rendered it a perplexing case what to do with them. In one view, indeed, the case is plain, viz. that proper punishments should be executed upon them. This would appear evidently just to the whole universe, and no objection could be made against it, though the criminals themselves, who are parties, and therefore not fit judges, might murmur against it as unmerciful and severe. But the difficulty is, how such rebels may not only be delivered from the punishments they deserve, but made happy for ever? If they cannot be saved in a way that displays the perfections of God, and does honour to his government, a way in which sin will meet with no encouragement, but, on the other hand, an effectual warning will be given against it; a way in which depraved creatures may be sanctified, and made fit for the pure bliss of heaven; I say, if they cannot be saved in such a way as this, they cannot be saved at all: their salvation is quite impossible; for each of these particulars is of such importance, that it cannot be dispensed with. God is the best and most glorious Being in himself; and it is fit he should do justice to his own perfections, and exhibit them in the most God-like and glorious manner to his creatures: to do otherwise would be to wrong himself, to obscure the bright-

est glory, and dishonour the highest excellency. This therefore cannot be done: men and angels must be happy, in a way consistent with his glory, otherwise they must perish; for the display of his glory is a greater good, and a matter of more importance than the happiness of the whole creation. God is also the moral Governor of the world. And his government over our world is a government over a country of rebels: and that is a tender point, and requires a judicious management. An error in government in such a case may have the most fatal consequences, both as to the ruler and his subjects, in all parts of his dominions. A private person may, if he pleases, give up his rights, may pardon offenders, and conceal his justice, and other qualities for government; but a ruler is not at liberty in this case. He must maintain his character, make known his capacity for government, and support the dignity of the law; otherwise, all might rush into confusion and lawless violence. If the ruler of a small kingdom on our little globe should fail to discover his justice; if he should pardon criminals, and admit them into favour, and into posts of honour and profit, without giving proper expressions of his displeasure against their conduct, and a striking warning against all disobedience, how fatal would be the consequences? how soon would such a ruler fall into contempt, and his government be unhinged? And how soon would his kingdom become a scene of confusion and violence! Criminals might like such an administration: but, I appeal to yourselves, would you chuse to live under it? Now, how much more terrible and extensively mischievous would be the consequences, if the universal Ruler of men and angels, and of more worlds than we have heard the fame of, should exercise such a government over our rebellious world? It would be reproachful to himself; and it would be most injurious to his subjects: in short, it might throw heaven and earth, and unknown regions of the universe, into confusion*. He must therefore display his own rectoral virtues; he

* Pardoning sin, receiving into favour, and bestowing happiness, are not to be considered in this case as private favours; but they are acts of government.

must maintain the honour of his government, he must shew his displeasure against disobedience, and deter his subjects from it; I say, he must do these things in saving the sinners of Adam's race, or he cannot save them at all. Should he save them upon other terms, it would reflect dishonour upon himself and administration; and it would be injurious to the good of the whole, which is always the end of a wise ruler; for the favour thus injudiciously shewn to a part of the creation in our world, might occasion a more extensive mischief in other more important worlds; and so it would be promoting a private interest to the detriment of the public, which is always the character of a weak or wicked ruler. Again, sinners cannot be saved, until their dispositions be changed, so that they can relish and delight in the fruition and employments of the heavenly state. Provision therefore must be made for this; otherwise, their salvation is impossible.

Now the way of salvation through Christ crucified, most completely answers these ends in the most illustrious manner.

1. The salvation of sinners in this way gives the brightest display of the perfections of God, and particularly of those that belong to him as the supreme ruler of the rational world, and maintains the honour of his government.

Justice and clemency, duly tempered, and exercised with wisdom, is a summary of those virtues that belong to a good ruler. Now these are most illustriously displayed in a happy conjunction in Christ crucified. Justice shines brighter than if every sin had been punished upon offenders, without any mercy; and mercy and clemency shine brighter than if every sin had been pardoned, and every sinner made happy, without any execution of justice. Mercy appears in turning the divine mind with such a strong propensity upon the salvation of sinners; and justice appears, in that when the heart of God was so much set upon it, yet he would not save them without a complete satisfaction to his justice. Mercy appears in providing such a Saviour; and justice, in inflicting the punishment due to sin upon him, without abatement, though he loved

him more than the whole universe of creatures. Mercy, in transferring the guilt from the sinner upon the surety, and accepting a vicarious satisfaction: justice, in exacting the satisfaction, and not passing by sin, when it was but imputed to the darling Son of God. Mercy, in pardoning and saving guilty sinners: justice, in punishing their sin. Mercy in justifying them, though destitute of all personal merit and righteousness: justice, in justifying them only and entirely on account of the merit and righteousness of Christ. Thus the righteousness or justice of God is declared not only in the punishment, but in the remission of sins, Rom. iii. 26.: and we are justified freely through his grace, and in the mean time by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. (ver. 24.) Mercy appears in providing a Saviour of such infinite dignity: justice, in refusing a satisfaction from an inferior person. Mercy, in forgiving sin; justice, in forgiving not so much as one sin without a sufficient atonement. Mercy, rich free mercy towards the sinner: justice, strict inexorable justice towards the surety. In short, mercy and justice, as it were, walk hand in hand through every step of this amazing scheme. They are not only glorious each of them apart, but they mingle their beams, and reflect a glory upon each other. By this scheme of salvation by the cross of Christ, also the honour of the divine government is secured and advanced. The clemency and compassion of God towards his rebellious subjects are most illustriously displayed; but in the mean time he takes care to secure the sacred rights of his government. Though innumerable multitudes of rebels are pardoned, yet not one of them is pardoned until their rebellion is punished according to its demerit in the person of the surety. The precept of the law, which they had broken, was perfectly obeyed; the penalty which they had incurred was fully endured, not by themselves indeed, but by one that presented himself in their place: and it is only on this footing they are received into favour. So that the law is magnified, and made honourable, and the rights of government are preserved sacred and inviolable, and

yet the prisoners of justice are set free, and advanced to the highest honours and blessedness.

2. In this way of salvation God's hatred to sin is discovered in the most striking light; the evil of sin is exposed in the most dreadful colours; and so an effectual warning is given to all worlds to deter them from it. Now it appears that such is the divine hatred against all sin, that God can by no means connive at it; or suffer it to pass without punishment; and that all the infinite benevolence of his nature towards his creatures cannot prevail upon him to pardon the least sin without an adequate satisfaction. Nay, now it appears, that when so malignant and abominable a thing is but imputed to his dear Son, his co-equal, his darling, his favourite, even he could not escape unpunished, but was made a monument of vindictive justice to all worlds. And what can more strongly expose the evil of sin? It is such an intolerably malignant and abominable thing, that even a God of infinite mercy and grace cannot let the least instance of it pass unpunished. It was not a small thing that could arm his justice against the Son of his love. But when he was but made sin for us, and was perfectly innocent in himself, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up unto death, the shameful tormenting, and accursed death of the cross. Go, ye fools, that make a mock at sin, go and learn its malignity and demerit at the cross of Jesus. Who is it that hangs there writhing in the agonies of death, his hands and feet pierced with nails, his side with a spear, his face bruised with blows, and drenched with tears and blood, his heart melting like wax, his whole frame racked and disjointed; forsaken by his friends, and even by his Father, tempted by devils, and insulted by men? Who is this amazing spectacle of woe and torture? It is Jesus, the eternal word of God; the man that is his fellow; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth! his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. And what has he done? He did no wickedness; he knew no sin; but was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And whence then all these dreadful sufferings from heaven, earth, and hell? Why,

he only stood in the law-place of sinners; he only received their sin by imputation. And you see what it has brought upon him? you see how low it has reduced him! and what an horrid evil must that be, which has such tremendous consequences, even upon the darling of Heaven! O! what still more dreadful havock would it have made, if it had been punished upon the sinner himself in his own person? Surely, all the various miseries which have been inflicted upon our guilty world in all ages, and even all the punishments of hell, do not so loudly proclaim the terrible desert and malignity of sin as the cross of Christ! And hence it follows, that in this way of salvation the most effectual warning is given to the whole universe, to deter them from disobedience. Rebels are pardoned, and made happy, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to others to repeat the transgression. And this was the tender and critical point. If rebels can be pardoned without reflecting dishonour upon the government and doing injury to the society, it is well: but how this shall be done, is the difficulty. But by the strange expedient of a crucified Saviour all the difficulty is removed. Sinners can no more presume upon sin, with a pretence that the supreme Ruler has no great indignation against it, or that there is no great evil in it; for, as I observed, his hatred to sin, and the infinite malignity of it appear nowhere in so striking and awful a light as in the cross of Christ. Let a reasonable creature take but one serious view of that, and sure he must ever after tremble at the thought of the least sin. Again, though sinners are pardoned in this way, yet no encouragement is given to the various territories of the divine dominions to flatter themselves that they also will be forgiven in case they should imitate the race of man in their rebellion. There is but one instance that we know of in the whole universe of the forgiveness of sin, and the restoration of rebels into favour, and we are so happy as to find that only instance in our guilty world. But what a strange revolution has been brought about! what amazing miracles have been wrought in order to pre-

pare the way for it! The eternal Son of God must become a man, and die the death of a criminal and a slave upon the cross. The very first effort of pardoning grace went thus far; and is it possible it should go any farther? or is there reason to hope that such a miracle should often be repeated? that the Son of God should hang upon a cross as often as any race of creatures may fall into sin? Such hopes receive a damp from the case of the apostate angels, for whom he refused to die and assume the office of a Saviour. Or is there any other being that can perform that task for some other kingdom of rebels which Christ has discharged for the sons of men? No; he only is equal to it; and none else has sufficient dignity, power, or love. This therefore must strike a terror into all worlds at the thought of sin, and leave them no umbrage to presume they shall escape punishment, when they observe that the redeemed from among men could not be saved but at so prodigious an expence, and that the fallen angels are suffered to perish without any salvation provided for them at all.

3. In this way provision is made for the sanctification of sinners, that they may be fit for the fruitions and employments of the heavenly state. Their taste is so vitiated that they have no relish for that pure bliss, and therefore can no more be happy there than a sick man can relish the entertainments of a feast. And they are so far gone with the deadly disease of sin, that they are not able to recover themselves, nay, they are not so much as disposed to use means for that end. They are estranged from God, and engaged in rebellion against him; and they love to continue so. They will not submit, nor return to their duty and allegiance. Hence there is need of a superior power to subdue their stubborn hearts, and sweetly constrain them to subjection; to inspire them with the love of God, and an implacable detestation of all sin. And for this purpose the holy Spirit of God is sent into the world: for this purpose he is at work from age to age upon the hearts of men. And though he be most ungratefully resisted, grieved, and despitefully treated,

and he gives up many to the lusts of their own hearts, yet numerous and glorious are the conquests he has gained over rebellious sinners. Many a stubborn will has he sweetly subdued: many an heart of stone has he softened, and dissolved into ingenuous repentance like snow before the sun: many a depraved soul has he purified, and at length brought to the heavenly state in all the beauties of perfect holiness. And hence it is that there is any such thing as true religion to be found upon earth, and that any of the sons of men are recovered to obedience and happiness. But for this inestimable blessing we are indebted to a crucified Christ. It is the dear purchase of his blood, and had it not been so purchased, it would never have been communicated to our guilty world; and consequently never would one rebel have submitted, never would one heart have felt the love of God, among all the sons of men.

Thus, my brethren, you see a way is really opened for the salvation of sinners through the crucifixion of Christ. And O! what an amazing, unexpected mysterious way! how far beyond the reach of human wisdom! and how brilliant a display of the divine! To display the perfections of God by occasion of sin more illustriously than if sin had never entered into the world, and thus bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil—to pardon and save the sinner, and yet condemn and punish his sin—to give the brightest display of justice in the freest exercise of mercy; and the richest discovery of mercy in the most rigorous execution of justice—to dismiss rebels from punishment, and advance them to the highest honours, and yet secure and even advance the honour of the government against which they had rebelled—to give the most effectual warning against sin, even in rewarding the sinner; and to let it pass unpunished, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to it—to magnify the law in justifying those that had broken it—to discover the utmost hatred against sin, in showing the highest love to the sinner—what an astonishing God-like scheme is this! What a stupendous display of the infinite wisdom of God! Could the Socrateses, the

Platos, and other oracles of the heathen world ever have found out an expedient to answer this end, and reconcile these seeming contradictions! No; this would have nonplused men and angels; for in what a strange unthought-of way is it brought about! that the Son of God should become the Son of man; the head of the universe appear in the form of a servant; the Author of life die upon a cross; the lawgiver become the subject of his own law, and suffer its penalty, though perfectly innocent! who would ever have thought of such strange events as these! This is to accomplish astonishing things in an astonishing way.—You may as well set an human understanding to draw the plan of a world, as to form such a scheme as this. O! it is all divine; it is the wonder of angels; and the greatest miracle in the universe.

Thus, you see, there are very good reasons, reducible to this head, why the cross of Christ should be the grand weapon to destroy the kingdom of darkness, and rescue sinners, and bring them into a state of liberty and glory.

And there are reasons, equally important, that fall under the other head, viz. That the preaching of Christ crucified makes such a discovery of things, as has the most direct tendency to bring sinners to repentance, and produce in them that temper which is necessary to their salvation.

If a representation of the most moving, the most alluring, and most alarming matters, can affect the mind of man, certainly the preaching of the cross cannot be without effect; for,

1. The preaching of a crucified Saviour gives the strongest assurance to the guilty sons of men, that their offended God is reconcileable to them, and willing to receive them into favour again, upon their penitent return to him. The provision he has made for this end, and particularly his appointing his Son to be their Saviour, and delivering him up to the death of the cross for them, leaves no room for doubt upon this head. It is full demonstration that he is not only willing, but that his heart is earnestly set upon reconciliation; otherwise he would not have been at such infinite pains

and expence to remove obstructions, and clear the way for it. Now this is an assurance that the light of nature could never give. It leaves us dreadfully in the dark. And indeed, nothing but an express declaration from God himself can inform us what he intends to do with criminals that lie entirely at mercy, and that he may do what he pleases with. The heathen world were either stupidly thoughtless about this point, or full of anxiety; and their philosophers, amid all their boasted knowledge, could only offer plausible conjectures. And yet this assurance is necessary to keep up religion in the world, and encourage rebellious sinners to return to obedience; for with what heart can they serve that God, as to whom they fear he will accept of no service at their hands, or return to him, when they have no encouragement that he will receive them! The hope of acceptance is the spring of repentance and all attempts for reformation; and when once the sinner concludes there is no hope, he lies down inactive and sullen in despair, or confirms himself in hardened impenitence, and gives the full rein to his lusts. This the psalmist observed long ago; *There is forgiveness with thee, O Lord, that thou mayest be feared.* Psalm cxxx. 4. The fear of God is often used in scripture for the whole of religion; and so it seems taken here. As much as to say, "There is forgiveness with thee; and thou hast assured us of it, that religion might be preserved in the world, that mankind may not abandon thy service as wholly in vain; or give up themselves to sin, as despairing of acceptance upon their repentance." O! what an acceptable assurance must this be to a guilty trembling sinner! And how suitable a remedy to such sinners is the preaching of the cross of Christ, which alone gives them this welcome assurance.

2. The preaching of a crucified Saviour gives the most moving display of the love of God; and love is a strong attractive to repentance and obedience.—There cannot be so strong an expression of love as the sufferings of Christ. For God to give us life, and breath, and all things, what is this, in comparison of the gift of his Son, and those immortal blessings which he has

purchased with his blood! To create such a world as this for our residence, to furnish it with such a rich variety of blessings for our accommodation, and to exercise a tender providence over us every moment of our lives, this is amazing love and goodness. But what is this in comparison of his dying love! To speak an all-creating word, and to hang, and agonize, and expire upon a cross; to give us the blessings of the earth, and to give the blood of his heart; these are very different things; they will not hold comparison.

My brethren, let me make an experiment upon you with the cross of Christ, and try with that weapon to slay your sins, and break your hearts. Can you view such agonies, and question the love that endured them? Or can you place yourselves under the warm beams of that love, and yet feel no love kindled in your hearts in return? What! not the love of a worm for the dying love of a God! The apostle John reasons very naturally, when he says, *He love him, because he first loved us.* 1 John iv. 19. Love for love is but a reasonable retaliation; especially the love of a redeemed sinner for the love of a crucified Saviour. St. Paul felt the energy of this love irresistible: *the love of Christ constraineth us,* 2 Cor. v. 14.; or according to the emphasis of the original word *, it carries us away, like a resistless torrent. And it appeared to him so shocking, that he could not mention it without weeping, that any should be enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18. Hear what expectations he had from the energy of his cross who himself hung upon it. *I, says he, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* Phil. iii. 18. This the evangelist teaches us to understand of the manner of his death, viz. his being raised up from the earth, and suspended on the cross. There, sinners, he hung to attract your love; and can you resist the force of this attraction, this almighty magnet? Jesus, if I may so speak, expects that this will carry all before it: that every sinner who sees him hanging there will immediately melt into repentance, and be drawn to him by the cords of love. And O! can you find in your hearts to resist? Where then is

* συνέχει. So Dr. Doddridge translates it.

the gratitude? Is that generous principle quite dead within you? I must honestly tell you, if the love of a crucified Saviour does not attract your love, nothing else will: you will continue his enemies, and perish as such. This is the most powerful inducement that can be proposed to you: all the reasonings of the ablest philosophers, all the persuasions of the ministers of the gospel, all the goodness of God in creation and providence, will never prevail upon you, if your hearts are proof against the attraction of the cross. But, blessed be his name who died upon it, many an obstinate and reluctant heart has this cross allured and subdued: and O! that we may all feel its sweet constraints!

3. The preaching of Christ crucified gives such a representation of the evil of sin, and the dreadful punishment due to it, as naturally tends to turn sinners from it, and bring them to repentance. In the cross of Christ the sinner may see what malignity there is in sin, when it brought such heavy vengeance on the head of the surety. There the sinner may see how God hates it, when he punished it so severely in his beloved Son. If the almighty Redeemer sunk under the load, how shall the feeble sinner bear up under it? If God spared not his own Son, who was but a surety, how can the sinner escape, who is the original debtor? O sinners, never call it cruel that God should punish you for your sins; so he dealt with Jesus, his favourite; and how can you hope for more favour! Read the nature of sin as written in characters of blood on the cross of Christ, and surely you can make light of it no more. You must tremble at the very thought of it; and immediately reform and repent of it. All the harangues of moralists upon the intrinsic deformity, the unreasonableness, the incongruity of vice, never can represent it in such a shocking light as you view it in the sufferings of Christ. And can you look upon your sins piercing him, stretching him upon the cross, and slaughtering him, and yet not mourn over them! O! can you indulge the murderous things that shed his blood! Then you practically pronounce him an impostor, and join the cry of the Jewish rabble, *Crucify him, crucify him.*

4. The preaching of Christ crucified presents us with such a perfect pattern of obedience, as has at once the force of an example, and an inducement to holiness. We need no longer view the law in theory: we see it reduced into an uniform practice, and presented to the life, in the whole of our Lord's conduct towards God and man. We see one in our nature, upon our guilty globe in our circumstances, behaving exactly agreeable to the divine law, and leaving us an example that we might follow his steps. And shall we not delight to imitate our best friend, and the most perfect pattern that ever was exhibited! O! how sweet to walk as he walked in the world, and to trace the steps of his lovely feet! Until the doctrine of the cross was introduced, the world was sadly at a loss about a rule of duty. All the admired writings of pagan antiquity cannot furnish out one complete system even of morality; but here we have a perfect law, and a perfect example, which has the force of a law. Therefore, let us be followers of this incarnate God, as dear children.

For an application:

1. Hence we may learn our great happiness in enjoying the preaching of Christ crucified. It is but a very small part of the world that has heard this joyful sound; and the time has been, when none of the sons of men enjoyed it in that full evidence which we are favoured with. Now since it pleases God, by this foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe, since this is the most effectual mean for our recovery from sin and ruin,—how great, how distinguishing, how peculiar is our privilege! It becomes us, my brethren, to know our happiness, that we may be thankful. How few among the sons of men enjoy this privilege! How does the whole world lie in wickedness! Alas! they are fatally unconcerned, or fruitlessly anxious about a way of reconciliation with God. Their priests and philosophers can afford them no relief in this case; but either mislead them or increase their perplexity. But we have the strongest assurance that God is reconcileable to us; and the clearest discovery of the way. We have the most powerful inducements to repentance, and the most effec-

tual restraints from sin. And what gratitude does this call for from us to our divine Benefactor! And how solicitous should we be to make a proper improvement of our peculiar advantages!

2. Hence we may learn the shocking guilt and danger of our modern infidels, the deists, who, like the Greeks, count the preaching of Christ crucified foolishness, and deny the Lord that bought them. This is to reject the best, the last, the only remedy. Now let them consult their feeble reason; let them go to the oracles of wisdom in the heathen world, and ask of them how guilty offenders may be restored into favour, in consistency with the honour of the divine perfections and government? Alas they can find no satisfactory answer. Now also they have lost the strongest motive to love and obedience, when they have turned away their eyes from the cross. They have lost the most full and amiable view of the divine nature and perfections that ever was exhibited to the world. Should they shut their eyes against the light of the sun, and abhor all the beauties of nature, it would not be such an astonishing instance of infatuation. Saint Paul represents it as the most amazing folly, nay, a kind of witchcraft and incantation, that any should desert the truth, that had ever had the least view of Christ crucified. *O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among you?* Gal. iii. 1. What wickedness, what madness, what an unnatural conspiracy against their own lives must it be for men to reject the only expedient found out by infinite wisdom and goodness for their salvation! What base ingratitude thus to require the dying love of Jesus! Can such monsters expect salvation from his hands? No; they will fully cut themselves off from all hope, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. If the cross of Christ does not break their hearts, it is impossible to bring them to repentance: the last and most powerful remedy has proved ineffectual: the last and strongest effort of divine grace has been used with them in vain. Since they obstinately reject the sacrifice of Christ, there remains no other sacrifice for their sin, and

and nothing awaits them but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour them as adversaries.

3. Hence we should inquire what effect the preaching of Christ crucified has been upon us. Since this is the grand mean Divine Wisdom has found out for the recovery of our wicked world, when all other means had been in vain, it is of the utmost importance to us that we should enquire, whether it is likely to answer this end upon us. *It pleases God by this foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* Observe the limitation,—*them that believe.* They and only they can be saved by it. As for unbelievers, they cannot be saved in this, or any other way. Let us then abandon every other concern for a while, and seriously examine ourselves in this point. Faith comes by hearing: and have we been brought to believe by hearing the preaching of the cross? Do we relish this humble despised doctrine with peculiar pleasure? Is it the life and nourishment of our souls, and the ground of all our hopes? Or do we secretly wonder what there can be in it, that some should be so much affected with it? *To them that perish, says the apostle, and to them only, the preaching of the cross is foolishness.* And is that our dreadful characteristic? Or does a crucified Christ appear to us as the wisdom of God, and the power of God as he does to all them that believe, however different their natural tastes and the prejudices of their education, and their outward circumstances? Do we suspend all our hopes upon the cross of Christ? Do we glory in it above all other things, whatever contempt the world may pour upon it? Do we feel our necessity of a Mediator in all our transactions with God, and depend entirely upon the merit of his death for acceptance, sensible that we have no merit of our own to procure one smile from God? Have we ever had our hearts enlightened to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have we admired the scheme of salvation through a crucified Jesus, as illustrating the perfections of God, and securing the honour of the divine government, while it secures our salvation? And do we delight in it upon that account? Or are we quite

indifferent about the glory of God, if we may be but saved? Alas! hereby we show we are entirely under the government of selfish principles, and have no regard for God at all. Do our thoughts frequently hover and cluster about the cross with the tenderest affections? And has the view of it melted our hearts into the most ingenuous relentings for sin, and given us such a hatred against it, that we can never indulge it more? My brethren, put such questions as these home to your hearts, and then endeavour to come to some just conclusion with regard to yourselves.—And if the conclusion be against you, then,

4. Consider your guilt and danger—consider your ingratitude in rejecting all the love of God, and a crucified Saviour—your hardness of heart, that has not been broken by such a moving representation—the aversion of your souls to God, that have not been allured to him by the powerful attraction of the cross—and O! consider your danger: the last remedy has been tried upon you in vain: Christ's grand expedient for the salvation of sinners has had no effect upon you. Had the religion of the Jews or of the heathen world failed to bring you to repentance, there might be still some hope that the preaching of Christ crucified might prevail. But alas! when that fails, how discouraging is your cause! Therefore I pray you take the alarm, and labour to get your hearts affected with this representation. O yield to the attraction of the cross: let him draw you to himself, whom you see lifted up on it; and do not attempt such an exploit of wickedness as to resist the allurements of such love. And O! cry to God for his enlightening spirit. Alas! it is your blindness that renders you unaffected with this moving object. Did you but know the Lord of glory who was crucified; did you but see the glory of the plan of salvation through his sufferings, you would immediately become the captives of his cross, conquered by the power of his love. And such, believe me, such you must be, before you can be saved.—But if the result of your examination turns out in your favour, then,

5. You may entertain the joyful hope of salvation; of salvation through one that was insulted as not able

to save himself; of crowns of glory through him that wore the crown of thorns; of fulness of joy through the man of sorrows; of immortal life through one that died upon a cross; I say, you may entertain a joyful hope of all this; for in this way of salvation there is no hinderance, no objection. God will be glorified in glorifying you, the law magnified in justifying you. In short, the honour of God and his government concurs with your interest; and therefore if you heartily embrace this plan of salvation, you may be as sure that God will save you as that he will take care of his own glory, for they are inseparably connected. And do not your hearts, dead as they are, spring within you at the thought? Do you not long to see your Saviour on the throne, to whose cross you are indebted for all your hopes? And O! will you not praise his name while you live, and continue the song through all eternity? Are you not ready to anticipate the anthem of heaven, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: for thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood.* Rev. v. 9, 12.

Finally, let me congratulate* my reverend brethren on their being made ministers of the New Testament, which reveals that glorious and delightful subject *Christ crucified*, in full light, and diffuses it through all their studies and discourses. The Lamb that was slain is the theme that animates the songs of angels and saints above, and even our unhallowed lips are allowed to touch it without profanation. Let us therefore, my dear brethren, delight to dwell upon it. Let us do justice to the refined morality of the gospel: let us often explain and enforce the precepts, the graces, and the virtues of christianity; and teach men to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. But let us do this in an evangelical strain, as ministers of the crucified Jesus, and not as the scholars of Epictetus or Seneca. Let us labour to bring men to an hearty compliance with the method of salvation through Christ;

* The author towards the end of the discourse writes, *At a Presbytery in Augusta, April 25, 1759; which accounts for this particular address to ministers.*

and then we shall find it comparatively an easier matter, a thing of course, to make them good moralists. Then a short hint of their duty to God and man will be more forcible than whole volumes of ethics, while their spirits are not cast in the gospel-mould. Thus may we be enabled to go on, till our great Master shall take our charge off our hands, and call us to give an account of our stewardship!

SERMON XXV.

Ingratitude to God an heinous but general Iniquity.

2 CHRON. xxxii. 25.

But Hezekiah rendered not again, according to the benefit done unto him.

AMONG the many vices that are at once universally decried, and universally practised in the world, there is none more base or more common than ingratitude; ingratitude towards the supreme Benefactor. Ingratitude is the sin of individuals, of families, of churches, of kingdoms, and even of all mankind. The guilt of ingratitude lies heavy upon the whole race of men, though alas! but few of them feel and lament it. I have felt it of late with unusual weight; and it is the weight of it that now extorts a discourse from me upon this subject. If the plague of an ungrateful heart must cleave to us while in this world of sin and imperfection, let us at least lament it; let us bear witness against it; let us condemn ourselves for it; and let us do all we can to suppress it in ourselves and others. I feel myself, as it were, exasperated, and full of indignation against it, and against myself as guilty of it. And in the bitterness of my spirit I shall endeavour to expose it to your view in its proper infernal colours, as an object of horror and indignation.

None of us can flatter ourselves that we are in little or no danger of this sin, when even so good and great a man as Hezekiah did not escape the infection. In the memoirs of his life, which are illustrious for piety, zeal for reformation, victory over his enemies, glory and importance at home and abroad, this, alas! is recorded of him, "That he *rendered not again* to his divine Benefactor, *according to the benefit done unto*

him; for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem."

Many had been the blessings and deliverances of this good man's life. I shall only particularize two, recorded in this chapter. The Assyrians had over-run a great part of the country, and intended to lay siege to Jerusalem. Their haughty monarch, who had carried all before him, and was grown insolent with success, sent Hezekiah a blasphemous letter, to intimidate him and his people. He profanely bullies and defies Hezekiah and his God together; and Rabshakeh, his messenger, comments upon his master's letter in the same style of impiety and insolence. But here observe the signal efficacy of prayer! Hezekiah, Isaiah, and no doubt many other pious people among the Jews, made their prayer to the God of Israel; and, as it were, complained to him of the threatenings and profane blasphemy of the Assyrian monarch. Jehovah hears, and works a miraculous deliverance for them. He sends out an angel (one was sufficient) who destroyed in one night, as we are elsewhere told (2 Kings xix. 35.) no less than an hundred fourscore and five thousand men; which extensive slaughter, a Jewish tradition tells us, was made by means of lightning; a very supposable and sufficient cause. Sennacherib, with the thin remains of his army, fled home inglorious; and his two sons assassinated him at an idolatrous altar. Thus Jerusalem was freed from danger, and the country rescued from slavery and the ravages of war. Nay, we find from profane history, that this dreadful blow proved fatal in the issue to the Assyrian monarchy, which had oppressed the world so long; for upon this the Medes, and afterwards other nations, threw off their submission; and the empire fell to pieces. Certainly, so illustrious a deliverance as this, wrought immediately by the divine hand, was a sufficient reason for ardent gratitude.

Another deliverance followed upon this. Hezekiah was sick unto death; that is, his sickness was in its own nature mortal, and would have been unto death, had it not been for the miraculous interposition of Providence. But, upon his prayer to God he was recovered, and fif-

teen years added to his life. This also was great cause of gratitude. And we find it had this effect upon him, while the sense of his deliverance was fresh upon his mind; for in his eucharistic song upon his recovery, we find these grateful strains: *The living, the living he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life.* But, alas! those grateful impressions wore off in some time; and pride, that uncreaturely temper, began to rise. He began to think himself the favourite of heaven, in some degree, on account of his own personal goodness. He indulged his vanity in ostentatiously exposing his treasures to the Babylonian messengers: which was the instance of selfish pride and ingratitude that seems here particularly referred to.

This pride and ingratitude passed not without evidences of the divine indignation; for we are told, *therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.* As the crime was not peculiar to him, so neither is the punishment. Nations and individuals have suffered in this manner from age to age; and under the guilt of it we and our country are now languishing.

In order to make you the more sensible of your ingratitude towards your divine Benefactor, I shall give you a brief view of his mercies towards you, and expose the aggravated baseness of ingratitude under the reception of so many mercies.

Mercy has poured in upon you on all sides, and followed you from the first commencement of your existence: rich, various, free, repeated, uninterrupted mercy. The blessings of a body wonderfully and fearfully made, complete in all its parts, and not monstrous in any: the blessing of a rational immortal soul, preserved in the exercise of sound reason for so many years, amid all those accidents that have shattered it in others, and capable of the exalted pleasures of religion, and the everlasting enjoyment of the blessed God, the supreme good: the blessing of a large and spacious world, prepared and furnished for our ac-

commodation; illuminated with an illustrious sun, and the many luminaries of the sky; the earth enriched and adorned with trees, vegetables, various sorts of grain, and animals for our support or convenience; and the sea a medium of extensive trade, and an inexhaustible store of fishes: the blessing of the early care of parents and friends, to provide for us in the helpless days of infancy, and direct or restrain us in the giddy precipitant years of youth: the blessing of being born in the adult age of the world, when the improvements of art are carried to so high a degree of perfection; of being born, not among savages in a wilderness, but in a humanized, civilized country; not on the burning sandy deserts of the torrid zone nor under the frozen sky of Lapland or Iceland, but in a temperate climate, as favourable to the comfort and continuance of life as most countries upon earth; not in a barren soil, scarcely affording provision of the coarsest sort for its inhabitants, but in a land of unusual plenty, that has never felt the severities of famine: the blessing of not being a race of slaves, under the tyranny of an arbitrary government, but free-born Britons and Virginians in a land of liberty: these birth-right blessings are almost peculiar to us and our nation. Let me enumerate also the blessing of a good education; good at least, when compared to the many savage nations of the earth: the blessing of health for months and years: the blessing of raiment suited to the various seasons of the year: the blessings of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest; the agreeable vicissitude of night and day; the refreshing repose of sleep, and the activity and enjoyment of our waking hours; the numerous and refined blessings of society, and the most endearing relations; the blessings included in the tender names of friend, husband or wife, parent or child, brother or sister: the blessings of peace; peace, in the midst of a peaceful country, which has been our happy lot till of late years; or peace, in the midst of a ravaged bleeding country, which is a more distinguished and singular blessing, and which we now enjoy, while many of our fellow-

subjects feel a terrible reverse: blessings in every age of life; in infancy, in youth, in adult age, and in the decays of old age: blessings by sea and land, and in every country where we have resided: in short, blessings as numerous as our moments, as long continued as our lives: blessings personal and relative, public and private: for while we have the air to breathe in, the earth to tread upon, or a drop of water to quench our thirst, we must own we are not left destitute of blessings from God. From God, I say, all these blessings originally flow; and to him we are principally obliged for them. Indeed they are conveyed to us by means of our fellow-creatures; or they seem to be the spontaneous productions of natural causes, acting according to the established laws of nature. But then it was God, the Fountain of being and of all good, that gave our fellow-creatures the disposition, the ability, and the opportunity of conveying these blessings to us; and it is the great God who is the Author of those causes which spontaneously produce so many blessings for our enjoyment, and of those laws of nature, according to which they act. These are but channels, channels cut by his hand; and he is the source, the ocean of blessings. Creatures are but the hands that distribute his charity through a needy world; but his is the store from which they derive their supplies. On this account therefore we should receive all these blessings as gifts from God, and feel ourselves obliged to him, as the supreme original Benefactor. Besides, it is very probable to me, that in order to bestow some of these blessings upon us by means of natural causes, God may give these causes a touch to turn them in our favour, more than they would be according to the established course of nature; a touch so efficacious as to answer the kind design; though so gentle and agreeable to the established laws of nature, as not to be perceivable, or to cast the system of nature into disorder. The blessings conveyed in this way, are not only the gifts of his hand, but the gifts of his immediate hand.

Therefore let God be acknowledged the supreme, the original Benefactor of the world, and the proper

Author of all our blessings; and let all his creatures, in the height of their benevolence and usefulness, own that they are but the distributors of his alms, or the instruments of conveying the gifts of his hand. Let us acknowledge the light of yonder sun, the breath that now heaves our lungs, and fans the vital flame, the growing plenty that is now bursting its way through the clods of earth, the water that bubbles up in springs that flows in streams and rivers, or rolls at large in the ocean; let us own, I say, that all these are the bounties of his hand, who supplies with good the various ranks of being, as high as the most exalted angel, and as low as the young ravens, and the grass of the field. Let him stand as the acknowledged Benefactor of the universe to inflame the gratitude of all to him, or to array in the crimson colours of aggravated guilt the ingratitude of those sordid stupid wretches who still continue unthankful.

The positive blessings I have briefly enumerated, have some of them been interrupted at times: but even the interruption seemed only intended to make way for some deliverance; a deliverance that re-instated us in the possession of our former blessings with a new and stronger relish, and taught us, or at least was adapted to teach us some useful lessons, which we were not likely to learn, had not our enjoyment been a while suspended. This very hour let us turn our eyes backward, and take a review of a length of ten, twenty, forty or sixty years; and what a series of deliverances rises upon us! Deliverances from the many dangers of childhood, by which many have lost their limbs, and many their lives! deliverance from many threatening and fatal accidents; deliverances from exquisite pains, and from dangerous diseases; deliverances from the gates of death, and the mouth of the grave; and deliverances for yourselves, and for your dear families and friends. When sickness, like a destroying angel, has entered your neighbourhood, and made extensive havock and desolation around you, you and yours have escaped the infection, while you were every day in anxious expectation of the dreadful visit, and trembling at the dubious fate of some dear relative, or your

own: or if it has entered your houses, like a messenger of death, it has not committed its usual ravages in them. Or if it has torn from your hearts one or more members of your family, still you have some left, or perhaps some new members added to make up the loss. When you have been in deep distress, and covered with most tremendous glooms, deliverance has dawned in the most seasonable hour, and light and joy have succeeded to nights of darkness and melancholy. In short your deliverances have been endless and innumerable. You appear this day so many monuments of delivering goodness. You have also shared in the deliverances wrought for your country and nation in former and latter times: deliverances from the open violences and clandestine plots and insurrections of enemies abroad, and traitors and rebels at home: deliverances from the united efforts of both to subvert the British constitution, and enslave free-born Britons to civil or ecclesiastical tyranny, or a medley of both;—and deliverances from drought, and the threatening appearances of famine, which we have so lately experienced in these parts; and yet they are long enough past to be generally forgotten!

In these instances of deliverances, as well as in the former of positive blessings, let the great God be acknowledged the Original Efficient, whatever creatures he is pleased to make use of as his instruments. Fortuitous accidents are under his direction; and necessary causes are subject to his controul. Diseases are his servants, his soldiers; and he sends them out, or recalls them, according to his pleasure.

And now mention the benefactor, if you can, to whom you are a thousandth part so much obliged as to this Benefactor. What a profusion of blessings and deliverances has the Almighty made you the subject of! And O! what obligations of gratitude do such favours lay upon you! What ardent love, what sincere thanksgiving, what affectionate duty do they require of you! These are the cords of love, the bonds of a man, wherewith he would draw you to obedience.

Dare you now make the enquiry, What returns has

this divine Benefactor received from you for all this goodness? Alas! the discovery which this enquiry will make may convict, shock, confound, and mortify us all; for we are all, in a prodigious degree, though some much more than others, guilty in this respect, guilty of the vilest ingratitude. Alas! are there not many of you that do not return to God the gratitude of a dog to his master? That brute animal who receives but crumbs and blows from you, will welcome you home with a thousand fond and obliging motions. The very dull ox you fodder, knows his owner. But, O! the more than brutal ingratitude of reasonable creatures! Some of you perhaps do not so much as acknowledge the agency of Providence in these enjoyments, but, affecting a very unphilosophical infidelity under the name of philosophy, you make natural causes the authors of all good to you, without the agency of the first Mover of all the springs of nature. Others of you, who may be orthodox in your faith as to this point, yet are practical infidels, the most absurd and inconsistent sort in the world; that is, while you verbally acknowledge, and speculatively believe the agency of Providence in these things, yet you live as if there was no such thing: you live thoughtless of the divine Benefactor, and disobedient to him for days and years together. The very mercies he bestows upon you, you abuse to his dishonour, by making them occasions of sin. Do not your consciences now convict you of that monster sin, Ingratitude, the most base, unnatural, and yet indulged gratitude? How do you resent it, if one whom you have deeply obliged should prove ungrateful, and use you ill? But it is impossible any one of your fellow-creatures should be guilty of such enormous ingratitude towards you as you are guilty of towards God; because it is impossible any one of them should be so strongly obliged to you as you are to him.

Ye children of God, his peculiar favourites, whose hearts are capable of and do actually feel some generous sensations of gratitude, what do you think of your conduct towards such a Benefactor? I speak particularly to you, because you are most likely to feel what I say. Have you rendered again to your God accord-

to the benefits done you? O! are you not mortified and shocked to reflect upon your ingratitude, your sordid monstrous ingratitude? Do you not abhor yourselves because you were capable of such base conduct? From you I expect such a generous resentment. But as to others, they are dead in trespasses and sins, dead toward God, and therefore it is no wonder if they are dead to all penitential ingenuous relentings for their ingratitude.

But if all this does not suffice to make you sensible of your enormous guilt in this particular, let me lay before you an inventory of still richer blessings. At the head of this stands Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of God. *God so loved the world* (hear it men and angels, with grateful wonder!) *as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16. *God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved.* John iii. 17. The comforts of this life alone would be a very inadequate provision for creatures who are to exist for ever in another; for what are sixty or seventy years in the long duration of an immortal being! But in the unsearchable riches of Christ, are contained the most ample provisions for your immortal state. Jesus Christ is such a gift as draws all other gifts after it: for so the apostle argues, *He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. And the purposes for which he gave this gift, render it the more astonishing. He gave him not only to rule us by his power, but to purchase us with the blood of his heart. He gave him up to death, even the death of the cross. In consequence of which an œconomy of grace, a ministry of reconciliation, is set up in our guilty world. Various means are appointed, and various endeavours are used to save you perishing sinners. For your salvation Jesus now intercedes in his native heaven, at the right hand of God. For your salvation the holy Spirit strives with you; conscience admonishes you; Providence draws you by blessings, and drives you by chastisements; angels minister to

you; Bibles are put into your hands; ministers persuade you; friends advise you; and thousands of saints pray for you. For this end prayer, preaching, baptism, and the Lord's supper, and a great variety of means of grace are instituted. For this end heaven is prepared and furnished with many mansions; the pearly gates open, and dart their splendors from afar to attract our eyes; and things which the eye, that has seen so many things, had never seen; which the ear, that has had still more extensive intelligence, had never heard; nor the heart of man, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, had never conceived, are brought to light by the gospel. Nay, for this purpose, your salvation, Sinai thunders, Hell roars and throws its devouring flames, even to warn a stupid world not to plunge themselves into that place of torment. In short, the kind designs of redeeming-love run through the whole œconomy of Providence towards our world. Heaven and earth, and in the sense mentioned, hell itself, are striving to save you. The strong-holds of sin and Satan, in which you are held prisoners, are attacked in kindness to you from all quarters. What beneficent efforts, what heroic exploits of divine goodness are these! And, blessed be God, these efforts are not in vain.

The celestial regions are fast peopling, though alas! not so fast as the land of darkness, with numerous colonies from our guilty globe. Even in these dregs of time when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, Jesus is gaining many hearts and saving many souls, in the various apartments of his church. Though you and thousands more should be left, and continue to neglect, yet such excellency shall not want admirers, such a physician shall not want employ in our dying world. No, *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* Isa. liii. 11. And I doubt not but there are some among you who are the trophies of his victorious love,—of his victorious love, I say; for it is by the force of love he sweetly conquers.

Now you, my brethren, are the subjects of this administration of grace; with you these means are used

for your salvation: to you Jesus is offered as a Saviour; and heaven and earth are striving to lodge you safe in his arms. You should not rejoice in the wants of others; but certainly it may make you the more sensible of your peculiar obligations, to reflect that your lot in this respect is singular. It is but a very small part of mankind that enjoy these great advantages for a happy immortality. You live under the gospel, while the most of the nations of the earth are sunk in heathen idolatry, groaning under Popish tyranny, seduced by Mahometan imposture, or hardened in Jewish infidelity.

And what peculiar obligations of gratitude result from such peculiar distinguishing favours? Men have obliged you, and you feel the obligation. But can men, can angels, can the whole created universe bestow such gifts upon you, and make such provisions for you as those which have been mentioned? Gifts of infinite value, dear to the Giver; provisions for an everlasting state; an everlasting state of as complete happiness as your nature, in its highest improvements, is capable of. These are favours worthy of God; favours that bespeak him God. And must he not then be the object of your supreme gratitude? Can any thing in the world be more reasonable?

And yet—hear, O earth, with horror; be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; be ye horribly afraid! how little gratitude does God receive from our world after all! How little gratitude from you, on whom these favours are showered down with distinguished profusion? Do not many of you neglect the unspeakable gift of God, Jesus Christ, as well as that salvation which he bought with his blood? Do you not ungratefully neglect the means of your salvation and resist the generous efforts that are used from all quarters to save you? O! the mountainous load of ingratitude that lies upon you! enough to sink the whole world into the depth of hell.

But I must now address such of you who are still more deeply obliged to your divine Benefactor, and whose ingratitude therefore is black and horrid; I mean such of you who not only have shared in the

blessings and deliverances of life, and lived under the advantages of a dispensation of grace, but have experimentally known the love of God to your souls in a manner peculiar to yourselves, and are actually entitled to all the unknown blessings prepared for those that love him. If I am so happy as to belong to your number, I am sure I am so unhappy as to share deeply with you in the guilt, the black guilt of ingratitude. When you were dead in trespasses and sins, God quickened you, out of his great love wherewith he loved you. When you were rushing on towards destruction, in the enchanting paths of sin, he checked your mad career, and turned your faces heavenward. When you were sunk into sorrows, borne down with a sense of guilt, and trembling every moment with the fears of immediate execution, he relieved you, led you to Jesus, and, as it were, lodged you safe in his arms. When dismal glooms have again gathered upon your minds, and overwhelming fears rushed again upon you like a deluge, he has relieved you again by leading you to the same almighty and ever-constant Saviour. When your graces and virtues have withered in the absence of the Sun of righteousness, he has again risen upon you with healing in his wings, and revived your languishing souls. He has shed abroad his love in your hearts, which has made this wretched wilderness a paradise to you. He has at times afforded you, as you humbly hoped, joy and peace in believing; yea, even caused you to rejoice with *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. He has met you in your retirements, and allowed you to converse with him in his ordinances, with the heart of a friend. He has, as it were, unlocked his peculiar treasures to enrich you, and given you an unshaken title to the most glorious inheritance of the saints in light. He has made you his own, his own in a peculiar sense; his people, his friends, his children. You are indeed his favourites: you were even so long before time began. He loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness has he drawn you; and having loved you once, he will love you always, and he will continue in his love to all eternity. *Neither life, nor death, things present or*

things to come, shall ever be able to separate you from his love. Rom. viii. 38, 39. His love to you is an unbounded ocean, that spreads over eternity, and makes it, as it were, the channel or the ocean of your happiness. In you he intends to shew to all worlds what glorious creatures he can form of the dust, and of the polluted fragments of degenerate human nature. What is all the profusion of kings to their favourites, what are all the benefactions of creatures, nay what are all the bounties of the divine hand itself within the compass of time, when compared to these astonishing, unparalleled, immortal, infinite, God-like favours? They all dwindle into obscurity, like the stars of the night in the blaze of noon.

And now I am almost afraid to turn your thoughts to enquire, what returns you have made for all these favours, lest you should not be able to bear the shock. You know you have a thousand times repeated Hezekiah's offence. I need not be particular. Your conscience accuses you, and points out the particulars; and I shall only join the cry of conscience against you, O! the ingratitude! O! the base, vile, unnatural, horrid, unprecedented ingratitude! From you your God might have expected better things; from you, whom he has so peculiarly, so infinitely obliged, and whose hearts he has made capable of generous sensations. But, O! the shocking, horrid ingratitude!—Let our hearts burst into a flood of sorrows at the thought. They may be justly too full to allow us to speak much upon it; but, O! they can never be too full of shame, confusion, and tender relentings for the crime. Methinks the thought must break the hardest heart among us.

Let me now add a consideration, which gives an astonishing emphasis to all that has been said. All this profusion of mercy, personal and relative, temporal and spiritual, is bestowed upon creatures that deserve not the least mercy; creatures that deserve to be stripped naked of every mercy; nay, that deserve to be made miserable in time and eternity; creatures that deserve not to breathe this vital air, to tread the ground, or drink the stream that runs waste through the wilder-

ness, much less to enjoy all the blessings which the infinite merit of Jesus could purchase, or the infinite goodness of God can bestow; creatures that are so far from deserving to be delivered from the calamities of life, that they deserve to have them all heightened and multiplied, till they convey them to the more intolerable punishments of hell; creatures that are so far from making adequate returns, that they are perpetually offending their God to his face; and every day receiving blessings from him; and every day sinning against him. O! astonishing! most astonishing! This wonder is pointed out by Jesus Christ himself, who best knows what is truly marvellous. *The most High*, says he, *is kind to the unthankful and to the evil*, Luke vi. 35. *Your heavenly Father maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*, Matt. v. 45.

It need afford you no surprize, if my subject so overwhelms me as to disable me from making a formal application of it. I leave you to your own thoughts upon it. And I am apt to think they will constrain you to cry out in a consternation with me, 'O! the amazing, horrid, base, unprecedented ingratitude of man! And O! the amazing, free, rich, overflowing, infinite, unprecedented goodness of God! Let these two miracles be the wonder of the whole universe!

One prayer, and I have done. May our divine Benefactor, among his other blessings, bestow upon us that of a thankful heart, and enable us to give sincere, fervent, and perpetual praise to his name, through Jesus Christ, his unspeakable gift! Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

The Sufferings of Christ, and their consequent Joys and Blessings.

ISAIAH liii. 10, 11.

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.*

THIS chapter contains a most lively and moving account of very tragical sufferings; and, if we have but a small share of humanity, we cannot hear it without being affected, even though we did not know the person concerned. Here is one so mangled and disfigured, that he has *no form or comeliness; one despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; one wounded, bruised, oppressed, afflicted; one brought as a lamb to the slaughter; one cut off out of the land of the living.* And who is he? Were he an enemy, or a malefactor, we could not but pity him. But this was not his character; for *he had done no violence, neither was there guile found in his mouth.* And he was so far from being our enemy, that *he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities,* not for his own. Were he a child or a friend that had suffered such things, it would raise all our mournful and sympathizing passions to hear the history.—But what if this should be *the man that is God's fellow,* the Redeemer, to whom we are bound by the most endearing obligations! a person of infinite dignity and perfect innocence, our best friend, and only Saviour! What if it should be he! Would not this move your hearts, and

* The Sermon is dated Hanover (a county, if I mistake not, in Virginia), July 11, 1756; and is evidently a Sacramental Discourse.

raise all your tender passions? Or shall he die in such agonies unpitied, unlamented, unbeloved, when even a dying criminal excites our compassion? What do you think would be the issue, if I should make an experiment of this to-day? If I should make a trial what weight the sufferings of Jesus will have upon your hearts? Do you think the representation of his sufferings and love would have any effect upon you? That they may have this effect is my design in the prosecution of this subject; for that it is Jesus who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the subject of these sufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of passages quoted from this chapter to him in the New Testament. This chapter has been a successful part of the scriptures; and there are some now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when he asked Philip, *Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or some other man? And Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus: and he believed with all his heart, and was baptized; and went on his way homeward and heavenward rejoicing, Acts viii. 32, 35.* This was the chapter that opened to the penitent Earl of Rochester the way of salvation through the sufferings of Christ, which alone relieved his mind from the horrors of guilt, and constrained him to hope that even such a sinner as he might find mercy. O! that it may have the same effect upon you, my brethren, to-day, that with the eunuch you may return home rejoicing!

The design and method I have now in view is only to illustrate and improve the several parts of my text, especially those that represent how pleasing and satisfactory the conversion and salvation of sinners by the death of Christ is to him.

1. *When* thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.*
An † offering for sin is, when the punishment of sin is

* The particle here rendered *when*, is more generally rendered *if*; and then the sentence will read thus: *If thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin*, the consequence will be, that *he shall see his seed, &c.*

† Or, *When thou shalt make his soul sin.* It is a common scripture-phrase, whereby a sin-offering is called sin. And it is sometimes re-

transferred from the original offender to another, and that other person suffers in his stead. Thus the Lord Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. The punishment of our sin was transferred to him, and he bore it in his own body on the tree. He became our substitute, and took our place in law, and therefore the penalty of the law due to us was executed upon him. It is in this, my brethren, that we have any hope of salvation; blood for blood, life for life, soul for soul: the blood, the life, the soul of the Son of God, for the blood and life, and soul, of the obnoxious criminal. Here, sirs, your grateful wonder may begin to rise upon our first entrance on this subject; and you will find the wonders will increase as we go along.

You see Jesus presented an offering for sin; and what was it he offered? "Silver and gold he had none," the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of heifers, would not suffice; and these two he had not. But he had blood in his veins, and that shall all go; that he will offer up to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made an offering for sin. *His soul an offering for sin!* his pure spotless soul! his soul, that was of more value than the whole universe beside! You may find those that will give a great many things for the deliverance of a friend, but who will give his soul? his soul for his enemies!—This is the peculiar commendation of the love of Jesus.

His soul here may signify his whole human nature; in which sense it is often taken in the sacred writings. And then the meaning is, that both his soul and body, or his whole human nature, bore the punishment due to us. Or his soul may be here understood properly for his rational and immortal part, in opposition to his body; and then the meaning is, that he suffered in soul as well as in body. His soul suffered by the foresight of his sufferings; by the temptations of the devil; by an affecting view of the sins of men; and especially by the absence of his heavenly father.—Hence, when his body was untouched, in the garden of Gethsemane, he cries out, *my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death:*

tained in our translation, particularly in 1 Cor. v. 21. *He hath made him to be sin;* that is, a sin-offering for us, &c.

and elsewhere, *now is my soul troubled.* In short, as one expresses it, the sufferings of his soul was the soul of his sufferings. The sense of bodily pain may be swallowed up in the pleasing sensations of divine love. So some have found by happy experience, who have suffered for righteousness sake. But Jesus denied himself that happiness which he has given to many of his servants. His soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and all this for such sinners as we. And shall this have no weight among the creatures for whom he endured all this? Make an experiment upon your hard hearts with this thought, and try if they can resist its energy.—*Thou shalt make his soul an offering, for sin.* Thou shalt make; that is, thou, the great God and Father of all. This sacrifice is provided by thy wisdom and grace, and appointed by thy authority, who hast a right to settle the terms of forgiveness; and therefore we may be sure this sacrifice is acceptable; this atonement is sufficient. This method of salvation is thy contrivance and establishment, and therefore valid and firm. Here, my brethren, is a sure foundation; here, and nowhere else. Can you produce a divine warrant for depending on your own righteousness, or any thing else? No; but this offering for sin is of divine appointment, and therefore you may safely venture your eternal all upon it. “Come, ye afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;” come build upon this rock, and you shall never fall.

Or the words may be rendered, *When his soul shall make an offering for sin**. And in this sense it is signified that this was Christ's own voluntary act. He consented to the arduous undertaking: he consented to be our substitute, and offer himself a sacrifice for us. He was under no previous constraint; subject to no compulsion. This he tells us himself; *No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself.* John x. 18. Thus it was his own free choice; and this consideration prodigiously enhances his love. A forced

* The reason of this ambiguity is, that the original word is the second person masculine, and the third person feminine. If taken in the masculine gender, it must be applied to God the Father; if in the feminine, to the soul of Christ; which is also feminine.

favour is but a small favour. But Jesus willingly lay down his life when he had power to keep it. He voluntarily ascended the cross, when he might have still continued on his throne. He was absolute Lord and Proprietor of himself, under no obligations to any, till he assumed them by his own consent. When martyrs have died in the cause of righteousness, they did but what was their previous duty; their lives were not theirs, but his who gave them, his to whom they devoted them; and they had no right to them when he demanded them; nor were they able to protect them against the power of their enemies. But Jesus resigned what was his own absolute property; and he resigned his life when it was in his power to have retained it. All the united forces of earth and hell could not have touched his life, had not he consented. As with one word he spoke them into being, so with a word he could have blasted all their powers, or remanded them into nothing, as he found them. Of this he gave a specimen, when by saying *I am he* (John xviii. 6.); I am the despised Nazarene whom ye are seeking, he struck an armed company down to the earth; and he could as easily have chained them there, and never suffered them to rise more. Here was love indeed, that he should offer himself a voluntary self-devoted sacrifice! and if he made his soul an offering for sin when he was not obliged to it, will not you voluntarily love and serve him, when you are obliged to it; obliged by all the ties of authority and gratitude, of duty and interest? Let me bring home this overture to your hearts: will you of your own choice devote yourselves to his service, who consented to devote himself a victim for your sins? Are you willing to live to him, when you are bound to do it; to him who died for you, when he was not bound to do it? You have the easier task of the two: to live a life of holiness, and to die upon a cross, are very different things, and will you not do thus much for him? could there be such a thing as a work of supererogation, or an overplus of obedience, methinks this overplus of love might constrain you to it; and will you not so much as honestly attempt that which you are bound to by the most strong and endearing obligations?

if you reject this proposal, make no pretensions to gratitude, a regard to the most sacred and rightful authority, or any noble disposition. You are sunk into the most sordid and aggravated degree of wickedness, and every generous and pious passion is extinct within you.

Now what shall be the consequence, what the reward of all these sufferings of Christ? Shall he endure all this in vain? Shall he receive no compensation? Yes: for,

2. My text tells you *he shall prolong his days*. The self-devoted victim shall have a glorious resurrection. His days were cut off in the midst; but he rose again, and shall enjoy an endless length of happy and glorious days. That he was once dead he was not ashamed to own, when he appeared in a form of so much majesty to John. *Fear not*, says he, *I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore*. Rev. i. 17, 18. The man that hung on Calvary, and lay dead in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, where is he now? O! he has burst the bonds of death, triumphed over the grave, and enjoys an immortal life. And this immortal life he spends in a station of the most exalted dignity and perfect happiness for ever. See! *Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*. Heb. ii. 9. *Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess*. Phil. ii. 8—11. It was for this end that *Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living*. Rom. xiv. 9. By his death he acquired universal government, and has the keys of the vast invisible world, and of death that leads into it. Rev. i. 18. This was a great part of that *joy which was set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame*. Heb. xii. 2*.

* This sentence, "he shall prolong his days," is otherwise translated by some, and applied not to Christ, but to his seed: "He shall see his

And is the poor, despised, insulted, crucified Jesus thus exalted? Then I proclaim, like the herald before Joseph, when advanced to be prime minister to Pharaoh, Bow the knee! submit to him, ye sons of men. He has bought you with his blood, and has a right to your subjection; therefore yield yourselves to him. This day become his willing subjects, and swear allegiance to him at his table. To him let every knee bow in this assembly, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. And do you now feel your hearts begin to yield? Are your souls in the posture of humble homage? Are you ready to say ‘Lord Jesus, reign over this soul of mine: see, I resign it as the willing captive of thy cross.’ Or will you stand it out against him? Shall your hearts and practices, as it were, send a message after him, now when he is advanced to his heavenly throne, *We will not have this man to reign over us?* Then I proclaim you rebels, wilful inexcusable rebels against the Supreme, the most rightful, and the most gracious government of Christ; and if you continue such, you must perish for ever by the sword of his justice, without a possibility of escaping. You cannot rebel against the crucified Jesus with impunity, for he is not now dying on the cross, or lying senseless in the grave. He lives! he lives to avenge the affront. He lives for ever to punish you for ever. He shall prolong his days to prolong your torment. Therefore you have no alternative, but to submit to him, or perish.

I may also propose the immortality and exaltation of Christ to you, as an encouragement to desponding souls. So the apostle uses it, *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth.* Heb. vii. 25. In trusting your souls to him, you do not commit them to a dead Saviour. It is true, he was once dead, above 1700 years ago; but seed, who shall prolong their days;” or, “He shall see a long-lived seed,” or “a long succession of posterity.” *So the Seventy.*—This translation gives a stricter connection and uniformity to the words with the preceding and following sentences. And in this sense it is undoubtedly true: for Jesus has always had, and ever will have some spiritual children on our guilty globe; and neither earth nor hell shall ever be able to extinguish the sacred race.

now he is alive; and behold, he liveth for evermore. He lives to communicate his spirit for your sanctification; he lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness; he lives to send down supplies to you according to your exigencies; he lives to make perpetual intercession for you (which is the thing the apostle had in view) to plead your cause, to urge your claims founded on his blood, and to solicit blessings for you. He lives for ever to make you happy for ever. And will you not venture to trust your souls in his hands? you may safely do it without fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the Supreme Being, Lord of all, and having all things subjected to him; and consequently, nothing can hurt you if he undertakes to be your guard. Ye trembling weaklings, would it not be better for you to fly to him for refuge than to stand on your own footing, afraid of falling every hour? He can, he will support you, if you lean upon him.

And does not he appear to you as an object of love in his exalted state? He is all-glorious, and deserves your love; and he is all benevolence and mercy, and therefore self-interest, one would think, would induce you to love him; for to what end is he exalted? Isaiah will tell you,—*He is exalted that he may have mercy upon you.* Isai. xxx. 18. He has placed himself upon his throne, as upon an eminence, may I so speak, that he may more advantageously scatter blessings among the needy crowd beneath him, that look up to him with eager wishful eyes, like the lame beggar on Peter and John, expecting to receive something from him. And shall not such grace and bounty, in one so highly advanced above you, excite your love? Certainly it must, unless that the principle of gratitude be lost in your breasts.

Finally, May I not propose the exaltation and immortality of the Lord Jesus, as an object of congratulation to you that are his friends? Friends naturally rejoice in the honours conferred upon one another, and mutually congratulate each other's success. And will not you that love Jesus rejoice with him, that he is not now where he once was; not hanging on a painful and

ignominious cross, but seated on a glorious throne; not insulted by the rabble, but adored by all the heavenly armies; not pierced with a crown of thorns, but adorned with a crown of unfading glory; not oppressed under loads of sufferings, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys! Must you not rejoice that his sufferings for you had so happy an issue with regard to himself? O! can you be sunk in sorrow while your head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain he endured for you! Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all his members; and if you have no reason to rejoice on your own account, yet rejoice for your head: share in the joys of your Lord.

Thus you see Jesus Christ has obtained the richest reward in his own person. But is this all? Shall his sufferings have no happy consequences with regard to others; in which he may rejoice as well as for himself? Yes; for,

3. My text tells you that *He shall see his seed. He shall see of the travail of his soul*, and shall be satisfied: and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. What an emphatical variety of expressions are here to signify the pleasure which Christ takes in observing the happy fruits of his death, in the salvation of many of the ruined sons of men!

He shall see his seed. By his seed are meant the children of his grace, his followers, the sincere professors of his religion. The disciples or followers of a noted person, for example, a prophet or philosopher, are not seldom denominated his seed or children.—These words are parallel to those spoken by himself, in the near prospect of his sufferings; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* John xii. 24. So unless Jesus had fallen to the ground and died, he would have abode alone; he would have possessed his native heaven in solitude, as to any of the sons of Adam: but now by his dying, and lying entombed in the ground, he has produced a large increase. One dying Christ has produced thousands, millions of Christians. His blood

was prolific; it was indeed "the seed of the church*." And, blessed be God, its prolific virtue is not yet failed. His spiritual seed have been growing up from age to age; and O the delightful thought! they have sprung up in this barren soil, though alas! they too often appear thin and withering. These tender plants of righteousness have sprung up in some of your families; and I trust, a goodly number of them are here in the courts of the Lord to-day. If you search after the root, you will find it rises from the blood of Jesus; and it is his blood that gives it nourishment. Jesus came into our world, and shed the blood of his heart on the ground, that it might produce a crop of souls for the harvest of eternal glory: and without this, we could no more expect it than wheat without seed or moisture. A part of this seed is now ripened and gathered into the granary of heaven, *like a shock of corn come in in his season.* Another part is still in this unfriendly climate, suffering the extremities of winter, covered with snow, nipt with frost, languishing in drought, and trodden under foot. Such are you, the plants of righteousness, that now hear me. But you are ripening apace, and your harvest is just at hand. Therefore bear up under the severities of winter; for that coldness of heart, that drought for want of divine influences, those storms of temptation, and those oppressions that now tread you down, will ere long be over. O! when shall we see this heavenly seed spring up in this place, in a more extensive and promising degree? When you travel through the country, in this temperate season, with which God has blessed our country that was parched and languishing last year, how agreeable is the survey of wide extensive fields, promising plenteous crops of various kinds! And O! shall we not have a fruitful season of spiritual seed among us! May I accommodate the words of Jesus to this assembly, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest!* John iv. 35. O! is the happy season come, when we shall see a

* It was a proverb in the primitive times, that "The blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church;" but never could it be applied with so much propriety as to the blood of Christ.

large crop of converts in this place? Then welcome thou long-expected season! But alas! is not this a flattering hope? is it not, on the other hand, a barren season with us? is not the harvest past and the summer over, while so many are not saved? O! the melancholy thought! If it has been so with us for some time, O let us endeavour to make this a fruitful day!

