

SERMONS

ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

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Sermons on important Subjects.

SERMON I.

THE DIVINE MERCY TO MOURNING PENITENTS.

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

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

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

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

In this chapter we have a prediction of their repentance under the heavy chastisement of seventy years captivity, and of their return thereupon to their own land. In the text the whole body of penitents among them is called by the name of a single person, Ephraim. In the prophetic writings, the kingdom of the ten tribes, as distinguished from that of Judah, is frequently denominated by this name, because the Ephraimites were a principal family among them. And sometimes, as here, the name is given to the Jews, probably, on account of the great number of Ephraimites mingled with them, especially on their return from captivity. All the penitent Jews are included under this single name, to intimate their unanimity in their

repentance; their hearts consented, like the heart of one man, to turn to the Lord, from whom with horrid unanimity they had revolted. This single name Ephraim also renders this passage more easily applicable to particular penitents in all ages. Every one of such may insert his own name, instead of that of Ephraim, and claim the encouragement originally given to them. And indeed this whole passage is applicable to all true penitents. Repenting Ephraim did but speak the language of every one of you, my brethren, who is made sensible of the plague of his own heart, and turned to the Lord; and the tender language of forgiving grace to mourning Ephraim is addressed to each of you; and it is with a view to you that I intend to consider this scripture.

The text naturally resolves itself into three parts, as it consists of three verses. In the first verse we find the careless, resolute impenitent, reduced by chastisement to a sense of his danger, and the necessity of turning to God; and yet sensible of his utter inability, and therefore crying for the attractive influences of divine grace. You hear Ephraim bemoaning his wretched case, and pouring out importunate groans for relief, thus: *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, that struggles and wearies himself in vain to get free from it, and must be broken and tamed with severe usage.—* “Thus stubborn and unmanageable have I been; and now when I am convinced of the necessity of a return to thee, I feel my obstinate heart reluctant, like a wild ox, and I cannot come. I therefore cry to thee for the attractive influence of thy grace;” *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee.* “To whom but to thee should I return; and to whom but to thee should I

apply for strength to return? For thou only art the Lord my God, who can help me, and whom I am under infinite obligations to serve.”—Thus the awakened sinner prayed; and mercy listened to his cries. The attractive influences of divine grace are granted, and he is enabled to return; which introduces the second branch of the text in the 19th verse, in which the new convert is represented as reflecting upon the efficacy of converting grace, and the glorious change wrought in him by it: *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

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

*Though affirmative interrogations are generally to be understood as strong negations, yet sometimes they are to be understood affirmatively. See 1 Sam. ii. 27, 28. Job xx. 4.

against him in my threatenings, I do earnestly remember him still;" *therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.*

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

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

And where shall we find him? And what is he doing? We shall not find him, as usual, in a thoughtless hurry about earthly things, confining all his attention to these trifles, and unmindful of the important concerns of eternity. We shall not find him merry, inconsiderate, and vain, in a circle of jovial, careless companions; much less shall we find him intrepid and secure in a course of sin, gratifying his flesh, and indulging his lusts. In this enchanted road the crowd of hardy impenitents pass secure and cheerful down to the chambers of death, but the awakened sinner flies from it with horror; or, if his depraved heart would tempt him to walk in it, he cannot take many steps before he is shocked with the horrid apparition of impending danger. He finds the flattering paths of sin haunted with the terrible spectres of guilt, and the sword of divine vengeance gleams bright and dreadful before him, and seems lifted to give the fatal blow. You will, therefore, find the awakened sinner solitary and solemn in some retired corner, not deceiving himself with vain hopes of safety in his present state, but alarmed with apprehensions of danger; not planning schemes for his secular advantage, nor asking with sordid anxiety, "Who will shew.

me any temporal good?" but solicitous about his perishing soul, and anxiously inquiring, *what shall I do to be saved?* He is not congratulating himself upon the imaginary goodness of his heart or life, or priding himself with secret wonder in a rich conceit of his excellencies, but you will hear him in his sorrowful retirement bemoaning, or, (as the original signifies,) condoling himself. He sees his case to be really awful and sad, and he, as it were, takes up a lamentation over himself. He is no more senseless, hard-hearted, and self-applauding, as he was wont to be; but like a mourning turtle he bewails himself in such tragical strains as these: "Unhappy creature that I am! into what a deplorable state have I brought myself! and how long have I continued in it with the insensibility of a rock, and the stupidity of a brute? Now I may mourn over my past neglected, and unimproved days, as so many deceased friends, sent indeed from heaven to do me good, but cruelly killed by my ungrateful neglect and continued delays as to a return to God and holiness. Fly back, ye abused months and years; arise from the dead; restore me your precious moments again, that I may unravel the web of life, and form it anew; and that I may improve the opportunities I have squandered away. Vain and desperate wish! the wheels of time will not return, and what shall I do? Here I am, a guilty obnoxious creature, uncertain of life, and unfit to die; alienated from God, and incapable, (alas! I may add unwilling,) to return, a slave to sin, and too feeble to break the fetters of inveterate habits; liable to the arrest of divine justice, and unable to deliver myself; exposed to the vengeance of Heaven, yet can make no atonement; destitute of an interest in Christ, and uncertain, awfully uncertain, whether I shall ever obtain it. Unhappy

creature! How justly may I take up a lamentation over myself! Pity me, ye brute creation, that know not to sin; and therefore cannot know the misery of my case; and have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends! and if these guilty lips may dare to pronounce thy injured name, O thou God of grace, have pity upon me! But alas! I deserve no pity, for how long have I denied it to myself! Ah! infatuated wretch! why did not I sooner begin to secure my unhappy soul, that has lain all this time neglected, and unpitied upon the brink of ruin! Why did I not sooner lay my condition to heart? Alas, I should have gone on thoughtless still, had I not been awakened by the kind severity, the gracious chastisements of my dishonoured Father!”

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

There are many ways which our heavenly Father takes to correct his undutiful children until they return to him. Sometimes he kindly takes away their health, the abused occasion of their wantonness and security, and restrains them from their lusts with fetters of affliction. This is beautifully described by Elihu. *He is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones, that were not seen, stick out: yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life unto the destroyer. If there be a messenger with him, a peculiarly skilful interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his*

uprightness, then he is gracious unto him, and saith, deliver him from going down to the pit;—I have found a ransom. Job xxxiii. 19, &c. Sometimes God awakens the sinner to bethink himself, by stripping him of his earthly supports and comforts, his estate, or his relatives, which drew away his heart from eternal things, and thus brings him to see the necessity of turning to God, the fountain of bliss, upon the failure of the streams. Thus he dealt with profligate Manasseh. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12. He was taken in thorns, and bound in fetters, and carried to Babylon; and when he was in affliction he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly before him, and prayed unto him, &c. Thus also God promises to do with his chosen: I will cause you to pass under my rod, and bring you into the bond of my covenant. Ezek. xx. 37. Psal. lxxxix. 32. Prov. xxii. 15. xxix. 15.

But the principal means of correction which God uses for the end of return to him is that of conscience; and indeed without this, all the rest are in vain. Outward afflictions are of service only as they tend to awaken the conscience from its lethargy to a faithful discharge of its trust. It is conscience that makes the sinner sensible of his misery, and scourges him until he return to his duty. This is a chastisement the most severe that human nature can endure. The lashes of a guilty conscience are intolerable; and some under them have chosen strangling and death rather than life. The spirit of a man may bear him up under outward infirmities; but when the spirit itself is wounded, *who can bear it?* Prov. xviii. 14. Conscience is a serpent in his breast, which bites and gnaws his heart; and he can no more avoid it, than he can fly from himself. Its force is so great and universal that even the heathen poet Juvenal,

not famous for the delicacy of his morals, taught by experience, could speak feelingly of its secret blows, and of agonizing sweats under its tortures.*

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

*——— *Frigida mens est*

Criminibus, tacita sudant præcordia culpa.

JUVEN. Sat. I.

——— *Cur tamen hos tu*

Erasisse putes, quos divi conscia facti

Mens habet attonitos, & sardo verberè cædit,

Occultum quatiante animo tortore flagellum?

Id. Sat. XIII.

its demands, though before divine grace renewed your heart, your wills were stubborn and reluctant; and you might say with Ephraim,

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

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

therefore will not submit to them. The way of holiness is disagreeable to his depraved heart, and he will not turn his feet to it. He loves to be stupidly easy and serene in mind, and cannot bear to be checked in his pursuit of business or pleasure by anxieties of heart, and therefore he is impatient of the honest warnings of his conscience, and uses a variety of wretched expedients to silence its clamorous remonstrances. In short, he will do any thing, he will turn to any thing rather than turn to God. If his conscience will be but satisfied, he will forsake many of his sins: he will, like Herod, Mark vi. 20. do many things, and walk in the whole round of outward duties. All this he will do, if his conscience will be but bribed by it. But if conscience enlarges its demands, and, after he has reformed his life, requires him to make him a new heart, requires him to turn not only from the outward practice of gross vices, but from the love of all sin; not only to turn to the observance of religious duties, but to turn to the Lord with all his heart, and surrender himself entirely to him, and make it the main business of life to serve him; if conscience, I say, carries its demands thus far, he cannot bear it, he struggles to throw off the yoke. And some are cursed with horrid success in the attempt: they are permitted to rest content in a partial reformation, or external religion, as sufficient, and so go down to the grave *with a lie in their right hand*. But the happy soul, on whom divine grace is determined to finish its work in spite of all opposition, is suffered to weary itself out in a vain resistance of the chastisements of conscience, till it is obliged to yield, and submit to the yoke. And then with Ephraim it will cry,

Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. This is the mourning sinner's language, when convinced

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

“Here am I as passive clay in the hand of the the potter; incapable to fashion myself into a ves-

sel fit for thy house; but thou canst form me as thou pleasest. This hard and stubborn heart will be ductile and pliable to thine irresistible power." Thus you see the awakened sinner is driven to earnest prayer in his exigence. Never did a drowning man call for help, or a condemned malefactor plead for pardon with more sincerity and ardour. If the sinner had neglected prayer all his life before, now he flies to it as the only expedient left, or if he formerly ran it over in a careless unthinking manner, as an insignificant form, now he exerts all the importunity of his soul; now he prays as for his life, and cannot rest till his desires are answered.

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

It may be understood thus: "Turn thou me, for thou only, who art the Lord of the universe, and

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

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

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

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

Or finally, the passage may be looked upon as a plea drawn from the sinner's external relation to God, as a member of his visible church, and as dedicated to him. "Turn me, and I will turn to thee, whose name I bear, and to whom I have been early devoted. I would now of my own choice acknowledge the God of my fathers, and return to the guide of my youth. And, since thou hast honoured me with a place in thy visible church, I humbly hope thou wilt not reject me now, when I would sincerely consecrate myself to thee, and become thy servant in reality, as well as in appearance." In this sense the plea might be used with peculiar propriety by the Jews, who had been nationally adopted as the peculiar people of God.

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

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

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

We left him just now crying, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*; here we find him actually turned. *Surely after that I was turned, I repented.* When the Lord exerts his power to subdue the stubbornness of the sinner, and sweetly to allure him to himself, then the sinner repents; then his heart dissolves in ingenuous disinterested relentings. His sorrow and concern before conversion are forced and mercenary; they are occasioned only by a selfish fear of punishment, and he would

willingly get rid of them, but now his grief is free and spontaneous; it flows from his heart as freely as streams from a fountain; and he takes pleasure in tender relentings before the Lord for his sin; he delights to be humble, and to feel his heart dissolve within him. An heart of flesh, soft and susceptible of impressions, is his choice, and a stony insensible heart his greatest burden; the more penitent the more happy, and the more senseless, the more miserable he finds himself. Now also his heart is actuated with a generous concern for the glory of God; and he sees the horrid evil of sin as contrary to the holiness of God, and an ungrateful requital of his uninterrupted beneficence.

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

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

The penitent proceeds, *After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.* The same grace that

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

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

The pardoned penitent proceeds,—*I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* We are ashamed when we are caught in a mean, base, and scandalous action; we blush, and are confounded, and know not where to look, or what to say. Thus the penitent is heartily ashamed of himself, when he reflects upon the sordid dispositions he has indulged, and the base and scandalous actions he has committed. He blushes at his own inspection; he is confounded at his own tribunal. He appears to himself, a mean, base, contemptible wretch; and, though the world may honour him, he loaths himself, as viler than the earth he treads on; and is secretly ashamed to see the face of man. And how then shall he appear before God? how shall he hold up his face in the presence of his injured Father? He comes to him ashamed, and covering his head. He knows not what to say to him; he knows not how to look him in the face, but he falls down abashed and confounded at his feet. Thus was penitent Ezra ashamed before God. He fell upon his knees, and lifted up his hands (his eyes, like the publican, he durst not lift up,) unto the heavens, and he says, *O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses are grown up unto the heavens.—And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have broken thy commandments.* Ezra ix. 5—10. Thus it was foretold concerning the repenting Jews. *Then thou shalt remember thy evil ways and be ashamed. Thou shalt be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame.* Ezek. xvi. 61, 63. There is good reason for this conscious shame, and therefore it is enjoined as a duty: *Not for your sakes do I this unto you, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you:*

be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Ezek. xxxvi. 32.

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

Thus I have delineated the heart of penitent Ephraim; and let me ask you, my brethren, is this your picture? Have you ever felt such ingenuous relentings, such just consternation, such holy shame and confusion? There can be no transition from nature to grace, without previous concern, &c. You all bear the reproach of that youth, you have all spent some unhappy days in the scandalous ways of sin, and your consciences still bear the brand of infamy. And have you ever been made deeply sensible of it? Has God ever heard you bemoaning yourselves in some mournful soli-

tude, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Is there any such mourner here this day? then listen to the gracious voice of your heavenly Father, while,

III. I am illustrating the last, the sweetest part of the text, which expresses the tender compassion of God towards mourning penitents.

While they are bemoaning their case, and conscious that they do not deserve one look of love from God, he is represented as attentively listening to catch the first penitential groan that breaks from their hearts. Ephraim, in the depth of his despondency, probably did hardly hope that God took any notice of his secret sorrows, which he suppressed as much as possible from the public view: but God heard him, God was watching to hear the first mournful cry; and he repeats all his complaints, to let him know (after the manner of men) that particular notice he had taken of them. "*I have surely heard, or hearing I have heard:*" that is, "I have attentively heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus."

What strong consolation may this give to desponding mourners, who think themselves neglected by that God to whom they are pouring out their weeping supplications! He hears your secret groans, he courts your sighs, and puts your tears into his bottle. His eyes penetrate all the secrets of your heart, and he observes all their feeble struggles to turn to himself; and he beholds you not as an unconcerned spectator, but with all the tender emotions of fatherly compassion: for,

While he is listening to Ephraim's mournful complaints, he abruptly breaks in upon him, and sweetly surprises him with the warmest declarations of pity and grace. "Is this Ephraim, my

dear son, whose mourning voice I hear? Is this my pleasant child, or (as it might be rendered,) the child of my delights, who thus wounds my ear with his heart-rending groans?" What strange language this to an ungrateful, unyielding rebel, that continued obstinate till he was wearied out; that would not turn till drawn; that deserved to fall a victim to justice! This is the language of compassion all divine, of grace that becomes a God.

This passage contains a most encouraging truth, that, however vile and abandoned a sinner has been, yet, upon his repentance, he becomes God's dear son, his favourite child. He will from that moment regard him, provide for him, protect him, and bring him to his heavenly inheritance, as his son and heir: for *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, &c.* Rom. viii. 38, &c. shall separate him from his Father's love; but he shall inherit all things. Rev. xxi. 7. Yea, all things are his already in title, and he shall be made *greater than the kings of the earth*; he shall be made such as becomes so dignified a relation as that of a Son to the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And is not this magnet sufficient to attract all this assembly to their Father's house? Can you resist the almighty energy of such compassion? Return, ye perishing prodigals! Return, though you have *sinned against heaven and before your Father, and are no more worthy to be called his sons*, yet return, and you shall be made his dear sons, his pleasant children.

Are none of you in need of such strong consolation as this? Do you want encouragement to return, and are you ready to spring up and run to

your father's arms, upon the first assurance of acceptance? If this be what you want, you have an abundance for your supply. Are all your souls then in motion to return? Does that eye which darts through the whole creation at once, now behold your hearts moving towards God? Or am I wasting these gracious encouragements upon stupid creatures, void of sensation, that do not care for them, or that are so conceited of their own worth, as not to need them? If so, I retract these consolations, with respect to you, and shall presently tell you your doom. But let us farther pursue these melting strains of paternal pity.

“For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.” Many and dreadful were the threatenings denounced against the sinner, while impenitent; and, had he continued impenitent, they would certainly have been executed upon him. But the primary and immediate design of the threatenings are to make men happy, and not to make them miserable; they are designed to deter them from disobedience, which is naturally productive of misery, or to reclaim them from it, which is but to restrain them in their career to ruin. And consequently these threatenings proceed from love as well as the promises of our God, from love to the person, though from hatred to sin. So the same love which prompts a parent to promise a reward to his son for obedience, will prompt him also to threaten him, if he takes some dangerous weapon to play with: or, to choose a more pertinent illustration, for God is the moral ruler as well as father of the rational world; the same regard to the public weal, which induces a law-giver to annex a reward to obedience, will also prompt him to add penalties to his law, to deter from disobedience; and his immediate design is not to make any of his

subjects miserable, but to keep them from making themselves and others miserable by disobedience; though, when the threatening is once denounced, it is necessary it should be executed, to vindicate the veracity of the lawgiver; and secure his government from insult and contempt. Thus when the primary end of the divine threatenings, namely, the deterring and reclaiming men from disobedience is not obtained, then it becomes necessary that they should be executed upon the impenitent in all their dreadful extent; but when the sinner is brought to repentance, and to submit to the divine government, then all these threatenings are repealed, and they shall not hurt one hair of his head. And the sinner himself will acknowledge that these threatenings proved necessary mercies to him, and that the denunciation of everlasting punishment was one means of bringing him to everlasting happiness, and that divine vengeance in this sense conspired with divine grace to save him.

Consider this, ye desponding penitents, and allay your terrors. That God, who has written such bitter things against you in his word, earnestly and affectionately remembers you still, and it was with a kind intent to you that he thundered out these terrors at which you tremble. These acids, this bitter physic, were necessary for your recovery. These coals of fire were necessary to awaken you out of your lethargy. Therefore read the love of your Father, even in these solemn warnings. He affectionately remembers you still; he cannot put you out of his thoughts.

Therefore my bowels, (adds the all-gracious Jehovah,) *are troubled for him.* Astonishing beyond conception! how can we bear up under such words as these? Surely they must break our hearts, and overwhelm our spirit! Here is the great God, who

has millions of superior beings to serve him, and who is absolutely independent upon them all, troubled, his very bowels troubled, for a rebellious, useless, trifling worm! Be astonished at this, ye angels of light, who are the witnesses of such amazing, such unbounded compassion; and wonder at it, O ye sons of men, who are more intimately concerned in it, stand and adore, as it were, in statues of admiration! It is true these words are not to be taken literally, as though the Deity were capable of sorrow, or any of the human passions: but he here condescends to adapt himself to the language of mortals, and to borrow such images as will convey to us the most lively ideas of his grace and tenderness to mourning penitents; and no image can answer this end better than that of a father, whose bowels are yearning over his mourning child, prostrate at his feet, and who, with eager embraces, raises him up, assuring him of pardon and acceptance. If any of you know what it is to receive a penitent child in this manner, while all the father is tenderly working within you, you may form some affecting ideas of the readiness of our heavenly Father to receive returning sinners from this tender illustration.

The Lord concludes this moving speech with a promise that includes in it more than we can ask or think, sealed with his own sacred name. *I will surely have mercy*, or (according to the more emphatical original,) *with mercy, I will have mercy upon him, saith the Lord*; that is, I will shew abundant mercy to him, I will give him all the blessings that infinite mercy can bestow; and what can be needed more? This promise includes pardon, acceptance, sanctification, joy in the Holy Ghost, peace of conscience, and immortal life and glory in the future world. O sirs! what a God, what a

Father is this! *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, &c.* Micah vii. 18.

And can you, ye mourners in Zion, can you fear a rejection from such a tender Father? Can you dread to venture upon such abundant mercies? Is there a mourning Ephraim in this assembly? I may call you, as God did Adam, *Ephraim, where art thou?* Let the word of God find you out, and force a little encouragement upon you: your heavenly Father, whose angry hand you fear, is listening to your groans, and will measure you out a mercy for every groan, a blessing for every sigh, a drop, a draught of consolation, for every tear. His bowels are moving over you, and he addresses you in such language as this, "Is this my dear son? is this my pleasant child?" &c.

And as to you, ye hardy impenitents, ye abandoned profligates, ye careless formalists, ye almost christians, can you hear these things, and not begin now to relent? Do you not find your frozen hearts begin to thaw within you? Can you resist such alluring grace? Can you bear the thoughts of continuing enemies to so good, so forgiving a Father? Does not Ephraim's petition now rise in your hearts, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;* then I congratulate you upon this happy day; you are this day become God's dear sons, the children of his delights, &c.

Is there a wretch so senseless, so wicked, so abandoned, as to refuse to return? Where art thou, hardy rebel? Stand forth, and meet the terrors of thy doom. To thee I must change my voice, and, instead of representing the tender compassions of a father, must denounce the terrors of an angry judge. Thy doom is declared and fixed by the same lips that speak to penitents in such encouraging strains; by those gracious lips that never uttered

an harsh censure. *God is angry with thee every day. Ps. vii. 11. Except thou repentest, thou shalt surely perish. Luke xiii. 3. The example of Christ authorises me to repeat it again; Except thou repentest, thou shalt surely perish, ver. 5. The God that made thee will destroy thee; and he that formed thee will shew thee no favour. Isa. xxvi. 11. Thou art treasuring up wrath in horrid affluence, against the day of wrath. Rom. ii. 5. God is jealous, and revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The mountains quake at him: the hills melt; the earth is burnt at his presence: yea, the world, and they that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. Nahum i. 2—6. These flaming thunderbolts, sinner, are aimed at thy heart, and, if thou canst harden thyself against their terror, let me read thee thy doom before we part. You have it pronounced by God himself in Deuteronomy, the twenty-ninth chapter, at the nineteenth and following verses, *If it comes to pass that when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart—The Lord will not spare him: but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven; and the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law. And now sinner, if thou canst return home careless and senseless with this heavy curse upon thee, expect not a word of comfort, expect no blessing till thou art**

made truly penitent; for “how shall I bless whom God has not blessed?” The ministerial blessing falls upon one on thy right hand, and one on thy left, but it lights not upon thee. The curse is thy lot, and this must thou have at the hand of God, if thou continuest hardened and insolent in sin. *Thou must lie down in sorrow.* Isa. l. 11. *Consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he tear ye in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* Ps. l. 22.

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST PRECIOUS TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.

1. PET. ii. 7.—*Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious.**

YES; blessed be God; though a great part of the creation is disaffected to Jesus Christ; though fallen spirits, both in flesh and without flesh, both upon earth and in hell, neglect him, or profess themselves open enemies to him, yet he is precious; precious not only in himself, not only to his Father, not only to the choirs of heaven, who behold his full glory without a veil, but precious to some even in our guilty world; precious to a sort of persons of our sinful race, who make no great figure in mortal eyes, who have no idea of their own goodness; who are mean, unworthy creatures in their own view, and who are generally despicable in the view of others; I mean he is precious to all true believers. And though they are but few comparatively in our world; though there are, I am afraid,

*Or preciousness in the abstract, τιμή.

but few additions made to them from among us; yet, blessed be God, there are some believers even upon our guilty globe; and, I doubt not, but I am now speaking to some such.

My believing brethren, (if I may venture to claim kindred with you) I am now entering upon a design, which I know you have much at heart: and that is, to make the blessed Jesus more precious to you, and if possible, to recommend him to the affections of the crowd that neglect him. You know, alas! you love him but little; but very little, compared to his infinite excellency and your obligations to him; and you know that multitudes love him not at all. Whatever they profess, their practice shews that their carnal minds are enmity against him. This you often see, and the sight affects your hearts. It deeply affects you to think so much excellency should be neglected and despised, and so much love meet with such base returns of ingratitude. And you cannot but pity your poor fellow sinners, that they are so blind to the brightest glory and their own highest interest, and that they should perish, through wilful neglect of their Beliverer; perish, as it were, within the reach of the hand stretched out to save them. This is indeed a very affecting, very lamentable, and, alas! a very common sight. And will you not then bid me God speed this day in my attempt to recommend this precious, though neglected, Jesus? Will you not contribute your share towards my success in so pious and benevolent a design, by your earnest prayers? Now, shall not the interceding sigh rise to Heaven from every heart, and every soul be cast into a praying posture? I shall hope to discharge my duty with more comfort and advantage, if you afford me this assistance. And surely such of you cannot deny me this aid, who

desire that Jesus may become still more precious to your own hearts, and that he may be the object of universal love from all the sons of men, who are now disaffected to him!

To you that believe, he is precious—He?—Who? Is it mammon, the god of the world? Is it pleasure, or honour? No; none of these is the darling of the believing heart. But it is he who is the uppermost in every pious heart; he, who is first in the thoughts and affections; he whom every friend of his must know, even without a name; if it be but said of him, he is precious, this is enough to distinguish him from all others. “If it be he, the apostle means, may every believer say, who is most precious to my soul, then I can easily point him out, though without a name. It must be Jesus, for O! it is he that is most precious to me.” The connexion also of the text directs us to the same person. It is he the apostle means, whom he had just described as a living stone, chosen of God, and precious; the chief corner-stone, the great foundation of the church, that spiritual temple of God, so stately and glorious, and reaching from earth to heaven; it is this precious stone, this heavenly jewel, that is precious to believers.

“*To you that believe he is precious;*” i. e. he is highly valued by you. You esteem him one of infinite worth, and he has the highest place in your affections. He is dearer to your hearts than all other persons and things. The word τιμή requires a still stronger translation: “*To you that believe, he is preciousness;*” preciousness in the abstract; all preciousness, and nothing but preciousness; a precious stone without one blemish. Or it may be translated with a little variation, “*To you that believe, he is honour.*” It confers the highest honour upon you to be related to him; and you

esteem it your highest honour to sustain that relation. Though Jesus Christ and his cross are names of reproach in the unbelieving world, you glory in them, and they reflect a real glory upon you. Or, "To you that believe there is honour."* Honour is now conferred upon you in your being built as living stones in the temple of God upon this precious foundation; and honour is reserved for you in heaven, where the crown of righteousness awaits you.

"To you which believe, he is precious;" that is to say, the value of this precious stone is, alas! unknown to the crowd. It is so far from being precious, that it is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; a stone disallowed of men, (v. 4.) rejected even by the builders, (v. 7.) but you believers, ye happy few, have another estimate of it. Faith enables you to see the glories of the blessed Jesus; and, when you know him through this medium, you cannot but love him. The blind world neglect the Lord of glory, because they know him not: but you believers know him, and therefore to you he is precious. Faith presents him to your view in a just light, and directs you to form a proper estimate of him. It is truly lamentable that such real excellency should be despised; but so it will be with the world till they believe. The mere speculative recommendation of their reason, the prepossessions of education, in his favour, and the best human means, are not sufficient to render Jesus precious to them. Nothing but saving faith can effect this.

To you, therefore, which believe, he is precious. The illative particle, therefore, shews this passage is an inference from what went before; and the

*The pronoun *he* is not in the original; but the passage reads thus: To you who believe, honour.

reasoning seems to be this: "This stone is precious to God, therefore, it is precious to you that believe. You have the same estimate of Jesus Christ which God the Father has; and for that very reason he is precious to you, because he is precious to him." That this is the connexion, will appear, if you look back to the 4th and 6th verses; where you find Jesus described as "a chief corner stone, laid in Zion, elect or chosen, and precious—disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."* Men wickedly disapprove this stone, and even many of the professed builders of his church reject him. This, says, the apostle, must be granted. But this is no objection to his real worth. He is precious to God, who knows him best, and who is a perfect judge of real excellency; and for that very reason he is precious to you that believe. Faith teaches you to look upon persons and things in the same light in which God views them; it makes your sentiments conformed to his. Christ is the Father's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and he is your beloved Saviour, in whom you are well pleased.

Is it any wonder that Jesus should be precious to believers, when he is so precious in himself, and in his offices, so precious to the angelic armies, and so precious to his Father?

1. He is precious in himself. He is Immanuel, God-man; and consequently, whatever excellencies belong either to the divine or human nature, centre in him. If wisdom, power, and goodness, divine or human, created or uncreated, can render him worthy of the highest affection, he has a just claim to it. Whatever excellencies, natural or

*The word used in ver. 4 and 6, is a compound, rendered precious in the text. And this is an intimation that the text is an inference from the above verses.

moral, appear in any part of the vast universe, they are but faint shadows of his beauty and glory. *All things were created by him and for him: and through him all things consist.* Col. i. 16, 17. And whatever excellencies are in the effect, must be eminently in the cause. You do not wonder nor censure, when you see men delighted with the glories of the sun, and the various luminaries of the sky; you do not wonder nor blame, when they take pleasure in the beautiful prospects of nature, or in that rich variety of good things, which earth and sea, and every element furnishes for the support of man, or the gratification of his senses: you do not wonder and blame, when they are struck with moral beauty, when you see them admire and approve wisdom, benevolence, justice, veracity, meekness, and mercy: you never think it strange, much less censurable, that men should love these things, and count them precious; and can you be astonished, can you ridicule or find fault that Jesus is precious to poor believers? If the copy be so fair and lovely, who would not love the original, that has eyes to behold it? Believers see so much of the worth of Christ as is sufficient to captivate their hearts, and convince them of their guilt in loving him no more; and the clearer their views are of him, the more are they mortified at the criminal defects of their love! for O! they see he deserves infinitely more!

2. The Lord Jesus is precious in his offices. His mediatorial office is generally subdivided into three parts; namely, that of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king: and how precious is Christ in each of these!

