

SERMONS

ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

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SERMON XXV.

INGRATITUDE TO GOD AN HEINOUS BUT GENERAL INIQUITY.

2 CHRON. XXXII. 25.—*But Hezekiah rendered not again, according to the benefit done unto him.*

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

endeavour to expose it to your view in its proper infernal colours, as an object of horror and indignation.

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

Many had been the blessings and deliverances of this good man's life. I shall only particularize two, recorded in this chapter. The Assyrians had over-run a great part of the country, and intended to lay siege to Jerusalem. Their haughty monarch, who had carried all before him, and was grown insolent with success, sent Hezekiah a blasphemous letter, to intimidate him and his people. He profanely bullies and defies Hezekiah and his God together; and Rabshakeh, his messenger, comments upon his master's letter in the same style of impiety and insolence. But here observe the signal efficacy of prayer! Hezekiah, Isaiab, and no doubt many other pious people among the Jews, made their prayer to the God of Israel; and, as it were, complained to him of the threatenings and profane blasphemy of the Assyrian monarch. Jehovah hears, and works a miraculous deliverance for them. He sends out an angel, (one was sufficient,) who destroyed in one night, as we are elsewhere told, (2 Kings xix. 35.) no less than an hundred fourscore and five thousand men; which extensive slaughter, a Jewish tradition tells us,

was made by means of lightning; a very supposable and sufficient cause. Sennacherib, with the thin remains of his army, fled home inglorious; and his two sons assassinated him at an idolatrous altar. Thus Jerusalem was freed from danger, and the country rescued from slavery and the ravages of war. Nay, we find from profane history, that this dreadful blow proved fatal in the issue to the Assyrian monarchy, which had oppressed the world so long; for upon this the Medes, and afterwards other nations, threw off their submission; and the empire fell to pieces. Certainly so illustrious a deliverance as this, wrought immediately by the divine hand, was a sufficient reason for ardent gratitude. <

Another deliverance followed upon this. Hezekiah was sick unto death; that is, his sickness was in its own nature mortal, and would have been unto death, had it not been for the miraculous interposition of Providence. But, upon his prayer to God, he was recovered, and fifteen years added to his life. This also was great cause of gratitude. And we find it had this effect upon him, while the sense of his deliverance was fresh upon his mind; for in his eucharistic song upon his recovery, we find these grateful strains: *The living, the living he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life.* But, alas! those grateful impressions wore off in some time; and pride, that uncreaturely temper, began to rise. He began to think himself the favourite of heaven, in some degree, on account of his own personal goodness. He indulged his vanity in ostentatiously exposing his treasures to the Babylonian messengers: which was the instance of

selfish pride and ingratitude that seems here particularly referred to.

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

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

Mercy has poured in upon you on all sides, and followed you from the first commencement of your existence: rich, various, free, repeated, uninterrupted mercy. The blessings of a body wonderfully and fearfully made, complete in all its parts, and not monstrous in any; the blessing of a rational, immortal soul, preserved in the exercise of sound reason for so many years, amid all those accidents that have shattered it in others, and capable of the exalted pleasures of religion, and the everlasting enjoyment of the blessed God, the supreme good: the blessing of a large and spacious world, prepared and furnished for our accommodation; illuminated with an illustrious sun, and the many luminaries of the sky: the earth enriched and adorned with trees, vegetables, various sorts of grain, and animals, for our support or convenience; and the sea, a medium of extensive trade, and an inexhaustible store of fishes: the blessing of the early care of parents and friends, to provide for us in the helpless days of infancy, and direct or restrain us in the giddy, precipitant years

of youth; the blessing of being born in the adult age of the world, when the improvements of art are carried to so high a degree of perfection; of being born, not among savages in a wilderness, but in a humanized, civilized country; not on the burning, sandy deserts of the torrid zone, not under the frozen sky of Lapland or Iceland, but in a temperate climate, as favourable to the comfort and continuance of life as most countries upon earth; not in a barren soil, scarcely affording provision of the coarsest sort for its inhabitants, but in a land of unusual plenty, that has never felt the severities of famine; the blessing of not being a race of slaves, under the tyranny of an arbitrary government, but free-born Britons and Virginians in a land of liberty: these birth-right blessings are almost peculiar to us and our nation. Let me enumerate also the blessing of a good education; good, at least, when compared to the many savage nations of the earth; the blessing of health for months and years; the blessing of raiment suited to the various seasons of the year; the blessings of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest; the agreeable vicissitude of night and day; the refreshing repose of sleep, and the activity and enjoyment of our waking hours; the numerous and refined blessings of society, and the most endearing relations; the blessings included in the tender names of friend, husband or wife, parent or child, brother or sister; the blessings of peace; peace, in the midst of a peaceful country, which has been our happy lot till of late years; or peace, in the midst of a ravaged, bleeding country, which is a more distinguished and singular blessing, and which we now enjoy, while many of our fellow subjects feel a terrible reverse; blessings in every age of life; in

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

to be perceivable, or to cast the system of nature into disorder. The blessings conveyed in this way are not only the gifts of his hand, but the gifts of his immediate hand.

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

The positive blessings I have briefly enumerated, have some of them been interrupted at times: but even the interruption seemed only intended to make way for some deliverance; a deliverance that re-instated us in the possession of our former blessings with a new and stronger relish, and taught us, or at least was adapted to teach us, some useful lessons, which we were not likely to learn, had not our enjoyment been a while suspended. This very hour let us turn our eyes backward, and take a review of a length of ten, twenty, forty, or sixty years; and what a series of deliverances rise upon

us! Deliverances from the many dangers of childhood, by which many have lost their limbs, and many their lives; deliverance from many threatening and fatal accidents; deliverances from exquisite pains, and from dangerous diseases; deliverances from the gates of death, and the mouth of the grave; and deliverances for yourselves, and for your dear families and friends. When sickness, like a destroying angel, has entered your neighbourhood, and made extensive havoc and desolation around you, you and yours have escaped the infection, while you were every day in anxious expectation of the dreadful visit, and trembling at the dubious fate of some dear relative or your own: or if it has entered your houses, like a messenger of death, it has not committed its usual ravages in them. Or if it has torn from your hearts one or more members of your family, still you have some left, or perhaps some new members added to make up the loss. When you have been in deep distress, and covered with the most tremendous glooms, deliverance has dawned in the most seasonable hour, and light and joy have succeeded to nights of darkness and melancholy. In short, your deliverances have been endless and innumerable. You appear this day so many monuments of delivering goodness. You have also shared in the deliverances wrought for your country and nation in former and latter times: deliverances from the open violences and clandestine plots and insurrections of enemies abroad, and traitors and rebels at home: deliverances from the united efforts of both, to subvert the British constitution, and enslave free born Britons to civil or ecclesiastical tyranny, or a medley of both;—and deliverances from drought, and the threatening appearance of famine, which we have so lately ex-

perienced in these parts; and yet they are long enough past to be generally forgotten!