We may perhaps more naturally understand this metaphor as taken, not from the seed of vegetables, but from that of man; and so it signifies a posterity, which is often called Seed. This only gives us another view of the same case. Spiritual children are rising up to Christ from age to age, from country to country: and blessed be his name, the succession is not yet at an end, but will run on as long as the sun endureth. Spiritual children are daily begotten by his word in one part of the world or other; and even of this place it may be said, "that this and that man was born here." And are there none among you now that feel the pangs of the new birth, and about to be added to the number of his children? O that many may be born to him this day! O that this day we may feel the prolific virtue of that blood which was shed above 1700 years ago!

He shall see his seed. It is a comfort to a dying man to see a numerous offspring to keep up his name, and inherit his estate. This comfort Jesus had in all the calamities of his life, and in all the agonies of death; and this animated him to endure all with patience. He saw some of his spiritual children weeping around him while hanging on the cross. He looked forward to the end of time, and saw a numerous offspring rising up from age to age to call him blessed, to bear up his name in the world, and to share in his heavenly inheritance. And O! may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that from his cross he cast a look towards Hanover in the ends of the earth; and that in his last agonies he was revived with this reflection, 'I see I shall not die in vain: I see my seed dispersed over the world, and reaching the wilds of America. I foresee that a number of them, towards the end of the world, will meet in Hanover, gratefully to commemorate the sufferings I am now enduring, and devote themselves to

me for ever.' O! my brethren, will you not afford the blessed Jesus this pleasure? it is but little, very little, for all the tortures he bore for you: your sins have given him many a wound, many a pang, and will you not now grant him this satisfaction? But the cross is not the only place from whence he takes a view of his spiritual seed. He is now exalted to his throne in the highest heavens; and from thence he takes a wide survey of the universe. He looks down upon our world: he beholds kings in their grandeur, victorious generals with all their power, nobles and great men in all their pomp; but these are not the objects that best please his eyes. "He sees his seed," he sees one here, and another there, bought with his blood, and born of his spirit; and this is the most delightful sight our world can afford him. Some of them may be oppressed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghastly with famine: they may make no great figure in mortal eyes; but he loves to look at them, he esteems them as his children, and the fruits of his dying pangs. And let me tell you, his eyes are upon this assembly to-day; and if there be one of his spiritual seed among us, he can distinguish him in the crowd. He sees you drinking in his words with eager ears; he sees you at his table commemorating his love; he sees your hearts breaking with penitential sorrows, and melting at his cross. And O! should we not all be solicitous that we be of that happy number on whom his eyes are thus graciously fixed!

But these are not the only children whom he delights to view; they are not all in such an abject imperfect state. No, he sees a glorious company of them around his throne in heaven, arrived to maturity, enjoying their inheritance, and resembling their divine Parent. How does his benevolent heart rejoice to look over the immense plains of heaven, and see them all peopled with his seed! When he takes a view of this numerous offspring, sprung from his blood, and when he looks down to our world, and we hope, to this place among others, and sees so many infants in grace, gradually advancing to their adult age; when he sees some, perhaps every hour since he died upon Calvary,

entering the gates of heaven, having finished their course of education upon earth; I say, when this prospect appears to him on every hand, how does he rejoice! Now the prophecy in my text is fulfilled, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* If you put the sentiments of his benevolent heart into language, methinks it is to this purpose, 'It is enough; since my death has been so fruitful of such a glorious posterity, I am satisfied. If sinners will submit to me, that I may save them, if they will but suffer me to make them happy, I desire no other reward for all my agonies for them. If this end be but answered, I do not at all repent of my hanging on the tree for them.' O sirs, must not your hearts melt away within you, to hear such language as this? See the strength of the love of Jesus! if you be but saved, he does not grudge his blood and life for you. Your salvation would make amends for all. He asks no other reward from you than that you will become his spiritual seed, and behave as children towards him. This he would count the greatest joy; a joy more than equivalent to all the pains he endured for you. And, O! my brethren, will you not afford him this joy to-day? This is a point I have much at heart, and therefore I must urge it upon you; nay, I can take no denial in it. Jesus has done and suffered a great deal for you; and has gratitude never constrained you to enquire how you can oblige him? or what you shall do for him in return? If this be your enquiry, you have an answer immediately: devote yourselves to his service, love and obey him as his dutiful children, that he may save you. If you would oblige him, if you would give him full satisfaction for all the sorrows you have caused him, do this; do this or nothing; for nothing else can please him. Suppose he should this day appear to you in that form in which he once was seen by mortals, sweating great drops of blood, accused, insulted, bruised, scourged, racked upon the cross; and suppose he should turn to you with a countenance full of love and pity, and drenched with blood and tears, and address you in such moving language as this, 'See! sinners, see what I suffer for you; see at what

a dear rate I purchase your life; see how I love you. And now I have only this to ask of you in return, that you would forsake those murderous sins which thus torment me; that you would love and serve me; and accept of that salvation which I am now purchasing for you with the blood of my heart; this I ask with all the importunity of my last breath, of bleeding wounds, and expiring groans. Grant me but this, and I am satisfied; I shall think all my sufferings well bestowed.' I say, suppose he should address you thus in person, what answer would he receive from this assembly? O! would you not all cry out with one voice, 'Lord Jesus, thou hast overcome us with thy love; here we consent to thy request. Prescribe any thing, and we will obey. Nothing can be a sufficient compensation for such dying love.'—Well, my brethren, though Jesus be not here in person, yet he makes the same request to you by the preaching of the gospel, he makes the same request by the significant representation of his sufferings, just about to be given by sacramental signs; and therefore make the same answer now, which you would to himself in person. He has had much grief from Hanover ere now; many sins committed here lay heavy upon him, and bruised and wounded him: and O! will you not afford him joy this day? Will you not give him the satisfaction he desires? His eyes are now running through this assembly, and shall he not see of the travail of his soul? Shall he not see the happy fruits of his death? there is joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner, and Jesus has a principal share in the joy. And will you endeavour to rob him of it? If you reject his proposal, the language of your conduct is, 'He shall have no cause of joy, as far as I can hinder it: he shall however have none from me: all his sufferings shall be in vain, as far as I can render them so.' And are you not shocked at such blasphemy and base ingratitude? The happiness of his exalted state consists in a great degree in the pleasure of seeing the designs of his death accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners; and therefore by denying him this you attempt to degrade him, to rob him of his happiness, and to make him once more a

man of sorrows. And can you venture upon such impiety and ingratitude? I tell you, sirs, it will not do for you to profess his name, to compliment him with the formalities of religion, and to be Christians in pretence, while you do not depart from iniquity, and while your hearts are not fired with his love. He takes no pleasure in seeing such spurious seed, that have no resemblance to their pretended Father; but he will disown them at last as he did the Jews, and tell them, *Ye are of your father the devil, whose works ye do.* John viii. 44.—The thing in which he would rejoice, and which I am inculcating upon you, is, that as penitent helpless sinners you would cast yourselves entirely upon the merit of his atonement, devote yourselves to his service, and submit to him as your Lord; that is, that you would become true, genuine, sincere christians. This, and nothing short of this, would afford him pleasure; and can you refuse it to him; especially when it will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves? Permit me, my dear brethren, to insist upon it, that you rejoice the heart of the blessed Jesus to-day. I request you in his name and stead; and to which of you shall I make the request with success? Will you, the freeborn descendants of Britons, gratify him in this? Or if you refuse, behold I turn to the Gentiles. Some of you, poor negroes, have, I hope, rejoiced the heart of Christ, by submitting to him as your Saviour; and are there no more among you that will do him this kindness? O! can any of you bear the thought of refusing? He bore the black crimes of many a poor negro; and now he is looking upon you to see what return you will make him. Come then, ye that are at once slaves to men and slaves to sin, let the *Son make you free, and you shall be free indeed*: he will deliver you from sin and Satan, the worst of masters, and bring you into the glorious liberty of his children.

Here I would for a while drop my address to the noble principle of gratitude, and endeavour to work upon that of self-love, which, though less noble, is more strong in degenerate creatures. In affording Christ this pleasure, you will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves; for it is your happiness, your

salvation that he rejoices in, and therefore in grieving him you ruin yourselves. Accept of him as your Saviour and Lord, and you shall be happy for ever; but if you reject him you are for ever undone: he will not save you, and where will you look for a Saviour? To which of the saints, to which of the angels will you turn? Alas! they all will cast you off if Christ renounces you. If you will not suffer him to rejoice over you in doing you good, he will rejoice over you in doing you evil: he will glorify himself in your destruction: he will please himself in the execution of justice upon you. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright to reflect the splendours of his perfections. But, on the other hand, if you afford him joy at your conversion this day, he will reward you for ever; he will reward you with all the unspeakable joys of heaven.

Here then is a twofold cord to draw you to Jesus Christ, the love of Christ and the love of yourselves; and one would think such a cord could not easily be broken. Can any of you resist the united force of gratitude and self-interest? Are you so unnatural as to sin against Christ, and against your own life; to ruin yourselves rather than oblige him? Who would think that the once noble nature of man should ever be capable of such a degree of degeneracy? And O? who would have thought that the Son of God would lay down his life, or even entertain one benevolent thought for such base ungrateful creatures that care so little for him, or even for their own true interest? I must bring this matter to a short issue; and it is this; you must either afford Christ this generous pleasure, by receiving and submitting to him this day, or you will return home under the additional guilt of rejecting him, and doing all you could to reduce him into misery again; and if you continue such, which alas! is not improbable, you must feel his eternal resentments, and perish for ever under the weight of his righteous vengeance. Let us now proceed to another part of the text.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
It is the pleasure of the Lord that sinners should be

saved through the mediation of Jesus Christ; I say, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; for he is determined they shall not be saved in any other way; he is determined that those who refuse to be saved in this way, shall not be saved at all; because their salvation in any other way would not be consistent with the glory of his perfections, the honour of his government, and his character as the supreme Magistrate of the universe; and his honour and glory are of more importance than the happiness of all created worlds; and therefore their happiness cannot be obtained in any way inconsistent with it. But through the mediation of Christ sinners may be saved, and in the mean time the honour of the divine perfections and government secured, and even illustrated. He has made atonement for sin, and answered the demands of the divine law and justice; so that God can now be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus. Hence *God is in Christ*; observe in Christ, *reconciling the world to himself.* 2 Cor. v. 19. His heart is set on it; and the success of this scheme affords him the greatest pleasure. It is not only your interest, but your duty to be saved. It is as much your duty to enter into heaven as to pray, or to perform any other part of religion. And your destruction will not only be your righteous punishment, but your sin; the most criminal self-murder. God has been pleased to interpose his authority, to give greater force to the principle of self-love. Your interest has this additional recommendation, that it is your duty; and you sin against God in ruining yourselves. Here again my subject leads me to address myself to the united principles of gratitude and self-love. Will you not afford the Lord that made you this benevolent pleasure? Will you not gratify him in this, when it is your happiness he seeks? Has neither the pleasure of God nor your own immortal interest any weight with you? Is sin dearer to you than both? Alas! if you are not to be wrought upon by considerations drawn from the love of God; or love to yourselves, from gratitude or self-interest, from what topic shall I reason with you? If this be the case, you are no longer to be dealt with as reasonable creatures, but

as natural brute-beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.

This work of saving sinners, God has entrusted to Jesus Christ; and he has chosen a very proper person for so grand and difficult an undertaking. *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*, or under his management. He knows how to carry on the scheme to the best advantage. The work has been going on from Adam to this day, in spite of all opposition; and it is not now at a stand. O that it may prosper among you, my dear people! O that the sacred Trinity, and all the angels on high, may look down with pleasure this day on this guilty spot, rejoicing to see the grand scheme of salvation successfully going on! My brethren, will you not fall in with the design? A design so favourable to yourselves. Will you not all concur to promote it, and carry it into execution upon a child, a friend, a neighbour, and especially upon yourselves? Or will you set yourselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed, by refusing to fall in with this scheme? Will you join in the conspiracy against it with the malevolent powers of hell, who oppose it with all their might, because it tends to your salvation? You readily concur in any scheme for your temporal advantage, and why not in this? Is the happiness of heaven the only kind of happiness that you are careless about? Is the salvation of your immortal soul the only deliverance for which you have no desire? Alas! are you become so stupidly wicked?

This subject affords strong consolation to such of you as have complied with the method of salvation through Christ, since the salvation of sinners in this way is the pleasure of the Lord; and since it is entrusted to the faithful and skilful hands of Christ, under whose management it will prosper, you may be sure his pleasure will be accomplished with respect to you, and that the divine scheme shall be carried into complete execution, in spite of all opposition. Therefore rejoice in your security, and bless his name to whom you owe it.

I shall conclude with a few advices adapted to this solemn sacramental occasion.

The table of the Lord is just about to be spread among us. This is another instance of the grace and benevolence of Christ; for to remember him, who is the design of this ordinance, is not only your duty, but your privilege and happiness. The remembrance of him has virtue in it to refresh your souls, to heal your wounded consciences, and to revive your languishing graces. Hence it is that this ordinance is not only a memorial of Christ, but a feast for your refreshment and support; and consequently his making it a standing ordinance in his church is a standing evidence of his good-will to his people to the end of the world. It is true it is an institution little regarded, even in the christian world: to many the table of the Lord is contemptible, or they stand by and gaze at it as unconcerned, or curious spectators. But this does not depreciate it, nor is it a reason why you should desert it. Come ye children, crowd round your Father's table to-day. Let Jesus see his seed feasting together in commemoration of him, and in mutual love with one another. Let him now see of the travail of his soul, the children with whom he travailed as in birth; let him now see a goodly company of them around his table, that he may be satisfied. Let me remind you that you have caused him many an heavy hour, and much pain and sorrow; therefore let him in return have pleasure and satisfaction from you this day. O! rejoice the heart you have often broken, and let there be joy in heaven over you. Let the angels that are ministering to the saints, and that are no doubt hovering unseen over the assembly, viewing those humble memorials of that Saviour whom they behold without a veil in his native heaven, let them carry up glad tidings to their Lord this evening, and tune their harps above to higher strains of joy and praise. And O! that the lost sheep would this day return, that their kind shepherd may rejoice over them: he came from heaven in search of you, and will you keep out of his way, and fear falling into his hands? Let wandering prodigals return, that there may be joy in your Father's house, whose arms are stretched out to embrace you, and who is looking after you with eager eyes. O let

the pleasure of the Lord prosper among us this day, and it will be a day gratefully to be remembered to all eternity!

This ordinance is also a seal of the covenant of grace; therefore come to it this day to renew your contract with your God and Saviour; to take him for your God, and to give up yourselves to him as his people, in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. Make a sure covenant; call heaven and earth, God, angels, and men to be witness to it, and seal it with the memorials of your dying Redeemer. You had need to make it firm, for much depends upon it; and you have much to go through to perform the duties of the Christian life; to conflict with powerful temptations; to die; to stand at the supreme tribunal; these are the things you are to go through; and you cannot pass through them with honour or safety, unless you make sure of an interest in God, and give up your all into his hands.

This institution is also intended to cultivate the communion of the saints; and therefore, as children, you are to sit down at the table of your common Father, with hearts full of ardent love to mankind, and especially to the household of faith. Let no angry or malicious passion pollute this sacred feast; but be all charity and benevolence, like that Redeemer whose death you celebrate.

Finally, you are now to renew your vows and obligations to be the Lord's, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life. See that you enter into them with an intire dependence upon his strength: and O! remember them afterwards, to carry them into execution. One would think that all traitors would be for ever deterred from sitting down at the Lord's table, by the shocking example of Judas, the first hypocrite that profaned it. And O! one would think that vows made in so solemn a posture, and with the emblems of Christ's body and blood in your hands, would not soon be forgotten as trifles. It is, methinks, an exploit of wickedness to be capable of this; and none of you, I hope, are hardy enough to venture upon it.

SERMON XXVII.

Life and Immortality revealed in the Gospel.

2 TIM. i. 10.

And hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.*

SO extensive have been the havock and devastation which death has made in the world for near six thousand years, ever since it was first introduced by the sin of man, that this earth is now become one vast grave-yard, or burying-place for her sons. The many generations that have followed upon each other, in so quick a succession from Adam to this day, are now in the mansions under ground. And there must we and all the present generation sleep ere long. Some make a short journey from the womb to the grave: they rise from nothing at the creative fiat of the Almighty, and take an immediate flight into the world of spirits, without an intermediate state of probation. Like a bird on the wing, they perch on our globe, rest a day, a month, or a year, and then fly off for some other regions. It is evident, these were not formed for the purposes of the present state, where they make so short a stay; and yet we are sure they are not made in vain by an all-wise Creator; and therefore we conclude they are young immortals, that immediately ripen in the world of spirits, and there enter upon scenes, for which it was worth their while coming into existence. Others spring up and bloom for a few years; but they fade away like a flower, and are cut down. Others arrive at the prime or meridian of human life; but in all their strength and gaiety, and amid their hurries and schemes, and promising prospects, they are surprized

* This Sermon was preached at the Funeral of Mr. William Yuille, and is dated Sept. 1, 1756.

by the arrest of death, and laid stiff, senseless, and ghastly in the grave. A few creep into their beds of dust under the burden of old age and the gradual decays of nature. In short, the grave is *the place appointed for all living*; the general rendezvous of all the sons of Adam. There the prince and the beggar, the conqueror and the slave, the giant and the infant, the scheming politician and the simple peasant, the wise and the fool, Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians, all lie equally low, and mingle their dust without distinction. There beauty in all its charms putrefies into stench and corruption, and feeds the vilest insects. There the sturdy arm of youth lies torpid and benumbed, unable to drive off the worms that crawl through their frame, and riot upon their marrow. There lie our ancestors, our neighbours, our friends, our relatives, with whom we once conversed, and who were united to our hearts by strong and endearing ties; and there lies our friend, the sprightly vigorous youth, whose death is the occasion of this funeral solemnity. This earth is overspread with the ruins of the human frame: it is an huge carnage, a vast charnel-house, undermined and hollowed with the graves, the last mansions of mortals.

And shall these ruins of time and death never be repaired? Is this the final state of human nature? Are all these millions of creatures that were so curiously formed, that could think, and will, and exercise the superior powers of reason, are they all utterly extinct, resorbed into the yawning gulph of annihilation, and never again to emerge into life and activity? If this be the case, the expostulation of the psalmist upon this supposition, seems unavoidable; *Lord, wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Psalm lxxxix. 47. It was not worth while to come into being, if it must be resigned so soon. The powers of reason were thrown away upon us, they were given only for the low purposes of the present life.

But my text revives us with heavenly light to scatter this tremendous gloom. Jesus hath abolished death, overthrown its empire, and delivered its captives;

and he *hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.*

Life and immortality here seem to refer both to the soul and the body, the two constituents of our person. As applied to the body, life and immortality signify, that though our bodies are dissolved at death, and return into their native elements, yet they shall be formed anew with vast improvements, and raised to an immortal existence; so that they shall be as though death never had *had* any power over them; and thus death shall be abolished, annihilated, and all traces of the ruins it had made for ever disappear, as though they had never been. It is in this sense chiefly that the word *Immortality*, or *Incorruptibility**, is made use of in my text. But then the resurrection of the body supposes the perpetual existence of the soul, for whose sake it is raised; therefore life and immortality, as referring to the soul, signify that it is immortal, in a strict and proper sense; that is, that it cannot die at all, or be dissolved like the body; but it lives in the agonies of the dying animal; it lives after the dissolution of the animal frame in a separate state; it lives at the resurrection to re-animate the new-formed body; and it lives for ever, like its immortal Parent, and shall never be dissolved nor annihilated. In this complex sense we may understand the immortality of which my text speaks.

Now it is to the gospel that we owe the clear discovery of immortality in both these senses. As for the resurrection of the dead, which confers a kind of immortality upon our immortal bodies, it is altogether the discovery of divine revelation. The light of nature could not so much as give a hint of it to the most sagacious philosophers in the heathen world. They did not hope for it as possible, much less believe it as certain. And when among other important doctrines of pure revelation, it was first preached to them by Saint Paul, their pride could not bear the mortification of being taught by a tent-maker what all their studies had not been able to discover; and therefore rejected it

* ἀφθαρσία.

with scorn, and ridiculed it as a new-fangled notion of the superstitious Jews. This seems to have been an entire secret to all nations (except the Jews) till the light of christianity dawned upon the world. They bade an eternal farewell to their bodies, when they dropped them in the grave. They never expected to meet them again in all the glorious improvements of an happy resurrection. But that divine revelation from whence we learn our religion, opens to us a brighter prospect; it strengthens our eyes to look forwards through the glooms of death, and behold the many that sleep in the dust awaking; *some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* Dan. xii. 2. It assures us, *that the hour is coming, when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation,* John v. 28. Therefore, be it known unto thee, O! Death, thou king of terrors! that though we cannot now resist thy power nor escape thy arrest, yet we do not surrender ourselves to thee as helpless irredeemable prisoners. We shall yet burst thy bonds, and obtain the victory over thee. And when we commit the dust of our friends or our own to thee, O grave! know, it is a trust deposited in thy custody to be faithfully kept till called for by Him who was once a prisoner in thy territories, but regained his liberty, and triumphed over thee, and put that song of victory into the mouths of all his followers, *O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

As for the immortality of the soul, christian philosophers find it no difficulty to establish it upon the plain principles of reason. Their arguments are such as these; and I think they are conclusive: That the soul is an immaterial substance, and therefore cannot perish by dissolution like the body; that the soul is a substance distinct from the body, and therefore the dissolution of the body has no more tendency to destroy the soul, than the breaking of a cage to destroy the bird enclosed in it; that God has implanted in the soul the innate desire of immortality; and that as the

tendencies of nature in other instances and in other creatures are not in vain, this innate desire is an indication that he intended it for an immortal duration; that as God is the moral Governor of the rational world, there must be rewards and punishments, and therefore there must be a future state of retribution; for we see mankind are now under a promiscuous providence, and generally are not dealt with according to their works; and if there be a future state of retribution, the soul must live in a future state, otherwise it could not be the subject of rewards and punishments. These and the like topics of argument have been improved by the friends of immortality, to prove that important doctrine beyond all reasonable suspicion. And because these arguments from reason seem sufficient, some would conclude that we are not at all obliged to the christian revelation in this respect. But it should be considered that those are not the arguments of the populace, the bulk of mankind, but of a few philosophic studious men. But as immortality is the prerogative of all mankind, of the ignorant and illiterate as well as of the wise and learned, all mankind, of all ranks of understanding, are equally concerned in the doctrine of immortality; and therefore a common revelation was necessary, which would teach the ploughman and the mechanic, as well as the philosopher, that he was formed for an immortal existence, and consequently that it is his grand concern to fit himself for a happiness beyond the grave, as lasting as his nature. Now, it is the gospel alone that makes this important discovery plain and obvious to all. It must also be considered, that men may be able to demonstrate a truth when the hint is but once given, which they would never have discovered, nor perhaps suspected, without that hint. So when *the gospel of Christ has brought immortality to light*, our christian philosophers may support it with arguments from reason; but had they been destitute of this additional light, they would have been lost in perplexity and uncertainty, or at best have been advanced to no further than plausible or probable conjectures. Persons may be assisted in their searches by the light of revelation;

but, being accustomed to it, they may mistake it for the light of their own reason; or they may not be so honest and humble as to acknowledge the assistance they have received. The surest way to know what mere unassisted reason can do, is to enquire what it has actually done in those sages of the heathen world who had no other guide, and in whom it was carried to the highest degree of improvement. Now we find, in fact, that though some philosophers had plausibilities and presumptions that their souls should exist after the dissolution of their bodies, yet that they rather supposed, or wished, or thought it probable, than firmly believed it upon good evidence. The Socrateses, the Platos, and the Ciceros of Greece and Rome, after all their searches, were more perplexed on this point, than a plain common christian of the smallest intellectual improvements in our land of evangelical light. Whoever reads their writings upon this subject will find, when they draw the conclusion of the soul's existence after death, it is often from extravagant and chimerical premises; such as the pre-existence of human souls, their successive transmigration from body to body, their being literally particles of the Deity, whom they supposed to be the *Anima Mundi*, the universal soul of the world, &c. All these premises want the support of proper evidence; and some of them are directly subversive of the proper notion of a future state, as a state of rewards and punishments. Sometimes indeed they seem to reason from better principles; but then they still hesitate about the conclusion, and fluctuate between the presumptions for it and the objections against it. Socrates was confessedly the brightest character in the heathen world, and seemed to have the fairest claim of any among them to the honour of a martyr for the cause of truth and virtue: and yet even he, when making his defence before his Judges, speaks in the language of uncertainty and perp'exity. 'Death,' says he, 'either reduces us to nothing, and entirely destroys all sense and consciousness; or, as some say, it conveys us from this world into some other region*.' Thus, standing on the brink of eternity, he

* Δουῖν γὰρ θάτερον ἔστι τὸ τεθάναι ἢ γὰρ οἷος μηδὲν εἶναι μηδ' αἰσθησθαι

was not assured whether he was not about to leap into the hideous gulph of annihilation, or to pass into some vital region replete with inhabitants. When he was condemned, his last words to the court were these: 'It is time for us to part; I, that I may suffer death; and you, that you may enjoy life: but which of us has the happier lot, is known only to God*.' Poor honest Socrates! how happy hadst thou been, hadst thou but enjoyed one glimmering of that heavenly light which multitudes among us despise! My brethren, let us be thankful for our superior advantages, and let us prize and improve that precious gospel, which gives us full information in this important point, and renders the meanest christian wiser in this respect than Socrates himself.

My present design is not to propose arguments for the conviction of your judgments, which I hope you do not so much need; but I shall give you some idea of immortality, in both the senses I have mentioned, and then improve it.

Let us first look through the wastes and glooms of death and the grave to the glorious dreadful morning of the resurrection. At the all-alarming clangor of the last trumpet, Adam, and the sleeping millions of his posterity start into sudden life. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation,* John v. 28.

Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be organized, and re-animated; and *though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God.* Job xix. 26. *Then this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

And may not the prospect alarm us, and set us upon

μηδελιάν μεθνης ἔχειν τὸν τεθνεῶτα* ἢ, κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα. μεταβολὴ τις τυγχανέεισα καὶ μετόκησις τῆς ψυχῆς τῷ τόπῳ τῷ ἐνθάδε, εἰς ἄλλον τόπον.

Plato Socrat. Apol.

† ἢ δὲ ὧρα ἀπίεσαι, ἐμοὶ μὲν, ἀποθανυμένοι, ὑμῖν δὲ βεωσομένοις. ὁ σποτεροὶ δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ ἀμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἀδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ Θεῳ. Ibidem.

earnest preparation for these important scenes? Shall we take so much care of our bodies in this mortal state, where, after all our care, they must soon fall to dust, and become the prey of worms, and shall we take no care that they may have a happy and glorious resurrection? What does it signify how they are fed or dressed, while they are only fattening for worms, and the ornaments of dress may be our winding-sheet? What does this signify, in comparison with their doom at the great rising day, and their state through eternity? My brethren, you must not let *sin reign in your mortal bodies now, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof*, if you would have them raised holy and happy in that awful morning; but you must consecrate your bodies, and keep them holy as the temples of the Holy Ghost; and *yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God*. Can you flatter yourselves that bodies polluted with filthy lusts and sensual gratifications shall ever be admitted into the regions of perfect purity? It would be an unnatural element to such depraved constitutions. Shall those feet ever walk the crystal pavement of the New Jerusalem, which have been accustomed to run into the foul paths of sin? Shall those tongues ever join the songs of heaven, which have been oftener employed in swearing and imprecation, the language of hell, than in prayer and praise? Shall those ears ever be charmed with cœlestial music, which have not listened with pleasure and eagerness to the joyful sound of the gospel, but were entertained with the song of drunkards, the loud, unthinking laugh, and the impure jest? Are those knees likely to bow in delightful homage before the throne of God and the Lamb on high, which have not been used to the posture of petitioners at the throne of grace on earth? Are those members likely to be the instruments of an heavenly spirit, in the exercises of that blessed state, which have not been "instruments of righteousness unto holiness" in this state of trial and discipline? No, my brethren, this is not at all probable, even to a superficial inquirer; and to one that thinks deeply, and consults right reason and the sacred scriptures, this appears utterly im-

possible. Therefore take warning in time. Methinks this consideration might have some weight, even with epicures and sensualists, who consider themselves as mere animals, and make it their only concern to provide for and gratify the flesh. Unless you be religious now, unless you now deny yourselves of your guilty pleasures, not only your soul, that neglected disregarded trifle, must perish: but your body, your dear body, your only care, must be wretched too; your body must be hungry, thirsty, pained, tortured, hideously deformed, a mere system of pain and loathsomeness. But if you now keep your bodies pure, and serve God with them, and with your spirits too, they will bloom for ever in the charms of celestial beauty; they will flourish in immortal youth and vigour! they will for ever be the receptacles of the most exquisite sensations of pleasure. And will you not deny yourselves the sordid pleasures of a few years, for the sake of those of a blessed immortality?

But let me give you a view of immortality of a more noble kind, the proper immortality of the soul. And here, what an extensive and illustrious prospect opens before us! look a little way backward, and your sight is lost in the darkness of non-existence. A few years ago you were nothing. But at the creative fiat of the Almighty, that little spark of being, the soul, was struck out of nothing; and now it warms your breast, and animates the machine of flesh. But shall this glimmering spark, this *divinæ particula auræ*, ever be extinguished? No; it will survive the ruins of the universe, and blaze out into immortality: it will be coeval with the angels, the natives of heaven, and the *Indigeneæ*, the original inhabitants of the world of spirits; nay with the great Father of spirits himself. The duration of your souls will run on from its first commencement, in parallel lines with the existence of the Deity. What an inheritance is this entailed upon the child of dust, the creature of yesterday! Here let us pause,—make a stand,—and take a survey of this majestic prospect! This body must soon moulder into dust, but the soul will live unhurt, untouched, amid all the dissolving struggles and convulsions of animal

nature. *These heavens shall pass away with a great noise; these elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up; 2 Pet. iii. 10.*; but this soul shall live secure of existence in the universal desolation;

“ Unhurt amidst the war of elements,

“ The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds.”

ADDISON.

And now, when the present system of things is dissolved, and Time shall be no more, Eternity, boundless eternity, succeeds; and on this the soul enters as on its proper hereditary duration. Now look forward as far as you will, your eye meets with no obstruction, with nothing but the immensity of the prospect: in that, indeed, it is lost, as extending infinitely beyond its ken. Come, attempt this arithmetic of infinites, and exhaust the power of numbers; let millions of millions of ages begin the vast computation; multiply these by the stars of heaven; by the particles of dust in this huge globe of earth; by the drops of water in all the vast oceans, rivers, lakes, and springs that are spread over the globe; by all the thoughts that have risen in so quick a succession in the minds of men and angels, from their first creation to this day; make this computation, and then look forward through this long line of duration, and contemplate your future selves: still you see yourselves in existence; still the same persons; still endowed with the same consciousness, and the same capacities for happiness or misery, but vastly enlarged; as much superior to the present as the capacities of an adult to those of a new-born infant, or an embryo in the womb. Still will you bloom in immortal youth, and are as far from an end as in the first moment of your existence. O sirs, methinks it may startle us to view our future selves so changed, so improved, removed into such different regions, associated with such strange unacquainted beings, and fixt in such different circumstances of glory or terror, of happiness or misery.

Men of great projects and sanguine hopes are apt to

VOL. II.

M

sit and pause, and take an imaginary survey of what they will do, and what they will be in the progress of life. But then death, like an apparition, starts up before them, and threatens to cut them off in the midst of their pursuit. But here no death threatens to extinguish your being, or snap the thread of your existence; but it runs on in one continued everlasting tenor. What a vast inheritance is this, inalienably entailed upon every child of Adam! What importance, what value, does this consideration give to that neglected thing the soul! What an awful being is it? Immortality! What emphasis, what grandeur in the sound! Immortality is so vast an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinity to any thing to which it is annexed, however insignificant in other respects: and on the other hand, the want of this would degrade the most exalted being into a trifle. The highest angel, if the creature of a day, or of a thousand years, what would he be? A fading flower, a vanishing vapour, a flying shadow. When his day or his thousand years are past, he is as truly nothing as if he had never been. It is little matter what becomes of him: let him stand or fall, let him be happy or miserable, it is just the same in a little time; he is gone, and there is no more of him; no traces of him left. But an immortal! a creature that shall never, never, never cease to be! that shall expand his capacities of action, of pleasure or pain, through an everlasting duration! what an awful, important being is this!—And is my soul, this little spark of reason in my breast, is that such a being? I tremble at myself. I revere my own dignity, and am struck with a kind of pleasing horror to view what I must be. And is there any thing so worthy of the care of such a being as the happiness, the everlasting happiness of my immortal part? What is it to me, who am formed for an endless duration, what I enjoy, or what I must suffer in this vanishing state? Seventy or eighty years bear not the least imaginable proportion to the duration of such a being; they are too inconsiderable a point to be seen; mere cyphers in the computation. They do not bear as much proportion as the small dust

that will not turn the balance, to this vast globe of earth, and all the vaster globes that roll in their orbits through the immense space of the universe.

And what shall become of me through this immortal duration? This, and this only, is the grand concern of an immortal; and in comparison of it, it does not deserve one thought what will become of me while in this vanishing phantom of a world. For consider, your immortality will not be a state of insensibility, without pleasure or pain; you will not draw out an useless inactive existence in an eternal stupor, or a dead sleep. But your souls will be active as long as they exist; and as I have repeatedly observed, still retain all their capacities; nay, their capacities will perpetually enlarge with an eternal growth, and for ever tower from glory to glory in heaven, or plunge from depth to depth in hell. Here then, my fellow-immortals! here pause and say to yourselves, "What is like to become of my soul through this long space for ever? Is it likely to be happy or miserable?" What though you are now rich, honourable, healthy, merry, and gay? Alas! terrestrial enjoyments are not proper food for an immortal soul; and besides they are not immortal, as your souls are. If these are your portion, what will you do for happiness millions of ages hence, when all these are fled away like a vapour? Are you provided with a happiness which will last as long as your souls will live to crave it? Have you an interest in God? Are you prepared for the fruition of the heavenly state? Do you delight in God above all? Have you a relish for the refined pleasures of religion? Is the supreme good the principal object of your desire? Do you now accustom yourselves to the service of God, the great employment of heaven? and are you preparing yourselves for the more exalted devotion of the church on high, by a serious attendance on the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth? Are you made pure in heart and life, that you may be prepared for the regions of untainted holiness, to breathe in that pure salubrious air, and live in that climate, so warm with the love of God, and so near the Sun of righteousness? Do not some of you know that this is

not your prevailing character? And what then do you think will become of you without a speedy alteration in your temper and conduct? Alas! must your immortality, the grand prerogative of your nature, become your eternal curse? Have you made it your interest that you should be a brute? that is, that you should perish entirely, and your whole being be extinguished in death? Then it is no wonder you strive to disbelieve the doctrine of a future state, and your own immortality. But alas! in vain is the strife. The principles of Atheism and infidelity may lull your consciences into a stupid repose for a little while, but they cannot annihilate you. They may lead you to live like beasts, but they cannot enable you to die like beasts: no, you must live, live to suffer righteous punishment, whether you will or not. As you did not come into being by your own consent, so neither can you lay down your being when you please. And will you not labour to make your immortality a blessing? Is there any thing in this world that can be a temptation to you to forfeit such an immense blessing? O that you were wise! that you would consider this!

I shall now accommodate my subject to the present melancholy occasion, and endeavour to make a particular improvement of it.

Do you expect a character of our deceased friend? This is not my usual practice; and I omit it, not because I can see nothing amiable in mankind, nor because I would enviously deny them their just praises, but because I have things of much greater importance to engage your attention. The dead have received their just and unchangeable doom at a superior tribunal; and our panegyrics or censures may be often misapplied. My business is with the living; not to flatter their vanity with compliments, but to awaken them to a sense of their own mortality, and to a preparation for it. However, if you must have a character, I will draw it to you in the most important and interesting light. Here was a youth in the bloom of life, in the prime of his strength, with a lively flow of spirits, who seemed as secure from the stroke of death as any of us; a youth that had escaped many dangers by sea

and land; a youth launched into the world with, no doubt, the usual projects and expectations of that sanguine age. But where is he now? In yonder grave, alas! lies the blooming promising flower, withered in the morning of life. There lies the mortal body, mouldering into dust, and feeding the worms. Come to his grave, ye young and gay, ye lively and strong, ye men of business and hurry, come and learn what now may, and shortly must, be your doom. Thus shall your limbs stiffen, your blood stagnate, your faces wear the pale and ghastly aspect of death, and your whole frame dissolve into dust and ashes. Thus shall your purposes be broken off, your schemes vanish like smoke, and all your hopes from this world perish. Death perpetually lurks in ambush for you, ready every moment to spring upon his prey. 'O that Death!' (said a gentleman of a large estate, strong constitution, and cheerful temper) 'I do not love to think of that Death; he comes in and spoils all.' So he does indeed; he spoils all your thoughtless mirth, your idle amusements, and your great schemes. Methinks it becomes you to prepare for what you cannot avoid. Methinks, among your many schemes and projects, you should form one to be religious. You may make a poor shift to live without religion, but you can make none to die without it. You may ridicule the saint, but he really has the advantage of you. 'Well, after all,' said a celebrated unbeliever, 'these christians are the happiest people upon earth.' Indeed they are; and if you are wise, you will labour to be of their number.

But was our departed friend nothing but an animal, a mere machine of flesh? Is the whole of him putrifying in yonder grave? No; I must draw his character farther. He was an immortal; and no sooner did he resign his breath, than his soul took wing, and made its flight into the regions of spirits. There it now dwells. And what amazing scenes now present themselves to his view? what strange unknown beings does he now converse with? There also, my brethren, you and I must ere long be. We too must be initiated into those grand mysteries of the invisible world, and mingle in this assembly of strangers. We must share

with angels in their bliss and glory, or with devils in their agonies and terrors. And our eternal doom shall be according to our present character, and the improvement we make of our opportunities for preparation.

And do you, sirs, make it your main concern to secure a happy immortality? Do you live as expectants of eternity? Or do you live as though this world were to be your eternal residence, and as if your bodies, not your souls, were immortal? Does your conscience approve of such conduct? Do you really think it is better for you upon the whole, to commence fashionably wicked, or perhaps ringleaders in debauchery and infidelity, in a country over-run with all manner of vice? Is this better than to retain the good impressions you might perhaps receive in youth, and to act upon the model built for you in a religious education? Which do you think you will approve of in the hour of death, that honest hour when things begin to appear in a true light? And of which think ye will you be able to give the most comfortable account at the supreme tribunal? Brethren, form an impartial judgment upon this comparison, and let it guide your conduct. Behave as *strangers and pilgrims on earth, that have here no continuing city*; behave as expectants of eternity, as candidates for immortality; as *beholding him that is invisible, and looking for a city which has foundations eternal in the heavens*. In that celestial city may we all meet at last, through Jesus Christ. Amen!

SERMON XXVIII.

Jesus Christ the only Foundation.

ISAIAH xxviii. 16, 17.

Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.*

THE context, like many other passages of the prophetic scriptures, seems to have a double sense. The primary sense may be thus represented. The judgments of God were ready to break in upon and overwhelm the impenitent nation of the Jews, like *a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing*, and bearing all before it. (ver. 2.) The prophet had repeatedly given them timely warning of these approaching judgments; but they still continued secure and impenitent, and unapprehensive of danger. They flattered themselves they had artifice enough to keep themselves safe. They thought themselves impregnablely intrenched and fortified in their riches, their strong holds, and the sanctity of their temple and nation. They might also think their arts of negotiation would secure them from the invasion of the neighbouring powers, particularly the Assyrians, to whom they were most exposed. These were the lies which they made their refuge, and the falsehood under which they hid themselves. These, they imagined, like moles or ditches, who keep off the deluge of wrath, so that it should not come to them, much less overwhelm them; and they were as secure as if they had made *a covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave, not*

* This Sermon is dated Hanover, Feb. 13, 1757.

to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, *We have made a covenant with death; and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies* (that is what the prophet calls lies) *our refuge; and under what he calls falsehood have we hid ourselves.* (ver. 15) It is in this connection my text is introduced; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which these sinners trusted; as if he had said, 'Since the refuge to which you flee is not safe, and since my people need another,' *Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; that is, 'My promises, my providential care, the supporting influences of my grace, and the various means I shall take for the comfort and safety of my people in this national distress, shall as effectually bear them up as a firm foundation of stone does a building erected upon it. They that build their hopes upon this foundation, shall stand unshaken amidst all the storms and tempests of national calamity that may beat upon our guilty land.' He that believeth shall not make haste; that is, 'he that trusts in this refuge shall not be struck into a distracted hurry and consternation upon the sudden appearance of these calamities. He shall not, like persons surprised with unexpected danger, fly in a wild haste to improper means for his safety, and thus throw himself into destruction by his ill-advised precipitant attempts to keep out of it; but he shall be calm and serene, and have presence of mind to take the most proper measures for his deliverance.'* Or the meaning may be, 'He that believeth, shall not make such haste to be delivered as to fly to unlawful means for that purpose; but will patiently wait God's time to deliver him in a lawful way.' The prophet proceeds, *Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; that is, 'God will try the Jews with strict justice, as an architect examines a building with a line and plummet. Such of them who have built their hopes upon the foundation above described, shall stand firm and unshaken, whatever tem-*

pests fall upon them, like a regular and stately building, founded upon a solid rock. But as to others, they shall be overwhelmed in the public calamity! *the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies in which they trusted; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.* And then your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: *when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall they be trodden down by it.* (ver. 18.)

This seems to be a primary sense of the context; and thus, it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. In this view it is very applicable to us, in the present state of our country and nation, when the enemy is like to break in like a flood upon us. But I must add, that it is very likely that, even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to Jesus Christ. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words when they are applied to any other; and the connexion will admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus: 'Since the refuge of sinners is a refuge of lies, behold, I will provide one that will effectually secure all that fly to it from all the judgments to which they were exposed.' *I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, &c.* 'I send my Son into the world as an Almighty Saviour; and all that put themselves under his protection, and build their hopes upon him, shall be so safe, that all the calamities of life shall not do them a lasting injury; and the vengeance of the eternal world shall never fall upon them.'

But whether we can find Christ in the primary sense of these words or not, it is certain we shall find him in their ultimate principal sense. And we have the authority of an inspired apostle for this application. Saint Peter quotes this passage according to the LXX. with some improvements, and applies it expressly to Christ. *To whom coming, says he, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-*

stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 1 Peter ii. 4, 6. Taking the passage in this evangelical sense, the general meaning is to this purpose:—The Lord Jesus is represented as a tried, precious, and sure foundation, laid in Zion; that is, in the church for the sons of men to build their hopes upon. His church thus built on him, is compared to a stately regular and impregnable temple consecrated to the service of God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices; and proof against all the storms and tempests that may beat upon it. It shall stand firm and immoveable through all eternity, for its foundation is sure.

But alas! though Jesus Christ be the only foundation, yet the sons of men are so full of themselves, that they venture to build their hopes upon something else, and promise themselves safety, though they reject this sure foundation. They think themselves as secure as if they had entered into a treaty with death and the grave, and brought them over to their interest.

But lo! the wrath of God will at last beat upon a guilty world, like a storm of hail, or break in upon it like an overwhelming torrent; then every soul that is not built upon this rock must be swept away, and all the other refuges and hiding-places shall be laid in ruins for ever.

The great God will also strictly inquire who is founded upon this rock, and who not. He will critically try the temple of his church, like a workman, with line and plummet; he will discover all irregularities and useless appendages. And in consequence of this examination, the storms and torrents of divine indignation shall sweep away and overwhelm all that are not built upon this foundation, and that are not compacted into this building.

These remarks contain the general meaning of our text; but it is necessary I should be more particular.

Brethren, our nature, our circumstances, and the important prospects before us, are such, that it is high time for us to look about us for some sure foundation upon which to build our happiness. The fabric must

endure long, for our souls will exist for ever; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement for ever. The fabric must rise high, for the capacities of our souls will perpetually expand and enlarge; and a low happiness of a vulgar size will not be equal to them. The fabric must be strong and impregnable, proof against all the storms that may beat upon it; for many are the storms that will rise upon us, upon our country, and upon this guilty world in general. Losses, bereavements, sicknesses, and a thousand calamities that I cannot name, may yet try us. The enemy is now breaking in like a flood upon our country, and we and our earthly all are in danger of being overwhelmed. Death will certainly attack us all; and that must be a strong building indeed which the King of Terrors will not be able to demolish. Besides, when all the purposes of divine love in our world shall be accomplished, an almighty tempest of divine indignation shall break upon it, and sweep away all that it contains; and blend cities, kingdoms, plains, and mountains, seas and dry land, kings and beggars, in one vast heap of promiscuous ruin. Or, to shift the metaphor according to the emphatical variety in my text, the fiery deluge of divine vengeance which has been gathering and swelling for thousands of years, but has been, as it were, restrained and kept within bounds by divine patience, shall then rise so high as to burst through all restraints, and overwhelm the guilty globe, and turn it into an universal ocean of liquid fire. This resistless torrent shall sweep away all the refuges of lies, and them that trusted in them, into the gulph of remediless destruction. We, my brethren, shall be concerned in this universal catastrophe of nature; and where shall we find a support to bear us up in this tremendous day? Where shall we find a rock to build upon, that we may be able to stand the shock, and remain safe and unmoved in the wreck of dissolving worlds? What can support the fabric when this vast machine of nature, formed with so much skill and strength by the hands of a divine architect, shall be broken up and fall to pieces? Now is the time for us to look out; it will be too late when

all created supports are swept away, and this solid globe itself is dissolved beneath our feet into a sea of fire. Now, now is the time for you to provide. And where will you look? Whither will you turn? This earth and all its riches, honours, and pleasures, will prove but a quicksand in that day. Your friends and relations, were they ever so great or powerful, can then afford you no support. If they can but find refuge for themselves, that will be all, therefore bethink yourselves once more, where shall you find a rock on which you may build a happiness that will stand the shock in that day?

If you are anxious and perplexed, I need only point you to my text for relief. *Behold*, says the Lord God, *behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste.* Let me expatiate a little upon the properties of this foundation.

1. It is a stone: a stone for solidity, stability, and durableness. 'Every thing else,' says the charming Hervey*, 'is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honour an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of the true happiness.' And, blessed be God! he is sufficient for this purpose. Is a stone firm and solid? so is Jesus Christ. His power is almighty, able to support the meanest of his people that build their hopes on him, and render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm immoveable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal All upon this rock; it will stand for ever, without giving way under the heaviest pressure; without being broken by the most violent shock. Let thousands, let millions, with all the mountainous weight

* Theron and Aspasio, Vol. II. p. 361. &c.

of guilt upon them, build upon this foundation, and they shall never be moved. Is a stone durable and lasting? so is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, his strength an everlasting strength and himself the everlasting Father. He liveth for ever to make intercession for his people, and therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, to the uttermost point of duration, all that come unto God by him. Here is a stone that can never moulder away by the waste of all-consuming time. Parian marble, and even the flinty rocks decay: the firm foundations, the stately columns, the majestic buildings of Nineveh, Babylon, and Persepolis, and all the magnificent structures of antiquity, though formed of the most durable stone, and promising immortality, are now shattered into ten thousand fragments, or lying in ruinous heaps. But here is a foundation for immortal souls, immortal as themselves: a foundation that now stands as firm under Adam, Abel, and Abraham, as the first moment they ventured their dependence upon it: a foundation that will remain the same to all eternity. Therefore it deserves the next character given to it, namely,

2. *A tried stone.* 'Tried,' says the same fine writer, 'in the days of his humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny.' His obedience was tried; and it appeared upon trial that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried by the abusive treatment he met with from men. His patience and resignation to the divine will was tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into his hand, and when the absence of his Father extorted that bitter cry from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. His love to his Father, and his zeal for his honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed without once languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men,—to sinners,—to enemies, was tried; tried to the uttermost: it was put to the trial whether his own life or theirs was most dear to him;

whether he would rather see his enemies perish by the sword of justice, or that himself should feel the agonies of a cross. This was a trial indeed; and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

Jesus has also been tried under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing to expiate the most enormous guilt; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions; and to *save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him*. Ten thousand times ten thousand have built their hopes upon this stone, and it has never failed so much as one of them. Manasseh and Paul, that had been bloody persecutors, Mary Magdalen, that had been possessed of seven devils, and thousands more that were sinners of the most atrocious characters, have ventured upon this rock with all their load of sin upon them, and found it able to sustain them. This stone is the foundation of that living temple the Church, which has been now building for near six thousand years, and the top of which already reaches the highest heaven. All the millions of saints from Adam to this day, both those in heaven and those on earth, are living stones built upon this foundation-stone; this supports the weight of all. And this trial may encourage all others to build upon it; for it appears sufficient to bear them all.

But I must farther observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of *a tried stone*, it may be rendered 'a stone of trial;' or, 'a trying stone:' that is, this is the true touch-stone of mens characters. It is this that, above all other things, discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring forward and embrace him

as a Saviour, they are true subjects to the King of heaven; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to Jesus Christ as a Saviour, is not a single command of God, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole Law and Gospel; it is the grand capital precept; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of heaven towards the son of men. And therefore, while men refuse to submit to this command, they are guilty of a kind of universal disobedience; and it is in vain for them to pretend to have a real regard to God and his authority in any one instance whatsoever. If they obey God sincerely in falling in with this command, they will obey him in every thing; but if they will not obey him in this, they will truly obey him in nothing. Hence it is that good works are the inseparable fruits of faith in Christ, and that unbelief is the root of all evil. Submission to Christ is also the most effectual trial, whether the corrupt dispositions of the heart, whether the innate enmity to God, pride, stubbornness, &c. be thoroughly subdued? If a man is once made so dutiful, so humble, so pliable, as to submit to this humbling mortifying method of salvation through Jesus Christ, it shews that divine grace has got an entire victory over him, and that now the rebel is so subdued that he will be obedient in any thing. There is nothing in the whole law or gospel to which the hearts of sinners are so averse, as this method of salvation; and therefore, when they are subdued to this, and made willing captives of the cross of Christ, we may be sure they have surrendered themselves to universal obedience.

This text has made strange discoveries in the world in every age. This touchstone has discovered many glittering virtues to be but dross. The Pharisees and Scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this trying stone was applied to them; and then it appeared what they were, then it appeared they were the most inveterate enemies of God upon earth. These were the builders that rejected this stone, and would not build upon it. They

rather chose to build upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness. Nay, instead of making him the foundation of their hopes, they made him *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 8.; and they stumbled and fell into destruction. *Christ crucified,* says the apostle, *is to the Jews a stumbling block,* 1 Cor. i. 23. This test made strange discoveries also in the heathen world. Many of the sages of Greece and Rome had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue; they gloried in it themselves, and they were admired and celebrated by the populace. But when this stone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud disdain, and thought it much more safe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of one that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touchstone be applied likewise to the men of this generation, and it will discover a great many counterfeits. You will find some who have an amiable ingratiating conduct, who are temperate, just, charitable, and shine with the appearance of many virtues. You will find others who are very punctual in the duties of religion; they are frequent in prayer, and strict attendants upon all the solemnities of divine worship: all this looks well. But tell them that all this is no sufficient ground for their hopes of the divine acceptance: nay, that they must renounce all this point of dependence, as having no merit at all; and that they must, as helpless, guilty, self-condemned sinners, place their trust only in Jesus Christ; and they then begin to shew their pride: then their hearts rise against this mortifying doctrine, and perhaps against him that inculcates it. They cannot bear that all their imaginary merit should have such contempt cast upon it. They will own indeed, as others around them do, that Christ is the only Saviour; but their real dependence is at bottom upon some supposed goodness in themselves. And thus they discover that all their righteousness is but the proud self-righteousness of a Pharisee, or the self-confident virtue of a stoic philosopher, and not the humble re-

ligion or genuine sterling virtue of a true Christian. Thus the reception which men give to Jesus Christ is the grand criterion of their character. And this is agreeable to the prophecy of good old Simeon concerning him: *Behold this child, says he, is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against;—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed,* Luke ii. 34, 35. The secret thoughts, reasonings*, and dispositions of many hearts, that were before unsuspected, are revealed by this trial. And I wish it may not make very ungrateful discoveries among you.

As this is a trying stone with regard to mens present characters, so it will be also as to their final doom and everlasting state. All that are built upon this foundation, however frail and tottering in themselves, shall grow up into a glorious impregnable temple, and stand firm when the frame of nature is dissolved. But all that are not built upon this foundation, however strong or well-established in their own conceit, or however high they raise the fabric of their hopes, shall be demolished and laid in ruins for ever. The one may be likened, says Christ, *unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.* And the other may be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it, Matt. vii. 24, 27. What a confounding fall will this be to those that have built a towering Babel of hopes that reaches to heaven! But,

3. This is a precious stone. 'More precious than rubies (to borrow the words of Mr. Hervey) the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations. Precious with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects greater than Jonah;—wiser than Solomon;—fairer than the children of men;—

* *δαιδαγμοί.*

chiefest among ten thousand;—and, to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, altogether lovely.’

He is precious in himself, as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the sum total of all divine excellencies, and as clothed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In short, all moral excellency, divine and human, created and uncreated, center in him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased*; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. He is precious to angels. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain*, is their eternal song. He is dear to all good men in all ages. *To you therefore that believe, he is precious*, says St. Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 7. How precious are his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness to the guilty self-condemned soul! how precious is his sanctifying grace to the soul heavy laden with sin, and groaning under that body of death! how precious the assistance of his almighty arm to his poor soldiers in the spiritual warfare! how precious the light of his instructions to the benighted wandering mind! how sweet the words of his mouth! sweeter than honey from the honey-comb. How precious the light of his smiling countenance, and the sensations of his love to the desponding sinking soul! how precious that eternal salvation which he imparts! and how precious the price he paid for it! *not corruptible things, such as silver and gold*, says St. Peter, *but his own precious blood*, 1 Peter i. 18, 19. In short, he is altogether lovely, altogether precious. Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious stones in the universe, cannot represent his worth. O that a thoughtless world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then say to his friends, *Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?* I enlarge upon this article with the more pleasure, as I doubt not but the experience of several among you can affix your Amen to what I say, and to much more. I am now but complying with the request of one of my friends*, at the distance of near four thousand miles, who writes to me thus:—‘Dear Sir, recommend Him to poor sinners,

* Mr. Benjamin Forfitt, of London.

recommend him to poor believers, as a most wonderful Saviour and Redeemer; abundantly able to deliver them from all that hell and sin can do to destroy them. O that his divine excellencies and worth could be set forth! Surely the most abandoned sinners would fall before him with ravishment and wonder.'—These are British sterling thoughts concerning this precious stone, my brethren, and I hope the same thoughts are to be found among you. O! that they were universal among us, and among all the sons of men!

4. This stone is a sure foundation. 'Such (says Mr. Hervey) as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world.—The rock of ages, such as never has failed, never will fail those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes upon this immoveable basis.' The foundation is sure, because it is of divine appointment. *Behold*, says the Lord God, who has authority to make the appointment, *behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.* It is also sure, because of the extent of his power, the perfection of his righteousness, and the eternity of his existence. But these I have already touched upon. Indeed, his excellencies are so sweetly blended and complicated, like the colours of the rainbow, that it is hard to describe one of them, without running into another.

The author whom I have repeatedly quoted, thinks the words may be otherwise rendered: 'A foundation! a foundation! There is, says he, a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence thus understood: it speaks the language of agreeable surprise and exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek, and find not; it is here! it is here! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.'

5. This is a corner-stone. 'It not only,' says Mr. Hervey, 'sustains, but unites the edifice: incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages and manifold denominations, here, in one harmonious

bond of brotherly love; hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy.' To this purpose, and in this style, speaks the apostle: *He is our peace who hath made both; that is, both Jews and Gentiles one, one regular, compact, magnificent superstructure, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom you [Gentiles] also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Ephes. ii. 14, 20, 22. Materials for this sacred temple are collected from thrones and cottages, from bond and free, from Jews and Gentiles, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; but notwithstanding these distinctions, they are all united in this corner-stone; all harmoniously compacted* into one regular magnificent temple, where the God of heaven delights to dwell.

Jesus Christ may also be called a corner-stone, to signify his peculiar importance in this spiritual building. Hence he is elsewhere repeatedly called the chief corner-stone, and the head of the corner. Matt. xxi. 42. Psalm cxviii. 22. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17. Acts iv. 11. 1 Peter ii. 7. Ephes. ii. 20. We are *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, in a subordinate sense; but *Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone*. He has the most important place in the building. It is he that holds up and connects all. Apostles, prophets, and all are but sinking sand without him. Their righteousness, their strength are nothing without him. On him all their doctrines depend, in him they all terminate, and from him they derive all their efficacy. Take away this corner-stone, and immediately the saints in heaven fall from their thrones; and the saints upon earth, that are gradually rising heavenward, sink for ever. Take away this corner-stone, and this glorious living temple that has been building for so many ages, breaks to pieces, and covers heaven and earth with its ruins.

Having thus illustrated the particular properties of this stone, I shall take notice of this general property

* So the original word, συναρμοζομένην.

of it, that it is a foundation. So it is repeatedly called in my text. 'It is laid in Zion as a foundation:' it is a sure foundation. It must be the foundation, and have the principal place in the spiritual building, or none at all. *No other foundation, says St Paul, can any man lay, than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And he must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstructure cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with his in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. To make our own merit the ground of our claim to his righteousness; that is, to hope that God will save us for Christ's sake, because we are so good as to deserve some favour at least for our own sakes, this is to lay a foundation of stone upon a quicksand. The stone would have stood, had it been in its proper place, that is, at the bottom of all; but when it is founded upon the sand, it must give way, and all the superstructure must fall. This is the grand fundamental mistake of multitudes in the Christian world. They all own that Christ is the only Saviour; but then the ground of their expecting salvation through him, is not his righteousness, but their own. Their own worthless works, which their ignorance and vanity call good, lie at the bottom of all their hopes, as the first foundation; and Christ's righteousness is rather a part of the superstructure than the entire foundation. This is *the refuge of lies*, the delusive hiding-place which multitudes are building all their lives with a great deal of pains, and, when they think themselves provided with a strong everlasting mansion, suddenly they feel themselves swept away into destruction by the overwhelming torrent of divine indignation.

Here, brethren, let us pause a while, and turn our attention to a question that I hope you have anticipated, 'Am I a living stone built upon this foundation? Are all my hopes of acceptance with God and eternal happiness founded upon this rock?' Are you not desirous to make this important discovery? to make it now while you have time? if you have made a mistake, to correct it, by pulling down the old build-

ing, and beginning a new one on the right foundation? Have you no anxiety about this? If not, I must tell you, you care not for the God that made you, or the Saviour that bought you with his blood: heaven and hell are but trifles to you, and you are indifferent which should be your eternal lot. You have not the sensibility of a man with regard to pleasure and pain, but the stupidity of a brute, or rather of a senseless stone. And if you continue thus stupidly careless about eternal things, you shall for ever be cut off from the rewards of pious diligence, and feel the dreadful doom of the slothful servant. Brethren, can you be indifferent in a matter of such infinite consequence? Let me remind you that a dreadful hurricane is gathering over this guilty world, which will burst upon you, and sweep you away, unless you be founded upon the Rock of ages. Think of the last part of my text; *the hail shall sweep away the refuge, or hope of lies, the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.* You may be parts of the outward court of this spiritual building; I mean, you may be members of the visible church; but that is only a scaffold to the sacred temple, and when this is finished, that shall be pulled down. Remember this building will be critically inspected: the great Architect *will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;* and if you do not stand that test, you will be demolished as useless appendages or incumbrances, and you never can be built up again; the temple of God will then be complete, and no new stones shall be added to it for ever. Therefore now is the time to discover fundamental errors, and correct them. Discover them you can and will in the eternal world; but O! it will then be too late to correct them!

Would you then know, whether you are really built upon this sure foundation? If so, I shall willingly assist you to make the trial. And for this purpose I solemnly propose a few questions to your consciences in the sight of God.

1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build anywhere else with hopes of safety. If you have ever fled to him as a hiding-

place, you have seen it was your last refuge. And have all your false hopes, all your refuges of lies been swept away? have you seen that honors, riches, pleasures, and all the world were but breaking bubbles? Have you been sensible that your own righteousness was a rotten foundation, and that you were just ready to sink every moment under the burden of your sins, and to be swept away by the torrent of divine vengeance? Like a sinking man, you have been ready to catch at every twig or straw for support; but were you obliged at length, with Peter, to turn to Christ and cry out, *help, Lord, I perish?* Have you let go every other hold, and taken fast hold of him as the only support? Have you given up all other grounds of hope, and as poor, guilty, perishing, helpless creatures, placed your whole dependence upon this foundation? If you can honestly give a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it looks encouraging: but if not, you may be sure you are building upon some sandy foundation; you are lurking in some refuge of lies, and must be overwhelmed at last in inevitable ruin.

2. Have you ever been sensible of the preciousness, the excellency, and the stability of this divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Christ, it has been at once an act of the last necessity, and of the most free choice. O! how precious did this stone appear to you! like the loadstone, it had a strong attraction upon you, and you were effectually drawn to it. You need go no further than your own hearts to find the truth of what I have said of the preciousness of Christ; the preciousness of his strength, his righteousness, and every thing in him. *To you that believe, he is precious.* 1 Peter ii. 7. This is the assertion of an apostle concerning all believers, without exception. And shall I conclude this is the real sentiment of all in this assembly concerning Christ? Shall I conclude it, brethren? O! shall I allow myself to be so happy? Does your conscience tell you there is ground for your saying that Christ is precious to you. Alas! is it not quite the reverse with many of you?

3. Where is your habitual dependence? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? or is it upon something else? Da

you not feel the need of strength, of spiritual life, of pardon and righteousness, and eternal life? Certainly, if you know yourselves, you feel the need of these things. And upon whom do you depend for them? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Is it habitual, and, as it were, natural to you, since you first ventured upon this foundation, to rest there, sensible that you have always need of this support, and that every other foundation is but sinking sand? Brethren, what does conscience reply to these questions?

4. Have you been formed into proper stones for this spiritual temple? Has God hewn you, may I so speak, by his word, and broken off whatever was rugged, irregular, and unfit to be compacted into the building? Has he shaped and polished your souls for a place in it? Do you feel this divine Architect daily carrying on this work in you, polishing you more and more into a resemblance to Christ? Or are you still the same rough, irregular, unpolished pieces, with human nature unsanctified in its present degenerate state? Then you may be sure you are not built upon this foundation.