As a prophet, how sweet are his instructions to a bewildered soul! How precious the words of his lips, which are the words of eternal life! How delightful to sit and hear him teach the way of duty

and happiness, revealing the Father, and the wonders of the invisible state! How transporting to hear him declare upon what terms an offended God may be reconciled! a discovery beyond the searches of all the sages and philosophers of the heathen world! How reviving is it to listen to his gracious promises and invitations; promises and invitations to the poor, the weary, and heavy laden, the broken hearted, and even to the chief of sinners! The word of Christ has been the treasure, the support, and joy of believers in all ages. *I have esteemed the words of his mouth, says Job, more than my necessary food. Job xxiii. 12.* It is this precious word, the psalmist so often and so highly celebrates. He celebrates it as *more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb. Psa. xix. 10.* *O how I love thy law!* says he; *it is my meditation all the day. Psa. cxix. 97.* *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. ver. 103.* *The law of thy mouth is better than thousands of gold and silver. ver. 72.* *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts. ver. 40.* *Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage, ver. 54.* *In my affliction thy word hath quickened me. ver. 50.* *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction. ver. 92.* This is the language of David, in honour of this divine Prophet, near three thousand years ago, when Christ had not revealed the full gospel to the world, but only some rays of it shone through the veil of the Mosaic dispensation. And must not believers now, who live under the more complete and clear instructions of this great Prophet, entertain the same sentiments of him? Yes, to such of you as believe, even in this age, he is most precious.

But this external objective instruction is not all

that Christ as a prophet communicates; and indeed, did he do no more than this, it would answer no valuable end. The mind of man, in his present fallen state, like a disordered eye, is incapable of perceiving divine things in a proper light, however clearly they are revealed; and therefore, till the perceiving faculty be rectified, all external revelation is in vain, and is only like opening a fair prospect to a blind eye. Hence this great Prophet carries his instructions farther, not only by proposing divine things in a clear objective light by his word, but inwardly enlightening the mind, and enabling it to perceive what is revealed by his Spirit. And how precious are these internal subjective instructions! How sweet to feel a disordered dark mind opening to admit the shinings of heavenly day; to perceive the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the beauties of holiness, and the majestic wonders of the eternal world! Speak, ye that know by happy experience, and tell how precious Jesus appears to you, when by his own blessed Spirit he scatters the cloud that benighted your understandings, and lets in the rays of his glory upon your admiring souls; when he opens your eyes to see the wonders contained in his law, and the glorious mysteries of his gospel. What a divine glory does then spread upon every page of the sacred volume! Then it indeed appears the Book of God, Godlike, and worthy its Author. O precious Jesus! let us all this day feel thine enlightening influences, that experience may teach us how sweet they are! Come, great Prophet! come, and make thine own spirit our teacher, and then shall we be divinely wise!

Again, the Lord Jesus is precious to believers as a great High Priest. As an high priest, he made a complete atonement for sin by his propitiatory

sacrifice on the cross; and he still makes intercession for the transgressors on his throne in heaven. It was his sacrifice that satisfied the demands of the law, and justice of God, and rendered him reconcileable to the guilty, upon terms consistent with his honour and the rights of his government. It was by virtue of this sacrifice that he procured pardon of sin, the favour of God, freedom from hell, and eternal life for condemned obnoxious rebels. And such of you who have ever felt the pangs of a guilty conscience, and obtained relief from Jesus Christ, you can tell how precious his atoning sacrifice. How did it ease your self-tormenting consciences, and heal your broken hearts! How did it change the frowns of an angry God into smiles of love, and your trembling apprehensions of vengeance into delightful hopes of mercy! How precious did Jesus appear, with a pardon in his hand, with atoning blood gushing from his opened veins, and making his cross, as it were, the key to open the gates of heaven for your admission! Blessed Saviour! our great High Priest, thus appear to us in all thy pontifical robes dyed in thine own blood, and cause us all to feel the efficacy of thy propitiation!

Let us next turn our eyes upwards, and view this great High Priest as our intercessor in the presence of God. There he appears as a lamb that was slain, bearing the memorials of his sacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the blessings purchased for his people. There he urges it as his pleasure, as his authoritative will, that these blessings should in due time be conferred upon those for whom they were purchased. In this authoritative manner he could intercede even in the days of his humiliation upon earth, because of the Father's covenant-engagements with him,

the accomplishment of which he has a right to demand, as well as humbly to petition: *Father, I will, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me. &c.* John xvii. 24. Now how precious must Christ appear in the character of Intercessor! That the friendless sinner should have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cause! that the great High Priest should offer up the grateful incense of his own merit, with the prayers of the saints! that he should add the sanction of his authoritative will to the humble petitions of faith! that he should urge the claims of his people, as his own claims, founded upon an unchangeable covenant with his Father, of which he has fully performed the conditions required! that he should not intercede occasionally, but always appear in the holy of holies as the constant ever-living Intercessor, and maintain the same interest, the same importunity at all times, even when the petitions of his people languish upon their lips! What delightful reflections are these! and how warmly may they recommend the Lord Jesus to the hearts of believers! How just is the apostle's inference, *Having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* Heb. x. 21—23. *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; for this reason, because he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Heb. vii. 25. May each of us intrust his cause to this all-prevailing Advocate, and we shall certainly gain it! The unchangeable promise has passed his lips, *that whatsoever we ask the Father in faith and in his name, he will give it us.* John xvi. 25.

Let me add, the kingly office of Christ is precious to believers. As King, he gives laws, laws

perfectly wise and good, and enforced with the most important sanctions, everlasting rewards and punishments. And how delightful, how advantageous, to live under such a government! to have our duty discovered with so much clearness and certainty, which frees us from so many painful anxieties, and to have such powerful motives to obedience, which have a tendency to infuse vigour and spirit into our endeavours! As King, he appoints ordinances of worship. And how sweet to converse with him in these ordinances, and to be freed from perplexity about that manner of worship which God will accept, without being exposed to that question, so confounding to will-worshippers, *Who hath required this at your hands?* As King, he is head over all things to his church, and manages the whole creation, as is most subservient to her good. The various ranks of creatures in heaven, earth, and hell, are subject to his direction and control; and they must all co-operate for the good of his people. He reclaims, confounds, subdues, or destroys their enemies, according to his pleasure. And how precious must he be in this august character to the feeble helpless believer! To have an almighty friend sitting at the helm of the universe, with the supreme management of all things in his hands; to be assured that even the most injurious enemy can do the believer no real or lasting injury, but shall at length concur to work his greatest good; and that, come what will, it shall go well with him, and he shall at last be made triumphant over all difficulty and opposition. O! what transporting considerations are here! But this is not the whole exercise of the royal power of Christ. He not only makes laws and ordinances, and restrains the enemies of his people, but he exercises his power inwardly upon their hearts. He is the

King of souls; he reigns in the hearts of his subjects; and how infinitely dear and precious is he in this view! To feel him subdue the rebellion within, sweetly bending the stubborn heart into willing obedience, and reducing every thought into a cheerful captivity to himself, writing his law upon the heart, making the dispositions of his subjects a transcript of his will, corresponding to it, like wax to the seal, how delightful is all this! O the pleasures of humble submission! How pleasant to lie as subjects at the feet of this mediatorial King without arrogating the sovereignty ourselves, for which we are utterly insufficient! Blessed Jesus! thus reign in our hearts! thus subdue the nations to the obedience of faith! *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty! and ride prosperously, attended with majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness.* Psalm xlv. 3, 4. *Send the rod of thy strength out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies,* Psalm cx. 2. rule us, and subdue the rebel in our hearts.

Thus you see the Lord Jesus is precious to believers in all the views of his mediatorial office. But he is not precious to them alone; he is beloved as far as known, and the more known the more beloved: which leads me to add,

3. He is precious to all the angels of heaven.

St. Peter tells us that the things now reported to us by the gospel, are *things which the angels desire to look into.* 1 Pet. i. 12. Jesus is the wonder of angels now in heaven; and he was so even when he appeared in the form of a servant upon earth. St. Paul mentions it as one part of the great mystery of godliness, that *God manifested in the flesh was seen of angels.* 1 Tim. iii. 16. Angels saw him and admired and loved him in the various stages of his life, from his birth to his return to his native heaven. Hear the manner in which

angels celebrated his entrance into our world. One of them spread his wings and flew with joyful haste to a company of poor shepherds that kept their midnight watches in the field, and abruptly tells the news, of which his heart was full; *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord: and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.* Crowds of angels left their stations in the celestial court in that memorable hour, and hovered over the place where their incarnate God lay in a manger: Jesus, their darling, was gone down to earth, and they must follow him; for who would not be where Jesus is? Men, ungrateful men, were silent upon that occasion, but angels tuned their song of praise. The astonished shepherds heard them sing, *Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace: good-will to men.* Luke ii. 10—14. When he bringeth his first born into the world, the Father saith, *Let all the angels of God worship him,* Heb. i. 6. This seems to intimate that all the angels crowded round the manger, where the Infant-God lay, and paid him their humble worship. We are told, that when the devil had finished his long process of temptations, after forty days, and had left him, *the angels came and ministered unto him.* Matt. iv. 11. When this disagreeable companion had left him, his old attendants were fond of renewing their service to him. In every hour of difficulty they were ready to fly to his aid. He was seen of angels, in his hard conflict, in the garden of Gethsemane; and one of them *appeared unto him from heaven, strengthening him.* Luke xxii. 43. With what wonder, sympathy, and readiness did this angelic assistant raise his prostrate Lord from the cold ground, wipe off his bloody

sweat, and support his sinking spirit with divine encouragements! But, O! ye blessed angels, ye usual spectators, and adorers of the divine glories of our Redeemer, with what astonishment and horror were you struck, when you saw him expire on the cross!

“Around the bloody tree
Ye press’d with strong desire,
That wond’rous sight to see,
The Lord of life expire!
And, could your eyes
Have known a tear,
Had dropt it there
In sad surprise.”*

Ye also hovered round his tomb, while he lay in the prison of the grave. The weeping women and his other friends found you stationed there in their early impatient visits to the sepulchre. O what wonders then appeared to your astonished minds! Could you, that pry so deep into the secrets of heaven, you that know so well what divine love can do, could you have thought that even divine love could have gone so far? could have laid the Lord of glory a pale, mangled, senseless corpse in the mansions of the dead? Was not this a strange surprise even to you? And, when the appointed day began to dawn, with what eager and joyful haste did ye roll away the stone, and set open the prison doors, that the rising Conqueror might march forth!

And when array’d in light,
The shining conqueror rode,
Ye hail’d his rapt’rous flight
Up to the throne of God:

* Doddridge.

And wav'd around
Your golden wings,
And struck your strings
Of sweetest sound.*

When he ascended on high, he was attended with the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even thousand of angels. Psalm lxxviii. 17, 18. And now, when he is returned to dwell among them, Jesus is still the darling of angels. His name sounds from all their harps, and his love is the subject of their everlasting song. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall ere long hear them, saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Rev. v. 11, 12.—This is the song of angels, as well as of the redeemed from among men:

“Jesus the Lord, their harps employ;
Jesus, my love, they sing;
Jesus, the name of both our joys,
Sounds sweet from every string.”†

O my brethren, could we see what is doing in heaven at this instant, how would it surprise, astonish, and confound us! Do you think the name of Jesus is of as little importance there as in our world? Do you think there is one lukewarm or disaffected heart there among ten thousand times ten thousand, of thousands of thousands? O no! there his love is the ruling passion of every heart, and the favourite theme of every song. And is he so precious to angels? to angels, who are less in-

* An excellent hymn of Dr. Doddridge's on 1 Tim. iii. 16.—Seen of Angels.

† Watts' Hor. Lyric.

interested in him, and less indebted to him? And must he not be precious to poor believers, bought with his blood, and entitled to life by his death? Yes, you that believe have an angelic spirit in this respect; you love Jesus, though unseen, as well as they who see him as he is, though alas! in a far less degree. But to bring his worth to the highest standard of all, I add,

4. He is infinitely precious to his Father, who thoroughly knows him, and is an infallible judge of his real worth. He proclaimed more than once from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. Behold, says he, my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.* Isa. xlii. 1. He is called by the names of the tenderest endearment; his Son, his own Son, his dear Son, the Son of his love. He is a stone, disallowed indeed of men; if their approbation were the true standard of merit, he must be looked upon as a very worthless, insignificant being, unworthy of their thoughts and affections. But let men form what estimate of him they please, he is *chosen of God, and precious.* And shall not the love of the omniscient God have weight with believers to love him too? Yes, the apostle expressly draws the consequence; he is precious to God, therefore to you that believe, he is precious. It is the characteristic of even the meanest believer, that he is God-like. He is a partaker of the divine nature, and therefore views things, in some measure, as God does; and is affected towards them as God is, though there be an infinite difference as to the degree. He prevailingly loves what God loves, and that because God loves it.

And now, my hearers, what think you of Christ? Will you not think of him as believers do? If so, he will be precious to your hearts above all things

for the future. Or if you disregard this standard of excellence, as being but the estimate of fallible creatures, will you not think of him as angels do; angels, those bright intelligences, to whom he reveals his unveiled glories, who are more capable of perceiving and judging of him, and who therefore must know him better than you; angels, who have had a long acquaintance with him at home, if I may so speak, for near six thousand years, as God, i. e. ever since their creation, and for near two thousand years as God-man? Since angels then, who know him so thoroughly, love him so highly, certainly you may safely venture to love him; you might safely venture to love him implicitly, upon their word. He died for you, which is more than ever he did for them, and will you not love him after all this love? It is not the mode to think much of him in our world, but it is the mode in heaven. Yes, blessed be God, if he be despised and rejected of men, he is not despised and rejected of angels. Angels, that know him best, love him above all, and as far as their capacity will allow, do justice to his merit: and this is a very comfortable thought to a heart broken with a sense of the neglect and contempt he meets with among men. Blessed Jesus! may not one congregation be got together, even upon our guilty earth, that shall in this respect be like the angels, all lovers of thee? O! why should this be impossible, while they are all so much in need of thee, all so much obliged to thee, and thou art so lovely in thyself! Why, my brethren, should not this congregation be made up of such, and such only, as are lovers of Jesus? Why should he not be precious to every one of you, rich and poor, old and young, white and black? What reason can any one of you give why you in particular should neglect him? I am

sure you can give none. And will you, without any reason, dissent from all the angels in heaven, in a point of which they must be the most competent judges? Will you differ from them, and agree in your sentiments of Christ with the ghosts of hell, his implacable, but conquered and miserable enemies?

If all this has no weight with you, let me ask you farther, will you not agree to that estimate of Jesus which his Father has of him? Will you run counter to the supreme reason? Will you set up yourselves as wiser than omniscience? How must Jehovah resent it to see a worm at his foot-stool daring to despise him, whom he loves so highly! O let him be precious to you, because he is so to God, who knows him best.

But I am shocked at my own attempt. O precious Jesus! are matters come to that pass in our world, that creatures bought with thy blood, creatures that owe all their hopes to thee, should stand in need of persuasions to love thee? What horrors attend the thought! However, blessed be God, there are some, even among men, to whom he is precious. This world is not entirely peopled with the despisers of Christ. To as many of you as believe, he is precious, though to none else.

Would you know the reason of this? I will tell you: none but believers have eyes to see his glory, none but they are sensible of their need of him, and none but they have learned from experience how precious he is.

1. None but believers have eyes to see the glory of Christ. As the knowledge of Christ is entirely from revelation, an avowed unbeliever who rejects that revelation, can have no right knowledge of him, and therefore must be entirely indifferent towards him, as one unknown, or must despise and

abhor him as an enthusiast or impostor. But one, who is not an unbeliever in profession or speculation, may yet be destitute of that faith which constitutes a true believer, and which renders Jesus precious to the soul. Even devils are very orthodox in speculation; devils believe and tremble; and they could cry out, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? We know thee, who thou art; even the holy One of God.* Mark i. 24. And there are crowds among us who believe, after a fashion, that Christ is the true Messiah, who yet shew by their practices that they neglect him in their hearts, and are not believers in the full import of the character. True faith includes not only a speculative knowledge and belief, but a clear, affecting, realizing view, and an hearty approbation of the things known and believed concerning Jesus Christ; and such a view, such an approbation, cannot be produced by any human means, but only by the enlightening influence of the holy Spirit shining into the heart. Without such a faith as this, the mind is all dark and blind as to the glory of Jesus Christ; it can see no beauty in him, that he should be desired. Honourable and sublime speculations concerning him may hover in the understanding, and the tongue may pronounce many pompous panegyrics in his praise, but the understanding has no realizing, affecting views of his excellency; nor does the heart delight in him and love him as infinitely precious and lovely. The god of this world, the prince of darkness, has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them. But as to the enlightened believer, God, who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ. This divine illumination pierces the cloud that obscured his understanding, and enables him to view the Lord Jesus in a strong and striking light; a light entirely different from that of the crowd around him; a light, in which it is impossible to view this glorious object without loving him. A believer and an unbeliever may be equally orthodox in speculation, and have the same notions in theory concerning Jesus Christ, and yet it is certainly true, that their views of him are vastly different. Believers, do you think that, if the Christ-despising multitude around you had the same views of his worth and preciousness which you have, they could neglect him as they do? It is impossible. You could once neglect him, as others do now; you were no more charmed with his beauty than they. But O! when you were brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, when the glories of the neglected Saviour broke in upon your astonished minds, then was it possible for you to withhold your love from him? Were not your hearts captivated with delightful violence? You could no more resist. Did not your hearts then as naturally and freely love him, whom they had once disgusted, as ever they loved a dear child or a friend, or the sweetest created enjoyment? The improving your reason into faith is setting the disordered eye of the mind right, that it may be able to see this object: and when once you viewed it with this eye of reason restored and improved, how did the precious stone sparkle before you, and charm you with its brilliancy and excellence?—Christ is one of those things unseen and hoped for, of which St. Paul says, *faith is the substance and evidence.* Heb. xi. 1. Faith gives Christ a present subsistence in the mind, not as a majestic phantom, but as the most glorious and important reality: and

this faith is a clear, affecting demonstration, or conviction, of his existence, and of his being in reality what his word represents him. It is by such a faith, that is, under its habitual influence, that the believer lives; and hence, while he lives, Jesus is still precious to him.

2. None but believers are properly sensible of their need of Christ. They are deeply sensible of their ignorance and the disorder of their understanding, and therefore they are sensible of their want of both the external and internal instructions of this divine Prophet. But as to others, they are puffed up with intellectual pride, and apprehend themselves in very little need of religious instructions; and therefore they think but very slightly of him. Believers feel themselves guilty, destitute of all righteousness, and incapable of making atonement for their sins, or recommending themselves to God, and therefore the satisfaction and righteousness of Jesus Christ are most precious to them, and they rejoice in him as their all-prevailing Intercessor. But as to the unbelieving crowd, they have no such mortifying thoughts of themselves! they have so many excuses to make for their sins, that they bring down their guilt to a very trifling thing, hardly worthy of divine resentment: and they magnify their good works to such an height, that they imagine they will nearly balance their bad, and procure them some favour at least from God, and therefore they must look upon this High Priest as needless. They also love to be free from the restraints of religion, and to have the command of themselves. They would usurp the power of self-government, and make their own pleasure their rule; and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, as a King, is so far from being precious, that he is very unacceptable to such obstinate, head-strong

rebels. They choose to have no lawgiver, but their own will; and, therefore, they trample upon his laws, and, as it were, form insurrections against his government. But the poor believer, sensible of his incapacity for self-government, loves to be under direction, and delights to feel the dependent, submissive, pliant spirit of a subject. He counts it a mercy not to have the management of himself, and feels his need of this mediatorial King to rule him. He hates the rebel within, hates every insurrection of sin, and longs to have it entirely subdued, and every thought, every motion of his soul, brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and therefore he feels the need of his royal power to make an entire conquest of his hostile spirit. His commands are not uneasy impositions, but most acceptable and friendly directions to him; and the prohibitions of his law are not painful restraints, but a kind of privileges in his esteem. The language of his heart is, "Precious Jesus! be thou my King. I love to live in humble subjection to thee. I would voluntarily submit myself to thy control and direction. Thy will, not mine, be done! O subdue every rebellious principle within, and make me all resignation and cheerful obedience to thee!" To such a soul it is no wonder Jesus should be exceedingly precious: but O how different is this spirit from that which generally prevails in the world? Let me add but one reason more why Jesus is precious to believers, and them only; namely,

3. None but believers have known by experience how precious he is. They, and only they, can reflect upon the glorious views of him, which themselves have had, to captivate their hearts forever to him. They, and only they, have known what it is to feel a bleeding heart healed by his gentle

hand; and a clamorous, languishing conscience pacified by his atoning blood. They, and only they, know by experience how sweet it is to feel his love shed abroad in their hearts, to feel an heart, ravished with his glory, pant, and long, and breathe after him, and exerting the various acts of faith, desire, joy, and hope towards him. They, and only they, know by experience how pleasant it is to converse with him in his ordinances, and to spend an hour of devotion in some retirement, as it were, in his company. They, and only they, have experienced the exertions of his royal power, conquering their mightiest sins, and sweetly subduing them to himself. These are, in some measure, matters of experience with every true believer, and, therefore, it is no wonder Jesus should be precious to them. But as to the unbelieving multitude, poor creatures! they are entire strangers to these things. They may have some superficial notions of them floating in their heads, but they have never felt them in their hearts, and therefore the infinitely precious Lord Jesus is a worthless, insignificant being to them: and thus, alas! it will be with the unhappy creatures, until experience becomes their teacher; until they taste for themselves *that the Lord is gracious.* 1 Pet. ii. 3.

There is an interesting question, which, I doubt not, has risen in the minds of such of you as have heard what has been said with a particular application to yourselves, and keeps you in a painful suspense: with an answer to which I shall conclude: “Am I indeed a true believer? may some of you say; and is Christ precious to me? My satisfaction in this sweet subject is vastly abated, till this question is solved. Sometimes, I humbly think, the evidence is in my favour, and I begin to hope that he is indeed precious to my soul; but alas, my

love for him soon languishes, and then my doubts and fears return, and I know not what to do, nor what to think of myself.”

Do not some of you, my brethren, long to have this perplexing case cleared up? O what would you not give, if you might return home this evening fully satisfied in this point? Well, I would willingly help you, for experience has taught me to sympathise with you under this difficulty. O my heart! how often hast thou been suspicious of thyself in this respect? The readiest way I can now take to clear up the matter is to answer another question, naturally resulting from my subject; and that is, “How does that high esteem which a believer has for Jesus Christ discover itself? Or how does he show that Christ is indeed precious to him?” I answer, he shows it in various ways; particularly by his affectionate thoughts of him, which often rise in his mind, and always find welcome there. He discovers that Jesus is precious to him by hating and resisting whatever is displeasing to him, and by parting with every thing that comes in competition with him. He will let all go rather than part with Christ. Honour, reputation, ease, riches, pleasure, and even life itself, are nothing to him in comparison of Christ, and he will run the risk of all; nay, will actually lose all, if he may but win Christ. He discovers this high esteem for him by the pleasure he takes in feeling his heart suitably affected towards him, and by his uneasiness when it is otherwise. O! when he can love Jesus, when his thoughts affectionately clasp around him, and when he has an heart to serve him, then he is happy, his soul is well, and he is lively and cheerful. But, alas! when it is otherwise with him, when his love languishes, when his heart hardens, when it becomes out of order for his service, then

he grows uneasy, and discontented, and cannot be at rest. When Jesus favours him with his gracious presence, and revives him with his influence, how does he rejoice! But when his beloved withdraws himself and is gone, how does he lament his absence, and long for his return! He weeps and cries like a bereaved, deserted orphan, and moans like a loving turtle in the absence of its mate. Because Christ is so precious to him, he cannot bear the thought of parting with him, and the least jealousy of his love pierces his very heart. Because he loves him, he longs for the full enjoyment of him, and is ravished with the prospect of him. Because Christ is precious to him, his interests are so too, and he longs to see his kingdom flourish, and all men fired with his love. Because he loves him, he loves his ordinances; loves to hear, because it is the word of Jesus; loves to pray, because it is maintaining intercourse with Jesus; loves to sit at his table, because it is a memorial of Jesus; and loves his people, because they love Jesus. Whatever has a relation to his precious Saviour is for that reason precious to him; and when he feels any thing of a contrary disposition, alas! it grieves him, and makes him abhor himself. These things are sufficient to shew that the Lord Jesus has his heart, and is indeed precious to him; and is not this the very picture of some trembling doubting souls among you? If it be, take courage. After so many vain searches, you have at length discovered the welcome secret, that Christ is indeed precious to you: and if so, you may be sure that you are precious to him. *You shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels.* Mal. iii. 17. If you are now satisfied, after thorough trial of the case, retain your hope, and let not every discouraging appearance renew your jealousies again; la-

bour to be steady and firm christians, and do not stagger through unbelief.

But alas! I fear that many of you know nothing experimentally of the exercises of a believing heart, which I have been describing, and consequently that Christ is not precious to you. If this is the case, you may be sure indeed you are hateful to him. He is angry with the wicked every day. "Those that honour him he will honour; but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed." 1 Sam. ii. 30. And what will you do if Christ should become your enemy and fight against you? If this precious stone should become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you, over which you will fall into ruin, O how dreadful must the fall be! What must you expect but to lie down in unutterable and everlasting sorrow!

SERMON XV.

THE DANGER OF LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION.

REV. III. 15, 16.—*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

THE soul of man is endowed with such active powers, that it cannot be idle; and, if we look round the world, we see it all alive and busy in some pursuit or other. What vigorous action, what labour and toil, what hurry, noise, and commotion about the necessaries of life, about riches and honours! Here men are in earnest: here there is no dissimu-

tation, no indifferency about the event. They sincerely desire, and eagerly strive for these transient delights, or vain embellishments of a mortal life.

And may we infer farther, that creatures, thus formed for action, and thus laborious and unwearyed in these inferior pursuits, are proportionably vigorous and in earnest in matters of infinitely greater importance? May we conclude, that they proportion their labour and activity to the nature of things, and that they are most in earnest where they are most concerned? A stranger to our world, that could conclude nothing concerning the conduct of mankind but from the generous presumptions of his own charitable heart, might persuade himself that this is the case. But one that has been but a little while conversant with them, and taken the least notice of their temper and practice with regard to that most interesting thing, Religion, must know it is quite otherwise. For look round you, and what do you see? Here and there indeed you may see a few unfashionable creatures, who act as if they looked upon religion to be the most interesting concern; and who seem determined, let others do as they will, to make sure of salvation, whatever becomes of them in other respects; but as to the generality, they are very indifferent about it. They will not indeed renounce all religion entirely; they will make some little profession of the religion that happens to be most modish and reputable in their country, and they will conform to some of its institutions; but it is a matter of indifferency with them, and they are but little concerned about it; or, in the language of my text, they are *lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot.*

This threatening, *I will spew thee out of my mouth,* has been long ago executed with a dreadful

severity upon the Laodicean church; and it is now succeeded by a mongrel race of Pagans and Mahometans; and the name of Christ is not heard among them. But, though this church has been demolished for so many hundreds of years, that lukewarmness of spirit in religion which brought this judgment upon them, still lives, and possesses the christians of our age: it may therefore be expedient for us to consider Christ's friendly warning to them, that we may escape their doom.

The epistles to the seven churches in Asia are introduced with this solemn and striking preface, "I know thy works:" that is to say, your character is drawn by one that thoroughly knows you; one who inspects all your conduct, and takes notice of you when you take no notice of yourselves; one that cannot be imposed upon by an empty profession and artifice, but searches the heart and the reins. O that this truth were deeply impressed upon our hearts: for surely we could not trifle and offend while sensible that we are under the eye of our Judge.

I know thy works, says he to the Laodicean church, *that thou art neither cold nor hot*. This church was in a very condition, and Christ reproves her with the greatest severity;* and yet we do not find her charged with the practice or toleration of any gross immoralities, as some of the other churches were. She is not censured for indulging fornication among her members, or communicating with idolaters in eating things sacrificed to idols, like some of the rest. She was free from the infection of the Nicolaitans, which had

*She was as loathsome to him as lukewarm water to the stomach, and he characterises her as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." What condition can be more deplorable and dangerous?

spread among them. What then is her charge? It is a subtle, latent wickedness, that has no shocking appearance, that makes no gross blemish in the outward character of a professor in the view of others, and may escape his own notice; it is, *Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot:* as if our Lord had said, Thou dost not entirely renounce and openly disregard the christian religion, and thou dost not make it a serious business, and mind it as thy grand concern. Thou hast a form of godliness, but deniest the power. All thy religion is a dull, languid thing, a mere indifferency; thine heart is not in it; it is not animated with the fervour of thy spirit. Thou hast neither the coldness of the profligate sinner, nor the sacred fire and life of the true christian; but thou keepest in a sort of medium between them. In some things thou resemblest the one, in other things the other; as lukewarmness partakes of the nature both of heat and cold.

Now such a lukewarmness is an eternal solecism in religion; it is the most absurd and inconsistent thing imaginable; more so than avowed impiety, or a professed rejection of all religion: therefore, says Christ, *I would thou wert cold or hot,—i. e.* “You might be any thing more consistently than what you are. If you looked upon religion as a cheat, and openly rejected the profession of it, it would not be strange that you should be careless about it, and disregard it in practice. But to own it true, and make a profession of it, and yet be lukewarm and indifferent about it, this is the most absurd conduct that can be conceived; for, if it be true, it is certainly the most important and interesting truth in all the world, and requires the utmost exertion of all your powers.”

When Christ expresses his abhorrence of lukewarmness in the form of a wish, *I would thou wert cold or hot*, we are not to suppose his meaning to be, that coldness or fervour in religion is equally acceptable, or that coldness is at all acceptable to him; for reason and revelation concur to assure us, that the open rejection and avowed contempt of religion is an aggravated wickedness, as well as an hypocritical profession. But our Lord's design is to express in the strongest manner possible, how odious and abominable their lukewarmness was to him; as if he should say, "Your state is so bad, that you cannot change for the worse; I would rather you were any thing than what you are." You are ready to observe, that the lukewarm professor is in reality wicked and corrupt at heart, a slave to sin, and an enemy to God, as well as the avowed sinner; and therefore they are both hateful in the sight of God, and both in a state of condemnation. But there are some aggravations peculiar to the lukewarm professor that render him peculiarly odious; as, 1. He adds the sin of an hypocritical profession to his other sins. The wickedness of real irreligion, and the wickedness of falsely pretending to be religious, meet and centre in him at once. 2. To all this he adds the guilt of presumption, pride, and self-flattery, imagining he is in a safe state and in favour with God; whereas he that makes no pretensions to religion, has no such umbrage for this conceit and delusion. Thus the miserable Laodiceans "thought themselves rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing." 3. Hence it follows, that the lukewarm professor is in the most dangerous condition, as he is not liable to conviction, nor so likely to be brought to repentance. Thus publicans and harlots received the gospel more readily than the self-righteous

Pharisees. 4. The honour of God and religion is more injured by the negligent, unconscientious behaviour of these Laodiceans, than by the vices of those who make no pretensions to religion; with whom therefore its honour has no connexion. On these accounts you see lukewarmness is more aggravated, sinful and dangerous than entire coldness about religion.