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

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

Dare you now make the inquiry, What returns has this divine Benefactor received from you for all this goodness? Alas! the discovery which this inquiry will make may convict, shock, confound, and mortify us all; for we are all, in a prodigious degree, though some much more than others, guilty in this respect, guilty of the vilest ingratitude. Alas! are there not many of you that do not return to God the gratitude of a dog to his master? That brute animal who receives but crumbs and blows from you, will welcome you home with a thousand fond and obliging motions. The very dull ox you fodder, knows his owner. But, O! the more than brutal ingratitude of reasonable creatures! Some of you perhaps do not so much as acknowledge the agency of Providence

in these enjoyments, but, affecting a very unphilosophical infidelity under the name of philosophy, you make natural causes the authors of all good to you, without the agency of the first Mover of all the springs of nature. Others of you, who may be orthodox in your faith as to this point, yet are practical infidels, the most absurd and inconsistent sort in the world; that is, while you verbally acknowledge, and speculatively believe the agency of Providence in these things, yet you live as if there was no such thing: you live thoughtless of the divine Benefactor, and disobedient to him for days and years together. The very mercies he bestows upon you, you abuse to his dishonour, by making them occasions of sin. Do not your consciences now convict you of that monster sin, ingratitude, the most base, unnatural, and yet indulged gratitude? How do you resent it, if one whom you have deeply obliged should prove ungrateful, and use you ill? But it is impossible any one of your fellow-creatures should be guilty of such enormous ingratitude towards you as you are guilty of towards God; because it is impossible any one of them should be so strongly obliged to you as you are to him.

Ye children of God, his peculiar favourites, whose hearts are capable of, and do actually feel, some generous sensations of gratitude, what do you think of your conduct towards such a Benefactor? I speak particularly to you, because you are most likely to feel what I say. Have you rendered again to your God according to the benefits done you? O! are you not mortified and shocked to reflect upon your ingratitude, your sordid monstrous ingratitude? Do you not abhor yourselves because you were capable of such base conduct? From you I expect such a generous resentment.

But as to others, they are dead in trespasses and sins, dead toward God, and therefore it is no wonder if they are dead to all penitential ingenuous relentings for their ingratitude.

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

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

The celestial regions are fast peopling, though, alas! not so fast as the land of darkness, with numerous colonies from our guilty globe. Even in these dregs of time when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, Jesus is gaining many hearts and saving many souls, in the various apartments of his church. Though you and thousands more should be left, and continue to neglect, yet such excellency shall not want admirers, such a

physician shall not want employ in our dying world. No, *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* Isa. liii. 11. And I doubt not but there are some among you who are the trophies of his victorious love,—of his victorious love, I say: for it is by the force of love he sweetly conquers.

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

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

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

But I must now address such of you, who are still more deeply obliged to your divine Benefactor, and whose ingratitude therefore is black and horrid; I mean such of you who not only have shared in the blessings and deliverances of life, and lived under the advantages of a dispensation of grace, but have experimentally known the love of God to your souls in a manner peculiar to yourselves, and are actually entitled to all the unknown blessings prepared for those that love him. If I am so happy as to belong to your number, I am sure I am so unhappy as to share deeply with you in the guilt, the black guilt of ingratitude. When you were dead in trespasses and sins, God quickened you, out of his great love wherewith he loved you. When you were rushing on towards destruction, in the enchanting paths of sin, he checked your mad career, and turned your faces heavenward. When you were sunk into sorrows, borne down with a sense of guilt, and trembling every moment with the fears of immediate execution, he relieved you, led you to Jesus, and, as it were, lodged you safe in his arms. When dismal glooms

have again gathered upon your minds, and overwhelming fears rushed again upon you like a deluge, he has relieved you again by leading you to the same almighty and ever-constant Saviour. When your graces and virtues have withered in the absence of the Sun of righteousness, he has again risen upon you with healing in his wings, and revived your languishing souls. He has shed abroad his love in your hearts, which has made this wretched wilderness a paradise to you. He has, at times, afforded you, as you humbly hoped, joy and peace in believing; yea, even caused you to rejoice with *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. He has met you in your retirements, and allowed you to converse with him in his ordinances, with the heart of a friend. He has, as it were, unlocked his peculiar treasure, to enrich you, and given you an unshaken title to the most glorious inheritance of the saints of light. He has made you his own, his own in a peculiar sense; his people, his friends, his children. You are indeed his favourites: you were even so, long before time began. He loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness has he drawn you; and having loved you once, he will love you always, and he will continue in his love to all eternity. *Neither life, nor death, things present, or things to come, shall ever be able to separate you from his love.* Rom. viii. 38, 39. His love to you is an unbounded ocean, that spreads over eternity, and makes it, as it were, the channel or the ocean of your happiness. In you he intends to shew to all worlds what glorious creatures he can form of the dust, and of the polluted fragments of degenerate human nature. What is all the profession of kings to their favourites, what are all the benefactions of creatures, nay, what are all the bounties of the divine hand itself within

the compass of time, when compared to these astonishing, unparalleled, immortal, infinite, God-like favours? They all dwindle into obscurity, like the stars of night in the blaze of noon.

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

Let me now add a consideration, which gives an astonishing emphasis to all that has been said. All this profusion of mercy, personal and relative, temporal and spiritual, is bestowed upon creatures that deserve not the least mercy; creatures that deserve to be stripped naked of every mercy; nay, that deserve to be made miserable in time and eternity; creatures that deserve not to breathe this vital air, to tread the ground, or drink the stream that runs waste through the wilderness, much less to enjoy all the blessings which the infinite merit of Jesus could purchase, or the infinite goodness of God can bestow; creatures that are so far from

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

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

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

SERMON XXVI.**THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND THEIR CONSEQUENT JOYS AND BLESSINGS.**

ISAIAH LIII. 10, 11.—*When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.**

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

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

whom we are bound by the most endearing obligations! a person of infinite dignity and perfect innocence, our best friend, and only Saviour! What if it should be he? Would not this move your hearts, and raise all your tender passions? Or shall he die in such agonies unpitied, unlamented, unbeloved, when even a dying criminal excites our compassion? What do you think would be the issue, if I should make an experiment of this to-day? If I should make a trial what weight the sufferings of Jesus will have upon your hearts? Do you think the representation of his sufferings and love would have any effect upon you? That they may have this effect, is my design in the prosecution of this subject; for that it is Jesus who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the subject of these sufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of the passages, quoted from this chapter, to him in the New Testament. This chapter has been a successful part of the scriptures; and there are some now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the Ethiopian eunuch was reading, when he asked Philip, *Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or some other man?* and Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus: and he believed with all his heart, and was baptized; and went on his way homeward and heavenward rejoicing. Acts viii. 32, 35. This was the chapter that opened to the penitent earl of Rochester the way of salvation through the sufferings of Christ, which alone relieved his mind from the horrors of guilt, and constrained him to hope that even such a sinner as he might find mercy. O! that it may have the same effect upon you, my brethren, to-day, that with the eunuch, you may return home rejoicing!

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

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

You see Jesus presented an offering for sin; and what was it he offered? "Silver and gold he had none," the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of heifers, would not suffice; and these too he had not. But he had blood in his veins, and that shall all go; that he will offer up to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made

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

†Or, "when thou shalt make his soul sin." It is a common scripture-phrase, whereby a sin offering is called sin. And it is sometimes retained in our translation, particularly in I Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin;" that is, a sin-offering for us, &c.

an offering for sin. *His soul an offering for sin!* his pure, spotless soul! his soul, that was of more value than the whole universe beside! You may find those that will give a great many things for the deliverance of a friend, but who will give his soul? his soul for his enemies!—This is the peculiar commendation of the love of Jesus.