I think I may pronounce these few queries fully decisive in this case. And what discoveries do they now make among you? Where now appears to be the foundation of your hope? Have not some of you rejected the chief corner-stone which God has appointed, and built upon a quicksand? If so, even a friendly tongue cannot but denounce some terrible things to you.

While you are not founded upon Christ, you shall, you must unavoidably, sink for ever. There is nothing that can support you. Build your hopes ever so high, the fabric will fall, and bury you in its ruins. Nay, this only foundation of hope and happiness will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, the occasion of your more aggravated guilt, and more dreadful destruction. There are a few texts of scripture which I would ring like peals of alarming thunder in your ears. *The same Lord of hosts who shall be for a sanctuary to his people, shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, for a gin and a snare; and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and snared, and taken.* Isai. viii. 14. *Unto you that be-*

lieve, says St. Peter, *he is precious; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word.*

1 Peter ii. 7, 8. If this stone be not made by you the foundation of your hopes, it will fall upon you and crush you in pieces. Remember the declaration of Christ himself, *Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken; that is, whosoever shall reject him while in a humble form in the days of his flesh, shall perish, but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder; that is, whosoever shall reject him in his state of exaltation, shall perish in a still more terrible manner.* And will not all these alarming considerations have weight with you, to persuade you to make him your only foundation?

If you have already made him so, then be assured you are safe and immoveable for ever. Let storms of private or public calamity rise and beat upon you; let your fears and doubts rise to ever so high a deluge; let temptations make ever so severe attacks upon you, still the foundation on which you stand abides firm and unshaken. Nay, let all nature go to wreck, and seas and land, and heaven and earth be blended together, still this foundation stands firm, and the living temple built upon it will remain immoveable for ever. You that believe, need not make haste, you need not be struck into consternation upon the appearance of danger, nor fly to unlawful means of deliverance, your all is safe, and therefore you may be serene and calm. Is the burden of your guilt intolerable, and are you ready to sink under it? Or are you sinking under a load of sorrow? Whatever be the burden, cast it upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. This foundation is able to bear you up, however great the pressure. Come ye that are weary and heavy laden, come, and build your hopes, and place your rest here. O! what joyful tidings are these! I hope they will prove a word in season to some soul that is weary.

What now remains but that I should more explicitly point out this precious stone to you all, by illustrating the emphatical word *behold*, prefixt to the text.

Behold, ye poor sinking souls, behold with wonder and gratitude: here is a sure foundation for you; cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it,

and it will support you. Say no more, 'Alas! I must sink for ever under this mountain of guilt;' but turn to Jesus with sinking Peter, and cry, *Help, Lord, I perish*; and he will bear you up. Yes, whatever storms may blow, whatever convulsions may shake the world, you are safe.

Behold, ye joyful believers. See here the foundation of all your joys and hopes, Do you stand firm like mount Zion? See here is the rock that supports you. Gratefully acknowledge it, and inscribe this precious stone with your praises. Point it out to others as the only ground of hope for perishing souls.

Behold, ye wretched self-righteous Pharisees, the only rock on which you must build if you expect to stand. Your proud self-confident virtue, your boasted philosophic morality, is but a loose tottering foundation. Virtue and morality are necessary to complete and adorn the superstructure; but when they are laid at the bottom of all, they will prove but a quicksand.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish! perish you must if you set at nought this precious stone. To you this only foundation is like to prove a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*. To you the nature of things is inverted; the only ground of hope will heighten your despair; and the Saviour of men will be your destroyer.

Behold, ye glorious angels, behold the firm foundation divine love has laid for the salvation of guilty worms. It is as firm as that on which you stand. Are the affairs of mortals beneath your notice? No, we are concerned with Jesus too who is your head; and our connection with him must give us an importance in your view. Therefore join with us in celebrating the praises of this foundation. This precious stone appears to you in all its splendors: its brilliancy dazzles your admiring eyes. We also admire it as far as we know it; but to us it is like a foundation laid deep under ground, that supports us though we see it not. When shall we be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly Zion, where it will appear full to our view, and be the object of our delightful contemplation for ever and ever!

SERMON XXIX.

The Necessity and Excellence of Family-Religion.

I TIMOTHY v. 8.

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

THE great Author of our nature, who has made us sociable creatures, has instituted various societies among mankind, both civil and religious, and joined them together by the various bonds of relation. The first and radical society is that of a family, which is the nursery of the church and state. This was the society instituted in Paradise in the state of innocence, when the indulgent Creator, finding that it was not good for man, a sociable creature, to be alone, formed an help meet for him, and united them in the endearing bonds of the conjugal relation. From thence the human race was propagated; and when multiplied, it was formed into civil governments and ecclesiastical assemblies. Without these associations the worship of God could not be publicly and socially performed, and liberty and property could not be secured. Without these, men would turn savages and roam at large, destitute of religion, insensible of the human passions, and regardless of each other's welfare. Civil and religious societies are therefore wisely continued in the world, and we enjoy the numerous advantages of them. But these do not exclude, but presuppose domestic societies, which are the materials of which they are composed; and as churches and kingdoms are formed out of families, they will be such as the materials of which they consist. It is therefore of the greatest importance to religion and civil society that families be under proper regulations, that they may produce proper plants for church and

state, and especially for the eternal world, in which all the temporary associations of mortals in this world finally terminate, and to which they ultimately refer.

Now in families, as well as in all governments, there are superiors and inferiors; and as it is the place of the latter to obey, so it belongs to the former both to rule and to provide. The heads of families are obliged not only to exercise their authority over their dependents, but also to provide for them a competency of the necessaries of life; and indeed their right to rule is but a power to provide for themselves and their domestics.

This is implied in my text, where the apostle makes the omission of this duty utterly inconsistent with Christianity; and a crime so unnatural, that even infidels are free from it. *If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

The apostle, among other things, in this chapter is giving directions how widows should be treated in the church. If they were widows indeed; that is, widowed and entirely destitute of relations to support them; then he advises to maintain them at the public expences of the church. ver. 3, 9, 10. But if they were such widows as had children or nephews, then he orders that they should be maintained by these their relatives, and that the charge should not fall upon the church. ver. 4, 16.

He supposes that the relatives of some of them might be unwilling to put themselves to this expence: and to engage such to their duty, he in the text exposes the unnatural wickedness of neglecting it. *If any man provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

By a man's *own* are meant poor relatives, who are unable to support themselves. And by his *house* are meant those that are his domestics, and that live with him, as wife, children, servants. The former a man is obliged to provide for, but especially the latter; and if he neglect it, he has denied the faith in fact, however much he may profess it in words; he is no christian, nor to be treated as such: nay, he is worse than an in-

fidel: for many heathens have had so much humanity and natural light, as to observe their duty, supporting their domestics and such of their relatives as could not procure a subsistence for themselves.

In order to make provision for our families, we must be careful or laborious, according to our circumstances, and see that all our domestics be so too. *And him that will not work, neither let him eat.* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

‘This, some of you will say, is excellent doctrine, and this is our favourite text, which we often descant upon to justify our eager pursuit of the world. This commandment have we kept from our youth up; and, as we exert ourselves to provide estates for our children, we are not chargeable with any guilt in this case.’ But stay, sirs; before you peremptorily conclude yourselves innocent, let me ask you, are your domestics, your wives, children, and servants, nothing but material bodies? If so, I grant your duty is fulfilled by providing for their bodies. If they are only formed for this world, and have no concern with a future, then it is enough for you to make provision for them in the present state. They are like your cattle, upon this hypothesis, and you may treat them as you do your beasts, fodder them well, and make them work for you. But are you so absurd as to indulge such a thought? Are you not fully convinced that your domestics were made for eternity, endowed with immortal souls, and have the greatest concern with the eternal world? If so, can you think it sufficient that you provide for their bodies and their temporal subsistence? I appeal to yourselves, is there not as much reason for your taking care of their immortal spirits as of their perishing bodies? Ought you not to be as regardful, and as laborious for their comfortable subsistence in eternity as in time? Nay, is not your obligation to family-religion as much more strong as an immortal spirit is more important than a machine of animated clay, and the interests of eternity exceed those of this transitory world? If then he that does not provide for his domestics a competency of the necessaries of life *has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, what shall we say of him that neglects their souls, and takes no pains to form them for an happy immortality?

Surely he must be worse than one that is worse than an infidel; and how extremely bad then must he be! He has more than denied the faith, however confidently he may profess it.

You see that though this text does not immediately refer to family-religion, yet it will admit of a very natural accommodation to that purpose: and in this view I intend to handle it.

Several of you, my hearers, I doubt not have long since formed and practised Joshua's resolution; *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Josh. xxiv. 15. While vanity laughs aloud, and impiety belches out its blasphemies in families around you, *the voice of spiritual rejoicing and salvation is heard in your tabernacles.* Psalm cxviii. 15. I congratulate you, my dear brethren, and hope your families will be nurseries for religion in future times, and educate many for the heavenly state; nay, I hope you have seen some of the happy effects of it already in the early impressions that begin to appear upon the tender minds of your dear children, and the promising solemnity and reformation of some of your slaves. It were to be wished that all of you made conscience of this matter, and it would not at all seem extravagant to expect it; for surely it would not be extravagant to expect that you who attend upon public worship, and profess the religion of Jesus, should not so grossly deny the faith as to be worse than infidels. But alas! my friends, though I do not affect to be a spy into your families *I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy*, lest some of you habitually neglect this very important duty. Though family-religion be not the peculiarity of a party, but owned to be obligatory by christians in general (and therefore christians of all denominations should conscientiously observe it, if they would act consistently with their own principles) yet are there not several in this assembly who live without religion in their houses? Conscience can find out the guilty, and I need not be more particular. It is certainly a most lamentable thing that any who have enjoyed such opportunities for instruction, who have been solemnly and frequently warned, exhorted, and persuaded, and who have come under the strongest obliga-

tions to this duty, should notwithstanding live in the wilful and habitual neglect of it. For persons to omit it for want of instruction about its obligation might be very consistent with a tender conscience, and nothing would be necessary to bring such to the practice, but to convince them it is their duty, which it is very easy to do; but to omit family-religion in our circumstances, my brethren, discovers such a stupid indifferency about religion, or so inveterate an aversion to it, that it is lamentably doubtful, whether a conviction of the duty will determine you to the practice of it. When persons have long habituated themselves to sin against light, it is hard to take any effectual measures to deal with them. All that the ministers of the gospel can do, is to convince their understandings, to persuade, to exhort, to invite, to threaten; but such are accustomed to resist these means, and now they find it no great difficulty to master them. I therefore make this attempt with discouragement, and hardly hope to succeed with such of you as have hitherto obstinately fought against conviction; and the attempt is still the more melancholy, as I know that, if what shall be offered does not prevail upon you to make conscience of family-religion, the additional light you may receive will but render you more inexcusable, encrease your guilt, and consequently your punishment. This is one of the tremendous consequences of the ministry of this neglected, disregarded gospel, that may strike ministers and people with a solemn horror. However, I am not without hopes of success with some of you, who have not yet been cursed with a horrid victory over your consciences. I hope that when you are more fully convinced of this duty, you will immediately begin the practice of it. But though I had no expectation of success, I am still obliged to make the attempt. Though nothing can animate a minister more than the prospect of success, yet he is not to regulate his conduct wholly according to this prospect. He must labour to deliver his own soul, by warning even such as may not regard it. He must declare the whole counsel of God, whether they hear, or whether they forbear. I shall therefore, my dear brethren, endeavour honestly this day to bring you to

Joshua's resolution, *that you and your houses will serve the Lord*; and let him who is hardy enough to despise it, prepare to answer for it at the supreme tribunal; for he despiseth not man, but God.

I would not have you perform any thing as a duty, till you have sufficient means to convince you that it is a duty; and I would not confine you to an overfrequent performance of the duty I am now to open to you: therefore when I have briefly mentioned the various parts of family-religion, I shall,

I. Prove it to be a duty, from the law of nature and scripture-revelation.

II. Shew in what seasons, or how frequently family-religion should be statedly performed.

III. I shall consider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are invested with to maintain religion in their houses. And,

IV. And lastly, I shall answer the usual objections made against this important duty.

As to the parts of family-religion, they are prayer, praise, and instruction. We and our families stand in need of blessings in a domestic capacity, therefore in that capacity we should pray for them; in that capacity too we receive many blessings; therefore in that capacity we should return thanks for them; and singing of psalms is the most proper method of thanksgiving. Further: Our domestics need instructions about the great concerns of religion, therefore we should teach them. But I need not stay to prove each of these branches to be a duty, because the following arguments for the whole of family-religion will be equally conclusive for each part of it, and may be easily accommodated to it. Therefore,

I. I shall prove that family religion is a duty, from the light of nature and of scripture.

To prepare the way, I would observe that you should hear what shall be offered with a mind in love with your duty when it appears. You would not willingly have a cause tried by one that is your enemy: now *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, and consequently while you retain that carnal mind, you are very unfit to judge of the force of those arguments that prove your duty to-

wards him. If you hate the discovery, you will shut your eyes against the light, and not receive the truth in love. Therefore lie open to conviction, and I doubt not but you shall receive it from the following arguments.

If family-religion be due to the supreme Being upon the account of his perfections, and the relation he bears to us,—if it be one great design of the institution of families,—if it tend to the advantage of our domestics,—if it be our privilege,—then family-religion appears to be our duty from the law of nature.

1. If family-religion be a just debt to the supreme Being, upon account of his perfections and the relation he sustains to us as families, then it must be our duty to maintain it according to the law of nature. Now this is the case in fact.

God is the most excellent of beings, and therefore worthy of homage in every capacity, from his reasonable creatures. It is the supreme excellency of the Deity that renders him the object of personal devotion, or the religion of individuals, and the same reason extends to family-religion; for such is his excellency, that he is entitled to all the worship which we can give him; and after all. *he is exalted above all our blessing and praise*, Nehem. ix. 5.; that is, he still deserves more blessing and praise than we can give him. Hence it follows, that our capacity is the measure of our obligation to serve him; that is, in whatever capacity we are that admits of service to him, we are bound to perform all that service to him, because he justly deserves it all. Now we are capable of worshipping him as a family, for family-devotion, you must own, is a thing possible in itself, therefore we are bound to worship him in that capacity. If any of you deny this, do but put your denial into plain words, and you must shudder at yourselves: it must stand thus, ‘I must own that such is the excellency of the Deity, that he has a right to all the homage which I can pay him in every capacity; yet I owe him none, I will pay him none in the capacity of an head of a family. I own I owe him worship from myself as an individual, but my family as such shall have nothing to do with him. Will you, sirs, rather run into such an impious absurdity as this, than own yourselves obliged to this duty?’

Again, God is the Author of our sociable natures, and as such claims social worship from us. He formed us capable of society, and inclined us to it: and surely this capacity ought to be improved for religious purposes. Is there any of you so hardy as to say, 'Though God has made me a sociable creature, yet I owe him no worship as such, and will pay him none?' You may as well say, 'Though he formed me a man, and endowed me with powers to serve him, yet as a man or an individual, I will not serve him.' And what is this but to renounce all obligations to God, and to cut yourselves off from all connection with him. Now if your social nature lays you under an obligation to social religion, then it must oblige you to family-religion, for a family is the first society that ever was instituted; it is a radical society, from which all others are derived, therefore here social religion began, (as it must have begun in families before it had place in other societies) and here it ought still to continue.

Again, God is the Proprietor, Supporter, and Benefactor of our families, as well as of our persons, and therefore our families as such should pay him homage. He is the owner of your families, and where is the man that dares deny it? Dare any of you say, 'God hath nothing to do with my family; he hath no right there, and I will acknowledge none?' Unhappy creatures! Whose property are you then? If not God's, you are helpless orphans indeed; or rather the voluntary avowed subjects of hell. But if your families are his property, must you not own that you should worship him as such? What! pay no acknowledgment to your great Proprietor! how unjust! The apostle argues, that because our persons are his, therefore we should serve him, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.; and surely the argument is equally strong in this case. Further, Are not your families entirely dependent upon God as their Supporter and Benefactor? should he withdraw his supporting hand, you and your houses would sink into ruin together. Are you not then obliged in a family-capacity to acknowledge and praise him? You also receive numberless blessings from him in a domestic capacity: every evening and morning, every night and day you find his

mercies flowing down upon your houses, and shall no grateful acknowledgments ascend from them to him? You also every moment stand in need of numerous blessings, not only for yourselves but for your families, and will you not jointly with your families implore these blessings from your divine Benefactor? Here again consider the language of your refusal, and it must strike you with horror: 'I own that God is the proprietor of my family, that he is the constant support of my family, that I and mine every moment receive mercies from him, and depend entirely upon him for them, yet my family as such shall pay no worship, shall serve him no more than if we had no concern with him.' Can you venture upon such a declaration as this?

2. If family-religion was the principal design of the institution of families, then is family-religion our indispensable duty.

That families were founded by God may be inferred from the creation of different sexes, the institution of marriage, and the various relations among mankind, and from the universal agency of his providence. Psalm lxxviii. 6. and cxiii. 9.

And that family-religion was the principal end of the institution, is evident; for can you think that God would unite a number of immortals, heirs of the eternal world, together in the most intimate bonds, in this state of trial, without any reference to their future state? Were your families made for this world only, or for the next? If for the next, then religion must be maintained in them, for that alone can prepare you for eternity: or if you say your families were formed for this world, pray what was this world made for? To be the final residence? or to be only a stage along which to pass into your everlasting home, a place of probation for candidates for immortality? And must not religion then be maintained in your families? They should be nurseries for heaven; and that they cannot be, if you banish devotion from them.

If the conjugal relation, which is the foundation of families, was first instituted for religious purposes, then certainly the worship of God ought to be maintained in them. But the former is true: *Did not he make one?*

Mal. ii. 15. that is, one of each sex, that there might be one for one; and that the very creation of our nature might carry an intimation that polygamy was unnatural, 'And wherefore one?' that is, wherefore did God make but one of each sex, when *he had the residue of the spirit*, and could have made more? Why his design was *that he might seek a godly seed*; that is, that children might not only be procreated, but retain and convey down religion from age to age. But can this design be accomplished if you refuse to maintain religion in your families? Can you expect that godliness shall run on in the line of your posterity, if you habitually neglect it in your houses! Can a godly seed be raised in so corrupt a soil? Therefore, if you omit this duty, you live in families in direct opposition to the end of the institution, and deny your domestics the greatest advantage they can enjoy as members of a family: a consideration which leads me to another argument.

3. If family-religion tends to the greatest advantage of our families, then it is our duty; and to neglect it is wickedly to rob ourselves and ours of the greatest advantage.

If you deny that religion is advantageous, you may renounce the name of christians; yes, and of men too. Religion places its subjects under the blessing and guardianship of Heaven; it restrains them from those practices which may be ruinous to them in time and eternity; it suppresses such dispositions and passions as are turbulent and self-tormenting; and affords the most refined and substantial joys.

Now I appeal to yourselves whether it be not more probable that your family will be religious, if you solemnly worship God with them, and instruct them, than it would be if you neglected these duties? How can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family-religion? Can prayerless parents expect to have praying children? If you neglect to instruct them, can you expect they will grow up in the knowledge of God and of themselves? If they see you receive daily mercies from the God of heaven, and yet refuse him the tribute of praise, is it not likely

they will imitate your ingratitude, and spend their days in a stupid insensibility of their obligations to their divine Benefactor? Is it as likely they will make it their principal business in life to secure the favour of God, and prepare for eternity, when they see their parents and masters thoughtless about this important concern, as if they saw you every day devoutly worshipping God with them, and imploring his blessing upon yourselves and your households? Their souls, sirs, their immortal souls are entrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, while you neglect to maintain your religion in your families? Will you not be accessory to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last! Therefore, if you love your children; if you would make some amends to your servants for all the service they do to you; if you would bring down the blessing of Heaven upon your families; if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age; if you would deliver your own souls,—I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives.

4. You are to consider family-religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace. How great the privilege to hold a daily intercourse with heaven in our dwellings! to have our houses converted into temples for that adorable Deity whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain! to mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! to vent the overflowings of gratitude! to spread the savour of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps and in anthems of praise! to have our families devoted to him while others live estranged from the God of their life! if all this does not appear the highest privilege to you,

it is because you are astonishingly disaffected to the best of Beings. And since the Almighty condescends to allow you this privilege, will you wickedly deny it yourselves? If he had denied it to you, you would no doubt have cavilled at it as hard: you would have murmured had he laid a prohibition on your family, and told you, I will accept of worship from other families; they shall converse with me every day; but as for yours, I will have nothing to do with them, I will accept of no worship from them; you may not make mention of the name of the Lord.' How would you tremble if God had marked your families with such a brand of reprobation? And will you put this brand upon them with your own hand? Will you deny that privilege to your families which would strike you with horror if God had denied it? Will you affect such an horrid singularity, that when other families are admitted into a familiar audience with the Deity, you will keep off from him, and pay him no homage in yours?

These arguments are chiefly derived from the light of nature, and plainly shew that family-religion is a duty of natural religion. Accordingly heathens and idolaters have observed it. The heathens had their Lares, their Penates, or household gods. Such were Laban's gods which Rachel stole from him, Gen. xxxi. 34.; and such were that of Micah, Judges xvii. 4, 5. These indeed were idols, but what did they stand instead of? Did they not stand instead of the true worship of the true God? What reformation was necessary in this case? The renouncing of these idols, and taking nothing in their room? or the renouncing of them and taking the true God in their place? Undoubtedly the latter. And will you not blush that heathens should exceed you? that you should be, according to the text, *worse than infidels*? And must you not tremble lest they should rise up in judgment against you and condemn you?

I now proceed to some arguments more purely scriptural, which prove the necessity of family-religion in general, or of some particular branch of it.

1. We may argue from the examples of the saints, recorded and commended in scripture.

Good examples infer an obligation upon us to imitate them; and when they are transmitted down to posterity with honour in the sacred records, they are proposed to our imitation, and as really bind us to the duty as express precepts.

Now we are here surrounded with a bright cloud of witnesses. Even before the introduction of the clearer dispensation of the gospel, we find that the saints carefully maintained family-religion.

On this account Abraham was admitted into such intimacy with God, that he admits him into his secrets. *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; since—I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, &c.* Gen xviii. 16, 18.

We find Isaac and Jacob, by the influence of his good example and instructions, follow the same practice. They, as well as he, built an altar to the Lord wherever they pitched their tents; an altar then being a necessary utensil for divine worship. This you will find repeatedly in the short history we have of these patriarchs, particularly in Gen. xxvi. 25. xxv. 1, 3. and xxxiii. 20.

We find Job so intent upon family-devotion, that he rises up early in the morning and offers burnt offerings: and thus he did, we are told, not upon extraordinary occasions only, but continually, Job i. 5.

The devout king David, after he had spent the day in the glad solemnity of bringing the ark to its place, returned to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20. He had his hour for family-devotion; and when that is come, he leaves the solemnity of public worship, and hastens home. This was agreeable to his resolution, *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: I will walk within my house with a perfect heart,* Psalm ci. 2.

Daniel ran the risk of his life rather than omit this duty, which some of you omit with hardly any temptation. When the royal edict prohibited him, upon penalty of being cast into the lions den, *he still prayed and gave thanks to God, as he did afore time—As he*

did aforetime. This is added to shew that he had always observed a stated course of devotion in his family, and that it was not a transient fit of zeal that now seized him, Dan. vi. 10.

These illustrious patterns we find under the dark dispensation of the Old Testament. How much more zealous should we be who enjoy the meridian light of the gospel, to keep the religion of Jesus in our families!

In the New Testament we repeatedly find our blessed Lord in prayer with his family, the apostles. St Paul thrice mentions a church in a private house, Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. and Col. iv. 15.; by which he probably means the religious families of Nymphas, and that pious pair Priscilla and Aquila. And Cornelius is an instance peculiarly observable, who, though an heathen, and ignorant of the coming of Christ, *feared God* (an expression that often signifies to worship God) *with all his house; and prayed unto God alway;* that is, at all proper seasons. And when a divine messenger was sent to him to direct him to send for Peter, we are told he was found praying in his house; that is, with his domestics, as the word often signifies, Acts x. 2, 30.

If it might have any weight after such authentic examples as these, I might add, that in every age persons of piety have been exemplary in family-religion. And if you look round you, my brethren, you will find that by how much the more religious persons are, by so much the more conscientious they are in this duty. What though some, like the Pharisees, use it as a cloke for their clandestine wickedness, this is no objection against the practice; otherwise there is hardly one branch of religion or morality but what must be rejected too; for every good thing has been abused by hypocrites to disguise their secret villainy.

2. We may argue from several scripture-precepts, which either directly or consequentially refer to the whole, or to some branch of family-religion,

The apostle Paul, having given various directions about relative duties in families, subjoins, *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving,* Col. iv. 2. Peter exhorts *husbands to dwell with their*

wives according to knowledge, &c.—that their prayers might not be hindered, 1 Pet. iii. 7.; which certainly implies that they should pray together. And here I may observe by the by, what is perhaps immediately intended in this text, that beside the stated worship of God, common to all the family, it may be very proper for the husband and wife to retire for prayer at proper seasons by themselves together. As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize those things that could not be prudently mentioned before others. But to return: we are enjoined to *pray always with all prayer and supplication*, Ephes. vi. 18.; and surely family-prayer must be included in these comprehensive terms.

As to family instruction, it was expressly enjoined upon the Israelites. *These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.* Deut. vi. 6, 7. and xi. 19. They were commanded to instruct their domestics in the nature and design of the ordinances of that dispensation, particularly the passover. Exod. xii. 26, 27. And the psalmist mentions all the wonderful works of God as what ought to be taught by parents to children from age to age. And must not parents now be under even superior obligations, to inform their children of the more glorious doctrines and ordinances of the gospel? Again, It is enjoined as a duty common to christians in general, though they should not be united in one family, *to exhort one another daily*, Heb. iii. 13. and *to teach and admonish one another.* Col. iii. 16. How much more then is it our duty to teach, and admonish, and exhort our families, which are more particularly intrusted to our care?

As to family-praise, it is a duty because thanksgiving is so often joined with prayer in scripture, Phil. iv. 6. Col. iv. 2. 1 Thes. v. 17, 18.; and psalmody must be owned the most proper method of expressing thank-

fulness by such as own it a part of divine worship. *The voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.* Psal. cviii. 15.: an expression that may properly signify, *praising God in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,* as we are commanded. Col. iii. 16.

And now, my brethren, I presume you are convinced that family-religion is a duty, unless you shut your eyes against the light of nature and the light of scripture; and if convinced you are reduced to this dilemma, either to set up the worship of God immediately in your families, or sin wilfully against the knowledge of the truth. And which side will you choose? O sirs! this case is so plain, you need no time to deliberate; it is as plain as whether you should choose life or death, heaven or hell?

If you from henceforth make conscience of this important duty, it will be a most happy omen to your families, and to this congregation. If the grateful incense of family-devotion were ascending to heaven every morning and evening, from every family among us we might expect a rich return of divine blessings upon ourselves and ours. Our houses would become the temples of the Deity, and our congregation feel his gracious influences. Our children would grow up in the knowledge and fear of God, and transplant religion from our families into their own whenever they shall be formed. Our servants and slaves would become the servants of righteousness, and heirs with us of the grace of life. The animosities and contests that may now disturb our households, and render them like the dens of wild beasts, would cease. Vice would wither and die among us, and languishing religion would lift up its head and revive. This would certainly be the consequence in several instances, if we were but to maintain family-religion in a proper manner; for God hath not commanded us to seek his face in vain; and if this desirable success should not be granted universally, we shall still have the comfort to reflect that we have done our duty.

But how shocking is the prospect, if you determine to resist conviction, and live in the wilful neglect of

this duty! Your families are like to be nurseries for hell; or if there should be an Abijah in them, *one in whom some good thing is found towards the Lord God of Israel* (1 Kings xiv. 13.) no thanks to you for it; you must be punished for your neglect of him as though he had perished by your iniquity.

Remember, sirs! that the omission of a known, practicable duty against the remonstrances of your conscience, is a certain evidence that you are entirely destitute of all religion? and therefore I must discharge the artillery of heaven against you in that dreadful imprecation which, as dictated by inspiration, is equivalent to a prediction or denunciation. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.* Jer. x. 25. Observe here that you are ranked with heathens that know not God; and that the divine fury is imprecated upon you, and it shall fall, it shall fall speedily upon your devoted heads and your prayerless families, unless you fly out of its reach by flying to the Lord in earnest supplications in your houses. Will you rather run the venture, will you rather destroy yourselves and your domestics too, than spend a quarter or half an hour, morning and evening, in the most manly, noble, heavenly, evangelical exercises of devotion? Surely you are not so hardy! surely you are not so averse to God, and careless about your own welfare, and that of your dearest relatives and domestics! I request, I beg, I adjure you by your regard to the authority of God, by your concern for your own salvation and that of your families, by the regard you bear the interests of religion in this place, and your poor minister, that this may be the happy evening from whence you may date the worship of God in your houses; that this may be the blessed æra from which you and your houses will serve the Lord.

I proceed,

II. To shew in what seasons, or how frequently, family-religion should be statedly performed.

Now it is more than intimated in scripture, that it

should be performed every day, and particularly morning and evening. Thus the sacrifices under the law, which were attended with prayer, were offered daily, morning and evening. To this the psalmist alludes: *Let my prayer be set before thee as incense which was offered in the morning, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* Psalm cxli. 2. He elsewhere resolves, *Every day will I bless thee.* Psal. cxlv. 2. Yea, his devotion was so extraordinary, that he resolves, *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud.* Psalm lv. 17. So Daniel performed family-worship thrice a day. Hence we are undoubtedly bound to perform family-religion twice at least in the day. And thus frequently it seems to be enjoyed for common. *It is a good thing to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.* Psal. xcii. 1, 2. Farther, reason directs us to morning and evening as the proper season for family-worship: for pray, which would you omit? Dare you venture your families out into the world all the day without committing them to the care of Providence in the morning? Can you undertake your secular pursuits without imploring the divine blessing upon them? And as to the evening, how can you venture to sleep, without committing yourselves and yours to the divine protection, and returning thanks for the mercies of the day? Again, The very course of nature seems to direct us to these seasons. Our life is parcelled out into so many days; and every day is a kind of life and sleep; a kind of death. And shall we enter upon life in the morning, without acknowledging the Author of our life? Or shall we, as it were, die in the evening, and not commend our departing spirits into his hands? Night is a kind of pause, a stop, in the progress of life, and should kindle a devout temper in us towards our divine Preserver. I shall only add, that the prophet hints that we should seek the Lord as the Author of the revolutions of night and day; *Seek him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night,* Amos v. 8.; that is, seek him

under that notion; and what a time so proper for this as evening and morning?

Therefore, my brethren, determine to begin and conclude the day with God.

III. I shall consider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are invested with to maintain religion in their houses.

In all societies there must be a subordination, and particularly in families, and it is the place of the head of such societies to rule and direct. Particularly it belongs to the head of a family when there is no fitter person present to perform worship in it, to use proper means to cause all his domestics to attend upon it. The gentler methods of persuasion ought to be used where they will succeed; but when it is unavoidable, compulsive measures may be taken to oblige all our domestics to an attendance. The consciences of all, bond and free, are subject to God only, and no man ought to compel another to any thing as a duty that is against his conscience. But this is not the case here. Your domestics may plead a great many excuses for not joining in family-worship, but they will hardly plead that it is against their conscience; that is, they will hardly say that they think they should sin against God in so doing. Here then you may use your authority; and perhaps some word they hear may touch their hearts. You should in common cases cause them all to attend morning and evening, unless your servants are scattered in different quarters, and make conscience of praying together, which you should exhort them to do, and for which you should allow them convenient time.

That you are authorised and obliged to all this is evident from God's commending Abraham for commanding his children, &c.; from Joshua's resolving that not only he, but also his house should serve the Lord; a resolution he could not perform unless he had authority over his house to compel them, at least externally, to serve the Lord, Josh. xxiv. 15.; and from the superiority which you have over your domestics, which enables you to command them in this case as well as in your own affairs.

IV. And lastly, I come to answer the usual objections against this important duty of family-religion.

It would be more honest for people frankly to own that they have no heart to it, and that this is the real cause of their neglecting it, and not any valid objections they have against it; but since they will torture their invention to discover some pleas to excuse themselves, we must answer them.

1st Objection. 'I have no time, and my secular business would suffer by family-religion.'

Were you formed for this world only, there would be some force in this objection; but how strange does such an objection sound in the heir of an eternity? Pray, what is your time given to you for? Is it not principally that you may prepare for eternity? And have you no time for what is the great business of your lives?

Again, why do not you plead too, that you have no time for your daily meals? Is food more necessary for your bodies than religion for your souls? If, you think so, what is become of your understandings?

Further, What employment do you follow? Is it lawful or unlawful? If unlawful then renounce it immediately; if lawful, then it will admit of the exercise of family-religion, for God cannot command contradictions; and since he has commanded you to maintain his worship in your houses, that is demonstration that every calling which he allows you to follow will afford time for it.

Finally, May you not redeem as much time from idle conversation, from trifling, or even from your sleep, as may be sufficient for family-religion? May you not order your family-devotion so as that your domestics may attend upon it, either before they go out to their work, or when they come to their meals?

2d Objection. 'I have not ability to pray; I am too ignorant.'

If you had a proper sense of your wants, this plea would not hinder you. Did you ever hear a beggar, however ignorant, make this objection? A sense

of his necessities is an unfailling fountain of his eloquence.

Further, How strange does this objection sound from you! What! have you enjoyed preaching, Bibles, and good books so long, and yet do not know what to ask of God? Alas! what have you been doing?

Again, Is neglecting prayer the way to improve in knowledge, and qualify you to perform it?

Finally, May you not easily furnish yourselves with forms of prayer, which you may use as persons weak in their limbs do their crutches, till you can lay them aside. It is bigotry only that will say that you should neglect the substance of the duty, if you cannot perform every circumstance of it in the best manner.

3d Objection. 'I am ashamed.' But is this shame well grounded? Is it really a shame to worship the God of heaven, and share in the employment of angels?

Are sinners ashamed to serve their master?

A little practice will easily free you from all this difficulty.

4th Objection. 'But alas! I know not how to begin it.' Here indeed the difficulty lies; but why will you not own that you were hitherto mistaken, and that you would rather reform than persist obstinately in the omission of an evident duty!

5th Objection. 'But my family will not join with me.'

How do you know? Have you tried? Are you not master of your own family? Exert that authority in this which you claim in other cases.

6th Objection. 'But I shall be ridiculed and laughed at.'

Are you then more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the displeasure of God? Would you rather please men than him?

Will you never become religious till you can obtain the applause of the wicked for being so? Then you will never be religious at all.

Think how you will bear the contempt of the whole universe at last for the neglect of his duty!

Therefore wherever you have your habitations, there let Jehovah, may I so speak, have an altar, and there let morning and evening prayers and praises be presented, till you are called to worship him in his temple above, where your prayers shall be swallowed up in everlasting praise. *Amen.*

SERMON XXX.

The Rule of Equity.

MATT. vii. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

CHRISTIANITY is not a fragment, but a complete system of religion; and it is intended and adapted to make us good entirely and throughout; it teaches us a proper conduct and temper towards every being with whom we have any connection, particularly towards God and our fellow-men. A christian is a complete, uniform, finished character; a character in which there is the most amiable symmetry and proportion; it is all of a piece, without chasms and inconsistencies. A christian is a penitent, a believer, a lover of God, conscientious in devotion, and diligent in attendance upon every ordinance of religious worship; he begins his religion with a supreme regard to God, the Supreme of beings, sensible that unless he begins here, he inverts the order of things, and that all his religion and virtue must be preposterous and vain. To love the Lord his God with all his heart, and to serve him from that exalted principle, is the first and great commandment with him; and he observes it as such. Religion, virtue, morality, and every thing that bears a specious name among mankind, is a poor maimed thing, monstrously defective, if a proper regard to God be left out of the system. It is shocking and unnatural for the creatures of God to be punctual in observing the duties they owe to one another, and yet entirely negligent of those radical fundamental duties they owe to him their common Parent, the highest excellence and the original of all authority and obligation.

But though christianity begins with, and chiefly consists in our duty to God, yet it extends farther; it also includes a proper conduct and temper towards men. A good christian is not only devout, but moral and virtuous: he is not only a dutiful servant of God in matters purely religious, but he is an useful member of every society to which he belongs, and makes conscience of justice, charity, and all the good offices due to his fellow-creatures. He is a good ruler, or a good subject, a good neighbour, a good father or child, a good master or servant; in short, he endeavours to have a *conscience void of offence towards God and towards men*. I have made it the great object of my ministry among you to bring you to pay a proper regard to God, as he has revealed himself in the gospel of his Son; and for this purpose have inculcated the important doctrines of Faith, Repentance, Love, and those other graces which are essential to every good man. But I must not forget another part of my office, which is to teach you the second great command, or summary of the divine law, namely, *That you should love your neighbour as yourselves*, and inculcate upon those important duties which you owe to mankind; and it is very extravagant for persons to disgust these, through a pretended relish for the gospel and the doctrines of grace, since these are no inconsiderable parts of the gospel, and the lessons of morality run through the whole New Testament.

When I would discourse upon the duties of social life, I cannot choose a text more pertinent or copious than that I have read to you, which is a fundamental and most comprehensive rule of morality; *all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets*.

In the illustration and improvement of this subject, I shall,

I. Offer a few things for the right understanding of this divine rule of social duty.

II. Consider the reason of it.

III. Open its excellency.

IV. Mention some important instances of particular cases to which it should be applied. And,

Lastly, Shew the necessity and advantage of observing it.

1. I am to offer a few things for the right understanding of this divine rule.

It is proper then to observe, that as there is a great diversity in the stations and characters of men, there is a proportionable diversity in the duties which they owe one to another; and self-love may make a man very extravagant in his expectations and desires about the conduct of another towards him. On these accounts it is necessary that we should understand this precept with these two cautions or limitations.

1. That we should do that to others which we would expect and wish from them upon a change of condition, or if they were in our circumstances and we in theirs. Every man should be treated according to his character and station; and therefore that conduct which may be proper towards me in my station, may not be proper towards another in a different station; but let me suppose myself in his place, and he in mine, and then that behaviour which I would expect from him, the same I should observe towards him. Thus, for example, a magistrate is bound to protect his subjects, and to behave towards them as he would desire a ruler to behave towards him if he were a subject; but he is not bound to yield that submission to his subjects while a ruler, which he may justly demand of them. The rule in such cases is, let every man act in character; let him perform to others those duties which he would desire from others if they were in his circumstances, and he in theirs; and where there is a sameness of circumstances, there, and there only, his duty to others must be the same that he expects from them.

2. We should make only our reasonable and lawful expectations from others the rule of our conduct towards them. A man may expect and wish very extravagant and sinful things from others: he may desire another should give him all his estate, or gratify his wicked lusts and passions by some criminal compliance: such desires are by no means to be the rule of conduct; for we cannot indulge them, nor others

comply with them, without acting wickedly and unreasonably. But those things which we may desire and expect from others, consistently with right reason, religion, and the laws of society, those things we ought to perform to them; those things which our consciences justify, and not those to which inordinate self-love or some extravagant passion may prompt us.

If we understand this precept with such limitations as these, we may safely follow it as a general rule of conduct; and then it will not be liable to such objections as may be otherwise made against it. For example, a criminal may plead, 'If I were in the place of my judge, and he in mine, I would acquit him, and grant him his life.' Or a judge might think, 'if I were in the place of that poor criminal, I should be glad my judge would forgive me; and therefore, if I would do as I would be done by, I must forgive him.' Such thoughts as these, arising from wrong principles, are not to be the rule and measure of our actions or expectations; for our own consciences cannot approve of them in our sedate and impartial moments. I proceed,

II. To consider the reason of this precept.

Now the reason or foundation of it is evidently this, namely, the natural equality of mankind. For notwithstanding the great difference in the capacities, improvements, characters, and stations of men, yet, considered as men, they share in the same common nature, and are so far equal; and therefore, in the same circumstances they have a right to the same treatment. A superior, for example, should treat his inferior just in the manner in which he would reasonably expect to be treated himself if he was in a low condition and his inferior advanced to his station. If there be any reason why another should behave in such a manner to me, there is the very same reason that I should behave in the same manner towards him; because he is to himself what I am to myself, as near, as dear, as important. Is it reasonable my neighbour should make no incroachments upon my property? It is equally reasonable that I should not encroach upon his; for his property is as much his as my property is mine. Do I expect my neighbour should observe the rules

of justice in his dealings with me? then certainly I should observe them in my dealings with him; for he has as good a right to be treated according to these rules by me, as I have to be so treated by him. If it is reasonable that he should be tender of my good name, it is equally reasonable that I should be tender of his. If he should relieve me in my calamities, certainly I am equally bound to relieve him when in the same circumstances. And the reason is plain; he is to himself what I am to myself, and he is to me what I am to him, and therefore I am obliged to treat him as I would justly expect he would treat me; we are equal, and consequently our obligations are equal, and our duties mutual or reciprocal. Hence you see that this precept is the most reasonable thing in the world. My next business is,

III. To open the excellency of it.

And this appears, (1.) from its comprehensiveness; it includes all the social duties of life; it is a short summary of the whole divine law, as far as it refers to our conduct towards man. This excellency Christ himself points out: *This*, says he, *is the law and the prophets*; that is, it is the substance of both: do to others what you would have others do to you, and then you do to them all that the law and the prophets, and I may add, all that Christ and the apostles require you to do. Now it is a great advantage to have the whole of our duty collected into such narrow bounds, and presented to us at one view: we are not sent to pore over tedious volumes of laws and statutes, or to gather up fragments of precepts here and there in order to learn our duty to one another; it is all summed up in this, *Do to others what you would have them do to you*. With this is connected another excellency of this precept; and that is,

2. Its conciseness: it is what I may call a portable directory, which you may always carry about with you and easily recollect; and therefore you need never be at a loss to know your duty. You may always know your own expectations and desires; do to others then what you would expect and desire from them, and you are right; you do all that the law and the prophets

require you to do. Tedious precepts and long discourses are not so easily learned or remembered; but the shortest memory cannot fail to recollect this concise command.

3. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is universal, and extends to all mankind, in all circumstances; to superiors, inferiors, and equals. It is true there is a great diversity in the characters and stations of men, which it is not your business, nor is it in your power to alter; and there is a correspondent variety in the duties you owe them. But you can easily imagine them all in the same circumstances; or you can easily suppose yourselves in their place, and they in yours; and then you can with equal ease look into your own minds, and consider what treatment you would expect from them in such a change of circumstances; and that will immediately discover how you should treat them in their present circumstances. Thus the rule may be universally applied without impropriety.

4. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is plain and convictive. Common minds may be bewildered, instead of being guided, by an intricate tedious system of laws; but a man of the weakest understanding may easily perceive this rule. It is an appeal to his own sensations. 'What would you expect or wish from others? How would you have them treat you? Surely you cannot but know this: well, treat them just in the same manner.' This is also a most convictive rule; every man that thinks a little, must immediately own that it is highly reasonable; consult your own consciences, and they will tell you, you need no other adviser, and you are self-condemned if you violate this precept. It is written upon your hearts in illustrious indelible characters: it shines and sparkles there, like the Urim and Thummim on the breast of Aaron.

I am,

IV. To mention some important instances of particular cases to which this excellent rule ought to be applied. And here I shall throw a great many things together without method, that my description may

agree the nearer to real life, in which these things happen promiscuously without order.

Would you desire that another should love you, be ready to serve you, and do you all the kind offices in his power? Do you expect your neighbour should rejoice in your prosperity, sympathize with you in affliction, promote your happiness, and relieve you in distress? Would you have him observe the rules of strict justice in dealing with you? Would you have him tender of your reputation, ready to put the kindest construction upon your actions, and unwilling to believe or spread a bad report concerning you? Do you desire he should direct you when mistaken, and labour to reclaim you from a dangerous course? In short, do you think it reasonable he should do all in his power for your good, in soul, body, and estate? Are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others towards you? Then in this manner should you behave towards them; you have fixed and determined the rule of your own conduct*: your expectations from others have the force of a law upon yourselves; and since you know how they should behave towards you, you cannot be at a loss to know how to behave towards them.

If you were a servant, how would you have your master to behave towards you? Consider and determine the matter; and you will know how you should behave towards your servants. The same thing may be applied to rulers and subjects in general, to parents and children, husbands and wives, neighbour and neighbour.

On the other hand, we may consider this rule negatively. Do you desire that another should not entertain angry and malicious passions against you? that he should not envy your prosperity, nor insult over you in adversity? that he should not take the advantage of you in contracts? that he should not violate the laws of justice in commerce with you, nor defraud you of your property? that he should not injure your reputation or put an unkind construction upon your conduct? Would you expect that if you were a servant, your master

* — Tu tibi legem dixisti.

should not tyrannize over you, and give you hard usage; or that if you were a master, your servant should not be unfaithful, disobedient, and obstinate? Are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others? then you have prescribed a law for your own conduct: do not that to others which you would not have them to do to you: treat every man as another self, as a part of the same human nature with yourself. How extravagant and ridiculous is it that you should be treated well by all mankind, and yet you be at liberty to treat them as you please? What are you? What a being of mighty importance are you? Is not another as dear to himself as you are to yourself? Are not his rights as sacred and inviolable as yours? How come you to be entitled to an exemption from the common laws of human nature? Be it known to you, you are as firmly bound by them as any of your species.

By these few instances you may learn how to apply this maxim of Christian morality to all the cases that may occur in the course of your lives.

Were I reading to you a lecture of moral philosophy in the school of Socrates or Seneca, what I have offered might be sufficient. But in order to adapt this discourse to the Christian dispensation, and make it true Christian morality, it is necessary I should subjoin two evangelical peculiarities, which are the qualifications of that virtue which God will accept.

The first is, that all our good offices to mankind should proceed not only from benevolence to them, but from a regard to the divine authority, which obliges us to these duties. We should do these things not only as they are commanded, but because they are commanded. We cannot expect that God will accept of that as obedience to him, which we do not intend in that view. Let us apply that rule to every social duty, which the apostle particularly applies to the duty of servants to their masters: *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men,* Col. iii. 23.

The second qualification of evangelical virtue or true christian morality, is, that you perform it in the name of Christ, or that you depend not upon the merit

of your obedience, but entirely upon his mediatorial righteousness to procure acceptance with God. Without this all your actions of charity and justice, however fair and splendid they appear in the eyes of men, are but proud philosophic virtue, utterly abhorred by an holy God. But with this evangelical temper, you will be accepted as serving God, even in serving men. And O! that with these qualifications this rule may regulate the conduct of each of us! I am sure there is reason enough for it, if the greatest necessity, or the greatest advantage can be a reason. Which consideration leads me,

V. and lastly, To shew the necessity and advantage of observing this rule.

(1.) The observance of this rule is absolutely necessary to constitute you real christians. I hinted at this in the beginning of my discourse; but it is of such vast importance, that it merits a more thorough consideration. A christian not only prays, attends upon religious ordinances, discourses about religion, and the like, but he is also a strict moralist; he is just and charitable, and makes conscience of every duty to mankind; and morality is not only ornamental, but essential to his character; and it is vain for you to pretend to the christian character without morality. An unjust, uncharitable christian is as great a contradiction as a prayerless, or a swearing christian. You can no more be a good man without loving your neighbour, than without loving your God. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother*, and neglects the duties he owes to him, is really in darkness even until now (1 John ii. 9.), let him pretend what he will. Therefore if you count it of any importance to be christians indeed, you must do to others what you would have them do to you. No inward experience, no religious duties, no zeal in devotion can make you true christians, or entitle you to the charity of others as such, without a proper temper and behaviour towards mankind. I would have you, my dear brethren, to be complete finished christians; if there be any thing in the world that I have at heart, it is this: I would have christianity appear in you in its full glory,

unmaimed and well-proportioned; and therefore I would have you to be not only zealous in devotion in secret, in your families, and in public, but also just, honourable, and faithful in all your dealings with mankind; kind, affectionate, meek and inoffensive in your conduct towards them; in short, that you should treat them as you would have them treat you. You find a great deal of fault with the conduct of others towards you, but consider, have they not equal reason to blame your conduct towards them? My dear brethren, be yourselves what you would have others be: Would you have them to be better than yourselves? Would you meanly resign to them that true honour? Do you desire that they should be better christians and better men than you? What an awkward, perverse, preposterous humility is this? But

(2.) A proper conduct towards mankind in the professors of religion is necessary to recommend religion to the world, and reflect honour upon their profession; whereas the want of it brings a reproach upon the christian name. The blind world has but little knowledge, and still less concern about the duties that we owe immediately to God, and therefore the neglect of them is not so much observed; but as to the duties we owe to mankind, they themselves are concerned in them, and therefore they take the more notice of the omission of them, and are more sensible of the importance. And when they see a man that makes a mighty profession, that talks a great deal about religion, and is zealous in frequent attendance upon sermons, prayer, &c. when they see such a man make no conscience of the laws of justice and charity towards men; when they observe he is as deceitful, as over-reaching, as sordid and covetous as others, and perhaps more so, what will they think of his religion? Will they not think it a cloke for his knavery, and a stratagem to accomplish his own wicked designs? And thus are they hardened in impiety, and confirmed in their neglect of all religion. My brethren, it is incredible what injury the christian religion has received from this quarter; the bad lives of professors is the common objection against it in the

mouths of heathens, Jews, Turks, and infidels among ourselves. There is indeed no real force in the objection: you may as well say that moral honesty is but villainy, because many who pretend to it are knaves, and make that pretence to carry on their knavery with more success. It must also be confessed, that many discover much of their enmity against religion itself, by raising a clamour against the bad lives of its professors; and that there is much less ground for the objection than they would have you believe. The true secret is this: they hate strict religion themselves, and would find some umbrage to expose it in others, in order to excuse or defend their own neglect of it; and as they can find no objection against religion in itself, they abuse all its professors; and it is evident that if their visible conduct is good, they would find out some secret flaw; and if they can discover no glaring defect in their duty to God, they pry into their conduct towards man, to discover some secret wickedness: and, alas! in too many instances their malignant search is successful; and they find some that make a mighty profession, who are secretly guilty of some mean or wicked artifices in their transactions with men. Now they think they have found them out, and surmise, 'They are all such; they pray and make a great stir about religion, but they will cheat and lie, when they can do it clandestinely, as readily as their neighbours.' This imputation, when made to christians in the bulk, is not only ungenerous, but utterly false. But it must, alas! be owned, that the fact, upon which it is founded, is true with regard to some. And what a melancholy thought is this! The innocent, I mean the consistent and uniform professors of religion, suffer by this conduct of their false brethren; for the same artful hypocrisy will be surmised of them; and religion itself suffers by such conduct; for it gives a disadvantageous idea of religion, as though it were all show and ostentation, and made its most zealous votaries no better in reality than those that neglect and despise it. My brethren, I seriously tell you, I know of nothing in the world that would have a more efficacious tendency to propa-

gate christianity through the nations of the earth, than the good behaviour of its professors. The impiety and bad morals of those that make no profession of religion is evident to all; and if all that profess it would live according to their profession, then the difference would be discernable to all; and even common sense would teach an heathen that it is a difference much for the better; and the world would soon conclude there is something singularly excellent and divine in a religion that sanctifies every thing within its reach, and makes its subjects so evidently better than all mankind besides: they would need no laboured arguments to convince them of this point; their own consciences would afford them sufficient evidence of it, and then it would be sufficient to make an heathen a christian to bring him into the acquaintance of christians; and it would be impossible there should be such a thing as a Deist or an infidel free-thinker in a christian country: he would receive conviction from the practice of every one about him, and he would not be able to shut his eyes against it. I am sorry, my brethren, the case is so much the reverse through the generality of the christian world. It is really melancholy that the name of a christian should raise in a stranger any ideas but those of justice, benevolence, and every thing honourable and excellent. I am sure our religion, as we find it in the Bible, is such; but alas! how different, how opposite is the christian world! Those that trade among infidels, or that are employed as missionaries among the heathen, can inform you what a fatal obstruction the bad lives of its professors is to the propagation of our holy religion. Why should they embrace a religion which leaves the morals of its followers as bad or worse than their own? This enquiry the light of nature teaches them to make; and it is really hard to answer it satisfactorily. When a Turk could turn upon a christian who insinuated that he lied, with this reprimand, 'What! do you think I am a christian, that I should lie?' When an Indian can tell a christian missionary, 'If your religion be so much better than ours, as you say it is, how comes it that you white people are no better than we? Nay,

you have taught us many vices, which we knew nothing of till our acquaintance with you?' I say, when Turks and heathens can make such repartees, is there any prospect that christianity should be received among them? Alas! no. The same thing may be applied to those careless, vicious, impious multitudes among ourselves, who do indeed usurp the name of christians, but can hardly be said to make any profession of christianity, as their whole lives are openly and avowedly contrary to it. If all who make a stricter profession were to live in character, it would soon afford conviction to these profane sinners: they could not but see the difference, and that it is a shocking difference for the worse on their side. And now, my brethren, shall our holy religion suffer? shall nations be prejudiced against it? shall multitudes of souls be lost by our misconduct? O! can you bear the thought of incurring such dreadful guilt! Well, if you would avoid it, observe the sacred precept in my text. On the other hand, would you not contribute all in your power to render your religion amiable in the world, to convert mankind to it, and thus save souls from death? If you would, then observe this divine rule. Let the world see that you are really the better for your religion, and that your singular profession is not a vain, idle, ostentatious pretence. I have this particular much at heart, and therefore you will bear with me that I have enlarged so much upon it.

(3.) The observance of this sacred rule of equity would have the most happy influence upon human society, and would make this world a little paradise. If men did to others whatever they would have others do to them, such a conduct would put an end to a great part of the miseries of mankind. Then there would be no wars and tumults among the nations, no jealousies and contentions in families, no oppression, fraud, or any form of injustice, no jars, animosities, and confusions in neighbourhoods; but human society would be a company of friends, and justice, equity, love, charity, kindness, gratitude, sympathy, and all the amiable train of virtues, would reign among them. What an happy state of things would this be! How

different from the present! And shall not each of us contribute all in our power to bring about such a glorious revolution?

(4.) The observance of this rule is a piece of prudence with regard to ourselves. It is of great importance to our happiness in this world, that others should treat us well. There are none of us absolutely independent of others; we are not able to stand as the butt of universal opposition; or if we are now in happy circumstances, we stand upon a slippery place, and may soon fall as low as our neighbours. Now the readiest way to be treated well by others, is to treat others well ourselves. If you would have others to behave agreeably to you, you must do so to them; do what you expect from them. Men often complain of bad neighbours, when they are the occasion of it, by being bad neighbours themselves. There is hardly any place so bad, but a benevolent inoffensive man may live peaceably in it; but the contentious will always meet with contention; for they raise the storm which disturbs them. Therefore, if no other argument has weight with you, for your own sakes observe this divine rule.

(5.) I shall only add, that unless you conscientiously observe the duties of social life, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Not only sins done immediately against God, and the omission of duties to him, but also sins against our fellow-creatures, and the omission of the duties we owe to them, will exclude men from the kingdom of God. Of this we have abundant evidence in scripture. I need only refer you to two comprehensive passages, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. in which you see that all unrighteousness, hatred, variance, strife, envy, extortion, and the like, which are offences against men, will as certainly shut the gates of heaven against you as idolatry or heresies, which are sins against God. The most plausible experiences, the greatest diligence and zeal in devotion, and the most promising profession of religion, will never bring you to heaven, though absolutely necessary in their place, unless you also abound in good works towards men. And shall this argument have no weight with you? Is your eternal salvation an insignificant thing

with you? Are you proof against the terrors of everlasting destruction? If you would enjoy the one, and escape the other, 'Do to others what you would have them do to you.'

I shall conclude with one or two reflections.

(1.) If this be the rule of our conduct, alas! how little true morality is there in the world! Men seem to act as if they were entirely detached from one another, and had no connection, or were not at all concerned to promote each other's interest. Self-interest is their pursuit, and self-love their ruling passion; if that be but promoted, and this gratified, they have little or no concern besides. 'Let their neighbours look to themselves, they have no business with them.' If I shall only mention one particular case under this general rule, namely, commerce and bargaining, what a scene of iniquity would it open! Men seem to make this their rule, to get as much for what they sell, and give as little for what they buy, as they can: they hardly ever think what the real value of the thing is, and whether the other party has a tolerable bargain of it: 'Let him look,' say they, 'to that; it is none of their care.' Alas! my brethren, where are the laws of justice and charity, when men behave in this manner; and yet, alas! how common is such a conduct in the commercial world!

(2.) We ought to examine our own conduct in this respect, and it will go a great way to determine whether our religion be true and sincere, or not. If we make conscience of social duty, it is a promising sign that God has written his law in our hearts. But if we can willingly indulge ourselves in any sinful and mean conduct towards men, we may be sure our religion is vain, whatever our pretension be. Let us feel then the pulse of our souls, whether it beats warm and full, both with the love of God and the love of our neighbour. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, or venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us think on these things.* Phil. iv. 8.

SERMON XXXI.

Dedication to God argued from redeeming Mercy.

1 COR. vi. 19, 20.

What! know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

MY first and last business with you to-day is to assert a claim which perhaps you have but little thought of, or acknowledged. In the name of God I enter a claim to you, to the whole of you, soul and body, and whatever you possess; to every one of you, high and low, old and young, freemen as well as slaves; I enter a claim to you all as God's right, and not your own: and I would endeavour to bring you voluntarily to acknowledge his right, and by your own free act to surrender and devote yourselves to him, whose you are, and whom therefore you are bound to serve.

It is high time for me to assert, and for you to acknowledge God's right to you; for have not many of you behaved as if you thought you were your own, and had no master or proprietor? Have you not practically said, with those insolent sinners the psalmist mentions, *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Psalm xii. 4. for have you not refused to employ your tongues for the honour of God, and spoke what you pleased, without any controul from his law? Have you not said by your practice, what Pharaoh was bold and plain enough to speak out in words, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Excd. v. 2. Have you not aimed at pleasing yourselves, as if you were not bound to please the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, whose authority confines the stubborn powers of hell in chains of ever-

* The discourse is said by the author to be Sermons preparatory to the Lord's Supper.

lasting darkness, and sets all the armies of heaven in motion to execute his sovereign orders? Have you not followed your own inclinations, as if you were at liberty to do what you pleased? Or if you have in some instances restrained yourselves, have not the restraints proceeded, not from a regard to his authority, but from a regard to your own pleasure or interest? Have you not used your bodies, your souls, your estates, and all your possessions, as if they were your own absolutely and independently, and there were no God on high, who has an original and superior claim to you, and all that you are and have? Do not your own consciences convict you of these things? Is it not then high time for you to be made sensible whose right you are? that you are not your own, but God's.

This reason would render this subject very seasonable at any time. But there is another reason which peculiarly determines me to make choice of it to-day, and that is, the greatest business of this day is to surrender and devote ourselves to God as his servants for ever. In so solemn a posture as at the Lord's table, in so affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happiness, and with such solemn emblems as those of bread and wine in our hands, which represent the broken body and flowing blood of Jesus, we are to yield ourselves to God, and seal our indenture to be his. This is the solemn business we are now entering upon. And that we may perform it the more heartily, it is fit we should be sensible that we are doing no more than what we are obliged to do, no more than what God has a right to require us to do, seeing we are not our own, but his.

The apostle speaks of it with an air of surprise and horror, that any under the profession of christianity should be so stupid as not to know and acknowledge that they are not their own, but God's. *What!* says he, *know ye not—that ye are not your own?* As if he had said, Can you be ignorant in so plain a point as this? Or can you be so hardy, as knowing the truth, to practise contrary to knowing it? Knowing you are not your own, dare you act as if you were your own? Acknowledging that you are God's, dare you withhold

from him his property? Will a man rob God? Shall not his professed servants serve him? Since your bodies and your souls are his, dare you use them as if they were absolutely your own, and refuse to glorify him with them?

The same claim, my brethren, is valid with regard to you, which the apostle here asserts with regard to the Corinthians. You are no more your own than they were; you are as much God's property as they were.

And his property in you depends upon such firm foundations as cannot be shaken without the loss of your being, and your relapse into nothing. If you made yourselves, you may call yourselves your own. But you know the curious frames of your bodies were not formed by your hands, nor was it your feeble breath that inspired them with those immortal sparks of reason, your souls. A greater absurdity cannot be mentioned, than that a creature should be its own creator; for then it must act before it had a being. You owe your being to a divine Original, the Fountain of all existence. It was Jehovah, the uncreated, all-creating Jehovah, who so wonderfully and fearfully formed your bodies, and who is likewise the Father of your spirits. And what right can be more valid than that founded upon creation? It is a right founded upon your very being, and which nothing but the entire loss of being can destroy. He that makes servants out of nothing, has he not a right to their service? Did he form your souls and bodies, and may he not require you to glorify him with them? Can you call them your own, or dare to dispose of them as you please, without any regard to God, when you would have had neither soul nor body, nor been any thing at all, if it had not been for him? You think you have such a right to a thousand things as entitles you to the use of them; but shew me one thing if you can, to which you have such a right as God has to you, to your whole souls and bodies, to you, who have no master upon earth, and who are your own property in exclusion to all the claims of your fellow-creatures. Did you produce out of nothing any of those things you call yours? No,

you only bought them with money, or you formed them into what they are, out of materials already created to your hand. But it is Jehovah's right alone that is founded upon creation. And will you not acknowledge this right? Will not your hearts declare even now, 'My Maker, God, this soul and this body are thine; and to thee I cheerfully surrender them. The work of thine own hands shall be thine by my free and full consent; and I renounce all claim to myself that is not dependent upon and subordinate to thee.'

Again, the providence of God towards you has made you his absolute property; and on this footing he claims your service. You could no more support yourselves in being, than you could give being to yourselves at first. Who but he has preserved you alive for so many months and years; preserved you, so frail and precarious, surrounded with so many dangers, and exposed to so many wants? Whose earth have you trod upon? Whose air have you breathed in? Whose creatures have you fed upon? *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*, Psal. xxiv. 1.; and consequently all the supports and enjoyments, all the necessaries and comforts of life are his. Shew me the mercy, if you can, which you created. Mention the moment, if you can, in which you supported your own life, independently of the Almighty. Shew me that property of yours, if you can, which is so independent upon you as you are upon him. This moment, if he should withdraw his supporting hand, you would instantaneously become as entirely nothing as you were ten thousand years ago. If he should now strip you of all that is his, and only leave you what is originally your own, he would leave you nothing at all. The earth and all its productions, the air, the light, and your very being would be entirely vanished, and your place would be no more known in the creation. O! that you knew, O! that you felt, O! that you practically acknowledged how entirely you are dependent upon God! And dare you call yourselves your own, when you cannot support yourselves in being or in happiness one moment? O! renounce so

haughty a claim, and this day give up yourselves to God as his. A son honoureth his father: and since God is your Father, where is his honour? The dull ox knows his owner, and the stupid ass knows his master's crib; and will not you know and acknowledge your divine Benefactor and Preserver? He has nourished and brought you up as his children; and dare you rebel against him?