So then, says Christ, *Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth:* this is their doom; as if he should say, “As lukewarm water is more disagreeable to the stomach than either cold or hot, so you, of all others, are the most abominable to me. I am quite sick of such professors, and I will cast them out of my church, and reject them forever.”

My present design is to expose the peculiar absurdity and wickedness of lukewarmness or indifferency in religion; a disease that has spread its deadly contagion far and wide among us, and calls for a speedy cure. And let me previously observe to you, that, if I do not offer you sufficient arguments to convince your own reason of the absurdity and wickedness of such a temper, then you may still indulge it; but that if my arguments are sufficient, then shake off your sloth, and be fervent in spirit; and if you neglect your duty, be it at your peril.

In illustrating this point I shall proceed upon this plain principle, *That religion is, of all things, the most important in itself, and the most interesting to us.* This we cannot deny, without openly pronouncing it an imposture. If there be a God, as religion teaches us, he is the most glorious, the most venerable, and the most lovely Being; and nothing can be so important to us as his favour, and nothing so terrible as his displeasure. If he

be our Maker, our Benefactor, our Lawgiver and Judge, it must be our greatest concern to serve him with all our might. If Jesus Christ be such a Saviour as our religion represents, and we profess to believe, he demands our warmest love and most lively services. If eternity, if heaven and hell, and the final judgment, are realities, they are certainly the most august, the most awful, important, and interesting realities: and, in comparison of them, the most weighty concerns of the present life are but trifles, dreams, and shadows. If prayer and other religious exercises are our duty, certainly they require all the vigour of our souls; and nothing can be more absurd or incongruous than to perform them in a languid, spiritless manner, as if we knew not what we were about. If there be any life within us, these are proper objects to call it forth: if our souls are endowed with active powers, here are objects that demand their utmost exertion. Here we can never be so much in earnest as the case requires. Trifle about any thing, but O do not trifle here! Be careless and indifferent about crowns and kingdoms, about health, life, and all the world, but O be not careless and indifferent about such immense concerns as these!

But to be more particular: let us take a view of a lukewarm temper in various attitudes, or with respect to several objects, particularly towards God—towards Jesus Christ—a future state of happiness or misery—and in the duties of religion; and in each of these views we cannot but be shocked at so monstrous a temper, especially if we consider our difficulties and dangers in a religious life, and the eagerness and activity of mankind in inferior pursuits.

1. Consider why and what God is. He is the original uncreated beauty, the sum total of all na-

tural and moral perfections, the origin of all the excellencies that are scattered through this glorious universe; he is the supreme good, and the only proper portion for our immortal spirits. He also sustains the most majestic and endearing relations to us: our Father, our Preserver and Benefactor, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. And is such a Being to be put off with heartless, lukewarm services? What can be more absurd or impious than to dishonour supreme excellency and beauty with a languid love and esteem; to trifle in the presence of the most venerable Majesty; treat the best of Beings with indifference; to be careless about our duty to such a Father; to return such a Benefactor only insipid, complimentary expressions of gratitude; to be dull and spiritless in obedience to such a Lawgiver; and to be indifferent about the favour or displeasure of such a judge! I appeal to Heaven and earth, if this be not the most shocking conduct imaginable. Does not your reason pronounce it horrid and most daringly wicked? And yet thus is the great and blessed God treated by the generality of mankind. It is most astonishing that he should bear with such treatment so long, and that mankind themselves are not shocked at it: but such the case really is. And are there not some lukewarm Laodiceans in this assembly? Jesus knows your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; and it is fit you should also know them. May you not be convinced, upon a little inquiry, that your hearts are habitually indifferent towards God? You may indeed entertain a speculative esteem or a good opinion of him, but are your souls alive towards him? Do they burn with his love? And are you fervent in spirit when you are serving him? Some of you, I hope, amid all your infirmities, can give comfortable answers to these in-

quiries. But alas! how few! But yet as to such of you as are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, you are the most abominable creatures upon earth to an holy God. *Be zealous, be warm, therefore, and repent.* (ver. 19.)

2. Is lukewarmness a proper temper towards Jesus Christ? Is this a suitable return for that love which brought him down from his native paradise into our wretched world? That love which kept his mind for thirty-three painful and tedious years intent upon this one object, the salvation of sinners? That love which rendered him cheerfully patient of the shame, the curse, the tortures of crucifixion, and all the agonies of the most painful death? That love which makes him the sinner's friend, still in the courts of heaven, where he appears as our prevailing Advocate and Intercessor? Blessed Jesus! is lukewarmness a proper return to thee for all this kindness? No; methinks devils cannot treat thee worse. My fellow-mortals, my fellow-sinners, who are the objects of all this love, can you put him off with languid devotions and faint services? Then every grateful and generous passion is extinct in your souls, and you are qualified to venture upon every form of ingratitude and baseness. O was Christ indifferent about your salvation? Was his love lukewarm towards you? No: your salvation was the object of his most intense application night and day through the whole course of his life, and it lay nearest his heart in the agonies of death. For this he had *a baptism to be baptized with*, a baptism, an immersion in tears and blood; *and how am I straitened*, says he, *till it be accomplished!* For this *with desire*, he desired to eat his last passover, because it introduced the last scene of his sufferings. His love! what shall I say of it? What language can describe its

strength and ardour? *His love was strong as death: the coals thereof were coals of fire, which had a most vehement flame: many waters could not quench it, nor the floods drown it.* Cant. viii. 6, 7. Never did a tender mother love her sucking child with a love equal to his. Never was a father more earnest to rescue an only son from the hands of a murderer, or to pluck him out of the fire, than Jesus was to save perishing sinners. Now to neglect him after all; to forget him; or, to think of him with indifference, as though he were a being of but little importance, and we but little obliged to him, what is all this but the most unnatural, barbarous ingratitude, and the most shocking wickedness? Do you not expect everlasting happiness from him purchased at the expense of his blood? And can you hope for such an immense blessing from him without feeling yourselves most sensibly obliged to him? Can you hope he will do so much for you, and can you be content to do nothing for him, or to go through his service with lukewarmness and languor, as if you cared not how you hurried through it, or how little you had to do with it? Can any thing be more absurd or impious than this? Methinks you may defy hell to shew a worse temper. May not Christ justly wish you were either cold or hot; wish you were any thing, rather than thus lukewarm towards him under a profession of friendship? Alas! my brethren, if this be your habitual temper, instead of being saved by him, you may expect he will reject you with the most nauseating disgust and abhorrence. But,

3. Is lukewarmness and indifference a suitable temper with respect to a future state of happiness or misery? Is it a suitable temper with respect to an happiness far exceeding the utmost bounds of our present thoughts and wishes; an happiness

equal to the largest capacities of our souls in their most improved and perfected state; an happiness beyond the grave, when all the enjoyments of this transitory life have taken an eternal flight from us, and leave us hungry and famishing forever, if these be our only portion; an happiness that will last as long as our immortal spirits, and never fade or fly from us? Or are lukewarmness and indifferency a suitable temper with respect to a misery beyond expression, beyond conception, dreadful; a misery inflicted by a God of almighty power and inexorable justice upon a number of obstinate, incorrigible rebels for numberless, wilful, and daring provocations, inflicted on purpose to shew his wrath and make his power known; a misery proceeding from the united fury of divine indignation, of turbulent passions, of a guilty conscience, of malicious, tormenting devils; a misery (who can bear up under the horror of the thought!) that shall last as long as the eternal God shall live to inflict it; as long as sin shall continue evil to deserve it; as long as an immortal spirit shall endure to bear it; a misery that shall never be mitigated, never intermitted, never, never, never see an end? And remember, that a state of happiness or misery is not far remote from us, but near us, just before us; the next year, the next hour, or the next moment, we may enter into it; is a state for which we are now candidates, now upon trial; now our eternal all lies at stake: and, O sirs, does an inactive, careless posture become us in such a situation? Is a state of such happiness, or such misery; is such a state just—just before us, a matter of indifferency to us? O can you be lukewarm about such matters? Was ever such prodigious stupidity seen under the canopy of heaven, or even in the regions of hell, which abound with monstrous and horrid

dispositions? No; the hardiest ghost below cannot make light of these things. Mortals! can you trifle about them? Well, trifle a little longer and your trifling will be ever forever. You may be indifferent about the improving of your time; but time is not indifferent whether to pass by or not; it is determined to continue its rapid course, and hurry you into the ocean of eternity, though you should continue sleeping and dreaming through all the passage. Therefore awake, arise; exert yourselves before your doom be unchangeably fixed. If you have any fire within you, here let it burn; if you have any active powers, here let them be exerted; here or nowhere, and on no occasion. Be active, be in earnest where you should be; or debase and sink yourselves into stocks and stones, and escape the curse of being reasonable and active creatures. Let the criminal, condemned to die to-morrow, be indifferent about a reprieve or a pardon; let a drowning man be careless about catching at the only plank that can save him: but O do not you be careless and indifferent about eternity, and such amazing realities as heaven and hell. If you disbelieve these things, you are infidels; if you believe these things, and yet are unaffected with them, you are worse than infidels: you are a sort of shocking singularities, and prodigies in nature. Not hell itself can find a precedent of such a conduct. The devils believe, and tremble; you believe, and trifle with things whose very name strikes solemnity and awe through heaven and hell. But,

4. Let us see how this lukewarm temper agrees with the duties of religion. And as I cannot particularize them all, I shall only mention an instance or two. View a lukewarm professor in prayer; he pays to an omniscient God the compliment of a bended knee, as though he could impose upon him

with such an empty pretence. When he is addressing the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, he hardly ever recollects in whose presence he is, or whom he is speaking to, but seems as if he were worshipping without an object, or pouring out empty words into the air: perhaps, through the whole prayer, he had not so much as one solemn, affecting thought of that God whose name he so often invoked. Here is a criminal petitioning for pardon so carelessly, that he scarcely knows what he is about. Here is a needy famishing beggar pleading for such immense blessings as everlasting salvation, and all the joys of heaven, so lukewarmly and thoughtlessly as if he cared not whether his requests were granted or not. Here is an obnoxious offender confessing his sins with an heart untouched with sorrow; worshipping the living God with a dead heart; making great requests, but he forgets them as soon as he rises from his knees, and is not at all inquisitive what becomes of them, and whether they were accepted or not. And can there be a more shocking, impious, and daring conduct than this? To trifle in the royal presence would not be such an audacious affront. For a criminal to catch flies or sport with a feather when pleading with his judge for his pardon, would be but a faint shadow of such religious trifling. What are such prayers but solemn mockeries and disguised insults? And yet, is not this the usual method in which many of you address the great God? The words proceed no further than from your tongue: you do not pour them out from the bottom of your hearts; they have no life or spirit in them, and you hardly ever reflect upon their meaning. And when you have talked away to God in this manner, you will have it to pass for a prayer. But surely such prayers must bring down a curse upon you instead

of a blessing: such sacrifices must be *an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xv. 8. and it is astonishing that he has not mingled your blood with your sacrifices, and sent you from your knees to hell; from thoughtless, unmeaning prayer, to real blasphemy and torture.

The next instance I shall mention is with regard to the word of God. You own it divine, you profess it the standard of your religion, and the most excellent book in the world. Now, if this be the case, it is God that speaks to you; it is God that sends you an epistle when you are reading or hearing his word. How impious and provoking then must it be to neglect it, to let it lie by you as an antiquated, useless book, or to read it in a careless, superficial manner, and hear it with an inattentive, wandering mind? How would you take it, if, when you spoke to your servant about his own interest, he should turn away from you, and not regard you? Or if you should write a letter to your son, and he should not so much as carefully read it, or labour to understand it? And do not some of you treat the sacred oracles in this manner? You make but little use of your Bible, but to teach your children to read: or if you read or hear its contents yourselves, are you not unaffected with them? One would think you would be all attention and reverence to every word; you would drink it in, and thirst for it as new-born babes for their mother's milk; you would feel its energy, and acquire the character of that happy man to whom the God of heaven vouchsafes to look; you would tremble at his word. It reveals the only method of your salvation: it contains the only charter of all your blessings. In short, you have the nearest personal interest in it, and can you be unconcerned hearers of it; I am sure your reason and conscience must

condemn such stupidity and indifferency as incongruous, and outrageously wicked.

And now let me remind you of the observation I made when entering upon this subject, that if I should not offer sufficient matter of conviction, you might go on in your lukewarmness; but if your own reason should be fully convinced that such a temper is most wicked and unreasonable, then you might indulge it at your peril. What do you say now in the issue? Ye modern Laodiceans, are you not yet struck with horror at the thought of that insipid, formal, spiritless religion you have hitherto been contented with? And do you not see the necessity of following the advice of Christ to the Laodicean church, *be zealous*, be fervent for the future, *and repent*, bitterly repent of what is past? To urge this the more, I have two considerations in reserve, of no small weight. 1. Consider the difficulties and dangers in your way. O sirs, if you knew the difficulty of the work of your salvation, and the great danger of miscarrying in it, you could not be so indifferent about it, nor could you flatter yourselves such languid endeavours will ever succeed. It is a labour; a striving, a race, a warfare; so it is called in the sacred writings: but would there be any propriety in these expressions, if it were a course of sloth and inactivity? Consider, you have strong lusts to be subdued, an hard heart to be broken, a variety of graces, which you are entirely destitute of, to be implanted and cherished, and that in an unmaecral soil where they will not grow without careful cultivation, and that you have many temptations to be encountered and resisted. In short, you must be made new men, quite other creatures than you now are. And O! can this work be successfully performed while you make such faint and feeble efforts? Indeed God is

the Agent, and all your best endeavours can never effect the blessed revolution without him. But his assistance is not to be expected in the neglect, or careless use of means, nor is it intended to encourage idleness, but activity and labour: and when he comes to work, he will soon inflame your hearts, and put an end to your lukewarmness. Again, your dangers are also great and numerous; you are in danger from presumption and from despondency; from coldness, from lukewarmness, and from false fires and enthusiastic heats: in danger from self-righteousness, and from open wickedness, from your own corrupt hearts, from this ensnaring world, and from the temptations of the devil: you are in great danger of sleeping on in security, without ever being thoroughly awakened; or, if you should be awakened, you are in danger of resting short of vital religion; and in either of these cases you are undone forever. In a word, dangers crowd thick around you on every hand, from every quarter; dangers, into which thousands, millions of your fellow-men have fallen and never recovered. Indeed, all things considered, it is very doubtful whether ever you will be saved, who are now lukewarm and secure: I do not mean that your success is uncertain if you be brought to use means with proper earnestness; but alas! it is awfully uncertain whether ever you will be brought to use them in this manner. And, O sirs, can you continue secure and inactive when you have such difficulties to encounter with in a work of absolute necessity, and when you are surrounded with so many and so great dangers? Alas! are you capable of such destructive madness? O that you knew the true state of the case! Such a knowledge would soon fire you with the greatest ardour and make you all life and vigour in this important work.

2. Consider how earnest and active men are in other pursuits. Should we form a judgment of the faculties of human nature by the conduct of the generality in religion, we should be apt to conclude that men are mere snails, and that they have no active powers belonging to them. But view them about other affairs, and you find they are all life, fire, and hurry. What labour and toil! what schemes and contrivances! what solicitude about success! what fears of disappointment! hands, heads, hearts, all busy. And all this to procure those enjoyments which at best they cannot long retain, and which the next hour may tear from them. To acquire a name or a diadem, to obtain riches or honours, what hardships are undergone! what dangers dared! what rivers of blood shed! how many millions of lives have been lost! and how many more endangered! In short, the world is all alive, all in motion with business. — On sea and land, at home and abroad, you will find men eagerly pursuing some temporal good. They grow gray-headed, and die in the attempt without reaching their end; but this disappointment does not discourage the survivors and successors; still they will continue, or renew the endeavour. Now here men act like themselves; and they shew they are alive, and endowed with powers of great activity. And shall they be thus zealous and laborious in the pursuit of earthly vanities, and be quite indifferent and sluggish in the infinitely more important concerns of eternity? What, solicitous about a mortal body, but careless about an immortal soul! Eager in pursuit of joys of a few years, but careless and remiss in seeking an immortality of perfect happiness! Anxious to avoid poverty, shame, sickness, pain, and all the evils, real or imaginary, of the present life; but indifferent about an whole eternity of the most intoler-

able misery! O the destructive folly, the daring wickedness of such a conduct! My brethren, is religion the only thing which demands the utmost exertion of all your powers, and alas! is that the only thing in which you will be dull and inactive? Is everlasting happiness the only thing about which you will be remiss? Is eternal punishment the only misery which you are indifferent whether you escape or not? Is God the only good which you pursue with faint and lazy desires? How preposterous! how absurd is this! You can love the world, you can love a father, a child, or a friend; nay, you can love that abominable, hateful thing, sin: these you can love with ardour, serve with pleasure, pursue with eagerness, and with all your might; but the ever-blessed God, and the Lord Jesus, your best friend, you put off with a lukewarm heart and spiritless services. O inexpressibly monstrous! Lord, what is this that has befallen thine own offspring, that they are so disaffected towards thee? Blessed Jesus, what hast thou done that thou shouldst be treated thus? O sinners! what will be the consequence of such a conduct? Will that God take you into the bosom of his love? Will that Jesus save you by his blood, whom you make so light of? No, you may go and seek a heaven where you can find it; for God will give you none. Go, shift for yourselves, or look out for a Saviour where you will; Jesus will have nothing to do with you, except to take care to inflict proper punishment upon you if you retain this lukewarm temper towards him.— Hence, by way of improvement, learn,

1. The vanity and wickedness of a lukewarm religion. Though you should profess the best religion that ever came from heaven, it will not save you; nay, it will condemn you with peculiar aggravations if you are lukewarm in it. This spirit

of indifference diffused through it, turns it all into deadly poison. Your religious duties are all abominable to God while the vigour of your spirits is not exerted in them. Your prayers are insults, and he will answer them as such by terrible things in righteousness. And do any of you hope to be saved by such a religion? I tell you from the God of truth, it will be so far from saving you, that it will certainly ruin you forever: continue as you are till the last, and you will be as certainly damned to all eternity, as Judas, or Beelzebub, or any ghost in hell. But alas!

2. How common, how fashionable is this lukewarm religion! This is the prevailing, epidemical sin of our age and country; and it is well if it has not the same fatal effect upon us as it had upon Laodicea; Laodicea lost its liberty, its religion, and its all. Therefore let Virginia hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. We have thousands of christians, such as they are; as many christians as white men; but alas! they are generally of the Laodicean stamp; they are neither cold nor hot. But it is our first concern to know how it is with ourselves; therefore let this inquiry go round this congregation; are you not such lukewarm christians? Is there any fire and life in your devotions? Or are not all your active powers engrossed by other pursuits?—Impartially make the inquiry, for infinitely more depends upon it than upon your temporal life.

3. If you have hitherto been possessed with this Laodicean spirit, I beseech you indulge it no longer. You have seen that it mars all your religion, and will end in your eternal ruin: and I hope you are not so hardened as to be proof against the energy of this consideration. Why halt you so long between two opinions? *I would you were cold or hot.* Either make thorough work of religion, or do not

pretend to it. Why should you profess a religion which is but an insipid indifferency with you? Such a religion is good for nothing. Therefore awake, arise, exert yourselves. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; strive earnestly, or you are shut out forever. Infuse heart and spirit into your religion. "Whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might." Now, this moment, while my voice sounds in your ears, now begin the vigorous enterprise.— Now collect all the vigour of your souls, and breathe it out in such a prayer as this, "Lord, fire this heart with thy love." Prayer is a proper introduction: for let me remind you of what I should never forget, that God is the only Author of this sacred fire; it is only he that can quicken you; therefore, ye poor careless creatures, fly to him in an agony of importunity, and never desist, never grow weary till you prevail.

4. And lastly, Let the best of us lament our lukewarmness, and earnestly seek more fervour of spirit. Some of you have a little life; you enjoy some warm and vigorous moments; and O! they are divinely sweet. But reflect how soon your spirits flag, your devotion cools, and your zeal languishes. Think of this, and be humble: think of this, and apply for more life. You know where to apply. Christ is your life: therefore, cry to him for the communications of it. "Lord Jesus! a little more life, a little more vital heat to a languishing soul." Take this method, and *you shall run, and not be weary; you shall walk and not faint.*—
Isaiab xl. 31.

SERMON XVI.**THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT THE JOY OF OUR WORLD.****PSALM XCVII. 1.**—*The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.*

WISE and good rulers are justly accounted an extensive blessing to their subjects. In a government, where wisdom sits at the helm: and justice, tempered with clemency, holds the balance of retribution, liberty and property are secured, encroaching ambition is checked, helpless innocence is protected, and universal order is established; and, consequently, peace and happiness diffuse their streams through the land. In such a situation every heart must rejoice, every countenance look cheerful, and every bosom glow with gratitude to the happy instrument of such extended beneficence.

But, on the other hand, *Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child*, Eccles. x. 16. weak, injudicious, humorsome, and peevish. This is the denunciation of Solomon, a sage philosopher, and an opulent king, whose station, capacity, and inclination, conspired to give him the deepest skill in politics: and this denunciation has been accomplished in every age. Empires have fallen, liberty has been fettered, property has been invaded, the lives of men have been arbitrarily taken away, and misery and desolation have broken in like a flood, when the government has been intrusted in the hands of tyranny, of luxury, or rashness; and the advantages of climate and soil, and all others which nature could bestow, have not been able to make the subjects happy under the baleful influence of such an administration.

It has frequently been the unhappy fate of nations to be enslaved to such rulers; but such is the unavoidable imperfection of all human governments, that when, like our own, they are managed by the best hands, they are attended with many calamities, and cannot answer several valuable ends; and from both these considerations we may infer the necessity of a divine government over the whole universe, and particularly over the earth, in which we are more especially concerned. Without this supreme universal Monarch, the affairs of this world would fall into confusion; and the concerns of the next could not be managed at all. The capacities of the wisest of men are scanty, and not equal to all the purposes of government; and hence many affairs of importance will be unavoidably misconducted; and dangerous plots and aggravated crimes may be undiscovered for want of knowledge, or pass unpunished for want of power. A wise and good ruler may be diffusing among his subjects all that happiness which can result from the imperfect administration of mortals, but he may be tumbled from his throne, and his government thrown into the greatest disorder by a more powerful invader; so that the best ruler could not make his subjects lastingly happy, unless he were universal monarch of the globe (a province too great for any mortal,) and above the reach of the ambitious power of others. Further, Human dominion cannot extend to the souls and consciences of men: civil rulers can neither know nor govern them; and yet these must be governed and brought into subjection to the eternal laws of reason, otherwise tranquillity cannot subsist on earth; and especially the great purposes of religion, which regard a future state, cannot be answered.

Men are placed here to be formed by a proper education for another world, for another class, and other employments; but civil rulers cannot form them for these important ends, and therefore they must be under the government of one who has access to their spirits, and can manage them as he pleases.

Deeply impressed with these and other considerations, which shall be presently mentioned, the Psalmist is transported into this reflection, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof.*

The Psalmist seems to have the mediatorial empire of grace erected by Immanuel more immediately in view; and this indeed deserves our special notice; but no doubt he included the divine government in general, which is a just ground of universal joy; and in this latitude I shall consider the text.

Persons in a transport are apt to speak abruptly, and omit the particles of connexion and inference usual in calm reasoning. Thus the Psalmist cries out, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof!* but if we reduce the passage into an argumentative form; it will stand thus, "The Lord reigneth, therefore, let the earth rejoice; and let the multitude of the isles be glad upon this account."

The earth may here signify, by an usual metonymy, the rational inhabitants of the earth, who are especially concerned in the divine government; or, by a beautiful poetical prosypopœia, it may signify the inanimate globe of the earth, and then it intimates that the divine government is so important a blessing, that even the inanimate and senseless creation would rejoice in it, were it capable of such

passions* The isles may likewise be taken figurately for their inhabitants, particularly the Gentiles, who resided in them; or literally for tracts of land surrounded with water.

My present design is,

To illustrate this glorious truth, that Jehovah's supreme government is a just cause of universal joy.

For that end I shall consider the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial; and show that in each of these views the divine government is matter of universal joy.

I. The Lord reigneth upon a throne of legislation, *let the earth rejoice; let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof:*

He is the one supreme Lawgiver, *James iv. 12,* and is perfectly qualified for that important trust. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil society than to have good laws established, according to which mankind are to conduct themselves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the supreme and universal King has enacted and published the best laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular.

Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us, and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind. Human reason, or the light of nature, gives us some intimations of the duties of morality, even in our degenerate state, and for this information we should bless God; but alas! these discoveries are very imperfect, and we need super-

*By the same figure the inanimate parts of the creation are called upon to praise the Lord, *Psalms cxlviii*, and are said to travail and groan under the sin of man. *Rom. viii. 22.*

natural revelation to make known to us the way of life. Accordingly, the Lord has favoured us with the sacred oracles as a supplement to the feeble light of nature; and in them we are fully "taught what is good, and what the Lord requireth of us." And what cause of joy is this! How painful are the anxieties that attend uncertainty about matters of duty! How distressing a doubtful, fluctuating mind, in an affair of such tremendous importance! This, no doubt, some of you that are conscientious have had the experience of, in particular cases, when you were at a loss to apply to them the general directions in sacred scripture.

Again, *let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad* that these laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions. The sanctions are such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. The rewards of obedience in the divine legislation are not such toys as posts of honour and profit, crowns and empires, which are the highest rewards that civil rulers can promise or bestow; but rational peace and serenity of mind, undaunted bravery under the frowns of adversity, a cheerful confidence in the divine guardianship under all the calamities of life, and in the future world an entire exemption from all sorrow, and from sin, the fruitful source of all our afflictions; the possession of every good, the enjoyment of the divine presence, of the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; in short, the fruition of an happiness above our present wishes, and equal to our then mature faculties, and all this forever: these are the rewards of evangelical obedience, not indeed for its own sake,

but upon account of the righteousness of the blessed Jesus; and if these fail to allure men to obedience, what can prevail? And how happy is it to live under a government, where virtue and religion, which in their own nature tend to our happiness, are enforced with such resistless arguments! On the other hand, the penalty annexed by the divine Lawgiver to disobedience is proportionably dreadful. To pine and languish under the secret curse of angry Heaven, which, like a contagious poison, diffuses itself through all the enjoyments of the wicked, *Mal. ii. 2.* to sweat under the agonies of a guilty conscience in this world, and in the future world to be banished from the beatific presence of God and all the joys of heaven; to feel the anguish and remorse of guilty reflections; to burn in unquenchable fire, to consume a miserable eternity in the horrid society of malignant ghosts; and all this without the least rational expectation; nay, without so much as a deluded hope of deliverance, or the mitigation of torture, through the revolutions of endless ages, all this is a faint representation of the penalty annexed to disobedience; and it is a penalty worthy a God to inflict, and equal to the infinite malignity of sin. *And let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad,* on account not only of the promissory sanction of the law, but also of this tremendous penalty; for it flows not only from justice, but from goodness, as well as its promise. The penalty is not annexed to the law, nor will it be executed from a malignant pleasure in the misery of the creature, but it is annexed from a regard to the happiness of mankind, and will be executed upon individuals for the extensive good of the whole as well as for the honourable display of the divine purity and justice. A penalty is primarily intended to deter men from disobe-

ence. Now disobedience tends in its own nature to make us miserable; it renders it impossible, in the nature of things, that we should be happy in the enjoyment of God and the employments of heaven, which are eternally and immutably contrary to sinful dispositions; and it fills us with those malignant and unruly passions which cannot but make us uneasy. Hence it follows, that, since the penalty tends to deter us from sin, and since sin naturally tends to make us miserable, therefore the penalty is a kind of gracious enclosure round the pit of misery, to keep us from falling into it: it is a friendly admonition not to drink poison; it is, in a word, a kind restraint upon us in our career to ruin; and indeed it is a blessing we could not spare; for we find, that, notwithstanding the terror of the threatening, men will run on in sin; and with how much more horrid alacrity and infernal zeal would they continue their course, if there were no divine threatening to check and withhold them? The earth may also rejoice for the execution of the penalty of the divine law against sin; for the conspicuous punishment of the disobedient may serve as a loud warning to all rational beings that now exist, or that may hereafter be created, not to offend against God; and thus it may be the means of preserving them in obedience, and so promote the general good; and it may be that the number of those that shall be punished of the human and angelic natures, when compared to the number of reasonable beings that shall be confirmed in holiness and happiness by observing their doom, may bear no more proportion than the number of criminals executed in a government as public examples does to all the subjects of it; and consequently such punishment may be vindicated on the same principles. Farther, Justice is an amiable attribute

in itself, and it appears so to all rational beings but criminals, whose interest it is, that it should not be displayed; and, therefore, the infliction of just punishment should be matter of general joy, since it is amiable in itself. So it is in human governments; while we are innocent, we approve of the conduct of our magistrates in inflicting capital punishment upon notorious malefactors, though the malefactors themselves view it with horror. But to proceed:

Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad, that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Human laws can only smooth our external conduct at best, but the heart in the mean time may be disloyal and wicked. Now this defect is supplied by the laws of the King of heaven, which are spiritual. They require a complete uniformity and self-consistency in us, that heart and life may agree; and therefore they are wisely framed to make us entirely good. They have also an inimitable power upon the consciences of men. Should all the world acquit us, yet we cannot acquit ourselves when we violate them. The consciousness of a crime has made many an hardy offender sweat and agonize with remorse, though no human eye could witness to his offence. Now what cause of joy is it that these laws are quick and powerful, and that they are attended with almighty energy, which in some measure intimidates and restrains the most audacious, and inspires the conscientious with a pious fear of offending!

II. “The Lord reigneth by his Providence, let the earth therefore rejoice; and the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.”