His soul here may signify his whole human nature; in which sense it is often taken in the sacred writings. And then the meaning is, that both his soul and body, or his whole human nature, bore the punishment due to us. Or his soul may be here understood properly for his rational and immortal part, in opposition to his body; and then the meaning is, that he suffered in soul as well as in body. His soul suffered by the foresight of his sufferings; by the temptations of the devil; by an affecting view of the sins of men; and especially by the absence of his heavenly Father. Hence, when his body was untouched, in the garden of Gethsemane, he cries out, *my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death;* and elsewhere, *now is my soul troubled.* In short, as one expresses it, the sufferings of his soul was the soul of his sufferings. The sense of bodily pain may be swallowed up in the pleasing sensations of divine love. So some have found by happy experience, who have suffered for righteousness' sake. But Jesus denied himself that happiness which he has given to many of his servants. His soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and all this for such sinners as we. And shall this have no weight among the creatures for whom he endured all this? Make an experiment upon your hard hearts with this thought, and try if they can resist its energy,—*Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.* Thou shalt make; that is, thou, the great

God and Father of all. This sacrifice is provided by thy wisdom and grace, and appointed by thy authority, who hast a right to settle the terms of forgiveness; and therefore we may be sure this sacrifice is acceptable; this atonement is sufficient. This method of salvation is thy contrivance and establishment, and therefore valid and firm. Here, my brethren, is a sure foundation; here, and no where else. Can you produce a divine warrant for depending on your own righteousness, or any thing else? No; but this offering for sin is of divine appointment, and therefore you may safely venture your eternal all upon it. "Come, ye afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;" come build upon this rock, and you shall never fall.

Or the words may be rendered, *When his soul shall make an offering for sin.** And in this sense it is signified that this was Christ's own voluntary act. He consented to the arduous undertaking: he consented to be our substitute, and offered himself a sacrifice for us. He was under no previous constraint; subject to no compulsion. This he tells us himself; *No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself.* John x. 18. Thus it was his own free choice; and this consideration prodigiously enhances his love. A forced favour is but a small favour. But Jesus willingly laid down his life when he had power to keep it. He voluntarily ascended the cross, when he might have still continued on his throne. He was absolute Lord and Proprietor of himself, under no obligations to any, till he assumed them by his own consent. When

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

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

as honestly attempt that which you are bound to by the most strong and endearing obligations? If you reject this proposal, make no pretensions to gratitude; a regard to the most sacred and rightful authority, or any noble disposition. You are sunk into the most sordid and aggravated degree of wickedness, and every generous and pious passion is extinct within you.

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

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

the living. Rom. xiv. 9. By his death he acquired universal government, and has the keys of the vast invisible world, and of death that leads into it. Rev. i. 18. This was a great part of that joy which was set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame. Heb. xii. 2.*

And is the poor, despised, insulted, crucified Jesus thus exalted? Then I proclaim, like the herald before Joseph, when advanced to be prime minister to Pharaoh, Bow the knee! submit to him, ye sons of men. He has bought you with his blood, and has a right to your subjection; therefore yield yourselves to him. This day become his willing subjects, and swear allegiance to him at his table. To him let every knee bow in this assembly, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. And do you now feel your hearts begin to yield? Are your souls in the posture of humble homage? Are you ready to say, "Lord Jesus, reign over this soul of mine: see, I resign it as the willing captive of thy cross?" Or will you stand it out against him? Shall your hearts and practices, as it were, send a message after him, now when he is advanced to his heavenly throne, *We will not have this man to reign over us?* Then I proclaim you rebels, wilful, inexcusable rebels against the supreme, the most rightful, and the most gracious government of Christ; and if you continue such, you must perish forever

*This sentence, "he shall prolong his days," is otherwise translated by some, and applied not to Christ, but to his seed: "He shall see his seed, who shall prolong their days;" or, "He shall see a long-lived seed," or, "a long succession of posterity." *So the Seventy.*—This translation gives a stricter connexion and uniformity to the words with the preceding and following sentences. And in this sense it is undoubtedly true: for Jesus has always had, and ever will have some spiritual children on our guilty globe; and neither earth nor hell shall ever be able to extinguish the sacred race.

by the sword of his justice, without a possibility of escaping. You cannot rebel against the crucified Jesus with impunity, for he is not now dying on the cross, or lying senseless in the grave. He lives! he lives to avenge the affront. He lives forever to punish you forever. He shall prolong his days to prolong your torment. Therefore, you have no alternative, but to submit to him, or perish.

I may also propose the immortality and exaltation of Christ to you, as an encouragement to desponding souls. So the apostle uses it, *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth.* Heb. vii. 25. In trusting your souls to him, you do not commit them to a dead Saviour. It is true, he was once dead, above 1700 years ago; but now he is alive; and behold, he liveth forevermore. He lives to communicate his Spirit for your sanctification; he lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness; he lives to send down supplies to you according to your exigencies; he lives to make perpetual intercession for you, (which is the thing the apostle had in view,) to plead your cause, to urge your claims founded on his blood, and to solicit blessings for you. He lives forever to make you happy forever. And will you not venture to trust your souls in his hand? you may safely do it without fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the Supreme Being, Lord of all, and having all things subjected to him; and, consequently, nothing can hurt you if he undertakes to be your guard. Ye trembling weaklings, would it not be better for you to fly to him for refuge than to stand on your own footing, afraid of falling every hour? He can, he will support you, if you lean upon him.

And does not he appear to you as an object of love in his exalted state? He is all-glorious, and

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

Finally, May I not propose the exaltation and immortality of the Lord Jesus, as an object of congratulation to you that are his friends? Friends naturally rejoice in the honours conferred upon one another, and mutually congratulate each other's success. And will not you that love Jesus rejoice with him, that he is not now where he once was; not hanging on a painful and ignominious cross, but seated on a glorious throne; not insulted by the rabble, but adored by all the heavenly armies; not pierced with a crown of thorns, but adorned with a crown of unfading glory; not oppressed under loads of sufferings, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys! Must you not rejoice that his sufferings for you had so happy an issue with regard to himself? O! can you be sunk in sorrow while your Head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain he endured for you! Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all his members; and if you have no reason to rejoice on your own account;

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yet rejoice for your Head; share in the joys of your Lord.

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

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

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

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

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

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Jesus to this assembly, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest!* John iv. 35. O! is the happy season come, when we shall see a large crop of converts in this place! Then welcome thou long expected season! But, alas! is not this a flattering hope! is it not, on the other hand, a barren season with us? is not the harvest past and the summer over, while so many are not saved! O! the melancholy thought! If it has been so with us for some time, O let us endeavour to make this a fruitful day!

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

He shall see his seed. It is a comfort to a dying man to see a numerous offspring to keep up his name, and inherit his estate. This comfort Jesus had in all the calamities of his life, and in all the agonies of death; and this animated him to endure all with patience. He saw some of his spiritual children weeping around him while hanging on the cross. He looked forward to the end of time,

And their consequent Blessings.

and saw a numerous offspring rising up from age to age to call him blessed, to bear up his name in the world, and to share in his heavenly inheritance. And O! may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that from his cross he cast a look towards Hanover in the ends of the earth; and that in his last agonies he was revived with this reflection, "I see I shall not die in vain: I see my seed dispersed over the world, and reaching the wilds of America. I foresee that a number of them, towards the end of the world, will meet in Hanover, gratefully to commemorate the sufferings I am now enduring, and devote themselves to me forever." O! my brethren, will you not afford the blessed Jesus this pleasure? it is but little, very little for all the tortures he bore for you: your sins have given him many a wound, many a pang, and will you not now grant him this satisfaction? But the cross is not the only place from whence he takes a view of his spiritual seed. He is now exalted to his throne in the highest heavens; and from thence he takes a wide survey of the universe. He looks down upon our world: he beholds kings in their grandeur, victorious generals with all their power, nobles and great men in all their pomp; but these are not the objects that best please his eyes. "He sees his seed," he sees one here, and another there, bought with his blood, and born of his Spirit; and this is the most delightful sight our world can afford him. Some of them may be oppressed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghastly with famine: they may make no great figure in mortal eyes; but he loves to look at them, he esteems them as his children, and the fruits of his dying pangs. And let me tell you, his eyes are upon this assembly today; and if there be one of his spiritual seed among us, he can distinguish him in the crowd.