Thus you see the divine right to you may be made good upon the footing of creation and Providence, But this is not the foundation of right which the apostle here has in view, or which I would chiefly insist upon. The ground of claim that he has here in view, is that of redemption by Jesus Christ; *Ye are not your own*, says he, *for ye are bought with a price*. This is a ground of claim still more endearing. You are God's, not only because he made you, because he preserved you, but because he hath bought you; bought you, saith St. Peter, *not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*. 1 Peter i. 18, 19. What an expensive purchase is this! a purchase by blood! not by the blood of bulls and of goats, not by the blood of man, but by the blood of Jesus, which St. Paul does not scruple to call the blood of God himself; *the church of God*, says he, *which he has purchased with his own blood*. Acts xx. 28. This was the immense ransom; this is what the apostle calls a price, by way of eminence in my text; *ye are bought with a price*; a price so vast and distinguishable, that it may easily be known without being particularly described; every christian must know it, if he is but told that it is the price with which he was bought.

The words *buying, purchase, ransom, redemption*, and the like, occur so often in the account of our salvation by Christ, that they deserve a particular explication.

They are sometimes taken in a proper sense, and sometimes in an improper, in the sacred scriptures. I shall particularly consider the word *redeem*, which most frequently occurs as a specimen of the rest.

To redeem in a lax improper sense, signifies in general to deliver from oppression and misery, in whatever way the deliverance is affected, and not necessarily implying that it is effected by a proper payment of a price. So you very often read of the Israelites being redeemed from slavery in Egypt; and on this account God assumed the title of their Redeemer. In this lax sense of the word we have been redeemed by Jesus Christ: redeemed, that is, delivered from slavery to sin and Satan. Our freedom from sin is called redemption by Christ in the sacred language. So in Tit. ii. 14. the apostle says, *Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* It is by Christ's freely giving himself a sacrifice for us, that the influences of the holy spirit are procured to mortify our corrupt dispositions, and subdue the power of sin, and thus to free us from our sordid slavery to its usurped jurisdiction. Sin has still retained its power over fallen angels: through the space of at least near six thousand years, notwithstanding all the punishment they have already suffered for it, and notwithstanding all that they have seen of the wonders of divine Providence, and the amiable and tremendous displays of the divine perfections, they sin on, still impenitent and unreformed, and will do so for ever. But many a sinner of the race of man has been recovered to a state of holiness and happiness, and been freed from the tyrannical dominion of sin. And the reason is Jesus did not give himself for the fallen angels, but for the fallen sons of Adam; for these but not for the former, he purchased sanctifying grace; and this makes the difference. While the former are hardened more and more in wickedness in the furnace of hell, the fallen offspring of Adam are purified by his spirit, and made a peculiar people, a people distinguishable from all others by their purity and zeal for good works, and peculiarly his above all others. St. Peter also uses the word *redeem* in the same sense, to signify deliverance from sin. *Ye know,* says he, *that ye were redeemed from your vain conversation by*

the precious blood of Christ. 1 Peter i. 18, 19. This is a very glorious redemption indeed, much more illustrious than the deliverance of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian bondage; which is so often called Redemption.

Again, Jesus Christ has redeemed; that is, delivered his people from the guilt of sin; and consequently from the wrath of God, and the punishments of hell. *He obtained eternal redemption for his people.* Heb. ix. 12. *Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Thess. i. 10. All the saints that are now in heaven, and all that shall be added to their happy number in all the future ages of the world, are indebted to him for their great, their everlasting deliverance. To Jesus they owe it, that they have the actual enjoyment of complete happiness, and the sure prospect of its everlasting continuance, instead of feeling the vengeance of eternal fire. To Jesus they owe it, that they rejoice for ever in the smiles of divine love, instead of sinking under the frowns of divine indignation. To Jesus they owe it, that they enjoy the pleasures of an applauding conscience, instead of agonizing under the pangs of guilt, and the horrors of everlasting despair. To Jesus they owe it, that their voice is employed in songs of praise and triumph, instead of infernal groans and howlings. To Jesus they are indebted for all this; and they are very sensible of their obligations; and their everlasting anthems acknowledge it. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall hear them ere long, singing with a loud voice, *Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* Rev. v. 9. *These are they which were redeemed from the earth, and from among men, as first-fruits unto God and the Lamb.* Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

Thus you see that taking the word Redemption in a lax improper sense, as signifying deliverance, though without a price, that we may be said to be bought or redeemed by Jesus Christ. But if we take the word in a strict and proper sense, it signifies a particular kind of deliverance; namely, by the payment of a

price. And it is in this way that Jesus redeemed his people. *He gave himself*, says St. Paul, *a ransom for all.* 1 Tim. ii. 6. And himself has told us, *the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.* Matt. xx. 28. Now a ransom is a price paid to redeem a thing that was forfeited, or a person that was held in captivity and slavery. So to redeem an estate, is to pay a price equivalent to it, and so to recover it. To redeem a prisoner or a captive, is to lay down a price as an equivalent for his liberty. In this sense Christ bought his people with a price, or redeemed them with his blood as the ransom. This will lead us to conceive of his work in our salvation in various views.

He is said *to redeem us to God by his blood.* Rev. v. 9. This implies that we were lost to God, because justice required we should be given up to punishment, and God could take no pleasure in us. We were lost to God, just as a criminal delivered up to justice is lost to his family and his country. But Jesus pays the ransom to divine justice with his own blood; that is, he bears the punishment in his own person, which justice demanded of the sinner; and hereupon the poor helpless lost sinner is recovered to God, becomes his property again upon the footing of mercy, and recovers the divine favour which he had lost. The blessed God, as it were, recovers his lost creature, receives him with delight from the arrest of justice safe and unhurt, and rejoices over him as redeemed from eternal death. Now like the father of the prodigal in the parable, he gives orders for public rejoicings through all the heavenly court, saying, *It is meet we should make merry and be glad, for this my Son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.* Luke xv. 32. And again, *I will save him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.* Job xxxiii. 24. Again, Jesus is said to redeem us from the curse of the law: *God sent forth his Son—made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.* Gal. iv. 4, 5. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13. Here you see what he redeemed us from, namely, the curse of the law, the penalty threatened in the law

to disobedience; and also the manner in which he redeemed us, namely, by becoming a curse for us, or suffering the penalty in his own person which was due to us for disobedience. This representation supposes that the law of God has demands upon us, demands of punishment, and that it detains us as prisoners under arrest till these demands are answered by some adequate satisfaction. Now the Lord Jesus entered into our law-place, and by his sufferings made a satisfaction equivalent to the demands of the law: and it is this satisfaction that is called the ransom by which he redeemed us. By his obedience and sufferings all the demands of the law are completely answered, so that now the prisoner is dismissed, the captive set free; set free upon the footing of a ransom, or for and in consideration of full payment made. By this a way is opened for the salvation of sinners upon the plan of the gospel; that is, by the righteousness of Jesus imputed to them upon their believing in him; imputed to such as have no personal merit, but must sink into everlasting condemnation, if dealt with according to the rigour of the law. Thus Jesus is made to believers righteousness and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30.; righteousness to answer the precept of the law, and redemption from its penalty.

In short, our salvation is accomplished so much in the way of redemption, that this word, or one of the same sense, is very often used in the affair. Heaven is called a purchased* possession, Ephes. i. 14: because when we had forfeited our right to it, it was purchased for us by the blood of Christ. Believers are called a peculiar. 1 Peter ii. 9. or as the word is sometimes rendered, a purchased† people. The resurrection is called the redemption of our body, Rom. viii. 23. because, after having been made a helpless captive under the power of death, and shut up in the prison of the grave, it is dismissed and set at liberty by Jesus Christ. And our salvation is called eternal redemption, because all the blessings contained therein are redeemed for us after they had been forfeited and lost,

* περιποιήσεως.

† λαός εις περιποιήσιν.

Thus you see the death of Christ may be called the great price with which we are bought, and by which all spiritual and everlasting blessings were bought for us. As for believers, it is beyond all dispute that they have been thus dearly bought; and on this account they are not their own, but God's. They are his on the footing of redemption; and therefore he has the strongest claim to their service. O! shall not those favoured creatures whom he has redeemed from hell, redeemed from sin and Satan, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, devote themselves to their Deliverer as his servants for ever? Can you bear the thought of withholding his own from him, when he redeemed you when lost, and purchased a right to you by the blood of his Son? one drop of which is of more value than a thousand worlds!

A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.

Must not the love of Christ constrain you, as it did St. Paul, to judge thus: That if this illustrious Personage *died for you, then you that live should no longer live to yourselves, but to him that died for you and rose again.* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Thus you see the argument concludes with full force as to believers, who are indisputably purchased by the blood of Christ. But will it conclude also as to those who are now unbelievers? Were they so redeemed or bought by Jesus Christ that they are no longer their own but God's, and upon that footing obliged to devote themselves to him? There is hardly any subject in divinity more intricate than the extent of Christ's redemption; and it would by no means suit the present occasion, to perplex a practical discourse with this controversy. I shall therefore only lay down a few principles which are indisputable, and will fully answer my present design. (1.) As to those who believe that Christ laid down his life as a price for the redemption of every individual of mankind, the argument concludes with full force; for by their own confession they are bought with a price, and therefore they are not their own, but God's. (2.) You all hope that Jesus Christ died for you; unless you have this hope,

you can have no hope at all of being saved according to the gospel; for the gospel allows you no hopes of salvation at all, but upon the supposition of Christ's dying for you. Have you then any hope of salvation? Undoubtedly you have; for you do not look upon yourselves as shut up under remediless despair. Well then, just as much hope as you have of salvation, just so much hope you have that Christ died for you; and consequently, upon your own principle, you are so far obliged to act as persons bought with a price, and therefore not your own but God's; that is, as far as you hope for heaven, so far are you obliged to devote yourselves to God, as his, and no longer to live to yourselves. And if you deny his claim to you upon the footing of redemption, you renounce all hope, and give yourselves over as lost and hopeless. And what can bind you more strongly than this? Will you rather rush into despair, and fling yourselves headlong into ruin, than acknowledge God's right, and behave as those that are his, and not your own? (3.) I venture to assert that Christ died for every man in such a sense, as to warrant all that hear the gospel to regard the offer of salvation by his death, as made to them without distinction; and to oblige all indefinitely to embrace that offer, or to believe in him, and to conduct themselves towards him, as one that by his death placed them under a dispensation of grace. Therefore all are obliged to behave towards him as their Redeemer, and to own that he has a right to them upon the footing of redemption. This is sufficient to my present purpose: for if this be the case, then I may enter a claim to you all, in the name of God as his property; and you cannot refuse to resign yourselves to him, without denying the Lord that bought you. He claims your souls and bodies as his due, and requires you to glorify him with both, upon the footing of redemption.

Here I am naturally led to consider the duty the apostle infers from these premises; and that is, to glorify God. *Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; your souls and your bodies are God's; therefore glorify God with your souls and your bo-*

dies, which are his. This is the connection of the apostle's reasoning.

Here you are ready to inquire, What is it to glorify God with our souls and bodies? I answer in short, The connection intimates that it consists in using our souls and bodies, and all that we are and possess, not as our own, but as his; that is, that we serve him with all the powers of both. We should consider our understandings as his, and therefore employ them to think of him and know him: our wills as his, and therefore chuse him: our love, our desire, our joy as his, and therefore love, desire, and rejoice in him above all: our sorrow, our indignation, and all the various forms of our irascible passions as his, and therefore level them against his enemies, particularly against sin: our consciences as his, and therefore regard them as his deputies; our powers of action as his, and therefore to be governed by his authority. We should consider our whole souls as his, and therefore not willingly harbour any thing in them that may displease him; no chosen darkness, vanity, or error in the mind: no enmity, no coldness, or lukewarmness in the heart. We should love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; because our hearts, our souls, our minds, and strength are his; his, and not our own. So also our bodies are his, and therefore all our members should be instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Your eyes are his, therefore let them glorify him by viewing the wonders of his word and works. Your ears are his, therefore let them hear his voice. Your tongues are his, therefore use them as instruments of praise, and of making known his glory. In short, you are all entirely his, therefore be all entirely devoted to him. You are his servants, even when you are serving yourselves; therefore whatsoever ye do, even in your own affairs, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not to men. This is to *glorify God with your souls and bodies, which are his.* And this should be your universal practice in all your actions: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether you live, you should live to the Lord; and whether you die,*

you should die to the Lord; that living and dying you may be the Lord's. Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

You have now had a brief view of those grounds upon which Jehovah claims you as his, and of the duty resulting from this claim. And what remains but that I wind up the whole with a serious, plain, warm proposal to your hearts? And that is, whether you will this day practically acknowledge God's right in you, by devoting yourselves entirely to him? Will you, or will you not? Pause, and think upon the proposal. Perhaps you may be willing to comply without any farther excitements. If not, come, and let us reason the matter together.

Consider how entirely, and how long you have unjustly detained his own property from God. Have you not lived to yourselves, and not to him? Have you not used the faculties of your souls, and the members of your bodies, your time, your estates, and your all, as if he had no right in them, but they were entirely your own? Has not *self* been the ruling principle in you, as if you had no Master in heaven; or as if no blood had been shed upon mount Calvary to purchase a superior right in you? You have thought your own thoughts, spoke your own words, consulted your own pleasure, and followed your own will; as if you usurped the disposal of yourselves, and did not acknowledge a superior. When were your thoughts, your words, your time, your powers of action, devoted to the Lord that bought you? The patience of God has lent some of you many days and years, but which of them have you used for his glory? And is it not high time for you now to return to your rightful Master, and to *render to God the things that are God's*?

Again, Consider, that while you have thus lived to yourselves, you have most unjustly usurped a right to what was not your own. Did you make yourselves? Did you redeem yourselves? Have you preserved yourselves? Is it you that gave the least virtue to the food to nourish you? Can you enable the earth to support you, or the air to heave your lungs with the breath of life? Can you recover yourselves when sick, or revive yourselves when dying? Can you make your-

selves happy in the world of spirits, and provide for yourselves through an immortal duration? If you can do these things, you may set up for independency with a better grace, and call yourselves your own; and you may boldly lift up your faces to heaven, and tell the Sovereign of the universe you will not be obliged to him, but he may take away from you all that is his, and leave you to shift for yourselves. But are you not struck with horror at such claims as these? You must then acknowledge you are not your own. And what aggravated sacrilege have you been guilty of, in robbing God of his right? If he that robs you of a little money is punished with death for the crime, what do you deserve who have robbed God of your souls and bodies, and that all your life long? O! will you not this day restore him his own? He will accept it again, when freely restored, though abused, dishonoured, and rendered unfit for service by you.

Farther, If you will not give up yourselves to God, pray what will you do with yourselves? You are not capable of self-subsistence, or independency. A newborn, naked, helpless infant may as well refuse the breast, reject the mother's care, and set up for itself, as you pretend to shift for yourselves independently of the God that made you, and the Saviour that redeemed you. Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die and putrify. If you will not give up yourselves to God, whom will you choose for your patron? Will you yield yourselves to sin and Satan? Alas! that is but to submit to a merciless tyrant, who will employ you in sordid, cruel drudgery, and then reward you with death and destruction. Will you give up yourselves to the world, to riches, honours, and pleasures? Alas! what service can the world do you when it is laid in ashes by the universal flames of the last conflagration? What service can the world do you when your unwilling souls are torn away from it, and must leave all its enjoyments for ever and ever? Will not the God of grace prove a better Master to

you? Has he ever forsaken any of his servants in their last extremity? No; he has promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. 5. And the long train of his servants, through thousands of years, bear an united testimony, that they have always found him faithful to his promise. And why then will you not choose him for your Master? Alas! if you refuse, you become what I may call the lumber and rubbish of the universe; useless to yourselves, and lost to God and your fellow-creatures, a property not worth owning. While you call yourselves your own you degrade yourselves, and lose all your dignity and importance; you cut yourselves off from all happiness, and can expect no other heaven than what such guilty, helpless creatures as you can create for yourselves. If you will not voluntarily surrender yourselves to God, he will not own you as his, but leave you to yourselves, to shift-for yourselves as you can. *He will hide his face from you, according to his threatening, that he may see what will be your end,* Deut. xxxii. 19, 20. And O! what wretched outcasts, what poor helpless orphans will you then be!

Let me farther try whether you have the least spark of gratitude still remaining in you. Has the love of Jesus no sweetly-constraining force upon you? Can you look upon him dying for you on the cross, and yet keep him out of his right? Can you view him paying your ransom with his blood and life, and yet refuse to give him up what he has redeemed at so high a price? Shall poor captives, redeemed from sin and hell with the blood of Jesus, rather continue still in bondage than submit to so good a Master? Are you capable of such base ingratitude? Can you treat your kind Redeemer so unkindly?

Let me conclude this exhortation with the more forcible, though plain and artless language of another*. *Consider when judgment comes, inquiry will be made, whether you have lived as your own, or as his that bought you. Then he will require his own with improvement,* Luke xix. 23. 'The great business of that day will not be so much to search after particular sins

* Mr. Baxter's Practical Works, vol. iv. p. 714, 715.

or duties, which were contrary to the scope of heart and life, but whether you lived to God, or to your flesh? and whether your time, and care, and wealth were expended for Christ in his members and interest, or for your carnal selves? You that Christ hath given authority to shall then be accountable, whether you improved it to his advantage. You that he hath given honour to, must then give account whether you improved it to his honour. In the fear of God, sirs, cast up your accounts in time, and bethink you what answer will then stand good. It will be a doleful hearing to a guilty soul, when Christ shall say, I gave thee thirty or forty years time; thy flesh had so much in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and labouring; in idleness and vain talking, and recreations, and other vanities; but where was my part? How much was laid out for promoting my glory? I lent you much of the wealth of the world: so much was spent in provisions for your backs and bellies; so much on costly toys, or superfluities; so much in revengeful suits and contentions: and so much was left behind for your posterity; but where was my part? How much was laid out for the furtherance of the gospel, or to relieve the souls or the bodies of your brethren? I gave thee a family, and committed them to thy care to govern them for me; but how didst thou perform it? O! brethren, bethink you in time what answer to make to such questions. Your Judge hath told you that your doom must then pass according as you have improved your talents for him; and that he that hideth his talent, though he give God his own, *shall be cast into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Matt. xxv. 30. How easily will Christ then evince his right in you, and convince you that it was your duty to have lived to him! Do you think, sirs, that you shall then have the face to say, I thought, Lord, I had been made and redeemed for myself? I thought I had nothing to do on earth but live in as much plenty as I could, and pleasure to myself, and serve thee on the by, that thou mightest continue my prosperity, and save me when I could keep the world no longer: I knew not that I was thine, and should

have lived to thy glory? If any of you plead thus, what store of arguments hath Christ to silence you! He will then convince you that his title to you was not questionable. He will prove that thou wast his by thy very being, and fetch unanswerable arguments from every part and faculty; he will prove it from his incarnation, his life of humiliation, his bloody sweat, his crown of thorns, his cross, his grave: he that had wounds to shew after his resurrection for the satisfaction of a doubting disciple, will have such scars to shew then as shall suffice to convince a self-excusing rebel: all these shall witness that he was thy rightful Lord.'

And now, my brethren, may I not presume that I have carried my point, if I had only to do with your reason? Does not your reason plead in favour of resigning yourselves to God this day? Take notice, I again proclaim God's right in you. Can any of you deny this claim? Certainly you dare not. Well then, let heaven and earth bear witness, that you were all claimed this day as God's property upon the footing of redemption; and not one of you dared to deny it. Therefore, *render to God the things that are God's*. May I hope you now feel your hearts beginning to yield? I make the proposal to you all; to you masters and freemen, as well as to you slaves: shall we all this day, with one consent, devote ourselves to God as his servants? Will you allow me, as it were, to draw up your indenture, and speak for you? I hope I am willing to lead the way, and will you follow me? Methinks I hear you say, 'Yes, we are willing: after many struggles and reluctances, we are at length willing, and can hold out no longer.' But hold! I am afraid some of you know not what you are going about. And if you rashly and inconsiderately engage in the service, you will soon desert it. As soon as the force of persuasion has ceased, and the flow of passion is over, you will retract all. Therefore I must put you back, till I inform you of some things with relation to this contract, that you may make sure work an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

Take notice then, 1. Your resignation of yourselves

must not be the act of mere nature, without much greater assistance; but you must be urged and sweetly constrained to it by the holy Spirit, making you willing by his power. Whatever professions you may make, whatever external forms of self-dedication you may force yourselves to use, yet your hearts are by no means willing; nay, they are utterly averse to this surrender, till they are changed by divine grace. This indeed should not discourage you from making the attempt; for it is while you are making the attempt, you are to hope for the assistance of divine grace. But I mention the necessity of divine power, lest you should mistake the efforts of mere nature under constraints of persuasion, or in a warm fit of passion, for an hearty voluntary surrender of yourselves to God. The same thing is to be applied to your future performance of your engagement. As you cannot of yourselves rightly devote yourselves to God, neither will you be able of yourselves to perform your vow. Therefore be humble and self-diffident in this transaction. Entertain no sanguine expectations from yourselves, or you will be surely disappointed. Trust in divine strength for all, for that alone is sufficient for you.

2. Your resignation must be unreserved and universal. God claims your all; Jesus bought all; your souls and bodies, and whatever belongs to you, and therefore you must give him all. He will not share his property with sin and Satan: you must make no reserve of this or that favourite lust or interest, but part with all that is inconsistent with your duty to him: and you must give up what is dearest to you to your heavenly Master, to be disposed of as he shall think proper. Here pause, and inquire whether you are willing to be unreserved and universal in your surrender?

3. You must resign yourselves to God at all adventures, resolving to be his whatever your attachment to him may cost you; though it should cost you your reputation among men, a part, or even the whole of your estate; nay, though it should cost you your life. Blessed be God, we are now in such happy circum-

stances, that our duty to him is not likely to do us much injury even in this world, where persecution and tribulation is the usual lot of his servants. Resignation to him may indeed expose you to a senseless laugh or a sneer, to reviling and calumny; but who that has the spirit of a man within him would be so meanly complaisant as to offend his God, and lose his heaven, in order to shun the ridicule and contempt of fools? Fools they are, if tried by the standard of true wisdom, however wise they may be in other respects. This is but a slight kind of persecution to one that makes a proper estimate of things, which cannot so much as make a finger ache, or raise the skin into a moment's pain. But times may yet change with us. The day may yet come when the servants of Christ among us may be called to forsake *father and mother, and wife and children, and lands, and even to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ*. This would be no unusual event; the servants of the crucified Jesus have been a company of cross-bearers, if I may so call them, from age to age; and their religion has cost them dear in the estimate of the world, though they are always immense gainers by it in the issue. This persecution, even to death, therefore you may perhaps meet with, and it is proper you should insert this article into the contract, that you will part with life for Christ's sake. Perhaps your indulgent Master may not insist upon it, and yet perhaps he may; it is therefore necessary you should consent to it. And what do you think of it? Does not this article cause some of you to draw back?

Let me add,

4. Your dedication of yourselves must be fixed and habitual. It is not a formality to be performed only at a sacramental occasion, nor a warm transient purpose under a sermon, or in a transport of passion; but it must be the steady uniform persevering disposition of your souls to be the Lord's at all times, and in all circumstances, in life, in death, and through all eternity.

These, brethren, are the qualifications of an acceptable surrender of yourselves to God; and are you wil-

ling to be his upon these terms? Or will you refuse and perish? Deliberate upon the matter, and come to some conclusion. *Choose ye in this day whom ye will serve.* May I hope you answer me to this purpose: 'We have weighed the case impartially; we see difficulties before us, if we become the Lord's servants; but, notwithstanding these difficulties, we are resolved upon it: his we will be who bought us with his blood.' Is this your determinate resolution, my dear brethren? Then make the transaction as solemn and explicit as you can, and follow me; I say, let all, white and black, old and young, follow me, while I speak for you; 'Lord, here is a poor sinner, thy creature redeemed by the blood of thy Son, that has long been a slave to other masters, and withheld from thee thy just and dear-bought property; here, Lord, I would now, freely and without reserve, devote and surrender myself, my soul and body, and my all to thee; to be universally and for ever thine. And let the omnipotent God, let angels and men, be witness to the engagement.'

Do you, my dear brethren, heartily consent to this formula? Then the contract is ready for sealing; therefore let us rise and crowd round the table of our Lord, and there annex our solemn seals, and acknowledge it as our act and deed. O! happy day! if we should be prepared to use this sacred ordinance for this purpose! Come, ye servants of the Lord, take a refreshment to strengthen you for your Master's work. Come ye redeemed slaves, commemorate the price of your redemption. Comè see how your Master loved you, and how much he suffered for you: and O let his love constrain you to live not to yourselves, but to him that died for you and rose again; rose again to plead your cause, and prepare a place for you in heaven, the region of immortal life and glory!

But if any of you refuse to comply with the proposal, or, which is much the same, are careless and indifferent about giving yourselves up to God, not forming any express determination one way or other, heaven and earth will bear witness against you, that your refusal is not owing to your not knowing God's claim

upon you. I have asserted it this day, in the presence of God and his people; and if you still refuse to acknowledge it, I denounce unto you that you shall surely perish, shall perish by the hand of divine justice as wilful rebels against the highest authority, and as insolently and ungratefully *denying the Lord that bought them*. Think on your dreadful doom, and let your hearts meditate terror, till you be delivered from it by a voluntary surrender of yourselves to God, through Jesus Christ your Redeemer. And now what account could such of you as have refused your compliance give of the transactions of this day, even to one of your fellow-creatures? Suppose one should ask you upon your return home, 'What were you doing to-day?' You must answer, "I was engaged in a treaty with the Proprietor of the universe, and the Redeemer that bought me with his blood, about becoming his servant, and acknowledging his right in me."—"Well, and what was the issue? Certainly you did not dare to refuse? certainly you are now the willing servant of God."—"No, I refused, and so the treaty broke up."—O thou monster! Could you bear the dreadful narrative? Would not every one that heard it gaze and stare at you with horror, and ask in consternation, 'Were you not afraid? Had you no regard for your own welfare? Alas! what will you do with yourself now? What rock or mountain can you find to hide your devoted head? How will you answer for your refusal in the great and terrible day of the Lord?'

SERMON XXXII.

The Christian Feast.

1 COR. v. 8.

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

AS we have the agreeable prospect of celebrating the Lord's supper on the next Lord's day, we cannot spend this day to better purpose than preparing for it. And no preparative can be of more importance than a right knowledge of the end and design of that solemn ordinance, and the qualifications necessary in those that would worthily partake of it. To this I would devote the present discourse: and so important a design certainly demands the attention of all, especially of such of you as intend to join in the participation of the sacred supper.

Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude, yet it is justly supposed to have a particular reference to this institution, which has the same place under the gospel-dispensation which the passover had under the law. St. Paul had very naturally glided into the stile of the Jewish law concerning the paschal supper, in the direction he had been giving concerning a scandalous member of the Corinthian church: and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity when he comes to speak of the gospel-dispensation, and particularly of the Lord's supper. He had directed the church of Corinth to cast the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, because if they should tolerate such a corrupt member among them, it would tend to corrupt the whole society, Wickedness is of a spreading infectious nature, and the indulgence of it in one instance may occasion extensive mischief; for, says he, *Know ye not that leaven*

ferments and diffuses itself, till at length it has *leavened the whole lump*? Just so one corrupt member in a church may spread a contagion through the whole. *Therefore purge out the old leaven*; cast out this scandalous offender, and labour also to purge your church and your own hearts from all corruption, that ye may be as a new, solid, and pure lump; for ye are more strongly bound to keep yourselves morally pure, and to guard your church against infection, than the Jews were to abstain from all things mixed with leaven at the feast of the passover; for though that feast is no more to be observed, yet that which was signified by the paschal lamb is now come to pass; *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*, and the ordinance of his supper is appointed as a sacred feast, in commemoration of him, and our deliverance by him, as the passover was commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt, and the destroying-angel. And this is a stronger reason for the more purity of particular persons and congregations under the gospel, than there could be for ceremonial purity under the law. *Therefore*, says he, *let us keep this evangelical feast, not with old leaven, not with those corrupt dispositions which we once indulged, and which, like leaven, soured our nature, and fermented through our frame; neither with the leaven of malice, or any kind of wickedness; but renouncing our old temper and practice, and with hearts universally sanctified, and full of love and good-will to all mankind, let us religiously celebrate this gospel feast with those dispositions which were signified by the unleavened bread, namely, sincerity and truth.*

It was the practice of the Jews, when the passover was approaching, to search every corner of their houses with lighted candles, that they might be sure there was no leaven to be found under their roofs. The apostle probably alludes to that practice, and exhorts christians to a like care in searching and purging their hearts, and the churches to which they belong, that they may be pure, and fit for partaking of so holy an ordinance.

My design is to shew you the principal ends of the institution of the Lord's supper; and as I go along,

to delineate the character of those who are fit to attend upon it; for by knowing the former, we may easily know the latter.

The Lord's supper partakes of the general nature of those divine institutions which are called sacraments: in this, 'That it is intended to represent things spiritual by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas, and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood.' As we have not only rational minds, but also animal bodies endowed with senses, God has wisely adapted his institutions to the make of human nature, and called in the assistance of our eyes* and our ears to help our conceptions of divine things, and to affect our minds with them. And this method is agreeable to the nature of mankind: God has been pleased to use it in every age, and under every dispensation of religion. The tree of life was the sacrament of the first covenant; a sensible confirmation to Adam that he should obtain eternal life by his obedience. The rainbow was appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with Noah, that the world should no more perish by a deluge; and we have not only the assurance of the divine promise, but we may receive the confirmation through our eyes by beholding that illustrious sign in the clouds. Circumcision and the passover were noted sacraments of the covenant of grace, under the Jewish dispensation; and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appointed in their room, and answer the like ends under the gospel. In all these ordinances God consults our weakness, and, as I observed, makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds. Indeed this method of representing and confirming things by sensible signs and significant actions is so natural and expressive, that men have used it in all ages in their transactions with one another. It was remarkably in use among the antients; and it is not quite laid aside in our age, which does not abound in such methods of representation. In our age and country it is usual to confirm contracts

* *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.* HOR.

by annexing seals to an instrument of writing; to confirm an agreement by shaking hands; to signify love by a kiss, and complaisance by bowing; and we sometimes give some token as a memorial to a parting friend. I mention these low and familiar instances that I may, if possible, give some just ideas of a sacrament to the meanest capacity. It partakes of the general nature of these significant signs and actions, and is intended, like them, to strike our senses; and through that medium to instruct or affect our minds: and such a sign, such a seal, such a significant action is the Lord's supper in particular.

Having made this remark upon its general nature, I now go on to shew the particular ends of its institution. And,

I. This ordinance was intended as a memorial of the sufferings of Christ for his people.

That this is its immediate and principal design we learn from the words of the blessed Jesus at its first institution, *This do in remembrance of me*. That we are to remember him particularly and principally as suffering for our sins, is evident from his words in distributing the elements, *This is my body which is broken for you*. Here a moving emphasis is laid upon his body's being broken; broken, crushed, and mangled with an endless variety of sufferings. So again, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you*. Hence it is evident this ordinance was appointed as a memorial of a suffering Saviour; and it is under this notion that we are particularly to remember him. We are to *shew forth the Lord's death*, says the apostle; his death, which was the consummation of his sufferings, *till he come again* to visit our world in a very different and glorious manner.

The Lord's supper in this view is to be looked upon as a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they see it, they may remember him. Our Lord knew we should be very apt to forget him; and therefore, that the memory of his sufferings might never be lost, he instituted this ordinance; and by the humble elements of bread and wine, he represents himself to our senses as

broken under the burden of his sufferings, and shedding his blood. Corn, out of which bread is made, which is first threshed, then ground in a mill, then baked in an oven, is a very proper emblem to signify the violences which our Lord's sacred body endured; and wine pressed from the grape, and poured into the cup, is a striking representation of his blood, which was forced from him by the crushing weight of his agonies. Therefore there was a peculiar propriety in appointing these elements to be the memorials of his sufferings.

This remembrance of a suffering Saviour must be attended with suitable affections. To remember him with a careless indifferency, or with contempt, is the most ungrateful insult. Were he an insignificant person in whom we have no concern, we might treat him thus; but thus to treat the beloved Son of God, and our only Saviour, thus to requite all his love and sufferings for us, what can be more shocking? What can be more base ingratitude? We should therefore remember him in this ordinance with a penitent sense of our sins, which were the causes of his death; with an ardent love and gratitude for his dying love to us; with an humble faith and confidence in the merit of his death, to procure us acceptance with God; and with a voluntary dedication of ourselves to him and his service for ever.

And hence you may learn the character of those who are prepared to communicate in this feast. They, and only they, are prepared, who are true penitents, fully convinced of their sins, and deeply sensible of their malignity, especially as the causes of his death, and thoroughly determined to forsake them; who are lovers of a crucified Jesus, and feel their hearts fired with gratitude to him for all his love; who are sensible that they have no personal righteousness, and therefore place all their dependence upon upon his only; who feel his love constraining them, and are determined to *live no more to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.*

Self-examination is a necessary preparative to this ordinance. *Let a man examine himself,* says the apos-

tle, and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup. Therefore, my brethren, enquire whether this be your character; if it be not, you have no right to this privilege. It is a shocking incongruity to pretend to commemorate the death of Christ without love to him, or penitential sorrows for those sins for which he died. Memorials of friendship and love-tokens are only for friends; and when others use them, it is mere farce and hypocrisy. Therefore till you have these dispositions, do not adventure to come to his table.

II. The Lord's supper was appointed as a badge of our christian profession; and of our being the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is appointed for our initiation into the christian church at our first assuming the christian profession: and by partaking of this ordinance of the Lord's supper, we declare our constancy in that profession, and that we do not repent of our choice, nor desire to change our Master. We openly profess that we are not ashamed of the cross, or the religion of the despised Nazarene, but publicly avow our relation to him before the world. This perhaps may be intended by that expression of St. Paul, *shewing forth the Lord's death*. We shew, profess, and publish to all the world the regard we have even to his ignominious death. We may look upon this ordinance as an oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ. And hence probably it was first called [*sacramentum*] a sacrament; which properly signifies an oath*, and particularly that kind of oath which the Roman soldiers took to their generals, in which they engaged to be faithful to their leaders, and to fight for their country, and never desert its cause.

To this practice probably St. Augustine, about fourteen hundred years ago, refers, as well known to his hearers, when he addresses them thus: 'Ye know, my beloved, that the soldiers of this world, who receive but temporal rewards from temporal masters, do first bind themselves by military sacraments or oaths, and

* So Horace uses it:

— Non ego perfidum
Dixi Sacramentum.

profess that they will be faithful to their commanders; how much more then ought the soldiers of the eternal King, who shall receive eternal rewards, to bind themselves with the heavenly sacraments or oaths, and publicly profess their fidelity to him*!

Now if we receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in this view, we assume a badge or mark of distinction from the rest of the world, and openly profess ourselves his disciples. We take a solemn oath of allegiance to him, and swear that we will be his faithful servants and soldiers to the end of life.

This shews the peculiar propriety of this ordinance as following upon baptism, especially with regard to those that were baptized in infancy, as we have generally been. In baptism our parents offered us up to God as his servants, and members of the christian church, before we were capable of personal choice, or doing any thing for ourselves; and when we arrive to years of discretion, it is expected we should approve of what they did by our own personal act. Now the Lord's supper is an institution in which we may make their act our own, and acknowledge that we may stand to the contract they made for us. And as often as we partake of it, so often we make this profession. And hence by the way, you may see that such who neglect this ordinance when they are grown up to a capacity of acting for themselves, do virtually renounce their baptism and disown the act of their parents in devoting them to God. Their parents were to act for them no longer than while they were incapable to act for themselves; and now when they are arrived at that age, and refuse to confirm the act of their parents, they practically disown it, and wilfully make heathens of themselves: and consequently they proclaim themselves rebels against Christ; for what but rebels are we to account

* Notum est, Dilectissimi, charitati vestrae quod milites seculi beneficia temporalia a temporalibus Dominis accepturi, prius Sacramentis militaribus obligantur, & Dominis suis fidem se servaturos profitentur: quanto magis ergo aeterno Regi militaturi, & aeterna praemia percepturi, debent Sacramentis coelestibus obligari, & fidem per quam ei placituri sunt, publice profiteri?

such who refuse the oath of allegiance when tendered to them, and that over and over?

From hence you may learn another qualification of an acceptable communicant, namely, an hearty willingness to renounce his lusts and pleasures, and every sin, and to become universally and eternally the devoted servant and disciple of Jesus Christ. Here again examine yourselves whether you have this qualification.

III. We may consider this ordinance of the Lord's supper as a seal of the covenant of grace, both upon God's part and upon ours.

Every sacramental institution seems to partake of the general nature of a seal; that is, it is a sensible sign for the confirmation of a covenant or contract. This St. Paul expressly asserts with regard to circumcision, when he says, that *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.* Rom. iv. 11. And Christ asserts the same thing concerning the ordinance now under consideration: *This cup, says he, is the New Testament, or covenant in my blood;* that is, it is a ratifying sign or seal of the covenant of grace which is founded in my blood.

That you may rightly understand this, you must observe that God has cast his dispensation towards our guilty world into the form of a covenant, or contract, in which God and man are the parties, and Christ is the Mediator between them. The tenor of the covenant on God's part is to this purpose, 'That he will graciously bestow for the sake of Christ, pardon of sin, eternal life and all the blessings of his purchase, upon all such sinners of the race of man as comply with the terms on which these blessings are offered.' The tenor or terms upon our part are to this purpose, 'That we receive and submit to the Lord Jesus as our only Saviour and Lord; or, in other words, that we believe in him with all our hearts, and repent of our sins, and devote ourselves to his service.' This is the substance of that happy contract; and of this the Lord's supper is a seal, as to both parties.

On God's part this covenant can receive no intrinsic confirmation. He has plainly declared it in his word;

and no oaths or confirming signs can add any intrinsic certainty to his declaration. We say, 'an honest man's word is as good as his oath, or bond and seal:' and surely we may apply this in the highest sense to the declarations of eternal truth. But, though this covenant cannot be made more certain in itself on God's part, yet the evidence of its certainty may be made more sensible and affecting to poor creatures that are so slow of heart to believe. And hence God has been pleased, in condescension to our weakness, to confirm it with the most solemn oaths and sacramental signs. This institution, in particular, is a standing evidence, obvious to our senses, in all the ages of the christian church, that he is unchangeably willing to stand to the articles on his part; that he is as ready to give his Son and all his blessings to such as believe, as he is to give bread and wine as signs and seals of them.

As to our part, in receiving these elements, we signify our hearty consent to the covenant of grace, and as it were, set our seal to it to confirm it. The language of that speaking action is to this purpose; I cordially agree to the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel; and in token thereof I hereto affix my seal. As I take this bread and wine before many witnesses, so I openly and avowedly take and receive the Lord Jesus as my only Saviour and Lord, and the food and life of my soul: I cheerfully receive the offer of salvation according to the terms proposed in the gospel; of which let this bread and wine given and received be a token, or pledge, and seal.

This, my brethren, is the meaning of this solemn action. And hence you may know whether you are qualified to join in it. If you have not heartily consented to the contract, it is the greatest absurdity and dissimulation to set your seal to it. What! will you, as it were, annex your hand and seal to a bargain that you do not agree to? Can you dare thus to be trifling with an heart-searching, all-knowing God? But, if divine grace has powerfully engaged your hearts to consent to this agreement, come with humble boldness, and attest and seal it before men and angels. And remember, for your comfort, that on God's part it al-

ways stands firm and unalterable. You have his word, his hand-writing, his oath, his seal, to confirm your faith; and what can you desire more to give you strong consolation!

IV. This ordinance of the Lord's supper was intended for the saints to hold communion together.

By the Communion of Saints, I mean that mutual love and charity, that reciprocal acknowledgment of each other, that brotherly intercourse and fellowship, which should be cultivated among them as children of the same Father, in the same family, and as members of the same society, or mystical body. This is a thing of so much importance, that it is an article of the common Creed of the Christian church.

Our sitting down at the same table, partaking of the same elements, and commemorating the same Lord, are very expressive of this communion, and have a natural tendency to cultivate and cherish it. In such a posture we look like children of one family, fed at the same table upon the same spiritual provisions. It is a significant expression, that we are one in heart and affection; that we have one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, one God and Father of all; and that we acknowledge one another as brethren and fellow-christians*.

Hence this ordinance has been frequently and justly called the communion. And St. Paul assures us it deserves the name; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?* that is, Is it not a token and pledge of our joint share and communion in the blessings purchased by his blood? *The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* that is, Is it not a sign of our common right to the happy effects of the sufferings of his body? *For, says he, we being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread:* that is, 'As many grains make 'but one loaf of bread, and as many members make 'but one body, so we, being many, are, as it were, but

* The *ἀγάπαι*, or *Love-feasts*, among the primitive christians, were intended still farther to express this brotherly love and communion; but as the practice was at length abused, it was laid aside.

‘one bread, and one sacred body politic, of which Christ is the head; and our partaking together of one bread in the Lord’s Supper, is a sign and pledge of this union.’ This appears still clearer from the design of the apostle in these verses, which was to caution the Corinthians against partaking with heathens in those religious feasts, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols, after they had offered their sacrifice. This he represents as idolatrous. *My dearly beloved, says he, flee from idolatry.* ver. 14. And then to convince them that in communicating with idolaters in these feasts they really joined with them in their idolatry, he argues from the nature of the Lord’s Supper, which is also a feast upon sacrifice. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?* So by joining with idolaters in these religious entertainments, we hold communion with them in their idolatry. He illustrates the same thing from the feasts upon sacrifice among the Jews, ver. 18.

Hence you may learn another qualification for this ordinance, namely, love and charity to all mankind, and especially to our fellow-communicants. To sit down at this feast of love with an heart possessed with angry and malicious passions, is certainly an aggravated wickedness. To this we may accommodate the words of Christ, though spoken before the institution of this ordinance. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thy gift before the altar and go thy ways; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Matt. v. 23, 24.

Hence also you may learn that none but such as make a credible profession of the christian religion have a right to this ordinance. If it be a sign of the communion of saints, and if we should love our fellow-communicants as saints, then it follows that they should give us some ground for this charity, and that they should, as far as we can judge, be real saints or true christians. Their being such in reality is necessary to give them a right in the sight of God; and their appearing such, in a judgment of charity, is necessary to give them a right in the sight of the visible church,

which can only judge of an outward visible profession ; therefore such ought not to be admitted, however strenuously they insist that they are christians, whose gross ignorance, or wrong notions of religion, or whose immoral and irreligious practices leave no ground for a rational charity to hope that they are true christians. How can we cultivate the communion of saints with such who do not so much as appear to be saints? To have been baptized, to call themselves christians, and to attend upon the worship of the christian church, and the like, is far from being sufficient to constitute a credible profession ; for all this a man may do, and yet be farther from practical christianity than an heathen. But a man must profess and act habitually in some measure as a christian, before he can justly be looked upon as a christian. Alas ! the numbers of christians in our land are generally of a very different character ! They may call themselves christians, as you or I may call ourselves kings or lords ; but the profession is ridiculous ; and that charity is under no rational or scriptural limitations that can communicate with them as fellow-christians.

V. In this ordinance God maintains communion with his people, and they with him.

This is a communion of a more divine and exalted kind than the former ; and it is often mentioned in scripture as the privilege of the people of God. *Our fellowship*, says St. John, *is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 John i. 3. *The communion of the Holy Ghost* is a part of the apostolical benediction, which we also use at the close of our religious assemblies.

This communion consists partly in that intercourse which is carried on between God and his people, partly in the community of property, and partly in the interchange of property. There is a spiritual intercourse carried on between him and them. He communicates his love and the influences of his spirit to them ; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls ; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship.

Hence he is said to dwell in them, and to walk in them ; 2 Cor. vi. 16. *And our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, in which he resides.* 1 Cor. vi. 19. Christ speaks of this mutual intercourse in the strongest terms ; *If a man love me, my Father will love him, and I will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23. There is also a kind of community of goods between Christ and his people. They are children of the same Father, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren ; they are joint heirs of the same inheritance. They have a fellowship in his sufferings, Phil. iii. 10. and are sharers in the glory and bliss of his resurrection and exaltation. The relation between them is often represented by that between husband and wife, between whom all things are common. Hence the apostle argues, that *if we are Christ's then all things are ours.* 1 Cor. iii. 21. *ad fin.* There is also an happy interchange of property between Christ and his people ; happy for them, though it was terrible to him. He took their sin upon him, and they have his righteousness in exchange. He endured the death they had incurred, and they enjoy the life he obtained. He assumed the curse due to them, and they have the blessing transferred to them which was due to him. Here again the conjugal relation may be a proper illustration. As the wife is entitled to the inheritance of her husband, and he is answerable for her debts and obligations, so Christ made himself answerable in behalf of his people, for all their debts to the law and justice of God ; and they are entitled to all the blessings he has purchased. O what a gracious and advantageous exchange is this for us ?

Now the Lord's Supper is a very proper emblem of this communion, and a suitable mean to cultivate it*. It is the place where Christ and his people meet, and

* The apostle illustrates this point in 1 Cor. x. where he cautions the Corinthians against joining with idolaters in their religious festivals, because they could not do it without holding communion with those demons in honour of whom they were celebrated. His argument is to this purpose : 'That as in the Lord's supper we hold a communion with Christ, and as the Jews in their sacred feasts communicated with God at his altar, so in these idolatrous feasts they held a religious communion with the idol.' And this supposes that in the Lord's supper we really have communion with Christ. See ver. 20, 21.

have their interviews. He, the great Master of the feast, feeds them at his own table, upon his own provisions, in his own house, and they eat and drink, as it were, in company with him; and thus it is a social entertainment between them. There he favours them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him; and they draw near to him with humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech and conversation with him. There, under the elements of bread and wine, he makes over to them his body and blood, and all the blessings purchased by his sufferings; and they receive them with eager desire: they cast their guilt and unworthiness upon him, and give themselves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them. There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciously acknowledges their title good. There is a solemn exchange made between them of guilt for righteousness, of misery for happiness, of the curse for a blessing, of life for death. Christ takes the evils upon himself, and they cast them off themselves upon him; and he makes over the blessings to them, and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, and, as it were, sitting down together at one table, like husband and wife, or parent and children, is a very proper emblem and representation. And I doubt not but some of you upon such occasions have enjoyed the pleasures of communion with him, which gives you an high esteem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design than is in the power of any language to afford.

Here again you may learn one important preparative for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and that is, reconciliation to God, and a delight in communion with him. You cannot walk together, or maintain fellowship with him, till you are agreed, and take pleasure in his society; therefore carefully enquire into this point.

Having thus shewn you the principal ends of this institution, and the qualifications necessary in those that would partake of it, I shall subjoin this one general remark, 'That it is evident from all that has been said, that persons who live vicious and irreligious lives, whatever their profession be, have no right to

‘this ordinance, and should not be admitted to it by the officers of the church, till they profess their repentance and reformation.’ When we exclude such, we are not taking too much upon us, nor pretending to judge of what we have nothing to do with; but we only exercise that power which is inherent in every society, and with which Christ has expressly invested his church. Every society has a power to exclude those from its peculiar privileges, who violate the essential and fundamental laws of its constitution. And no law can be so essential to any constitution, as a life of holiness is to the character of a christian, and the constitution of the christian church. It is no matter what persons profess with their lips, it is the life that is to be regarded as the decisive evidence. What would it signify for a man to insist upon it that he was honest, if he persisted in theft and robbery; or to take the oaths of allegiance, when his conduct was a course of rebellion against his sovereign? And equally insignificant and absurd is a profession of christianity without a correspondent practice. If we consider the design and end of this ordinance, we cannot but see that such persons cut themselves off from all right to it. Is it fit that a drunkard, a swearer, or any profane sinner should commemorate the death of the holy Jesus while he has no love to him, but is determined to go on in sin? Should they wear the badge of Christ’s disciples, whose lives proclaim them his enemies? Should they affix their seals to the covenant of grace, who have never consented to it, but are grossly violating it by their practice? Should they hold communion with Christ and his people, who have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Hear the apostle upon this head: *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils*, 1 Cor. x. 21.: the thing is absurd and impracticable. *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore, come out from*

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. 2 Cor. vi. 14—17. As to public offences, the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, which is binding upon all the ministers of Christ: *Them that sin, that is, that sin publickly, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* 1 Tim. v. 20. To the same purpose he speaks to Titus; *a man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.* Tit. iii. 10. or cast out of the church. This indeed is immediately intended of fundamental errors in principle, but it may undoubtedly be applied to vicious practices; for as Archbishop Tillotson justly observes, ‘The worst of heresies is a bad life.’ As to private offences against a particular person, in which the church, as such, is not concerned, private measures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, till they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprized of it; and if he pay no regard to that authority, he is to be excluded from the society. This is according to Christ’s express direction, in Matt. xviii. 15, &c. *If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen-man and a publican.* There is nothing more plain in scripture than that scandalous members should be cast out of the church; and an excessive indulgence is most severely censured. St. Paul orders Timothy to *turn away from such as have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.* 2 Tim. iii. 5. He lays the weight of his apostolical authority upon the christian church in this case. *We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.* 2 Thess. iii. 6. The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are severely threatened by Christ himself, for tolerating the corrupt sect of the Nicolaitans, and the followers of Balaam’s and Jezebel’s profane and loose practices, and

not casting them out of their communion. Rev. ii. 14, &c. And the church of Ephesus is commended for her strict discipline, and *that she could not bear them that were evil, and had tried pretended apostles*, discovered and rejected them as impostors. But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies for abundant evidence of the necessity of this holy discipline. Here St. Paul warmly rebukes the Corinthian church for allowing a scandalous member to continue in communion with them; and solemnly charges them to cast him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the God of this world. And this he strongly describes, in order to strike terror into the offender, as a delivering him over to Satan. He urges this wholesome severity as a proper expedient to bring the offender himself to repentance, and especially to keep their church pure. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* And just so the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt the whole society. It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline that the primitive church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathens and idolaters. And it is the want of this that has so scandalously corrupted the generality of our modern churches, whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess. Let us not imitate them, but pity and pray for them, lest we become a mere mass of corruption, like them. The apostle forbids not only all religious communion, but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more shy of them than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. *I wrote to you*, says he, *not to keep company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world:* that is, 'I do not mean that you should break off all intercourse with the fornicators of this world, who are professedly of the world, and make no pretensions to christianity; or with the covetous or extortioners, or idolaters; for them must ye needs go out of the world:' all places are so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them without leaving human society al-

together. *But now I have written unto you, says he, not to keep company, if any one that is called a brother, a christian brother by profession, here lies the emphasis, if any one that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not to keep company with such a one, no not to eat.* 1 Cor. v. ver. 10, 11. Cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with such a one; do not make a choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much less in the sacred feast of the Lord's supper.

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority to the faithful exercise of discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of mankind, yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make a compliment of the ordinances of Christ, it is at our peril. It is therefore the most unreasonable and absurd thing for persons by their offences to constrain the officers of the church to animadvert upon them, and then to take it ill that they faithfully do their duty. All that is required of them is a profession of deep repentance for their misconduct, and a promise of reformation for the future. And is this too much to do to repair the injury they have done to religion, to satisfy the society to which they belong, and restore themselves into the charity of their brethren, whose hearts are so grieved by their conduct? Or are they indeed determined not to repent and reform, but go on in their wicked courses? Then they have nothing to do with the peculiar privileges of the Christian church, and therefore should not claim them. It is in vain here to object, 'That none can forgive sins but God, and therefore they will not confess them to man.' For, as I told you, every member of the Christian church ought to give his fellow-members some evidence that he is indeed one of their body, and worthy of their charity. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into some scandalous sin inconsistent with his profession, he does not so much as profess his repentance? It is only God that can pardon the sin, as it is done against him; but

the church is also offended, and every society as well as particular person who is offended, has a right to demand satisfaction. Hence we are commanded to *confess our faults to one another*, James v. 16.; and that is a proud, impenitent creature indeed, unworthy of a place among Christians, who thinks it a mighty thing to make this small satisfaction. The incestuous Corinthian was brought to repentance by the wholesome severities used with him. And upon this, the apostle, in his second epistle, advises them to *forgive him* (which implies, that in some sense the offence was against the church; and, in that sense, that they had power to forgive him), *that they should comfort him, and confirm their love towards him, lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*; 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. And shall we be more obstinate than an incestuous, excommunicated Corinthian?

As this subject naturally came in my way, and as it is necessary for us as church-members to have right ideas of gospel-discipline, I have taken this opportunity to enlarge on it; and I hope you will so remember it, as to render all instructions on this head needless hereafter.

I now proceed to what is more practical.

Let me, as an herald of Jesus Christ, proclaim to you the business of the next Lord's day. We are going to commemorate the most important event that ever happened upon our globe; an event accomplished about seventeen hundred years ago, but never to be forgotten; an event that extends its happy consequences to the remotest periods of eternity, I mean the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for us. And who among you is prepared and willing to commemorate this grand event? Where are the broken-hearted penitents? Where the lovers of a crucified Saviour? Where the happy persons that believe in him with all their hearts? Come, take the dear memorials of your precious Redeemer; come, refresh your souls once more with the sweet remembrance of his love. O! shall his dear name be forgot among us? What! forgotten, after all he has done, after all he has suffered

for us! Can you bear the thought? We are going to profess openly before a scoffing world, that we are the servants and disciples of a crucified Christ; we are going to put on the badges of his servants, and wear his livery; to enlist as volunteers under his banner, and swear allegiance and fidelity to him. And where are those that are willing to join with us? *Who is upon the Lord's side? Who?* Come ye that will have Christ for your Master, come enter your names in his list: be fixed and determined for him. *How long will ye halt between two opinions?* It is a plain case, and requires no long time to deliberate. Come, ye that would stand among his people at his right hand at last, come now with prepared hearts, and mingle among them at his table. We are going to enter into an everlasting covenant with our God, and to set our solemn seal to the contract. And who among you gives his consent? Who is willing to take the Lord Jesus for his only Saviour and Lord, and to give himself up to him entirely and for ever? Who will avouch the Lord to be his God, that He may avouch him to be one of his people? How are your hearts, my brethren, disposed in this respect? Do they give a full consent? And are you willing from this time to renounce and abjure all your lusts and sinful pleasures? In short, do you consent to the covenant of grace? If so, come and confirm it with that solemn oath and seal. God and Christ are agreed to the proposal; and if you agree, the happy contract is made; it is established firmer than the pillars of heaven; and if you had them, you might venture ten thousand souls upon it. We are going to maintain communion with the saints, and sit down with them at the same table of our common Lord. And who of you would join yourselves with that little flock, that despised but happy few? If you would mingle with them in heaven, separate from the wicked world, and join them now: and as a token of it, eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with them. But we are going to maintain communion of a still more exalted kind; communion with the Father of our spirits, with the Son of his love, and with

the Holy Ghost. And where are they that pant and languish for this sacred and divine fellowship? Come to the table of the Lord, the place of interview, and you may humbly hope to meet him there. There you may pour out your hearts to him with all the freedom of intimacy and filial boldness, and there you may receive the tokens of his love.

My brethren, if, upon careful self-examination, you find reason to hope you have the qualifications of acceptable communicants, which I have described, I require you, in the name of that Jesus who expired upon the cross for you, a name which one would think should have some weight with you; in his endearing irresistible name I require you, to come to his table. This is not only your privilege, but your duty; and you cannot neglect it without the basest ingratitude and wickedness. Shall Jesus, when he views the guests around his table, find your seat empty? Alas! shall he have reason to say, 'What! has such a one turned 'his back upon me? I bought him with my blood, and 'have I deserved to be thus treated by him? O! my brethren, is it come to that pass with you that you stand in need of persuasions to commemorate that Saviour who laid down his life for you? Had he been as shy of a cross as you are of his table, as backward to die as you are to commemorate his death, alas! what would have become of you?

What are the obstructions and discouragements that lie in your way? Mention them, and methinks I can remove them all in a few words, when the case is so plain. Do you urge, that you are afraid you are not prepared? But have you examined yourselves impartially by what I have said? Are you sure you have the qualifications mentioned? If so, your way is very clear. Or if you are not sure, does it appear probable to you? If so, you may humbly venture. Or if you cannot go so far as a probability, have you some trembling hopes? hopes which, though they often waver, yet you cannot entirely cast away, though you admit all the evidence you can get, and are desirous to know the very worst of yourselves. Why, if you have even thus much of encouragement, I would ad-

wise you to come, though with trembling. If you are impartial in self-examination, and yet cannot after all discover that you are destitute of those qualifications I have mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that you are deceived: persons are never deceived in this case but by their own carelessness and partiality; therefore take courage. If you look out with a careful eye, there is little danger of your splitting on this rock.

Or are you afraid that you will not be able to perform your sacramental vows, but may apostatize from your God? But I need not tell you that your strength is entirely from God: and I appeal to yourselves whether it be most likely you will obtain strength from him in the way of duty, or in the neglect of it? My brethren, do you do your duty, and leave the consequence to him. Trust in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raise you up if you should fall. It is not his usual way to desert those that, sensible of their own weakness, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himself by promise that he will not do it: but you *shall be kept by his power through faith unto salvation*, 1 Peter 1. 5. and *he will never leave you nor forsake you*, Heb. xiii. 5.; therefore, in his strength, humbly make the adventure.

As for such of you as have not the qualifications described, and yet are communicants at the Lord's table, I have a few serious considerations to offer to you.

1. Did you never observe that solemn warning of St. Paul, which, like a flaming sword, hovers round the table of the Lord to guard it from your profanation? *Whosoever shall eat of this bread, and drink of this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; and eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himself*, 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. Keep off, therefore, ye unholy sinners, lest the weight of this tremendous curse fall upon you and crush you to ruin.

2. To what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted can do this, without an interest in Christ, and universal holiness of heart and life. And will you incur such

dreadful guilt, without answering any valuable end by it?

3. How absurd is it for you to pretend friendship to Christ in this ordinance, when your hearts are not well affected towards him! This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a seal; but what do you set your seal to, when you do not heartily and practically consent to the covenant of grace? How can you hold communion with the saints, when you are none of them? or with God, when you neither know him nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his servants, when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people, when you belong to the camp of the gloomy god of this world? Will you act the part of Judas over again, and compliment Christ with a traitorous kiss? What absurdity, what gross hypocrisy, what a daring insult is this? Can Omniscience be imposed upon by such pretensions? Or will a jealous God let them escape unpunished? Do but read a part of the fiftieth Psalm: you will see your doom, ver. 16—22. *Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do, that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?—These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. O! sirs, consider, it will be a poor plea at last to have it to say, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence? and thou hast taught in our streets. The supreme Judge will, notwithstanding, pronounce the dreadful sentence upon you, Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, Luke xiii. 26, 27.*

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance; and in the use of which you may hope to obtain proper qualifications? His word, prayer, meditation, and such means, are for the common use of saints and sinners, and intended to beget as well as to confirm grace in the hearts of men. But the Lord's Supper is the peculiar privilege of such as

are true christians already; and is intended only to cherish and improve true religion where it is begun. Therefore your partaking of it without this grand preparative is preposterous, and directly contrary to the order of divine appointment. Sinners, go first upon your bended knees before God; cry to him with all the earnestness of perishing creatures for converting grace. Think upon your miserable condition, and never take off your thoughts from the melancholy contemplation till your hearts are deeply affected. Read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you have succeeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels and men, will bid you welcome.

5. Consider how aggravated your punishment will be, if you continue in your present condition. To sink into hell from the table of the Lord! O! what a terrible fall! They that perished from Sodom and Gomorrah, though their punishment will be intolerable, will be but slightly punished in comparison of you. A lost communicant!—One that went to hell with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Saviour, as it were, in his mouth! O! methinks, such a one must be the most shocking sight in the infernal regions. How will lost angels, and lost heathens, wonder and stare at you as an horrible phænomenon, a dreadful curiosity! How will they upbraid you, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? art thou also become as one of us? To tell the truth without reserve, I cannot but tremble at the thought of seeing such of you on the left hand of the Judge. O! what a shocking figure will you make there! Therefore do not make the profanation of the body and blood of Christ the whole of your religion, but begin where you should, in earnest endeavours after a new heart and life, in the use of the means appointed for that end.

But there are some of you perhaps, who may take encouragement from hence, and think you are safe, because you have not been guilty of profaning this solemn institution. You are conscious you are not prepared, and therefore most contentedly stay away. There are, no doubt, sundry of you who have lived in this

neglect all your lives. I have a few things to say to you, and I pray you to apply them to yourselves.

1. Consider what it is you say, when you declare you are unfit for this ordinance. There are some that seem to make a merit of it, that they stay away from a sense of their want of preparation. But what is this want? It is the want of all love to God, of faith in Christ, of repentance for sin; it is the want of holiness of heart and life, and every good thing; it is to be without pardon, without a title to heaven, without any interest in the righteousness of Christ; it is to be a slave to sin and Satan, and heir of hell, a poor perishing creature, liable every moment to be cut off, and sink under the weight of divine vengeance: this is your case if you are unfit for this ordinance. Nothing but such things as I have mentioned can render you unfit. And is this a safe case? Can you contentedly rest in it? Alas! is there so much merit in neglecting to remember Christ in this institution, as will render your case safe and indemnify you? Must you not be shocked at the thought?

2. Are you using all proper means to obtain preparation, with the utmost diligence and earnestness? Or are you inactive and unconcerned about it? If so, it is plain you love to be unprepared; you take pleasure in being disqualified to remember the Lord Jesus. And while you are careless about this, you are virtually careless what will become of you, careless whether heaven or hell will be the place of your everlasting residence: and O! what will be the end of such a course! and how terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you that you have lived so many years in the world without affectionately commemorating that Saviour who died for you, without devoting yourselves to God, consenting to his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? O! is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in suffering so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by neglected? what can be a more aggravated wickedness?

4. This neglect clearly proves that you have no regard for Jesus Christ. You do perhaps insist upon it that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love: *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Now

this brings the matter to a short issue. There is no command in the whole Bible more plain than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the wilful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus. With what face then can you pretend that you love him? Your love is reprobated and will not stand the test.

5. Let me remind you of what I observed before. that, by the neglect of this ordinance, you practically renounce your baptism. You are now of age to act for yourselves, and you have not approved of the act of your parents by ratifying it in your own person, therefore you abjure it; you renounce the blessed Trinity, in whose name you were baptized, and to whom you were devoted; and you give yourselves back to an horrible trinity of another kind, to the world, to sin, and the devil. And are you indeed willing to have no more to do with the God that made you, and with Jesus of Nazareth? Pause and think before you agree to such a dreadful renunciation. But alas! you have agreed to it already, by refusing to renew your early dedication in your own persons. Therefore the best you can now do is to recall your renunciation, and immediately acknowledge the act of your parents as your own.

I would inculcate this particularity on young people. You that are eight or ten years old, or more, you have sense enough to act for yourselves in so plain a case. And what are you resolved upon? Will you be Christ's or Satan's? you cannot avoid choosing one or the other for your master; for not positively choosing Christ, is virtually choosing the devil for your lord, and hell for home. If you do stand to the act of your parents in dedicating you to God, come make it your own at his table. Such young guests would be an ornament to it: and O! that we may early see you there properly prepared!

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourselves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you list. Your obligations do not depend upon your consent. You were born the servants of God, and you will continue under obliga-

tions to be such in spite of you. Is he not the most excellent of beings, your Creator, your Lawgiver, your Preserver, your Redeemer? And do these things infer no obligation upon you? have you not also in sickness or under horror of conscience made vows and resolutions in your own persons? And are you free to sin still? The truth of the case is, Do what you will, you are under the strongest obligations to God, and you cannot shake them off; and if you will not observe these obligations to duty, you must submit for ever to your indispensable obligation to punishment. And he will make you know that he has a right to punish you, if you will not acknowledge his right to your obedience.