The Providence of God is well described in our Shorter Catechism: “It is his most holy, wise, and

powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." To particularize all the instances of providential government which may be matter of joy to the earth would be endless, therefore I shall only mention the following:

Let the earth rejoice; and the multitude of the isles be glad, that the Lord reigneth over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his sovereign and wise pleasure. We sometimes hear of wars, and rumours of wars, of thrones tottering, and kingdoms falling, of the nations tumultuously raging and dashing in angry conflict, like the waves of the boisterous ocean. In such a juncture we may say, The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their waves. But the Lord reigneth, therefore the world shall be established that it cannot be moved.—The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Psalm xciii. Sometimes the ambition of foreign power, or the encroachments of domestic tyranny, may threaten our liberties, and persecution may seem ready to discharge its artillery against the church of God, while every pious heart trembles for the ark, lest it should be carried into the land of its enemies. But the Lord reigneth! let the earth, let the church rejoice; the eternal God is her refuge, and underneath her are the everlasting arms. Deut. xxxiii. 27. He will overrule the various revolutions of the world for her good; he will give kings for her ransom, Æthiopia and Seba for her; and the united powers of earth and hell shall not prevail against her. Though the frame of nature should be unhinged, we may find refuge in our God. Yet it must be owned, that the Lord for the chastisement of his people may suffer their enemies to break in upon them,

and may cast them into the furnace of affliction. But let the earth rejoice, let the church be glad that the Lord reigneth over her most powerful enemies, and that they are but executing his will even when they have no regard to it, but are gratifying their own ambition. They are but a rod in the hand of a tender father, who corrects only to amend: and when he has used the rod for this gracious purpose, he will then lay it aside. In this language the Almighty speaks of the haughty Assyrian monarch who had pushed his conquest so far and wide. *Isaiah x. 5, 6, 7. O Assyrian, the rod of my anger, &c. I will give him my commission, and send him against the Jews, my favourite people; because they are degenerated into an hypocritical nation, and he shall execute my orders. "Howbeit, he meaneth not so; it is far from his heart to obey my will in this expedition; but his only design is to aggrandize himself, and to destroy and cut off nations not a few."* And when this instrument of the divine vengeance arrogates to himself the honour of his own successes, with what just insult and disdain does the King of kings speak of him! *ver. 12--15. Shall the axe boast itself against him that he weth therewith? As if the rod should shake itself against him that lifteth it up, &c.* The design of God in these chastisements is to purge away the iniquity of his people; and this is all the fruit of them to take away their sin; and when this gracious design is answered, they shall be removed; *and the rod of the wicked shall not always lie upon the lot of the righteous. Psalm cxxv. 3.* Now what cause of universal joy is this, that One infinitely wise sits at the helm, and can steer the feeble vessel of his church through all the outrageous storms of this unfriendly climate and tempestuous ocean! He may seem at times to lie asleep, but in the ar-

ticle of extreme danger he will awake and still the winds and the sea with his sovereign mandate, *Peace, be still.* Men may form deep and politic schemes, and purpose their accomplishment in defiance of Heaven, *but God disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.* Job v. 12, 13. This was exemplified in the case of Ahithophel, 1 Sam. xvii. 14. The hearts of men, yea of kings, *are in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth them whithersoever he will.* Prov. xxi. 1, (see also chap. xvi. 1, 9. and xix. 21.) And how joyful a thought this, that we are not at the arbitrary disposal of our fellow-mortals, and that affairs are not managed according to their capricious pleasure, but that our God is in heaven, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth! Psalm cxv. 3.

Again, the church may be endangered by intestine divisions and offences. The professors of religion may stumble and fall, and so wound the hearts of the friends of Zion, and give matter of triumph and insult to its enemies. Some may apostatize, and return like the dog to his vomit. A general lukewarmness may diffuse itself through the church, and even those who retain their integrity in the main may feel the contagion. Divisions and animosities may be inflamed, mutual love may be extinguished, and a spirit of discord succeed in its place. A most melancholy case this, and too much like our own; and our hearts sink at times beneath the burden. *But the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad.* He can reduce this confusion into order, and make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it. Psalm lxxvi. 10. It is the peculiarity of divine wisdom to educe good out of evil, and let us rejoice in it.

God is supreme, and therefore can control all the wicked passions of the mind. He has the residue of the spirit, and can rekindle the languishing flame of devotion. And O let us apply to him with the most vigorous and unwearied importunity for so necessary a blessing.

Again, we are exposed to numberless accidental and unforeseen dangers, which we cannot prevent, nor encounter. Sickness and death may proceed from a thousand unsuspected causes. Our friends, our estates, and, in short, all our earthly enjoyments, may be torn from us by a variety of accidents. We walk, as it were, in the dark, and may tread on remediless dangers ere we are aware. *But the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad!* contingent events are at his disposal, and necessity at his control. The smallest things are not beneath the notice of his providence, and the greatest are not above it. Diseases and misfortunes that seem to happen by chance, are commissioned by the Lord of all; and they that result evidently from natural causes are sent by his almighty will. He says to one, go, and it goeth; and to another, come, and it cometh: he orders the devastations that are made by the most outrageous elements. If flames lay our houses in ashes, they are kindled by his breath. If hurricanes sweep through our land, and carry desolation along with them, they perform his will, and can do nothing beyond it: his hand hurls the thunder, and directs it where to strike. An arrow or a bullet shot at a venture in the heat of battle, is carried to its mark by divine direction. How wretched a world would this be were it not under the wise management of divine Providence! If chance or blind fate were its rulers, what desolations would crowd upon us every moment! we should soon be crushed in the ruins of a

fallen world. Every wind that blows might blast us with death, and fire and water would mingle in a blended chaos, and bury us in their destruction. But so extensive is the care of Providence, that even the sparrows may find safety in it; and we cannot lose so much as a hair of our heads without its permission. Matt. x. 29, 30, 31. And how much more then are our persons and our affairs of importance under its guardianship and direction!

Again, we are in perpetual danger, from the malignant agency of infernal spirits, who watch all opportunities to ruin the souls, bodies and estates of men. These subtle spirits can inject insnaring thoughts into our minds, and present such images to the fancy as may allure the soul to sin. This is repeatedly asserted in scripture, and attested by the melancholy experience of multitudes in all ages. That they have power also in the material world to raise storms and tempests, and to ruin men's estates, and inflict diseases on their bodies, is plain from the case of Job, and many in our Saviour's time, and from Satan's being called *the prince of the power of the air; and his associates spiritual wickednesses in high places.* And what horrid devastations would these powerful and malicious beings spread through the world if they were not under the control of divine providence! They would perpetually haunt our minds with insnaring or terrifying images, would meet us with temptations at every turn, and lead us willing captives to hell. They would also strip us entirely of all temporal enjoyments, torture our bodies with grievous pains, or moulder them into dust with consuming and loathsome diseases. *But the Lord reigneth: let the earth be glad.* He keeps the infernal lions in chains, and restrains their rage. He sees all their subtle plots and machinations

against his feeble sheep and baffles them all. "He will not suffer his people to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but with the temptation will also make a way to escape. 1 Cor. x. 13. And when he suffers them to be buffeted, his grace shall be sufficient for them, &c. 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9. He hath also (as Satan himself confessed with regard to Job,) made an hedge about us, about our houses, and about all that we have on every side, Job i. 10, and hence we live and enjoy the blessings of life. What cause of grateful joy is this? Who would not rather die than live in a world ungoverned by divine Providence! This earth would soon be turned into a hell, if the infernal armies were let loose upon it.

III. The Lord reigneth upon a throne of grace! "let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad."

It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which the Psalmist had more immediately in view; and this is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants. This is a kind of government peculiar to the human race; the upright angels do not need it, and the fallen angels are not favoured with it. This is invested in the person of Immanuel, "who is made head over all things to his church," Eph. i. 22, "to whom all power in heaven and earth is given," Matt. xi. 27, and xxviii. 18. This is the kingdom described in such august language in Dan. ii. ver. 44, 45, and vii. 14. Luke i. 32, 33. Hence that Jesus who was mocked with a crown of thorns, and condemned as a criminal at Pilate's bar, wears on his vesture and on his thigh this majestic inscription, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.* Rev. xix. 16. And behold I bring you glad tidings; this kingdom of God is come unto you, and you are called to become its subjects,

and share in its blessings. Wherever the gospel is preached, there Jehovah sits upon a mercy-seat in majesty tempered with condescending grace.— From thence he invites rebels that had rejected his government to return to their allegiance, and passes an act of grace upon all that comply with the invitation. To his throne of grace he invites all to come, and offers them the richest blessings.— From thence he publishes peace on earth, and good will towards men. From thence he offers pardon to all that will submit to his government, and renounce their sins, those weapons of rebellion.— From thence he distributes the influences of his Spirit to subdue obstinate hearts into cheerful submission, to support his subjects under every burden and furnish them with strength for the spiritual warfare. He subdues their rebellious corruptions, animates their languishing graces, and protects them from their spiritual enemies.* He enacts laws for the regulation of his church, appoints ordinances for her edification, and qualifies ministers to dispense them. He hath *ascended up on high*; he hath received gifts for men; and these he hath distributed, and given some *prophets; and some apostles; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. And it is by virtue of authority derived from him, that his ministers now officiate, and you receive his ordinances at their hands. Now how happy are we, that we live under the mediatorial administration! under the empire of grace!—*Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad upon this account.* And let us pray

* See his reign most beautifully described under the type of *Solomon*, Psalm lxxii.

that all nations may become the willing subjects of our gracious Sovereign. If this administration of grace had not yet been erected, in what a miserable situation should we have been! guilty, miserable, and hopeless! Let us rejoice that the King of heaven, from whom we had revolted, has not suffered us to perish without remedy in our unnatural rebellion, but holds out the sceptre of his grace to us, that we may touch it and live.

IV. And lastly, The Lord will reign ere long upon a throne of universal judgment, conspicuous to the assembled universe, *let the earth, therefore, rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad.*

Here I may borrow the inimitable language of the Psalmist, Ps. xcvi. 10, 13. *The Lord shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof: let the fields be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh! for he cometh to judge the earth.* “He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth.” This will indeed be a day of insupportable terror to his enemies, Rev. vi. 15, 16. but, on many accounts, it will prove a day of joy and triumph.

This day will unfold all the mysteries of divine Providence which are now unsearchable. There are many dispensations now for which we cannot account. Many blessings are bestowed, many calamities fall, and many events happen, of which mortals cannot see the reason. Prosperity is the lot of some who seem the peculiar objects of divine vengeance; and many groan under afflictions who seem more proper objects of providential beneficence. We are often led into ways the end of which we cannot see, and are bewildered in various perplexities about the designs of divine Providence

towards us. Hence also impiety takes occasion to cavil at the ways of God as not equal, and to censure his government as weakly administered. But in that day all his ways will appear to be judgment. The clouds and darkness that now surround them will vanish, and the beams of wisdom, goodness, and justice, will shine illustrious before the whole universe, and every creature shall join the plaudit, *He hath done all things well!* Now we can at best but see a few links in the chain of providence, but then we shall see it all entire and complete; then the whole system will be exposed to view at once, which will discover the strange symmetry, connexions, dependencies, and references of all the parts, without which we can no more judge of the excellency of the procedure than a rustic could tell the use of the several parts of a watch, if he saw them scattered in various places. Let the earth therefore be glad in expectation of this glorious discovery.

Again, let the earth rejoice that in that day the present unequal distributions of Providence will be forever adjusted, and regulated according to the strictest justice. This is not the place or season for retribution, and therefore we need not be surprised that the blessings and calamities of this life are not disposed according to men's real characters; but then every man shall be dealt with according to his works. Oppressed innocence will be redressed, and insolence forever mortified: calumny will be confuted, and flattery exposed: Lazarus shall be comforted, and Dives tormented: impious kings shall be driven into the infernal pit, while pious beggars shall be advanced to the heights of happiness. In short, all matters will then be set right, and therefore let the earth rejoice.

Again, let the earth rejoice that in that day the righteous shall be completely delivered from all sin and sorrow, and advanced to the perfection of heavenly happiness. Then they shall enter upon the full fruition of that bliss, which is now the object of all their anxious hopes and earnest labours.

But we must change the scene into tragedy, and take a view of trembling criminals hearing their dreadful doom, and sinking to hell with horrible anguish. And must the earth rejoice in this too? Yes, but with a solemn tremendous joy. Even the condemnation and everlasting misery of these is right and just, is amiable and glorious; and God, angels, and saints, will at the great day rejoice in it. The awful grandeur of justice will be illustrated in it; and this is matter of joy. The punishment of ir reclaimable impenitents will be an effectual warning to all reasonable beings, and to all future creations, as has been observed; and by it they will be deterred from disobedience; and this is the cause of joy. These criminals will then be beyond repentance and reformation, and therefore it is impossible in the nature of things they should be happy; and why then should Heaven be encumbered with them? Is it not cause of joy that they should be confined in prison who have made themselves unfit for society? In the present state sinners are objects of our compassion and sorrow, and the whole creation mourns for them. Rom. vii. 22. But God will then rejoice in their ruin, and laugh at their calamity. Prov. i. 26, and all dutiful creatures will join in his joy.

Thus you see that the Lord reigneth. And who, poor feeble saints, who is this that sustains this universal government, and rules the whole creation according to his pleasure? It is your Father, your Saviour, your Friend! It is he that entertains

a tenderer regard for you than ever glowed in an human breast. And can you be so foolish as to regard the surmises of unbelief? Can you force yourselves to fear that he will ever leave or forsake you? Can you suspect that he will suffer you to fall an helpless prey to your enemies? No, your Lord reigneth, therefore rejoice. *Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say rejoice.* While he keeps the throne of the universe, you shall be safe and happy. Your Father is greater than all, and none can pluck you out of his hands. Remember he sits upon a throne of grace, therefore come to him with boldness. You may smile at calamity and confusion, and rejoice amid the ruins of the world; you may borrow the language of David, Psalm xvi. or of Habakkuk, chap. iii. ver. 17, 18. Remember also, that as he is a king he demands your cheerful obedience, and, therefore, make his service the business of your life.

And, unhappy sinners! let me ask you, Who is this that reigns King of the universe? Why, it is he whom you have rejected from being King over you; it is he against whom you have rebelled, and who is therefore your just enemy. And are you able to make good your cause against him who has universal nature at his nod? How dreadful is your situation! That which may make the earth rejoice, may make you fear and tremble. The Lord reigneth, let sinners tremble. You must fall before him, if you will not cheerfully submit to his government. Let me therefore renew the usual neglected declaration, "He sits upon a throne of grace." Let me once more in his name proclaim reconciliation! reconciliation! to your ears, and invite you to return to your allegiance. Lay down your arms, forsake your sins. Hasten, hasten to him. The sword of his justice now hangs over

your heads while I am managing the treaty with you; and therefore delay not. Yield; yield, or die; surrender, or perish; for you have no other alternative. Submit and you may join the general joy at his government. You upon earth, and devils and damned ghosts in hell, are the only beings that are sorry for it; but upon your submission your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and you shall exult *when the Lord of all comes to judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.* Psalm xcvi. 18.

SERMON XVII.

THE NAME OF GOD PROCLAIMED BY HIMSELF.

EXOD. XXXIII. 18, 19. *And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.—*

WITH

CHAP. XXXIV. 6, 7. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.*

IT is a very natural and proper inquiry for a creature, “Where is God my Maker?” And an heart that loves him must long to know more of him, and is ever ready to join with Moses in his petition, *Shew me, I pray thee, thy glory;* or, “Reveal thyself to me.” That thou art, I infer from my own existence, and from thy numerous works

all around me; and that thou art *glorious*, I learn from the display of thy perfections in thy vast creation, and in the government of the world thou hast made. But, alas! how small a portion of God is known in the earth? How faintly does thy glory shine in the feeble eyes of mortals? My knowledge of things in the present state of flesh and blood depends in a great measure upon the senses; but God is a spirit invisible to eyes of flesh, and imperceptible through the gross medium of sensation. How and when shall I know thee as thou art, thou great, thou dear unknown? In what a strange situation am I! I am surrounded with thy omnipresence, yet I cannot perceive thee: thou art as near me as I am to myself; “thou knowest my rising up and my sitting down; thou understandest my thoughts afar off; thou penetratest my very essence, and knowest me altogether.” Psa. cxxxix. 2, &c. But to me thou dwellest in impervious darkness, or, which is the same, in light inaccessible. *O that I knew where I might find him! Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.* Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9. I see his perfections beaming upon me from all his works, and his providence ever-active ruling the vast universe, and diffusing life, motion, and vigour through the whole: the virtue of his wisdom, power, and goodness,

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze;
 Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
 Lives in all life, extends through all extent;
 Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
 Inspires our soul, informs our vital part.—

But where is the great Agent himself? These are his works, and they are glorious: “in wisdom has he made them all,” but where is the divine Artificer? From these displays of his glory, which strike my senses, I derive some ideas of him; but O! how faint and glimmering! how unlike to the all-perfect Archetype and Original! I have also heard of him by the hearing of the ear: I read his own descriptions of himself in his word; I contemplate the representations he has given of himself in his ordinances; and these are truly glorious, but they are adapted to the dark and grovelling minds of mortals in this obscure region, and fall infinitely short of the original glory. I can think of him; I can love him; I can converse and carry on a spiritual intercourse with him; I feel him working in my heart; I receive sensible communications of love and grace from him: I dwell at times with unknown delight in the contemplation of his glory, and am transported with the survey: but, alas! I cannot fully know him; I cannot dive deep into this mystery of glory; my senses cannot perceive him; and my intellectual powers in the present state are not qualified to converse with spiritual objects, and form a full acquaintance with them. O! if it would please my God to shew ~~me~~ his glory in its full lustre! O that he would reveal himself to me so as that my senses may assist my mind; if such a manner of revelation be possible!

Such thoughts as these may naturally rise in our minds; and probably some such thoughts possessed the mind of Moses, and were the occasion of his request, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory.*

These chapters whence we have taken our subject of discourse, present us with transactions that must seem very strange and incredible to a mind that knows nothing of communion with the Father

of spirits, and that is furnished with modern ideas.

Here is, not an angel, but a man; not a creature only, but a sinner, & sinner once depraved as ourselves, in intimate audience with the Deity. Jehovah speaks to him *face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend*. Moses uses his interest in favour of a rebellious people; and it was so great that he prevailed: nay, to shew the force of his intercessions, and to give him an encouragement to use them, God condescends to represent himself as restrained by this importunate petitioner, and unable to punish the ungrateful Israelites, while Moses pleaded for them, *Let me alone, says he, that my wrath may wax hot against this people, that I may consume them*. *Exod. xxxii. 10.* Moses urges petition upon petition; and he obtains blessing upon blessing, as though God could deny nothing to such a favourite. He first deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not immediately break out upon the Israelites, and cut them off, verses 13, 14. When he has gained this point, he advances farther, and pleads that God would be their Conductor through the wilderness, as he had been till that time, and lead them into the promised land. In this article God seems to put him off, and to devolve the work of conducting them upon himself; but Moses, sensible that he was not equal to it, insists upon the request, and with a sacred dexterity urges the divine promises to enforce it. Jehovah at length appears, as it were, partly prevailed upon; and promises to send his angel before him as his guide. *Chap. xxxii. 34, and xxxiii. 2.* But alas! an angel cannot fill up his place; and Moses renews his petition to the Lord, and humbly tells him that he had rather stay, or even die where they were in the wilderness, than go up to the

promised land without him. *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence,* chap. xxxiii. 15, “alas! the company of an angel, and the possession of a land flowing with milk and honey will not satisfy us without thyself.” His prayers prevail for this blessing also, and Jehovah will not deny him any thing. O the surprising prevalency of faith! O the efficacy of the fervent prayer of a righteous man!

And now, when his people are restored unto the divine favour, and God has engaged to go with them, has Moses any thing more to ask? Yes, he found he had indeed great interest with God, and O! he loved him, and longed, and languished for a clearer knowledge of him; he found that after all his friendly interviews and conferences he knew but little of his glory; and now, thought he, it is a proper time to put in a petition for this manifestation; who knows but it may be granted! Accordingly he prays with a mixture of filial boldness and trembling modesty, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory;* that is to say, “Now I am in converse with thee, I perceive thou art the most glorious of all beings; but it is but little of thy glory I as yet know. O! is it possible for a guilty mortal to receive clearer discoveries of it? If so, I pray thee favour me with a more full and bright view.” This petition is also granted, and the Lord promises him, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.*

That you may the better understand this strange history, I would have you observe a few things.

1st, In the earliest ages of the world it was a very common thing for God to assume some visible form, and in it to converse freely with his servants. Of this you frequently read in the history of the

patriarchs, particularly of Adam, Abraham, Jacob, &c. It is also a tradition almost universally received in all ages, and among all nations, that God has sometimes appeared in a sensible form to mortals. You can hardly meet with one heathen writer but what you will find in him some traces of this tradition. Upon this, in particular, are founded the many extravagant stories of the poets concerning the appearances of their gods. Had there been no original truth in some appearances of the true God to men, there would have been no colour for such fables; for they would have evidently appeared groundless and unnatural to every reader. This tradition therefore was no doubt originally derived from the appearances of the Deity in a corporeal form in early ages.* Sometimes God assumed an human shape, and appeared as a man. Thus he appeared to Abraham, in company with two angels, Gen. xviii. and that good patriarch entertained them with food as travellers; yet one of them is repeatedly styled the Lord, or Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God; see verses 13, 20, 22, 26, &c. and speaks in a language proper to him only, verses 14, 21, &c. Sometimes he appeared as a visible brightness, or a body of light, or in some other sensible form of majesty and glory. Thus he was seen by Moses in the bush as a

* These appearances were probably made in the person of the Son, and might be intended as a prelude or earnest of his assuming human nature in the fulness of time, and his dwelling among mortals. He was the immediate Agent in the creation of the world, and the Father devolved upon him the whole economy of Providence from the beginning; and hence he had frequent occasions to appear on some grand design. It cannot seem incredible that he should thus assume some visible form to such as believe that God was at length really *manifested in the flesh*; for this temporary apparant incarnation cannot be deemed more strange than his really being *made, flesh, and dwelling among us*.

burning fire; thus he attended the Israelites through the wilderness, in the symbol of fire by night, and a cloud by day; and thus he often appeared in the tabernacle, and at the dedication of Solomon's temple, in some sensible form of glorious brightness, which the Jews called the *Schechinah*; and looked upon as a certain symbol of the divine presence.

2dly, You are to observe that God, who is a spirit, cannot be perceived by the senses; nor were these sensible forms intended to represent the divine essence, which is wholly immaterial. You can no more see God than you can see your own soul; and a bodily form can no more represent his nature than shape or colour can represent a thought, or the affection of love. Yet,

3dly, It must be allowed that majestic and glorious emblems, or representations of God exhibited to the senses, may help to raise our ideas of him. When the senses and the imagination assist the power of pure understanding, its ideas are more lively and impressive: and though no sensible representations can bear any strict resemblance to the divine nature, yet they may strike our minds deeply, and fill them with images of grandeur and majesty. When I see a magnificent palace, it naturally tends to give me a great idea of the owner or builder. The retinue and pomp of kings, their glittering crowns, sceptres, and other regalia, tend to inspire us with ideas of majesty. In like manner, those sensible representations of Deity, especially when attended with some rational descriptions of the divine nature, may help us to form higher conceptions of the glory of God: and the want of such representations may occasion less reverence and awe. For instance, had the description of the Deity, *The Lord God, merciful and gracious, &c.* been only suggested to the mind of Mo-

ses as an object of calm contemplation, it would not have struck him with such profound reverence, nor given him such clear or impressive ideas as when it was proclaimed with a loud, majestic voice, and attended with a visible glory too bright for mortal eyes. Human nature is of such a make, that it cannot but be affected with things of this nature.

Consider the matter well in the light which I have set it, and you may see something of the propriety and good tendency of these appearances, and at the same time guard yourselves against mistakes. Let me now give you what I apprehend the true history of this remarkable and illustrious appearance of God to Moses.

Moses had enjoyed frequent interviews with God, and seen many symbols of his presence and representations of his glory; but he still finds his knowledge of him very defective, and apprehends that God might give him some representation of his glory more striking and illustrious than any he had seen. Therefore, finding that now he was in great favour with him, he humbly moves this petition, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*; “give me some more full and majestic representation of thy glory than I have hitherto seen.” The Lord answers him, “I will cause all my goodness,” that is, a glorious, visible representation of my goodness, which is, “my glory, to pass before thee,” which may strike thy senses, and make them the medium of conveying to thy mind more illustrious and majestic ideas of my glory. And as no sensible forms can fully represent the spiritual essence and perfections of my nature, while I cause a visible representation of my glory to pass before thee, I will at the same time proclaim the name of the Lord,*

* The LXX render the passage, *I will call by my name, the Lord, before thee*. And this is the most literal translation

and describe some of the principal perfections which constitute my glory and goodness. But so bright will be the lustre of that form which I shall assume, that thou art not able to see my face, or the most splendid part of the representation; the glory is too bright to be beheld by any mortal, ver. 20. But there is a place in a rock where thou mayest wait, and I will cast darkness over it till the brightest part of the form of glory in which I shall appear is passed by, and then I will open a medium of light, and thou shalt see my back parts; that is, those parts of the representation which are less illustrious, and which pass by last: the glory of these thou shalt be enabled to bear, but my face shall not be seen." ver. 2—23.

Thus God condescended to promise; and when matters were duly prepared, he performs his engagement. The Lord assumed a visible form of glory, *and passed by before him, and proclaimed his name, which includes his perfections.* Things are known by their names, and God is known by his attributes, therefore, his name includes his attributes. The proclamation ran in this august style, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.* Moses was struck with reverence and admiration, and bowed and worshipped.

My present design is to explain the several names and perfections here ascribed to God, and shew that they all concur to constitute his goodness. For you must observe this is the connexion. Moses prays for a view of God's glory. God

of the Hebrew: they are rendered, *Inclamabo nominatim Jehova ante faciem tuam*, by Junius, and Tremellius. According to this version the sense seems to be, "When the symbol of my glory is passing by, I will give thee notice, and call by my name the Lord, that I may not pass by unobserved."

promises him a view of his goodness, which intimates that his goodness is his glory; and when he describes his goodness, what is the description? It is *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping* mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.* That these attributes belong to his goodness we easily and naturally conceive; but what shall we think of his punitive justice, that awful and tremendous attribute, the object of terror and aversion to sinners? Is that a part of his goodness too! Yes, when God causes his goodness to pass before Moses; he proclaims as one part of it, that *he will by no means clear the guilty; and that he visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.* This awful attribute is an important part of his goodness, and without it he could not be good, amiable, or glorious.

I am now about to enter upon a subject the most sublime, august, and important, that can come within the compass of human or angelic minds, the name and perfections of the infinite and ever-glorious God. I attempt it with trembling and reverence, and I foresee I shall finish it with shame and confusion: for *who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?* Job xi. 7. The question of Agur mortifies the pride of human knowledge; *What is his name, or what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?* Prov. xxx. 4. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high,*

* The Hebrews observe, that the first letter of the word translated *keeping*, is much larger than usual; which shews that a particular emphasis is to be laid upon it, as if he should say, "I most strictly and richly keep mercy for thousands; the treasure is immense, and can never be exhausted."

I cannot attain unto it. Psalm cxxxix. 6. It is as high as heaven, what can I know? deeper than hell, what can I do? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. Job xi. 8, 9. Lend me your skill, ye angels, who have seen his face without intermission from the first moment of your happy existence; or ye saints above, that see him as he is, and know even as you are known, inspire me with your exalted ideas, and teach me your celestial language, while I attempt to bring heaven down to earth, and reveal its glories to the eyes of mortals. In vain I ask; their knowledge is incommunicable to the inhabitants of flesh, and none but immortals can learn the language of immortality. But why do I ask of them? O thou Father of angels and of men, who canst perfect thy praise even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, and who canst open all the avenues of knowledge, and pour thy glory upon created minds, do thou shine into my heart, to me give the light of the knowledge of thy glory: I beseech thee, shew me thy glory; cause it to shine upon my understanding, while I try to display it to thy people, that they may behold, adore, and love.

As to you, my brethren, I solicit your most solemn and reverential attention, while I would lead you into the knowledge of the Lord your maker. One would think a kind of filial curiosity would inspire you with eager desires to be acquainted with your divine Parent and original. You would not be willing to worship you know not what, or, with the Athenians, adore an unknown God. Do you not long to know the greatest and best of beings, the glimmerings of whose glory shine upon you from heaven and earth? Would you not know him in whose presence you hope to dwell and be happy forever and forever? Come then, be all awe

and attention, while I proclaim to you his name and perfections, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.*

We may be sure God has assumed to himself such names as are best adapted to describe his nature, as far as mortal language can reach. And every thing belonging to him is so dear and important, that his very name deserves a particular consideration. This is not to make empty criticisms upon an arbitrary, unmeaning sound, but to derive useful knowledge from a word of the greatest emphasis and significancy.

The first name in the order of the text, and in its own dignity, is, *the Lord*, or *Jehovah*; a name here twice repeated, to shew its importance, *the Lord, the Lord*, or, *Jehovah, Jehovah*. This is a name peculiar to God, and incommunicable to the most exalted creature. The apostle tells us, *There are gods many, and lords many.* 1 Cor. viii. 5. Magistrates in particular are so called, because their authority is some shadow of the divine authority.— But the name *Jehovah*, which is rendered *Lord* in my text, and in all those places in the Bible where it is written in capitals, I say, this name *Jehovah* is appropriated to the Supreme Being, and never applied to any other. He claims it to himself, as his peculiar glory. Thus in Psalm lxxxiii. ver. 18. *Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.* And in Isaiah xlii. ver. 8. *I am the Lord, or (as it is in the original,) Jehovah; that is my name, my proper incommunicable name, and my glory will I not give to another; that is, I will not allow another to share with me in the glory of wearing this name.* Thus also in Amos vi. ver. 13. *Lo, he that formeth the mountains,*

and createth the wind, that declareth to man what is in his thoughts, &c. the Lord, the God of Hosts, is his name, his distinguishing, appropriated name. There must, therefore, be something peculiarly sacred and significant in this name, since it is thus incommunicably appropriated to the only one God.