He sees you drinking in his words with eager ears; he sees you at his table commemorating his love; he sees your hearts breaking with penitential sorrows, and melting at his cross. And O! should we not all be solicitous that we be of that happy number on whom his eyes are thus graciously fixed!

But these are not the only children whom he delights to view; they are not all in such an abject, imperfect state. No; he sees a glorious company of them around his throne in heaven, arrived to maturity, enjoying their inheritance, and resembling their divine Parent. How does his benevolent heart rejoice to look over the immense plains of heaven, and see them all peopled with his seed! When he takes a view of this numerous offspring, sprung from his blood, and when he looks down to our world, and we hope to this place among others, and sees so many infants in grace, gradually advancing to their adult age; when he sees some, perhaps every hour since he died upon Calvary, entering the gates of heaven, having finished their course of education upon earth: I say, when this prospect appears to him on every hand, how does he rejoice! Now the prophecy in my text is fulfilled, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* If you put the sentiments of his benevolent heart into language, methinks it is to this purpose, "It is enough; since my death has been so fruitful of such a glorious posterity, I am satisfied. If sinners will submit to me, that I may save them, if they will but suffer me to make them happy, I desire no other reward for all my agonies for them. If this end be but answered, I do not at all repent of my hanging on the tree for them." O sirs, must not your hearts melt away within you, to hear such language as

this? See the strength of the love of Jesus! if you be but saved; he does not grudge his blood and life for you. Your salvation would make amends for all. He asks no other reward from you than that you will become his spiritual seed, and behave as children towards him. This he would count the greatest joy; a joy more than equivalent to all the pains he endured for you. And, O! my brethren, will you not afford him this joy to-day? This is a point I have much at heart, and therefore I must urge it upon you; nay, I can take no denial in it. Jesus has done and suffered a great deal for you; and has gratitude never constrained you to inquire how you can oblige him? or what you shall do for him in return? If this be your inquiry, you have an answer immediately: devote yourselves to his service, love and obey him as his dutiful children, that he may save you. If you would oblige him, if you would give him full satisfaction for all the sorrows you have caused him, do this; do this or nothing; for nothing else can please him. Suppose he should this day appear to you in that form, in which he once was seen by mortals, sweating great drops of blood, accused, insulted, bruised, scourged, racked upon the cross; and suppose he should turn to you with a countenance full of love and pity, and drenched with blood and tears, and address you in such moving language as this? "See! sinners, see what I suffer for you: see at what a dear rate I purchase your life; see how I love you. And now I have only this to ask of you in return, that you would forsake those murderous sins which thus torment me; that you would love and serve me; and accept of that salvation which I am now purchasing for you with the blood of my heart; this I ask with all the importunity of my last breath, of bleeding wounds, and expiring groans.

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

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

deliver you from sin and Satan, the worst of masters, and bring you into the glorious liberty of his children.

Here I would, for a while, drop my address to the noble principle of gratitude, and endeavour to work upon that of self-love, which, though less noble, is more strong in degenerate creatures. In affording Christ this pleasure, you will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves; for it is your happiness, your salvation that he rejoices in, and therefore in grieving him you ruin yourselves. Accept of him as your Saviour and Lord, and you shall be happy forever; but if you reject him, you are forever undone: he will not save you, and where will you look for a Saviour? To which of the saints, to which of the angels, will you turn? Alas! they all will cast you off if Christ renounces you, If you will not suffer him to rejoice over you in doing you good, he will rejoice over you in doing you evil; he will glorify himself in your destruction; he will please himself in the execution of justice upon you. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright to reflect the splendours of his perfections. But, on the other hand, if you afford him joy at your conversion this day, he will reward you forever; he will reward you with all the unspeakable joys of heaven.

Here then is a twofold cord to draw you to Jesus Christ, the love of Christ, and the love of yourselves; and one would think such a cord could not easily be broken. Can any of you resist the united force of gratitude and self-interest? Are you so unnatural as to sin against Christ, and against your own life; to ruin yourselves rather than oblige him? Who would think that the once noble nature of man should ever be capable of such a degree of degeneracy? And O! who would have

thought that the Son of God would lay down his life, or even entertain one benevolent thought for such base, ungrateful creatures, that care so little for him, or even for their own true interest? I must bring this matter to a short issue; and it is this; you must either afford Christ this generous pleasure, by receiving and submitting to him this day, or you will return home under the additional guilt of rejecting him, and doing all you could to reduce him into misery again; and if you continue such, which, alas! is not improbable, you must feel his eternal resentments, and perish forever under the weight of his righteous vengeance. Let us now proceed to another part of the text.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. It is the pleasure of the Lord that sinners should be saved through the mediation of Jesus Christ; I say, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; for he is determined they shall not be saved in any other way; he is determined that those who refuse to be saved in this way, shall not be saved at all; because their salvation in any other way would not be consistent with the glory of his perfections, the honour of his government, and his character as the supreme Magistrate of the universe: and his honour and glory are of more importance than the happiness of all created worlds; and, therefore, their happiness cannot be obtained in any way inconsistent with it. But through the mediation of Christ sinners may be saved, and in the mean time the honour of the divine perfections and government secured, and even illustrated. He has made atonement for sin, and answered the demands of the divine law and justice; so that God can now be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus. Hence *God is in Christ*; observe, in Christ, recon-

eking the world to himself. 2 Cor. v. 19. His heart is set on it; and the success of this scheme affords him the greatest pleasure. It is not only your interest, but your duty to be saved. It is as much your duty to enter into heaven, as to pray, or to perform any other part of religion. And your destruction will not only be your righteous punishment, but your sin; the most criminal self-murder. God has been pleased to interpose his authority, to give greater force to the principle of self-love. Your interest has this additional recommendation, that it is your duty; and you sin against God in ruining yourselves. Here again my subject leads me to address myself to the united principles of gratitude and self-love. Will you not afford the Lord that made you this benevolent pleasure? Will you not gratify him in this, when it is your happiness he seeks? Has neither the pleasure of God nor your own immortal interest any weight with you? Is sin dearer to you than both? Alas! if you are not to be wrought upon by considerations drawn from the love of God, or love to yourselves, from gratitude or self-interest, from what topic shall I reason with you? If this be the case, you are no longer to be dealt with as reasonable creatures, but as natural brute-beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.

This work of saving sinners, God has entrusted to Jesus Christ; and he has chosen a very proper person for so grand and difficult an undertaking. *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,* or under his management. He knows how to carry on the scheme to the best advantage. The work has been going on from Adam to this day, in spite of all opposition; and it is not now at a stand. O that it may prosper among you, my dear people! O that the sacred Trinity, and all the angels on

high, may look down with pleasure this day on this guilty spot, rejoicing to see the grand scheme of salvation successfully going on! My brethren, will you not fall in with the design? A design so favourable to yourselves. Will you not all concur to promote it, and carry it into execution upon a child, a friend, a neighbour, and especially upon yourselves? Or will you set yourselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed, by refusing to fall in with his scheme? Will you join in the conspiracy against it with the malevolent powers of hell, who oppose it with all their might, because it tends to your salvation? You readily concur in any scheme for your temporal advantage, and why not in this? Is the happiness of heaven the only kind of happiness that you are careless about? Is the salvation of your immortal soul the only deliverance for which you have no desire? Alas! are you become so stupidly wicked?

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

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

The table of the Lord is just about to be spread among us. This is another instance of the grace and benevolence of Christ; for to remember him, who is the design of this ordinance, is not only your duty, but your privilege and happiness. The

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

prodigals return, that there may be joy in your Father's house, whose arms are stretched out to embrace you, and who is looking after you with eager eyes. O let the pleasure of the Lord prosper among us this day, and it will be a day gratefully to be remembered to all eternity.