7. What avails it that you can avoid the Lord's table when you cannot possibly shun death, or avoid his tribunal? Here try all your art, and you will find it in vain. And if you are not prepared for this ordinance of worship in the church on earth, much less are you prepared for those more exalted forms of worship in the church in heaven! what then will become of you?

In short, it is a national sin in our country, that the table of the Lord is contemptible; that men who call themselves christians live in the wilful neglect of that ordinance which was appointed by him, whom they acknowledge as the Founder of their religion, to be a memorial of himself. Alas! the very memory of Christ is almost lost among us. *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Jer. v. 9.

Perhaps some of you will say, 'You shut us up in a strange dilemma indeed. If we come unprepared, we sin; and if we stay away we sin; and what then shall we do?' My brethren, I thus shut you up, on purpose that you may see what a wretched case you are in, and that there is no safety for you while you continue in it. You are shut up under a necessity of sinning, and the best choice in such a condition can be only the lesser evil; though even that is extremely aggravated. Whether you come or stay away, you grievously sin: it is all sin, peril, ruin, and misery all through: you should neither come unprepared, nor stay away unprepared; that is, you should not be un-

prepared at all. Your want of preparation is in itself a complication of wickedness ; and whatever you do in that state, you are neither safe nor in the way of duty : it is altogether a state of sin and danger. The only way of safety and duty is to seek for preparation immediately, and with the utmost earnestness, and then to come to the Lord's supper. And O ! let me set all this congregation upon this work before we part to-day, and make it the business of this week. You have spent many a week about things of less importance, and will you refuse one to this great work ? Now set about it ; now begin to look into the state of your neglected souls ; now recollect your sins ; look in upon your depraved hearts ; look back upon a miserable mis-spent life ; look forward to death, eternity, and the divine tribunal just before you ; look to Jesus in the agonies of crucifixion on mount Calvary ; and O ! look up to God in earnest prayer for his mercy. Let these things follow you home to your houses ; let them dwell upon your hearts night and day. Do not laugh, or talk, or trifle them away ; for O ! they will rebound upon you with overwhelming weight at last, if you now turn them off. O ! that God may prepare a people for himself in this poor place ! O ! that He would visit this barren spot with the showers of divine grace ! And may he prepare our hearts for the rich entertainment before us ! Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God.

1 JOHN iii. 1, 2.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

THOUGH the schemes of divine Providence run on with the most consummate harmony, and will at last terminate in the wisest ends, yet, to the undiscerning eyes of mortals, confusion reigns through this world, and nothing appears, in this infant state of things, in that light in which eternity, the state of maturity, will represent every thing. This remark is particularly exemplified in the dispensations of grace towards the heirs of heaven. Though they are not in such unmingled darkness, even in this region of ignorance and uncertainty, as to have no evidences at all of their being the objects of divine love, and regenerated by the holy Spirit, but may, in some shining moments at least, conclude that they are even now the Sons of God; yet they can form no adequate ideas of the immensity of that love which has adopted them as the Sons of God, and made them heirs of heaven, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There are indeed such rays of this love, that, like a flash of lightning, break through the cloud that surrounds them, as cast them into a pleasing consternation, and make them stand and pause in delightful astonishment. In a kind of transport of ignorant admiration, they are often exclaiming, *What manner of love is this!* how

great, how vast, how immense, how unaccountable, how incomprehensible, that love which has given us, us rebellious sinners and heirs of ruin, the title of the Sons of God, and the many privileges of such relation. Behold what sort of unheard-of unparalleled love is this! behold it with intense observation and grateful wonder.

Ye trifling sons of men, abstract your thoughts from the toys of earth, and here fix your attention; here look and gaze, till you are so transported with the survey of this love, as to be engaged to the most vigorous endeavours to be partakers of it. Our brethren in grace, that share in the same privilege, do you especially pause, behold, and wonder. Let all your admiring powers exert themselves to the utmost in the contemplation of that love which has bestowed upon you so gracious, so honourable a distinction as that of Sons of the King of Heaven. And ye blessed inhabitants of heaven, who know the import of this glorious title, and the riches of the inheritance reserved for us; ye angels, that are happy in your Maker's goodness, but have not been distinguished with redeeming grace, look down from your celestial thrones, look down to this contemptible earth, and view the greatest exploit of divine infinite love; for surely no achievement of Almighty grace among your various orders through the vast of heaven, can equal this, that we rebellious worms should be called the Sons of God, the highest title in which you can glory. Behold, and wonder, and adore with us, and supply our defects of praise. You see farther into the secrets of this mystery of love than we in our present state, who can only pause in silent admiration, or vent our blind conjectures upon it. *What manner of love is this!* therefore give all your contemplative powers a loose upon a theme you can so deeply penetrate.

Farther, As the sons of God in their present state cannot comprehend that love which has conferred this title upon them, so they know not fully the glorious import of the title: they only know in general, that when their Father appears they *shall be like him*, but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeness

is: it doth not yet appear, even to themselves, what they shall be, Their liveliest imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will ere long be: they are utter strangers to their future selves. They know themselves only at present in their infancy; but when these little children of God, these babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fulness of the stature of Christ, they will be prodigies to themselves, and mysteries which they cannot now conceive. In this world we are accustomed to little and obscure things, and our thoughts are like their objects; we see nothing sufficiently glorious to suggest to us any proper images of the glory of the sons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The splendor of the meridian sun, the grandeur of kings and the parade of nobles, are but obscure shadows of the glory and magnificence of the meanest pious beggar, of the poorest Lazarus that ever languished upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven. The difference is greater than that between Job upon the dunghill, lying in ashes, and covered with ulcers, and Solomon in all his glory. However, amidst all our ignorance, we may rest confident in this, that if we are now the children of God, we shall be conformed to him, when he appears to us in all his glory on the other side of death, and especially when he appears in the clouds in all the majesty of the universal Judge, when every eye shall see him: and though we should know no more than this in general, we may rest implicitly satisfied that we shall be inconceivably glorious and happy, since the perfection of our nature consists in conformity to God. We may be sure that that state which the apostle here, by unerring inspiration, calls a likeness to God, the standard of all excellency, must be as perfect as our nature can bear. The apostle having said, that *when he shall appear, we shall be like him*, subjoins, *for we shall see him as he is*. This vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the evidence, or as the cause of our likeness to God when he shall appear. Considering it as an evidence, the meaning is, 'It is evident that we shall be in some

measure like to God when he appears, otherwise we could not bear the full vision of his glories; we could not see him and live.' It is also evident the apostle here speaks of the vision of God as an happiness, and the blessed privilege of his sons. Now to see God could afford no pleasure to such as are not like to him: they would be shocked and confounded at the sight, and shrink from it, and by how much the clearer the vision, by so much the more they would hate him, because by so much the more they would discover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a sufficient evidence of our likeness to God, that we can bear the vision of his naked perfections with pleasure, for none that are unlike to him can bear it. Considering the passage in the other view, which probably was what the apostle intended, as the cause of likeness to him, it means, that the full and direct views of him will be transformative, and efficacious to change the beholders into his likeness. As the light shining upon glass renders it transparent, or as the sun diffuses its lustre into a diamond, and gives it an intrinsic radiancy, so the discoveries of the divine perfections will impress their image upon the minds they illuminate. Their views will not be superficial and speculative, nor attract an idle gaze, but they shall be vital, efficacious, and impressive; and no wonder if such views, which we now know so little of, should produce a perfection we can now so little conceive.

If the sons of God are such strangers to the riches of their present title, and the dignity and glory of their future selves, no wonder a blind world should not know them. If it does not yet appear to themselves what they shall be, much less does it appear to others, who are strangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and therefore cannot discern his children by their resemblance to him. This the apostle may intimate when he says, *It doth not appear* (that is, it doth not appear to others) *what we shall be*; and we are led to this sense by the former verse, *therefore the world, the general run of mankind, who are strangers to God, know us not*; that is, do not distinguish, love, and honour us, who are the children of God, *because*

they know him not. As they are ignorant of our Father, and disregard him, so they accordingly treat us. They look upon us with contempt, and are wholly ignorant of our heavenly extraction and dignity, and thus it will be till we shine in all the glory of the children of so illustrious a king, and possess the inheritance of the saints in light; then, to their confusion, they shall discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked. *Mal. iii. ult.*—I shall,

I. Show you what is the import of the glorious title, the Sons of God.

II. Mention some instances of the present ignorance of the sons of God, with regard to their future state. And,

III. Show in what respects they are mistaken and unknown to the world.

I. I shall show what is the import of this glorious title, the Sons of God.

It is evident that the title is used here, not in so general a sense as elsewhere, where it signifies no more than the creatures of God; *Luke iii. ult.* *Acts xvii. 28, 29*, for here it is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of true christians, in which the world in general does not partake. In the sense of the text, it implies that believers are born again of God; that they are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and that they are the heirs of heaven.

I. To be the sons of God, implies that they are regenerated, or born of him.

He is a son who is begotten and born; and therefore to be a child of God, supposes that we are begotten by him. This seems to be the peculiar foundation of that sonship the apostle here has immediately in view; for it is the thought of being born of God, mentioned in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, that seems to introduce the text, and raps him away, in the fourth verse of this chapter, into that transported exclamation, *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!*

This new birth you have often heard me describe, as a thorough universal change of a corrupt rebellious sinner into an affectionate, penitent, obedient servant

of God. His views of things, and dispositions towards them, are happily altered, which produce a correspondent change in his practice. But I cannot enlarge without excluding the other subjects of my discourse.

I pray God you would seriously consider the importance of this spiritual birth, and not vainly deem yourselves the sons of God while you are strangers to it: you may as well become the sons of men without being generated by human parents, as the sons of God without being regenerated by supernatural grace; for the scripture has repeatedly declared the absolute necessity of it in various terms. All that become the children of God are born of him, and *not of blood*, or by natural generation, nor *of the will of the flesh*, or by any natural propensions of theirs, nor *of the will of man*, or by the best endeavours of others with them. John i. 12, 13. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* begets them again, 1 Peter i. 3. and creates them anew; Ephes. ii. 10. so that *old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. And Christ himself, who best knows the terms of admission into heaven, has assured us with a *verily, verily, that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3, 5. And this is the declaration of infallible inspiration, that *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*; that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewish or Christian religion is of no avail to salvation, *but the new creature.* Gal. vi. 15.

2. They that are the sons of God are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and this is implied in their title.

God here treats us with his usual condescension in expressing divine things in the humble language of mortals, by metaphors borrowed from affairs amongst men, that are familiar to us. Therefore form an idea of the usual privileges which a child enjoys from a gracious and powerful Father, and leave proper room for the infinitely superior perfections of our heavenly Father to those of the most excellent human parents, and you may from the analogy know something of the

peculiar privileges of the children of God. A son, you know, has liberty of access to his father, however great; he obtains his requests; he has the guardianship and compassion of his father; and is seasonably corrected by him for his good. And thus our heavenly Father deals with the children of his grace.

He gives them liberty of access to him in prayer and the institutions of the gospel. He not only allows them to attend upon his ordinances, which many do that continue strangers to him, but at times he enlarges their hearts, so that they find themselves near him; they are admitted into his presence-chamber in free audience with him, and pour out all their hearts before him, vent their complaints, beg a supply of their wants, and render their grateful acknowledgments for his mercies. This temper of mind is so suitable to their relation as the sons of God, that the holy Spirit, as the author of it, is called the Spirit of Adoption; and the children of God are not capable of exercising this filial freedom at pleasure, but just as he enables them to *draw near with humble boldness to the throne of grace*. Rom. viii. 14, 15, 26, 27. Heb. x. 22. and 2 Cor. iii. 17. And the holy Spirit, as a Spirit of liberty and adoption, is a privilege entailed upon the sons of God, and which they at times enjoy. Gal. iv. 5, 6.

Again, As the children of God have liberty to address their Father, so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. An human parent is ready to give good gifts to his children, and much more is our heavenly Father. Thus Christ reasons in the most familiar and moving manner, in Matt. vii. 7—11. and Luke xi. 11—13; and he seems to intimate that this privilege is implied in the relation, by repeating the endearing term Father, in Matt. vi. 6, 8, 9. *Pray to thy Father,—and thy Father shall reward thee—Your Father knoweth what things you have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father, &c.*

Again, The children of God are entitled to his protection and compassion. His guardian care is celebrated in Psalm xci. and Psalm cxxi.; and his tender

compassion in Psalm ciii. 13. Isai. lxiii. 9. and in numberless passages that speak of *his bowels of mercy, his compassions, &c.*

Another privilege of the children of God is, that they are seasonably corrected by his fatherly displeasure. This indeed they are too apt to count a calamity rather than a privilege; but since his correction is necessary for their reformation, since it proceeds from the benevolence of a Father, and not from the vengeance of an incensed Judge, since it is intended for their benefit and not for their destruction, since they are supported under it, and it has a proper measure and seasonable end, and since it will be more than compensated with future rewards, it follows, that their chastisement is one of their blessings, and as such it seems promised rather than threatened, and mentioned as a badge of the sons of God, Psalm lxxxix. 30—34. Heb. xii. 5—11.: and many of the children of God have found reason to praise him for this wholesome severity. Psalm cxix. 67, 68, 71. Upon this principle St. James exhorts them to *rejoice when they enter into divers temptations*, James i. 2.; and St. Peter tells them that they will befall them only *if need be*. 1 Peter i. 6.

3. The children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and their relation implies a title to it.

They are born to a crown, begotten to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. *If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 16, 17. Gal. iv. 7. And how vast their inheritance is, you may learn from Rev. xxi. 7. and 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

What advancement is this to mean, sinful, miserable creatures! Out of prison they come to reign. They are raised from the dunghill, and set among the princes of heaven. No wonder the apostle should exclaim, *Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*

Thus I have briefly shewn you the glorious import of your relation, the sons of God; and you see it

should be the greatest concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the children of God, you have been supernaturally begotten by him, as I observed before (James i. 18.); and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honour him (Mal. i. 6.); you love and fear to offend him, and cheerfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulness; you are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. and bear the lineaments of his holiness. But if it be otherwise with you, as I fear it is with many, if you be not conformed to the moral perfections of God and bear his image, if you have not the dispositions of dutiful children towards him, but the temper of the Devil, and do his works, then *you are of your father the Devil*. John vi. 14. And though you may resent this, as the Jews did, the charge is fixed upon you. Therefore awaken all the importunity of your souls, and cry to him for regenerating grace, that you also may become the sons and daughters of the living God. But if you find these characters of the children of God which I just now mentioned, then *rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice*: you are happier than princes, more great and honourable than the sons of earthly kings. You cannot now form any ideas what miracles of glory and blessedness your Father will make of such mean, guilty, and wretched things as yourselves. Which introduces what I next proposed,

II. To mention some instances of the ignorance of the sons of God with regard to their future state.

It is true indeed, and some of you I doubt not, know it by experience, that the children of God in some shining moments enjoy prelibations of heaven, and even now *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Peter i. 8*. just as a child in infancy stumbles upon a manly thought: and as the first dawnings of reason may give a child some obscure hint of the masterly reasonings of a mature genius; so from these foretastes of heaven, the sons of God may form some faint ideas of the perfection of its happiness in full en-

* Χαῖά—ἡδοξασμενη, a glorified joy.

joyment. They find these dispositions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will constitute their blessedness; and they now find so much real happiness in the exercise of such dispositions, though in an imperfect degree, as fully convinces them that nothing is necessary to make them completely happy but the perfection of such exercises, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is they have not yet experienced; their highest thoughts fall short of it; and *it doth not yet appear to them what they shall be* in the following particulars.

1. It doth not yet appear what they shall be with respect to the enlargement of the faculties of their souls.

That the human soul is capable of vast enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimensions, is evident; and we find by experience its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the close of life, especially in men of a studious turn. And we may be sure that, when like a bird out of a cage, it gets loose among its kindred spirits, and flies at large in its proper element, its faculties will be vastly improved: otherwise it would be overborne and crushed with the weight of glory; it would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightness, like a mole that has wrought itself into day-light. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exercises, so, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the soul would be incapable of exercising them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted services of that mature world. You may therefore rest confident in this, ye sons of God, that your little souls will then be vastly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of his riper years, so it is with you. Compare your present selves with your infant-selves, and you will see a vast difference even in the present state; and how vast the difference between what you now are and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the proper region, the natural element of spirits! Beloved, you are now the sons of God; and he will make you

such beings as become so near a relation to such a Father; and what prodigies can he make of you! He that could make you what you are out of nothing, in the course of a few years, what can he make you out of what you now are, through the series of everlasting ages! How can he mature and enlarge your souls from one degree of perfection to another! so that, in some future period, you will no more resemble what you are now, than you now resemble what you were in the womb, or upon the breast. Your understandings, through an endless duration, may be still brightening, without ever coming to their meridian; and your views be still enlarging, though still infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that souls so improved should be united to bodies suited to them: which leads me to observe,

2. It does not yet appear to you what kind of glorious bodies you will have after the resurrection.

We are sure they will still be material bodies, otherwise they would not be bodies at all. But matter we know is capable of prodigious refinements. Yonder globe of light, the sun, is of the same original matter with a clod of earth, and differs only in modifications. How vast the difference between this animal flesh on our bodies, and earth and water! and yet they are originally the same. Earth and water are the materials of which grain and other vegetables, that animals feed upon, are formed; and our bodies consist of grain formed into bread, and of the flesh of beasts: so true is it, not only with respect to Adam, but all his posterity, that they are but dust. In short, there is a transmutation of matter into a surprising variety of forms, wherever we cast our eyes: the linen we wear was once earth, that was first refined into flax, then formed into thread, then woven into what we now see it. Thus our bodies may be changed in a most amazing manner, and yet continue substantially the same. St. Paul tells us, that they will be spiritual bodies, 1 Cor. xv. 44. that is, so exquisitely refined, that they will resemble proper spirits, as near as it is possible while they retain their materiality; and elsewhere he says, that *the Lord Jesus will change our vile body, that it may be form-*

ed like unto his glorious body. Phil. iii. 21. Such is the glory of Christ's body in its now exalted state, that the splendors breaking from it struck Paul and his fellow-travellers to the ground; and deprived him of sight for three days; how illustrious then must those bodies be that resemble his though we allow his a suitable superiority! This the apostle intimates by representing the change of the bodies of saints at the resurrection as a mighty exploit of God's all-subduing power. Phil. iii. 21. We are sure the body will not then be a clog to the active spirit, but a proper instrument for the employments of heaven. It may be free from the law of gravitation, and capable of moving every way with equal speed; it may be nimble and quick as a glance of lightning; it may be adorned with a visible glory more bright than the sun in its meridian lustre, like the body of Christ on the mount of transfiguration. Matt. xvii. 2. Dan. xii. 3. and Matt. xiii. 43. It will then be incapable of pain, sickness, and death, Isaiah xxxiii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 53. and will no more feel hunger and thirst, nor any of the appetites of animal nature, Rev. vii. 16.; it will be capable of the most excellent sensations of pleasure through every organ; and a suitable companion to an improved and glorified soul. Such bodies will the saints have: but what it is to have such bodies, we have now no experience; and shall never know till the glorious morning of the resurrection.

3. It doth not yet appear to us what it is to be perfect in holiness.

However enlarged and glorious our souls and bodies should become, we should be still miserable without a proportionable perfection in holiness. Now this, alas! we do not as yet know. We humbly hope some of us know what it is to feel the spark of divine love in our breasts. We hope we have tasted some small drops of bliss, though intermingled with gall and wormwood. We know what it is to exert our feeble powers in the service of the blessed God, and in contemplating and admiring his excellencies; but, alas! sin still cleaves to us, and deadens our powers; numberless imperfections attend our best moments. But O! to have all

the powers of soul and body enlarged; to exert them to the full stretch in the exercises of heaven; to find them animated and directed by the most consummate holiness, and free from every the least taint of sin, what an inconceivable state is this! O how unlike the present! Sure in such a state we should hardly know ourselves: it would astonish us to find that we, who had been so long accustomed to be assaulted and perplexed with some guilty thought or sinful inclination, should at once commence perfectly free from it! that we, who have so long made such languid essays, should find all our powers full of unwearied immortal vigor! what an happy surprise will this be!

4. It does not yet appear what will be the employments and services of the heavenly world.

We know, from the plain declarations of sacred writ, that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of nature and grace, celebrating the praises of God, and prostrate adorations before him, will be no small part of the happiness of a future state. But we have no reason to suppose that it will consist intirely in contemplation and adoration. A state of activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will separate spirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in these mortal regions? a very pleasant employ to generous and benevolent minds! Will they be ambassadors of their Sovereign to the remote parts of his empire, to bear his messages, and discharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important services to the present and future creations, and the instruments of divine beneficence to worlds now unknown? A philosophic curiosity would pry into these things, and even a pious thirst for knowledge would be satisfied; but alas! we know not what answer to give to these inquires, till the light of eternity shall break on us. But,

5. The sons of God, in consequence of their improvements natural and moral, and of their exalted services and employments, will be made so exquisitely happy, as they can have now no ideas of the felicity.

We know not what it is, in the present state, to

have every want supplied, every desire satisfied, and all our vast capacity of happiness filled to the utmost; and therefore we can form no just conceptions of our future selves, when we shall be thus perfectly happy.

Behold, ye sons of God; behold the wonders that open before you! see to what vast things you are born! Can you survey this mystery and not be lost in pleasing wonder, and cry out, *Behold! what manner of love is bestowed on us!*

Alas! can you forget your own happiness; and let your thoughts and affections run out upon the things of this world, as if they were your portion? Shall the King's sons thus degrade their dignity, and depreciate their inheritance?

And you, unhappy sinners; ye who are not the sons of God by regeneration, what do you think of your case, when it is the very reverse of all this? Your souls, indeed, will be enlarged, but enlarged only that they may be more capacious vessels for torment; and your bodies shall be made strong and immortal; but it will be to bear strong immortal misery. Instead of becoming perfect in holiness, you will arrive to an horrid perfection in sin. As all sin will be rooted out from the hearts of the children of God, so all the virtuous and amiable qualities you might retain in this world will fall from you: and as the children of God will be transformed into pure unmingled holiness, you will degenerate into pure unmingled wickedness, and consequently you must be as miserable as they will be happy; and all your enlarged capacities will be as full of torment as theirs of bliss. I may therefore adapt the text to you, sinners: now you are the children of the devil; *but it doth not appear what you shall be;* you know not what prodigies of vengeance, what miracles of misery you shall be made: therefore awake from your carelessness and neglect, and seek earnestly to become the children of God.

III. And lastly, I proceed to shew in what respects the sons of God are unknown to the world, and mistaken by them.

The irreligious world may see a considerable dif-

ference between those that are, in the judgment of charity, the children of God, and others; but this they rather look upon as an odious singularity than as a peculiar glory and excellency. They may see their life is not according to the course of this world; and if they were witnesses to their secret devotions, or could penetrate their hearts, they would see a vastly greater difference; but by how much the greater difference, by so much the more they hate them. And though they still profess a mighty veneration for religion, yet wherever it appears, they hate, oppose, and asperse it; not indeed under that honourable name, but under some odious character that will cloke their wickedness, and the more effectually expose it. They love religion they say, and God forbid they should speak a word against it; but they hate hypocrisy, preciseness, &c.; and wherever a person appears remarkably religious, they will be sure to brand him with some of their odious names. Thus living christianity, and its professors, have always met with more contempt and hatred in the world than easy and pliable, or even the most profligate and abandoned sinners.

Now this is owing to the ignorance of the world as to what the sons of God shall ere long be. They do not look upon them as such favourites of heaven; otherwise they would not dare to despise them at such a rate. The sons of God are princes in disguise; and therefore they are not known by a blind world, who, as they are ignorant of their Father, cannot discern his features in them.

O sinners! could you but see in all his future glory the meanest saint whom you now contemn and ridicule, how would it astonish you! it would tempt you rather to the extreme of adoration, than contempt: how willingly would you change conditions with him!

Well, stay a little, and there will be a full *manifestation of the sons of God*. Rom. viii. 19. You will then see those whom you now account stupid mopish creatures, that have no taste for the pleasures of life, shining more glorious than the sun; happy as their na-

tures can admit, and in their humble sphere, resembling God himself.

It is, however, all things considered, an instance of divine wisdom, that *it does not yet appear* to themselves or to others what the sons of God shall be. Such a manifestation would quite stun and confound the world, and strike it into a torpid consternation. It would render the children of God utterly impatient of the present life and its employments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth; it would put an end to the necessary activity about temporal concerns, break off the designs of providence, and quite alter the form of administration in this world. Therefore the manifestation is wisely put off to the most proper season.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

First, What a state of darkness and imperfection is this! We slipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation; and we shall be ere long we know not what. Alas! how short are our views! all before us is impenetrable darkness, and we can see but a very little way behind us. What small cause then have the wisest of us to be elated with our own knowledge! In comparison of angelic beings, and even of our future selves, we see no more than the mole groveling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly, But what surprizing discoveries of things will flash upon us when we enter the other world! O my brethren, when we ascend the heavenly mount, and take large surveys all around of the immensity of the works of God, when the unveiled perfections of the Deity suddenly shine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our walking from the sleep of death, how shall we be lost in wonders! What scenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How shall we be astonished at ourselves, and ready to vent our surprise in some such strains as these; "It this I, who so lately was groveling in yonder world! how changed! how ennobled! how glorified! Is this the soul that was once so overrun with the leprosy of sin! once so blind and dark! once so perverse and deprav-

ed! so feeble and weak! tormented with vain anxieties and trifling cares, or transported with empty joys and delusive prospects! is this the soul that had so many hard conflicts with temptations, that felt such shocks of jealousy, and so often languished under desponding fears of seeing this glorious place! O how changed! how free from every anxious care! unmolested by so much as a guilty thought! nobly triumphant over sin and sorrow, and all that is feared in its mortal state! And is this my once frail, mortal body! my incumbrance in yonder world; how amazingly transformed! how gloriously fashioned! O to what a pitch of excellency and bliss can almighty grace raise the meanest worm! and O! in what raptures of praise should I celebrate this grace through all eternity!" Thus may we think the glorified saint would express his wonder. But alas! we know just nothing about it. The sensations and language of immortals are beyond our comprehension. But,

Thirdly, We are just on the brink of this surprizing state. A few years, perhaps a few moments, may open to our eyes these amazing scenes; the next day, or the next hour, they may flash upon us; and O! where are we then! in what a strange world! among what new beings! and what shall we then be! O! how amazingly transformed! Should you see a clod from beneath your feet rising and brightening into a star, or shining like the noon-day sun, the transformation would not be half so astonishing. Then we have done with all beneath the sun! all the little things of this trifling world will vanish at once like a vapour: and all before us will be the most important and majestic realities. Therefore,

Fourthly, How astonishing is it that we should think so little of what is before us! that we should still stumble on in the dark, thoughtless of these approaching wonders! Ye sons of God, what are you doing, that you think no more of your relation to God, and your heavenly inheritance? If a large estate, or the government of a kingdom should fall to you to-morrow, and you were told of it before-hand, would it not always dwell upon your thoughts, and keep you

awake this night with the eager prospect? What! would things comparatively low fix your attention! and can you be thoughtless of a glory and a bliss that infinitely surpass all your present conceptions? And you, unregenerate sinners, though I cannot say you are near to glory, yet I may assure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its solemn wonders; this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your present condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miserable for ever. Therefore,

Fifthly, O! sinners, why do you not labour to become the sons of God now while you may? Consider, what prodigies of misery, what monuments of vengeance you will soon be, if you continue unregenerate! Alas! sirs, it does not yet appear what you shall soon be, otherwise you could no more rest in your present case than upon the top of a mast, or upon burning coals. And, poor creatures! have you a mind to be initiated into these horrid mysteries of woe, and be taught them by experience? Will not you believe the repeated declarations of eternal truth, that they are intolerably dreadful, and that, till you are the sons of God, till you are born again, and have the dispositions of children towards him, you cannot have a moment's security for escaping them? Alas! I must pity you; and I call upon all the children of God to pour out the tears of their compassion over you.

Sixthly, Let me call upon all the sons of God in this assembly to admire his love in conferring this dignity upon them: *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!* Consider what you were, guilty rebellious creatures, condemned to everlasting tortures; and you will own, that to be just delivered from hell, though it has been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favour for you: but for you to be the sons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be transformed into happy somethings that you can now form no ideas of, and this too at the expence of the blood of God; what love is this! Go home, and forget it if

you can. I may as well bid you live without breathing if you can.

Seventhly, Let me conclude with this reflection; how honourable, how happy, how glorious are the sons of God! how immense their privileges! how rich their inheritance! Why then are they so backward to enter upon it! how unaccountable, how absurd their eager attachment to this world, and their unwillingness to die! Why so much afraid of ascending to their Father's house? Why so shy of glory and bliss? Why so fond of slavery and imprisonment? O! my brethren, be always on the wing, ready for flight, and be always looking out, and crying, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.

A Sermon on the New Year.

JER. xxviii. 16.

This year thou shalt die.*

WHILE we are entering upon the threshold of a new year, it may be proper for us to stand, and pause, and take a serious view of the occurrences that may happen to us this year, that we may be prepared to meet them. Future contingencies are indeed unknown to us; and this ignorance is as agreeable to our present state, and as conducive to our improvement and happiness, as our knowledge of the things which it concerns us to know. But though we cannot predict to ourselves the particular events that may befall us, yet the events of life in general, in a vague indeterminate view are not so contingent and unknowable as to leave no room for rational suppositions, and probable expectations. There are certain events which regularly happen to us every year, and therefore we may expect them this year. There are others sometimes occur in the compass of a year, and sometimes do not; such are many of the blessings and afflictions of life; of these we should be apprehensive, and prepare for them. And there are events which we know are before us, and we are sure they will occur: but at what particular time they will happen, whether this year or next, whether this day or to-morrow, is to us an utter uncertainty. Such is that interesting event the close of the present life, and our entrance into eternity. That we must die, is as certain as that we now live; but the hour or year when, is kindly and wisely concealed from us, that we may be always ready, and

* This Sermon was preached at the college at Nassau-Hall, and consequently to a number of young persons, Jan 1, 1761. The Author died the 4th of February following.

stand in the posture of constant vigilant expectation; that we may not be surprised. But certainly it becomes us to reflect seriously upon the mere possibility of this event happening this year, and realize to ourselves those important consequences that result from this supposition. The mere possibility of this may justly affect us more than the certain expectation of any other futurity. And it is not only possible, but highly probable, death may meet some of us within the compass of this year. Yes, it is highly probable that if some prophet, like Jeremiah, should open to us the book of the divine decrees, one or other of us would there see our sentence, and the time of its execution fixed. *Thus saith the Lord—this year thou shalt die.* There some of us would find it written, ‘This year thou shalt enjoy a series of prosperity, to try if the goodness of God will lead thee to repentance.’ Others might read this melancholy line, ‘This year shall be to thee a series of afflictions; this year thou shalt lose thy dearest earthly support and comfort; this year thou shalt pine away with sickness, or agonize with torturing pain, to try if the kind severities of a father’s rod will reduce thee to thy duty.’ Others, I hope, would read the gracious decree, ‘This year thy stubborn spirit, after long resistance, shall be sweetly constrained to bow to the despised gospel of Christ. This year shalt thou be born a child of God, and an heir of happiness, which the revolution of years shall never, never terminate.’ O! happy and glorious event. May we hope this mercy is reserved among the secrets of heaven for any thoughtless impenitent sinner among us! And that the decree will bring forth this year! this year which finds us in a dead sleep, stupidly careless of our everlasting interest, and which, if like the preceding, will be a season of thoughtless impenitence and presumptuous security! Others perhaps would read this tremendous doom, ‘This year my spirit, so long resisted, shall cease to strive with thee; this year I will give thee up to thine own heart’s lusts, and swear in my wrath thou shalt not enter into my rest.’ O! dismal sentence! None can equal it in terror but one, and that is, *depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting*

fire: and the former is an infallible presage of the latter. Others (O! let our souls dwell upon the thought!) would probably find the doom of the false prophet Haniah pronounced against them: *Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die.*

This year you may die, for your life is the greatest uncertainty in the world. You have no assurance of another year, another day, or even another moment.

This year you may die, because thousands have died since the last new-year's day; and this year will be of the same kind with the last; the duration of mortals; a time to die. The causes of death, both in the human constitution and in the world without, will exist and operate in this year as well as in the last.

This year you may die; for thousands of others will die: it is certain they will, and why may not you? What peculiar security have you to confide in?

This year you may die, though you are young; for the regions of the dead have been crowded with persons of your age; and no age is the least security against the stroke of death.

This year you may die, though you are now in health and vigour, and your constitution seems to promise a long life; for thousands of such will be hurried into the eternal world this year, as they have been in years past. The principles of death may be even now working within you, notwithstanding the seeming firmness of your constitution; and you may be a pale cold lifeless corps, sooner than the invalid whose life is apparently near its close.

This year you may die, though you are full of business, though you have projected many schemes, which it may be the work of years to execute, and which afford you many bright and flattering prospects. Death will not consult your leisure, nor be put off till another year, that you may accomplish your designs. Thousands have died before you, and will die this year amidst their golden prospects, and while spinning out their eternal schemes. And what has happened to them may happen to you.

, This year you may die, though you have not yet

finished your education, nor fixed in life, but are preparing to appear in the world, and perhaps elated with the prospect of the figure you will make in it. Many such abortive students are now in the dust. Many that had passed through a laborious course of preparation for public life, and had inspired their friends, as well as themselves, with high hopes, have been snatched away as they were just stepping upon the stage: and this may be your doom also.

This year you may die, though you are not prepared for it. When death shows you his warrant under the great seal of Heaven, it will be no excuse to plead, 'I am not ready.' Though the consequence of your dying unprepared will be your everlasting ruin, yet that dreadful consideration will have no weight to delay the execution.

This year you may die, though you deliberately delay your preparation, and put it off to some future time. You may fix upon the next year, or the decline of life, as the season for religion; but that time may never be at your disposal. Others may live to see it, but you may be ingulphed in the boundless ocean of eternity before it arrives, and your time for preparation may be over for ever.

This year you may die, though you are unwilling to admit the thought. Death does not slacken his pace towards you, because you hate him, and are afraid of his approach. Your not realizing your latter end as near, does not remove it to a greater distance. Think of it or not, you must die: your want of thought can be no defence; and you know not how soon you may feel what you cannot bear to think of.

This year you may die, though you may strongly hope the contrary, and flatter yourself with the expectation of a length of years. You will not perhaps admit the thought of a short abortive life; but notwithstanding this, you may be a lifeless corps before this year finishes its revolution.

Thus it appears very possible, that one or other of us may die this year. Nay, it is very probable, as well as possible, if we consider that it is a very uncommon, and almost unprecedented thing, that not one should

die in a whole year out of such an assembly as this. More than one have died the year past, who made a part of our assembly last New-year's-day. Therefore let each of us (for we know not on whom the lot may fall) realize this possibility, this alarming probability, 'This year I may die.'

And what if you should? Surely you may be startled at this question: for O! the surprizing change! O! the important consequences!

If you should die this year, then all your doubts, all the anxieties of blended hopes and fears about your state and character will terminate for ever in full conviction. If you are impenitent sinners, all the artifices of self-flattery will be able to make you hope better things no longer; but the dreadful discovery will flash upon you with the resistless blaze of intuitive evidence. You will see, you will feel yourselves such. If you lie under the condemnation of the divine law, you will no longer be able to flatter yourselves with better hopes: the execution of the penalty will sadly convince you of the tremendous truth. To dispute it would be to dispute the deepest heart-felt sensations of the most exquisite misery. But, on the other hand, if your fears and doubts are the honest anxieties of a sincere self-diffident heart, ever jealous of itself, and afraid of every mistake in a matter of such vast importance, you will meet with the welcome demonstration of your sincerity, and of your being unquestionably the favourites of Heaven. Sensation will afford you conviction; and you will believe what you see. In short, the possibility that this year may be your last, may be joyful tidings to you. If you die this year, this year you shall be in heaven, imparadised in the bosom of God. And is it possible your salvation is so near! Transporting thought!

It would be easy to enumerate several happy consequences of death with regard to those who have spent their life in preparation for it; and the nearness of death, instead of striking them with terror, may heighten the transport of expectation. It would afford me no small pleasure to trace those blessed consequences, and it would be an act of kindness and compassion to the heirs of hea-

ven, many of whom go on mourning and trembling even towards the regions of happiness, as though they were going to the place of execution, and anticipate but very little of those infinite pleasures which are so near at hand. But I intend to devote the present hour chiefly to the service of a part, perhaps the greater part of my hearers, who are in a more dangerous and alarming situation, I mean such who may die this year, and yet are not prepared; such who are as near to hell as they are to death, and consequently stand in need of the most powerful and immediate applications lest they be undone for ever beyond recovery.

To you therefore, my dear brethren, my fellow mortals, my fellow-candidates for eternity, whose everlasting state hangs in a dread suspense, who have a secret conviction that you are not qualified for admission into the kingdom of heaven, and who cannot promise yourselves that you shall not sink into the infernal pit this year, but upon this supposition, which is the most precarious and doubtful in the world, namely, that you shall live out another year; to you I would address myself with affectionate tenderness, and yet with plainness and pungency. And I beg your most solemn attention to an affair of infinite moment, to which you may not have another year to attend.

This year you may die: and should you die this year, you will be for ever cut off from all the pleasures of life. Then farewell, an everlasting farewell to all the mirth and gaiety, the tempting amusements and vain delights of youth. Farewell to all the pleasures you derive from the senses, and all the gratifications of appetite. This year the sun may lose his lustre as to you; and all the lovely prospects of nature may become a dismal blank. To you music may lose all her charms, and die away into everlasting silence; and all the gratifications of the palate may become insipid. When you lie in the cold grave, you will be as dead to such sensations as the clay that covers you. Then farewell to all the pompous but empty pleasures of riches and honours. The pleasures both of enjoyment and expectation from this quarter will fail for ever. But this is not all.

If you should die this year, you will have no pleasures, no enjoyments to substitute for those you will lose. Your capacity and eager thirst for happiness will continue, nay, will grow more strong and violent in that improved adult state of your nature. And yet you will have no good, real or imaginary, to satisfy it; and consequently the capacity of happiness will become a capacity of misery; and the privation of pleasure will be positive pain. Can imagination feign any thing more wretched than a creature formed for the enjoyment of the infinite good, pining away for ever with hungry raging desires, without the least degree of gratification! banished at once from the supreme good, and from all the created enjoyments that were wont to be poorly substituted in his stead! Yet this may be your case in the short compass of the following year. O! what a terrible change! What a prodigious fall!

Should you die this year, all your hopes and prospects as to future life will perish abortive. Several of you now are in a state of education, preparing to enter upon the stage of the world; and you are perhaps often pleasing yourselves with gay and magnificent dreams about the figure you will make upon it. You may be planning many schemes to be accomplished in the several periods of a long life; and are perhaps already anticipating in idea the pleasure, the profit, or the honour you expect to derive from their execution. In these fond hopes your affectionate parents, friends, and teachers concur with generous pleasure. But alas! in the swift revolution of this beginning year, all these sanguine expectations and pleasing prospects may vanish into smoke. Youth is the season of promise, full of fair blossoms; but these fair blossoms may wither, and never produce the expected fruits of maturity. It may perhaps be the design of Heaven, that, after all the flattering hopes and projects, and after all the pains and expence of a liberal education, you shall never appear upon the public stage; or that you shall vanish away like a phantom, as soon as you make your appearance. Certainly then you should extend your prospects beyond the limits of mortality; extend them into that

world, where you will live to execute them without the risk of a disappointment! Otherwise,

If you die this year, you will not only be cut off from all the flattering prospects of this life, but from all hope entirely, and for ever. If you die in your sins, you will be fixed in an unchangeable state of misery; a state that will admit of no expectation but that of uniform or rather ever-growing misery; a state that excludes all hopes of making a figure, except as the monuments of the vindictive justice of God, and the deadly effects of sin. How affecting is the idea of a promising youth cut off from the land of the living, useless and hopeless in both worlds! fallen from the summit of hope into the gulph of everlasting despair! Yet this may be your doom, my dear youth, your doom this very year if you should die in your sins.

If you should die this year, then all the ease and pleasure you now derive from thoughtlessness, self-flattery, and suppressing the testimony of your consciences, will for ever be at an end. You will then be obliged to view yourselves in a just light, and to know the very worst of your condition. The secret plaudits of self-flattery will be for ever silenced, and conscience will recover itself from that state of insensibility into which you have cast it by repeated violences, and, as exasperated by your ill treatment, it will become your everlasting tormentor; it will do nothing but accuse and upbraid you for ever: you will never more be able to entertain so much as one favourable thought of yourselves. And what a wretched state will this be! for a man to be self-condemned! to disapprove of his whole past conduct! to be pleased with nothing in himself, but heartily, though with horror, to concur in the condemning sentence of the supreme Judge, and the whole creation! to esteem himself a fool, a sinner, a mean sordid wretch; an enemy to himself, and the whole universe; a self-destroyer, an outcast from all happiness, and from the society of all happy beings; an unlovely, odious, useless, miserable, despairing creature for ever! O miserable situation! Does it not alarm you to think you may be so near it?

If you should die this year, you will be deprived for ever of all the means of salvation. All these are confined to the present life, and have no place in the world of eternal punishment. There the thunders of the divine law roar; but the gentle voice of the gospel never sounds. There the Lion of the tribe of Judah rends the prey; but never exhibits himself as a Lamb that was slain, an atonement for sin, and the Saviour of the guilty. There conscience exerts its power, not to excite the medicinal anguish of kindly repentance, but the hopeless horrors of everlasting despair. There Jehovah works, but not to enable the sinner to work out his own salvation, but to touch all the springs of painful sensation, and open all the sources of misery in the criminal. There Mercy no more distributes her bounties, but Justice reigns in her awful rigors. There the sanctifying spirit no more communicates his purifying all-healing influences, but Sin, the great Apollyon, diffuses its deadly poison. In a word, when you leave this state of trial, all the discipline of the present state, all your advantages for salvation, all the means of grace, and all the encouragements of hope will be for ever removed out of your reach; and consequently all possibility of your salvation will cease for ever; for when the necessary means are taken away, the end becomes utterly impossible. Therefore,

If you should die this year, all your hopes of heaven will vanish for ever. No more happiness for you! You have received your portion in this life, a few years of sordid unsatisfactory happiness; and an entire eternity of misery, permanent, exquisite, consummate misery follows behind! No more honour for you, but shame and everlasting contempt. No more intellectual amusements! no more pleasing studies! no more gentle beams of science! but the blackness of darkness for ever! intense poring upon your hopeless wretchedness! tormenting recollections of your past folly and madness in voluntarily rushing into the pit! No agreeable companion! no sympathizing friend! no relaxation! no pleasing exercise! no encouraging prospects! no comforting reviews! no friendly intercourse with

heaven! no token of love, no gift of grace from the Father of mercy! none of the conscious joys of self-approbation! no hope in the future! no relief from the past! no refuge, no escape, at the expence of existence, into the gulph of annihilation! but above, an angry God and a lost heaven! behind, a mis-spent life and opportunities of salvation irrecoverably lost! within a guilty remorseful conscience, an implacable self-tormentor! around, malignant enraged ghosts, mutual tormentors! before, an eternity of hopeless misery, extending infinitely beyond the ken of sight! O! tremendous doom! who can bear the thought?

And is it possible it should be so near to any of us? Where is the unhappy creature, that we may all drop our tears over him? Where is he? Rather, where is he not? An impenitent sinner is almost every where to be found; and that is the wretched creature who stands every moment upon the slippery brink of this horrible precipice; and this year, nay this hour, for what mortals or angels know, he may be thrown down, ingulphed and lost for ever.

And is this a safe situation for you, thoughtless, fool-hardy mortals! Does it become you in such a situation to be cheerful, merry, and gay; or busy, restless, and laborious in the pursuits of this transitory life? Does it become you to dread nothing but the disasters and calamities of the present state, or spin out your eternal schemes of grandeur, riches, or pleasure, in hopes to accomplish them within the narrow uncertain limits of time allotted to you? Alas! before another year has run its hasty round, the world and all that it contains, all its pursuits and enjoyments, all its cares and sorrows, may be as insignificant to you as the grandeur of Cæsar, or the riches of the world before the flood. Earthly riches or poverty, liberty or slavery, honour or disgrace, joy or sorrow, sickness or health, may in this year become as little your concern, and be as much nothing to you as to your coffin, or the dust that shall cover it, or to Judas that has been gone to his own place above seventeen hundred years.

Does it not rather become you to turn your thoughts to another enquiry, 'Is it possible for me to escape

this impending danger? Where, how, whence may I obtain deliverance? If you are not desirous seriously to attend to this enquiry, it will be to no purpose for me to solve it: to you it will appear as a solemn trifle, or an impertinent episode. But if you will lay it to heart, if you will, as it were, give me your word that you will pay a proper regard to it, I shall enter upon the solution with the utmost alacrity.

I assure you then, in the first place, your case is not yet desperate, unless you choose to make it so; that is, unless you choose to persist in carelessness and impenitence, as you have hitherto done. If you now begin to think seriously upon your condition, to break off from your sins, and attend in good earnest upon the means appointed for your salvation, there is hope concerning you; yes, miserable sinners! there is hope that this year, which now finds you in so deplorable a state, will introduce you into another, under the blessing of Heaven, safe from all danger, and entitled to everlasting happiness.

I presume you all know so well the external means you should use for your salvation, that I need not particularly direct you to them. You all know that prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, meditation upon divine things, free conference with such as have been taught by experience to direct you in this difficult work; you all know, I say, that these are the means instituted for your conversion: and if you had right views of things, and a just temper towards them, you would hardly need instruction or the least persuasion to make use of them. But to give you such views, and inspire you with such a temper, this is the difficulty. O! that I knew how to undertake it with success! I can only give you such directions as appear to me proper and salutary; but it is the almighty power of God alone that can give them force and efficacy.

You must learn to think, to think seriously and solemnly upon your danger, and the necessity of a speedy escape. You must retire from the crowd, from talk, dissipation, business, and amusement, and converse with yourselves alone in pensive solitude.

You must learn to think patiently upon subjects

the most melancholy and alarming, your present guilt and depravity, and your dreadful doom so near at hand, if you continue in your present condition. The mind, fond of ease, and impatient of such mortifying and painful thoughts, will recoil, and fly off; and seek for refuge in every trifle: but you must arrest and confine it to these disagreeable subjects; you must force upon it this medicinal pain, as you often force your stomach, when your health requires it. There is not any moroseness in this advice; no ill-natured design upon your pleasure and happiness. On the other hand, it is intended to procure you more pleasure and happiness than you can possibly obtain any other way: it is intended to prevent many sorrowful days and years, nay a complete eternity of misery. The alternative proposed to you is not, Whether you shall feel the bitter anguish of repentance, or not; whether you shall be pensive and serious, or not; whether you shall think upon gloomy and alarming subjects, or not: This is not at all the state of the case; for you must feel the sorrows of repentance; you must be thoughtful and pensive; you must confine your minds to subjects of terror: you must, whether you will or not: it is utterly unavoidable. But the only alternative proposed to your choice is, Whether you will voluntarily submit to the kindly hopeful medicinal preventive sorrows of repentance in this state of trial, which will issue in everlasting joy; or be forced to submit to the despairing pangs, and useless destructive horrors of too late a repentance in the eternal world; which will only torment you, but not save you; which will be your punishment, and not a mean of your reformation, or a preparative for happiness. Whether you will confine your thoughts for a time to the contemplation of your present miserable circumstances, while hope irradiates even the darkest gloom of discouragement, and the gospel opens such bright and inviting prospects beyond those melancholy views that now first present themselves to your thoughts; or whether you will choose to pine away a doleful eternity in sullen intense hopeless porings upon your remediless misery, in pale reviews of past folly, and shocking surveys of

endless ages of woe before you. This is the true state of the case; and can you be at a loss what choice to make! Does not the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, of self-interest and self-love, as well as the voice of God, direct you to choose a few serious, sad, solemn, sorrowful, penitent hours now, rather than to invert the choice, and to purchase a few hours of presumptuous ease at the expence of a wretched, despairing eternity? O choose life, that you may live. While you indulge a trifling levity of mind, and a roving dissipation of thought, there is no hope you will ever seriously attend to your most important interest, or use the means of grace in earnest. Hence it is that I have made it so much my endeavour to-day to make you serious and thoughtful. To enforce this, let me repeat what I think cannot but have some effect; especially as it comes not from the priesthood, but the court; and from a courtier as eminent as England ever boasted.

‘ Ah! my friends! while we laugh all things are
 ‘ serious round about us. God is serious, who exer-
 ‘ ciseth patience towards us: Christ is serious, who
 ‘ shed his blood for us: the Holy Ghost is serious, who
 ‘ striveth against the obstinacy of our hearts; the holy
 ‘ Scriptures bring to our ears the most serious things
 ‘ in the world: the holy Sacraments represent the most
 ‘ serious and awful matters: the whole creation is seri-
 ‘ ous in serving God and us: all that are in heaven or
 ‘ hell are serious:—How then can we be gay?’

I pray you, my dear brethren, yield an immediate compliance. Do not delay this great affair for another year, till you are sure you shall live another year. You may perhaps have time enough before you to work out your salvation, if you immediately begin to improve it; but, if you loiter, you may perish for want of time; the riches of the world will not be able then to redeem one of those precious hours you now squander away.

Let me now make you one of the most reasonable, salutary, and advantageous proposals that heaven itself can make to you; and that is, That you endeavour to enter upon this new year as new creatures. Let the

old man with his affections and lusts die with the old year. *Let the time past of your life more than suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh. What profit had you then in those things of which you should now be ashamed?* How shocking the thought that your old guilt should follow you into the new year, and haunt you in future times! O begin this year as you would wish to end your life! Begin it so as to give hopes that your future time will be so spent as to render death harmless, and even welcome to you.

Let the possibility suggested in my text have due weight with you; This year you may die.

But perhaps some of you may be inverting this consideration, and whispering to yourselves, 'This year I may not die:' and therefore there is no immediate necessity of preparation for death. But what if you should not die this year, if you still delay the great work for which your time is given you? Alas! if you persist in this, one would think it can give you but little pleasure whether you die this year or not? What end will your life answer, but to add to your guilt, and increase your punishment? What safety can another year afford you, when you must die at last? What valuable end do you intend to answer in future life? Do you purpose to spend this year as you have done your past years? What! in offending your God! abusing his mercies! neglecting the precious seasons of grace! hardening yourselves more and more in impenitence! adding sin to sin, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! Is it worth your while to live for such horrid preposterous purposes as these? Can you wish for another year with these views? Could you venture to pray for it? Will the prayer bear to be put into words? Come, put on the hardiness of an infernal ghost, that you may be able to support yourselves under the horror of the sound. 'Thou supreme Excellence! Thou Author of my being, and all my powers! Thou Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge of the world! I have spent ten, twenty, or thirty years in displeasing thee and ruining myself; but I am not yet satisfied with the pleasures of such a conduct. Grant me, I pray thee, another year to spend

‘in the same manner. Grant me more mercies to abuse; more time to misspend; more means of grace to neglect and profane.’ Could you now fall on your knees, and present such petitions to Heaven? Surely you could not. Surely your frame would shudder; nay, would not the heavens gather blackness, and the earth tremble at the sound! But have your temper and practice no language. Language expresses the thoughts and intentions of the mind; and are not the habitual temper and practice a more certain discovery of the thoughts and intentions than mere words? Words, which may be spoken without a thought, or in a passion, and which may soon be heartily retracted. But the temper and practice is a steady and sure rule of judging, and decisive of a man’s predominant character. Therefore, while your temper and practice are agreeable to such a prayer; that is, while you are disposed to spend your time that God gives you in sin and impenitence, you are perpetually insulting Heaven with such petitions, and that too in a manner much more expressive and strong than if you should utter them in words. And can you quietly bear the thought of this horrid blasphemy, which you are constantly breathing out against Heaven? Can you wish and pray for another year for this purpose? What though you should not die this year? Will this exempt you from death in another, or from the punishment of a misspent life? Alas! no; this will only render you a greater criminal, and a more miserable wretch in eternity. One year of sinning will make a dreadful addition to your account.

Therefore conclude, every one for himself, ‘It is of little importance to me whether I die this year, or not; but the only important point is, that I make a good use of my future time, whether it be longer or shorter.’ This, my brethren, is the only way to secure a happy new year; a year of time, that will lead the way to an happy eternity.

SERMON XXXV.

An Enrollment of our Names in Heaven, the noblest source of Joy.

LUKE X. 20.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.*

THIS is the answer Christ gave to his disciples, when returned from their mission, flushed with victory over the most mighty and most malignant enemies, the infernal powers. *Lord, say they, even the devils are subject to us, through thy name.* This they probably mentioned with a tincture of vanity, and were secretly proud of their new power, which their Master had given them. Though they owned it was his gift, they gloried in it; as conferring some new honour and dignity upon themselves. And probably, like the rest of their countrymen, their heads were filled with notions of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and his conquests over the other nations of the earth in favour of the Jews; and inferred that they should have an irresistible power over their enemies on earth, from the power they had been enabled to exercise over evil spirits, so much more mighty and seemingly unconquerable.

Their Lord and Master, among other things in his answer, checks this secret vanity, and points out to them a superior cause of joy. *Rejoice not in this; that is, rejoice not so much as you do, rejoice not principally in this, that the spirits (that is evil spirits) are subject to you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven;* as if he should say, "Though you may safely rejoice in the victory you have obtained through my name over the powers of hell, yet you ought to take care that it be not a vain,

* A Sermon preached at Hanover in Virginia, Jan. 14, 1759.

selfish, carnal joy, a joy springing from the gratification of your own ambition. And take care also, that it does not run into excess: for I will shew you a much greater cause of joy than even this; and that is, that your names are written in heaven. It is possible, that while you are casting the devil out of the bodies of others, your own souls may be under his power, and you may be his miserable slaves for ever. But since your names are written in heaven, you are safe; and that is cause of joy indeed. Rejoice in this above all other things.'

How should we rejoice, and perhaps boast, if the mighty powers of hell were subject unto us, and we could make them fly at a word! But the meanest christian is more happy than this, and has cause of greater joy.

For the farther explication of the text, it is only necessary to inquire, What is meant by their names being written in heaven?

Heaven is here compared to a city or corporation, in which a list or record is kept of all the citizens or freemen who are entitled to its privileges and immunities. And therefore, to have our names written in heaven, signifies to be citizens, or freemen of the heavenly city; that is, to have a right to an inheritance there, and to all its privileges and enjoyments.

This naturally suggests a very important inquiry, the decision of which may hold us all in an anxious suspense: "How may I know (may each of us ask) whether my unworthy name be written in heaven? who can open and read the records of heaven, and shew me whether my name is registered there?"

I answer, This is a secret that may be discovered, for all that have their names written in heaven, may be distinguished by their characters, their temper, and practice, while upon earth. And their characters are such as these.

1. They are deeply sensible of the vanity of all earthly things, and that heaven alone is a sufficient portion and happiness. All that are registered as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem have a superlative esteem of that privilege, and count all things but loss

in comparison of it. Matt. vii. 24—26, and xiii. 45, 46. And is this your character? Are your hearts in heaven? or are your highest affections confined to the earth?

2. All that have their names written in heaven have a heavenly nature; a nature very different from that of the men of this world, and like that of the citizens of heaven. And is this your temper? or is it earthly and sensual?

3. All that have their names written in heaven, have a peculiar love for all their fellow-citizens, who are heirs of heaven. They love them as members of the same corporation with themselves. 1 John iii. 14.

4. If your names are written in heaven, it is the chief business and concern of your life to obtain an interest in heaven. This is not the object of languid, lazy wishes, or of lukewarm, spiritless prayers; but of your vigorous, anxious, persevering desires. And do you thus seek the kingdom of heaven? Matt. x. 12. Luke xvi. 16.

These marks must suffice at present to assist you in self-examination; and I beg you would bring them to your hearts, and see if they will stand this test.

If your names are written in heaven, then my text authorizes me to tell you, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy.

But on the other hand,

If your names are not written in heaven, there is nothing in the world that can happen to you, that can be a cause of rational lasting joy to you.

I. If your names are written in heaven, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy.—This will appear by an induction of particulars.

Are you rich in this world? Has God blessed your industry and frugality, so that you are in easy affluent circumstances? This is cause of joy and gratitude to God, as it furnishes you with the materials of earthly happiness, frees you from many anxieties and painful wants, and puts it in your power to enjoy the generous

pleasure of doing good with your substance. **But** what is this when compared with the blessing of the sanctified use of riches, and the assurance that **God** has given you, that all things shall work together for your good! what is this to the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that fulness of grace and glory, in which you have an interest! Rejoice more in this than in thousands of gold and silver.

Or if you are not in affluent circumstances, are you above extreme want, and able by your labour and industry to provide yourselves and your dependents with the necessaries of life? This is the happiness of most, even of the poor in our country: and this is cause of joy. But what is this to the happiness of having provision made for your subsistence through everlasting ages! Is it not superior cause of joy, that when you are stript of all the enjoyments of the present life, you shall also be delivered from all its wants and labours, and shall not only have a bare sufficiency, but a rich overflowing abundance of happiness, equal to the capacities of your souls in their highest enlargements. In this you may warrantably rejoice, and you cannot run into excess.

Do you enjoy health of body? In this rejoice: but how trifling a cause of joy is this to that of your souls being in health and prospering, and bearing the symptoms of immortal life and vigour?

Are your bodies free from diabolical possession? Rejoice not so much in this, but rather rejoice that the devil is cast out of your souls, and that you are not under his spiritual tyranny.

Are you happy in your friends and relations, and every domestic blessing? Rejoice not so much in this as that you have the most honourable relations and friends in heaven. God is your Father; Christ is your Saviour, your elder Brother, your Friend; the Holy Ghost is your Sanctifier; the angels and all the saints are your fellow-servants, your brethren of the same household of God.

Do you rejoice in the salvation of your country, and that you are delivered from the hands of your savage and perfidious enemies on earth? Rather rejoice

that you are delivered from the tyranny of sin and satan, and from the condemnation of the divine law.

Do you rejoice that our forces have been victorious over our enemies? Rather rejoice in the victory which the Captain of your salvation has gained for you over your spiritual enemies. Rather rejoice in the victory you are enabled to gain over sin, Satan, and the world, through the blood of the Lamb. Rather rejoice to see your lusts slain, or at least mortally wounded, and dying in your hearts.

Do you rejoice that you have the prospect of living in safety and peace in your country? Rather rejoice that you have peace of conscience, and peace with God, through Jesus Christ; and that you shall enter into everlasting peace whenever you leave this restless world.

Do you rejoice that your earthly possessions, your property and liberty are safe? Rather rejoice that your heavenly inheritance is safe; and that whatever becomes of the kingdoms of the earth, you have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, eternal in the heavens.

Do you rejoice that you live under the government of a good king? and that you enjoy the blessings of our happy constitution? This is a peculiar happiness indeed; but rejoice not so much in this, as that you are the subjects of the King of kings, and under a dispensation of grace, and the government of a Mediator. *The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.* Psalm xcvi. 1. Rejoice, above all, in this, that you and all your affairs are under the direction of a divine hand, that will manage all for your good. Rejoice that ere long you shall be admitted to the court of the heavenly King, and see him in all his glory.

Do you rejoice that your life is prolonged, while so many are dropping into the grave around you? Rather rejoice that you are not to live always in this most wretched world. Rejoice that death itself, your last enemy, will not be able to do you any lasting injury, but only convey you home to your Father's house, and the full possession of your heavenly inheritance.

Do you rejoice that you enjoy the gospel and the means of salvation, and that these invaluable blessings are not likely to be torn from you by the hands of Indian savages and Popish idolaters? This indeed is cause of rejoicing; but how much more ought you to rejoice that the gospel and the means of salvation are made effectual by divine grace for your conversion and sanctification! Many enjoy them as well as you, to whom they are of no service, but on occasion of more aggravated guilt and ruin.

Let me therefore persuade you to rejoice, not only as a privilege, but as a duty. God enjoins it upon you by the same authority by which he requires you to pray, or to love himself or your neighbour. *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.* Psal. xxxii. 11. *Rejoice evermore: rejoice in the Lord alway; and again, I say, rejoice,* 1 Thess. v. 16. It is decent and congruous that you should now rejoice in that, in which you shall rejoice for ever. And, on the other hand, it is highly unbecoming that you should walk towards heaven melancholy and dejected, as if you were going to the place of execution. Let sinners be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, who stand every moment on the slippery brink of eternal misery. Sorrow and lamentation become their circumstances. But will you always mourn and droop, who stand every moment on the threshold of heaven, and know not but you may be there before another sun shall rise? how indecent is this! Therefore rejoice with all your hearts, that your worthless names are written in heaven. This is greater cause of joy than if they were registered in the annals of fame, or among princes of the blood royal.

And do not excuse yourselves from this agreeable duty, by saying, "I would rejoice, if I were sure my name is written in heaven: but alas! I am not." For is not this uncertainty your own fault? the effect of your own negligence? Besides have you not some cheerful hopes and probabilities, and even some transient assurance? and is not this cause of joy to creatures that deserve to be left under the pangs of everlasting despair?

Let me advance a step farther, and tell you, that you should rejoice that your names are written in heaven, not only more than in all other causes of joy, but also in opposition to all causes of sorrow.

What though you are poor in this world, when the heavenly inheritance is yours? That you are despised among men, when you have the honour of being the sons of God? That you are weak or sick and pained in body, when your souls are recovering from the deadly disease of sin? That you are the slaves of men, when you are free of the heavenly city, members of the same corporation with the armies of heaven, and sharers in the liberty of the sons of God? That your enemies should prove victorious over you upon earth, when you shall certainly overcome at last? That your mortal relations and friends die, when your heavenly Father and all your spiritual kindred live, and you cannot be bereaved of them? In short, what though you endure all the afflictions that can crowd upon one man in the present life, when they are all short and transitory, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and when you will soon arrive in the land of rest, beyond the reach of every misery? In spite of all these calamities, rejoice; *rejoice and be exceeding glad, since your names are written in heaven.*

But I must proceed to address another class of hearers; and to them I must say,

II. If your names are not written in heaven, you can have no cause of solid, rational, and lasting joy in any thing. This also I shall illustrate by an induction of particulars.

Rejoice not that you are rich, or at least enjoy the comforts of life, while you are destitute of spiritual and everlasting riches. Will it be any pleasure to you to pass from a splendid well-furnished house into the regions of horror and darkness? From faring sumptuously every day, to suffer the extremities of eternal want? From gay and merry company, to the society of the lost spirits in hell? From all the luxuries of life, to weep, and wail, and gnash the teeth for ever? From wearing silks, and lace, and every form of finery, to

be wrapt in sheets of infernal flame? Alas! what joy can you take in all the advantages that riches can give you, while you must be stript of them all so soon, and feel a terrible reverse? Many who are stiled worshipful, honourable, and hear nothing but titles of dignity among men, are vile despicable creatures in the sight of God, and must ere long sink into shame and everlasting contempt. Many a body adorned with whatever riches can procure, is animated by a poor worthless soul, full of sin, and void of the beauties of holiness. And can you rejoice in such trifles as these? A man that has a gangrened foot may as well rejoice that it is covered with a silken plaister; or a criminal, that he is carried to the gallows in a coach of state.