The Jews had such a prodigious veneration for this name as amounted to a superstitious excess. They call it "that name," by way of distinction, "The great name, the glorious name, the appropriated name, the unutterable name, the expounded name,"* because they never pronounced it, except in one instance, which I shall mention presently, but always expounded it by some other: thus when the name Jehovah occurred in the Old Testament, they always read it *Adonai*, or *Elohim*, the usual and less sacred names, which we translate *Lord, God*. It was never pronounced by the Jews in reading, prayer, or the most solemn act of worship, much less in common conversation, except once a year, on the great day of atonement, and then only by the high priest in the sanctuary, in pronouncing the benediction; but at all other times, places and occasions, and to all other persons, the pronounciation was deemed unlawful. The benediction was that which you read in Numbers vi. verse 24, 25, 26, where the name Jehovah is thrice repeated in the Hebrew, *Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee; Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee: Jehovah lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*. When this venerable name was pronounced upon this occasion, we are told by the Jewish rabbies, "that all the vast congregation then present bowed the

*They also distinguish it by the name of the four letters that composed it, *yod, he, vau, he*; and hence the Greeks called it *the four-lettered Name*. See Buxtorf.

knee, and fell down in the humblest prostration, crying out, *Blessed be his glorious name forever and ever.*" They supposed this name had a miraculous virtue in it, and that by it Moses and others wrought such wonders: nay, so great was their superstition, that they thought it a kind of charm or magical word, and that he that had it about him, and knew its true pronounciation and virtue, could perform the most surprising things, and even shake heaven and earth.*

I do not mention these things with approbation, but only to shew that there is something peculiarly significant, important, and sacred in this name, from whence the Jews took occasion for such extravagant notions: and this will appear from its etymology. You know it is not my usual method to carry a great quantity of learned disquisition with me into the pulpit, or to spend your time in trifling, pedantic criticisms upon words, which may indeed have a shew of literature, and amuse those who admire what they do not understand, but can answer no valuable end in a popular audience.— However, at present I must take the liberty of shewing you the original meaning of the name *Jehovah*, that I may thoroughly explain my text, and that you may know the import of a name that will occur so often to you in reading your Bibles; for, as I told you, wherever you meet with the word *Lord* in large letters, it is always *Jehovah* in the original.

*This name seems not to have been unknown among other nations. Hence probably is derived the name *Jovis*, *Jove*, the Latin name for the supreme God. And it is probably in allusion to this that Varro says, "Deum Judæorum esse Jovem." The Moors also call God *Jubah*, and the Mahometans *Hou*, which in their language signifies the same with *Jehovah*, namely, *He who is*. See Univ. Hist. Vol. III. p. 357, note T.

The name Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew verb, *to be*; and therefore the meaning of the word Jehovah is, *The existent, the being, or, He that is.* Thus it seems explained in Exodus iii. ver. 14. *I am that I am*, or, “I am because I am;” that is, I exist, and have being in and of myself without dependence upon any cause; and my existence or being is always the same, unchangeable and eternal, St. John well explains this name by the *Who is, who was, and who is to come*; or, as the passage might be rendered, “the present Being, the past Being, and the future Being;” or, *The Being that is, the Being that was, and the Being that will be*; that is, the perpetual, the eternal, and unchangeable Being. I shall only observe farther, that Jehovah is not a relative, but an absolute name; there is no pronoun or relative word that is ever joined with it; we can say, *My Lord, our Lord, our God, &c.* but the Hebrews never say or write, *My Jehovah, our Jehovah, &c.* so that this name represents him as he is in himself, without any relation to his creatures, as he would have been if they had never existed. He would still have been the Being, the absolute, independent existent, in which view he has nothing to do with his creatures, and can sustain no relation to them.

From this name, thus explained, we learn the following glorious, incommunicable perfections of God; that he is self-existent and independent; that his being is necessary; that he is eternal; and that he is unchangeable.

While I am about to enter upon these subjects, I seem to stand upon the brink of an unbounded, fathomless ocean, and tremble to launch into it; but, under the conduct of scripture and humble reason, let us make the adventure; for it is an hap-

piness to be lost and swallowed in such an ocean of perfection.

I. The name Jehovah implies that God is *self-existent* and independent. I do not mean by this that he produced himself, for that would be a direct contradiction, and suppose him to exist, and not to exist at the same time: but I mean that the reason and ground of his existence is in his own nature, and does not at all depend upon any thing besides. Being is essential to him. He contains an infinite fulness of being in himself, and no other being has contributed in the least towards his existence; and hence with great propriety he assumes that strange name, *I am*. He is being throughout, perfectly and universally vital; and the reason of this is entirely within his own nature.

How gloriously is he distinguished in this respect from all other beings, even the most illustrious and powerful! Time was, when they were nothing. Angels and archangels, men and beasts, sun, moon, and stars; in short, the whole universe besides, were once nothing, had no being at all: and what was the reason that they ever came into being? Certainly it was not in them: when they were nothing there was no reason at all in them why they should ever be something; for in not being, there can be no reason or ground for being. The mere pleasure of God, the fiat of this self-existing Jehovah, is the only reason and sole cause of their existence. If it had not been for him, they would have continued nothing as they were: their being, therefore, is entirely precarious, dependent, and wholly proceeds from a cause without themselves. But Jehovah glories in an unborrowed, undervived, independent being. Whatever he is, it is his own; he owes it only to himself. What a glorious Being is this! how infinitely different from and supe-

rior to the whole system of creatures! Are you not already constrained to bow the knee before him, and wonder, adore, and love? But,

II. Hence it follows that his existence is necessary; that is, it is impossible for him not to *be*. His being does not depend upon any thing without him, nor does it depend on his own arbitrary will, but it is essential to his nature. That he should not be is as great an impossibility as that two and two should not make four. It is impossible that any thing should be more closely connected with any thing than being is with his essence, and it is impossible any thing should be more opposite to any thing than he is to non-existence. Since he received his being from nothing without himself, and since the reason of his existence is not derived from any other, it follows, that unless he exists by the necessity of his own nature, he must exist without any necessity; that is, without any reason at all, which is the same as to say that nothing is the cause or ground of his existence; and what imagination can be more absurd! His being therefore must exist by an absolute, independent necessity.

What a glorious Being is this! how infinitely distant from nothing, or a possibility of not being! What an unbounded fund of existence, what an immense ocean of Being is here! Alas! what are we, what is the whole universe besides in this comparison? They are *nothing, less than nothing, and vanity*. Our being is not only derived but arbitrary, depending entirely upon the mere pleasure of Jehovah. There was no necessity from our nature that we should *be* at all; and now there is no necessity that we should continue to *be*. If we exist, it is not owing to us. "He made us, and not we ourselves;" and if we shall continue to be forever,

it is not owing to a fund of being within ourselves, but to the same God who first formed us. It is but lately since we sprung from nothing, and how near are we still to the confines of nothing! We hang over the dreadful gulf of annihilation by a slender thread of being, sustained by the self-originated Jehovah. Remove him, take away his agency, and universal nature sinks into nothing at once. Take away the root, and the branches wither: dry up the fountain, and the streams cease. If any of you are such fools as to wish in your hearts there were no God, you imprecate annihilation upon the whole universe; you wish total destruction to yourself and every thing else; you wish the extinction of all being. All depend upon God, the uncaused cause, the only necessary Being. Suffer me here to make a digression. Is this the God whom the daring sons of men so much forget, dishonour, and disobey? Are they so entirely dependent upon him, and yet careless how they behave towards him, careless whether they love and please him? Do they owe their being and their all entirely to him? And are they wholly in his hand? What then do they mean by withholding their thoughts and affections from him, breaking his laws, and neglecting his gospel? Can you find a name for such a conduct? Would it not be entirely incredible did we not see it with our eyes all around us? Sinners, what mean you by this conduct? Let the infant rend the womb that conceived it, or tear the breasts that cherish it; go, poison or destroy the bread that should feed you; dry up the streams that should allay your thirst; stop the breath that keeps you in life: do these things, or do any thing, but O! do not forget, disobey, and provoke the very Father of your being, to whom you owe it that you are not as much nothing now as you were

ten thousand years ago, and on whom you depend, not only for this and that mercy, but for your very being, every moment of your existence, in time and eternity. He can do very well without you, but O what are you without him! a stream without a fountain, a branch without a root, an effect without a cause, a mere blank, a nothing. He indeed is self-sufficient and self-existent. It is nothing to him, as to his existence, whether creation exists or not. Let men and angels and every creature sink to nothing, from whence they came, his being is still secure: he enjoys an unprecarious being of his own, necessarily, unchangeably, and eternally existent. Men and angels bow the knee, fall prostrate, and adore before this Being of beings. How mean are you in his presence! what poor, arbitrary, dependent, perishing creatures! what shadows of existence! what mere nothings! And is it not fit you should humbly acknowledge it? Can there be any thing more unnatural, any thing more foolish, any thing more audaciously wicked, than to neglect or contemn such a Being, the Being of beings, the Being that includes all being? I can hardly bear up under the horror of the thought.

III. The name of Jehovah implies that God is eternal; that is, he always was, is, and ever will be. *From everlasting to everlasting he is God.* Ps. xc. 2. This is his grand peculiar, *he only hath immortality,* 2 Tim. vi. 16, in a full and absolute sense. Men and angels indeed are immortal, but it is but a kind of half-eternity they enjoy. They once were nothing, and continued in that state through an eternal duration. But as Jehovah never will have an end, so he never had a beginning. This follows from his necessary self-existence. If the reason of his existence be in himself, then unless he always existed he never could exist, for

nothing without himself could cause him to exist. And, if he exists by absolute necessity, he must always exist, for absolute necessity is always the same, without any relation to time or place. Therefore, he always was and ever will be.

And what a wonderful Being is this! a Being unbegun, and that can never have an end! a Being possessed of a complete, entire eternity. Here, my brethren, let your thoughts take wing, and fly backward and forward, and see if you can trace his existence. Fly back in thought about six thousand years, and all nature, as far as appears to us, was a mere blank; no heaven nor earth, no men nor angels. But still the great Eternal lived, lived alone, self-sufficient and self-happy. Fly forward in thought as far as the conflagration, and you will see *the heavens dissolving, and the earth and the things that are therein burnt up*: but still Jehovah lives unchangeable, and absolutely independent. Exert all the powers of number, add centuries to centuries, thousands to thousands, millions to millions, fly back, back, back as far as thought can possibly carry you, still Jehovah exists; nay, you are even then as far from the first moment of his existence as you are now, or ever can be. Take the same prospect before you, and you will find the King eternal and immortal still the same: he is then no nearer an end than at the creation, or millions of ages before it.

O! what a glorious Being is this! Here again, let men and angels, and all the offspring of time, bow the knee and adore. Let them lose themselves in this ocean, and spend their eternity in ecstatic admiration and love of this eternal Jehovah.

O! what a glorious portion is he to his people! Your earthly enjoyments may pass away like a shadow; your friends die, yourselves must die, and

heaven and earth may vanish like a dream, but your God lives! he lives forever, to give you an happiness equal to your immortal duration. Therefore, *blssed, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord!*

But O! let sinners, let wicked men and devils tremble before him, for how dreadful an enemy is an eternal God! He lives forever to punish you. He lives forever to hate your sin, to resent your rebellion, and to display his justice; and while he lives you must be miserable. What a dismal situation are you in, when the eternal existence of Jehovah is an inexhaustible fund of terror to you! O how have you inverted the order of things, when you have made it your interest that the Fountain of being should cease to be, and that with him yourselves and all other creatures should vanish into nothing! What a malignant thing is sin, that makes existence a curse, and universal annihilation a blessing! What a strange region is hell, where being, so sweet in itself, and the capacity of all enjoyments, is become the most intolerable burden, and every wish is an imprecation of universal annihilation! Sinners, you have now time to consider these miseries and avoid them, and will you be so senseless and fool-hardy as to rush headlong into them? O! if you were but sensible what will be the consequences of your conduct in a few years, you would not need persuasions to reform it; but O the fatal blindness and stupidity of mortals, who will not be convinced of these things till the conviction be too late!

IV. The name of Jehovah implies that God is unchangeable, or always the same. If he exists necessarily, he must always necessarily be what he is, and cannot be any thing else. He is dependent upon none, and therefore he can be subject to no

change from another; and he is infinitely perfect, and, therefore, cannot desire to change himself: So that he must be always the same through all duration, from eternity to eternity: the same not only as to his being, but as to his perfections; the same in power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and happiness. Thus he represents himself in his word, as *the Father of lights, with whom there is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning.* James i. 17. *The same yesterday, to-day, and forever.* Heb. xiii. 8. What a distinguishing perfection is this! and indeed it is in Jehovah only that immutability can be a perfection. The most excellent creature is capable of progressive improvements, and seems intended for it; and to fix such a creature at first in an immutable state, would be to limit and restrain it from higher degrees of perfection, and keep it always in a state of infancy. But Jehovah is absolutely, completely, and infinitely perfect, at the highest summit of all possible excellency, infinitely beyond any addition to his perfection, and absolutely incapable of improvement; and, consequently, as there is no room for, so there is no need of a change in him; and his immutability is a perpetual, invariable continuance in the highest degree of excellency, and, therefore, the highest perfection. He is the cause and the spectator of an endless variety of changes in the universe, without the least change in himself. He sees worlds springing into being, existing a while, and then dissolving. He sees kingdoms and empires forming, rising, and rushing headlong to ruin. He changes the times and the seasons; *removeth kings, and he setteth up kings,* Dan. ii. 21, and he sees the fickleness and vicissitudes of mortals; he sees generations upon generations vanishing like successive shadows; he sees them now wise, now foolish; now

in pursuit of one thing, now of another; now happy, now miserable, and in a thousand different forms. He sees the revolutions in nature, the successions of the seasons, and of night and day. These and a thousand other alterations he beholds, and they are all produced or permitted by his all-ruling providence; but all these make no change in him; his being, his perfections, his councils, and his happiness are invariably and eternally the same. He is not wise, good, just, or happy only at times, but he is equally, steadily, and immutably so through the whole of his infinite duration. O how unlike the fleeting offspring of time, and especially the changing race of man!

Since Jehovah is thus constant and unchangeable, how worthy is he to be chosen as our best friend! You that love him need fear no change in him. They are not small matters that will turn his heart from you: his love is fixed with judgment, and he never will see reason to reverse it: it is not a transient fit of fondness, but it is deliberate, calm, and steady. You may safely trust your all in his hands, for he cannot deceive you; and whatever or whoever fail you, he will not. You live in a fickle, uncertain world; your best friends may prove treacherous or cool towards you; all your earthly comforts may wither and die around you; yea, heaven and earth may pass away; but your God is still the same. He has assured you of it with his own mouth, and pointed out to you the happy consequence of it, *I am the Lord Jehovah, says he, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.* Mal. iii. 6.

What a complete happiness is this Jehovah to those who have chosen him for their portion! If an infinite God is now sufficient to satisfy your utmost desires, he will be so to all eternity. He is an ocean

of communicative happiness that never ebbs or flows, and, therefore, completely blessed will you ever be who have an interest in him.

But O! how miserable are they who are the enemies of this Jehovah! Sinners, he is unchangeable, and can never lay aside his resentments against sin, or abate in the least degree in his love of virtue and holiness. He will never recede from his purpose to punish impenitent rebels, nor lose his power to accomplish it. His hatred of all moral evil is not a transient passion, but a fixed, invariable, deep-rooted hatred. Therefore, if ever you be happy, there must be a change in you. As you are so opposite to him, there must be an alteration in the one or the other: you see it cannot be in him, and therefore it must be in you; and this you ought to labour for above all other things. Let us then have grace, *whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire* (Heb. xii. 28, 29,) to his impenitent and implacable enemies.*

* Our author has evidently not finished his subject, and I do not find it prosecuted in any of the discourses that are come to my hands: but yet I determined to publish the Sermon, not only for its own (if I mistake not,) substantial worth, but the rather as the Sermon that next follows in order, may be considered as a prosecution, if not a completion of the great and glorious subject he has undertaken, particularly of his professed design in this Sermon, "of explaining the several perfections here ascribed to God, and shewing that they all concur to constitute his goodness."

The Editor.

SERMON XVIII.

GOD IS LOVE.

1 JOHN IV. 8.—*God is Love.*

LOVE is a gentle, pleasing theme, the noblest passion of the human breast, and the fairest ornament of the rational nature. Love is the cement of society, and the source of social happiness; and without it the great community of the rational universe would dissolve, and men and angels would turn savages, and roam apart in barbarous solitude. Love is the spring of every pleasure; for who could take pleasure in the possession of what he does not love! Love is the foundation of religion and morality; for what is more monstrous than religion without love to that God who is the object of it! Or who can perform social duties without feeling the endearments of those relations to which they belong! Love is the softener and polisher of human minds, and transforms barbarians into men; its pleasures are refined and delicate, and even its pains and anxieties have something in them soothing and pleasing. In a word, love is the brightest beam of divinity that has ever irradiated the creation; the nearest resemblance to the ever-blessed God; for *God is love.*

God is love. There is an unfathomable depth in this concise, laconic sentence, which even the penetration of an angel's mind cannot reach; an ineffable excellence, which even celestial eloquence cannot fully represent. *God is love;* not only lovely and loving, but love itself; pure unmixed love, nothing but love; love in his nature and in his ope-

rations; the object, source, and quintessence of all love.

My present design is to recommend the Deity to your affections under the amiable idea of love, and for that end to shew that his other perfections are but various modifications of love.

I. Love comprehends the various forms of divine beneficence. Goodness, that extends its bounties to innumerable ranks of creatures, and diffuses happiness through the various regions of the universe, except that which is set apart for the dreadful, but salutary and benevolent purpose of confining and punishing incorrigible malefactors; grace, which so richly showers its blessings upon the undeserving, without past merit or the prospect of future compensation; mercy, that commiserates and relieves the miserable as well as the undeserving; patience and long suffering, which so long tolerate insolent and provoking offenders; what is all this beneficence in all these its different forms towards different objects, what but love under various names? It is gracious, merciful, patient and long suffering love; love variegated, overflowing, and unbounded; what but love was the Creator of such a world as this, so well accommodated, so richly furnished for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants? and what but love has planted it so thick with an endless variety of beings, all capable of receiving some stream of happiness from that immense fountain of it, the divine goodness? Is it not love that preserves such an huge unwieldy world as this in order and harmony from age to age, and supplies all its numerous inhabitants with every good? and O! was it not love, free, rich, unmerited love, that provided a Saviour for the guilty children of men? It was because *God loved the world, that he gave his only*

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish; but have everlasting life. John iii. 16. O love, what hast thou done! what wonders hast thou wrought! It was thou, almighty love, that broughtest down the Lord of glory from his celestial throne, to die upon a cross an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. And what but love is it that peoples the heavenly world with colonies transplanted from this rebellious province of Jehovah's dominions; that turns such miracles of glory and happiness out of the dust, and the shattered, polluted fragments of human nature! and what but eternal love perpetuates their bliss through an eternal duration? but it is so evident, that these instances of divine goodness are only the effects of love, that it is needless to attempt any farther illustration.

II. What is divine wisdom but a modification of divine love, planning the best adapted schemes for communicating itself in the most advantageous, beneficent, and honourable manner, so as to promote the good of the great whole or collective system of creatures, by the happiness of individuals; or to render the punishment and misery of individuals, which for important reasons of state may be sometimes necessary in a good government, subservient to the same benevolent end? Whatever traces of divine wisdom we see in creation; as the order and harmony of the great system of nature, its rich and various furniture, and the conspiracy of all its parts to produce the good of each other and the whole; whatever divine wisdom appears in conducting the great scheme of providence through the various ages of time; or in the more astonishing and godlike work of redemption; in a word, whatever displays of divine wisdom appear in any part of the universe, they are only the signatures

of divine love. Why was yonder sun fixed where he is, and enriched with such extensive vital influences, but because divine love saw it was best, and most conducive to the good of the system? Why were our bodies so wonderfully and fearfully made, and all their parts so well fitted for action and enjoyment, but because divine love drew the plan, and stamped its own amiable image upon them? Why was the manifold wisdom of God displayed, not only to mortals, but also to angelic *principalties and powers*, Eph. iii. 10, in the scheme of redemption, which advances at once the honours of the divine perfections and government, and the happiness of rebellious and ruined creatures, by an expedient which nothing but infinite wisdom could ever devise, the incarnation, the obedience, and passion of the co-equal Son of God? Why, I say, but because divine love would otherwise be under restraint, and incapable of giving full scope to its kind propensions in a manner honourable to itself and conducive to the public good? In short, divine wisdom appears to be nothing else but the sagacity of love, to discover ways and means to exercise itself to the greatest advantage; or, which is the same, divine wisdom always acts under the benign determination and conduct of love: it is the counsellor of love to project schemes subservient to its gracious purposes; and in all its councils love presides.

III. What is divine power but the omnipotence of love? Why did omnipotence exert itself in the production of this vast amazing world out of nothing? It was to open a channel in which the overflowing ocean of love might extend itself, and diffuse its streams from creature to creature, upwards as high as the most exalted archangel, and downwards as low as the meanest vital particle of being,

and extensive as the remotest limits of the universe, and all the innumerable intermediate ranks of existencies in the endless chain of nature. And why does divine power still support this prodigious frame, but to keep the channel of love open from age to age? and for this purpose it will be exerted to all eternity. Perhaps I should assist your ideas of Divine Power, if I should call it the acting hand, the instrument, the servant of love, to perform its orders, and execute its gracious designs.

IV. What is the holiness of God but love—pure, refined, and honourable love? What is it but the love of excellence, rectitude and moral goodness? Holiness, in its own nature, has a tendency to promote the happiness of the universe; it is the health, the good constitution of a reasonable being; without which it has no capacity of relishing those enjoyments which are suitable to its nature. It is no arbitrary mandate of Heaven that has established the inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness, between vice and misery. The connexion is as necessary, as immutable, and as much founded in the nature of things, as that between health of body and a capacity of animal enjoyments, or between sickness and a disrelish for the most agreeable food. Every creature in the universe, as far as he is holy, is happy; and as far as he is unholy he is miserable. Therefore, by how much the more holy Jehovah is, by so much the more fit he is to communicate happiness to all that enjoy him; and, consequently, he is an infinite happiness, for he is infinitely holy. His taking so much care to promote holiness is but taking care of the public good. The strict exactions of his law, which contains every ingredient of the most perfect holiness, and admits of no dispensation, are but strict injunctions to his subjects to pursue that

course which infallibly leads them to the most consummate happiness; and every abatement in his demands of obedience would be a license to them to deduct so much from their happiness, and render themselves so far miserable with his consent. That mitigation of the rigour of his law, which some imagine he has made to bring it down to a level with the abilities of degenerate creatures, disabled by their voluntary wickedness, would no more contribute to their felicity than the allowing a sick man to gratify his vitiated taste by mixing a little deadly poison in his food would contribute to the recovery of his health, or the preservation of his life. The penal sanctions of the divine law are but friendly warnings against danger and misery, and honest admonitions of the destructive consequences of sin, according to the unchangeable nature of things; they are threatenings which discover no malignity or ill-nature, as sinners are apt to imagine, but the infinite benevolence of the heart of God; threatenings which are not primarily and unconditionally intended to be executed, but to prevent all occasion of their being executed, by preventing sin, the natural source, as well as the meritorious cause of every misery: threatenings which are not executed, but as the only expedient left in a desperate case, when all other means have been used in vain, and no other method can secure the public good, or render a worthless criminal a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, and fit for nothing else; of no other service to the great community of rational beings. These are some of the ingredients and displays of the holiness of God: and what are these but so many exertions of pure love and benevolence? It is because he loves his creatures so much that he requires them to be so holy; and that very thing, against which there are

so many cavils and objections, as too severe and oppressive, and a rigid restraint from the pursuit of pleasure, is the highest instance of the love of God for them, and his regard for their happiness.

Let me, therefore, commence advocate for God with my fellow-men, though it strikes me with horror to think there should be any occasion for it.—Ye children of the most tender Father, ye subjects of the most gracious and righteous Sovereign, ye beneficiaries of divine love, why do you harbour hard thoughts of him? Is it because his laws are so strict, and tolerate you in no guilty pleasure? This appointment is the kind restraint of love: the love of so good a being will not allow him to dispense with your observance of any thing that may contribute to your improvement and advantage, nor indulge you in any thing that is in its own nature deadly and destructive, no more than a father will suffer a favourite child to play with a viper, or a good government permit a madman to run at large armed with weapons to destroy himself and others. Do you think hard of God because he hates all moral evil to such a degree, that he has annexed to it everlasting misery of the most exquisite kind? But what is this but an expression of his infinite hatred to every thing that is hurtful to his creatures, and his infinite regard to whatever tends to their benefit? Or has he been too rigid in exacting holiness as a necessary pre-requisite to the happiness of heaven? You may as well complain of the constitution of nature, that renders abstinence from poison necessary to the preservation of health, or that does not allow you to quench your thirst in a fever with cold water. Let me remind you once more, that holiness is essential to the happiness of heaven, and that without it you labour under a moral incapacity of enjoyment; and a moral in-

capacity will as inevitably deprive you of the pleasures of enjoyment, as if it were natural. While unholy, you can no more be happy even in the region of happiness than a stone can enjoy the pleasures of animal life, or a mere animal those of reason. "But why," you will perhaps murmur and object, "why has God formed such an heaven as cannot be universally enjoyed? Why has he not provided an happiness for every taste?" You may as well ask why he has not created a light that would be equally agreeable to every eye: to the mole and the owl, as well as to man and the eagle? Or why has he not formed light with all the properties of darkness; that is, why has he not performed contradictions? You may as well query, why has he not given us equal capacities of enjoyments in sickness and in health, and furnished us with equal pleasures in both? I tell you that, in the nature of things, the low and impure pleasures which would suit the depraved taste of the wicked, would be nauseous and painful to pure minds refined and sanctified; and they cannot mingle, they cannot approach each other without being destroyed. The element of water may as well be converted into a fit residence for the inhabitants of dry land, and yet retain all its properties that are suitable to its present natives; or the solid earth become a fit receptacle for fishes, and yet both it and the fishes retain their usual qualities. In short, men, beasts, birds, fishes, insects, angels, devils, the inhabitants of every zone and climate, of every planet, or any other region of the universe, may as well form one society in one and the same place, and mingle their respective food and pleasures, as an heaven of happiness be prepared that would suit every taste. God has prepared the only kind of heaven that is in its own nature possible; the

only one that would be an expression of love, or afford real and extensive happiness to such of his creatures as are capable of it. The heaven of sinners would be a nuisance to all other beings in the universe; a private good only to malefactors, at the expense of the public; an open reward of wickedness, and a public discountenancing of all moral goodness. This would be the case upon the supposition that the heaven of sinners were possible. But the supposition is infinitely absurd; it is as impossible as the pleasures of sickness, the sensibility of a stone, or the meridian splendours of midnight.

Therefore, acknowledge, admire, and love the beauty of the Lord, his holiness. *Give thanks,* says the Psalmist, *at the remembrance of his holiness,* Ps. xcvi. 12, of his holiness, as well as of his goodness and love; for it is the brightest modification of his love and goodness. An unholy being, in the character of supreme magistrate of the universe, cannot be all love, or communicate nothing but what is pleasing to all; nay, as far as he is unholy he must have a malignant disposition towards the public happiness, and be essentially deficient in benevolence.

V. What is the justice, even the punitive justice of God, but a modification of love and goodness!

As there is no divine perfection which appears so terrible to offenders as this, which, therefore, they toil and sweat to disapprove or explain away, I shall dwell the longer upon it. And I hope to convince you that justice is not that grim, stern, tremendous attribute which is delineated by the guilty, partial imagination of sinners, who have made it their interest that there should be no such attribute in Deity, but that it is infinitely amiable

and lovely, as well as awful and majestic; nay, that it is love and benevolence itself.

By the punitive justice of God, I mean that perfection of his nature which executes the sentence of his law upon offenders, or inflicts upon them the punishment he had threatened to disobedience, exactly according to his own denunciation. The present world, which is a state of trial and discipline, and not of final rewards and punishments, is not the proper theatre of vindictive justice, but of a promiscuous providence; *All things come alike to all*, and no man can know the love or hatred of the Ruler of the world towards him, *by all that is before him*. Eccles. ix. 1, 2. Yet sometimes, even in this life, justice arrests the guilty, and displays its illustrious terrors upon them, especially upon guilty nations that have no existence in a national capacity in the eternal world, and therefore can be punished in that capacity in this only. It was vindictive justice that deluged the ~~whole~~ world in a flood of vengeance; that kindled the flames of Sodom and Gomerrah; and that cut off the nations of Canaan when they *had filled up the measure of their iniquities*. It is justice that arms kingdoms from age to age, and makes them the executioners of divine wrath upon one another, while they are gratifying their own ambition, avarice, or revenge. The devastations of earthquakes, inundations, plagues, epidemical sickness, famines, and the various calamities in which mankind have been involved, are so many displays of divine justice; and their being brought on the world according to the course of nature, and by means of secondary causes, will by no means prove that they are not so, but only that the very make and constitution of this world are so planned and formed by divine wisdom as to admit of the execution of justice at

proper periods, and that all its parts are instruments of justice to accomplish its designs. But these and all the other judgments of Heaven upon our world are only preludes and specimens of the most perfect administration of it in a future state. There the penalty of the law will be executed upon impenitent offenders with the utmost impartiality. And Revelation assures us that the punishment will be endless in duration, and of as exquisite a kind and high degree as the utmost capacity of the subjects will admit; and, consequently, that it will not, like fatherly chastisements, have any tendency to their reformation or advantage, but to their entire and everlasting destruction. Now it is this display of punitive justice that appears so terrible and cruel to the guilty children of men: and therefore this is what I shall principally endeavour to vindicate and to clothe with all the gentle and amiable glories of love and public benevolence.

For this end I beg you would consider, that whatever has a tendency to prevent sin, tends to prevent misery also, and to promote the happiness of the world and of all the individuals in it; that good laws are absolutely necessary for the prevention of sin; that penal sanctions are essential to good laws; and, that the execution of the penal sanctions upon offenders is absolutely necessary to their efficacy and good tendency; and, consequently, the execution of them is a display of love and benevolence.

Consider also, that many are excited to seek everlasting happiness, and deterred from the ways that lead down to destruction, by means of the threatenings of the law; that even those on whom they are finally executed were once in a capacity of receiving immortal advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency by their own wilful obstinacy: and, that the righteous exe-

cution of these threatenings upon the incorrigible, may promote the common good of the universe.

Consider farther, that criminals are incompetent judges of vindictive justice, because they are parties; and therefore we should not form an estimate of it by their prejudices, but from the judgment of the disinterested and impartial part of the creation.

Finally consider, that proceedings similar to those of the divine government, are not only approved of as just in all human governments, but also loved and admired as amiable and praiseworthy, and essential to the goodness and benevolence of a ruler.

Let us briefly illustrate these several classes of propositions.

I. "Whatever has a tendency to prevent sin, tends to prevent misery also, and to promote the happiness of the universe and of all the individuals in it: good laws are absolutely necessary for the prevention of sin: penal sanctions are essential to good laws; and the seasonable execution of those sanctions is absolutely necessary to their efficacy and good tendency; and, consequently, the execution of them is a display of love and benevolence."