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

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

Finally, You are now to renew your vows and obligations to be the Lord's, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life. See that you enter into them with an entire dependence upon his strength: and O! remember them afterwards, to carry them into execution. One would think that

all traitors would be forever deterred from sitting down at the Lord's table, by the shocking example of Judas, the first hypocrite that profaned it. And O! one would think that vows, made in so solemn a posture, and with the emblems of Christ's body and blood in your hands, would not soon be forgotten as trifles. It is, methinks, an exploit of wickedness to be capable of this; and none of you, I hope, are hardy enough to venture upon it.

SERMON XXVII.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY REVEALED IN THE
GOSPEL.

2 TIM. I. 10. *And hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.**

SO extensive have been the havoc and devastation which death has made in the world for near six thousand years, ever since it was first introduced by the sin of man, that this earth is now become one vast grave-yard, or burying-place for her sons. The many generations that have followed upon each other, in so quick a succession from Adam to this day, are now in the mansions underground. And there must we and all the present generation sleep ere long. Some make a short journey from the womb to the grave: they rise from nothing at the creative fiat of the Almighty, and take an immediate flight into the world of spirits, without an intermediate state of probation. Like a bird on the wing, they perch on our globe,

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

rest a day, a month, or a year, and then fly off for some other regions. It is evident, these were not formed for the purposes of the present state, where they make so short a stay; and yet we are sure they are not made in vain by an all-wise Creator; and therefore we conclude they are young immortals, that immediately ripen in the world of spirits, and there enter upon scenes, for which it was worth their while coming into existence. Others spring up and bloom for a few years; but they fade away like a flower, and are cut down. Others arrive at the prime or meridian of human life; but in all their strength and gaiety, and amid their hurries and schemes, and promising prospects, they are surprised by the arrest of death, and laid stiff, senseless, and ghastly in the grave. A few creep into their beds of dust under the burden of old age and the gradual decays of nature. In short, the grave is *the place appointed for all living*: the general rendezvous of all the sons of Adam. There the prince and the beggar, the conqueror and the slave, the giant and the infant, the scheming politician and the simple peasant, the wise and the fool, Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and christians, all lie equally low, and mingle their dust without distinction. There beauty in all its charms putrifies into stench and corruption, and feeds the vilest insects. There the sturdy arm of youth lies torpid and benumbed, unable to drive off the worms that crawl through their frame, and riot upon their marrow. There lie our ancestors, our neighbours, our friends, our relatives, with whom we once conversed, and who were united to our hearts by strong and endearing ties; and there lies our friend, the sprightly, vigorous youth, whose death is the occasion of this funeral solemnity. This earth is overspread with the ruins of

the human frame: it is an huge carnage, a vast charnal-house, undermined and hollowed with the graves, the last mansions of mortals.

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

But my text revives us with heavenly light to scatter this tremendous gloom. Jesus hath abolished death, overthrown its empire, and delivered its captives; and he *hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.*

Life and immortality here seem to refer both to the soul and the body, the two constituents of our person. As applied to the body, life and immortality signify, that though our bodies are dissolved at death, and return into their native elements, yet they shall be formed anew with vast improvements, and raised to an immortal existence; so that they shall be as though death never had *had* any power over them; and thus death shall be abolished, annihilated, and all traces of the ruins it had made forever disappear, as though they had never been. It is in this sense chiefly that the word *Immortality* or *Incorruptibility*, is made use of in my text. But then the resurrection of the

body supposes the perpetual existence of the soul, for whose sake it is raised: therefore, life and immortality, as referring to the soul, signify that it is immortal, in a strict and proper sense; that is, that it cannot die at all, or be-dissolved like the body; but it lives in the agonies of the dying animal; it lives after the dissolution of the animal frame in a separate state; it lives at the resurrection to re-animate the new formed body; and it lives forever, like its mortal Parent, and shall never be dissolved nor annihilated. In this complex sense we may understand the immortality of which my text speaks.

Now it is to the gospel that we owe the clear discovery of immortality in both these senses. As for the resurrection of the dead, which confers a kind of immortality upon our mortal bodies, it is altogether the discovery of divine revelation.—The light of nature could not so much as give a hint of it to the most sagacious philosophers in the heathen world. They did not hope for it as possible, much less believe it as certain. And when, among other important doctrines of pure revelation, it was first preached to them by St. Paul, their pride could not bear the mortification of being taught by a tent-maker what all their studies had not been able to discover; and, therefore, rejected it with scorn, and ridiculed it as a new-fangled notion of the superstitious Jews. This seems to have been an entire secret to all nations (except the Jews,) till the light of christianity dawned upon the world. They bade an eternal farewell to their bodies, when they dropped them in the grave. They never expected to meet them again in all the glorious improvements of an happy resurrection. But that divine revelation from whence we learn our religion, opens to us a brighter prospect; it strengthens our eyes to look forward through the glooms

of death, and behold the many that sleep in the dust awaking; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Dan. xii. 2. It assures us, that the hour is coming, when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. John v. 28. Therefore, be it known unto thee, O Death, thou king of terrors, that though we cannot now resist thy power nor escape thy arrest, yet we do not surrender ourselves to thee as helpless, irredeemable prisoners. We shall yet burst thy bonds, and obtain the victory over thee. And when we commit the dust of our friends or our own to thee, O grave, know, it is a trust deposited in thy custody, to be faithfully kept till called for by Him who was once a prisoner in thy territories, but regained his liberty, and triumphed over thee, and put that song of victory into the mouths of all his followers, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

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

as God is the moral Governor of the rational world, there must be rewards and punishments, and, therefore, there must be a future state of retribution; for we see mankind are now under a promiscuous providence, and generally are not dealt with according to their works; and if there be a future state of retribution, the soul must live in a future state, otherwise it could not be the subject of rewards and punishments. These and the like topics of argument have been improved by the friends of immortality, to prove that important doctrine beyond all reasonable suspicion. And because these arguments from reason seem sufficient, some would conclude that we are not at all obliged to the christian revelation in this respect. But it should be considered, that those are not the arguments of the populace, the bulk of mankind, but of a few philosophic studious men. But as immortality is the prerogative of all mankind, of the ignorant and illiterate, as well as of the wise and learned, all mankind, of all ranks of understanding, are equally concerned in the doctrine of immortality; and therefore a common revelation was necessary, which would teach the ploughman and mechanic, as well as the philosopher, that he was formed for an immortal existence, and consequently that it is his grand concern to fit himself for a happiness beyond the grave, as lasting as his nature. Now, it is the gospel alone that makes this important discovery plain and obvious to all. It must also be considered, that men may be able to demonstrate a truth when the hint is but once given, which they would never have discovered, nor perhaps suspected, without that hint. So, when *the gospel of Christ has brought immortality to light*, our christian philosophers may support it with arguments from reason; but had they been destitute of this additional