Besides, remember, how hardly shall rich men enter into the kingdom of God! It is an human impossibility; but it is not impossible to Omnipotence. As riches increase, temptations increase; temptations to love the world more, and to think less of heaven; temptations from pride, flattery, hurry, company, &c. And can you rejoice that your salvation is made more difficult? that you, who are apt to stumble at straws, have mountains thrown up in your way? Alas! if this were rightly considered, would the wealthy and affluent be so resolute and eager in the pursuit of riches?

What though you are in good business, and prospering in the world, while you are not doing the work of your salvation, nor carrying on a trade for heaven, and your hurry of business is a great occasion of this pernicious neglect?

What though you enjoy health of body, while your souls are dead in trespasses and sins, and your health is no security against death or hell? What though you enjoy friends and relatives, while the great God is your enemy? Or mirth and pleasure, when they will end in eternal howlings, and you will be upbraided with them another day, like Dives, *Son, remember, that thou in thy life-time didst enjoy thy good things.*

What though the French and Indians are routed? alas! the devil and your sins are still lords over you! What though your country is safe, when you shall stay in it but a very little time, and you have no place pre-

pared for you in heaven? What though you are the free-born descendants of Britons, and never were in bondage to any man? alas! you are the slaves of sin. What though you live under the government of the best of kings, while you are the captives of the prince of darkness, and the King of heaven is your enemy? What though your bodies are not exposed to the sword of your fellow-mortals, when you are liable every moment to the sword of divine justice? What though you are safe as to your outward estate, when your immortal souls are in danger? *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* or to enjoy the gospel, while you receive no advantage from it, but abuse it to your more aggravated ruin? What avails it that God is merciful, when you have no share in his mercy, and never will, if you continue in your vain carnal joy? that Christ died for sinners, while you wilfully exclude yourselves from the blessed effects of his death?

In short, what upon earth, or even in heaven, can afford you any pleasure or rational joy, while your names are not written in heaven, and you are not using earnest endeavours to be admitted citizens there? alas! your case calls for sighs, and tears, and sorrow, rather than joy. What have you to do with politics, news, and the fate of armies and kingdoms, while you know not whether you will be out of hell one day longer?

And as the joy of the righteous in having their names written in heaven may swallow every other joy, so your sorrow, on account of your names not being written there, may swallow up all other sorrows. Be sorrowful on this account, above all other things.

Have you lost your friends, your relatives, your estate? This is sad; but O! it is nothing to the loss of God, of heaven, and your souls. All will be lost ere long, if you continue in your present condition. Are you poor in this world? That is but a trifling affliction, compared with that everlasting poverty you must ere long suffer. Are you mean and despised by men? Alas! what is that to your being despised and abhorred by the God that made you? Are you the slaves of men? This would be trifling, and you need

not care for it, were it not that you are slaves to sin and Satan, and under the condemnation of the divine law. Are you disordered in body? That is nothing to the disorders of your souls. Are you afraid of natural death? alas! what is that to spiritual death, which has seized your souls, and the eternal death which is but just before you? In short, nothing in all the world ought so to distress and grieve you as this, That your names are not written in heaven.

Therefore, instead of vain rejoicing, and mirth, and gaiety, I must read to you the denunciation of Jesus Christ against you: *But wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.* Luke vi. 24, 25.—and call upon you as the apostle James does, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.* James v. 9. And again, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.* James iv. 9.

I can honestly assure you, I am no enemy to the pleasures of mankind. But it is because I love you that I wish you may return home sad and sorrowful from this place; for I well know, you are for ever undone, unless you turn to the Lord; and that you never will turn to him, without rending of your hearts, weeping, and mourning. Joel ii. 12.

If your joy and mirth were rational, I should say nothing against it; but is it not frenzy and madness to be merry in the chains of sin, under the wrath of God, and upon the brink of eternal ruin?

Is it not also dishonourable to God? It is as if you should tell him to his face, that you can be merry and happy without his favour, and that you care nothing for his displeasure.

I should not reprove your mirth, if it were harmless; but alas! it will ruin you if you indulge it. For, let me tell you, such sinners as you cannot become converts, without alarming fears and deep sorrows. Without this you never will be in earnest in your religious endeavours.

You will tell me perhaps, "you see christians cheerful, and sometimes merry; and why may not you be so?" I answer (1.) There is a great difference in your case and theirs; they have a lively hope of everlasting happiness; but you can have no hope in your present condition. And may not they rejoice, while you have cause to mourn and weep? What would you think of a criminal under condemnation, if he allowed himself in that mirth and amusement, which may be lawful and becoming in others? (2.) The Christians you know now are cheerful with good reason; but did you know any of them under their first convictions? were they cheerful then? then, when they received a sight of their sin and danger, and were in an awful suspense what would be their everlasting doom? Were they merry and gay while they saw themselves without a Saviour, and under the displeasure of God? No; then all was sadness, fear, and sorrow. And this is what your case now requires. Can you expect the same cheerfulness in one under the power of a deadly disorder as in one recovering? or would it be becoming?

Finally, I should not endeavour to damp your joys and turn them into sorrow, if they would last. But Oh! they will soon end, and nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will succeed. Look down into that hideous gulph, the prison of divine justice, where Dives and Judas, and thousands of sinners lie; and can you see no cheerful look, or hear one laugh among them? No, no: they have done with all joy; and must spend a miserable eternity in grief and tears. And will you not rather mourn in time, than mourn for ever? will you choose now to receive your consolation? or will you not rather delay it till you have reason to rejoice?

To conclude: Suffer a friend to your best interests to prevail upon you to return home this evening sadly pensive and sorrowful, and to resolve you will never indulge yourselves in one hour's mirth and gaiety, till you have some reason to believe that your names are written in heaven. This is what your own interest requires; and if you refuse, you will unavoidably be sorry for it for ever, when your sorrow can be of no service

to you. Betake yourselves in serious sadness to the earnest use of all the means of salvation, and you have reason to hope God will have mercy upon you, and turn you to himself. Then you will have reason to rejoice, to rejoice in your temporal blessings, and especially because your names are written in heaven. And then God, and Christ, and angels will rejoice over you, and join in your joy.

SERMON XXXVI.

The Success of the Gospel by the Divine Power upon the Souls of Men*.

2 COR. X. 4, 5.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

THIS restless world is now in an unusual ferment; kingdom rising up against kingdom, and nation against nation: magazines filling, arms brightening, cannons roaring, and human blood streaming, both by sea and land. These things engross the thoughts and conversation of mankind, and alarm their fears and anxieties. But there is another kind of war carrying on in the world; a war, the issue of which is of infinitely greater importance; a war of near six thousand years standing; that is, ever since the first grand rebellion of mankind against God; a war in which we are all engaged as parties, and in the result of which our immortal interest is concerned; though, alas! it engages but little of the attention and solicitude of the generality among us; I mean, the war which Jesus Christ has been carrying on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to reduce the rebellious sons of men to their duty, and redeem them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, from their wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is the design in which the apostles were embarked, and which St. Paul describes in the military style in my text. As some members of the Corinthian church had taken up a very low opinion of St. Paul, his design in the context is

* A Sermon preached at Hanover in Virginia, October 17, 1756.

to raise the dignity of his apostolic office. And for that purpose, he describes in the military language the efficacy and success of those apostolic powers with which he was furnished for the propagation of christianity, and the reduction of the world into obedience to the gospel. Those powers were such as these; the power of working miracles to attest his divine commission; the preaching of the doctrine of the cross, and the rod of discipline for the reformation of offenders; which, in the hands of the apostles, seems to have been attended with the power of inflicting temporal judgments, and particularly bodily sicknesses; and which St. Paul here threatens to exercise upon such of the Corinthians as continued obstinate in their opposition to his ministry.

These powers he here calls weapons of war. This tent-maker and a few fishermen were sent out upon a grand expedition, in opposition to the united powers of Jews and Gentiles, of earth and hell. All the world, with their gloomy god, were ready to join against them. They were ready to oppose them with all the force of philosophy, learning, authority, threatenings, and all the cruel forms of persecution. For the christian cause, in which these soldiers of Jesus Christ were engaged, was contrary to their lusts and prejudices, their honour, and secular interests. This opposition of the world to the gospel, the apostle also describes in the military style. Their lusts, prejudices, and interests, their vain imaginations and false reasonings, are so many strong-holds and high things or castles in which they, as it were, fortify and entrench themselves. These they hold and garrison under the prince of darkness; in these they stand out in their rebellion against heaven, and fight against God, against his gospel, and against their own consciences. And with what weapons did the apostles attack these rebels in their strong-holds? Not with carnal weapons, such as the heroes and conquerors of the world are wont to use, but with weapons of a spiritual nature, the force of evidence and conviction, the purity of their doctrines and lives, the terrors of the Lord, and the all-conquering love of a dying Saviour. With these

weapons they encountered the allied powers of men and devils; with these they propagated the religion of their Master; and not with the sword, like Mahomet; or with the bloody artillery of persecution, like the church of Rome, or by the dragoonade, like the tyrants of France.

What unpromising weapons were these? What avails the light of evidence in a world that loves darkness rather than light, and where lust, prejudice, and interest generally prevail against truth and reason? Is the contemptible weapon of the cross likely to do execution? Are the unpopular mortifying doctrines of one that was crucified like a malefactor and a slave, likely to prevail against all the prejudices of education, the attachment of mankind to the religion of antiquity, established by law; the policy of priestcraft; the love of gain; the powers of the world; and the various oppositions of the depraved hearts of mankind? Are such gentle and weak weapons as these likely to have any success? Yes, these weapons, though not carnal, were mighty, resistless, all-conquering—but then you must observe, they were mighty through God. The excellency of the power was of God, and such unpromising arms were used on purpose to shew this. It was he that gave edge to the weapons, and force to the blow. Without the energy of his grace, they could have done nothing, even in the hands of apostles. But, by the might of his spirit, they became almighty, and carried all before them: these contemptible weapons, with his concurrence, pulled down strong holds; cast down towering imaginations, and reasonings* that seemed impregnable, and demolished every high thing, every battery, castle, or citadel, that was erected against the knowledge of God, that knowledge of him which the gospel brought to light, and reduced every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Sinners were brought not only to compliment Jesus with a bended knee, and profess subjection to him with their lips, but to bow their stubborn hearts to him, and let him reign in their affections. That gospel to which they were so averse, gained a complete victory over

* λογισμῶν.

their minds, their minds, which the Alexanders and Cæsars of the world could not subdue; and reduced not only their external conduct, but their thoughts; not only some thoughts, but every thought, to the obedience of Christ. When God gives the commission, the stately walls of Jericho will fall, even at the feeble sound of rams horns.

To bring into captivity, is generally understood in a bad sense, and signifies the carrying away of loyal subjects against their wills, into a foreign country, and there enslaving them to the enemy. But here it is a significant catachresis, and signifies the deliverance of sinners from the slavery of sin and Satan, and their restoration into a state of liberty, and into favour with God, and this too by their own free consent. And it is called a captivating, to intimate, that, though when the sinner submits he does it voluntarily, yet he had really made a strong resistance, and did not submit till sweetly constrained to it; and that he looked upon his state of slavery to sin as a state of freedom, and was as unwilling to leave it as a free-born subject would be to be captivated and enslaved in an enemy's country.

I foresee I cannot take time to do justice to this copious subject. But I shall endeavour to comprize my thoughts in as little room as possible, in a few propositions, to which each head in my text may be reduced. And the whole will be but a short history of the revolt of mankind against the great God, their rightful Sovereign, and their miserable slavery to sin and Satan—of an important expedition set on foot and carried on by the ministry of the gospel, to recover them from their state of slavery, and reduce them to their obedience—of their various methods of opposition to this design; or the various ways in which they fortify themselves against the attacks made upon them by divine grace for this end—of the issue of this siege, particularly the terms of surrender—and of their consequent deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan, and their willing subjection to their rightful Lord and Proprietor.

I. All mankind, in their present state of apostacy,

have revolted from God, and surrendered themselves slaves to sin and Satan.

We might produce abundant evidence of this from the sacred writings; but as the evidence from plain undeniable fact may be more convictive, I shall insist chiefly upon it. Mankind are secretly disaffected to God and his government in their hearts; and hence they do not take pleasure in his service. They are not solicitous for the honour and dignity of his government. They will not bear the restraints of his authority, nor regard his law as the rule of their conduct, but will follow their own inclinations, let him prescribe what he will. Nay, they have no disposition to return to their duty, or listen to proposals for reconciliation; and hence they disregard the gospel (which is a scheme to bring about a peace) as well as the law. In short, they will not do any thing that God commands them, unless it suit their own corrupt inclinations; and they will not abstain from any thing which he forbids, for his sake, if they have any temptation to it from their own lusts. These things, and a thousand more which might be mentioned, fix the charge of rebellion upon them. It is undeniable they are disaffected to his government in their hearts, whatever forced or complimentary expressions of loyalty some of them may at times give him. Look into your own hearts, and take a view of the world around you, and you will find this is evidently the case.

But though they are thus disobedient to their rightful sovereign, yet to sin and Satan, those usurping and tyrannical masters, they are the most tame and obsequious slaves. For these, they will go through the most sordid drudgery, for no other wages than death. For these, they will give up their most important interests, and exchange their souls, and their share in heaven, without any retaliation, but the sorry transitory pleasures of sin. Let temptation but beckon, they immediately take the signal, and obey. Let sin command them to hurt their souls and bodies, and perhaps their estases, with excessive drinking, the poor slaves comply. Let sin order them to swear, to lie, to defraud, they submit, though eternal damnation be the

consequence. Let sin order them to pursue riches, honour, or sensual pleasures, through right and wrong, at the loss of their ease, the danger of their lives, and the destruction of their souls, they engage in the drudgery, and toil all their days in it. Let sin forbid them to serve God, to attend seriously to his word, to pray to him importunately; in secret and in their families, to reflect upon their miserable condition, to repent and believe the gospel; let sin but lay them under a prohibition to these things, they will cautiously refrain from them; and all the arguments which God and man can use with them will have little or no weight. In short, let sin but order them to give up their interest in heaven, and run the risk of eternal ruin; let sin but command them to neglect and disregard the God that made them, and the Saviour that died for them, they will venture upon the self-denying and destructive enterprize. They will do more for sin than they will do for the great God their rightful Sovereign and constant Benefactor. Sin has more influence with them than all the persuasions of parents, ministers, and their best friends; nay, more influence than the love, the dying groans and agonies of a crucified Saviour. There is nothing so sacred, so dear or valuable in heaven, but they will give it up if sin requires them. Nothing so terrible in hell, but they will rush into, if sin sets them upon the desperate attempt. They are the most tame unresisting captives to sin. Sin is an arbitrary, absolute, despotic tyrant over them; and, which is most astonishing, they are not weary of its tyranny, nor do they pant and struggle for liberty. Liberty to them has lost its charms, and they hug their chains and love their bondage. Alas! are there not many free-born Britons in this assembly, who are slaves in this sense? slaves in a worse sense than the poorest negro among us: slaves to sin, and consequently to Satan; for sin is commander in chief under the prince of darkness, the gloomy god of this world: it is by sin, as his deputy, that he exercises his power, and therefore sinners are in reality slaves to him! This, one would think, would be a shocking reflection to them, that they are slaves of the most malignant being

in nature; a being not only malignant, but also very powerful; that they have broken off from the indulgent and equitable government of the Sovereign of the universe, and sold themselves slaves to such a lawless tyrannical usurper! But, alas! they do not resent the usurpation, nor struggle to throw off the yoke, and regain their liberty. They resign themselves voluntary slaves, and love their master and his drudgery.

This is a very melancholy, but, alas! it is a true history of human nature in its present state. Thus are mankind disaffected to the divine government, and held in a wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is indeed a very dismal and threatening state, and we might tremble for the consequences, had we no gospel to inform us of a plan of reconciliation. Here I may borrow the words of one of the greatest and best of christians*. "When we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him; that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? How did it issue? What was the event? and would expect to hear, Why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened and swallowed them up quick: yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear that fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts came down instantly upon them, and destroyed them in a moment, who would not say, So I thought: who could expect better?" But what grateful astonishment may it raise in heaven and earth, to hear that their offended Sovereign has been so far from this, that he has sent his Son, his only Son, to die for them, in order to bring about a peace! and that,

II. He has set on foot an important expedition, and is carrying it on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to recover these rebels from their voluntary slavery to sin and Satan, and reduce them to their duty, and so bring them into a state of liberty and happiness!

* Mr. Howe, in his discourse on Reconciliation between God and Man.

This is the benevolent design on which the Son of God came down from his native heaven, and for which he endured the shame and the agonies of the cross. This is the design on which he sent out his apostles into the world, armed, not with the instruments of mischief and destruction, but with the most beneficent powers, powers of doing good, the powers of preaching the most important doctrines, of proving them by argument, and the evidence of miracles and prophecies, and of exercising proper discipline upon offenders, to bring them to repentance. To carry on this design, the ministry of the gospel is perpetuated in the world from age to age; and for this purpose, my dear people, I would exercise my ministry among you. I would make an attack upon your hearts to break them open for the admission of the King of heaven. I have continued the siege for near ten years, the space spent in reducing the stubborn Trojans; and now, in the name of God, I once more would renew the attack, and summon you to capitulate and surrender.

For this purpose the ministers of the gospel have their arms; they begin the attack with the artillery of the divine law, which thunders the terrors of the Lord against you. They surround you with troops of arguments, which one would think would soon overpower a reasonable creature, and constrain him immediately to submit. They reason the matter with you, and lay before you the wickedness, the baseness, the unnatural ingratitude, and the dangerous consequences of your rebellion. They inform you what a good king and what an excellent government you have rejected; what holy, just, and good laws you have insolently broken; what rich mercies you have ungratefully abused; what long-continued patience you have provoked; and what friendly warnings you have despised. They expose to your view the terrible consequences of your rebellion, if you persist in it: they honestly warn you that *the wages of sin is death*; death in all its terrible forms; death temporal, spiritual and eternal; that if you continue the unequal war against Heaven, it will issue in your eternal remediless destruction. They open to

you the corruption of your natures; the aversion of your hearts to all that is spiritually good and excellent; your innate propensions to sin, and voluntary indulgence of your lusts and guilty pleasures. They put you upon a review of your lives, to recollect your wilful omissions of duty to God and man, and your commissions of known sin, in spite of the restraints of authority, the allurements of mercy, and the admonitions of your own consciences. When they have thus discharged the dreadful artillery of the law, the thunders and lightnings of Sinai against you, the way is prepared for proposing the terms of surrender and the articles of reconciliation. They make an attack upon the citadel of your heart, with the gentler arms from the magazine of the gospel of peace. They represent your injured Sovereign as reconcileable, reconcileable through Jesus Christ. They give you the strongest assurances from his own word, that he is willing to make up the difference and conclude a lasting peace with you; that upon your laying down your arms (that is, forsaking your sins and submitting upon his terms) he will freely pardon all your past rebellion, and receive you again into his favour. They also inform you of the strange method in which this peace may be brought about consistently with the honour of his character as the ruler of the world, and with the sacred rights of his government, and that is through the mediation of his Son, the great Peace-maker, who in your stead, has obeyed that law which you have broken, and endured that penalty which you have incurred. They likewise inform you in what manner you are to accede to this treaty, or consent to this plan, of accommodation, namely, by believing in his Son, by accepting peace with God, and every blessing as his free gift through Jesus Christ, by a deep ingenuous repentance for your last rebellion, and by devoting yourselves to his service for the future. These overtures of reconciliation they enforce from various topics, which, one would think, you would not be able to resist. They represent to you the riches of divine grace and mercy, and the all-conquering love

of Jesus. That contemptible weapon the cross, is a weapon of tried and well-known energy; many an hard heart has it broken; many an obstinate rebel has it subdued. They *pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God*; and if you should be hardy enough to refuse such a request, they urge it with arguments drawn from its reasonableness in justice and gratitude, from its being of the last importance to your happiness, as being the only way in which apostate creatures can re-obtain the favour of their injured Sovereign—and from the terrible consequences of a refusal; for unless you submit upon these terms, you may expect nothing but wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour you as adversaries.

You cannot but know, my brethren, that the ministry of the gospel has, with such arms as these, laid close siege to your hearts, year after year. And who would have thought that one heart among you would have been proof against this divine artillery, and stood it out so long? Some of you, I doubt not, have surrendered, and are now the willing subjects of your heavenly King. But alas! do not some of you still obstinately refuse to submit, and persist in your rebellion? And are you not fortifying yourselves more and more against the attempts made to reduce you to obedience? This naturally leads me,

III. To give you a kind of history of the various ways in which sinners oppose this benevolent design of the ministry of the gospel to subdue them to the obedience of Christ.

Alas! they also have their artillery, with which they labour to repel all the attacks made upon them by the gospel. They, as it were, throw up various lines of intrenchments around them, to defend them against conviction. Particularly,

Sinners hide themselves in the darkness of ignorance; ignorance of God, of Jesus Christ, of the law and gospel, and consequently of themselves. They endeavour to keep up their courage by refusing to know their danger. They muffle themselves up in ignorance, so that they do not see their almighty enemy, nor the in-

struments of death he has prepared for them; and hence they are so stupid as to conclude that neither does he see them, nor can find them out. They also fortify themselves, as it were, in the enclosure of a hard heart; a heart of rock and adamant, which is proof against the artillery of the gospel. This, like an impregnable cave cut in a rock, stands out against all the terrors of the Lord set in array against it. The sinner, shut up in this strong-hold, can laugh at the shaking of Jehovah's spear! Let the law thunder out tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish against him; let the gospel attack him with the cross of Christ, with all the love of a dying Saviour, and all the mercy of a reconcileable God, he is still secure, and bids defiance to all these attacks. The rock is impregnable till the power of God gives force to these weapons, and then indeed it begins to tremble; then the sinner is struck into a consternation, and is dreadfully apprehensive he cannot hold out the siege. This natural fortification (so I may call it, for his ignorance and hardness of heart are natural to him, though dreadfully improved by art) this natural fortification I say, begins to fail him; and hereupon he sets himself to work upon artificial fortifications, which may enable him to hold it out the longer in his opposition.

He throws up an entrenchment of objections and excuses, or (a little to alter the metaphor) he discharges whole volleys of objections and excuses against those that besiege him. Perhaps he dares to plead that he is already a dutiful subject of the King of heaven, and therefore that the ministry of the gospel has missed its aim in directing its artillery against him as an enemy. And if to this plea it be answered, that his temper and conduct towards his Sovereign plainly shew that he is really disaffected to him in his heart, whatever outward professions of duty he may make; he replies, that, if in some instances he allows himself in the breach of the divine laws, yet he has no bad design in so doing; that he has a good heart notwithstanding; and that he hopes the King of heaven will not be so strict as to take notice of these things. He objects,

that he is as loyal as other people about him, and why may not that suffice? and that, if he should be very punctual and zealous in his duty, he would soon be out of fashion, and draw the contempt and ridicule of the world upon him. He objects that he has not been so bold and daring a rebel as many others, and therefore he cannot think that so mild and gracious a King will severely punish him. He objects, that he is now too busy about other things, to listen to proposals of reconciliation; and therefore begs that the matter may be put off, at least, till he has finished some important affairs he has now in hand. And he promises, that the next year, or in old age, or upon a death-bed, he will submit, and conclude a peace. He pleads, that he enjoys a great deal of pleasure under his present master, Sin, which he must give up as unlawful, if he should change masters; and that the service of God is a drudgery to him, and that he has no relish for it, and that the laws of the King of heaven are so strict, that he cannot live under them.—These, and a thousand other pleas, the rebel urges to excuse his non-compliance with the proposals of reconciliation; and in these he trusts as a sufficient defence.

Moreover, the lusts of the flesh, his pride, presumption, and love of ease, the cares of the world, the company of the wicked, who persuade him by all means not to surrender, and furnish him with arms and all the assistance in their power to continue the war, these are all so many strong-holds in which the sinner fortifies himself against the Lord Jesus.

But if the weapons of the gospel prove mighty through God to demolish these strong-holds, and the rebel finds they can defend him no longer, then he abandons these out-works, and intrenches himself secretly in his own righteousness. He as it were, surrounds himself with a line of good works, repentance, and reformation. And now he thinks he is safe. Now he hopes he shall pass for a friend and subject of the King of heaven, as he is holding a place for him, and that the artillery of the law will continue to play upon him no longer. This is the sinner's last refuge; and it is the greatest difficulty of all to drive him out

of this. He will not abandon this, till he is driven to great extremity indeed. And here many continue till they are dragged out of it to the tribunal of their supreme Judge.

It must also be observed, that the sinner tries all the arts of dissimulation to secure his strong-hold. When he finds he cannot defend himself as an open enemy by his declared hostilities, he feigns a submission; he pretends to capitulate and surrender: but then, he does not cordially consent to all the terms. He makes a reserve of some favourite lusts, and will not deliver them all up to the sword of the Conqueror: he has secret exceptions to the conditions of surrender, and will not comply with them all. There are some instances of duty, from which he will excuse himself. In short, his heart is not well-affected to the Conqueror. His submission is forced and involuntary, and therefore is resented as the basest treachery by Him that searches the heart, and must reign in the hearts of all his subjects.

Are not some of you, my brethren, now intrenched and fortified against the gospel in these strong-holds? And such of you as are now the willing subjects of Jesus Christ, may you not recollect, that thus did you once strengthen yourselves in your opposition to him! But he has sweetly overcome your enmity, and constrained you to submit. And this leads me,

IV. To describe the issue of this war, where it is effectually carried on, and particularly the terms of surrender.

The success of this war depends entirely upon the concurrence of the almighty power of God. If the weapons of our warfare prove mighty, it is through God. Let the ministers of the gospel attack the sinner with all the arms with which the magazines of the law and gospel of scripture and reason furnish them, they will never subdue one soul to the obedience of Christ: the sinner will still stand it out, and bid them defiance. What is the reason, that there are so many secure presumptuous rebels among us, though the gospel-ministry has so often and so long played off its artillery against them? The reason is, the wea-

apons of our warfare are not made mighty through God. God does not give edge and force to these arms by the all-conquering power of his spirit. But when he begins to work, then the hardest sinner begins to tremble, the rocky heart breaks to pieces, and his strong-holds are demolished. All his objections are silenced: he is convinced that he is indeed a rebel against his rightful Sovereign; that his rebellion is most unnatural, ungrateful, unreasonable, and the height of wickedness; and that it is a most astonishing instance of condescending grace, that his provoked Sovereign should stoop to treat with him and deign to propose him articles of reconciliation. He sees that he might justly cut him off, without one offer of mercy. He is struck with horror to think that ever he, a poor dependent worm, should engage in a war against the Lord of armies, who has universal nature at his command, and especially that he has dared to stand out so long against him. He is sensible of the danger of delays, sensible that he has been ungrateful and rebellious too long already, and that, if he delay his submission, his almighty enemy may take his strong-holds by storm, and put him to the sword. He is now sensible that the slavery of sin is intolerable; that his lusts are tyrannical masters, and will give him no other wages but death; and therefore he pants and struggles for liberty. The artillery of the divine law demolishes the promising intrenchment which he had formed of his own good works, and leaves him naked and defenceless to its vindictive fire. Conscience also calls to the sinner to surrender, to surrender in time, while terms of peace may be obtained, and warns him of the dreadful consequences of continuing the war. The trumpet of the gospel is still publishing peace, and summoning him to submit. The gospel assures him of pardon and acceptance, if he will but surrender. Now also (if I may so boldly accommodate the military stile to this subject) now his provisions and ammunition begin to fail; he finds he can subsist no longer; and, like the prodigal, is *just perishing with hunger*. He finds he can defend himself no longer, but must submit or die. If he continues

in arms, he is sure to die; but if he submits he has some hopes of pardon; for O! he has *heard that the King of Israel is a merciful King*. He must however make the trial. All this time the spirit of God is at work within, sweetly inclining the stubborn heart to yield, *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*. He gives the rebel favourable thoughts of the government of the Conqueror, and the infinite advantages of living under it. In short, he enforces upon the heart all the applications made from without by the ministry of the gospel.

And now the sinner begins to think in earnest of surrendering: now he eagerly listens to the terms of peace; and at length he lays down his arms, submits to the Conqueror, falls at his feet, casts himself upon his mercy, and welcomes him into the citadel of his heart. This is the most happy and important hour the sinner ever saw: the transactions of this hour extend their blessed consequences through all his future life, and to the remotest periods of eternity. It may be necessary for me to inform you more particularly of the manner of this surrender.

(1.) The sinner surrenders himself as an obnoxious rebel, lying entirely at the mercy of the Conqueror. He has no plea to excuse his rebellion, no merit to ingratiate himself, or procure a pardon. He pleads guilty, and surrenders himself to the will of the Conqueror, conscious that he may do with him as he pleases. His high imaginations of himself are all demolished, his confidence in his own righteousness is entirely mortified, and he has nothing to plead but mercy, free unmerited mercy. On this he casts himself as his only ground of hope.

(2.) He surrenders himself entirely upon the terms prescribed by the Conqueror. He is conscious that he has no right to dictate, or to stand upon terms. His province is to submit. The way of reconciliation revealed in the gospel, appears to him infinitely reasonable, and to stand in need of no amendment. Particularly, he is willing to lay down his arms; that is, to forsake his sins, and to walk for the future in

the ways of holiness; or to make the pleasure of his Sovereign the rule of his conduct. Above all, it must be noticed, that he is willing to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The mediation of Jesus Christ, the glorious peculiarity of the christian religion, is the only medium through which he would approach to God, and expect reconciliation with him. It is only in the righteousness of Christ he trusts to make atonement for his guilt, and procure the divine favour. In short, he is willing the Conqueror should make his own terms, and he submits, if he may but have his life for a prey. He puts a blank into his hands, desirous he should fill it up with what articles he pleases, and he will cheerfully subscribe to them. His language is like that of Paul, when struck down prostrate at the feet of the persecuted Jesus, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.: Lord do thou command, and I will obey. Now the rebel is all submission, all obedience.

(3.) He submits voluntarily and cheerfully. The power of divine grace has rooted out the enmity of his carnal mind, and implanted the principle of love in his heart. He breaks off from sin and Satan, as from the most cruel usurpers and destroyers; and he submits to Christ, not merely as to an irresistible Conqueror, but as to a Deliverer. He enters upon a religious life, not as a state of slavery and unwilling captivity, but as a state of the most glorious liberty. He submits to the terms of reconciliation, not as the arbitrary impositions of an imperious usurper, but as the gentle and reasonable prescriptions of a wise and good Ruler. He esteems all his laws holy, and just, and good; and with all his heart he acquiesces and rejoices in the blessed gospel of peace. In short, the rebel's heart is now entirely changed, and rendered well-affected to the divine government; and consequently, he cordially and freely submits to it. Once indeed he hated it, and then he did at best but feign submission to it; but now, his enmity being subdued, he surrenders himself with all his heart. It is one of the freest acts of his whole life.

(4.) He makes an universal surrender of himself and all that he is and has to Jesus Christ. He makes no reserve of one favourite lust; but gives them all up to be slain. He makes no secret exceptions to any of the articles of reconciliation, but heartily consents to them all. He devotes his whole soul and all its faculties to God, in and through Jesus Christ; his understanding to know him; his heart to love him; and his will to be governed by him. This is implied in my text;—*Bringing every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ.* Every thought, every passion, every motion of the soul must submit to Christ, and every insurrection of sin in his heart alarms him, as an intestine enemy. He also yields his body to God, and his members *as instruments of righteousness unto holiness.* He also devotes all his accomplishments, his genius, learning, influence, and popularity, his riches, and, in short, all his possessions of every kind; willing to employ them all in the service of his new Master, or to resign them all, if their preservation should be inconsistent with his duty to him. O! how different a temper is this from that which is natural to the sinner!

Thus the treaty of peace is happily concluded; and he that was once a rebel against Heaven, and an enemy to the cross of Christ, is now become a friend and a loyal subject. The past difference is entirely forgotten and buried, and he is received into favour, as though he had never offended. Once God was angry with him every day, but now he accepts him in the beloved. Now the prince of hell has lost a captive; and Jesus has the satisfaction of seeing one more of his spiritual seed born into his family. Now there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, upon this addition to the number of loyal subjects. O! the happy, the glorious peace! O! the blessed change in the circumstance of the poor condemned criminal!

What now remains?

V. We take a view of the true convert's state and conduct in consequence of this reconciliation.

This you may be sure is very different from what it was before. He is now delivered from his sordid sla-

very to sin, as well as from guilt, and the sentence of condemnation. He is justified and accepted before God, through Jesus Christ, and entitled to an heavenly crown and kingdom. Sin, indeed, is not entirely subdued; it forms frequent and violent insurrections, and struggles hard to recover its former power over him. The old man with his affections and lusts was immediately crucified, upon the sinner's surrender to Christ; but crucifixion is a lingering death, and hence sin is never entirely dead while he continues in this imperfect state: it is every day plotting against him, and labouring to ensnare him. And hence his life is a constant warfare, an incessant conflict. He lives the life of a centinel, perpetually upon the watch; or of a soldier, night and day under arms. If he is off his guard but for an hour, he is liable to be surprised, and, sometimes, alas! he is overcome. But he rises again, and renews the combat, and will rather die than submit: he would resist even unto blood, striving against sin. In short, whatever inadvertencies he may fall into, he is habitually on God's side: he espouses the cause of God in this rebellious world, whatever it costs him. He is an enemy to the kingdom of darkness, and all its interests; and it is the great business of his life to oppose it in himself and others. The longer he lives under the government of King Jesus, the more he is attached to him, and in love with his administration; and it is his habitual endeavour to lead a life of universal obedience.

And now, my brethren, there is an inquiry I would set you upon, and that is, whether you have ever been captivated into a willing obedience to Jesus Christ? I am afraid this matter is not so plainly and unquestionably in your favour, as to render all inquiry into it needless. I am afraid it is dismally dark and doubtful, with regard to some of you, whether you are the servants of Christ or the slaves of sin and Satan. Nay, I am afraid, there are plain evidences against some of you. However, put the matter to trial, that you may see how it will turn out; for I assure you it is a matter of too much importance to be slightly passed over.

Now it is evident, in the first place, that you are

still the enemies of Jesus Christ, unless you have been deeply convinced of your enmity. It is impossible you should be reconciled to him, till you have seen your need of reconciliation; and it is impossible you should see your need of reconciliation till you are convinced that you are at variance with him. Such of you therefore are undoubtedly his enemies, who imagine you have always been his friends.

In the next place, turn the substance of what has been said into so many queries to yourselves, and by these means, you may discover the truth of your case.—Has ever the dreadful artillery of the law discharged its terrors upon you? Have you ever been driven out of all your carnal confidences, and particularly your own righteousness?—Have you ever surrendered yourselves to the Conqueror? Has he overcome you by the sweet constraints of his love? And upon what terms did you surrender? Did you surrender as a rebel, lying at mercy? Did you submit to his terms without pretending to dictate any of your own? Did you submit voluntarily and cheerfully? Did you surrender yourselves universally, without any reserve? Do you since endeavour to behave as dutiful subjects? And do you find his service to be perfect freedom?

And now, in consequence of this trial, *Who is upon the Lord's side? Who?* What is your real character? Are you to be ranked among the subjects of Christ, or among the enemies of his crown and dignity?

Could I now collect the rebels together into one company, I would tell them some very alarming things from that God to whom they refuse to submit. Yes, sinner, as Ehud said to Eglon, king of Moab, *I have a message from God to you*, Judges iii. 20.

In his name, and as his ambassador, I warn you of the dreadful consequences of your unnatural rebellion against him. You cannot make good your cause against him. *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered?* All nature is subject to him, and he can order the meanest part of it to be the executioner of his vengeance upon you. If you refuse to submit, you shall as surely perish as you have a being. Of

this you have reason to be apprehensive at all times, but especially at this time, when your almighty enemy is attacking your country with the terrors of war, and your neighbourhood with an epidemical raging distemper. Sicknesses are his soldiers, and fight in his cause against a rebellious world. *He says to one go, and it goeth; and to another, Come, and it cometh.* And are you not afraid some of these deadly shafts may strike you now, when they are flying so thick around you? God has for many a year used gentler weapons with you, but now he seems about to take the citadel by storm. Now, therefore, now without delay, lay down your arms, and surrender yourselves to him.

I have also joyful news to communicate, even to you rebels, if you are disposed to hear it; and that is, that your injured Sovereign is willing to be reconciled to you after all your hostilities, if you will now submit to the terms of reconciliation.

Therefore, *I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Christ is not here in person; but, lo! I am here to manage the treaty in his name, though I also am formed out of the clay.

SERMON XXXVII.

The Divine Perfections illustrated in the Method of Salvation, through the Sufferings of Christ.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

JOHN xii. 27, 28.

Now my soul is troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.

SHOULD a favourite child now come running to you, with all the marks of agony in his countenance, and with these words in his mouth, "I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and I know not what to say;" it would raise all the tender sensations of fatherly compassion and anxiety in your breasts, and you would solicitously inquire, "what ails my dear child, what is the cause of your distress?" But here your ears are struck with a more strange and affecting sound; you hear the source of all consolation complaining of sorrow: "I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and in a commotion like the stormy ocean." You see the wisdom of God, the guide of the blind, pausing—hesitating—at a stand—at a loss what to say. And will you not so far interest yourselves in his sorrows, as solicitously to inquire, "What ails my dear Lord?" Judas has not yet betrayed him; the rabble have not yet apprehended him, and dragged him away, like a flagitious malefactor: as yet his face is not dishonoured with spitting, nor bruised with blows; as yet I see no crown of thorns upon his sacred head; no nails in his hands and feet; no spear in his side; no streams of blood and water running down his body. He is at

liberty, and surrounded with his usual friends: nay, at this time even the despised Jesus begins to grow popular: the humble Jesus, the man of sorrows, has just now entered Jerusalem in triumph, like a conqueror, surrounded with the applauses and hosannas of the multitude. Now also the first-fruits of the Gentiles are brought to him: a number of Greek proselytes beg an interview with him, and desire his instructions: a thing so agreeable to him, that as soon as he hears of it, he cries out, *The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.* John xii. 23. And why does my Lord alter his voice so soon? Why, my blessed Jesus, why this sudden fall from joy to trouble, from triumph to sorrow and perplexity? The reason was, that though his sufferings were not now upon him, yet he saw them approaching: he saw the fatal hour just at hand; and this immediate prospect raises all the passions of his human nature, and throws him into a sea of troubles. He did not fall into his sufferings through inadvertency, or the want of foresight; and his fortitude and resolution were not owing to any hopes of escape, or an expectation of better usage. But we are expressly told, that *Jesus knew all things that should come upon him.* John xviii. 4. He saw the rugged road before him, all the way from his cradle to his cross. He rushed into dangers with his eyes open, and went on courageously to encounter the last enemy, Death, fully expecting to meet him in all his terrors. Now the foresight of sufferings is a peculiar aggravation; it brings them upon the anxious expectant by anticipation: they are reflected back upon him, before they are actually inflicted; and thus the pain of a few moments may be diffused through a length of years. And sometimes the expectation of an evil is more tormenting than the evil itself*. Our happiness is in a great measure owing to our being happily blind to the future†, and ignorant of the calamities before us. But Jesus had not this mitigation of his sufferings: the cross, the scourge, the nails, the crown of thorns, were ever before his mind:

* *Morsque minus poenae quam mora mortis habet.*

OVID.

† "O blindness to the future! kindly given."

POPE.

so that he could say with yet greater reason than his servant Paul, *I die daily, I am in deaths oft.* By this painful foresight, the crown of thorns was always upon his head; the nails were all his days fastened in his hands and feet; and his whole life was, as it were, one continued crucifixion. How peculiarly aggravated, how long continued, how uninterrupted do the severities of his sufferings appear, when viewed in this light! and how does this display his fortitude and the strength of his love! though he had this tragical prospect before him, yet he did not draw back or give up the arduous undertaking; but he resolutely held on his way; he was irresistibly carried to meet all these terrors, by his ardent zeal for his Father's glory, and his unconquerable love to the guilty creatures whose salvation he had undertaken. Sometimes indeed he shews he was a man; that he was capable of all the tender and painful sensations of human nature: and if he had not been such, his sufferings would have been no sufferings. At such times his innocent humanity seems struck aghast, pauses and hesitates, and would fain shrink away from the burden, would fain put by the bitter cup. But immediately the stronger principles of zeal for the divine glory, and love to man, gain the ascendent, calm all these tumults of feeble nature, and irresistibly impel him on to the dreadful encounter in its most shocking appearances. O! the generous bravery of the Captain of our salvation! O! the all-conquering power of his love! The critics are in raptures on the bravery of Homer's Achilles, who engaged in the expedition against Troy, though he knew he should never return. But how much more worthy to be celebrated is the heroic love of Jesus, who voluntarily exposed himself to infinitely greater sufferings, when he foresaw them all, and knew what would be the consequence!

The language of raised passions is abrupt and hurrying:—and in such language does our Lord here speak. *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?* “What petition shall I ask of my Father? such an hour of distress is a proper time to address him. But what shall I say to him? shall I yield to the reluctance of my frail human nature, that would draw back from suffering?”

shall I urge the petition my feeble flesh would put into my mouth, and say, *Father, save me from this hour**? “Father, dismiss me from this undertaking, and resign the glory which thou wouldst gain by the execution of it. Father, if it be possible, save sinners in some easier way; or let them perish, rather than that I should suffer so much for them. Shall this be my petition? No; I cannot bear the thought, that my Father should lose so much glory, and the objects of my love should perish. It was to suffer for these important purposes that I came unto this hour. For this I undertook to be the sinner’s Friend and Mediator; for this I left my native paradise, and assumed this feeble flesh and blood; for this I have spent three-and-thirty painful years in this wretched world, that I might meet this dismal hour. And now, when it is come, shall I fly from it, or shall I drop an undertaking which I have so much at heart, and in which I am so far engaged? No, this petition I will not urge, though it be the natural cry of my tender humanity. What then shall I say? *Father, glorify thy name*. This is the petition on which I will insist, come on me what will. Let the rabble insult me, as the offscouring of all things; let false witnesses accuse me, and perfidious judges condemn me, as a notorious criminal; let the blood-thirsty murderers rack me on the cross, and shed every drop of blood in my veins, still I will insist upon this petition; and not all the tortures that earth and hell can inflict; shall force me to retract it: *Father, glorify thy name*: display the glory of thy attributes by my sufferings, and I will patiently submit to them all. Display the perfections of thy nature, exhibit an honourable representation of thyself to all worlds by the salvation of sinners through my death, and I will yield myself to its power in its most shocking forms. Let this end be but answered, and I am content. This consideration calms the tumult of passions in my breast, overpowers the reluctance of my human nature, and makes it all patience and submission.”

* The sense is more easy if we read Πάτερ, σῶσον με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης, as a question. The original will bear it; and so Grotius, Doddridge, &c. understand it.

I intend, my brethren, to confine myself at present to this part of my text, this petition on which Jesus insists, and in which his mind acquiesces after perplexity and hesitation: *Father, glorify thy name.* And it evidently suggests to us this important truth, that the divine perfections are most illustriously displayed and glorified in the method of salvation through the sufferings of Christ.

This truth I shall endeavour to illustrate, after I have premised that it is most fit and proper that the glory of God should be the last end of all things, and particularly, that it should be his own principal end in all his works. He is in himself the most glorious of all beings, the supreme excellence, and the supreme good; and it is infinitely fit and reasonable that he should be known and acknowledged as such, and that it should be his great end in all his works to represent himself in this light. It is but justice to himself, and it is the kindest thing he can do for his creatures, since their chief happiness must consist in the enjoyment of the supreme good, and as they cannot enjoy him without knowing him. Selfishness in creatures is a vile and wicked disposition, because they are not the greatest or best of beings; but for God to love and seek himself above all, is the same thing as to love and seek what is absolutely best; for such he is. The aims of creatures should reach beyond themselves, because God, the supreme good, lies beyond them; they should all terminate upon him, and should not fall short of him, as they cannot fly beyond him, because he is the supreme excellence, and it is not to be found anywhere else. But for this reason he must aim at himself, if he aims at what is absolutely best; for he only is so. For creatures to aim principally at their own glory, to set themselves off, and make it their end to gain applause, is vanity and criminal ambition, because they are really unworthy of it, and were formed for the glory of another, even of the great Lord of all. But for God to make his own glory his highest end, for him to aim at the display of his attributes in all his works, is most decent and just, and infinitely distant from a vain ostentation, because there is nothing else so excellent,

and so worthy of a display : his perfections deserve to be represented in the most illustrious light, and demand the highest veneration and love from the whole universe. In short, for God to aim at his own glory in all his actions, is but for him to do justice to infinite merit, to display the most perfect beauty, to illustrate supreme excellence, to exhibit the supreme good in a just light, to procure honour to what is in itself most honourable, and to represent the true God in the most God-like manner : and what can be more fit or decent ? a lower end than this would be unworthy of him. This is of more real worth than the existence, or the happiness of ten thousand worlds. And this is the end which he has uniformly pursued in all the steps of creation, providence, and redemption. This particularly was his end in the permission of sin, and in the form of his administration towards our guilty world, through a Mediator. As, on the one hand, we are sure that he is not at all accessory to sin, as its proper producing cause, so we may be equally sure, on the other hand, that it has not entered into the world without his permission ; that is, it could not have happened if he had hindered it. Now there were undoubtedly very good reasons for this permission ; and one appears evident, namely, that if sin had never entered, it would have been impossible in the nature of things, that some of the divine perfections, particularly his punishing justice and his forgiving grace, should be displayed in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures. Pardoning grace could never be displayed, if there were no sin to be pardoned ; nor vindictive justice, if there were no crimes to be punished ; and consequently, if moral evil had never been permitted, these perfections must have been for ever idle, concealed, and as much unknown, as if they did not belong to the divine nature. But now there is room for the various economy of providence towards guilty creatures, and particularly for the mediatorial scheme of salvation to our world. And I now proceed to shew, that in this scheme all the perfections of God have an illustrious display, and are represented to the greatest advantage.

Here I would consider this scheme, both absolutely

in itself and relatively, as a part of the grand administration towards the rational world. In the latter view, I shall consider it but briefly, and therefore I shall begin with it.

Considering it relatively, as a part of the divine economy towards the rational world, it concurs with the other parts, to show the amiable and wise variety of the divine government, or in how many ways God can answer his ends, and display his perfections in his dispensations towards his creatures.

The scriptures give us an account of the divine conduct towards two sorts of reasonable creatures, angels and men. And from thence we may also learn the wise variety of the divine dispensations towards them. A part of the angels were preserved in their primitive state of holiness, and a part of them were suffered to fall into sin. But the whole human race was permitted to fall, and not one of them continued in their original state of integrity. A part of the angels are happy for ever; and so is a number of mankind. But here lies the difference; the angels are continued in a state of happiness, from which they never fell: but the saved from among men are recovered from a state of sin and misery, into which they fell, to a state of happiness, which they had entirely lost. The angels are entitled to happiness upon the footing of a covenant of works, to which they have yielded perfect obedience; but men are saved entirely upon the plan of the covenant of grace, on account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to them and accepted for them, though it be not originally their own. The angels, having never offended, have no need of a Mediator, or of redemption through his blood. But it is through a Mediator only that guilty mortals have access to God; and they owe their salvation to his death. As to the fallen angels, there was no Saviour provided for them; but *to us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.* They were never placed in a second state of trial, or under a dispensation of grace, but given up to irrecoverable ruin immediately, upon their first apostacy; but our guilty race is placed under a dispensation of grace, and made probationers

for a happy immortality, after their first fall. The devils are irrecoverably lost for want of a Saviour; but the sinners from among men perish by the neglecting a Saviour. All the fallen angels, without one exception, are remedilessly miserable; but only a part of mankind share in their doom. The angels stood every one for himself, but Adam was constituted our representative; our concerns were lodged in his hands, and we fell in him. Now what a surprizing variety is here! here are some holy and happy beings, that were never otherwise; and some that are recovered to holiness and happiness, who had been deeply involved in guilt and misery: here are some rewarded for their own personal works of obedience; and some are saved by the righteousness of another: here are some that have access to God without a Mediator, and some through a Mediator. Some that have always gone on in an easy natural tenor of uniform obedience; and some, that have passed through various conflicts and temptations, and ascended to heaven from the field of battle; here are some shining in all the glory of native innocence, highly improved, but not new-created; and some repaired from their ruins, and formed anew. Here are some that perish without a dispensation of grace, and some from under a dispensation of grace: some without the offer of a Saviour, and some for rejecting the offer. Here are some sinners abandoned for ever for the first offence; and some lost by abusing their time of trial and the means of their recovery. What various theatres are these, on which to display the glory of the divine perfections! what amazing wisdom to form so many different models of government, and so conduct and manage them all, as to answer the best ends? If there be any of the divine attributes that are most properly exercised upon sinless creatures that never fell, they meet with a proper object in the elect angels. If there be any perfections that cannot be displayed but upon the guilty, here are guilty men and angels, in the conduct towards whom they may shine in their full glory. If there be any of the divine attributes that may be represented in the most illustrious light, in the recovery of lost sinners

through the obedience and sufferings of a Mediator, here are thousands saved in this way from among men, who will be the everlasting monuments of their amiable glories. If any of the divine perfections can receive more honour by punishing abandoned criminals immediately given up to remediless ruin, they receive that honour from the everlasting punishment of the fallen angels; or if any of them be displayed to greater advantage, by the punishment of the ungrateful abusers of the means of grace, and a time of trial, the impenitent and unbelieving sons of men are a proper object for them. To all which I may add, that here we have the divine perfections displayed in justification by works and by grace, in inflicting punishment upon the proper offender, and upon Jesus Christ as a surety: and whatever glory may be peculiar to one or other of these ways, or may result from them all conjunctly as one whole, or system of government, all that glory redounds to the divine perfections.—Thus you see the method of salvation through Christ, considered as a part of the grand scheme of the divine government, tends to the illustration of the perfections of God: it is one link in the bright chain; and should it be broken or removed, the whole system and contexture would be shattered or left incomplete. Thus St. Paul tells us, that by the dispensations of grace towards the church, are made known, not only to men, but to principalities and powers (that is, to the angels) the manifold wisdom of God, his variegated and beautifully diversified wisdom. Ephes. iii. 10. And O! that our eyes may be enlightened to behold and admire it! However little this divine scheme be regarded in our blind and ungrateful world, the various ranks of angels cannot behold it with careless eyes: they stoop*, and look, and pry into it, with a divine curiosity and an insatiable eagerness, through all eternity.—But let us now proceed to a more particular survey of this scheme, considered absolutely in

* 1 Pet. i. 12. *Which things* (that is, the things now preached to us by the gospel, the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow) *the angels desire, παρασπῆσαι, to bend and pry into with eager eyes.*

itself; and, in this view, we shall find the divine perfections are displayed more gloriously by it, than by any other; particularly—as to the degree—the harmony—the universality—the grace and benevolence—and the wonderful and surprising manner of the display.

I. By this scheme the divine perfections are displayed in the highest degree possible. It appears that such and such attributes not only belong to God, but that they are in him in the highest perfection. Goodness had already displayed itself all the world over, in giving life and breath, and all things, to the sons of men, from age to age. But what are the blessings of the sun and rain, what are the productions of the earth, when compared to his only begotten Son, the man that was his fellow, whom he loved more than ten thousand worlds! This is an *unspeakable gift*; this the richest gift which even the infinite goodness of God could bestow: almighty love could do no more; this was its *ne plus ultra*. The creation and support of millions of worlds would not have displayed such a degree of love and goodness as this. God had displayed his holiness and justice, and his abhorrence of sin, by the variety of his judgments upon a guilty world; and he will display these attributes to all eternity by the more dreadful punishments of hell. But the subjects of these punishments are creatures of an inferior order; and they have provoked their gracious Sovereign, and most justly incurred his displeasure, by their own personal crimes. These he may therefore punish, and yet spare his Son, when he only becomes the surety of the guilty, and he is chargeable with no sin of his own, but only the imputed guilt of others. The dignity of his person, the greatness of the love of his Father to him, his personal innocence, and the benevolence of his design, plead for him, and seem to promise him an exemption, or at least the mitigation of his sufferings. This now is the greatest trial that can be made, whether divine justice be strictly inexorable, whether God can be prevailed upon by the strongest possible inducements to connive at sin, and dispense with his law. Had the doom of the whole

created universe been suspended on it, it would not have been so great a trial. And what was the issue? St. Paul will tell you the amazing result, *God spared not his own Son, his proper, peculiar Son**, but delivered him up to death, Rom. viii. 32. When the honour of his justice and holiness were at stake, even the Father would not relent; but with his own mouth he issues out the dread commission, *Awake, O! sword, against my Shepherd, against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts; smite the Shepherd, smite and spare not*, Zech. xiii. 7. *Now it even pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief*, Isa. liii. 10. And could there be a more astonishing display of justice and the sacred honours of the divine government? could a more striking proof be given of the infinite holiness of the divine nature, the malignity of sin, and his implacable hatred to it? No; all the punishments of hell can never give such an illustrious display of these perfections†. I might

* Τῆς ἰδίας υἱοῦ.

* How astonishing was the rigid justice of Brutus the Elder, who, in spite of all the passions of a father, passed sentence of death upon his own sons, for conspiring against the liberty of their country. While the amiable youths stood trembling and weeping before him, and hoping their tears would be the most powerful defence with a father! while the senate whisper for the moderation of the punishment, and that they might escape with banishment; while his fellow-consul is silent; while the multitude tremble and expect the decision with horror, the inexorable Brutus rises in all the stern majesty of justice, and with a steady voice, not interrupted with one sigh, turning to the lictors, who were the executioners, says to them, "To you, lictors, I deliver them; execute the law upon them." In this sentence he persisted inexorable, notwithstanding the weeping intercessions of the multitude, and the cries of the young men calling upon their father by the most endearing names. The lictors seized them, stripped them naked, tied their hands behind them, beat them with rods, and then struck off their heads; the inexorable Brutus looking on the bloody spectacle with unaltered countenance. Thus the father was lost in the judge: the love of justice overcame all the fondness of the parent: private interest was swallowed up in a regard to the public good, and the honour and security of government. This, perhaps, is the most striking resemblance of the justice of the Deity that can be found in the history of mankind. But how far short does it fall! how trifling were the sufferings of these youths, compared to those of the Son of God! How insignificant the honour of the law and government for which they suffered, to that of the divine! How small the good of the public, in the one case, to that in the other!—See *Universal History*, vol. xi. p. 360. Liv. l. ii. c. 5.

shew how sundry other attributes, particularly wisdom and veracity, are illustrated to the highest degree possible by this scheme; but my time denies me that pleasure.

II. The divine perfections are displayed in the most perfect harmony in this method of salvation: I mean such of them as seemed to jar, to cloud the glory of each other, or to be incapable of being illustrated at once, are now reconciled and mingle their beams, and, instead of obscuring, reflect a glory upon each other. The matter was so circumstanced, that it seemed really impossible to men and angels to display several divine perfections conjunctly. There seemed to be a necessity that one or other of them should be eclipsed; for if grace should be displayed in the universal pardon of sin, without the infliction of punishment, what will become of justice? How will the holiness of God be displayed? how will the honour of the law and the sacred rights of government be secured? But if these be illustrated by the punishment of sin, how will the goodness, grace, and mercy of God appear in diffusing happiness, in conferring blessings on the unworthy, and in relieving the miserable! If sinners are saved without a satisfaction, how will it appear that God is righteous, and hates all moral evil? or if a full satisfaction be made, how will it appear that their salvation is of grace? Can sin be punished, and yet the sinner escape without punishment? What device shall be found out for this? If sin pass unpunished, where is the honour of justice? and if all sinners are punished, where is the glory of grace? If the threatened penalty be not executed, is not the divine veracity rendered suspicious? and if it be executed, what will become of the amiable attribute of mercy? These, my brethren, are a few of the difficulties with which the case was embarrassed and perplexed; and they would have nonplused all created understandings: nothing but the infinite wisdom of God could surmount them. You see that the illustration of one set of perfections seems to cast a cloud over another set. To whatever side the Deity inclines, there seems to be a necessity that he should be but half-glorious, like the sun under

a partial eclipse. And is there any method in which he may be represented as he is, all glorious throughout?

“ A God all o’er, consummate, absolute,
 “ Full-orb’d, in his whole round of rays complete.” YOUNG.

Yes; such a method is the plan of salvation through Christ. These apparently clashing attributes harmonize; and are so far from clouding each other, that they are each of them displayed to greater advantage than if only one had been singly exercised. They reflect a mutual glory upon each other; and every one appears more illustrious in conjunction with the rest, than if it shone alone with its own peculiar glory. Here justice is honoured by the infliction of the punishment upon Christ, as the surety of sinners; and yet goodness, grace, and mercy shine in full glory in their salvation. They are saved upon the footing of strict justice, because their surety made a complete satisfaction for them; and yet they are saved through grace, because it was grace that provided and accepted this method of vicarious satisfaction. The honours of the divine government are secured by Christ’s perfect obedience to the law; and the philanthropy and mercy of the divine administration are also exhibited in the salvation of those who in their own persons had broken the law. Thus, according to that prophetic oracle, *Mercy and truth are met together, and agreed: righteousness and peace have kissed each other in perfect friendship*, Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11. Here also the wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed, in concerting such an amazing plan as would reconcile these seemingly opposite attributes, and advance the honour of all by the exercise of each; and even of that which appeared most inconsistent with the rest. This scheme bears the peculiar seal and stamp of the most finished wisdom. In it are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. O! the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God that appear in it! It was only his infinite wisdom that could invent such a scheme: it surpassed all created under-

standing. Hence it is often called *the wisdom of God in a mystery; the mystery which has been hid from ages and generations*: and it is said to reveal things *which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived*, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

To this head I may subjoin, that in Christ, as Mediator, are reconciled the most opposite and seemingly contradictory characters. Things may be truly and consistently predicted of him, which cannot agree to any one subject besides himself. A God-man, divinity and humanity united in one person; the Ancient of Days, yet now but 1760 years old; the everlasting Father, and yet the virgin's Son, the child of Mary; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and yet the Servant of servants. The highest dignity and glory, and the lowest condescension and humility meet in him. Here is justice punishing every the least sin, and yet grace to pardon the very greatest of sinners. Here are infinite majesty, and the most transcendent meekness: the deepest reverence toward God, and a full equality with him: infinite worthiness of good, and the most perfect patience under the suffering of evil; a submissive, obedient spirit, and supreme and universal dominion! absolute sovereignty and humble resignation. Jesus conquers by falling, saves others by dying himself, and the blood of his heart becomes the grand cure for the dying world. In him we see the highest love to God, and in the mean time the greatest love to the enemies of God; the greatest regard to the divine holiness, and the greatest benevolence to unholy sinners. It would be endless to enumerate all the opposite excellencies and characters that meet and harmonize in Jesus Christ; but these may suffice as a specimen. And what a surprizing complication of things is here! Things that never did, or could meet in any other, harmoniously center in him. How justly is his name called Wonderful! for as his name is, so is he: and as such, he will appear to all that know him to all eternity. How bright and astonishing is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! "That face, in which sense discovers nothing but marks of pain and disgrace; that bloated; mangled visage, red

with gore, covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes, and pale with death, that would be the last object in which the carnal mind would seek to see the glory of the God of life, a visage clouded with the horror of death; in that face we may see more of the divine glory than in the face of heaven and earth*." He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God; that is, in him is the brightest display of his wisdom and power, as well as of his other attributes. But I must proceed.

III. The perfections of God are more universally displayed in the method of salvation through Christ than in any other way.

The wisdom, power, and goodness of God are displayed in the formation of the world; and there are many traces of these perfections, as well as of his justice, discoverable in the government of it. But there is a more full and striking view of these exhibited in the government of the world upon the plan of redemption, with the additional illustration of some other attributes, which would have been unknown, or discovered only by some feeble glimmerings, if the world had never been governed upon this plan. Here, as I observed, the goodness of God in all its forms is illustriously displayed: grace in bestowing free favours upon the guilty and undeserving; mercy and compassion in relieving the miserable; patience and long-suffering in bearing so long with provoking obstinate rebels; whereas if there had been no guilt, misery, and rebellion permitted to enter into the world; or if no guilt had been pardoned, no misery relieved, no rebellion endured, there would have been no room for the display of grace, mercy, and patience. Here justice shines, and shines with peculiar advantage: now it appears to be an inseparable attribute of the Deity, and which he can in no case dispense with. Here veracity appears unstained, in executing the penalty of the law, even upon the darling Son of God. The majesty of the divine government and its sacred rights, these two are represented as inviolable and venerable, and demanding the regard of the whole cre-

* MacLaurin's Sermon on glorying in the cross.

ation; whereas, if there had been no guilt, there could have been no object upon which the awful honours of divine justice might be displayed; and if all guilt had been pardoned without satisfaction, this majestic attribute, so venerable and so amiable in the character of a ruler, would have been for ever concealed; or rather, great umbrage would have been given, that such a perfection did not belong to the supreme Governor of the world. And a judge without justice, a lawgiver who does not enforce his laws by proper sanctions, could be agreeable to none but wilful criminals. A petty kingdom of the earth would soon become a scene of lawless violence and confusion under such a ruler; and how dreadful would be the case, if the whole universe were under such a head! Here also is a most illustrious display of divine power. Though Christ was crucified in weakness, yet omnipotence shone even upon the cross. This may seem a paradox. "The Jews thought Christ's crucifixion a demonstration of his want of power; hence they upbraided him, that he that wrought so many miracles, suffered himself to hang on the cross; but this was the greatest miracle of all. They asked why he, who saved others, saved not himself: they named the reason, without taking notice of it: that was the very reason why at that time he saved not himself, because he saved others. The motive of his enduring the cross was powerful divine love, stronger than death: the fruits of it powerful divine grace, the power of God unto salvation, Rom. i. 16.: making new creatures, raising souls from the dead: these are acts of omnipotence. We justly admire the power of the Creator, in the motion of the heavenly bodies; but the motions of souls towards God as their centre is far more glorious.—The curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. So they found it who first brought it upon themselves. It sunk legions of angels, who excel in strength, from the heaven of heavens to the bottomless pit. And the same weight hung over the head of man. Before man could bear it, before any person could bear his own proportion of it, it behoved, as it were, to be divided into numberless parcels, and distributed among all

mankind, allowing every sinner his share. Man, after numberless ages, would have borne but a small part: the wrath to come would have been wrath to come to all eternity. But Christ had strength to bear it all, to bear it all at once, to bear it all alone; and what a glorious manifestation of his might was this! of the noblest kind of might, that he was mighty to save*!"—I might be more particular, but time will not allow.