"Whatever has a tendency to prevent sin, tends to prevent misery also," and that for this reason, because sin is necessarily productive of misery, and destructive of happiness. Can a rational creature be happy that is disaffected to the supreme good, the only source of that kind of happiness which is adapted to a rational nature? This is as impossible as that you should enjoy animal pleasures while you abhor all animal enjoyments. Can a social creature be happy in eternal solitude, or in a state of society, while ill-affected towards the other members of society, or while they are ill-

affected towards him, and he to them, *hateful, and hating one another?* Can a creature, formed capable of felicity superior to what any good can communicate, be happy in the eager pursuit of bubbles; that is, of its highest happiness in inferior enjoyments? All those dispositions of heart, and the practices resulting from them, in which sin consists, enmity to God, uneasy murmurings and insurrections against his perfections, and the government of his law and providence; a churlish, malignant, envious temper towards mankind; an anxious, excessive eagerness of desire after vain, unsatisfactory enjoyments; a disrelish for the exalted pleasures of holiness and benevolence; what are these and the like dispositions, but so many ingredients of misery, and so many abatements of happiness? and, consequently, all measures that are taken for the prevention of sin are so many benevolent expedients for the prevention of misery and the increase of happiness.

I add, *good laws are absolutely necessary for the prevention of sin.* Indeed those dispositions and actions which are sinful and forbidden by the divine law would be of a deadly nature to the soul, even if they were not forbidden, as a stab to the heart would prove mortal to the body, although there were no laws against it, and for that very reason laws have been made against it. Therefore, *the laws of God do not properly constitute the destructive nature of sin, but only point out and warn us against what is destructive in its own nature previous to all explicit law.* And is it not absolutely necessary, and an act of the highest benevolence, that the supreme Lawgiver should warn us against this pernicious evil, and plainly inform us what it is? This is the design of his laws both natural and revealed. And without them,

what sure instructor, what unerring guide, or what strong inducements to a proper conduct could we have in this most important case? Is it not necessary, is it not kind, that the supreme Legislator should interpose **his** authority, and lay us under the strongest **obligations** to avoid our own ruin? And if good laws are necessary, so are penal sanctions; for, "penal sanctions are essential to good laws." Laws without penalties would be only the advices of an equal or an inferior, and not the obligatory commands of authority. They might be observed or ~~not~~ according to pleasure, and consequently would answer no valuable purpose. They would also be infinitely absurd in their own nature; for if what the law enjoins be reasonable, necessary, and of good tendency, is it not necessary and fit that they who do not deserve it should feel the bad effects of their omission? And what is this but a penalty? But on a point so plain I need not multiply words; I appeal to the common sense of mankind, I appeal to the universal practice of all governments. Have there ever been, or can there possibly be any laws without penal sanctions? Would not such laws be exposed to perpetual insult and contempt, and be destitute of all force and energy? The common sense and universal practice of all the world, in all ages, remonstrate against such an absurdity. But if penal sanctions are essential to good laws, then so is their execution; for,

"The seasonable execution of penal sanctions is absolutely necessary to their efficacy and good tendency." Penalties denounced can have no efficacy upon the subjects of the law; that is, they cannot excite fear, and by that means deter them from disobedience, unless they are believed, and their execution expected. But they could soon

cease to be believed, and their execution would no longer be expected, if in several instances they should be dispensed with, and a succession of sinners should pass with impunity. Other sinners, judging of future events by past facts, would expect the same indulgence, and, therefore, venture upon disobedience without any restraint from the penalty of the law. Here again I shall bring the matter to a quick decision, by appealing to the common reason and universal practice of mankind. Would human laws have any force if the penalty was hung up as an empty terror and never executed? Would not such laws be liable to perpetual violation and insult, and become the sport of daring offenders? Would not the escapes of former offenders encourage all future generations to give themselves a-loose, in hopes of the same exemption? Is it not necessary in all governments that public justice should make examples of some, to warn and deter others? Have not all nations, especially the more civilized, made such examples? And have not all the impartial world commended their proceedings as necessary to the safety and happiness of society, and expressive of their regard to the public good?

View all these things together, and methinks I may bid defiance to common sense to draw any other conclusion than that the justice of God, in executing the penalties of his law upon impenitent offenders, is the height of goodness and love. If love requires that all proper expedients be used for the prevention of sin; if good laws are necessary for this end; if penalties are essential to good laws; and if the seasonable execution of penalties be absolutely necessary to give them their benevolent force and good tendency, does it not unavoidably follow, that love itself requires both the

enacting of penal sanctions to the law of God, and the execution of them upon proper subjects? Without this wholesome severity, the divine laws would be less secure from contempt, and the divine government would be less favourable to the peace and happiness of the subjects than the laws and governments of mortals in all civilized nations.

“But why does the penalty rise so high? Why is the execution lengthened out through everlasting ages? Why might not a gentler punishment suffice?” This is the grand objection; and in such language as this the enmity of the rebellious heart against the justice of God, generally expresses itself. But if the original design and natural tendency of the threatened penalty be to prevent sin, then by how much severer the penalty, by so much the more effectual tendency has it to answer this kind design? No punishments can rise higher than those which a righteous God has annexed to disobedience, the natural source of every misery; and what is this but to say that no methods more effectual can be taken to prevent it than what he has actually taken? We may, therefore, infer the ardour of the love of God from the terror of his threatenings. He has denounced the greatest misery against sin, in order to restrain his creatures from running into that very misery; and threatens the loss of heaven, in order to prevent his creatures from losing it.

I must also here repeat the common argument which appears to me as valid as common; “that a the essence of sin consists in the breach of an obligation, the evil of sin must be exactly proportioned to the strength of the obligation;” that as we are undoubtedly under infinite obligations to a God infinite excellency, our Maker, Ruler, and Benefactor, the evil of sin, which violates those oblig

tions, must be infinite also; and, that no punishment short of what is infinite can be adequate to the demerit of an infinite evil, and, consequently, sinners ought to suffer a finite punishment through an infinite duration, because that is the only way in which they are able to bear an infinite punishment. But on this common topic a few hints may suffice.

I proceed to the next set of propositions.

II. "That many are excited to the pursuit of everlasting happiness, and deterred from the ways of destruction, by means of the threatenings of the divine law; that even those unhappy creatures on whom they are finally executed were once in a capacity of receiving immortal advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency by their own wilful obstinacy; and, that the righteous execution of these threatenings upon the incorrigible may promote the common good of the universe."

"Many are excited to the pursuit of everlasting happiness, and deterred from the ways of destruction, by means of the threatenings of the divine law." I appeal to experience and observation, whether the terrors of the Lord are not the very first thing that gives a check to sinners in their headlong career to ruin? It is *the law that worketh wrath*, Rom. iv. 15; that is, an alarming apprehension of the wrath of God against sin, and constrains them to use the instituted means of deliverance. Thus even the terrors of the law are made subservient to divine love, in *turning sinners from the error of their way, and saving souls from death*. And could we consult the glorious assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, they would all own that if their heavenly Father had not threatened them so severely, they would always

have continued undutiful, and consequently rendered themselves miserable; and that they were saved from hell by being honestly warned of the danger of falling into it. It is true there are multitudes who do not receive this advantage by the penal sanctions of the divine law, but are made miserable forever by the execution of them; yet it may be added,

“That even those unhappy creatures on whom they are executed, were once in a capacity of receiving infinite advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency in their own wilful obstinacy.” The threatenings of the divine law had the same good tendency in their own nature with respect to them, to deter them from disobedience, and urge their pursuit of happiness, as with respect to others; and these were some of the means God appointed for their salvation. But they hardened themselves against them, and thus defeated their good tendency, and obstinately ruined themselves in defiance of warning: they even forced a passage into the infernal pit through the strongest enclosures. But if they had not been thus warned, they not only would not have been saved in the event, but they would not have enjoyed the means of salvation. Now their enjoying these means was in itself an inexpressible blessing, though in the issue it only aggravates their misery; and, consequently, the enacting those penalties to the divine law was really an act of kindness even to them; and their abuse of the blessing does not alter its nature. The primary and direct end of a penalty is not the punishment of the subjects, but to restrain them from things injurious to themselves and others, and urge them to pursue their own interest. But when this good end is not answered, by reason of their wilful folly and disobedience, then,

and not till then, the execution is necessary for the good of others;* which leads me to add,

“That the righteous execution of the threatened penalty upon the incorrigible may promote the common good of the universe.” This world of ours is a public theatre, surrounded with numerous spectators, who are interested in its affairs. Angels, in particular, are witnesses of the proceedings of Providence towards mankind, and thence learn the perfections of God, and the maxims of his government. Hell is also a region dreadfully conspicuous to them; and there, no doubt, the offended Judge intends to shew his wrath, and make his power known to them as well as to mankind. Now they are held in obedience by rational motives, and not by any mechanical compulsion. And among other motives of a gentler kind, no doubt this is one of no small weight; namely, their observing the destructive consequences of sin upon men and angels, and the terrible displeasure of God against it. It is not at all inconsistent with their dignity and purity to suppose them swayed by this motive, in a proper connexion with others of a more disinterested and generous nature. There-

*Penalties operate, like final causes, by a kind of retrospective influence; that is, whilst they are only threatened, and the subject expects they will be executed, should he turn disobedient, they have a powerful tendency, to deter him from disobedience. But they could not have this benevolent tendency, unless they be executed upon those, on whom their primary and chief design is not obtained; namely, the restraining of them from sin. It is enough that the offenders themselves once had an opportunity of taking warning, and reaping the advantage of the threatened penalty, while they were in a state of trial, and candidates for eternity. But it is absurd that they should receive any benefit from it, when, after sufficient trial, it appears that they will take no warning, but are resolved to persist in sin, in defiance of the most tremendous penalties.

fore, the confirmation of the elect angels in holiness, and their everlasting happiness, is no doubt, not a little secured and promoted by the execution of righteous punishment upon some notorious hardened malefactors, both of their own order and of the human race.

The same thing may be said of *the spirits of just men made perfect*; they are happily incapable of sinning, and consequently of becoming miserable; but their incapacity arises from the clear conviction of their understanding, which has the conduct of their will; and, while sin appears to them so deadly and destructive an evil, it is impossible, according to the make of a rational nature, that they should choose it. But the consequences of sin upon the wretched creatures on whom the penalty denounced against it is executed, is, no doubt, one thing that affords them this conviction; and so it contributes to their perseverance in obedience and happiness. Thus the joys of heaven are secured by the pains of hell, and even the most noxious criminals, the enemies of God and his creatures, are not useless in the universe, but answer the terrible but benevolent end of warning all other creatures against disobedience; which would involve them in the same misery, just as the execution of a few malefactors in human governments is of extensive service to the rest of the subjects.

But as the greater part of mankind perish, it may be queried, "How is it consistent with love and goodness, that the majority should be punished and made monuments of justice, for the benefit of the smaller number?" To this I reply, that though it be equally evident from scripture and observation, that the greater part of mankind go down to destruction in the smooth, broad, descending road of sin, in the ordinary ages of the world;

and though revelation assures us that the number of the apostate angels is very great, yet I think we have no reason to conclude that the greater part of the rational creation shall be miserable; nay, it is possible the number of those on whom the penalty of the divine law is inflicted, may bear no more proportion to that of the innumerable ranks of creatures that may be retained in obedience and happiness by means of their conspicuous and exemplary punishment, than the number of criminals executed in our government, for the warning of others, bears to the rest of the subjects. If we consider that those who have been *redeemed from the earth*, even in the ordinary ages of the world, though comparatively but few, yet absolutely are a *multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred, and people, and language*, Rev. viii. 9, and that the elect angels are *an innumerable company*,* Heb. xii. 22, perhaps much greater than the legions of hell; if to these we add the prodigious numbers that shall be converted in that long and blessed season when Satan shall be bound, when the prince of peace shall reign, when *the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High*, Dan. vii. 27, in which not only the greater number of the generations that shall live in that glorious millennium shall be saved, but perhaps a greater number than all that perished in former generations, which is very possible, if we consider the long continuance of that time, and that the world will then be under the peculiar blessing of Heaven, and, consequently, man-

* I do not forget that the original is *myriads of angels*. But the word is often, I think, generally used in the Greek classics, not for any definite number, but for a great and innumerable multitude. And so it is used here.

kind will multiply faster, and not be diminished as they now are by the calamities of war, plagues, epidemical sicknesses, and the other judgments of God upon those times of rebellion; if we also borrow a little light from the hypothesis of philosophy, and suppose that the other planets of our system are peopled like our earth with proper inhabitants, and particularly with reasonable creatures, (for he that made those vast bodies *made them not in vain, he made them to be inhabited;*) if we further suppose that each of the innumerable fixed stars is a sun, the centre of habitable worlds, and that all these worlds, like our own, swarm with life, and particularly with various classes of reasonable beings, (which is not at all unlikely, if we argue from parity of cases, from things well known to things less known, or from the immense overflowing goodness, wisdom and power of the great Creator, who can replenish the infinite voids of space with being, life, and reason, and with equal ease produce and support ten thousand worlds as ten thousand grains,) if we suppose that his creative perfections will not lie inactive forever, contented with one exertion for six days, but that he still employs and will employ them forever in causing new worlds, replenished with moral agents, to start into existence here and there in the endless vacancies of space; and finally, if we suppose that the flames of hell will blaze dreadfully bright and conspicuous in the view of all present and future creations, or that the destructive nature of sin will be some way or another made known to the rational inhabitants of all worlds by the punishment inflicted upon a number of men and angels, and that by this means they are effectually deterred from sin, and preserved from the misery inseparable from it; I say, if we admit these suppositions, some of which are

undoubtedly true, and the rest I think not improbable, then it will follow that the number of holy and happy creatures in the universe will be incomparably greater than that of miserable criminals; and that the punishment of the latter is one principal mean of preserving this infinite number in obedience and happiness; and consequently is highly conducive to the public happiness, and expressive of the love and goodness of the universal Ruler to the immense community of his subjects. And thus *God is love*, even in the most terrible displays of his vindictive justice.

To illustrate this subject, consider farther:

III. "That criminals are incompetent judges of vindictive justice." They are parties, and it is their interest there should be no such attribute as justice in the Deity. It is natural for them to flatter themselves that their crimes are small; that their Judge will suffer them to escape with impunity, or with a gentle punishment, and that if he should do otherwise, he would be unmerciful, unjust, and cruel. The excess of self-love suggests to them a thousand excuses and extenuations of their guilt, and flatters them with a thousand favourable presumptions. An impenitent criminal is always an ungenerous, mean-spirited, selfish creature, and has nothing of that noble disinterested self-denial and impartiality which would generously condemn himself and approve of that sentence by which he dies. A little acquaintance with the conduct of mankind will soon make us sensible of their partiality and wrong judgments in matters where self is concerned; and particularly how unfit they are to form an estimate of justice when themselves are to stand as criminals at its bar. Now this is the case of all mankind in the affair now under consideration. They are criminals at the

bar of divine justice; they are the parties to be tried; they are under the dominion of a selfish spirit; it is natural to them to palliate their own crimes, and to form flattering expectations from the clemency of their Judge. And are they fit persons to prescribe to their judge how he should deal with them, or what measure of punishment he ought to inflict upon them? Sinners! dare you usurp this high province? Dare you

“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
“Rejudge his justice, be the god of God!”*

Rather stand at the bar, ye criminals! that is your place. Do not dare to ascend the throne; that is the place of your Judge. Stand silent, and await his righteous sentence, which is always just, always best: or, if creatures must judge of the justice of their Sovereign, I appeal to the saints; I appeal to angels, those competent, disinterested judges; I appeal to every upright, impartial being in the universe. They approve, they celebrate, they admire, and love all the displays of punitive justice as necessary to the public good; and their judgment may be depended on; it is not misled by ignorance, nor perverted by self-interest. To whom would you appeal as judges of the proceedings of courts of justice among men? To malefactors in a dungeon, who have made justice their enemy, and who are, therefore, enemies to it? No; but you would appeal to obedient subjects, who are not obnoxious to justice themselves, but enjoy protection under its guardianship, and are sensible of its beauty and public utility? They all approve it with one voice, and would look upon a supreme magistrate without it as a very contemptible and odious char-

* Pope's Essay on Man.

acter, and essentially deficient in goodness. Hence it follows that even the punitive justice of God not only is in reality, but to all impartial judges appears to be a most amiable, engaging, and beneficent perfection; majestic indeed, but not forbidding; awful, but not sullen and hateful; terrible, but only to criminals; and destructive only to what destroys the public good. I have so far anticipated myself that I need hardly add,

IV. "That proceedings similar to those of the divine government are not only approved of as just in all human governments, but also loved and admired as amiable and praise-worthy, and highly essential to the goodness and benevolence of a ruler."

Does the supreme Lawgiver annex severe penalties to his laws which render the disobedient miserable forever? So do human governments with the unanimous approbation of their subjects; they inflict punishments that affect life, and cut off the offender from civil society forever; and this is the only kind of everlasting punishment that can be endured or executed by mortals. Does Jehovah maintain good order in his immense empire, protect his subjects, and deter them from offending by making examples of the guilty? and does he secure and advance the good of the whole by the conspicuous punishment of obnoxious individuals? This is done every day for the same ends in human governments, and that with universal approbation. Does he inflict punishments that are not at all intended for the reformation and advantage of the guilty sufferer, but only for the admonition and benefit of others? This is always the case in human governments when the punishment reaches to the life, for then the offender himself is put out of all capacity of reformation or personal

advantage by it, but he suffers entirely for the good of others. Even criminals must be made useful to society; and this is the only use they are fit to answer. Would it not be inexpedient and greatly injurious for a magistrate in his public character to forgive crimes and suffer criminals to escape, though to do so in a private character might be a virtue? Just so God, who is the supreme Magistrate of the universe, and not at all to be considered in this case as a private person acting only in a private character, the great God, I say, is obliged by his regard for his own honour and the benefit of his subjects, to inflict proper punishments and distribute his pardoning mercy to individuals consistently with the general good of the whole. What would be revenge in a private person, which is the ruling passion of devils, is justice, honour, and benevolence itself in the supreme Ruler of the world; and a failure in this would render him not only less glorious and majestic, but less amiable, less beneficent to his creatures.

I knew hardly any thing of so much importance to give us just sentiments of the proceedings of God with his creatures, as that we should conceive of him as a moral Ruler or the supreme Magistrate of the world. And it is owing to their not considering him in this character that sinners indulge such mistaken, dangerous presumptions concerning him. They choose to conceive of him under some fond and tender name, as a Being of infinite grace, the indulgent Father of his creatures, &c. All this is true; but it is equally true that he is their moral Ruler as well as their Father. His creatures are his subjects as well as his children; and he must act the wise and righteous Magistrate as well as the tender Father towards them. His goodness is that of a Ruler, and not of a private

person; and his pardoning of sin and receiving offenders into favour, are not private kindnesses, but acts of government, and, therefore, they must be conducted with the utmost wisdom; for a wrong step in his infinite administration, which affects such innumerable multitudes of subjects, would be an infinite evil, and might admit of no reparation.

Though I have thus enlarged upon this subject, yet I am far from exhausting my materials. But these things I hope are sufficient to convince your understandings that divine justice is not that unkind, cruel, and savage thing sinners are wont to imagine it; but that God is just, because *God is love*; and that he punishes not because he is the enemy, but because he is the friend of his creatures, and because he loves the whole too well to let particular offenders do mischief with impunity.*

I shall only add, that this is the view Jehovah has given of himself in the clearest manifestation of his perfections that he ever made to mortals.—He promises his favourite Moses, that he would *make all his goodness pass before him*. Observe, it

*It may perhaps be objected, “That to represent justice under the notion of love, is to affect singularity in language, to destroy the distinction of the divine attributes, and the essential difference of things.”—To which I answer, 1. That a catachresis may be beautiful and emphatical; though it be always a seeming impropriety in language. Such is this representation, “Divine justice, divine love.” 2. I do not deny that God’s executing righteous punishment upon the guilty may be called justice; but then it is his love to the public that excites him to do this; and, therefore, his doing it may be properly denominated love, as well as justice, or love under the name of justice, which is love still. 3. I do not mean that the usual names of things should be changed, but that we should affix suitable ideas to them. We may retain the name of justice still, but let us not affix ideas to it that are inconsistent with divine love. Let us not look upon it as the attribute of a tyrant, but of a wise and good ruler.

is his goodness he intends to exhibit; and the proclamation runs thus; *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, &c.* That these are acts or modifications of goodness, will be easily granted. But observe, it is added even in this proclamation of his goodness, *That he will by no means clear the guilty;* intimating, that to be just and punish sin is an act of goodness, as well as to be merciful and to forgive it.

And now when we have this copious subject in review, does it not suggest to us such conclusions as these:

I. May we not conclude that the case of impenitent sinners is desperate indeed, when it is not excessive rigour, not a malignity of temper, nor tyranny, or a savage delight in torture that condemns them, but goodness itself, love itself! Even the gentler perfections of the Deity, those from which they derive their presumptuous hopes, are conspired against them, and unite their forces to render them miserable, in order to prevent greater misery from spreading through the universe. Impenitent sinners! even the unbounded love of God to his creatures is your enemy. Love, under the name and form of justice, which is equally love still, demands your execution; and to suffer you to escape would not only be an act of injustice, but an act of malignity and hostility against the whole system of rational beings. Therefore, repent and be holy, otherwise divine love will not suffer you to be happy. *God is love;* therefore, will he confine you in the infernal prison, as a regard to the public welfare in human governments shuts up criminals in a dungeon, and madmen in Bedlam.

II. May we not hence conclude that all the acts of the Deity may be resolved into the benevolent principle of love? *God is love;* therefore he made

this vast universe, and planted it so thick with variegated life. *God is love*; therefore, he still rules the world he has made, and inflicts chastisement and judgments upon it from every age. *God is love*; therefore, he spared not his own Son, but made him the victim of his justice. *God is love*; therefore, he requires perfect holiness, perfect obedience from all his subjects. *God is love*; therefore, he has enacted such tremendous sanctions to his law, and executes them in their full extent upon offenders. *God is love*; therefore, he has made the prison of hell, and there confines in chains of everlasting darkness those malevolent creatures, that would be nuisances to society, and public mischiefs, if suffered to run at large. In short, whatever he does, he does it because he is love. How amiable a view of him is this! Therefore,

III. We may certainly conclude that if God be love, then all his creatures ought to love him.— Love him, O all ye inhabitants of heaven! But they need not my exhortation; they know him, and therefore cannot but love him. Love him, all ye inhabitants of the planetary worlds; if such there be. These also I hope need no exhortation, for we would willingly persuade ourselves that other territories of this immense empire have not rebelled against him as this earth has done. Love him, O ye children of men! To you I call: but O! I fear I shall call in vain. To love him who is all love is the most hopeless proposal one can make to the world. But whatever others do, love the Lord, all ye his saints! You I know cannot resist the motion. Surely your love even now is all on fire. *Love the Lord, O my soul! Amen.*

SERMON XIX.**THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.**

JOHN V. 28, 29.—*The hour is coming in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.*

EVER since sin entered into the world, and death by sin, this earth has been a vast grave-yard, or burying place, for her children. In every age, and in every country, that sentence has been executing, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* The earth has been arched with graves, the last lodgings of mortals, and the bottom of the ocean paved with the bones of men.* Human nature was at first confined to one pair, but how soon and how wide did it spread! How inconceivably numerous are the sons of Adam! How many different nations on our globe contain many millions of men, even in one generation! And how many generations have succeeded one another in the long run of near six thousand years! Let imagination call up this vast army: children that just light upon our globe, and then wing their flight into an unknown world; the grey-headed that have had a long journey through life; the blooming youth and the middle-aged, let them pass in review before us from all countries and from all ages; and how vast and astonishing the multitude! If the posterity of one man (Abraham,) by one son was, according to the

*No spot on earth but has supply'd a grave;
And human skulls the spacious ocean pave.

like promise, as the stars of heaven, or as the sand by the sea-shore, innumerable, what numbers can compute the multitudes that have sprung from all the patriarchs, the sons of Adam and Noah! But what is become of them all? Alas! they are turned into earth, their original element; they are all imprisoned in the grave, except the present generation, and we are dropping one after another in a quick succession into that *place appointed for all living*. There has not been, perhaps, a moment of time for five thousand years, but what some one or other has sunk into the mansions of the dead; and in some fatal hours, by the sword of war or the devouring jaws of earthquakes, thousands have been cut off and swept away at once, and left in one huge promiscuous carnage. The greatest number of mankind beyond comparison are sleeping under ground. There lies beauty mouldering into dust, rotting into stench and loathsomeness, and feeding the vilest worms. There lies the head that once wore a crown, as low and contemptible as the meanest beggar. There lie the mighty giants, the heroes and conquerors, the Samsons, the Ajaxes, the Alexanders, and the Cæsars of the world! there they lie stupid, senseless, and inactive, and unable to drive off the worms that riot on their marrow, and make their houses in those sockets where the eyes sparkled with living lustre. There lie the wise and the learned, as rotten, as helpless as the fool. There lie some that we once conversed with, some that were our friends, our companions; and there lie our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters.

And shall they lie there always? Shall this body, this curious workmanship of Heaven, so wonderfully and fearfully made, always lie in ruins, and never be repaired? Shall the wide extended vallies

of dry bones never more live? This we know, that it is not a thing impossible with God to raise the dead. He that could first form our bodies out of nothing, is certainly able to form them anew, and repair the wastes of time and death. But what is his declared will in this case? On this the matter turns; and this is fully revealed in my text. *The hour is coming; when all that are in the graves, all that are dead, without exception, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth.*

And for what end shall they come forth? O! for very different purposes; some to the resurrection of life; and some to the resurrection of damnation.

And what is the ground of this vast distinction? Or what is the difference in character between those that shall receive so different a doom? It is this, *They that have done good shall rise to life, and they that have done evil, to damnation.* It is this, and this only, that will then be the rule of distinction.

I would avoid all art in my method of handling this subject, and intend only to illustrate the several parts of the text. *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done well, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.*

They that are in the graves shall hear his voice. The voice of the Son of God here probably means the sound of the archangel's trumpet, which is called his voice, because sounded by his orders and attended with his all-quickenning power. This all-wakenning call to the tenants of the grave we frequently find foretold in scripture. I shall refer you to two plain passages. *Behold,* says St. Paul, *I shew you a mystery, an important and astonishing secret, we shall not all sleep; that is, mankind will not all be sleeping in death when that*

day comes, there will be a generation then alive upon earth: and though they cannot have a proper resurrection, yet they shall pass through a change equivalent to it. *We shall all be changed, says he, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, it shall give the alarm; and no sooner is the awful clangour heard, than all the living shall be transformed into immortals; and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; and we, who are then alive, shall be changed, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; this is all the difference, they shall be raised, and we shall be changed.* This awful prelude of the trumpet is also mentioned in 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16. *We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep; that is, we shall not be beforehand with them in meeting our descending Lord, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangels, and with the trump of God; that is, with a godlike trump, such as it becomes his majesty to sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: that is, before the living shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and when they are risen, and the living transformed, they shall ascend together to the place of judgment.*

My brethren, realize the majesty and terror of this universal alarm. When the dead are sleeping in the silent grave; when the living are thoughtless and unapprehensive of the grand event, or intent on other pursuits; some of them asleep in the dead of night; some of them dissolved in sensual pleasures, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; some of them planning or executing schemes for riches or honours; some in the very act of sin; the generality stupid and careless about the concerns of eternity, and the dreadful

day just at hand; and a few here and there conversing with their God, and *looking for the glorious appearance of their Lord and Saviour*; when the course of nature runs on uniform and regular as usual, and infidel scoffers are taking umbrage from thence to ask, *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* 2 Pet. iii. 4. In short, when there are no more visible appearances of this approaching day, than of the destruction of Sodom, on that fine clear morning in which Lot fled away; or of the deluge, when Noah entered into the ark: then, in that hour of unapprehensive security, then, suddenly, shall the heavens open over the astonished world; then shall the all-alarming clangour break over their heads like a clap of thunder in a clear sky. Immediately the living turn their gazing eyes upon the amazing phenomena. a few hear the long-expected sound with rapture, and lift up their heads with joy, assured that *the day of their redemption is come*, while the thoughtless world are struck with the wildest horror and consternation. In the same instant the sound reaches all the mansions of the dead, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they are raised, and the living are changed. This call will be as animating to all the sons of men, as that call to a single person, *Lazarus, come forth.* O what a surprise will this be to the thoughtless world! Should this alarm burst over our heads this moment, into what a terror would it strike many in this assembly? Such will be the terror, such the consternation, when it actually comes to pass. Sinners will be the same timorous, self-condemned creatures then as they are now. And then they will not be able to stop their ears, who are deaf to all the gentler calls of

the gospel now. Then the trump of God will constrain them to hear and fear, to whom the ministers of Christ now preach in vain. They, then, must all hear, for,

II. My text tells you, *all that are in the graves, all without exception, shall hear his voice.* Now the voice of mercy calls, reason pleads, conscience warns, but multitudes will not hear. But this is a voice which shall, which must reach every one of the millions of mankind, and not one of them will be able to stop his ears. Infants and giants, kings and subjects, all ranks, all ages of mankind, shall hear the call. The living shall start and be changed, and the dead rise at the sound. The dust that was once alive and formed a human body, whether it flies in the air, floats in the ocean, or vegetates on earth, shall hear the new-creating fiat. Wherever the fragments of the human frame are scattered, this all-penetrating call shall reach and speak them into life. We may consider this voice as a summons not only to dead bodies to rise, but to the souls that once animated them, to appear and be re-united to them, whether in heaven or hell. To the grave, the call will be, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment;* to heaven, *ye spirits of just men made perfect; "descend to the world whence you originally came; and assume your new-formed bodies;"* to hell, *Come forth and appear, ye damned ghosts, ye prisoners of darkness, and be again united to the bodies in which you once sinned, that in them ye may now suffer."* Thus will this summons spread through every corner of the universe; and heaven, earth, and hell, and all their inhabitants, shall hear and obey. Devils as well as sinners of our race, will tremble at the sound; for now they know they can plead no more as they once did, *Torment us not before the time; for the time is come,*

and they must mingle with the prisoners at the bar. And now when all that are in the graves hear this all-quickenning voice,

III. *They shall come forth.* Now methinks I see, I hear the earth heaving, charnal-houses rattling, tombs bursting, graves opening. Now the nations under ground begin to stir. There is a noise and a shaking among the dry bones. The dust is all alive, and in motion, and the globe breaks and trembles, as with an earthquake, while this vast army is working its way through and bursting into life. The ruins of human bodies are scattered far and wide, and have passed through many and surprising transformations. A limb in one country, and another in another; here the head and there the trunk, and the ocean rolling between.* Multitudes have sunk in a watery grave, been swallowed up by the monsters of the deep, and transformed into a part of their flesh. Multitudes have been eaten by beasts and birds of prey, and incorporated with them; and some have been devoured by their fellow-men in the rage of a desperate hunger, or of unnatural, cannibal appetite, and digested into a part of them. Multitudes have mouldered into dust, and this dust has been blown about by winds, and washed away with water, or it has petrified into stone, or been burnt into brick to form dwellings for their posterity; or it has grown up in grain, trees, plants, and other vegetables, which are the support of man and beast, and are transformed into their flesh and blood. But through all these various transformations and changes, not a particle that was essential to one human body has been lost, or incorporated with

*This was the fate of Pompey, who was slain on the African shore. His body was left there, and his head carried over the Mediterranean to Julius Cæsar.

another human body, so as to become an essential part of it. And as to those particles that were not essential, they are not necessary to the identity of the body or of the person; and, therefore, we need not think they will be raised again. The omniscient God knows how to collect, distinguish, and compound all those scattered and mingled seeds of our mortal bodies. And now, at the sound of the trumpet, they shall all be collected, wherever they were scattered; all properly sorted and united, however they were confus'd; atom to its fellow-atom, bone to its fellow-bone. Now methinks you may see the air darkened with fragments of bodies flying from country to country, to meet and join their proper parts;

—“Scatter'd limbs, and all

The various bones obsequious to the call,
 Self-mov'd, advance; the neck perhaps to meet
 The distant head, the distant legs, the feet.
 Dreadful to view, see through the dusky sky
 Fragments of bodies in confusion fly,
 To distant regions journeying, there to claim
 Deserted members, and complete the frame—
 The sever'd head and trunk shall join once more,
 Though realms now rise between, and oceans roar.
 The trumpet's sound each vagrant mote shall hear,
 Or fixt in earth, or if afloat in air,
 Obey the signal, wafted in the wind,
 And not one sleeping atom lag behind.”*—

All hear; and now, in fairer prospect shewn,
 Limb clings to limb, and bone rejoins its bone.”†—

*Young's Last Day, Book II.