light, they would have been lost in perplexity and uncertainty, or at best have been advanced to no farther than plausible or probable conjectures. Persons may be assisted in their searches by the light of revelation; but, being accustomed to it, they may mistake it for the light of their own reason; or they may not be so honest and humble as to acknowledge the assistance they have received. The surest way to know what mere unassisted reason can do, is to inquire what it has actually done in those sages of the heathen world, who had no other guide, and in whom it was carried to the highest degree of improvement. Now we find, in fact, that though some philosophers had plausibilities and presumptions, that their souls should exist after the dissolution of their bodies, yet that they rather supposed, or wished, or thought it probable, than firmly believed it upon good evidence. The Socrateses, the Platos, and the Ciceros, of Greece and Rome, after all their searches, were more perplexed on this point, than a plain common christian of the smallest intellectual improvements in our land of evangelical light. Whoever reads their writings upon this subject, will find, when they draw their conclusion of the soul's existence after death, it is often from extravagant and chimerical premises; such as the pre-existence of human souls, their successive transmigrations from body to body, their being literally particles of the Deity, whom they supposed to be the *Anima Mundi*, the universal soul of the world, &c. All these premises want the support of proper evidence; and some of them are directly subversive of the proper notion of a future state, as a state of rewards and punishments. Sometimes indeed they seem to reason from better principles; but then they still hesitate about the conclusion, and fluctuate between the

presumptions for it, and the objections against it. Socrates was confessedly the brightest character in the heathen world, and seemed to have the fairest claim of any among them to the honour of a martyr for the cause of truth and virtue; and yet, even he, when making his defence before his judges, speaks in the language of uncertainty and perplexity. "Death," says he, "either reduces us to nothing, and entirely destroys all sense and consciousness; or, as some say, it conveys us from this world into some other region." Thus, standing on the brink of eternity, he was not assured whether he was not about to leap into the hideous gulf of annihilation, or to pass into some vital region replete with inhabitants. When he was condemned, his last words to the court were these; "It is time for us to part; I, that I may suffer death; and you, that you may enjoy life; but which of us has the happier lot, is known only to God." Poor honest Socrates! how happy hadst thou been hadst thou but enjoyed one glimmering of that heavenly light which multitudes among us despise! My brethren, let us be thankful for our superior advantages, and let us prize and improve that precious gospel, which gives us full information in this important point, and renders the meanest christian wiser, in this respect, than Socrates himself.

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

Let us first look through the wastes and glooms of death and the grave to the glorious, dreadful morning of the resurrection. At the all-alarming clangour of the last trumpet, Adam, and the sleeping millions of his posterity, start into sudden

life. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28.

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

And may not the prospect alarm us, and set us upon earnest preparation for these important scenes? Shall we take so much care of our bodies in this mortal state, where, after all our care, they must soon fall to dust, and become the prey of worms, and shall we take no care that they may have a happy and glorious resurrection! What does it signify how they are fed or dressed, while they are only fattening for worms, and the ornaments of dress may be our winding-sheet? What does this signify, in comparison with their doom at the great rising day, and their state through eternity? My brethren, you must not let *sin reign in your mortal bodies now, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof*, if you would have them raised holy and happy in that awful morning; but you must consecrate your bodies, and keep them holy as the temples of the Holy Ghost; and *yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Can you flatter yourselves that bodies polluted with filthy lusts and sensual gratification shall ever be admitted into the regions of perfect purity? It would be an unnatural element to such depraved constitutions. Shall those feet ever walk the crystal pavement of the New Jerusalem, which have been accustomed to run into the foul paths of sin?

Shall those tongues ever join the songs of heaven, which have been oftener employed in swearing and imprecation, the language of hell, than in prayer and praise? Shall those ears ever be charmed with celestial music, which have not listened with pleasure and eagerness to the joyful sound of the gospel, but were entertained with the song of drunkards, the loud, unthinking laugh, and the impure jest? Are those knees likely to bow in delightful homage before the throne of God and the Lamb on high, which have not been used to the posture of petitioners at the throne of grace on earth? Are those members likely to be the instruments of an heavenly spirit, in the exercises of that blessed state, which have not been "instruments of righteousness unto holiness" in this state of trial and discipline? No, my brethren, this is not at all probable, even to a superficial inquirer; and to one that thinks deeply, and consults right reason and the sacred scriptures, this appears utterly impossible. Therefore take warning in time. Methinks this consideration might have some weight; even with epicures and sensualists, who consider themselves as mere animals, and make it their only concern to provide for and gratify the flesh. Unless you be religious now, unless you deny yourselves of your guilty pleasures, not only your soul, that neglected, disregarded trifle, must perish; but your body, your dear body, your only care, must be wretched too; your body must be hungry, thirsty, pained, tortured, hideously deformed, a mere system of pain and loathsomeness. But if you now keep your bodies pure, and serve God with them, and with your spirits too, they will bloom forever in the charms of celestial beauty; they will flourish in immortal youth and vigour; they will forever be the receptacles of the most exquisite sensations

of pleasure. And will you not deny yourselves the sordid pleasures of a few years, for the sake of those of a blessed immortality?

But let me give you a view of immortality of a more noble kind, the proper immortality of the soul. And here, what an extensive and illustrious prospect opens before us! look a little way backward, and your sight is lost in the darkness of non-existence. A few years ago you were nothing. But at the creative fiat of the Almighty, that little spark of being, the soul, was struck out of nothing; and now it warms your breast, and animates the machine of flesh. But shall this glimmering spark, this *divinæ particula auræ*, ever be extinguished? No; it will survive the ruins of the universe, and blaze out into immortality: it will be coeval with the angels, the natives of heaven, and the *Indigenæ*, the original inhabitants of the world of spirits; nay, with the great Father of spirits himself. The duration of your souls will run on from its first commencement, in parallel lines with the existence of the Deity. What an inheritance is this entailed upon the child of dust, the creature of yesterday! Here let us pause,—make a stand,—and take a survey of this majestic prospect! This body must soon moulder into dust, but the soul will live unhurt, untouched, amid all the dissolving struggles and convulsions of animal nature. *These heavens shall pass away with a great noise; these elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up; 2 Pet. iii. 10.* but this soul shall live secure of existence in the universal desolation;

“Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.”

ADDISON.

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

Men of great projects and sanguine hopes are apt to sit and pause, and take an imaginary survey of what they will do, and what they will be in the progress of life. But then death, like an appari-

tion, starts up before them, and threatens to cut them off in the midst of their pursuit. But here no death threatens to extinguish your being, or snap the thread of your existence; but it runs on in one continued everlasting tenor. What a vast inheritance is this, unalienably entailed upon every child of Adam! What importance, what value, does this consideration give to that neglected thing, the soul! What an awful being is it? Immortality! What emphasis, what grandeur in the sound! Immortality is so vast an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinity to any thing to which it is annexed, however insignificant in other respects: and on the other hand, the want of this would degrade the most exalted being into a trifle. The highest angel, if the creature of a day, or of a thousand years, what would he be? A fading flower, a vanishing vapour, a flying shadow. When his day or his thousand years are past, he is as truly nothing as if he had never been. It is little matter what becomes of him: let him stand or fall, let him be happy or miserable, it is just the same in a little time; he is gone, and there is no more of him; no traces of him left. But an immortal! a creature that shall never, never, never cease to be! that shall expand his capacities of action, of pleasure or pain, through an everlasting duration! what an awful, important being is this!—And is my soul, this little spark of reason in my breast, is that such a being? I tremble at myself. I revere my own dignity, and am struck with a kind of pleasing horror to view what I must be. And is there any thing so worthy of the care of such a being as the happiness, the everlasting happiness of my immortal part? What is it to me, who am formed for an endless duration, what I enjoy, or what I must suffer in this vanishing state? Seventy or

eighty years bear not the least imaginable proportion to the duration of such a being; they are too inconsiderable a point to be seen; mere cyphers in the computation! They do not bear as much proportion as the small dust that will not turn the balance, to this vast globe of earth; and all the vaster globes that roll in their orbits through the immense space of the universe.