IV. The scheme of salvation through the sufferings of Christ gives the most gracious, benevolent, and amiable display of the divine perfections. This is evident at first sight, from this consideration, that by this scheme sinners, such sinners as we, may be saved. O! the joyful sound! salvation for the lost, pardon for the condemned, sanctification for the unholy, life for the dead! what can be more agreeable to us? Angels contemplate this plan with eternal pleasure, though they do not need nor receive such blessings from it, and how much more should we, who are so nearly interested! Goodness, grace, and mercy are always the favourite attributes to guilty creatures such as we are, and where do they shine so bright in heaven or earth, as in the cross of our dying Jesus? But you will say, "Suppose that the sins of men had been pardoned, and they saved, without the sufferings of Christ in their stead; suppose that the stern attribute of justice had never been displayed in the infliction of punishment either upon sinners, or upon their surety, where would have been the injury? would not the Deity have appeared in a still more amiable light, as all benevolence and mercy?" So criminals may surmise, whose interest it is that there should be no such attribute as punitive justice. But I appeal to angels, who are not parties, as criminals are, but competent judges; I appeal to every lover of virtue and piety; nay, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether a ruler without justice would be an amiable character in their view? Would they choose to live under a government where vice, violence, and confusion were not restrained by

* MacLaurin.

the execution of the law, but shared in the rewards, or at least in the indemnity of perfect obedience? would they choose a king, who, through a false notion of lenity and mercy, would suffer criminals to pass with impunity? Do not the innocent part of the subjects approve of the conduct of their rulers in condemning and executing criminals, as well as in protecting themselves? and what a murmuring spreads through a government, when such are tolerated or approved? The complaints we hear of the excessive strictness of divine justice, the cruelty of eternal torments, &c. is the voice of guilt, and we should regard it no more than the clamours of a band of robbers against the just laws of their country. Justice, my brethren, is not that grim, horrible, and forbidding attribute, which the guilty are apt to imagine; it is not only a majestic, but an amiable, agreeable, lovely perfection; it is a part of the moral beauty of the divine nature; it is essential to the character of a good ruler; it is necessary to the public good; it is absolutely necessary to the exercise of goodness itself. The judicious, well-conducted exercise of goodness is not a promiscuous, indiscriminating communication of happiness at random; but the communication of happiness according to the real characters of the subjects; it supposes a distinction of the obedient and disobedient. No government can subsist without this; and this is the very nature of distributive justice. Hence it follows that the display of divine justice, as well as grace in the sufferings of Christ, represents the divine nature in an amiable light to us, as infinitely worthy of our love as well as of our fear. But,

V. The way of salvation through the sufferings of Jesus Christ gives the most wonderful and surprising display of the perfections of God. This is a cause of wonder and surprize, which is strange and uncommon, new and unexpected; and certainly we can never meet with things more strange, uncommon, and unexpected, than in the way of salvation through Christ. I have mentioned some of them already with another view; and now I shall enumerate a few wonders more. At

the creation, a world was brought out of a state of non-existence into being; but in this way, sinners are brought into a state of complete happiness and glory out of a state infinitely worse than that of non-existence. In the old creation, as there were no pre-existent materials, or tendency to existence, so there was no resistance: but in the new creation, there is a strong resistance, an obstinate opposition of corrupt nature against the operation; and yet, *behold all things are made new!* Who would ever have thought that the apostate angels should have been abandoned to the remediless ruin, while a Saviour is provided for the inferior order of man! Had Adam been plainly informed that He, by whom he and all things were made, should assume his frail and mortal nature, how would he have wondered! And how must angels wonder, to see the Creator and the creature made one person! to see their Lord and Master become man, a man that in his best estate was made a little lower than they! How strange, that guilty mortals should be saved by the death of the Lord of life! How astonishing, that a church should be purchased by the blood of God! how strange and surprising, that the reputed son of the carpenter, the despised Nazarene should be made *head over all things! that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him,* that had been so rudely insulted, and treated as the most contemptible malefactor! That the reputed criminal, condemned by Pilate, and crucified on mount Calvary, should be made the only Saviour, and the supreme Judge of mankind! How strange, that the blood of the cross should restore peace to earth and heaven, and be the grand remedy of a dying world! that the guilty should be redeemed by the death of the innocent? that death should be conquered by the death of the Author of life! that the greatest sin that ever was committed on our guilty globe, namely, the murder of the Son of God, should be the occasion of the pardon of sin, even for his murderers! Are not these, my brethren, strange unprecedented things! can you find any thing like them in heaven or earth? these are objects of grateful astonishment to all the celestial

armies through all the periods of their happy immortality.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections and exhortations.

1. You hence see what should principally recommend the gospel scheme to us; namely, that it promotes the glory of God, and gives such an advantageous, amiable, and majestic view of his perfections. This is the grand design of God, and the only design worthy of him in all his works, and particularly in making this constitution. It was this consideration induced the blessed Jesus to go through his painful work, and therefore on this account principally we should delight in this method. And this is the disposition of all those that are conformed to God, and have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Our own salvation should indeed be dear to us, but not merely because it is ours, but because it tends to bring glory to God, the great end of all things. Therefore,

2. They who have never been sensible of the glory of God manifested in this method of salvation, and charmed with the divine perfections displayed therein, have not complied with it, and cannot be saved by it. None can be saved by it, that do not heartily approve of it; and none can rationally approve of it, till they see its glory. It is the characteristic of all true believers, that *God hath shined into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 6. and iii. 18. It is natural to all to desire to be saved: but they are not solicitous about the glory of God: let them be but safe, and the selfish creatures care little for any thing else. But heaven itself is recommended to a pious soul by the thought that it may be brought thither in a way that tends to advance his glory. Alas! if this be the case, how many of you are quite off from the only plan of salvation! you see no peculiar glories in it, and it does not attract your hearts as the grand scheme for illustrating the divine perfections; and consequently, you have no interest in it.

3. Hence see the aggravated guilt of not accepting

this method of salvation; it is a hostile attempt upon the divine glory; it is the worst of sacrilege; and as such, Jehovah resents it.

4. You may hence see how secure you are of salvation who are upon the gospel-plan. Your salvation in this way is for the glory of the divine perfections. God is so far from having any objections against it, that, on the other hand, his honour is advanced by it; and therefore he will take the same care of your salvation as he will of his own glory, which is concerned therein.

5. These things may endear the institution of the Lord's supper to you as exhibiting these glories, by sacred emblems, to your senses: therefore you should esteem it, and reverently attend upon it.

It is true, this ordinance represents the Lord Jesus in his lowest state of abasement. But even in his lowest state, there appears a peculiar glory. Here I cannot deny you the pleasure of a quotation from that excellent man Mr. MacLaurin, once my friend and correspondent, now the companion of angels, and inhabitant of a better world. "Even the meanness of Christ did not wholly becloud his glory: many beams shone through the disguise. His birth was mean on earth below: but it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above. He had a poor lodging; but a star lighted visitants to it from distant countries. Never prince had such visitants, so conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other kings have: but he was attended with multitudes of patients, seeking and obtaining healing of soul and body; that was more true greatness than if he had been attended with crowds of princes. He made the dumb that attended him to sing his praises; and the lame to leap for joy, the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. He had no guard of soldiers, nor magnificent retinue of servants: but, as the centurion that had both acknowledged, health and sickness, life and death, took orders from him: even the winds and storms, which no earthly power could controul, obey him; and death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey when he

demanded it. He did not walk upon tapestry; but when he walked un the sea, the waters supported him. All parts of the creation, except sinful man, honoured him as their Creator. He had no treasure; but when he had occasion for money, the sea sent it to him in the mouth of a fish. He had no barns nor corn-fields; but when he inclined to make a feast, a few loaves covered a sufficient table for many thousands. Nor was his glory wholly clouded at his death: He had not indeed that phantastic equipage of sorrow that other great persons have on such occasions, but the frame of nature solemnized the death of its Author: heaven and earth were mourners, the sun was clad in black, and, if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth trembled under the awful load. There were few to pay the Jewish compliment of rending their garments; but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels. He had not a grave of his own, but other mens graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of such a tenant in their territories; but he came there, not as a subject, but as an Invader, a Conquerer: it was then the king of terrors lost his sting, and on the third day the Prince of Life triumphed over him, spoiling death and the grave."— These are the things, my brethren, this ordinance was designed to commemorate: and certainly these are full of glory.

6. These things may furnish you with proper materials for meditation this day. Fix your thoughts upon the glories of God displayed in a crucified Jesus, take a survey of the scheme of salvation through his blood, as bringing not only salvation to you, but honour to him; and wonder, love, and adore.

Finally, Let us all fall in with this glorious method of salvation; and join with God and Christ, and the whole creation, in glorifying God in this way; and in this way, and none else, we shall find salvation for ourselves.

SERMON XXXVIII.

Religion the highest Wisdom, and Sin the
greatest Madness and Folly.

PSALM iii. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.*

WISDOM is a character so honourable and ornamental to a reasonable being, that those who best knew the dignity of their own nature, have had no higher ambition than to be esteemed and called lovers of it. Hence the original of the name Philosopher†, which signifies no more than a lover of wisdom. On the other hand, there is hardly any character deemed more reproachful, or that is more resented, than that of a fool. Men are often as jealous of the reputation of their understandings as of their morals, and think it as a great reproach to be without sense as without goodness.

There is a prodigious diversity in the intellectual capacities of mankind, and their souls differ as much as their bodies; but whether it be owing to the intrinsic difference of their souls, or to the different formation of their bodies, is not my present purpose to determine. Some, that share in human nature, give very little discoveries of reason above the most sagacious sorts of brutes. The generality are endowed with common sense, which though it has nothing brilliant and pompous in it, and does not qualify them for high,

* Job xxviii. 28. Prov. i. 7. and ix. 10.

† Φιλοσοφος, quasi φιλος σοφιας a lover of wisdom. This name Pythagoras accepted, when he thought that of Σοφος, a wise man, was too ostentatious and arrogant for him.

improvements in science, or making a figure in the learned world, yet it is sufficient for all the purposes of life, and the necessities of a human creature. There are a few also who seem raised beyond their species, and perhaps approach near to the lower ranks of angels by a superior genius. These have been the first inventors and improvers of useful arts and sciences; which others, of inferior understanding, are able to put in practice for their own purposes, though they had not sagacity at first to discover them.

This little world of ours is an improved spot in the creation. How vastly different an appearance does it now make from its original state of pure nature, when it emerged out of chaos, uncultivated by art! What numerous arts and trades have been found out to furnish life with necessaries and comforts! How deeply have some penetrated into the world of knowledge! They have traced the secret workings of nature; they have even brought intelligence from the worlds above us, and discovered the courses and revolutions of the planets.

When you see these discoveries, you would conclude mankind to be a wise race of creatures; and indeed in such things as these they discover no inconsiderable abilities. Almost every man in his province can manage his affairs with some judgment. Some can manage a farm; others are dexterous in mechanics; others have a turn for mercantile affairs; others can unfold the mysteries of nature, and carry their searches far into the ideal worlds; others can conduct an army, or govern a nation. In short, every man forms some scheme which he apprehends will conduce to his temporal advantage; and prosecutes it with some degree of judgment.

But is this all the wisdom that becomes a candidate for eternity? Has he a good understanding who only acts with reason in the affairs of this life; but, though he is to exist for ever in another world, and to be perfectly happy or miserable there, yet takes no thought about the concerns of his immortal state? Is this wisdom? Is this consistent even with common sense? No; with sorrow and solemnity I would speak it, the

most of men in this respect are fools and madmen; and it is impossible for the most frantic madman in Bedlam to act more foolishly about the affairs of this life, than they generally do about the affairs of religion and eternity. There is such a thing as a partial madness; a person may have, as it were, one weak side to his mind, and it may be sound and rational in other respects. You may meet with some lunatics and madmen that will converse reasonably with you, and you would not suspect their heads are disordered, till they touch upon some particular point, and then you are to expect reason from them no more; they talk the wildest nonsense, and are governed entirely by their imaginations. Thus alas! it is with the generality of mankind in the present case. They are wise for this world; they talk and act at least agreeably to common sense; but hear them talk and observe their conduct about the concerns of their souls, and you can call them reasonable creatures no longer. *They are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God.* To bring them to themselves by exposing to them their madness, is my present design.

The text shews us the first step to true wisdom, and the test of common sense; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* This is so frequently repeated, that it may pass for a scripture maxim; and we may be sure it is of singular importance. Job starts the question, *Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?* He searches nature through, in quest of it, but cannot find it: he cannot purchase it with the gold of Ophir; and its price is above rubies. At length he recollects the primitive instruction of God to man, and there he finds it; *To man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job xxviii. 28. Solomon, the wisest of men, begins his Proverbs with this maxim, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* Prov. i. 7. And he repeats it again, Prov. ix. 10. *The fear of the Lord is*

the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy (the knowledge of those that may be called Saints with a sneer) *is understanding.*

The fear of the Lord, in scripture, signifies not only that pious passion of filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion; hence it is explained in the last part of the verse, by *doing his commandments*. The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of christianity; in short, all that holiness of heart and life which is necessary to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. So that the sense of the text is this: 'To practise religion and virtue, to take that way which leads to everlasting happiness, is wisdom, true wisdom, the beginning of wisdom, the first step towards it; unless you begin here, you can never attain it; all your wisdom without this, does not deserve the name; it is madness and nonsense. To do his commandments is the best test of a good understanding; a good sound understanding have all they that do this, all of them without exception: however weak some of them may be in other things, they are wise in the most important respect; but without this, however cunning they are in other things, they have lost their understandings; they contradict common sense; they are beside themselves. In short, to pursue everlasting happiness as the end, in the way of holiness as the mean, this is wisdom, this is common sense; and there can be none without this.'

Wisdom consists in two things: choosing a right end, and using right means to obtain it. Now what end so becoming a creature to live for ever, as everlasting happiness? And in what way can it be obtained, but in the way of holiness? Consult the judgment of God in his word; consult your own conscience, or even common sense, and you will find that this is the case. Therefore he is a man of sense that pursues this end in this way; but he is a fool, he is brutish, that chooses an inferior end, or that pursues this in a wrong way.

My time will not allow me to do any more than to

mention some instances of the folly and madness of such as do not make the fear of the Lord the beginning of their wisdom.

I. Men will not take the safest side in religion, which their reason and self-love carry them to do in other cases.

It is very possible the love of ease and pleasure, and a self-flattering disposition, may prompt your invention to form a plausible system of religion; a religion that admits of great hopes with little evidences, and that allows you many indulgences and lays few restraints upon you; a religion purged, as you imagine, from some of the melancholy and gloomy doctrines of christianity, and that releases you from those restraints, so painful to a wicked heart, which the holy religion of Jesus lays upon you. It is very possible you may hope you shall obtain eternal happiness without much pains, and without observing the strictness of universal holiness; you may indulge hopes of heaven, though you indulge yourselves wilfully in sin; you may flatter yourselves that God is not so inexorably just as the sacred scriptures represent him; and that his threatenings are only tremendous sounds, without any design to be executed in all their strictness; you may flatter yourselves, that the punishments of a future state are not intolerably dreadful, nor of everlasting duration; you may excuse and diminish your sins, and make a great many plausible apologies for them. But are you sure of these things? Have you demonstration for them, upon which you may venture your eternal all? Think the matter over seriously again; have you certainty that these things are so? and are you willing to perish for ever if they should be otherwise? What if you should be mistaken? What if you should find God as strict and holy as his word represents him? What if all his dreadful threatenings should be sincere and true, and your sins have infinitely greater malignity in his eyes than in yours? What if in a little time you should find that the scriptures give a more just account of the punishments of hell than your self-flattering hearts suggested to you, and that they are indeed intolerable and strictly eternal? What if you

should find, when it is too late to correct the mistake, that those neglected, ridiculous things, regeneration, conversion, holiness of heart and practice, the mortification of sin, and a laborious course of devotion,— what if you should find they are absolutely necessary to everlasting happiness? What if it should appear that the wilful indulgence of the least known sin will eternally ruin you? Stand and pause, and ask yourselves, What if you should find matters thus, quite the reverse to what you flattered yourselves? What will become of you then? You are undone, irreparably undone through all eternity. Well, to speak modestly, this may be the case, for what you know; and is it not then the part of a wise man to provide against such a dreadful contingency? Will you run so terrible a risk, and yet claim a good understanding? Do you esteem a life of religion so burdensome, that you had better make such a desperate venture than choose it? Do you esteem the pleasures of sin so sweet, so solid, so lasting, that it is your interest to run the risk of intolerable, eternal misery, rather than part with them? Can you form such an estimate as this while in your senses? No, he is a madman with whom certain pleasures for a little time, the sordid pleasures of sin, outweigh an eternity of perfect happiness. He is certainly not in his right mind that would rather be tormented in hell for ever, than lead an holy life, and labour to escape the wrath to come. Therefore act in this as you do in other cases of uncertainty, choose the safest side. Believe and regard what God has said; be holy in all manner of conversation; strive with all your might to enter in at the strait gate; accept of Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Do this, and you are safe, let the case be as it will; there are no bad consequences that can possibly follow from this conduct. It will, upon the whole, be the most pleasant for you, even in this life; and your reason will tell you, this is a more certain way to escape everlasting misery, and secure eternal happiness, than the contrary. But if you are resolutely set upon running the risk, and fool-hardy enough to venture your eternal all upon such improbabilities, not to say impossibilities, you forfeit the cha-

acter of a reasonable being; you are mad in this respect, however wise you may be in others.

II. Is it not the greatest folly to believe, or profess to believe, the great truths of religion, and yet act quite contrary to such a belief?

How many are there who own God to be the greatest and the best of beings, and yet neglect him, and pay a greater regard to a thousand other things! They own him lovely, and do not love him; their King, and do not obey him; and their Benefactor, and make no returns of gratitude to him. They confess that heaven is better than earth, and yet they pursue the things of this life, to the neglect of all the happiness of heaven. They believe their souls are of more importance than their bodies; and yet they will not take half the care about them that they take about their bodies. They confess that a life of sin and impenitence is very dangerous, and that it will end in everlasting misery; yet, with this confession in their mouth, and this conviction in their consciences, they will, they obstinately will go on impenitently in sin. They own that religion and virtue are excellent things, and yet they never make it the main business of their life, but live carelessly without them. They believe they are sinners, worthy of punishment, and yet they are generally as unconcerned as if they were innocent. They believe that Christ is the only Saviour of sinners, and yet they are as little concerned to get an interest in him as if they could be saved without him. They believe that all the pleasures of this transitory life are infinitely inferior to the pleasures of religion and the happiness of the heavenly state; they believe these pleasures will ruin them for ever if they continue in them, and yet they will persist in them, though by this they throw away their everlasting happiness, and incur eternal misery! Thus they believe, or profess to believe; and our country is full of such believers: But what absurd, self-contradicting creatures are they! What madness is it to entertain a belief that answers no other end but to condemn their practice, and aggravate their sin? Do they really believe these things, or do they not? if not, What folly is it to profess to

believe them? Do they think to impose by an empty profession on him who searches the hearts and the reins; or have they no other end in their profession of religion than just to be esteemed christians by men? Can they think that their faith will indemnify them in contradicting it? or that they may sin safely, because they sin against knowledge? Are these the conclusions of a sound mind? Must not a man be out of his senses before he can admit them?—But if you suppose they believe these things, it is certain they are entirely mad in this affair. What! to neglect God, and holiness, and heaven when they know they are of infinite importance! to choose the ways of sin, when they believe they will end in ruin! Is this the part of a wise man? Should a sick man tell you he is certain to die unless he takes such a medicine, and yet you should see that he does not take it, but continues to drink the most deadly poison, what would you think of him? Would you not conclude either that he did not believe himself, or that he was distracted? But this is the very conduct of many professed believers, who yet think they have no small share of wisdom. I will not dispute your wisdom about your secular affairs; you may be wise to do evil; but I am sure in these instances you are quite delirious; and yourselves will be convinced of it to your cost, when God shall say unto you, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*, Luke xii. 20.

All your pleas to vindicate or excuse your conduct do but aggravate your folly. Do you say, “Your lusts are headstrong and ungovernable, and you cannot restrain them?” I doubt not but this is true; but is this a reason why you should be so easy and careless? Are your enemies so strong? And will you, on that very account, be faint and inactive in your resistance? Ought you not to rise and cry to God for his grace to change your nature, to subdue these strong sins, and make you holy, since without it you cannot be saved? Besides, consider whether your pretended excuse be not a real aggravation. “Your lusts are so strong, you say, that you cannot restrain them.” What is this but to say that you are so wicked, that you have no

heart to break off from sin? and is the inveteracy of your wickedness an excuse for it? Does not common sense remonstrate against such an absurdity? Do you plead, that “you intend to repent of this inconsistent conduct hereafter?” But if religion is an excellent thing, as you profess to believe it, why do you not choose it now? the sooner the better. Again, is it not the greatest folly to indulge yourselves in a practice that you deliberately intend to repent of? If your present conduct be wise, why do you intend to repent of it? the very intention implies that you are even now convinced it is foolish; and what will your repentance be but a deep sense of your folly? And can there be a greater madness than deliberately to do any thing which at the very time you intend to repent of? Is there any thing more absurd and ridiculous? Is this your conduct in other things? Will you make a bargain, which you know you will afterwards repent of? Will you prosecute a scheme which you deliberately intend afterwards to condemn and be sorry for? Can you do such things, and yet take it ill to be called fools?—Further, Why do you design to repent? Is it because you hate sin? No; for if that was the reason, you would immediately forsake it. Is it because you love God and holiness? No; for then you would devote yourselves to the service of God immediately, and could not bear a delay. But you intend to force yourselves upon a little remorse of conscience, when the punishment of sin is just ready to fall upon you, with no other design but just to escape it. And can you think there is any value in such extorted sorrows, that proceed not from hatred of sin, or love to God, but merely from self-love, and a servile fear of punishment? Can any wise man look upon this as repentance to life, or hope that God will accept of it? Finally, Are you sure of that uncertain hereafter, in which you purpose to repent? Is there any man in his senses that dare pretend he is certain of another day? or that he shall not die by some sudden accident, or in a delirium, in which he has no time nor composure to repent?

III. Is it not the greatest folly for men to pretend to love God, when their temper and conduct are incon-

sistent with it, and plainly evidential of the contrary?

If you go round the world with the question, "Do you love God? Do you love him above all?" You will hardly meet with any one but what will answer, "Yes, to be sure; I have loved him all my life." Well; but where are the evidences and effects of this love? If you pretend friendship to men, they expect the expressions of it from you on every occasion; otherwise they will see through the pretence, and pronounce it flattery. They expect you should often think of them with tender affection, perform them all the good offices in your power, study to please them, be tender of their characters, solicitous about their interest, and delight in their society. These are the inseparable effects of love; and certainly, if you love God, your love will have such effects, especially since, if you love him at all with sincerity, you love him above all other persons and things. But men will insist upon it that they love him above all, and yet very seldom or never think of him with tender affection: they love him above all, and yet indulge themselves in sin, that abominable thing which he hates: they love him above all, and yet have little solicitude about pleasing him, and doing his will: they love him above all, and yet are unconcerned about the interests of religion in the world, which are his interests, and careless about his honour and glory; they love him above all, and yet have no pleasure in conversing with him in prayer and the other ordinances of his grace, where he holds spiritual interviews with his people. They love him above all, and yet love and delight in a thousand other things more than him; and they would highly resent it if one should begin to question the sincerity of their love; and they hope God will accept of it, and reward it. But can men in their senses think that this will pass for true and supreme love with him, that knows all things? They cannot expect that their fellow-creatures should thus be imposed upon; and is it not the greatest madness to imagine they can thus impose upon Omniscience? Indeed it may astonish any man that knows what love is, to find that

the most of men pretend they love God, even while they are giving the most glaring evidences of disaffection to him; and, after all, it is almost impossible to convince them that they do not thoroughly love him. What madness has seized the world, that they will not receive conviction in such a plain case? What mean thoughts must they have of God, when they think to put him off with such an empty compliment, and hypocritical profession!

IV. Is it not the greatest folly for men to hope for heaven, when they have no evidences at all of their title to it, or fitness for it?

Is it not the dictate of common sense, that no man can be happy in any thing but what he has a relish for, and delights in? Can an illiterate rustic find pleasure in rigid mathematical demonstrations, and learned speculations, or a man of pleasure and business in the ascetic mortified life of a hermit? Can a man whose taste is vitiated by sickness, enjoy happiness in the entertainments of a feast? No, nothing can make a man happy, but what is suited to his relish and disposition. And yet there are thousands that have no relish for the enjoyment of God, no pleasure in thinking of him, or conversing with him, no delight in his service and acts of devotion, who yet hope to be for ever completely happy in these exercises in heaven. The happiness of heaven, as I have often told you, consists in such things as these; and how can you hope to be happy there, while you have no pleasure in them? There are thousands who have no delight in any thing holy or religious, but only in the gratifications of their senses and the enjoyment of earthly things, who yet hope to be happy in heaven, in the wants of all sensual and earthly enjoyments. There are thousands who now disgust the society of the religious as intolerably precise, who yet flatter themselves they shall be perfectly happy in the company of saints and angels, where the meanest is incomparably more holy than the most sanctified creature upon earth. And have they a sound understanding who can entertain such absurd hopes? Does not common sense tell us,

that **God**, who does every thing wisely, will bring none to heaven but those whom he has made fit for it beforehand? and that as none shall be sent to hell but those that were previously wicked, so none shall be admitted into the world of glory but those who are previously made holy? None first begin to be holy in heaven or wicked in hell: both parties bring with them those dispositions which are fit for their respective places and employments. How absurd is it therefore to hope for heaven, while you have no heavenly dispositions? You may as well hope to see the sun without eyes. Further, God has assured you in his word, and you profess to believe him, that without regeneration, faith, repentance, and interest in Christ, and universal holiness, you cannot enter into his kingdom; and yet, are there not some of you who are foolish enough to hope for it, though destitute of all these? Has he not told you that drunkards, swearers, unclean, malicious, contentious persons, liars, and the like, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? And yet, though you know these are your characters, and the world knows it too, you will hope for admission to it, in defiance of God's most express repeated declarations! What madness is this! and how peculiar to this affair! The debauchee will not expect happiness in mortification and devotion, nor the prodigal in hoarding up useless wealth; and yet thus absurdly will they act in their expectations of heaven!

V. And lastly, Is it not the greatest madness to be more concerned about the affairs of time than those of eternity?

It is plain to any man in his senses, that the happiness and misery which are extreme, and which shall endure for ever, are of infinitely greater importance than all the enjoyments and all the sufferings of this transitory state. And you will hardly meet with any man but will own this to be his belief. But, alas! into what consternation may it strike us, when we survey the conduct of the generality! Are they as much concerned about the eternal world to which they are hastening, as to the concerns of time? Are they as labo-

rious and zealous to obtain everlasting happiness as to gain the riches of this world, or to gratify their sensual appetites? Are they as solicitous to avoid everlasting misery as to shun sickness, poverty, or any temporal calamity? Are they as cautious of sinning, which ruins their souls for ever, as of drinking poison, which may endanger their health or temporal life! Do not many of you know it is quite the reverse with you? Are not the concerns of this life the principal objects of your thoughts, your cares, and labours? And what can be a more consummate folly? You practically prefer a trifle of an hour to a substantial good of endless duration. You are careless about everlasting torment, and yet cautiously shun the light sufferings of a few moments. It matters not what you think, or say in this matter; it is your practice that determines the affair; and does not that shew that time outweighs a vast eternity with you? And what can be more absurd? If you should throw away an estate to obtain a farthing, if you should run upon a drawn sword to escape a prickle, if you should prefer pebbles to crowns and kingdoms, darkness to light, or one luxurious meal to the support of your whole life, it would not be so shocking a piece of madness.

I might give you many more instances of the madness of those who do not begin this wisdom with the fear of the Lord, but the inferences from the subject are so numerous and important, that I must reserve the rest of the time for them.

I. Since there is so much folly in the world in matters of religion, how astonishing is it that it is not universally contemned and ridiculed, or pitied and lamented! If men act a foolish part in other things, they soon furnish matter of laughter and contempt to the gay and witty part of mankind; and the thoughtful and benevolent view them with compassion. But let them act ever so foolishly in the concerns of eternity, there is hardly any notice taken of it; the absurdity is no way shocking; nay, the generality commend their conduct by imitating it themselves; and if any are so wise as to find fault with this madness, they are termed fools themselves, and the general laugh is

turned against them. How unaccountable is this, that men who act prudently in other things, and are easily shocked with a mad and frantic behaviour, can view the folly of mankind in this respect without horror, or perhaps with approbation! The only reason for it is, that the generality are madmen in this respect, and the folly is approved because it is common. To be singularly wise is to be foolish, in the opinion of the world; and to be fools with the multitude, is the readiest way to get the reputation of wisdom. They prove religion to be folly, by a majority of votes; and as many who are fools in this affair are wise in other respects, their judgment is implicitly submitted to. But pray, sirs, use your own reason, and judge impartially for yourselves, and I am sure you must see the wild absurdity of their conduct. Be nobly singular in beginning wisdom with the fear of the Lord; and whatever others think of you now, God, angels, and good men will applaud your wisdom; and even those who now ridicule it, will approve of it at last.

II. With what an ill grace do the irreligious condemn and despise those that make religion their great concern, as weak, silly creatures! Sinners, let your own reason determine, can there be any thing more foolish than your own behaviour? And does it become you to brand others with the odium of folly? Alas! you have reason to turn your contempt upon yourselves, and to be struck with horror at your own wilful stupidity. Do you set yourselves up as the standards of wisdom, who want sense to keep out of everlasting ruin? Are you wise men, who throw away your eternal happiness for the trifles of time? No, they only are wise who are wise for eternity. You may excel them in a thousand things; nature may have favoured you with a better genius; you may have had a more liberal education; you may be better acquainted with men and books; you may manage your secular affairs with more discretion; in such things you may be wiser than many of them. But they are wise for eternity! they have sense to escape everlasting burnings! they have wisdom to obtain eternal happiness! and this is a more important piece of wisdom than all your

acquisitions. The wisdom of Solomon, of Socrates, or Plato, is the wildest madness without this. How absurd is it therefore for you, without this, to arrogate the character of men of wisdom, or even of common sense!

III. How absurd is it for men to pretend they will not turn their thoughts to religion, lest it should make them melancholy or distracted! Alas! sinners, you cannot be more so than you are already! and you will never come to yourselves till, with the prodigal, you determine to return to your father's house. And will you continue fools through the fear of becoming such? I can assure you I would rather be the wildest frantic in Bedlam, than be that wretch who ruins his soul for fear of running mad by thinking of it.

IV. If the fear of the Lord, religion, is the perfection of wisdom, how unreasonably does the world charge it with making people mad! There are multitudes that lose their senses by excessive sorrows and anxieties about some temporal affair; many more than by religion; and yet they never fall out with the world on this account. But when any one, that seemed thoughtful about religion, loses his senses, then religion be sure must bear all the blame; and sinners are glad to catch at such a handle to expose it. Melancholy persons are wont to derive terrors from every thing in their reach; and, among other things, will pore upon all those doctrines of religion that can affright them. But this melancholy, as such, is a bodily disorder, and therefore has no more religion in it than a fever or a consumption. It is indeed very possible that too intense application of the mind to divine things, with a deep concern about our everlasting state, may be the occasion of melancholy; but there is nothing peculiar in this; let the mind be excessively attentive to any thing, it will have the same effect. How many disorders do men contract by their eager pursuit of the world! and yet the world is their favourite still. But if one here and there suffers by occasion of religion, O! they bless themselves from it, and think it is a terrible gloomy thing.—Those that are pious, let me tell you, are many of them much superior to the wisest

of us in all accomplishments; and they are generally as far from madness as their neighbours. Therefore drop this senseless slander, and be yourselves holy, if you would be truly wise.

V. Since men are such fools in matters of religion, since they censure it with so much severity and contempt, how astonishing is it that God should send down that divine, heaven-born thing religion into our world, where it is so much neglected and abused! where the celestial guest meets with but few hearts that will entertain it; where its professors neglect it, contradict it, and by their practice call it madness; and where even its friends and subjects frequently treat it very unkindly! What astonishing condescension and grace is it, that God has not left our mad world to themselves, since they are so averse to be reclaimed! But, lo! he hath sent his Son, he hath instituted the gospel, and a thousand means of grace, to bring them to themselves!

VI. And lastly, Hence we may infer, that human nature is exceedingly depraved and disordered. I think this is as plain as any disorder incident to the body. Men are universally indisposed as to religion; and on this account our world is, as a great genius calls it, "the Bedlam of the universe." The same natural faculties, the same understanding, will, and affections, that render us able to act with prudence in the affairs of this life, are also sufficient for the affairs of religion; but, alas! with regard to this they are disordered, though they exercise themselves aright about other things. They can acquire the knowledge of languages and sciences; but, alas! they have no disposition to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. They understand how to trade, and carry on schemes for this world; but they will not act wisely for eternity. They have sense enough not to run into the fire, or to drink poison; but they will run on in the ways of sin to everlasting misery. They will ask the way when they have lost themselves; but how hard is it to bring them to enquire, What shall I do to be saved? They will ask help for their bodies from their fellow-creatures, but how hard is it to bring them in the posture

of earnest petitioners to ask immortal blessings for their souls from God! In short, they can contrive with prudence, and act with vigour, courage, and perseverance in the affairs of time; but in the concerns of religion and eternity they are ignorant, stupid, languid, and careless. And how can we account for this, but by supposing that they are degenerate creatures, and that their nature has suffered a dreadful shock by the first fall, which has deprived them of their senses? - Alas! this is a truth too evident to be denied!

SERMON XXXIX.

Rejection of Christ a common, but most unreasonable Iniquity.

MARK xii. 6.

Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

THERE is no sin more common or more pernicious in the christian world than an unsuitable reception of Jesus Christ and the gospel. It is not only the sin of professed unbelievers and profane scoffers, but it often hides itself under the cloke of religion, and a profession of faith. It is of so subtil a nature, that it is often unsuspected, even by those who are destroyed by it: and it is of so deadly a nature, that nothing can save a soul under the power of it. A soul that has the offer of Christ, and the gospel, and yet neglects him, is certainly in a perishing condition, whatever good works, whatever amiable qualities or appearances of virtue it may be adorned with. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* 2 Cor. iv. 3. John iii. 18.

This was the sin of the Jews in Christ's time, and this brought temporal and eternal ruin upon them. To represent this sin in a convictive light is the primary design of this parable.

The blessed God had chosen the Jews, out of the world, to be his peculiar people, and distinguished them with the gracious privileges of his church. Hence they are represented as his vineyard, enclosed from the wilderness of the world, and furnished with every thing necessary to render it fruitful. And hence God is re-

presented as expecting fruit from them, as a man expects it from his vineyard ; which intimates the reasonableness of their obedience: it is what any one would expect ; who would judge by what is due and reasonable. But it does not intimate that God does properly look for or expect what will never come to pass ; for the certainty and universality of his fore-knowledge excludes all possibility of a disappointment. It is speaking to us in our own language, which we are most likely to understand ; but it must be explained agreeably to the perfection of the nature of God, and not according to the imperfection of ours. The scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers of the Jews, who were intrusted with the management of their church and state, are represented by the husbandmen, to whom this vineyard was leased or rented, and they were obliged to make annual payments of a part of the fruit. The succession of servants sent to demand the income of fruit in its season, signifies the prophets and other messengers of God sent to the Jews to call them to bring forth the fruits of holiness. But instead of obeying the call, they treated them abusively, persecuted and killed them, and refused that return of duty which God demanded, and which his distinguishing mercies towards them rendered so due upon the footing of gratitude. After repeated trials to no purpose by these servants, the great God resolves to make one trial more, and that by his own Son, his only Son, his beloved Son. Him he will send to these rebellious husbandmen. And he presumes that, bad as they are, they would at least reverence his Son, and count themselves highly honoured in having such a messenger sent to them. He might justly have sent his army to destroy them, who had murdered his former servants ; but instead of this, he sends his Son with proposals of peace once more. He presumes such clemency will melt down the rebels, and make them ashamed of their former conduct. *They will reverence my Son* : as if he should say, “ Though they have wickedly abused and slain my servants, surely they will not dare to treat my son in the same manner. Surely, the very sight of him must command awe and reverence. This will also

make them ashamed of their base ingratitude and cruelty to my former messengers*." When the omniscient God represents himself as presuming or expecting that they would receive his Son in a friendly manner, it does not intimate, as I just observed in a similar case, that he is defective in knowledge as to things future, or liable to disappointment; but it only expresses, in the strongest manner, the reasonableness of the thing expected. It is so reasonable, that any one who judges only according to the reasonableness of the thing, and has no view of futurity, would certainly look for it. It is so reasonable, that God himself would expect it, were he not omniscient, and incapable of being deceived by the most plausible appearances. In this view God expected (that is, he looked upon it as infinitely reasonable) that the Jewish rulers should reverence his Son. But alas! when they saw him, they were raised to a still higher pitch of rebellion and cruelty. They seized the Son himself, cast him out of his own vineyard, and with wicked hands crucified and slew him. On this account the vineyard was taken from them, and let out to others, who should pay the great Proprietor his fruit in its season; that is, they were cast out of the church, and the Gentiles received in their stead, who would make a better use of their privileges.

This is the primary sense of the parable, as referring to the Jews of that age. But it will admit of a more extensive application. It reaches us in these ends of the earth, and all the nations of the world, to whom the gospel has been proposed: and in this latitude I would consider the text.

The world had gone on for four thousand years in wickedness, in spite of all the means used for its reformation by lawgivers, prophets, and philosophers, and by the providence of God. Persuasions, warnings, chastisements, mercies, and whatever had a tendency to bring them to repentance, had been used with them. Philosophers had often reasoned; legislators had pre-

* The word, *ἐντρέπωμαι*, signifies to be flushed with shame, as well as to reverence: and so it may be rendered here, "They will be struck with shame at my Son;" that is, "at the sight of him."

scribed; prophets had carefully instructed, allured with promises, and deterred with threatenings, and carried their heavenly credentials in their hands; angels had appeared and conversed with men upon extraordinary occasions; Jesus the great angel of the covenant, had given frequent preludes of his incarnation; nay, Jehovah himself had descended and published his law with God-like pomp in the ears of his subjects on mount Sinai. But all this would not do! the world sinned on still, impenitent and incorrigible. And what shall be done in such a desperate case? What expedient remains to be tried? after so many messengers abused, persecuted, and killed, who will go upon so dangerous a message again? There is indeed the Son of God, the great co-equal of the Supreme Divinity, if he would undertake it, perhaps something might be done. But O! who can dare to hope for such condescension from one so high! Who can expect such a favour for rebels ripe for vengeance! Who can hope the Father will give him up! My text seems to hint sundry objections against it. He is his Son, his well-beloved Son, and he has but one Son; but one of his rank, though he has produced so many worlds. And will he part with his Son, his well-beloved, his only Son, and send him upon such a mission; a mission so difficult, so dangerous, in which so many of his servants have lost their lives? Who could believe that even divine love and mercy could go so far, had we not the testimony of God in the gospel for it! *Having one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also*; he sent even* him, dear as he was, as well as his servants of an inferior order. So much had he at heart the salvation of his rebellious creatures!

But observe the time when he sent him: He sent him last. He did not send him till every other method was tried in vain, and the case was found to be desperate without him. He did not send him till it appeared, from many experiments, that there was absolute need of him. Lawgivers, prophets, philosophers, and other real or pretended reformers, had a clear stage,

*—*Kai autōs*. The conjunction *kai* often signifies *even*; and if so rendered here, it would perhaps be more emphatical.

they had the world to themselves for four thousand years! but in all this time they did nothing to the purpose. Hence we are led to make this remark, which is of great importance to the right understanding of the gospel.

That the Son of God was sent into the world as a Saviour in a desperate case. It appeared, after a long course of trial, that when he undertook the case, there was no relief from any other quarter. And hence by the way it follows, that we can never receive him in that view in which he was sent, until we are deeply sensible that our case is desperate; that is, that we can obtain relief from no other.

But probably his being sent last has a farther meaning. It seems to intimate, that he is the last extraordinary messenger that God will ever send; that the dispensation of the gospel is the last trial that ever he will make with rebellious men, the final effort of divine grace for their salvation; and that such as are not recovered by it will be for ever given up as desperate, and no farther means used with them. What an alarming thought is this to such of you (and no doubt there are such among you) who have enjoyed the gospel, the dispensation of the Son of God all your days, without receiving any special benefit from it! If these means will not do, you are not to expect better, but must perish as incurables.

If we consider the unworthiness of our guilty world, and the high character of the blessed Jesus, as his Father's only and well-beloved Son, we could have little reason to expect he would come into our world as a Saviour. But suppose he should come! suppose he should leave all the glories of his native heaven, and assume the humble nature of man, converse with mortals, instead of the heavenly courtiers, and conflict with the calamities of life, instead of enjoying the pleasures of paradise! Suppose he should come himself, as a messenger of his Father's grace, and with his own blessed lips assure our guilty race that God is reconcilable! Suppose he should die upon a cross for us, that he might at once purchase redemption, and confirm the tidings of it! Suppose, I say, such won-

ders as these should happen! what then is to be expected? O! may it not reasonably be expected that this divine messenger will be received with universal welcome? that every heart will glow with his love, and every mouth be filled with his praise? May it not be reasonably expected that his appearance among guilty men would cast them all upon the knee, as humble penitents, and that now, overcome with his love, they would become his willing subjects for the future, and bitterly lament the baseness and ingratitude of their past disobedience? Is not this the most reasonable expectation that ever was formed? God speaks after the manner of men in my text: and therefore, when he says *They will reverence my Son*, it intimates that this would be the universal expectation of mankind, and of all reasonable creatures who consider the reasonableness of the thing. "They will reverence my Son; surely they will. Wicked and ungrateful as they are, the very sight of him must melt them into gratitude and obedience. Though they have rejected, persecuted, and murdered prophets and lawgivers, and all my other servants, yet surely they will reverence my Son." O! is not this a most reasonable expectation? Who would apprehend the contrary in so plain a case! Who would fear that such a divine Saviour, a Saviour in so desperate a case, should be received with neglect! Who would fear that sinners on the brink of everlasting destruction, would be careless about such a deliverer! We cannot think they would act thus, without supposing them madmen, as well as sinners, and that they have lost their reason and self-love, as well as moral goodness.

But alas! these are only the presumptions of reason from the reasonableness of the thing, and not matters of fact gathered from observation of the actual conduct of mankind. However likely it be from appearances that the Son of God will universally meet with an affectionate reception from creatures that stand in such absolute need of him, and however improbable it be, in an abstract view, that such creatures should neglect him, yet it is a melancholy notorious fact, that Jesus Christ has but little of the reverence and love

of mankind. The prophetic character given of him long ago by Isaiah still holds true, *He whom man despiseth; he whom the nations abhor*, Isaiah lxix. 7. *he is despised and rejected of men.* The riches, honours, and pleasures of the world are preferred to him. His creatures are loved more than himself. Nay, sin itself, the most hateful thing upon earth, or even in hell, is more beloved. The salvation he purchased with his blood is looked upon as hardly worth seeking. His favour is not earnestly sought, nor his displeasure carefully shunned. In short, he has but a small place, and is but of little importance in the thoughts, the affections, and conversation of mankind. This is a most melancholy and astonishing thing; it may spread amazement and horror through the whole universe, but alas! it is fact; a plain fact, though but few are convinced of it, and a melancholy fact, though few lament it. My chief design at present is to fasten conviction upon the guilty; a very unacceptable design, but not therefore the less necessary or useful.

In prosecuting it, I intend,

I. To shew what kind of reception it may justly be expected we should give to the Son of God.

II. To consider the reasonableness of that expectation. And,

III. And lastly, To shew how different a reception he generally meets with from what might be reasonably expected.

Hearken, my brethren, hearken attentively, to what you are so nearly concerned in. And to engage your attention the more, let this consideration have weight with you, that your making light of this matter is a strong presumption that you make light of Christ, and do not give him that reception which he demands. Your being unconcerned in the trial of this case is sufficient to prove you guilty. I am,

I. To shew you what kind of reception we may reasonably be expected to give to the Son of God.

In general, we should give him a reception agreeable to the character which he sustains, and agreeable to the designs upon which he was sent into our world,

or to those views in which he appears in it. We should treat every one according to his character: reason expects that we should do so, and God requires it. Therefore we should treat this divine messenger according to his character.

More particularly, Does Jesus Christ appear in our world under the character of a Saviour in a desperate case, a relief for the remediless, a helper for the helpless? Then it may reasonably be expected that his appearing in our world under this character would immediately flash universal conviction upon mankind, that they are altogether undone and helpless in themselves, and can obtain relief from no other quarter. It may reasonably be expected that they should give up all their proud self-righteous conceit of themselves, and abandon all trust in their own righteousness and good works; for till they do this, they can never receive him in the character; that is, as a Saviour in a desperate case. It may reasonably be expected, they should welcome Christ as the great, the only Deliverer, and give up themselves entirely to him, to be saved by him, who alone is mighty to save. And it may reasonably be expected, that every heart should be transported with admiration, joy, and gratitude at his appearance: and a contrary temper towards him can proceed from nothing but stupid ignorance of our sin and danger, and an ungrateful base disaffection to him.

Does Jesus appear among men as a great High-Priest, making atonement for sin? Then it may justly be expected that we should place all our trust upon the virtue of his atonement, and that all hands should be eagerly stretched out to receive those pardons which he offers, in consequence of his propitiatory sacrifice. Does he appear to destroy the works of the devil, and to save men from sin by making them holy; and are the influences of the holy spirit intrusted to his disposal to renew their nature, and implant every grace and virtue in their hearts? Then, who would not expect that we would all fall in with his design, all form a noble conspiracy against sin, seek for the sanctification of our hearts, and earnestly apply to him for

the influences of divine grace to make us holy! Again, does Christ appear in the character of a Mediatorial King, invested with all power in heaven and earth, and demanding universal homage? Then it may reasonably be expected that we should all bow the knee in humble submission, all make his will the rule of our conduct, and labour after universal obedience. Further, Does he appear both as the publisher and the brightest demonstration of the Father's love? and has he discovered his own love by the many labours of his life, and by the agonies and tortures of his cross? O! may it not be expected we should return him love for love! the love of worms for the love of a God! an obediential love for his bleeding, dying love! May it not be expected that the sight of a crucified Saviour, dying in agonies of love and pain, should melt every heart, and draw the whole world to his arms! He himself had this reasonable expectation: *I*, says he, *if I be lifted from the earth* (that is, suspended on a cross) *will draw all men unto me*. If such love will not draw, what can do it? May it not be expected that this strong assurance that their offended Sovereign is reconcileable, and so much in earnest to pardon obnoxious rebels, would at length make them sensible of their base ingratitude, would melt them down into ingenuous generous sorrows, for their unnatural rebellion against so good a God, and determine them to cheerful obedience in future? Again, Does Christ exhibit himself as able to save to the utmost all that come unto God through him, and as willing as able, as gracious as powerful? Then may it not reasonably be expected that all the unbelieving fears and tremblings of desponding penitents should vanish for ever, that they should all fly to his arms with cheerful hope and humble confidence, and do him the honour, and themselves the kindness, to believe themselves safe, upon their compliance with his invitation? Further, Does Christ appear in the character of a great Prophet sent to publish his Father's will, to reveal the deep things of God, and to shew the way in which guilty sinners may be reconciled to God? a way which all the philosophers and sages of antiquity, after all

their perplexing searches, could never discover! May it not then be reasonably expected that we should be all attention to his instructions, that we should resign our understandings to him as our Teacher, and readily believe what he has revealed, and particularly that we should cheerfully comply with the only method of salvation contained in the gospel? Once more, Does Christ assume the august character of supreme Judge of the quick and the dead, and must we all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? Then it may be expected we should all humbly revere and adore him, fear to offend him and make him our enemy, and prepare for our appearance before him. In short, considering him as the supreme Excellency, it is infinitely reasonable we should love and esteem him as the Physician of sick souls; that we should put ourselves under his all healing hands, and submit to his prescriptions; as our advocate, that we should present all our petitions in his name, and depend upon his intercession for acceptance. And as he is all in all in the mediatorial dispensation of religion under which we live, the only religion for sinners, that he should be all in all to us,

This is a brief view of the reception which we ought to give to the Son of God, upon his appearance in our world. Unless we receive him thus, we can receive no benefit from him; but must incur the aggravated guilt of rejecting him. *But to as many as thus receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name.* John i. 12.

Do not imagine that none are concerned to give him a proper reception but those with whom he conversed in the days of his flesh. We at the distance of 1700 years, and six or seven thousand miles from the time and place of his appearance in human form, are as much concerned with him as they. He is an ever-present Saviour, and he left his gospel on earth in his stead, when he went to heaven. It is with the motion of the mind, and not of the body, that sinners must come to him; and in this sense we may come to him, as properly as those that conversed with him. He de-

mands the reverence, love, and trust of mankind now, as well as seventeen hundred years ago; and we need his righteousness, his influence, and his salvation, as well as the sinners of Judea, among whom he appeared in person. Nay, as his glory has now pierced through the cloud that obscured it in the days of his flesh, and as he is exalted to the height of honour and dignity, it may be expected with still more reason that we should reverence him, and submit to him in his high character. He is not now the object of our bodily senses, we cannot see and handle him; but he is now an object for the acts of the mind with peculiar advantage. That must be a mere lump of flesh, or a beast, and not a man, that can love nothing but what he can see and feel. Spiritual and intellectual things are the most proper objects for all reasonable creatures. Therefore, though Jesus be not now within reach of our senses, yet reason and faith may reach him and perceive his glories: and it is reasonably expected we should admire, love, trust, and serve him. This, I say, is reasonably expected of us. I now proceed.

II. To shew the reasonableness of the expectation, that we should give the Son of God a welcome reception.

Here full evidence must strike every mind at first sight. Is there not infinite reason that infinite beauty and excellence should be esteemed and loved? that supreme authority should be obeyed, and the highest character revered? Is it not reasonable that the most amazing display of love and mercy should meet with the most affectionate returns of gratitude from the party obliged? shall the Creator die for his creatures, the sovereign for his rebellious subjects, the great law-giver transfer the penalty of his own law upon himself, in order to remove it from obnoxious criminals? shall he die in extremities of torture, and write his love in characters of blood? O shall he do this, and is it not infinitely reasonable that his creatures, that his rebellious subjects, that obnoxious criminals should be transported with wonder, joy, and gratitude; and that such miracles of love should engross their thoughts, their affections, and conversation? If we form our expecta-

tions from what we find in fact among mankind in other cases, sure we may expect the Son of God would meet with such a reception in our world; the thousandth part of this kindness would excite gratitude between man and man, and he would be counted a monster that would not be moved with it. And shall kindness from worm to worm, from sinner to sinner, excite love and gratitude? and shall not the infinite mercy of God towards rebellious creatures inflame their love and gratitude? Is this the only species of kindness that must pass unnoticed? Is Jesus the only Benefactor that must be forgotten? Is it not reasonable, and would not any one expect, that the perishing would willingly accept of a Saviour? that the guilty would stretch out an eager hand to receive a pardon? that the diseased would apply to the physician? that inexcusable offenders should repent of their causeless offences against the best of beings? and that needy dependent creatures should embrace the offer of happiness? Can any thing be more reasonably expected than this? Is it not as reasonable as to expect that creatures that love themselves, will seek their own happiness, or that the miserable will accept of deliverance? In short, no man can deny the reasonableness of this expectation without denying himself to be a creature: no man can deny its reasonableness, without asserting that the highest excellency should be despised, the highest authority rejected, the richest goodness contemned, that rebellion and ingratitude is a virtue, and self-destruction a duty; that is, no man can deny this, without commencing a monster, abjuring his reason, and embracing the most extravagant and impious absurdities in its stead. I am afraid I shall not be able to gain the temper and practice of all of you to my side in this affair, but I am sure if you are men, and believe the gospel, I have already brought over your judgment and conscience. Your judgment and conscience declare, that if it be reasonable for a child to reverence a tender affectionate parent, if it be reasonable you should love your life, or your own happiness, that then certainly it is infinitely reasonable you should give such a reception as has been mentioned to the

blessed Jesus. Happy for us, happy for the world, if we could as easily prove that the expectation is as much founded upon actual facts as upon reason. But, alas! here the evidence turns against us. In such a wicked disordered world as this, it would be a very deceitful method of reasoning to infer that things are, because they should be. This introduces what comes next under consideration, namely,

III. And lastly, To shew how different a reception the Son of God generally meets with in our world, from what might reasonably be expected.

Here a most melancholy scene opens, And O! that it may please the blessed spirit to affect our hearts deeply with the survey of it! forgive me, if I make my address as pungent and particular as I can, and speak directly to the conscience of each of you. The case really requires plain dealing, because without it you are not likely to be convinced, and, without conviction, you can never return, nor be reformed.

Let me put you all upon a serious search, what kind of reception you have given to Jesus Christ. You have lived all your days under his gospel; you profess his religion; you own him as the Author of your hopes, and what kind of treatment have you given him in these circumstances? It is high time for you to enquire into your behaviour.

Are not some of you sensible that you have never received him as a Saviour in a desperate case? No, you have never seen your case to be indeed desperate. Your proud hearts have not been brought so low. You have not had such an affecting view of your guilt and depravity, and the imperfections of your best works, and of the holiness and justice of God and his law, as to make you sensible you were undone and helpless in yourselves, that your own righteousness could by no means recommend you to God, and that you must perish for ever, unless Jesus Christ, out of mere mercy, would undertake to save you: unless you have had an affecting sense of your undone condition, you have certainly never received him as a Saviour.

Again, Is it not evident that Jesus Christ has had

but little share in your thoughts and affections? Do not the things of this perishing world gain the pre-eminence? Have you not a thousand thoughts of a thousand trifles for one affectionate thought of Jesus, the darling of his Father? Have you not been generally thoughtless of him all your lives? Take the time that is nearest to you as a specimen, which surely you have not yet forgot. Recollect now how many affectionate thoughts you have had of him the week past, or even upon this sacred morning, when you had this solemn worship immediately in view. May not even this short review convince you that you are guilty of the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the world; a thing which appears so improbable in an abstract view, that one would hardly believe you would venture upon it; I mean neglecting the Son of God, who has visited our world upon such designs of love?

Again, Is Jesus Christ the favourite subject of your conversation? Is his dear name the sweetest sound your lips can pronounce? And do you love to sit with his few friends in our guilty world, and talk over the wonder of his love, till your hearts burn within you, like the disciples in conference on the way to Emmaus? *Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh*; and were he uppermost in your hearts, he would have a proper share in your conversation. Or if you should mingle in a company (and such company is everywhere to be found) where prudence would not suffer you to dwell upon this darling subject, would the restraint be painful to you, and would his love, like a smothered fire in your hearts, struggle to break out, and vent itself—vent itself at least in some retired corner in his presence, if you could not enjoy the pleasure of letting it flame out in the society of his creatures? But, alas! is not this the reverse of your true character! Are you not disgusted, or struck silent, as soon as the conversation takes this turn! With horror I think of it—to converse concerning Jesus Christ is generally deemed needless, impertinent, or ostentatious, by creatures that profess themselves his disciples, redeemed by his blood? And does not this horrid guilt fasten upon some of you!

Farther, Are not your hearts destitute of his love? If you deny the charge, and profess that you love him, where are the inseparable fruits and effects of his love! Where are your eager desires and pantings after him! Where is your delight to converse with him in his ordinances! Where your anxiety, your zeal, your earnest endeavours to secure his favour! Where is your conscientious observance of his commandments! for he himself has made this the test of your love to him; *then, says he, are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* John xv. 14. And again, *if any man love me, he will keep my words.* John xiv. 28. Does not the evidence from this inquiry turn against you! Are you not convicted in your consciences, that if these are the inseparable fruits of love, you are entirely destitute of it? Is it not evident to yourselves, that your own pleasure, your own worldly interest, your honour or ease, is the general rule of your conduct, without any regard to his will?

Inquire farther, Have you learned to intrust your souls in his hands, to be saved by him entirely in his own way! Or do you not depend, in part at least, upon your own imaginary goodness? Do you not wonder and start at the doctrine of grace, and secretly disgust it! Does it not appear strange to you, to be told, that, after all your good works, God will deal with you entirely as guilty sinners, void of all goodness, and have no regard at all to your supposed merit in the distribution of his mercy, but entirely to the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Are you not utter strangers to that exploit of faith which casts a poor guilty depraved soul, void of all goodness, upon the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, who justifies the ungodly? For this purpose the Son of God came into the world; and you do not give him a proper reception, but wickedly reject him as well as the Jews, unless you thus intrust yourselves to him.

The evidence grows upon me as I proceed; and I cannot but wonder you do not perceive it yourselves. Can any thing be more plain than that you make light of Christ! that you choose to have as little to do with him as possible! that you have no delight in his ser-

vice! Does not your own conscience now tell you, there are this and that, and a thousand things, that you have more pleasure in! Do not your hearts fly off from him, whenever they are urged to approach him! When you are a little awakened with a sense of your guilt and danger, and ready with eager eyes to look about for a Saviour, alas! how naturally do you relapse into carelessness and security! How soon do you drop your purpose of seeking after him with unwearied endeavours, till you find him! how ready are you to take up with any thing in his stead! A little repentance and reformation are substituted in his place. You would rather get ease to your consciences from any quarter than from him. Like Judas, you sell him for a few pieces of silver; that is, you would rather part with him than give up your over-eager pursuit of earthly things.

A thousand such facts might be easily produced, which sadly prove that the blessed Jesus does not meet with that reception from multitudes among us which his character demands. Indeed their not being easily convicted of sin is an evidence they are guilty; for if they had a real regard for him, they would be concerned to enquire how the case stands, or how their hearts are disposed towards him. And a little honest enquiry would soon lead them unto the truth.

And now, I have a few questions to propose to such of you as are guilty of neglecting the Son of God, or have never given him that reception that might justly be expected of you; questions of the utmost importance, which I beg you would put home to your own hearts.

The first is, Do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jesus, you contract the most aggravated guilt? It is the Son of God, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, that you neglect. And must not the Father resent it? Do you not touch his honour in a very tender point? and will he not muster up all the forces of omnipotence to avenge the affront? Since you neglect him, whom the Father loves; him, whom all the heavenly armies adore; him, whom all good men upon

earth treat with the highest honour; since you neglect a person of infinite glory and dignity, your rightful Sovereign and only Saviour, how deep is your guilt! what a horrid exploit of wickedness this! neither heathens nor devils can sin up to such a pitch: devils cannot, because no Saviour was ever provided for them, or offered to them; and heathens cannot, because a Saviour was never revealed to them. You stand without a rival by your horrid pre-eminence in guilt. To you may be applied the words of Jesus, as well as to the unbelieving Jews: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they would not have had sin; that is, they would not have had sin of so aggravated a nature; but now they have no cloke for their sin, John xv. 22.*; they are utterly inexcuseable; *for they have both seen and hated me and my Father. John xv. 24.*

The next question I would ask you is, Must not your punishment be peculiarly aggravated, since it will be proportioned to your guilt? To be punished not only for sins against the law of nature, but against revelation, against the gospel of grace, against the love of a crucified Saviour—how dreadful must this be! *He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, says St. Paul: of how much sorer punishment (sorer than dying without mercy! O terrible!) suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God. Heb. x. 29.* You may make light of this now, but O! it will not prove light in the issue. Here let me mention a most alarming consideration: The love that God bears to his Son is the great source of all our hopes; it is because he loves him, that he accepts of his atonement for our sins; it is because he loves him, that he forgives and loves believing sinners for his sake; it is because he loves the head, that he shews such favour to the members: but as to such as neglect his Son, even the love which the Father has for him becomes a source of peculiar terror, and prompts him to signal vengeance. 'If he infinitely loves his Son, he must infinitely resent it to see him neglected and slighted by others. If he loves him he will avenge the affront offered him; and the more he loves him,

the more severely he must resent and avenge it. How wretched then is their condition, upon whom even the love of God for his Son calls aloud for vengeance! and how signal will the punishment be, that the Father's love for his Son will inflict upon the despisers of him!

The third question I would propose to you is, How do you expect to escape this signal vengeance, if you still continue to neglect the Lord Jesus? Answer the apostle's question if you can: *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Heb. ii. 3. You cannot expect Jesus will be a Saviour while you treat him thus: and if he refuse, to whom will you turn? What angel or saint can save whom he is determined to destroy? If he be against you, who can be for you? Remember the text—the Father sent his Son last into the world. He comes last, and therefore if you reject him you need not look for another Saviour. You must take him, or none; take him, or perish for ever.

I would further ask you, If your guilt and danger be so great, and if in your present condition you are ready every moment to be ingulphed in everlasting destruction, does it become you to be so easy and careless, so gay and merry! If your bodies were sick, you would be pensive and sad, and use means for their recovery: if your estates were in danger, you would be anxious till they were secured: if you were condemned to die for a crime against civil government, you would be solicitous for a pardon. In short, it is natural for man to be pensive, anxious, and sad in circumstances of danger; and it is shocking to the common sense of mankind, to see one thoughtless and gay in such circumstances. Can you be easy under such a load of guilt? careless under a sentence of condemnation? and negligent, when the possibility of deliverance is set before you? I would not willingly see you sorrowful and dejected; but when your case calls for it, when your temporal sorrow may be medicinal, and save you from everlasting pain, when it is as necessary in your circumstances as sickness at the stomach in the operation of physic, then I cannot form a kinder wish for

you, than that your hearts may be pierced and broken with penitential sorrows. You have, in your manner, commemorated the birth of a Saviour this Christmas* ; that is, you have danced and caroused, and sinned to his honour. But now I come after, and demand in his name another kind of reception for him: I call you to the sorrowful work of repentance for your ill-treatment of him. Instead of such mirth and extravagance, would it not have been more proper for you to have listened to St. James's advice, *Be afflicted, and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness*, James iv. 9. *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*; that mighty hand which can crush ten thousand worlds, and which is lifted up against you to revenge the quarrel of his beloved Son. Can you return home this evening as thoughtless and merry as usual? Well, your career will soon be at an end: your vanity and trifling will soon be over. Perhaps, as Jeremiah denounced to the false prophet, *this year thou shalt die*, Jer. xxviii. 16. :—and O! that will engulf you in everlasting sorrows.

Therefore what would you now think of making one honest trial, before it be too late, to obtain an interest in that Saviour whom you have hitherto neglected? O! will you not make trial, whether the disaffection of your hearts towards him, inveterate as it is, may yet be subdued by divine grace? whether he, who prayed with his dying breath, even for his murderers, will not have mercy upon you? whether the virtue of his blood is not still sufficient to cleanse you from all sin? O? will you give up the matter as desperate, before you make a thorough trial?

Your case is indeed very discouraging, but it is not yet hopeless; if I thought it was, I would not say one word to you about it, to torment you before the time. But I can assure you upon the best authority, of Jesus Christ himself, that if you now give him that reception which his character requires, he will receive you into favour as though you had never offended

* This Sermon is dated Jan. 16, 1753.

him, and make you for ever happy. Therefore, come ye poor guilty perishing sinners, fly to the arms of his mercy, which are opened wide to embrace you. Cry for the attractive influences of his grace, which alone can enable you to come to him, and let there be joy in heaven this day over repenting sinners upon earth!

SERMON XL.

The Doom of the incorrigible Sinner.

PROVERBS xxix. 1.

He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

A PROVERB is a system of wisdom in miniature: it is a pertinent striking observation, expressed in a few words, that it may be the more easily remembered; and often in metaphorical language, that it may be the more entertaining. A collection of proverbs has no connection, but consists of short independent sentences, each of which makes full sense in itself; and therefore, in explaining them, there is no need of explaining the context; but we may select any particular sentence, and consider it separately by itself.