†These two last lines are taken from a poem, which is a lively imitation of Dr. Young, entitled, *The Day of Judgment*, ascribed to Mr. Ogilvie, a promising young genius of Aberdeen, in Scotland, not above nineteen years of age, as

Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be re-animated and organized; and though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God, Job xix. 16.

And what a vast improvement will the frail nature of man then receive? Our bodies will then be substantially the same; but how different in qualities, in strength, in agility, in capacities for pleasure or pain, in beauty or deformity, in glory or terror, according to the moral character of the persons to whom they belong? Matter, we know, is capable of prodigious alterations and refinements; and there it will appear in the highest perfection. The bodies of the saints will be formed glorious, incorruptible, without the seeds of sickness and death. The glorified body of Christ,

I was informed, when he composed this poem. The lines preceding these quoted are as follows:

O'er boiling waves the sever'd members swim,
 Each breeze is loaded with a broken limb:
 The living atoms, with peculiar care,
 Drawn from their cells, come flying through the air.
 Wher'er they lurk'd, through ages undecay'd,
 Deep in the rock, or cloth'd some smiling mead;
 Or in the lily's snowy bosom grew,
 Or ting'd the sapphire with its lovely blue;
 Or in some purling stream refresh'd the plains;
 Or form'd the mountain's adamantine veins;
 Or gaily sporting in the breathing spring,
 Perfum'd the whisp'ring zephyr's balmy wing—
 All hear, &c.

The thought seems to be borrowed from Mr. Addison's fine Latin poem on the Resurrection, in which are the following beautiful lines:

Jam pulvis varias terræ dispersa per oras,
 Sive inter venas teneri concreta metalli,
 Sensim dirigit, seu sese immiscuit herbis,
 Explicita est; mox rursus coalescit in unam
 Divisum Funus, sparsos prior alligat artus
 Junctura, aptanturq; iterum coeuntia membra.

which is undoubtedly carried to the highest perfection that matter is capable of, will be the pattern after which they shall be formed. *He will change our vile body, says St. Paul, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Phil. iii. 21. Flesh and blood, in their present state of grossness and frailty, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. But this corruptible body must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. Cor. xv. 50, 53.* And how vast the change, how high the improvement from its present state! *It was sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; it was sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory; it was sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power, verses 42, 43, &c.* Then will the body be able to bear up under the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory; it will no longer be a clog or an incumbrance to the soul, but a proper instrument and assistant in all the exalted services and enjoyments of the heavenly state.

The bodies of the wicked will also be improved, but their improvements will all be terrible and vindictive. Their capacities will be thoroughly enlarged, but then it will be that they may be made capable of greater misery: they will be strengthened, but it will be that they may bear the heavier load of torment. Their sensations will be more quick and strong, but it will be that they may feel the more exquisite pain. They will be raised immortal that they may not be consumed by everlasting fire, or escape punishment by dissolution or annihilation. In short, their augmented strength, their enlarged capacities, and their immortality, will be their eternal curse; and they would willingly exchange them for the fleeting duration of a fading flower, or the faint sensations of an infant.

The only power they would rejoice in is, that of self-annihilation.

And now when the bodies are completely formed and fit to be inhabited, the souls that once animated them, being collected from Heaven and Hell, re-enter and take possession of their old mansions. They are united in bonds which shall never more be dissolved; and the mouldering tabernacles are now become everlasting habitations.

And with what joy will the spirits of the righteous welcome their old companions from their long sleep in the dust, and congratulate their glorious resurrection! How will they rejoice to re-enter their old habitations, now so completely repaired and highly improved? to find those bodies which were once their incumbrance, once frail and mortal, in which they were imprisoned; and languished, once their temptation, tainted with the seeds of sin, now their assistants and co-partners, in the business of heaven, now vigorous, incorruptible, and immortal, now free from all corrupt mixtures, and shining in all the beauties of perfect holiness? In these bodies they once served their God with honest though feeble efforts, conflicted with sin and temptation, and passed through all the united trials and hardships of mortality and the christian life. But now they are united to them for more exalted and blissful purposes. The lungs that were wont to heave with penitential sighs and groans, shall now shout forth their joys and the praises of their God and Saviour. The heart that was once broken with sorrows shall now be bound up forever, and overflow with immortal pleasures. Those very eyes that were wont to run down with tears, and to behold many a tragical sight, shall now behold *the King in his beauty*, shall behold the Saviour whom, though unseen, they loved, and all the glo-

ries of heaven; and *God shall wipe away all their tears.* All the senses, which were once avenues of pain, shall now be inlets of the most exalted pleasure. In short, every organ, every member shall be employed in the most noble services and enjoyments, instead of the sordid and laborious drudgery, and the painful sufferings of the present state. Blessed change indeed! Rejoice, ye children of God, in the prospect of it.

But how shall I glance a thought upon the dreadful case of the wicked in that tremendous day! While their bodies burst from their graves, the miserable spectacles of horror and deformity, see the millions of gloomy ghosts that once animated them, rise like pillars of smoke from the bottomless pit and with what reluctance and anguish do they re-enter their old habitations! O what a dreadful meeting! What shocking salutations! "And must I be chained to thee again, (may the guilty soul say,) O thou accursed, polluted body, thou system of deformity and terror! In thee I once sinned, by thee I was once ensnared, debased, and ruined: to gratify thy vile lusts and appetites I neglected my own immortal interests, degraded my native dignity, and made myself miserable forever? And hast thou now met me to torment me forever? O that thou hadst still slept in the dust, and never been repaired again! Let me rather be condemned to animate a toad or serpent than that odious body once defiled with sin, and the instrument of my guilty pleasures, now made strong and immortal, to torment me with strong and immortal pains. Once indeed I received sensations of pleasure from thee, but now thou art transformed into an engine of torture. No more shall I through thine eyes behold the cheerful light of the day and the beautiful prospects of nature, but the thick glooms of hell,

grim and ghastly ghosts, heaven at an impassable distance, and all the horrid sights of wo in the infernal regions. No more shall thine ears charm me with the harmony of sounds, but terrify and distress me with the echo of eternal groans, and the thunder of almighty vengeance! No more shall the gratification of thine appetites afford me pleasure, but thine appetites, forever hungry, forever unsatisfied, shall eternally torment me with their eager importunate cravings. No more shall thy tongues be employed in mirth, and jest, and song, but complain and groan, and blaspheme, and roar forever. Thy feet, that once walked in the flowery enchanted paths of sin, must now walk on the dismal burning soil of hell. O my wretched companion! I parted with thee with pain and reluctance in the struggles of death, but now I meet thee with greater terror and agony. Return to thy bed in the dust, there to sleep and rot, and let me never see thy shocking visage more." In vain the petition! the reluctant soul must enter its prison, from whence it shall never more be dismissed. And if we might indulge imagination so far, we might suppose the body begins to recriminate in such language as this: "Come guilty soul, enter thy old mansion; if it be horrible and shocking, it is owing to thyself. Was not the animal frame, the brutal nature, subjected to thy government, who art a rational principle? Instead of being debased by me, it became thee to have not only retained the dignity of thy nature, but to have exalted mine, by nobler employments and gratifications worthy an earthly body united to an immortal spirit. Thou mightest have restrained my members from being the instruments of sin, and made them the instruments of righteousness. My knees would have bowed at the throne of grace, but thou didst not

affect that posture. Mine eyes would have read, and mine ears heard the word of life; but thou wouldest not set them to that employ, or wouldest not attend to it. And now it is but just the body thou didst prostitute to sin should be the instrument of thy punishment. Indeed, fain would I relapse into senseless earth as I was, and continue in that insensibility forever:—but didst thou not hear the all-rousing trumpet just now? did it not even shake the foundations of thy infernal prison? It was that call that awakened me, and summoned me to meet thee, and I could not resist it. Therefore come, miserable soul, take possession of this frame, and let us prepare for everlasting burning. O that it were now possible to die! O that we could be again separated, and never be united more! Vain wish; the weight of mountains, the pangs of hell, the flames of unquenchable fire, can never dissolve these chains which now bind us together!*

O! Sirs, what a shocking interview is this! O the glorious, dreadful morning of the resurrection! What scenes of unknown joy and terror will then

* The Reverend Mr. John Reynolds, in his poem entitled *Death's Vision*, introduces the soul speaking against the body, and afterwards checking its censures, and turning them upon itself, in a vein of thought not unlike that of Mr. Davies.

Go, tempter, go, as thou hast been
 A quick extinguisher of heav'nly fires!
 A source of black enormity and sin,
 Thou cramp of sacred motions and desires!
 How brave and bless'd am I,
 Unfetter'd from the company,
 Thou enemy of my joys and me?
 But pardon that I thus
 Unconsciously accuse!
 How much more cruel have I been to thee!
 "'Twas cruel I oblig'd thee to obey
 "The wilful dictates of my guilty sway."

open! Methinks we must always have it in prospect; it must even now engage our thoughts, and fill us with trembling solicitude, and make it the great object of our labour and pursuit to share in the resurrection of the just.

But for what ends do these sleeping multitudes rise? For what purposes do they come forth? My text will tell you.

IV. They shall come forth, *some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation.* They are summoned from their graves to stand at the bar, and brought out of prison by angelic guards to pass their last trial. And as in this impartial trial they will be found to be persons of very different characters, the righteous Judge of the earth will accordingly pronounce their different doom.

See a glorious *multitude, which none can number, openly acquitted, pronounced blessed, and welcomed into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.* Now they enter upon a state which deserves the name of life. They are all vital, all active, all glorious, all happy. They *shine brighter than the stars in the firmament; like the sun forever and ever.* All their faculties overflow with happiness. They mingle with the glorious company of angels; they behold that Saviour whom unseen they loved; they dwell in eternal intimacy with the Father of their spirits; they are employed with ever-new and growing delight in the exalted services of the heavenly sanctuary. They shall never more fear nor feel the least touch of sorrow, pain, or any kind of misery, but shall be as happy as their natures can admit through an immortal duration. What a glorious new creation is here! what illustrious creatures formed of the dust! And shall any of us join in this happy com-

pany, O shall any of us, feeble, dying, sinful creatures, share in their glory and happiness? This is a most interesting inquiry, and I would have you think of it with trembling anxiety; and I shall presently answer it in its place.

The prospect would be delightful, if our charity could hope that this will be the happy end of all the sons of men. But alas! multitudes, and we have reason to fear the far greater number shall come forth, not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of damnation! what terror is in the sound. If audacious sinners in our world make light of it, and pray for it on every trifling occasion, their infernal brethren that feel its tremendous import are not so hardy, but tremble and groan, and can trifle with it no more.

Let us realize the miserable doom of this class of mankind. See them bursting into life from their subterranean dungeons, hideous shapes of deformity and terror, expressive of the vindictive design for which their bodies are repaired, and of the boisterous and malignant passions that ravage their souls. Horror throbs through every vein, and glares wild and furious in their eyes. Every joint trembles, and every countenance looks down-cast and gloomy. Now they see that tremendous day of which they were warned in vain, and shudder at these terrors of which they once made light. They immediately know the grand business of the day, and the dreadful purpose for which they are roused from their slumbers in the grave; to be tried, to be convicted, to be condemned, and to be dragged away to execution. Conscience has been anticipating the trial in a separate state; and no sooner is the soul united to the body, than immediately conscience ascends its throne in the breast, and begins to accuse, to convict, to pass sentence, to up-

braid, and to torment. The sinner is condemned, condemned at his own tribunal, before he arrives at the bar of his Judge. The first act of consciousness in his new state of existence is a conviction that he is condemned, an irrevocably condemned creature. He enters the court, knowing beforehand how it will go with him. When he finds himself ordered to the left hand of his Judge, when he hears the dreadful sentence thundered out against him, *depart from me* ~~degraded~~, it was but what he expected. Now he can flatter himself with vain hopes, and shut his eyes against the light of conviction, but then he will not be able to hope better; then he must know the worst of his case. The formality of the judicial trial is necessary for the conviction of the world, but not for his; his own conscience has already determined his condition. However, to convince others of the justice of his doom, he is dragged and guarded from his grave to the judgment-seat by fierce unrelenting devils, now his tempters, but then his tormentors. With what horror does he view the burning throne and the frowning face of his Judge, that Jesus whom he once disregarded, in spite of all his dying love and the salvation ~~he offered~~! How does he wish for a covering of rocks and mountains to conceal him from his angry eye! but all in vain. Appear he must. He is ordered to the left among the trembling criminals; and now the trial comes on. All his evil deeds, and all his omissions of duty, are now produced against him. All the mercies he abused, all the chastisements he despised, all the means of grace he neglected or misimproved, every sinful, and even every idle word, nay, his most secret thoughts and dispositions are all exposed, and brought into judgment against him. And when the Judge puts it to him, "Is it not so, sinner?"

Are not these charges true?" conscience obliges him to confess and cry out, Guilty! guilty! And now the trembling criminal being plainly convicted, and left without all plea and all excuse, the supreme Judge, in stern majesty and inexorable justice, thunders out the dreadful sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Matt. xxv. 41. O tremendous doom! every word is big with terror, and shoots a thunderbolt through the heart. "Depart: away from my presence; I cannot bear so loathsome a sight. I once invited thee to come to me, that thou mightest have life, but thou wouldst not regard the invitation; and now thou shalt never hear that inviting voice more. Depart from me; from me, the only Fountain of happiness, the only proper Good for an immortal mind." "But, Lord," (we may suppose the criminal to say,) "if I must depart; bless me before I go." "No," says the angry Judge, "depart accursed; depart with my eternal and heavy curse upon thee; the curse of that power that made thee; a curse dreadfully efficacious, that blasts whatever it falls upon like flashes of consuming, irresistible lightning." "But if I must go away under thy curse, (the criminal may be supposed to say,) let that be all my punishment; let me depart to some agreeable, or at least tolerable recess, where I may meet with something to mitigate the curse." "No, depart into fire; there burn in all the excruciating tortures of that outrageous element." "But, Lord, if I must make my bed in fire, O let it be a transient blaze, that will soon burn itself out, and put an end to my torment." "No, depart into everlasting fire; there burn without consuming, and be tormented without end." "But, Lord, grant me (cries the poor wretch,) at least the mitigation of friendly, enter-

taining, and sympathising company; or, if this cannot be granted, grant me this small, this almost no request, to be doomed to some solitary corner in Hell, where I shall be punished only by my own conscience and thine immediate hand: but O deliver me from these malicious, tormenting devils; banish me into some apartment in the infernal pit far from their society." "No, depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: thou must make one of their wretched crew forever: thou didst join with them in sinning, and now must share in their punishment: thou didst submit to them as thy tempters, and now thou must submit to them as thy tormentors."

Sentence being pronounced, it is immediately executed. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment.* Matt. xxv. 46. Devils drag them away to the pit, and push them down headlong. There they are confined in chains of darkness, and in a lake burning with fire and brimstone, forever, forever! In that dreadful word lies the emphasis of torment: it is an hell in hell. If they might be but released from pain, though it were by annihilation, after they have wept away ten thousand millions of ages in extremity of pain, it would be some mitigation, some encouragement; but, alas! when as many millions of ages are passed as the stars of heaven, or the sand on the sea-shore, or the atoms of dust in this huge globe of earth, their punishment is as far from an end as when the sentence was pronounced upon them. Forever! there is no exhausting of that word; and when it is affixed to the highest degree of misery, the terror of the sound is utterly insupportable. See, sirs, what depends upon time, that span of time we enjoy in this fleeting life. Eternity! awful, all-important eternity, depends upon it.

All this while conscience tears the sinner's heart with the most tormenting reflections. "O what a fair opportunity I once had for salvation, had I improved it! I was warned of the consequences of a life of sin and carelessness: I was told of the necessity of faith, repentance, and universal holiness of heart and life; I enjoyed a sufficient space for repentance, and all the necessary means of salvation, but, fool that I was, I neglected all, I abused all; I refused to part with my sins; I refused to engage seriously in religion, and to seek God in earnest; and now I am lost forever without hope. O! for one of those months, one of those weeks, or even so much as one of those days or hours I once trifled away; with what earnestness, with what solicitude would I improve it! But all my opportunities are past, beyond recovery, and not a moment shall be given me for this purpose any more. O what a fool was I to sell my soul for such trifles! to set so light by heaven, and fall into hell through mere neglect and carelessness! Ye impenitent, unthinking sinners, though you may now be able to silence or drown the clamours of your consciences, yet the time, or rather the dread eternity is coming, when they will speak in spite of you; when they will speak home, and be felt by the most hardened and remorseless heart. Therefore, now regard their warnings while they may be the means of your recovery.

You and I, my brethren, are concerned in the solemn transaction of the day I have been describing. You and I shall either be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, or while mouldering *in the grave, we shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth, either to the resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of damnation.* And which, my brethren, shall be our doom? Can we

foreknow it at this distance of time? I proposed it to your inquiry already, whether you have any good reason to hope you shall be of that happy number who shall rise to life? and now I propose it again with this counterpart, Have you any evidences to hope you shall not be of that wretched numerous multitude who shall rise to damnation? If there be an inquiry within the compass of human knowledge that demands your solicitous thoughts, certainly it is this. Methinks you cannot enjoy one moment's ease or security while this is undetermined. And is it an answerable inquiry? Can we now know what are the present distinguishing characters of those who shall then receive so different a doom? Yes, my text determines the point; for,

V. They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. These are the grounds of the distinction that shall then be made in the final states of men, doing good and doing evil. And certainly this distinction is perceivable now; to do good and to do evil are not so much alike as that it should be impossible to distinguish between them. Let us then see what is implied in these characters, and to whom of us they respectively belong.

1. What is it to do good? This implies, 1st. An honest endeavour to keep all God's commandments; I say, all his commandments, with regard to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, whether easy or difficult, whether fashionable or not, whether agreeable to our natural constitution or not, whether enjoining the performance of duty or forbidding the commission of sin, whether regarding the heart or the outward practice. I say an uniform impartial regard to all God's commandments, of whate-

ver said, in all circumstances, and at all times, is implied in doing good; for if we do any thing because God commands it, we will endeavour to do every thing that he commands, because where the reason of our conduct is the same, our conduct itself will be the same. I do not mean that good men in the present state perfectly keep the commandments of God in every thing, or indeed in any thing; but I mean that universal obedience is their honest endeavour. Their character is in some measure uniform and all of a piece; that is, they do not place all their religion in obedience to some commands which may be agreeable to them, as though that would make atonement for their neglect of others; but, like David, they are for having a respect, and indeed *have a respect to all God's commandments*. Psalm cxix. 6. My brethren, try yourselves by this test.

2. To do good in an acceptable manner presupposes a change of nature and a new principle.—Our nature is so corrupted that nothing really and formally good can be performed by us till it be renewed. To confirm this I shall only refer you to Eph. ii. 10, and Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, where being created in Christ Jesus to good works, and receiving a new heart of flesh, are mentioned as prerequisites to our walking in God's statutes. As for the principle of obedience, *it is the love of God*, 1 John v. 3, that is, we must obey God because we love him; we must do good because we delight to do good; otherwise it is all hypocrisy, constraint, or selfishness, and cannot be acceptable to God.—Here again, my brethren, look into your hearts and examine what is the principle of your obedience, and whether ever you have been made new creatures.

3. I must add, especially as we live under the gospel, that your dependence for life must not be upon the good you do, but entirely upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. After you have done all, you must acknowledge you are but unprofitable servants, and renounce all your works in point of merit, while you abound in them in point of practice. Phil. iii. 7, 8. This is an essential characteristic of evangelical obedience, and without it you cannot expect to have a resurrection to eternal life and blessedness.

I might enlarge upon this head, but time will not permit; and I hope these three characters may suffice to shew you what is implied in doing good. Let us now proceed to the opposite character.

2. What is it to do evil? This implies such things as these; the habitual neglect of well-doing, or the performance of duties in a languid, formal manner, or without a right principle, and the wilful indulgence of any one sin: the secret love of sin, though not suffered to break forth into the outward practice. Here it is evident at first sight that profane sinners, drunkards, swearers, defrauders, avowed neglecters of religion, &c. have this dismal brand upon them, that they are such as do evil. Nay, all such who are in their natural state, without regeneration, whatever their outside be, must be ranked in this class; *for that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, John iii. 6. *and they that are in the flesh cannot please God, nor be rightly subject to his law.* Rom. viii. 7, 8.

And now who is for life, and who for damnation among you? These characters are intended to make the distinction among you, and I pray you apply them for that purpose.

As for such of you, who, amidst all your lamented infirmities, are endeavouring honestly to do

good, and grieved at heart that you can do no more, you also must die; you must die, and feed the worms in the dust. But you shall rise gloriously improved, rise to an immortal life, and in all the terrors and consternation of that last day, you will be secure, serene, and undisturbed. The almighty Judge will be your friend, and that is enough. Let this thought disarm the king of terrors, and give you courage to look down into the grave, and forward to the great rising day. O what an happy immortality opens its glorious prospects beyond the ken of sight before you! and after a few struggles more in this state of warfare, and resting awhile in the bed of death, at the regions of eternal blessedness you will arrive, and take up your residence there forever.

But are there not some here who are conscious that these favourable characters do not belong to them? that know that well-doing is not the business of their life, but that they are workers of iniquity? I tell you plainly, and with all the authority the word of God can give, that if you continue such, you shall rise to damnation. That will undoubtedly be your doom, unless you are greatly changed and reformed in heart and life. And will this be no excitement to vigorous endeavours? Are you proof against the energy of such a consideration? Ye careless sinners, awake out of your security, and prepare for death and judgment! This fleeting life is all the time you have for preparation, and can you trifle it away? Your all, your eternal all, is set upon the single cast of life, and you must stand the hazard of the dye. You can make but one experiment, and if that fail, through your sloth or mismanagement, you are irrecoverably undone forever. Therefore, by the dread authority of the great God, by the terrors of death, and the

great rising day, by the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, and by the value of your immortal souls, I entreat, I charge, I adjure you to awake out of your security, and improve the precious moments of life. The world is dying all around you. And can you rest easy in such a world, while unprepared for eternity? Awake to righteousness now, at the gentle call of the gospel, before the last trumpet give you an alarm of another kind.

SERMON XX.

THE UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT.

ACTS XVII. 30, 31.—And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where 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, 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 clangour 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 resur-*

rection, 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 Areopagus, in the learned and philosophical city of Athens. In this august and polite assembly he speaks with the boldness, and in the evangelical strain, of an apostle of Christ. He first inculcates upon them the great truths of natural religion, and labours faithfully, though in a very gentle 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 had just hinted at the then unpopular doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, we are told, *some mocked, and others put it off to another hearing: We will hear thee again of this matter.*

In these dark times of ignorance which preceded the publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink or connive at the idolatry and various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world; that is, he seemed to overlook or 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 every where 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 connexion 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 will never work so unprecedented 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 phenomena of that day; and we are so accustomed to low and little objects, that it is im-

possible 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.* Psa. 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 alleged, it is most fit it should be devolved upon him. Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity centre 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 will the angels, those illustrious ministers of the court of heaven, attend upon that solemn occasion, but also all the saints who had left the world from Adam to that day; for those that sleep in Jesus, says St. Paul, will God bring with him. 1 Thess. 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 hair white like wool, as white as snow: his eyes as a flame of fire: his feet like unto fine brass; as if they burned.

*This sense is most agreeable to the connexion, 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.

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 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

**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,
The flaming Cherubim, attend his flight,
And heaven's foundations groan beneath the weight.
Through all the skies the forky lightnings play,
And radiant splendours round his head display.
From his bright eyes affrighted worlds retire:
He speaks in thunder and he breathes in fire.
Garments 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.

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 surrounds them like armed men. Now they *hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the Lamb that once bled as a sacrifice for sin now appears in all the terrors of a lion; and the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Rev. vi. 15. O! could they hide themselves in the bottom of the ocean, or in some rock that bears the weight of the mountains, how happy would they think themselves. But alas!

“Seas cast their 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 dasty 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 immortals, 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 expect this tremendous day or not, all feel a shock through their whole frames, while they are *instantaneously metamorphosed in every limb, and the pulse of immortality begins to beat strong in every part.* Now also the slumberers 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 thousand of years rising in crowds from graveyards 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, xxi. 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 bear 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 forever 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.*

* How weak, how pale, how haggard, how obscene,
What more than death in every face and mein!
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 laden with despair.—Young.

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 instrument 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. 1 Thess. iv. 17. And that the air will be the

*Mark, on the right, how amiable a grace!
 Their 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.

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 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 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, choos-

ing 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, form 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 county are met together, you are struck with the survey. Were all the inhabitants of a kingdom convened in one place, how much more striking would be the sight! Were all the inhabitants of 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 im-

mense survey. The extensive region of the air is very properly chosen as the place of judgment; for this globe would not be sufficient for such a multitude to stand upon. In that prodigious assembly, my brethren, you and I must mingle. And we shall not be lost in the crowd, nor escape the notice of our Judge; but his eye will be as particularly fixed on every one 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 their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.* Jude 6. What horribly majestic figures will these be! and what a dreadful appearance will they make at the bar! angels and archangels, thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, blasted, stripped of their primeval glories, and lying in ruins; yet majestic even in ruins, gigantic forms of terror and

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

Now the judge is seated, and anxious millions stand before him waiting for their doom. As yet there is no separation made between them; but men and devils, saints and sinners, are promiscuously blended together. But see! at the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion; they part, they sort together according to their character, and divide to the right and left. *When all nations are gathered before the Son of man, himself has told us, he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Matt. xxv. 32, 33.* And, O! what strange separations are now made! what multitudes that once ranked themselves amongst 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 connexions 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

• *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.*

one flesh, and who lay in one another's bosoms, must part forever. 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 forever. And is there no separation likely to be made then in our families or in our congregation? Is it likely we shall all be placed in a body upon the right hand? Are all the members of our families prepared for that glorious station? Alas! are there not some families among us who, it is to be feared, shall all be sent off to the left hand, without so much as one exception? for who are those miserable multitudes on the left hand? There, through the medium of revelation, I see the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the liar, the defrauder, and the various classes of profane, profligate sinners. There I see the unbeliever, the impenitent, the lukewarm formalist and the various classes of hypocrites and half-christians. There I see the families that call not upon God's name, and whole nations that forget him. And, 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 humble 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.* Ecc. xii. 14. And though we are too apt to think our words are free, he that is to be our Judge has told us, that *for every idle word which men 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 forebodes; for when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves, which 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 presentiment of human nature. As the heathens were invincibly ignorant of every rule but this, they shall be judged by this only. But as to those parts of the world that enjoyed, or might enjoy the advantages of revelation, whether by tradition with the Anti-Mosaic world, or in the writings of Moses and the prophets with the Jews, or in the clearer dispensation of the gospel with the christian world, they shall be judged by this revealed law. And by how much the more perfect the rule, by so much the stricter will their account be. That which would be an excusable infirmity in an African or an American Indian, may be an aggravated crime in us who enjoy such superior advantages. This is evident from the repeated declarations of sacred writ. *As many as have sinned without the law, (that is, without the written 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 cloak 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 much be 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 seat, 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 nature; 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.*

*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 slackened rein,
And give us up to licence unrecall'd,

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 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*

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 offenders 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.

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 the evidence against the sinner, that the scripture, which is full of striking imagery to affect human nature, gives life to inanimated things upon this occasion, and represents them as speaking. Stones and dust shall witness against the ungodly. The dust under the feet of their ministers shall witness against them. Matt. 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. Jas. 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 now they will give in their evidence that they chose death. Thus God and all his creatures, heaven, earth, and hell, rise up against them, accuse, and condemn them. And will not sinners accuse and witness against one another? Undoubtedly they will. They who lived or conversed together upon earth, and were spectators of each other's conduct, will then turn mutual witnesses against each other. 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, which he has graciously left us a copy: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Every word is full of emphasis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the desires of those to whom it is addressed. They desired, and longed, and languished to be near their Lord; and now their Lord invites them, *Come near me, and dwell with me forever.* There was nothing they desired so much as the blessing of God, nothing they feared so much as his curse, and now their fears are entirely removed, and their designs fully accomplished, for the supreme Judge pronounces them blessed of his Father. They were all poor in spirit, most of them poor in this world, and all sensible of their unworthiness. How agreeably then are they surprised, to hear themselves invited to a kingdom, invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood royal, born to thrones and crowns! How will they be lost in wonder, joy, and praise, to find that the great God entertained thoughts of love towards them, before they had a being, or the world in which they dwelt had its foundation laid, and that

he was preparing a kingdom for them, while they were nothing, unknown even in idea, except to himself? O! brethren, dare any of us expect this sentence will be passed upon us? Methinks the very thought overwhelms us. Methinks our feeble frames must be unable to bear up under the 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 at a frown; he whose thunder quelled the insurrection of rebel angels in heaven, and hurled them headlong down, down, down to the dungeon of hell; see, he turns to the guilty crowd on his left hand; his angry countenance discovers the righteous indignation that glows in his breast. His countenance bespeaks him inexorable, and that there is now no room for prayers and tears. Now the sweet, mild, mediatorial hour is past, and nothing appears but the majesty and terror of the judge. Horror and darkness frown upon his 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 executioners of your punishment.