And what shall become of me through this immortal duration? This, and this only, is the grand concern of an immortal: and in comparison of it, it does not deserve one thought what will become of me while in this vanishing phantom of a world. For consider, your immortality will not be a state of insensibility, without pleasure or pain; you will not draw out an useless inactive existence in an eternal stupor, or a dead sleep. But your souls will be active as long as they exist; and as I have repeatedly observed, still retain all their capacities; nay, but their capacities will perpetually enlarge with an eternal growth, and forever tower from glory to glory in heaven, or plunge from depth to depth in hell. Here then, my fellow-immortals! here pause and say to yourselves, "What is like to become of my soul through this long space, forever? Is it likely to be happy or miserable?" What though you are now rich, honourable, healthy, merry, and gay? Alas! terrestrial enjoyments are not proper food for an immortal soul; and beside, they are not immortal, as your souls are. If these are your portion, what will you do for happiness millions of ages hence, when all these are fled away like a vapour? Are you provided with a happiness which will last as long as your souls will live to crave it? Have you an interest in God? Are you prepared for the fruition of the heavenly state? Do you delight in God above all?

Have you a relish for the refined pleasures of religion? Is the supreme good the principal object of your desire? Do you now accustom yourselves to the service of God, the great employment of heaven? and are you preparing yourselves for the more exalted devotion of the church on high, by a serious attendance on the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth? Are you made pure in heart and life, that you may be prepared for the regions of untainted holiness, to breathe in that pure salubrious air, and live in that climate, so warm with the love of God, and so near the Sun of righteousness? Do not some of you know that this is not your prevailing character? And what then do you think will become of you without a speedy alteration in your temper and conduct? Alas! must your immortality, the grand prerogative of your nature, become your eternal curse? Have you made it your interest that you should be a brute? that is, that you should perish entirely, and your whole being be extinguished in death? Then it is no wonder you strive to disbelieve the doctrine of a future state, and your own immortality. But alas! in vain is the strife. The principles of atheism and infidelity may lull your consciences into a stupid repose for a little while, but they cannot annihilate you. They may lead you to live like beasts, but they cannot enable you to die like beasts; no, you must live, live to suffer righteous punishment, whether you will or not. As you did not come into being by your own consent, so neither can you lay down your being when you please. And will you not labour to make your immortality a blessing? Is there any thing in this world that can be a temptation to you to forfeit such an immense blessing? O that you were wise! that you would consider this!

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

Do you expect a character of our deceased friend? This is not my usual practice; and I omit it, not because I can see nothing amiable in mankind, nor because I would enviously deny them their just praises, but because I have things of much greater importance to engage your attention. The dead have received their just and unchangeable doom at a superior tribunal; and our panegyrics or censures may be often misapplied. My business is with the living; not to flatter their vanity with compliments, but to awaken them to a sense of their own mortality, and to a preparation for it. However, if you must have a character, I will draw it to you in the most important and interesting light. Here was a youth in the bloom of life, in the prime of his strength, with a lively flow of spirits, who seemed as secure from the stroke of death as any of us, a youth that had escaped many dangers by sea and land; a youth launched into the world, with, no doubt, the usual projects and expectations of that sanguine age. But where is he now? In yonder grave, alas! lies the blooming, promising flower, withered in the morning of life. There lies the mortal body, mouldering into dust, and feeding the worms. Come to his grave, ye young and gay, ye lively and strong, ye men of business and hurry, come and learn what now may, and shortly must, be your doom. Thus shall your limbs stiffen, your blood stagnate, your faces wear the pale and ghastly aspect of death, and your whole frame dissolve into dust and ashes. Thus shall your purposes be broken off, your schemes vanish like smoke, and all your hopes from this world perish. Death perpetually lurks in ambush

for you, ready every moment to spring upon his prey. "O that death!" said a gentleman of a large estate, strong constitution, and cheerful temper, "I do not love to think of that death; he comes in and spoils all." So he does indeed; he spoils all your thoughtless mirth, your idle amusements, and your great schemes. Methinks it becomes you to prepare for what you cannot avoid. Methinks, among your many schemes and projects, you should form one to be religious. You may make a poor shift to live without religion, but you can make none to die without it. You may ridicule the saint, but he really has the advantage of you. "Well, after all," said a celebrated unbeliever, "these christians are the happiest people upon earth." Indeed they are; and if you are wise, you will labour to be of their number.

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

And do you, sirs, make it your main concern to secure an happy immortality? Do you live as expectants of eternity? Or do you live as though this

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

SERMON XXVIII.**JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY FOUNDATION.**

ISAIAH XXVIII. 16, 17.—*Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.**

THE context, like many other passages of the prophetic scriptures, seems to have a double sense. The primary sense may be thus represented. The judgments of God were ready to break in upon and overwhelm the impenitent nation of the Jews, like a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, and bearing all before it. (ver. 2.) The prophet had repeatedly given them timely warning of these approaching judgments; but they still continued secure and impenitent, and unapprehensive of danger. They flattered themselves they had artifice enough to keep themselves safe. They thought themselves impregnably intrenched and fortified in their riches, their strong holds, and the sanctity of their temple and nation. They might also think their arts of negotiation would secure them from the invasion of the neighbouring powers, particularly the Assyrians, to whom they were most exposed. These were the lies which they made their refuge, and the falsehood under which they hid themselves. These, they imagined, like moles or ditches, who

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

keep off the deluge of wrath, so that it should not come to them, much less overwhelm them; and they were as secure as if they had made a *covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave*, not to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, *We have made a covenant with death; and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies, (that is, what the prophet calls lies,) our refuge; and under what he calls falsehood have we hid ourselves.* (ver. 15.) It is in this connexion my text is introduced; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which these sinners trusted; as if he had said, "Since the refuge to which you flee is not safe, and since my people need another," *Therefore, thus saith the Lord, behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; that is, "My promises, my providential care, the supporting influences of my grace, and the various means I shall take for the comfort and safety of my people in this national distress, shall as effectually bear them up, as a firm foundation of stone does a building erected upon it. They that build their hopes upon this foundation shall stand unshaken amidst all the storms and tempests of national calamity, that may beat upon our guilty land."* *He that believeth shall not make haste;* that is, "he that trusts in this refuge, shall not be struck into a distracted hurry and consternation upon the sudden appearance of these calamities. He shall not, like persons surprised with unexpected danger, fly in a wild haste to improper means for his safety, and thus throw himself into destruction, by his ill-advised, precipitant attempts to keep out of it; but he shall be calm and serene, and have pre-

sence of mind to take the most proper measures for his deliverance." Or the meaning may be, "he that believeth shall not make such haste to be delivered, as to fly to unlawful means for that purpose; but will patiently wait God's time to deliver him in a lawful way." The prophet proceeds, *Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;* that is, "God will try the Jews with strict justice, as an architect examines a building with a line and plummet. Such of them who have built their hopes upon the foundation above described, shall stand firm and unshaken, whatever tempests fall upon them, like a regular and stately building, founded upon a solid rock. But as to others, they shall be overwhelmed in the public calamity! *the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies in which they trusted; and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.* And then your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: *when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall they be trodden down by it.* (ver. 18.)

This seems to be a primary sense of the context, and thus, it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. In this view it is very applicable to us, in the present state of our country and nation, when the enemy is likely to break in like a flood upon us. But I must add, that it is very likely, that even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to Jesus Christ. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words, when they are applied to any other; and the connexion will admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus, "Since the refuge of sinners is a refuge of lies, behold I will provide one that will effectually secure all that fly to it from all the

judgments to which they were exposed." *I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, &c.* "I send my Son into the world, as an Almighty Saviour; and all that put themselves under his protection, and build their hopes upon him, shall be so safe, that all the calamities of life shall not do them a lasting injury; and the vengeance of the eternal world shall never fall upon them."