Such a collection of wise sayings is that book of the sacred scriptures, which we call the Proverbs of Solomon. Wise men in all ages, and in all languages, have often cast their observations into the concise significant forms of proverbs; but the sages of antiquity, especially, were fond of this method of instruction, and left legacies of wisdom to posterity, wrapt up in a proverbial dress; many of which, particularly of the Greek philosophers, are extant to this day. Solomon chose this method of recording and communicating his wise observations as most agreeable to the taste of the age in which he lived. The sacred memoirs of his life inform us, that *he spake three thousand proverbs.* 1 Kings iv. 32. Of these the most important and useful were selected probably by himself, and afterwards by the men of Hezekiah; that is, by persons appointed by Hezekiah to copy them off; and they are conveyed down to all ages in this cabinet of precious jewels, the Book of Proverbs.

Among the many significant and weighty sayings of this wisest of men, the solemn monitory proverb in my text deserves peculiar regard: *He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*.*

The request of a friend, and my fears that this proverb may have a dreadful accomplishment upon some of my hearers, have induced me to make it the subject of your meditations for the present hour. And O! that the event may shew I was divinely directed in the choice!

This proverb may be accommodated to all the affairs of life. In whatever course a man blunders on, headstrong, and regardless of advice and admonition, whether in domestic affairs, in trade, in politics, in war, or whatever it be he pursues by wrong measures with incorrigible obstinacy, it will ruin him at last, as far as the matter is capable of working his ruin. To follow the conduct of our own folly, and refuse the advantage we might receive from the wisdom of others, discovers an uncreaturely pride and self-sufficiency; and the career of such a pursuit, whatever be the object, will always end in disappointment and confusion. In this extent perhaps, this adage was intended by Solomon, who was a good economist and politician, and well skilled in the affairs of common life, as well as those of religion.

But he undoubtedly intended it should be principally referred to matters of religion. It is especially in these matters it holds true in the highest sense; that *he that being often reprov'd hardeneth himself, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

He that being often reprov'd—This is undoubtedly our character. We in this congregation have been often reprov'd, and that in various forms, and by va-

* *He that being often reprov'd*—This in the original, is *a man of reproofs*; and it may either signify, as our translators understand it, “a man often reprov'd;” or it may mean, “a man often reproving;” that is, a man that often reproves others, if he harden his own neck, while he pretends a great zeal to reduce others under the yoke of obedience, he shall suddenly be destroyed, &c. But the first sense appears more pertinent and natural, and therefore in that view I only consider it.

rious monitors. We have been reprov'd from heaven and earth, by God, men, and our own consciences; and, I might add, by the irrational creation, and even by infernal spirits.

Men of various classes have reprov'd us. It is the happiness of several of us to live in families where we are often reprov'd and admonish'd with the tender affecting address of a father and a master, who are deeply concern'd that their children and domestics should be their companions in the heavenly road, and be effectually warn'd from the alluring paths of sin and ruin. And have not our affectionate mothers often become our monitors, and gently, yet powerfully reprov'd us, with that forcible eloquence which could only proceed from the heart of a woman and a mother?—or if our parents have been cruelly deficient in this noblest office of love, has not God rais'd up unexpected reprov'ers for us, in a brother, a sister, or perhaps a poor despis'd slave? And who can resist the force of an admonition from such an unexpected quarter?—And have not some of us found an affectionate faithful monitor, in the conjugal state; a husband or a wife, that has reprov'd the vices or the negligence and carelessness of the other party; and, by a striking example at the least, if not in more explicit language, given the alarm to greater diligence and concern in the affairs of religion and eternity? Such are powerful, though modest and private assistants to the ministers of the gospel, and O! that they had but more assistance from this quarter! To encourage the few among you that improve the intimacy of this near relation for so important and benevolent a purpose, let me remind you of St. Paul's tender excitement to this duty, given one thousand seven hundred years ago: *What knowest thou, O wife! whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O husband! whether thou shalt save thy wife?* 1 Cor. vii. 16. The tender names of husband and wife have so much force in them, as may irresistibly constrain us to perform all the kindest offices in our power to those who bear them. But O! to save a husband! to save a wife! to save those dear creatures from everlasting misery!

how great, how important the kindness! and by so much the more pleasing, by how much the dearer the persons are to whom it is shewn!—But to return,—If we are not so happy as to be agreeably surrounded with such honest reprovers in our own houses; yet, blessed be God, we live in a neighbourhood where we may meet with one of them here and there. Has not a pious friend or a neighbour dropt a word now and then in conversation which might have served, and perhaps was intended, as a serious admonition to you? Alas! have you never had a friend in the world, who has sometimes taken occasion to talk solemnly and pungently with you about the neglected concerns of your souls? or at least, has not his example been a striking lesson to you? Alas! is it possible one should live in this congregation without enjoying the benefit of a reprover? Sure there are still some among us to bear their testimony against sin, and espouse the deserted cause of religion. But if the friends of religion have been silent (and indeed they are generally too modest in this respect) yet have you not sometimes received an accidental undesigned reproof even from the wicked? just as Caiaphas once prophesied of the death of Christ, and its blessed consequences. Not to observe, that their eagerness and indefatigable industry in pursuing their pleasures, whether they place them in honour, riches, or sensuality, and in serving their guilty lusts, in spite of all restraints, may serve as a pungent reproof of your lukewarmness and carelessness in the pursuit of the pleasures of religion and immortality, so much more noble and interesting. But I say, to take no notice of this, have they not at times rebuked you in more direct terms? Have they not twitted and reproached you to this purpose, “I thought you, that pretend to so much sanctity, would not dare to venture upon such a thing.” Or, “See the saint, the communicant, the presbyterian drunk—see his fraud and villany—see him as vain and frolicksome as his neighbours; sure, we that make no such profession, may take such liberties, since such saints do so”—Such reflections as these, my brethren, however sarcastical and malignant, blind and bitter, have

all the keenness of the sharpest reproof. And, O! that none of us may ever give any occasion for them! but if offences should come to occasion them, may our hearts always feel their force; thus may we derive good out of evil; be warned from sin by sinners; and restrained in our career to ruin by those who are themselves rushing into it!—But though all around you, both saints and sinners, should refuse to be your monitors, how many solemn warnings and reproofs have you had from the pulpit! You have heard many ministers of Christ, who have been your solemn admonishers in the dread name of their Master. And it is now eleven or twelve years since I have begun to discharge the painful and unacceptable office of a reprover of sin and sinners among you—And what kind and liberal assistance have I received in my office, from the other side of the vast ocean, in the many excellent Books which British piety and charity have furnished us with! Our friends, whose voice cannot reach you, have sent over reprovers into your houses; reprovers that speak particularly to the poor, especially to the neglected slaves. In short, I know no spot of America so happy in this important respect as Hanover.

Thus have you been reprov'd by men from all quarters. And certainly so loud, so general, so repeated an admonition, even from men, must have great weight. But who can resist an admonition from heaven? Surely, if Jehovah, the great Sovereign of the universe, condescends to be your reprov'er, you must immediately take the reproof, and set about a reformation. Well, this office he has condescended to sustain. He has himself become your monitor; and that in various ways, both mediately and immediately: mediately, by his word and providence; and immediately, by his blessed Spirit, whose office it is to *reprove the world of sin*, John xvi. 9.

The word of God has reprov'd you; has honestly laid before you the destructive consequences of sin, and denounced the divine displeasure against you on its account. All its commands, prohibitions, and dissuasives of various forms, are so many friendly warnings and admonitions to you. He conveys his

reproofs through your eyes and your ears, when you read and hear his word; and sometimes, I doubt not, he has made the hardest heart among you feel his rebukes, and tremble under them. In short, you must own yourselves, that if any of you go on obstinately in sin and perish, it will not be because the word of God did not act a faithful part towards you, but because you presumptuously disregard its most solemn and affectionate warnings.

Again; God has often reprov'd you by his providence. His providence has kindly chastised you with personal and relative afflictions; with sickness and pains, bereavements, losses, and disappointments. Providence has admonished you with the striking voice of sick beds, dying groans, ghastly corpses, and gaping graves, in your families, or neighbourhoods, or perhaps in both. How many among us, in a few years, have been brought down to the gates of the grave, that they might enter into a serious conference with death and eternity, which they were so averse to in the giddy unthinking hours of health and hurry of business! And what narrow escapes, what signal unexpected deliverances, has Providence wrought for you in those seasons of danger and distress, that you might enjoy a longer space of repentance! How many of our friends and neighbours have sickened and died, for the admonition of survivors! Providence has pitched upon one here and there, that was wont to sit among us in our religious assemblies, and made him an example and a warning to the rest. They are gone before, to shew us the way; and put us in mind, that our turn also will soon come *. Sickness and death, expiring agonies, pale corpses,

The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave,
The deep damp vault, the darkness, and the worm,

these are very solemn monitors; and that heart is hard indeed, that does not feel their reproof.

* Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
To damp our brainless ardors, and abate
That glare of life which often blinds the wise.

The providence of God has also reprov'd us, in common with our countrymen, by the public calamities that have hovered over, or fallen upon our land and nation; and particularly by the ravages and desolations of war. Providence has commissioned Indian savages and French Papists to be our reprovers, and loudly admonish'd us with the horrid roar of canons, the clangor of martial trumpets, and all the dread artillery of ruin and death. What ear among us has not heard, what heart has not trembled, at this terrible warning!

Thus, and in a thousand other ways, has Providence concurred with the word, and feelingly reprov'd us with its fatherly rod. And we should always remember, that the hand of Providence is the hand of God, whatever instruments he is pleas'd to use.

But has he not often laid aside all instruments, and reprov'd you more immediately by his Spirit? Has not his Spirit been long and frequently striving with you; reprov'g you of sin; alarming you with apprehensions of your danger: exciting in you good resolutions, and serious thoughts of reformation? Has not the blessed Spirit at times borne home the word upon your hearts with unusual power, and roused

Our dying friends are pioneers, to smooth
 Our rugged pass to death; to break those bars
 Of terror and abhorrence nature throws
 Cross our obstructed way; and thus to make
 Welcome as safe, our port from every storm,
 Each friend by fate snatch'd from us, is a plume
 Pluck'd from the wing of human vanity,
 Which makes us stoop from our aerial heights,
 And damp't with omen of our own decease,
 On drooping pinions of ambition lower'd,
 Just skim earth's surface, ere we break it up,
 O'er putrid pride to scratch a little dust,
 And save the world a nuisance. Smitten friends
 Are angels sent on errands full of love;
 For us they languish, and for us they die;
 And shall they languish, shall they die in vain?—
 Shall we disdain their silent, soft address;
 Their posthumous advice, and pious prayer?
 Senseless as herds that graze their hallow'd graves,
 Tread under foot their agonies and groans;
 Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths?

YOUNG.

your conscience to fall upon you with terrible, though friendly violence?—Which leads me to add,

You have been your own monitors; I mean your consciences have often admonished and warned you; have whispered in your breasts, that “this course of vice and irreligion will not do: this carelessness and indifferency in the concerns of your souls, this stupid neglect of God and eternal things, will not end well.” Conscience has often honestly pronounced your doom: “Thou art a guilty wicked creature, under the displeasure of God. Thou art destitute of true vital religion, and hast no title to the divine favour. If thou die in this condition, thou wilt be undone for ever.” Thus has conscience warned you; and you have no doubt sometimes sweated and agonized under its chastisements. Though you have preposterously laboured to bribe it, or suppress it by violence; yet it has still borne at least a faint testimony for its Master, and against you. Thus you always carry a reprover in your own bosoms wherever you go: and though every mouth around you should be silent, this will speak, if you do but attend, and give it fair play.

I may add, that even the irrational creation is your monitor; and in silent, but forcible language, remonstrates against your conduct. Can you hear the musicians of the air in every bush warbling out their grateful anthems to their Maker, without being convicted of your guilty silence in his praise? Can you see the sun invariably rolling in the path first marked out for him by his Maker and Lord, without feeling yourselves reprov'd for your numberless deviations from the path of duty? Do not the regulated stated revolutions of the seasons, and of night and day, sensibly reprove your neglect of the returns of your hours of devotion? In short, does not all nature cry out against you? Is not every thing you see obedient to its Maker's laws, but man? man, who should claim the precedence in obedience, as he is appointed lord of the lower creation*.

* How natural are these reflections of that great and good man, Dr. Watts!

Nay, even infernal spirits, those everlasting enemies of man and goodness, may serve as your reprovers. Can you think of their unwearied roaming over the earth, in quest of souls as their prey, and their industry and toil to do mischief, without blaming your own negligence to save your souls, and do good? And could you but hear the lost ghosts of your own race, who are now shut up in the infernal prison, bursting out into despairing cries, and bitterly accusing themselves for their presumption and security, their lazy delays, misimprovement of time, and neglect of the means of grace, while upon earth; how loud and striking a warning would this be to you, who are now walking in their steps!

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a brief list of your many monitors. And who can stand the united reproofs of such a multitude? Who dare set himself against the admonition of earth, heaven, and hell; of God and all his creatures? must you not all yield to the warning?

Solomon supposes, in my text, "that a man may be often reprov'd, and yet *harden his neck*;" that is, obstinately refuse submission and reformation. A stiff neck is a metaphor often used in scripture, to signify an unyielding incorrigible spirit, resolute in disobedience, in spite of all restraints; in spite of advice, dissuasives and reproofs. And to harden the neck, is to confirm one's self in disobedience, in opposition to

With steady course thy shining sun
Keeps his appointed way :
And all the hours obedient run
The circle of the day.
But, ah! how wide my spirit flies,
And wanders from her God!
My soul forgets the heavenly prize,
And treads the downward road!
The raging fire and stormy sea
Perform thine awful will;
And every beast and every tree,
Thy great designs fulfil:
While my wild passions rage within,
Nor thy commands obey;
And flesh and sense, enslav'd to sin,
Draw my best thoughts away.

LYRIC POEMS.

admonition; or to refuse to reform, and strengthen one's self in the refusal, in spite of all the means of reformation. It is to cherish obstinacy, to despise reproof, and resolve to follow a headstrong impetuous self-will at all adventures*. The metaphor is taken from an unmanageable sullen ox, that will not bend his neck to the yoke, nor kindly draw under it; but stiffens his neck, that it may not bear it; and hardens it, that it may not feel it: and the lash and the goad do not break his obstinate spirit, nor reduce him to willing subjection. Thus, nothing but a sullen and senseless beast can represent the stupid unreasonable conduct of that man who hardens himself in sin, against the strongest dissuasives and reproofs from God and his creatures.

And is not this the character of some of you? I am very unwilling to presume such bad things of any of you; but I must at least put it to your consciences to determine, whether it be so or not? This you may know by this single enquiry, whether you have reformed of those things for which you have been reprov'd? or whether you still obstinately persist in them, in opposition to the most striking admonitions? The profane and profligate among you have often been reprov'd for your vices; your drunkenness, swearing, lying, contempt of sacred things, and other immoralities: but do you not still obstinately persist in the practice of them? You have often been reprov'd for the neglect of the worship of God in your families, and the souls of your domestics; what warm remonstrances have you heard upon this head? And yet, have you not prayerless families, prayerless mornings and evenings still? Have you not been solemnly warn'd of the danger of neglecting, or carelessly attending upon, the means of grace? And yet you are negligent and careless still? Have you not been earnestly admonish'd for

* That this is the meaning of the metaphor, will appear from a particular survey of those passages of scripture, where it is used either in the original, or in our translation, Exod. xxxii. 5. 9. and xxxiii. 3. Deut. ix. 6, 13. and x. 16. and xxviii. 48. 2 Chron. xxx. 8. and xxxvi. 13. 2 Kings xvii. 14. Neh. ix. 16, 17, 29. Psal. lxxv. 5. Isa. xlvi. 4. Jer. vii. 26. and xvii. 23. and xix. 15. Acts vii. 51.

your presumption and security, your entertaining high hopes of future happiness, and that you are genuine christians, at random, without honest trial and repeated self-examination? And yet, do not some of you still persist in this stupid pernicious conduct? Alas! how ignorant of your own true character! How unwillingly are you dragged to the bar of conscience, there to be tried, and hear your sentence! How ready are you to flatter yourselves with pleasing expectations, though in reality contrary to the declarations of eternal truth! And how secure and thoughtless are you about the great concerns of religion and eternity! how lukewarm and inactive in the duties you owe to God and man, and in your endeavours to work out your salvation! But have you not been solemnly warned of the pernicious consequences of this course? How often have you been honestly told, that this is not the narrow and rugged road of virtue and religion that leads to heaven! How often have you been warned of the danger of mistaking external formalities for vital religion, and a mere profession of christianity for the heart-experience and constant practice of it! And yet do not some of you indulge this destructive mistake still? Have you not been often reprov'd for contenting yourselves with a dead, fruitless faith, an empty speculation, or historical belief; with transient unwilling fits of servile repentance, that produce no reformation; and the counterfeit appearances of other graces and virtues? I say, have you not often been reprov'd for contenting yourselves with these, instead of that lively, operative, heart-affecting faith, that kindly, ingenuous, voluntary repentance, and thorough reformation, and those other active, practical graces and virtues, which are required in the gospel, as essential constituents of a true christian, and absolutely necessary pre-requisites to everlasting life? And yet you wilfully indulge the delusion still, and are unwilling to admit conviction, and discover the truth! How often and how solemnly have you been reprov'd for your excessive eagerness and avarice in the pursuit of this vain world, and your stupid neglect to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, and to be rich towards

God! And yet, is not this enchanting world your favourite, and the idol of your hearts still? And are you not still careless what will become of you through an everlasting duration, in an infinitely more important world? That one expostulation from Christ himself might have been an irresistible rebuke to you, *What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* But, alas! have you not stood out against this, and a thousand other pungent admonitions? Have you not often had the dreadful guilt and danger of making light of Christ and his precious gospel, of delaying your conversion to some uncertain hereafter, and of presuming upon the mercy and patience of God, exposed to your view in a striking light? And yet you have still persisted in the practice, in spite of reproof and conviction. I might easily multiply instances on this head; but these must serve as specimens at present; and I shall only add this general rule for your farther conviction, that whatever sin you indulge yourselves in, whatever duty you omit, whatever grace or virtue you live destitute of, in opposition to the conviction of your own minds within, and of the reproofs and admonitions of God and man from without, you are then guilty of hardening your neck.

And if this be the case, how many of you are involved in this guilt? Lay your hand now upon your heart, and say, does not conscience whisper, or perhaps clamour, "Guilty! guilty!" It is strange, it is unaccountable, it is horrible, that there should be such a monster upon earth, on whom the repeated reproofs and warnings of God and his fellow-creatures have been thrown away; and who dares singly to stand it out against the whole universe! But, alas! are there not many such monsters among us? To reprove them again is a very unpromising and almost desperate attempt; for they have been so inured to it, that they are hardened against it, and set it at defiance. Yet duty and compassion constrain us to make the attempt once more: for O! we cannot yet give them up as altogether desperate, nor resign them with willing hands

as a tame prey to ruin. I know no other way to bring them out of danger but to make them sensible of it. And this I shall attempt, in illustrating the remaining part of the text, which informs you of the plain truth, that *he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, or broken, and that without remedy*; or, "and there is no cure."

The stiff neck, that will not bend to the yoke of obedience, must be broken; and its own stiffness renders it the more easily broken: for it is not easy to break what is yielding and pliable; but even the resistance of the stiff neck occasions its own ruin. It may harden itself into insensibility under reproof: but O! it cannot harden itself into insensibility under divine judgments. It may refuse the easy and gentle yoke of the divine law; but divine justice will forcibly impose its iron yoke upon it, and constrain it to bow till it be broken. This is the doom of the obstinate incorrigible sinner: thus shall he be destroyed and broken to pieces.

But this is not all: he shall suddenly be destroyed, suddenly broken. Sudden ruin is aggravated, because it strikes a man into a consternation, overtakes him unawares, surprizes him at a disadvantage, when unprovided with any methods to escape; and also tears all his pleasing hopes from him; and by how much the higher the hopes from whence he falls, by so much the deeper he is engulfed in misery.

Sudden ruin is the certain and natural consequence of a man's incorrigible obstinacy, in spite of admonition. He must be ruined, because he will not be warned, nor forsake the path that leads to destruction. He will even take his own way at all adventures, and no man can help it; and therefore he must be destroyed. He must also be suddenly destroyed, because he would hope for safety in spite of warning; suddenly broken, because he would not foresee the blow. Till he feels the stroke, he would not believe it was coming; and therefore his destruction is sudden, surprizing, and confounding. This is the natural end of fool-hardiness and obstinacy, in spite of all restraints and admonitions: and there is no help for it: such obstinacy

and presumption is an incurable disease, that excludes all remedy. This is implied in the last part of the text :

He shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy; or, as it might be more literally rendered, “and there is no cure, or medicine, or healing.” There can be no preventive medicine to such a self-willed head-strong creature; because he will not apply it; and pushes off every friendly hand that would apply it. And there can be no healing or restorative medicine applied; for the breach, when made, is desperate, and admits no cure. The stiff neck is broken in pieces so that it never can be healed. Then the patient, so obstinate before, would most willingly apply a remedy: but O! it is too late.

Reproofs and admonitions from God and men, and our own consciences, are the great means to recover sinners: and while these are ineffectual, no other can possibly have any effect. How can he be reclaimed from sin, who will sin in opposition to all restraints! In opposition to the checks of conscience, and the strivings of the holy spirit within, and the united dissuasives and rebukes of Providence, of the word of God, and of all his friends from without! Neither God nor all his creatures can reform and save such a wretch, while he continues proof against all the means of reformation and salvation. It is unavoidable, that he should suddenly be destroyed; and there is no help for it:—he must be given up as an incurable. The whole universe may look on, and pity him; but alas! they cannot help him: He has the instrument of self-murder in his own hand; and he will not part with it, but uses it against his own life, without controul: and none can take it out of his hand; that is, none can give his free will a new turn, but that God whom he is daily offending, and who is therefore not obliged to obtrude such a favour upon him.

This is the unavoidable doom of the man that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck. And since this is the character of some of you, have you not reason to fear and forbode this tremendous doom? Let me reason a little with you for your farther conviction.

Your danger will appear from these two considerations, that if you always continue in your present condition, proof against all admonition, you must be destroyed without remedy.—And that there is dreadful reason to fear, you always will continue in your present condition.

That if you live and die in your present condition you must be destroyed without remedy, is lamentably evident from what has been said.—It is the declaration of the wisest of men, inspired from heaven; *he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be broken and there is no remedy.* It is one of the proverbs of this wisest of men. Now a proverb is a wise remark, made after long observation, and frequently exemplified in the world. Therefore, when we consider Solomon here not only as speaking an inspired truth, but pronouncing a proverb, it is as if he had said, “This I have collected from long experience, and careful observation of mankind, and the course of Providence; this is daily exemplified in the world without exception; this all ages may regard as a sure and important truth, and I record it among my immortal proverbs for their warning, that *he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and there is no remedy.* A proverb being a familiar observation upon the common occurrences of the world, it follows farther, that the accomplishment of it is a common thing, that falls under every man’s notice, to his full conviction; and therefore Solomon, by inserting this remark among his Proverbs, intimates, that the sudden and remediless destruction of an incorrigible sinner, is a familiar event that falls under every man’s notice, and which no man can dispute, without disputing the common sense and experience of mankind. Thus certain, irreprovable sinners! thus common is your doom, if you continue in your present condition: it is certain, it is common, even to a proverb. And if you still go on in your present course, you will at last become a hissing, a by-word, and a proverb to all the world.—Your destruction, as I observed, is unavoidable and remediless, according to the nature of things: it is the natural, spontaneous, and

inseparable result and effect of incorrigible obstinacy. You resolutely set your free wills, which are not under the controul of any creature but yourselves, upon your own ruin: and what then remains, but that you must be ruined! To ruin you must go, though attended with the prayers and tears of the saints, and checked by their friendly admonitions, enforced with those of God himself. They cannot help you against your wills. What can keep you from ingulphing yourselves in destruction, when you break through all restraints from God and the whole creation? You reject the only means of cure: and must you not die as incurables! If the spirit of God strives with you in vain; if conscience check and admonishes you in vain; if Providence uses its chastising rod in vain; if sickness, and death, and graves preach in vain; if Bibles and good books are put into your hands in vain; if ministers, and friends, and neighbours, and the dearest relatives, advise, and persuade, and warn, and reprove in vain; if heaven, and earth, and hell, if God and all his creatures admonish in vain; what hopes can yourselves entertain of your salvation! what better means can you desire! what other means can you expect! can you hope to be reformed and prepared for heaven, when these means, the best, the only means that ever were used with sinful creatures, and which have proved effectual in the most discouraging cases, have no effect upon you! Judge yourselves, whether your destruction is not unavoidable in your present condition.

And that you will always continue in your present condition, is alas! but too probable. You have continued in it all your life past: and is not this a dreadful presumption that you will continue in it all your life to come! Can you expect better means than you have had! Or are your hearts become more soft and pliable now, when hardened by an obstinate course of incorrigible impenitence, that you should hope the same means will have greater efficacy upon them in time to come than formerly! Are you as sure of twenty or thirty years before you, as that you have enjoyed twenty or thirty years in time past! Is God the less provoked, by how much the longer you have offended

him, so that you have more encouragement to expect the assistance of his grace hereafter than formerly? Are you now any more out of danger of being judiciously hardened and given up of God, than ten years ago! And are you the more sure of his favour, by how much the more you deserve his wrath? Are the habits of sin grown weaker through inveteracy and long indulgence! Does the work of your salvation grow easier by delays, and by your having fewer days for work! Does conscience gain strength upon you, by your repeated violences; or the spirit of God work the more powerfully, the more you resist and grieve him! Does your being inured to the gospel, give it greater force upon you! If the happy change of your present condition be probable, the probability must depend, in human view, upon such absurdities as these. But can these be the foundation of probability? No; but of the greatest improbability. The truth of the case is, your condition is growing more and more discouraging every day; and you are approaching fast towards a fixed unchangeable state of incorrigible obstinacy in wickedness. Ten years ago, it was much more likely, in human view, that you would have been converted ere now, than it now is, that you will be converted in ten years to come. In short, the only ground of hope concerning you, is, not at all from the appearance of things in human view, but merely from the free and sovereign grace of God. I may say of your salvation, what Christ said of the salvation of the rich, *with men that is impossible*: that is, according to the ordinary way of judging among men, who can judge only by appearances, and who count those things likely or unlikely, possible or impossible, which seem to be so in their own nature: according to this rule of judging, there is no reason at all to hope for it: it is quite desperate. *But with God all things are possible*: he can and sometimes does, act contrary to appearances and the natural tendency of things; and astonishes his creatures with unexpected and surprizing wonders. Thus, veteran, obstinate sinners! he may yet deal with some of you. Omnipotence may yet take you in hand, disarm all your resistance, and cause you to feel those

admonitions you have made light of. This perhaps, God may do. But O! it is an anxious dreadful per-adventure; for you must know, though he sometimes singles out an hardened sinner of your class here and there, to make him the illustrious trophy of the power of his grace, yet this is not his usual way: he does not commonly work upon such rough unsuitable materials. He generally pitches upon the young and pliable, upon those that have not been long inured to the gospel, nor hardened in sin. Therefore, even this, which is your only ground of hope, can afford you but a trembling anxious hope. Notwithstanding this, you have reason to fear that you will die as you have hitherto lived, hardy, resolute, incorrigible sinners. And if so, you know your dreadful end; you shall suddenly be destroyed, your stiff neck shall be unexpectedly broken; and there will be no help, no remedy.

And if you are indeed in so much danger, will you not now lay it to heart, and endeavour to escape while you may? Alas! shall this admonition also, this admonition for your disregarding all past admonitions, be lost upon you like the rest? O! will you not at length take warning, before it is too late? Perhaps the voice that now warns you, may not long sound in your ears. But O! let me find this day, that those whom I have reprov'd in vain for so many years, regard me at last, and submit and yield. Then, and not till then, you will be safe from the vengeance denounced in this alarming proverb, *He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

SERMON XLI.

The Nature of looking to Christ opened and explained.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I
am God, and there is none else.*

IT is the peculiar sin and unhappiness of the christianized world, that, while they profess and speculatively believe Jesus to be the Messiah, the Saviour of sinners; and while they harbour some kind of high esteem for him as a Benefactor that appeared upon earth about 1700 years ago, who should be still remembered with gratitude, yet that they are not deeply sensible of that intimate personal concern which degenerate sinners have with him in every age. They do not make that eager, importunate, affectionate application to him, which his character requires as the Saviour of guilty men. Divine justice indeed was satisfied, the demands of the law were answered by the obedience and sufferings of our divine Redeemer long before we came into existence, and God became reconcilable to a guilty world. But all this alone does not insure our salvation. Redemption must not only be purchased, but applied; and though it was purchased without our concurrence, yet all mankind, in all ages, are concerned in the application of it. There was no need of the gospel and its ordinances to procure it; but all these are necessary, and therefore appointed for our obtaining an actual interest in it. Hence Christ, as an almighty Saviour, is exhibited, and the blessings of his purchase are offered in the gospel; and all that hear the gracious proposal are invited to entertain this

Saviour with suitable dispositions, and to consent to the terms on which these blessings are offered, upon the penalty of everlasting damnation. Our personal consent is required as much in this age as when the gospel was first published to the world; and it is this which is solicited by all the means of grace; it is to gain your consent to this gracious proposal, that the gospel is still continued among you. It is for this we preach; for this you should hear, and perform every other duty; for this the Lord's Supper in particular was instituted, and has been to-day administered among you. It is to melt your hearts, and engage your affections to a dying Saviour, that he is represented both in words and in speaking actions, in all the agonies of Gethsemane, and in all the tortures of Calvary.

But though these affecting means have been used from age to age, yet, alas! they have not had the intended effect upon multitudes. They act like a sick person infatuated with the imagination that the mere grateful remembrance of Galen or Hippocrates, or some other eminent physician of past ages, will be sufficient for his recovery, without following their prescriptions, or making a speedy application to a living physician now: whereas there is as much reason why we in this age should be pricked to the heart, and cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* as there was for St. Peter's hearers. Acts ii. 37, 38. There is as much reason to exhort unregenerate sinners now to repent and be converted, as there was to exhort the impenitent Jews to it. There is as much cause to direct and persuade men now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the heathen jailor, who had been an infidel. Acts xvi. 31. It is true indeed, when we now exhort men to believe in Christ, we cannot include all the ideas in it which were included in this exhortation when addressed to infidel Jews and heathens in the apostolic age; for then it included, that they should renounce their former religion, and assent to this important truth, that Jesus is the Messiah, and take upon them the profession of christianity; and this is rendered in general, I hope, needless in

our land, as we have been initiated into this persuasion by our education and other means. But, my brethren, all this is far short of that consent which we must yield to the gospel, if we expect to be saved by it. This faith is not that living faith which we are called to act upon the Redeemer; and we must give him another kind of reception than multitudes do, who thus believe his divine mission, and profess his religion. We must have those affectionate dispositions and vigorous exercises of heart towards him, which become guilty perishing sinners towards an almighty and gracious Saviour, who deserves and therefore demands our supreme affection, our humble dependence on his merits alone, and our hearty consent to be his servants for ever. We must be brought to believe in him with such a faith as will regulate our practices, and render the whole of our life a series of grateful obedience to him, who is an atoning Priest upon a throne of royal authority, enacting laws and demanding the dutiful submission of his subjects. And therefore, though it is needless to call upon you to believe in the same sense in which this exhortation was addressed to infidels by the apostles; yet there is still room enough to urge you to this duty, only leaving out one ingredient then included, viz. a speculative belief and external profession of the christian religion, and that Christ is the Messiah. There is still reason to persuade sinners to consent to the terms of life established in the gospel, to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and to place their humble confidence in his alone, to acquiesce with the warmest complacency in the method of salvation through grace, and in the mean time to surrender themselves to his government, to obey his will, with the most cheerful willingness, the most ardent devotion, and the humblest adoration: in short, to entertain the great Redeemer with those affections and dispositions which the nature and sign of this mediatorial office demand, and which become our condition as guilty, miserable, helpless creatures; all which are included in that faith in Jesus which the gospel enjoins as the grand condition of salvation.

This faith is one of the principal subjects of sacred scripture, and is expressed in various forms; sometimes in plain terms, but more frequently in metaphors borrowed from earthly things, and particularly from the actions of the body. This method of expressing spiritual objects and intellectual ideas in terms that originally and properly are applied to the body, is not only common in scripture, but intermingled in conversation, and authorized by the best authors in all ages and languages. We speak of the eye of the understanding as well as of our bodily eye: and to see an argument, or a meaning, is almost as common a phrase as to see a man or any other material object. The evidence by which the soul forms its determinations is called light, as well as the medium of proper vision. And as the metaphor is here borrowed from the eye, so it is frequently borrowed from the other organs of the body and their actions. This is owing to the penury of the language of mortals, who, as they are most conversant with material objects, and have the earliest and most frequent occasions of receiving or conveying their ideas of them in sound, are habituated to a dialect proper to these things; and, when they would express their ideas of immaterial things, they are obliged to transfer these terms, originally applied to material objects, to express those immaterial things; and there is not only necessity but reason for this, as there is a resemblance between those actions of the body from which these metaphors are borrowed, and those actions of the mind to which they are transferred; yea, it is not only a reasonable, but a beautiful and moving method of representing divine things: in this principally consists the beauty of poetry, that it clothes intellectual ideas in lively material images, which make deep impressions on our imaginations.

In such metaphorical terms as I observed, faith is often represented in sacred scripture. Sometimes the metaphor is borrowed from the feet; and then to believe is to come to Christ; to come to him as one opprest with a heavy burden to a person that can relieve, Matt. xi. 28.; to come to him as one perishing

with thirst to a fountain of living water, Isaiah lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17.; or as the manslayer, closely pursued by the avenger of blood, to the city of refuge: hence it is expressed by the most emphatical phrase of *fleeing for refuge*. Heb. vi. 18. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the conduct of a dutiful and loyal people towards their rightful Sovereign upon his entering among them in his own territories. John i. 11, 12. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the ears; and faith is expressed by hearing his voice, as an impoverished dying wretch would hear the offer of plenty and life. Isaiah lv. 3. John v. 25. And sometimes, as in the text, the metaphor is taken from the eyes; and faith is represented as looking to Christ. My present design is,

I. To explain the duty here express by the metaphor of looking.

II. To urge it upon you by sundry important considerations.

I. To explain the duty express by the metaphor of looking, we are to observe in general, that a man's looks often discover his condition and the frame of his mind. By virtue of the strange union between the soul and the body, the dispositions of the one are often indicated by the emotions and appearances of the other. The eye in particular, is a mirror in which we may see the various passions of the mind; and it has a kind of silent, and yet significant language, which conveys to others those inward exercises which the tongue does not, and perhaps cannot express. Hence we can understand a look of surprize and consternation, a look of sorrow and compassion, a look of joy, the look of a perishing supplicant, or of a needy, expecting dependent. If an agonizing patient casts an eager look upon his physician, we understand it to be a silent petition for relief. When a dying husband fixes a wishful, tender look upon his surviving half, or those little other selves, his children, they know the melting language, and feel its resistless energy. And when we see a drowning man casting a wild and eager look towards a boat coming to his relief, we understand it to be the language of earnest importunity for speedy

help. Hence it follows, that "looking to Christ, implies those suitable dispositions and exercises of heart towards him, which are exprest by the earnest and significant looks of persons in a distrest condition towards their deliverer." And in such a case it is natural to conceive a person as expressing by his looks a particular notice and distinct knowledge of his deliverer,—an importunate cry for his assistance,—a wishful expectation of it,—a dependence upon him for it,—an universal submission to him,—an hearty love and approbation of him,—and joy and gratitude for his deliverance. And these dispositions and exercises of mind towards Christ are intended in the text by looking to him.

I. Looking to Christ, implies a particular notice and distinct knowledge of him. When we fix an earnest look upon an object, we take particular notice and a distinct survey of it, and so obtain a clear knowledge of it. Thus we are called to fix our intellectual eyes upon Christ, to make him the object of our contemplation, and by these means to obtain the knowledge of him. Mankind are too commonly regardless and ignorant of him. And are not many of you chargeable with this criminal neglect? The blessed Jesus has exhibited himself to your observation in the gospel, but your attention is so engaged by other objects, that you will not allow him an earnest look. He has been set forth evidently crucified before your eyes, but you have, as it were, passed and repassed careless and unconcerned by his cross. You have had a variety of opportunities and means to be instructed in the glorious mysteries of the gospel; to know the person of the Redeemer as Immanuel, God and man; to know the absolute necessity, the gracious design, and the high degree of his sufferings; to know his sufficiency and willingness to pardon and save believing penitents; and, in a word, to obtain a competent acquaintance with the method of salvation. But you have taken but little or no notice of these things; and consequently remained contentedly ignorant of them. It is equally lamentable and astonishing, that in a land like this, abounding in Bibles and other means of instruction,

christianity should be so little known even by those that profess it. How ridiculous a figure would an artist make that knew nothing of his trade! a school-master that could not spell! Or a doctor that knew nothing of physic! And yet men have the impious impudence to call themselves christians, and resent it when their profession is pronounced an hypocritical pretence, though they are ignorant of the rudiments of christianity. You are therefore called in the text to pursue the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, John xvii. 3.; to make this the object of your study; for without it you cannot be saved. It is by the knowledge of him you were justified, Isa. liii. 11.; and if you are *a people of no understanding, he that formed you will not have mercy on you*, Isa. xxvii. 11. but you shall be destroyed through lack of knowledge, Hosea iv. 6. Not that a mere speculative knowledge of Christ will suffice; no, it must not be a look of curiosity and speculation, but you must be affected with the object; your eye must affect your heart; and by beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel, you must be changed into the same image, or conformed to him in holiness, 2 Cor. iii. 18. A perishing man is not a mere curious speculator of his deliverer; but he views him with the tenderest passions. So you must look upon Christ. Thus the knowledge of him was attended with supreme affection to him in St. Paul, Phil. iii. 7, 8. But this will be farther illustrated under the following particulars.

II. Looking to Christ, implies an importunate eagerness for relief from him. See Psalm xxv. 15. If your child were fallen into the hand of a murderer just ready to dispatch him, and should cast a wishful look upon you, while you was running to his deliverance, you would understand it as a silent cry for help. So we are enjoined to look to Christ with the most eager importunity for deliverance from him as our Saviour. And this supposes a deep sense of our need of him. When a guilty creature, that had been involved in the general presumptuous security, is effectually alarmed with just apprehensions of his danger; when he sees his numberless transgressions in all their horrid aggra-

vations, and the dreadful threatenings of the law in full force, and ready to be executed against him: in short, when he sees himself ripe for ruin, and ready every moment to sink into it, with what importunate cries will he betake himself to him for relief! Behold, he prayeth! now he is often on his knees before God in secret, as well as in social prayer; and in the intervals between his prayers, he is often looking to the hills from whence cometh his aid, Psalm cxxi. 1. and wafting up many an importunate cry to heaven. Sometimes he sinks into an abyss of sorrow, and is overwhelmed with boisterous waves of fears, so that, with Jonah, he is ready to cry out, *I am cast out of thy sight, O! Lord*: yet, with him he says, *I will look again towards thy holy temple*, Jonah ii. 4. Happy the souls that are thus looking to Jesus, who is lifted up for the recovery of a dying world as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness! John iii. 14. And happy we, should this spirit of pious importunity prevail among us, and banish that spirit of deep sleep which seems poured out upon us! then would prayer be our employ, not only when we observed the returns of stated prayer in secret in our families, and in our public assemblies, but our souls would be always in a supplicating posture; every wish, every groan would be a cry for mercy; and then might we expect to obtain the blessings we need; and the aspect of our religious affairs would be happily altered among us. To this duty the text invites us; and O! that we may consult our own interest, as well as regard the authority of God, so far as to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near! Isaiah lv. 6.

III. Looking to Christ implies a wishful expectation of deliverance from him. See Psalm lxix. 3. It may be illustrated by the history of the lame beggar, in Acts iii. 4, 5. He begged an alms of the apostles Peter and John: they do not immediately relieve him, but give him some ground of encouraging expectation by taking particular notice of him, and telling him to fix his eyes upon them. Thereupon the anxious cripple gives heed to them, and wishfully looks upon them, expecting to receive something of them. So a poor sinner, amidst

all his anxious fears and despondencies, approaches the throne of grace, and begs for mercy. The Lord Jesus, though his bowels are yearning over him, does not give him immediate relief; he puts him off for a while, as he did the Syrophœnician, that he may give occasion for him to plead with the more importunity, and more suitably prize the blessing when obtained. Yet in this melancholy interval, he does not leave him quite hopeless. The invitations of the gospel cry, "Look on me;" and the poor sinners lifts up the eyes of wishful expectation to receive something. "Who knows but that sovereign and unbounded grace, which has relieved thousands, may also listen to my cries? Blessed Jesus! may I not indulge some trembling hope that thou wilt at length grant me deliverance? Thy free, thine indefinite invitations and absolute promises give me some ground of pleasing expectation; and O! shall it be frustrated? No, let me trust in thee for the gracious accomplishment." Such are the soliloquies of such an anxious soul. And though we might be all left in remediless despair, yet, blessed be God! we have encouragement to look to Jesus with humble joyful hope; and it is to this the text exhorts us.

IV. Looking to Jesus, implies an humble dependence upon him for salvation. This supposes that we are deeply sensible of our own utter inability to relieve ourselves; and when we are convinced of this, we shall immediately look to another: when we see no ground at all for self-confidence, we shall place our trust in Jesus alone. It was such a look as this that good Jehoshaphat raised to heaven: *We have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. So Micah, finding no room for human confidence, resolves, *Therefore I will look unto the Lord*, Micah vii. 7. Thus an humble sinner, sensible of his utter inability, resolves to venture upon Christ, *to trust in him, though he should slay him*, Job xiii. 15. And in those happy moments when the sinner has some glimmering hopes of acceptance, with what pleasure and satisfaction does he rest upon this Eternal Rock! and how happy we,

should we be engaged this day to place our humble dependence there! It is to this the text calls us.

V. Looking to Christ, means an universal cheerful submission to his authority. We must consent to be his servants for ever, and wait all the intimations of his will to obey them. We must look and observe the motion of his hand pointing out to us the way of duty. We must look as a servant upon his master, eager to receive his orders. So the phrase seems used in Psalm cxxiii. 1, 2. *Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the Lord.* Thus, whoever trusts in Jesus with a saving faith, surrenders himself to an unlimited obedience to all his commandments; and to this the text invites us.

VI. Looking to Christ, implies a hearty approbation of him as a Saviour, and supreme affection to him. Love is often expressed by looks; and when we look affectionately upon an object, it evidences that we are pleased with the survey. So a perishing world is commanded to acquiesce in the method of salvation through Christ, to love him above all, and to take the fullest and noblest complacence in him; and upon their so doing, they are assured of salvation. We have indeed been influenced by education and the like means to entertain a general good esteem of Christ; but, alas! this is very far short of that endearing affection and hearty complacence which he claims and deserves. Our hearts must be engaged to him; he must be the chief among ten thousand in our eyes. Our thoughts and passions must often ascend to him, and we must rest in him with complacence, as containing all our salvation, and all our desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

VII. And lastly, Looking to Christ implies joy and gratitude for his delivering goodness. The passions of joy and gratitude are easily discovered by the looks; and therefore are intended by this phrase, *look unto me.* And this is not only the duty, but the delightful inclination of one that has been relieved by him from the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the dreadful

displeasure of God. Joy is in itself a pleasing passion and we delight to indulge it; and to a heart that has just felt the mercy of deliverance from everlasting destruction, thanksgiving is a most grateful and pleasing employ; and in this, much of the happiness of heaven consists.

From this view of the duty intended by looking to Jesus, take occasion, my brethren, to examine whether ever you have complied with it; for it is a matter of infinite importance, as your eternal state depends upon it. *He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life,* 1 John v. 12.

SERMON XLII.

Arguments to enforce our looking to Christ.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.

THE duty of looking to Christ being explained,
I shall,

II. Urge you to look to him by several weighty considerations.

This is the great duty of saints and sinners, and consequently of every one in all ages and places, even to *the ends of the earth*.—It is the duty of sinners to turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, and fix them upon this attractive, but alas! neglected Saviour; to turn their attention from the trifles of time to the great antitype of the brazen serpent, who is lifted up that a dying world may open their eyes just closing in death, and look and live. And saints, whose eyes have been turned to this glorious object, ought to fix them more intensely upon him, to take larger surveys of his glory, and to renew their affectionate trust in him.

I would premise, that when I exhort sinners to look to Jesus, I would not intimate, that they are able to do this of themselves. No; I am very sensible, that all the exhortations, persuasions, invitations, and ex-postulations that a feeble mortal, or even the most powerful angel in heaven can use with them will have no effect, but vanish into air, without the efficacious operation of almighty grace. And yet such exhortations are neither useless, improper, or unscriptural: they tend to convince sinners of their inability to believe,

which is necessary to their believing aright; and it is, while such arguments are addressed to their understandings, that the holy spirit is wont to work upon their hearts. Hence they are so often commanded in scripture to *repent, to believe in Christ, to look to him, to make them a new heart, &c.* I would add, that when I express the duty enjoined under the metaphor of looking, I hope it will not lead any of you into gross corporeal ideas, since the import of it has been so fully shewn.

The arguments to enforce this important evangelical duty can never be exhausted; and therefore I must confine myself to those which this copious text furnishes us with, which, when resolved into particulars, will stand thus:

It is salvation we are called upon to pursue,—It may be obtained upon the easiest terms, without any personal merit, viz. by a look—It is Immanuel, the incarnate God, that commands and invites us to look,—and he is the glorious and affecting object to which we are to look,—and our looking shall not be in vain, for he is God, who engages to save those that look to him;—and it is in vain to look elsewhere for salvation, and needless to fear his grace should be controuled by another; for as he is God, so there is none else,—and we in particular are invited, being especially meant by *the ends of the earth.*

I. It is salvation that is here offered. Look, and be saved. Salvation! O most propitious, transporting sound! Amazing! that ever it should be heard by our guilty ears! Sin, my brethren, has exposed us to the curse of the divine law, to the loss of heaven, and all its joys, yea, and of earth too, and all its entertainments; for death, the consequence of sin, will rend us from them. We have no title to any good to satisfy our eager pantings; and must languish and pine through an endless duration without a drop of bliss, if punished according to our demerit. We are also subject to the torturing agonies of a remorseful conscience, to be cut off from the earth by the sword of justice, and swept away by the besom of destruction into the regions of horror and despair, there to con-

sume away a long, long eternity, in inextinguishable flames, in remediless, intolerable torments, in the horrid society of devils and damned ghosts, who shall mutually promote and join in the general roar of torture and desperation. This, sirs, is our just, our unavoidable doom, unless we obtain an interest in the salvation of the Lord. But salvation brings us a complete remedy, equal to our misery. It contains a title to the divine favour, and consequently to all the joys of heaven; it contains a perfect deliverance from all the torments of hell: and shall we not then regard and obey the voice that cries, *Look unto me, and be ye saved!* It is not fit those should perish without remedy who hear the offer of such a salvation with indifference? *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Were we now under a sentence of condemnation to death by an earthly court, and were going out one after another to the place of execution, and should some welcome messenger with a general pardon in his hand come with joyful speed into this assembly, and proclaim, Salvation! Salvation! to all that would accept it on the easiest terms, what a shout of general joy would burst from this assembly! What changed faces, what tears of general joy, would appear among us! In this agreeable character, my brethren, I have the honour and the happiness of appearing among you this day. I proclaim salvation from the Lord to dying men; salvation to all that will look to him for it. And I would not make the offer to the air, or to the walls of this house, but to rational creatures, capable of consenting and refusing. I therefore request you to look upon it as a proposal made to you; to you men, to you women, to you youth and children, to you negroes, demanding a speedy answer. Will you look to Jesus? or will you hide your faces from him? Will you not think him and his salvation worth a look? Which leads me to observe,

II. This salvation may be obtained upon low terms. It may be obtained by a look. Look and be saved: and this metaphor implies that no merit is required in us to procure this salvation. It is as cheap a cure as

that which the Israelites obtained by looking to the brazen serpent. The salvation is wrought already, Christ would not separate his soul and body, and put an end to his pains, till he could say, *it is finished*, and all required of us is a cheerful acceptance: and what terms can be easier? It is true we are required to abstain from sin, and be holy, in order to enjoy this salvation; but can this be looked upon as a hard term? It is impossible in the nature of things you should be saved in a course of sin; for one great part of the salvation consists in deliverance from sin. This is the deadly disease which must be healed, in order to your happiness. And how then can you expect to be saved while you indulge it? Would you not think your physician made easy prescriptions to you, if he assured you of recovery, when you are sick, upon condition that you would abstain from poison, and confine yourselves to a wholesome diet? Holiness is as necessary to happiness as temperance to health; and though sinners like drunkards, think this a hard imposition, yet it cannot be altered, without a change in the immutable Deity. Therefore submit to the terms of salvation; they are as low, as easy as the nature of things will permit. They are not the rigid arbitrary impositions of an austere being, but the mild unavoidable requisitions of an indulgent and wise God, acting according to the reason of things. If salvation was offered to you, upon condition of your making an infinite satisfaction for sin, you might start off from the proposal; for even almighty grace could not enable you to do this: for this you could not do without being advanced above the rank of creatures, and endowed with infinity, which you are physically incapable of. But grace can dispose you to consent to the terms of the gospel; grace can turn your eyes to look to Jesus, for you are only morally incapable of this; that is, you are unwilling, you are sinfully averse to it. Come then, look and live. The lowness of the terms aggravates the guilt of a non-compliance with them. What do those deserve who do not think of a salvation purchased with the blood of God worth a look? What drudgery do you endure, what hard-

ships do you voluntarily undergo, to procure some of the specious toys of this world? What a difficult regimen will you submit to, what nauseous potions will you take, for the recovery of the health of your mortal bodies? And will you not take the trouble of a look for the salvation of your immortal souls? How eagerly will you accept the offer of any temporal advantage! and will you neglect this invitation to look and live? Especially, when,

III. It is Immanuel our incarnate God, that invites and commands you to look to him, and be saved. You may trifle with the commands of an usurper, and reject the treacherous invitations of an enemy; but dare you trifle with the injunctions, dare you refuse the gracious invitations of our supreme King and heavenly friend?—That it is Christ who here calls us to look to him, is evident from the application of this context to Christ by the apostle: *To this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*, Rom. xiv. 9—11. which words, according to the Hebrew, you find in the verse following my text. See also Phil. ii. 9—11. Moreover the characters here predicated concerning the Lord Jehovah, most properly belong to Christ, according to the dialect of the New Testament; *Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*. Now we know that Christ is everywhere represented as our righteousness and strength. *In the Lord shall the seed of Israel be justified*, verse 24, 25.; which is spoken most properly of Christ, through whom alone we can be justified. It is therefore the voice of our Immanuel that sounds so delightfully in our text. It is his voice which spoke this goodly universe into being out of its original nothing; which said, *Let there be light; and there was light!* and dare we disobey his voice by whom all things were created? Col. i. 16. He spoke us into being, and we obeyed; and shall we, when blest with existence, resist his almighty call? It is his voice whom angels obey; Gabriel, and all his flaming ministers, fly at the first hint of his sove-

reign pleasure. Nay, universal nature hears his awful mandate, and all her laws are observed, or cancelled according to his pleasure. Events natural and supernatural are equally easy to him. And is this the majestic voice which sinners hear sounding in the gospel, and yet disregard? Is this he whom they make so light of, as not to vouchsafe him a look? Amazing presumption! And further, It is his voice which shall pronounce the final sentence upon the assembled universe. He now sits exalted upon a throne of grace, scattering blessings among his subjects, and inviting a dying world to look to him and live; but ere long he will put on majesty and terror, and ascend the throne of judgment. From thence he will speak, and omnipotence will attend his word to execute it. From thence he will pronounce, *come, ye blessed*, on all that hear his call now; and neither earth nor hell can repeal the joyful sentence. And on those that will not now look to him, he will pronounce, *depart from me*; “away, away from my blissful presence, ye cursed creatures, never, never to see me more.” And though they can now resist the voice of mercy, yet then they must obey the dreadful orders of justice, and shrink confounded from his face, and sink to hell. We, my brethren, must mingle in that vast assembly, and hear our doom from his lips; and can we, in the serious expectation of that day, refuse his call to look to him now? Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and how shall we stand the terror of his face, if we now treat him so contemptuously? These considerations shew, that the call in my text is the command of authority, and therefore that our neglect of it is disloyalty and rebellion. But, O! there is a more melting, a more endearing consideration still. It is the voice of our beloved, it is the gracious invitation of love: it is his voice who heard the cry of our helpless misery; who, though equal with God, and possessed of infinite, independent happiness, emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant. He often looked up to heaven with strong cryings and tears in the days of his flesh for us. For us he spoke many a gracious word, still upon record; for us he wrought

many a miracle; for us he travelled many a fatiguing journey, and endured hunger and thirst, and all the calamities of poverty. For us he was reproached, belied, persecuted; and, O! for us he sweat and groaned in Gethsemane; for us his back was furrowed with scourging, his face defiled with spitting, his head bruised with buffetings, and pierced with thorns. For us he was nailed to the cross; for us he hung in ignominy and torture; for us he shed his blood, he breathed out his life; for us his side was pierced; and for us the Lord of life lay in the dust of death. And, O! blessed Jesus! after all this love, after all these sufferings, will not the sons of men afford thee one affectionate believing look, when thou exhibitest thyself in the gospel, crying with a loud and loving voice, "Behold me, behold me; look unto me, and be ye saved." O! sirs, can you reject the invitation of such a Saviour? are you capable of such horrid ingratitude? He bespeaks your attention with dying groans; his wounds preach from the cross, and cry, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* There he was lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; that whosoever believeth in him, though in the agonies of death, should not perish, but have everlasting life; and can we neglect the invitation of such a Saviour in such circumstances? Shall a guilty world always find something else to look upon, so that they cannot spare a glance to the blessed Jesus! With what pious horror must angels behold such a sight! And may not the earth shudder to support such impious ingratitude!

IV. It is Immanuel we are to look to. *Look unto me.* He that issues the command is the glorious and attractive object we are called to behold. The adorable glories of a God, and the milder beauties of a perfect man meet in his person. His glories attract the admiring gaze of angels, and charm the attention of the happy immortals above. The survey of his perfections is the source of all their bliss, and will furnish all their powers with extatic employ, through the revolutions of eternal ages. And will not worms look up from the dust to him? Shall every sordid trifle engage their

intense contemplation, while they hide their faces from this glorious Immanuel, as though he had no form or comeliness? There is an infinite variety of objects within the compass of the creation which attract our attention. Our eyes are charmed with the splendor of the day, the midnight glories of the starry arch, the verdure of the spring, the majesty of mountains, the beauties of human faces; nay, there is not a trifling curiosity in nature but engages our observation. But all the glories of the universe are but the faint reflections of his; they are but obscure copies of his underived excellencies. And shall we be charmed with the transcript, and take no notice of the original? Does the contemplation of the works of nature afford such exquisite entertainment to philosophic minds, and shall not every mind be transported in the survey of Immanuel's uncreated glories? But if all these considerations fail, sure the love of Christ must constrain you. He has exhibited himself to your view this day in a vesture dipt in blood. He has emblematically past before you crowned with thorns, and covered with blood; and as Pilate said to the Jews, to melt them into compassion, so say we to you, *Behold the man!* And will you turn away from him regardless, or view him with as much indifference as though he were a malefactor? What is this but to join the Jewish rabble, *away with him! away with him! crucify him! crucify him!* He has virtually said to you as to Thomas, *Look into my hands, and behold the print of the nails; and look into my side, and behold the stab of the spear, which opened a fountain of life for you.* And can you deny an affectionate look to such an object? He hangs conspicuous on the cross, his nerves racked, his bones disjoined, his heart melting like wax in the midst of his bowels, while streams of blood run down his sacred body; and it is in this posture we are to look upon him. In this posture, as it were, he issues forth his gracious invitation, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* And is there a mortal so hardy, so ungrateful, as to refuse an affectionate look to him in such circumstances? Shall he complain, with David, his type,

*I looked for some to pity; but there was none, Psalm lxi. 20. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; no man cared for my soul. Psalm cxlii. 4. Blessed Jesus! shalt thou take up this complaint over creatures for whom thou didst bleed and die! over creatures who owe all their hopes to thee! may not the whole creation be struck with consternation at the complaint! why are not the miraculous solemnities that attend thy death renewed? Why do not the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the sun put on the livery of a mourner, to see a dying God and a careless world! the Creator, the Saviour of men, in agony, in blood; and his creatures, his ransomed, asleep, and not affording him so much as a look of love and compassion! Were ever such horrid incongruities pronounced at a breath, or united in one sentence!—But the cross is not the only place where we should look upon him. Lift up your eyes to seats above, there you may behold him who tasted of death, crowned with glory and honour. His head, that was once crowned with thorns, is now adorned with a crown of glory: his face, that was once bruised with blows, and disgraced with spitting, shines brighter than the sun in his meridian glory: His hands, that were once nailed to the cross, now sway the scepter of the universe: and his feet, that were cruelly pierced, now walk the crystal pavement of heaven. He that was insulted by Jews and Gentiles, he at whom they wagged their heads, is now adored by all the heavenly hosts, who congratulate his exaltation, and cry with united voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Rev. v. 11, 12. This is the voice of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands in that world where Jesus is best known. And shall we break the harmony of the universal choir? Shall we not echo back their song, and reply, *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood (which is more than he did for angels) to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.* Rev. i. 5, 6. Shall we not look to him whose glory attracts the eyes of all the celestial armies,*

and congratulate his exaltation? We have cause indeed to rejoice in it; for O! he is exalted, that he may have mercy upon us, Isa. xxx. 18.; he has ascended the throne, that he may thence scatter blessings on a guilty world beneath him. He retains his usual love, and the tenderest bowels of compassion towards the meanest of his people. He is now pleading their cause in the court of heaven, and preparing a place for them. From thence he exhibits himself to our intellectual view, and invites us to look to him. And can we slight such glory and love united? Are our natures capable of such infernal gratitude? O let us look to him, especially since it shall not be in vain;

For, V. He is able to save us upon our looking to him. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God.* This is annexed as the reason of the duty enjoined; and what can give us greater security of salvation upon our compliance? *If God be for us, who shall be against us? If God justify, who is he that condemneth?* It is his right to constitute the terms of salvation, and he has almighty power to save all that comply with them. It is that God, who threatens to punish sinners, that here promises to save them upon their looking to him. And what glorious encouragement, what strong consolation does this afford us! Is there a creature here so full of unbelieving despondency, as seriously to think that even Jehovah cannot save him? Surely no; therefore look and be saved, for it is God that undertakes to save you. And he can do exceeding abundantly more for you than you can ask or think. Your sins may be mighty, but not almighty; your guilt may be great, but the blood of God can expiate it: the obstructions in your way may be numerous and insuperable to you, but he can reduce a mountain into a plain before you. You are feeble helpless things, *but have you not heard? have you not known that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall*

renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. Isa. xl. 28—31.

VI. Look to him; for as he is God, so there is *none else*. This implies that there is no other Saviour, and that this sole Saviour is controulable, and therefore able to save.

It is only a God that is able to work our salvation. Men, angels, all creatures are unequal to the task. They cannot satisfy divine justice for our sin; they cannot subdue our corruptions, and sanctify our hearts; nor conduct us safe through all the dangers and temptations that surround us. We in particular are utterly incapable of these things. It is not in the power of our hand to relieve ourselves*. And if you will not look to Christ, to whom will you look? *Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints, to which of the angels, wilt thou turn?* You are shut up to the faith, my brethren; you have no alternative but to look to Christ, or sink to hell. There is no salvation in any other. And will you rather be without a Saviour than look to him as such? Why, what evil hath he done? Why such strange aversion to your best Friend, who is able to save to the utmost? And as none else can save, so

He is able to save, because beyond controul. There is no God besides to reverse his will; but whom he blesses, is blessed indeed. *He is Head over all things to his church.* He limits the power, controuls the rage, and baffles all the politic schemes of the powers of hell; and the hearts of men, of kings, are in his hand, and he turns them whithersoever he pleases. None therefore shall pluck his sheep out of his hand; but he will give unto them eternal life. Look then to him, poor trembling weaklings, that are daily putting your life in his hand, and often dismally forebode your own destruction, and the victory of your enemies. *Trust in the Lord Jehovah; for in his arm is everlasting strength.*

* To attempt to save ourselves is to affect to be Gods, and to claim the peculiar work of omnipotence.

VII. And lastly, Look to him, for you are particularly invited, being especially meant by those in the ends of the earth. A promiscuous call may not be regarded so much as a particular invitation directed to us, as it were, by name. We dwell in a continent that may be called the ends of the earth with peculiar propriety; and though America was unknown in Isaiah's time, and probably not in his thoughts when he uttered these words, yet no doubt that omniscient Spirit, who inspired his lips, had a reference to it. It is true the words may be taken figuratively, as referring to the Gentiles in general, who might be said to be in the ends of the earth with respect to the favourite land of Judea, which was situated near the middle of the then known world, on the borders of Asia, near where it joins with Europe and Africa. Those in the ends of the earth seem also to suggest to us the ideas of poor outcasts in a helpless condition, as the Gentiles then were, without the knowledge of God and the means of grace. And if we take the text in this sense, it still refers to us who are the posterity of heathens. But methinks there is a particular beauty and propriety in it taken literally; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, ye that dwell in the remotest ends of the inhabited earth; look unto me, ye Americans, ye Virginians." O what a joyful sound! Not many years ago we or our near ancestors came from the old continent of Europe or its adjacent islands; and the Lord hath driven out the heathen from before us, and planted us in their stead. We left his church and the favourite lands where his gospel had shined for ages, and came among savages that never heard of the name of Jesus, but dwelt in darkness and the shadow of death. But lo! he sends his gracious invitation after us to the ends of the earth, *Look unto me, and be ye saved*. In the days of Isaiah God was mindful of America, he was mindful of Virginia, and treasured up a rich invitation, till it should be inhabited; and in need of it. And shall we not regard it? Shall we not regard his voice crying in this wilderness? Indeed if any other blessings were worthy to be compared with those of the gospel, I might observe that he has not been kind to us in this

respect only. He has turned this wilderness into a fruitful field; the residence of savages and wild beasts into a mart of nations. *He hath blessed us also, so that we are multiplied greatly; and he suffereth not our cattle to decrease.* See Psalm cvii. 36—38. We may borrow the word of Moses, in Deut. xxxii. 10—14. But alas! we have waxed fat, and kicked against God, like well-fed horses against their proprietor. We have turned his blessings into occasions of sinning. We have improved in guilt and impiety in proportion to our improvement in riches and the arts of life. And it is an instance of divine patience that may astonish even heaven itself, that so ungrateful a land has not been visited with some signal judgment. But our iniquities are not yet full, and we hope there are more than ten righteous persons among us, whose prayers stand in the gap, and prevent the irruption of vengeance. But perhaps our day is at hand, and then, though Noah, Daniel, and Job should stand before God, yet his heart will not be turned towards us. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise! is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee.* Deut. xxxii. 6. But to abuse the gospel is the greatest of all crimes. It is this that ripens a people for ruin, and fills up the measure of their iniquity: God will easier bear with the abuse of any mercy than with the contempt of his Son. *Therefore look unto him, and be ye saved, O ye ends of the earth!*

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