Now the grand period is arrived in which the final everlasting states of mankind are unchangeably settled. From this all-important era their happiness or misery runs on in one uniform, uninterrupted tenor; no change, no gradation, but from glory to glory, in the scale of perfection, or from gulf to gulf in hell. This is the day in which all the schemes of Providence, carried on for thousands of years, terminate.

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

Time was; but 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 silent 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 forever 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, de

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 transcendent glories of the just!”.....YOUNG.

Now with what pleasure and rapture do they look forward through the long, long prospect of immortality, and call it their own! the duration not only of their existence, but of their happiness and glory! 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 splendours 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 lightning, 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 below, 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 where to be found. How

* 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..... YOUNG

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 clangour 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 *sinners in Zion afraid?* Why does not *fearfulness surprise the hypocrites?* Isa. 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 pow-

erful motive to repentance. And what will criminals think of repentance when they see the Judge ascend his throne? Come, sinners, lood 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 every where 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 forever. 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 crea-

tures that love themselves, and have a strong innate desire of happiness. This a stranger to our world might charitably presume concerning them. But, alas! look upon the conduct of the world around you, or look nearer home, and where you are more nearly interested, upon your own conduct, and you will see this is not generally the case. No; instead of pursuing the one thing needful, the world is all in motion, all bustle and hurry, like ants upon a mole-hill, about other affairs. They are in a still higher degree than officious Martha, *careful and troubled about many things*. Now to recall you from this endless variety of vain pursuits, and direct your 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 honey-comb. Though she is solicitous for the comfort of her heavenly guest, yet she makes no great stir to provide for him an elegant or sumptuous entertainment; for she knew his happiness did not consist in luxurious eating and drinking: it was his *meat and his drink to do the will of his Father*; and as 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 the pride, luxury, excessive delicacy, and multiform extravagance which have crept in upon us under the ingratiating names of politeness, decency, hospitality, good economy, and I know not what.—These guilty superfluities and refinements render the life of some a course of idolatry to so sordid a god as their bellies, and that of others a course of busy, laborious, and expensive trifling.—But to return:

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

Martha though a pious woman, yet like too many among us, was too solicitous about these things. She seemed more concerned to maintain her reputation for good economy and hospitality, than to improve in divine knowledge at every opportunity; and to entertain her guest rather as a gentleman than as a divine teacher and the 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 vehemence and pungency in the repetition, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.* "Thy worldly mind has many objects, and many objects excite many cares and troubles, fruitless troubles and useless cares. Thy restless mind is scattered among a thousand things, and tossed from one to another with an endless variety of anxieties. But let me collect 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 forever. But Mary hath made a wiser choice; the portion she hath chosen shall be her's forever; it shall never be taken away from her."

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

I answer, We may learn what he meant by the occasion and circumstances of his speaking. He mentions this one thing in an admonition to Martha for excessive worldly cares and the neglect of an opportunity for promoting her salvation; and he expressly opposes this one thing to the many things which engrossed her care; and, therefore, it must mean something different from and superior to all the pursuits of time. This one thing is that which Mary was so much concerned about while attentively listening to his 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 forever. The end, namely, salvation, will be granted by all to be necessary, and the necessity of the end renders the means also necessary. If it be necessary you shall be forever happy, and escape everlasting misery, it is necessary you should be holy; for you can no more be saved without holiness than you can be healthy without health, see without light, or live without food. And if holiness be necessary, then the earnest use of 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 centre and terminate. It is also said to be one, in opposition to the many things that are the objects of a world-

ly mind. This world owes its variety in a great measure to contradiction and inconsistency. There is no harmony or unity in the earthly objects of men's pursuits, nor in the means they use to secure them. Riches, 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 falsehood, 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

necessaries 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 to our happiness that we should live in this world at all, for we may live infinitely more happy in another. And if life itself be not absolutely necessary, then much less are food, or raiment, or health, or any of those things which in a lower sense we call the necessaries of life. In comparison of this, they are all neediess. I add farther, this one thing may be said to be necessary, because it is necessary always, or forever. 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 here with a desire to receive some advantage? If not, you may number this seeming act of religion among the sins of your life; you have come here to-day to sin away these sacred hours in hypocrisy, and a profane mockery of the great God. But if you are willing to receive any benefit, hear attentively: hear, that your souls may live.

My first request to you is,* that you would make this passage the test of your characters, and seriously inquire whether you have lived in the world as those that really and practically believe that this is the one thing of absolute necessity. Are not all the joys of heaven and your immortal souls worth the little pains of seriously putting this short question to your consciences? Review your life, look into your hearts, and inquire, has this one thing lain more upon your hearts than all other things together? Has this been, above all other things, the object of your most vehement 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

*Many of the following sentiments, as to the substance of them, are borrowed from Mr. Baxter's excellent discourse, entitled, *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.

your families, or in your closets, after you have served yourselves and the world all the rest of your time, without one affectionate thought of God. Nor do I inquire whether in a pang of horror after the commission of some gross sin, you have tried to make your conscience easy, by a few prayers and tears, of which you form an opiate to cast you again into a dead sleep in sin; I do not ask whether you have performed many actions that are materially good, and abstained from many sins. All this you may have done, and yet have neglected the one thing needful all your lives.

But I ask you, whether this one thing needful has been habitually uppermost in your hearts, the 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 forever 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 neglected this one thing needful.

1. However well you have improved your time for other purposes, you have lost it all, unless you have improved it in securing the one thing needful. The proper notion of time is, that it is a space for repentance. Time is given us to prepare for eternity. If this is done, we have lived long enough, and the great end of time and life is answered, whatever else be undone. But if this be undone, you have lived in vain, and all your time is lost, however busily and successfully you have pursued other things. Though you have studied yourselves pale, to furnish your minds with knowledge; though you have spent the night and the day in heaping up riches, or climbing up to the pinnacle of 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 forever? For is not that lost which is spent in crossing the end for which it was given you? Time was given you to secure an eternity of happiness, but you have spent it in adding sin to sin, and consequently in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. And is not your time 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 had never had one hour's time given you, or that you had made a better use of it.

2. Whatever else you have been doing, you have lost your 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 beyond the grave, or that you can call your own to-morrow? Where is that sure immortal acquisition that you can carry with you into the eternal world? Were you to die this hour, would it afford you any pleasure to reflect that you have lived a merry life, and had a satiety of sensual pleasures, or that you have 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 phrenzy 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 forever? A child or an idiot riding upon a staff, building their mimic houses, or playing with a feather, are not so foolish as you in your conduct, while you are so seriously pursuing the affairs of time, and neglecting those of eternity. But,

3. This is not all: All your 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 consequences 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 pursu-

ing 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 feed, 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 centre; 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 lose 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 dan-

gerously 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 the body from which it often proceeds, and, therefore, is no object for punishment, and had you no capacity of understanding you would have a cloak for your sin; but your madness is your crime, because it is voluntary, and, therefore, you must give an account for it to the Supreme Judge.

It would be easy to offer many more considerations to expose the absurdity and danger of your conduct in neglecting the one thing necessary; but these must suffice for the present hour. And I

only desire you to consider farther, if this be a just view of the conduct of such as are guilty of this neglect, in what a miserable pitiable condition is the world in general? I have so often tried the utmost energy of my 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 cotemporaries 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 under-

stand 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. Matt. 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 choak 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 hear of it with both their ears; but if they sin against God, or neglect his word or worship, they shall meet with more patience than Eli's son did: a cold reproof is usually the most; and it is well if they be not encouraged in their sin: it is well if a child or servant that begins to be serious for salvation be not rebuked, derided and hindered by them. If on their days of 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 consider or converse upon the things that concern their everlasting life? The Lord's own day, which is appointed to be set apart for matters of this nature, is wasted in idleness or worldly talk. Come at any time into their company and you may talk enough, and too much of news, or other men's matters, of their worldly business, sports and pleasures, but about God and their salvation they have so little to say, and that so heartless 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 de-

spisers 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 will call a serving of God. Some of them will confess that holiness is good, but they hope God will be merciful to them without it; and some do so hate it, that it is a displeasing irksome thing to them to hear any serious discourse of holiness; and they detest and deride those as fanatical, troublesome precisians that diligently seek the one thing necessary: so that if the belief of the most may be judged by their practices, we may confidently say, that they do not practically believe that ever they should be brought to judgment, or that there is any heaven or hell to be expected; and that their confession of the truth of the scriptures and the articles of the christian faith are no proofs that they heartily take them to be true. Who can be such a stranger to the world as not to see that this is the case of the greatest part of men? And, which is worst of all, they go on in this course against all that can be said to them, and will give no impartial, considerate hearing to the truth, which would recover them to their wits, but live as if it would be a felicity to them in hell to think that they came thither by wilful resolution, and in despite of the remedy."

This, sinners, is a true representation of your case, drawn by one that well knew and lamented it. And what do you now think of it yourselves? What do you think will be the consequence of such a course? Is it safe to persist in it? or shall I be so happy as to bring you to a stand? Will you still go on, troubling yourselves with many things? or will you resolve for the future to mind the one thing

needful above all? I beseech you to come to some resolution. Time is on the wing, and does not allow you to hesitate in so plain and important an affair. Do you need any farther excitements? Then I shall try the force of one consideration more contained in my text, and that is Necessity.

Remember necessity, the most pressing, absolute necessity, enforces this care upon you. **One thing** is needful, absolutely needful, and needful above all other things. This, one would think, is such an argument as cannot but prevail. What exploits has necessity performed in the world! What arts has it discovered as the mother of invention! what 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 necessaries 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 forever, and must leave all its cares, enjoyments, and pursuits behind you. And shall not this grand necessity prevail upon you to work out your salvation, and make that your great business, when a far less necessity, a necessity that will last but a few years at most, 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 forever. 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 forever if your debts to the justice of God be not remitted, and you do not obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can make satisfaction for them! You must suffer hunger and nakedness unless you take care to provide food and raiment; but you must suffer eternal banishment from God and all the joys of his presence, if you do not 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 need-

ful you are undone, absolutely undone. Though you were as rich as Croesus, you are *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*. Your very being becomes a curse to you. It is your curse that you are a man, a reasonable creature. It had been infinitely better for you if you had been a toad or a snake, and so incapable of sin and of immortality, and consequently of punishment. 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 irresistible words of the author I before quoted, **‘Awake, you sluggish, careless souls! your house over your head is in a flame! the hand of God is lifted up! If you love yourselves, prevent the stroke. Vengeance is at your backs, the wrath of God pursues your sin, and wo to you if he 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.

1 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, he reviews the rocks and shoals he passed through, many of which lay under water and out of sight; and therefore now he is more fully acquainted with the difficulty of salvation than ever. And should he now rise and make his appearance in this assembly in the solemn and dread attire of an inhabitant of the world of

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

spirits, and again direct me to a more proper subject, methinks he would still stand to his choice, and propose it to your serious thoughts, that *if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

The apostle's principle 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 every where 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 favourites of Heaven, endured, he infers how much more dreadful the vengeance would be which should fall upon their enemies, the infidel Jews. If judgment begin at the House of God, his church, what shall be the doom of the camp of rebels? If it begin at us

christians who obey the gospel, what shall be the end of them that obey it not? Alas! what shall become of them? *Them that obey not the gospel of God,* is a description of the unbelieving Jews, to whom it was peculiarly applicable; and the apostle may have a primary reference to the dreadful destruction of their city and nation which was much more severe than all the sufferings the persecuted christians had then endured. But I see no reason for confining the apostle's view entirely to this temporal destruction of the Jews: he seems to refer farther to that still more terrible destruction that awaits all that obey not the gospel in the eternal world: that is to say, if the children are so severely chastised in this world, what shall become of rebels in the world to come, the proper state of retribution? How much more tremendous must be their fate!

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

The abrupt and pungent form of expression is very emphatical. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear* I need not tell you, your own reason will inform you: I appeal to yourselves for an answer, for you are all capable of determining upon so plain a case. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* Alas! it strikes me dumb with horror to think of it: it is so shocking and terrible

that I cannot bear to describe it. Now they are gay, merry, and rich; but when I look a little forward, I see them appear in very different circumstances, and the horror of the prospect is hardly supportable.

St. Peter here supposes that there is something in the condition and character of a righteous man that renders his salvation comparatively easy; something from whence we might expect that he will certainly be saved, and that without much difficulty: and, on the other hand, that there is something in the opposite character and condition of the ungodly and the sinner, that gives us reason to conclude that there is no probability at all of their salvation while they continue 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 principle 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.

I. I am to point out the principle 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 Pet. 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 is attended with difficulties which require the utmost exertion of all our powers 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 victory after conflict. Rev. ii. 7. And christians are soldiers; and as such must endure hardships. 2 Tim. ii. 2. 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 inquired into, the interests of eternity are forgotten, the eternal God, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell are cast out of the mind, and disregarded; and they care not for any or all of these important realities, if they can but gratify the lust of avarice, ambition, and sensuality. And are such likely to perform the arduous work of salvation? No; they do not so much as seriously attempt it. Now these things, which are fatal to multitudes, throw great difficulties in the way even of the righteous man. He finds it hard to keep his mind intent upon his great concern in the midst of such 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, un governable 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, their 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, knew 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? If 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 immortality and vice be but scarcely saved, where shall the vicious, profligate sinner appear?

It is the habitual character of a righteous man to be temperate and sober, chaste, just, and charitable; to revere the name of God, and every thing sacred, and religiously observe the holy hours devoted to the service of God. This is always an

*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 through;
 Their lips shall never cease to sing,
 And endless praise renew.

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

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

The righteous are characterized as persons that honestly 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*. Josh. 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 Zacharias 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 ap-

pear, 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 assembly 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? 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 those that are before them, and press with all their might towards the goal, do scarcely obtain the prize, what shall become of those lukewarm, careless, formal, presumptuous professors of christianity who are so numerous among us? Where shall they appear, who have *but a form of godliness without the power,* 2 Tim. 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 entirely upon his atonement, and give up ourselves to God through him, then we believe. Now if they who thus believe, to whom salvation is so often ensured, be not saved but with great difficulty, where shall those appear who never have experienced those exercises which are the antecedents or constituents of saving faith? who have never seen their own guilt and helplessness in an affecting light; who have never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; who have never submitted to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and who do not live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God? Alas! are they likely to be saved who are destitute of the grand pre-re-

quisite 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 proportionably 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 lxiii. 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 xliii. 1, Cant. 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 in-

consistency 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,

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

2. Examine yourselves to which class you belong, whether to that of the righteous, who shall be saved, though with difficulty, or to that of the ungodly and the sinner, who must appear in a very different situation. To determine this important inquiry, recollect the sundry parts of the righteous man's character which I have briefly described, and see whether they belong to you. Do you carefully abstain from vice and immorality? Do you make conscience of every duty of religion? Have you ever been born again of God, and made more than externally religious? Are you sensible of the difficulties in your way from Satan, the world, and the flesh? And do you exert yourselves as in a field of battle or in a race? Do you work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and press into the kingdom of God? Are you true believers, penitents, and lovers of God? Are these or the contrary the constituents of your habitual character? I pray you make an impartial trial, for much depends upon it.

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

4. If your character be that of the ungodly and the sinner, pause and think, where shall you appear at last? When, like our deceased friend, you leave this mortal state, and launch into regions unknown, where will you then appear? Must it not be in the region of sin, which is your element

now? in the society of the devils, whom you resemble in temper, and imitate in conduct? among the trembling criminals at the left hand of the Judge, where the ungodly and sinners shall all be crowded? If you continue such as you now are, have you any reason at all to hope for a more 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 according to his works? If the children are chastised with various calamities, and even die in common with the rest of mankind, what shall be the doom of enemies and rebels? If those meet with so many difficulties in the pursuit of salvation, what shall these suffer in enduring damnation? If the infernal powers are permitted to worry Christ's sheep, how will they rend and tear the wicked as their proper prey? O that you may in *this your day know the things that belong to your peace, before they are forever hid from your eyes.* Luke xix. 42.

SERMON XXIII.**INDIFFERENCE TO LIFE URGED FROM ITS SHORT-
NESS 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.*

A CREATURE treading every moment upon the slippery brink of the grave, and ready every moment to shoot the gulf of eternity, and launch away to some unknown coast, ought to stand always in the posture of serious expectation; ought every day to be in his own mind taking leave of this world, breaking off the connexions 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

*This sermon is dated, at Mr. Thompson's funeral, February 16, 1759.

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 outpreach the loudest preacher; and they must be deep and senseless rocks, and not men, who do not hear and feel their voice. Among the numberless instances of the divine skill in bringing good out of evil, this is one, that past generations have sickened and died to warn their successors. One here and there also is singled out of our neighbourhood or families, and made an example, a *memento mori*, to us that survive, to rouse us out of our stupid sleep, to give us the signal of the approach of the last enemy, death, to constrain us to let go our eager grasp of this vain world, and set us upon looking out and preparing for another. And may I hope my hearers are come here to-day determined to make this improvement of this melancholy occasion, and to gain this great advantage from our loss? To this I call you as with a voice from the grave; and, therefore, *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

One great reason of men's excessive attachment to the present state, and their stupid neglect 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 bereavement, a torturing separation of heart from heart, or rather a tearing of one's heart in pieces, ask the mourning, weeping widow, and fatherless children, when hovering round his dying bed, or conducting his dear remains to the cold grave. In short, it is evident from a thousand instances, that the enjoyments, pursuits, and sorrows of this life are mighty matters! nay, are all in all in the esteem of the generality of mankind. These are the things they most deeply feel, the things about which they

are chiefly concerned, and which are the objects of their strongest passions.

But is this a just estimate of things? Are the affairs of this world then indeed so interesting and all important? Yes, if eternity be a dream, and heaven and hell but majestic chimeras, or fairy lands; if we were always to live in this world, and had no concern with 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, 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 those 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 alarm-*

ing 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 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 ~~in~~ ^{arduous} pilgrimage through life, and does it not appear to you, as though you commenced men but yesterday? And how little a way can you trace it back till you are lost in the forgotten, unconscious days of infancy, or in that eternal non-existence in which you lay before your creation? But they are but a very few that drag on their lives through seventy or eighty years. Old men can hardly find contemporaries: a new race has started up, and they are become almost strangers in their own 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 prophesy that, in less than seventy or eighty years, the most, if not all this assembly, must be in some apartment of that strange, untried world. The merry, unthinking, irreligious multitude in that doleful mansion which I must mention, grating as the sound is to their ears, and that is hell!* and the pious, penitent, believing few in the blissful seats of heaven. There we shall reside a long, long time indeed, or rather through a long, endless eternity. Which leads me to add,

That 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

*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.

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 irrecoverably 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 gulf of annihilation.

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

And how shall we spend this eternal duration that is thus entailed upon us? Shall we sleep it away in a stupid insensibility or in a state of indifference, 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 God-like and unrivalled, in his exploits both of vengeance and of grace! In this present state, our good and evil are blended; our happiness has some bitter ingredients, and our miseries has some agreeable mitigations: but in the eternal world good and evil shall be entirely and forever separated; all will be pure, unmingled happiness, or pure, unmingled misery. In the present state the best have not uninterrupted peace within; conscience has frequent cause to make them uneasy: some mote or other falls into its tender eye, and sets it a weeping: and the worst also have their arts to keep conscience sometimes easy, and silence its 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 conception, conceived the things that God hath laid up for them that love him. The

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

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 gulf before us; and in a little, little while, you and I must feel them.

And what then have we to do with time and earth? Are the pleasures and pains of this world worthy to be compared with these? *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;* the enjoyments and sufferings, the 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 gait, 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 insignificance 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 forever. In that world where we must all be in a little, little time, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are in this respect like the angels. And of how small consequence is it to

creatures that are to exist forever in the most perfect happiness or misery, and that must so soon break off all their tender connexions 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 affliction may befall us here, they will not last long, but will soon be swallowed up in the greater joys or sorrows of the eternal world. These tears will not always flow;

these sighs will not always heave our breasts. We can sigh no longer than the vital breath inspires our lungs; and we can weep no longer than till death stops all the fountains of our tears; and that will be in a very little time. And when we enter into the eternal world, if we have been the dutiful children of God here, his own gentle hand shall wipe away every tear from our faces, and he will comfort the mourners. Then all the sorrows of life will cease forever, and no more painful remembrance of them will remain than of the pains and sickness of our unconscious infancy. But if all the discipline of our heavenly Father fails to reduce us to our duty, if we still continue rebellious and incorrigible under his rod, and consequently the miseries of this life convey us to those of the future, the smaller will be swallowed up and lost in the greater as a drop in the ocean. Some desperate sinners have hardened themselves in sin with this cold comfort, "That since they must be miserable hereafter, they will at least take their fill of pleasures here, and take a merry journey to hell." But, alas! what a sorry misadventure 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 forever, to reflect that this eternity of pain followed upon and was procured by a few months or years of sordid guilty pleasure! Was that a relief or an aggravation which Abraham mentions to his lost son, when he puts him in mind, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time 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 bereavements we suffer in this world, let us moderate our sorrows and keep them within bounds. Let them not work up and ferment into murmurings and insurrections against God, who gives and takes away, and blessed be his name! Let them not sink us into a sullen dislike of the mercies still left 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 affliction 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 forever; to exist forever 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 murmur, and repine when the parting hour comes. When we are rejoicing in the abundance of earthly blessings, we should be as careful and laborious in securing the 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 domestics perform to the cold 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 to 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 article of the parade of riches. Religion by no means enjoins a sordid, niggardly, churlish manner of living; it allows you to enjoy the blessings of life, but then it forbids all excess, and requires you to keep within the bounds of moderation in your enjoyments. Thus *use this world as not abusing it.*

The apostle’s inference is not only drawn from strong premises, but also enforced with a very weighty reason; *for the fashion of this world passeth away.* The whole scheme and system of worldly affairs, all this marrying, and rejoicing, and weeping, and buying, and enjoying, *passeth away, passeth away this moment;* it not only will pass away, but it is even now passing away. The stream of time, with all the trifles that float on it, and all the eager pursuers of these bubbles, is in motion, in swift, incessant motion, to empty itself and all that sail upon it, into the shoreless ocean of eter-

nity, where all will be absorbed and lost forever. And shall we excessively doat upon things that are perpetually flying from us, and in a little time will be no more our property than the riches of the world before the flood? *O ye sons of men, how long will 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 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 and 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 crowd wait their appearance with eager eyes, and place themselves in the most conve-

*Dunlop's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 215.

nient posture of observation; they gape at the passing show; they follow it with a wondering gaze;—and now it is past; and now it begins to look dim to the sight; and now it disappears. Just such is this transitory world. Thus it begins to attract the eager gaze of mankind: thus it marches by in swift procession from our eyes to meet the eyes of others; and thus it soon vanishes and disappears.*

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

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 overfond 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 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

* Thus Dr. Doddridge understands the text, *Family Expositor*, in 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 Edition.

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 of the world of spirits! ye borderers upon heaven or hell; make ready, loosen your hearts from earth, and all that it contains: weigh anchor, and prepare to launch away into the boundless ocean of eternity, which methinks is now within your ken, and roars within hearing.” And remember, “this I say, brethren, with great confidence, *the time is short: it remaineth therefore, for the future,—that they that have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as if they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not: and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world, all its schemes of affairs, all the vain parade, all the idle farce of life, passeth away.* And away let it pass, if we may at last obtain a better country; that is, 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 excel-

lency 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 centre, 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 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 the 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 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 contemp-

* Or, *Christ Jesus, even that crucified one.* So Dr. Doddridge renders the original Greek. 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.

tible thing, the cross, was the brightest display of divine power to be found in the universe.

Mankind had had time enough to try what expedients their reason could find out for the reformation and salvation of a degenerate and perishing world. The sages and philosophers of the heathen world had had a clear stage for many hundreds of years; and they might have done their utmost without control. But, alas! did any of them, amid all their boasted improvements, succeed in the experiment? Or could they so much as find out a method in which sinners might be reconciled to their God? No; in this most interesting point, they were either stupidly thoughtless, or all their searches issued in perplexity, or in the most absurd and impious contrivances. *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?* Let them appear and produce their schemes upon this head. But *hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* (ver. 20.) Yes, indeed he has, by proposing a method most perfectly adapted 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 cru-

cified; 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 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 hung 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 little provisions, could easily conquer the world, and rescue them from the power of the Romans. But when they saw him seized by his enemies, without making resistance, or working a miracle for his own 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 humble disciples of the cross, and receive for their teachers a company of illiteral 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 babbler, (Acts xvii. 28.) 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, we will 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 had been crucified, and put to the most infamous and tormenting death by men.* An heathen, 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.

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

†*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 minæ, supplicia, tormenta, etiam non adorandæ, sed subeundæ cruces. P. 11.*

“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.* 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 knew not what I have to do, as a minister of the gospel, but to preach Christ crucified. I would make him the substance, the centre, 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 his 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 forever. 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 brightest 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 choose to live under it? Now, how much more terrible and extensively mischievous would be the consequences, if the universal Ruler of men and angels, and of more worlds than we have heard the fame of, should exercise such a

government over our rebellious world? It would be reproachful to himself; and it would be most injurious to his subjects: in short, it might throw heaven and earth, and unknown regions of the universe, into confusion.* He must, therefore, display his own rectoral virtues; he must maintain the 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.

* Pardonning sin, receiving into favour, and bestowing happiness, are not to be considered, in this case, as private favours; but they are acts of 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 meantime by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, (ver, 24.) Mercy appears in providing a Saviour of such infinite dignity: justice, in refusing satisfaction from an inferior person. Mercy, in forgiving sin: justice, in not forgiving so much as one

sin without a sufficient atonement. Mercy, rich, free mercy towards the sinner: justice, strict inexorable justice towards the surety. In short, mercy and justice, as it were, walk hand in hand through every step of this amazing scheme. They are not only glorious each of them apart, but they mingle their beams, and reflect a glory upon each other. By this scheme of salvation by the cross of Christ, also the 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 ade-

quate 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 wo 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 havoc would it have made, if it had been punished upon the sinner himself in his own person! Surely, all the various miseries which have been inflicted upon our guilty world in all ages, and even all the punishments of hell, do not so loudly proclaim the terrible desert and malignity of sin as the cross of Christ; and hence it follows, that in this way of salvation, the most effectual warning is given to the whole universe, to deter them from disobedience. Rebels are pardoned, and made happy, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to others to repeat the transgression. And this was the tender and critical point. If rebels can be pardoned, without reflecting 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 no where 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 prepare 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 expense, and that the fallen angels are suffered to perish without any salvation provided for them at all.

3. In this way provision is made for the sanctification of sinners, that they may be fit for the fruitions and employments of the heavenly state. Their taste is so vitiated, that they have no relish for 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 oh, what an amazing, unexpected, mysterious way! how far beyond the reach of human wisdom! and how brilliant a display of the divine! To display the perfections of God by occasion of sin more illustriously than if sin had never entered into the world, and thus

bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil—to pardon and save the sinner, and yet condemn and punish his sin—to give the brightest display of justice in the freest exercise of mercy; and the richest discovery of mercy in the most rigorous execution of justice—to dismiss rebels from punishment; and advance them to the highest 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 reconcilable 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 expense to remove obstructions, and clear the way for it. Now this is an assurance that the light of nature could never give. It leaves us dreadfully in the dark. And, indeed, nothing but an express declaration from God himself can inform us what he intends to do with criminals that lie entirely at mercy, and that he may do what he pleases with. The heathen world were either stupidly thoughtless about this point, or full of anxiety; and their philosophers, amid all their boasted knowledge, could only offer plausible conjectures. And yet this assurance is necessary to

keep up religion in the world, and encourage rebellious sinners to return to obedience; for with what heart can they serve that God, as to whom they fear he will accept of no service at their hands, or return to him, when they have no encouragement that he will receive them? The hope of acceptance is the spring of repentance and all-attempts for reformation; and when once the sinner concludes there is no hope, he lies down inactive and sullen in despair, or confirms himself in hardened impenitence, and gives the full reign to his lusts. This the Psalmist observed long ago; *There is forgiveness with thee, O Lord, that thou mayest be feared.* Psa. 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, *We 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 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 effectual restraints from sin. And what gratitude does this call for from us, to our divine Benefactor! and how solicitous should we be to make a proper improvement of our peculiar advantages!

2. Hence we may learn the shocking guilt and danger of our modern infidels, the Deists, who, like the Grecks, 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. St. Paul represents it as the most amazing folly, nay, a kind of witchcraft and incantation, that any should desert the truth, that had ever had the least view of Christ crucified. *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 requite the dying love of Jesus! Can such monsters expect salvation from his hands? No; they wilfully cut themselves off from all hope, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. If the cross of Christ does not break their hearts, it is impossible to bring them to repentance: the last and most powerful remedy has proved ineffectual: the last and strongest effort of divine grace has been used with them in vain. Since they obstinately reject the sacrifice of Christ, there remains no other sacrifice for their sin, and nothing awaits them but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour them as adversaries.

3. Hence we should inquire what effect the preaching of Christ crucified has had upon us. Since this is the grand mean Divine Wisdom has found out

for the recovery of our wicked world, when all other means had been in vain, it is of the utmost importance to us, that we should inquire, whether it is likely to answer this end upon us. *It pleases God by this foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* Observe the limitation—*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 case! 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 concur with your interest: and, therefore, if you heartily embrace this plan of salvation, you may be as sure that God will save you, as that he will take care of his own glory, for they are inseparably connected. And do not your hearts, dead as they are, spring within you at the thought? Do you not long to see your 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 bre-

*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.

thren 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; and then we shall find it comparatively an easy matter, a thing of course, to make them good moralists. Then a short hint of their duty to God and man will be more forcible than whole volumes of ethics, while their spirits are not cast in the gospel-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!