But whether we can find Christ in the primary sense of these words or not, it is certain we shall find him in their ultimate, principal sense. And we have the authority of an inspired apostle for this application. St. Peter quotes this passage according to the LXX, with some improvements, and applies it expressly to Christ. *To whom coming, says he, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore also is it contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* 1 Peter ii. 4, 6. Taking the passage in this evangelic sense, the general meaning is to this purpose:—The Lord Jesus is represented as a tried, precious, and sure foundation, laid in Zion; that is, in the church, for the sons of men to build their hopes upon. His church thus built on him, is compared to a stately, regular, and impregnable temple, consecrated to the service of God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices; and proof against all the storms and tempests that may beat upon it. It shall stand firm and immoveable through all eternity, for its foundation is sure.

But alas! though Jesus Christ be the only foundation, yet the sons of men are so full of themselves, that they venture to build their hopes upon something else, and promise themselves safety, though

they reject this sure foundation. They think themselves as secure as if they had entered into a treaty with death and the grave, and brought them over to their interest.

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

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

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

Brethren, our nature, our circumstances, and the important prospects before us, are such; that it is high time for us to look about us for some sure foundation upon which to build our happiness. The fabric must endure long, for our souls will exist forever; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement forever. The fabric must rise high, for the capacities of our souls will perpetually expand and enlarge; and a low happiness of a vulgar size will not be equal to them. The fabric must be strong and impregnable, proof against all the storms that may beat upon it; for many are the storms that will rise upon us, upon our country, and upon this guilty world in general.

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

Now, now is the time for you to provide. And where will you look? whither will you turn? This earth, and all its riches, honours and pleasures, will prove but a quicksand in that day. Your friends and relations, were they ever so great or powerful, can then afford you no support. If they can but find refuge for themselves, that will be all; therefore bethink yourselves once more; where shall you find a rock on which you may build a happiness that will stand the shock in that day!

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

1. It is a stone; a stone for solidity, stability and durableness. "Every thing else," says the charming Hervey,* "is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honour an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of the true happiness." And, blessed be God! he is sufficient for this purpose. Is a stone firm and solid? so is Jesus Christ. His power is almighty, able to support the meanest of his people that build their hopes on him, and render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm, im-

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

moveable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal all upon this rock; it will stand forever, without giving way under the heaviest pressure; without being broken by the most violent shock. Let thousands, let millions, with all the mountainous weight of guilt upon them, build upon this foundation, and they shall never be moved. Is a stone durable and lasting? so is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, his strength an everlasting strength, and himself the everlasting Father. He liveth forever to make intercession for his people, and therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, to the uttermost point of duration, all that come unto God by him. Here is a stone that can never moulder away by the waste of all-consuming time. Parian marble, and even the flinty rocks decay: the firm foundations, the stately columns, the majestic buildings of Nineveh, Babylon and Persepolis, and all the magnificent structures of antiquity, though formed of the most durable stone, and promising immortality, are now shattered into ten thousand fragments, or lying in ruinous heaps. But here is a foundation for immortal souls, immortal as themselves: a foundation that now stands as firm under Adam, Abel, and Abraham, as the first moment they ventured their dependence upon it; a foundation that will remain the same to all eternity. Therefore it deserves the next character given to it, namely,

2. *A tried stone.* "Tried," says the same fine writer, "in the days of his humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny." His obedience was tried; and it appeared

upon trial that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried, by the abusive treatment he met with from men. His patience and resignation to the divine will was tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into his hand, and when the absence of his Father extorted that bitter cry from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxviii. 46. His love to his Father, and his zeal for his honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed without once languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men—to sinners—to enemies, was tried; tried to the uttermost: it was put to the trial whether his own life or theirs was most dear to him; whether he would rather see his enemies perish by the sword of justice, or that himself should feel the agonies of a cross. This was a trial indeed; and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

Jesus has also been tried under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing to expiate the most enormous guilt; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions; and to *save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him.* Ten thousand times ten thousand have built their hopes upon this stone, and it has never failed so much as one of them. Manassah and Paul, that had been bloody persecutors, Mary Magdalen, that had been possessed of seven devils, and thousands more that were sinners of the most atrocious characters, have ventured upon this rock with all their load of sin upon them, and found it able to sustain them.

This stone is the foundation of that living temple, the church, which has been now building for near six thousand years, and the top of which already reaches the highest heaven. All the millions of saints from Adam to this day, both those in heaven and those on earth, are living stones built upon this foundation-stone; this supports the weight of all. And this trial may encourage all others to build upon it; for it appears sufficient to bear them all.

But I must farther observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of *a tried stone*, it may be rendered, "a stone of trial;" or, "a trying stone;" that is, this is the true touch-stone of men's characters. It is this that, above all other things, discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring forward and embrace him as a Saviour, they are true subjects to the King of heaven; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to Jesus Christ as a Saviour, is not a single command of God, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole law and gospel; it is the grand, capital precept; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of heaven towards the sons of men. And, therefore, while men refuse to submit to this command, they are guilty of a kind of universal disobedience; and it is in vain for them to pretend to have a real regard to God and his authority in any one instance whatsoever. If they obey God sincerely in falling in with this command,

they will obey him in every thing; but if they will not obey him in this, they will truly obey him in nothing. Hence it is that good works are the inseparable fruits of faith in Christ, and that unbelief is the root of all evil. Submission to Christ is also the most effectual trial, whether the corrupt dispositions of the heart, whether the innate enmity to God, pride, stubbornness, &c. be thoroughly subdued. If a man is once made so dutiful, so humble, so pliable, as to submit to this humbling, mortifying method of salvation through Jesus Christ, it shews that divine grace has got an entire victory over him, and that now the rebel is so subdued that he will be obedient in any thing. There is nothing in the whole law or gospel to which the hearts of sinners are so averse, as this method of salvation; and therefore, when they are subdued to this, and made willing captives of the cross of Christ, we may be sure they have surrendered themselves to universal obedience.

This text has made strange discoveries in the world in every age. This touch-stone has discovered many glittering virtues to be but dross. The pharisees and scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this trying stone was applied to them; and then it appeared what they were; then it appeared they were the most inveterate enemies of God upon earth. These were the builders that rejected this stone, and would not build upon it. They rather chose to build upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness. Nay, instead of making him the foundation of their hopes, they made him *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Peter ii. 8, and they stumbled and fell into destruction. *Christ crucified*, says the apostle, *is to the Jews a stumbling block*. 1 Cor. i. 23. This test made strange discoveries

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

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

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

3. This is a precious stone. "More precious than rubies, (to borrow the words of Mr. Hervey,)

the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations. Precious with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects greater than Jonah; wiser than Solomon; fairer than the children of men; chiefest among ten thousand; and, to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, altogether lovely.”

He is precious in himself, as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the sum total of all divine excellencies, and as clothed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In short, all moral excellency, divine and human, created and uncreated, centre in him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased*; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. He is precious to angels: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain*, is their eternal song. He is dear to all good men in all ages. *To you therefore that believe he is precious*, says St. Peter. 1 Peter ii. 7. How precious are his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness to the guilty self-condemned soul! how precious is his sanctifying grace to the soul heavy laden with sin, and groaning under that body of death! how precious the assistance of his almighty arm to his poor soldiers in the spiritual warfare! how precious the light of his instructions to the benighted wandering mind; how sweet the words of his mouth; sweeter than honey from the honey-comb. How precious the light of his smiling countenance, and the sensations of his love to the desponding, sinking-soul! how precious that eternal salvation which he imparts! and how precious the price he paid for it! *not corruptible things, such as silver and gold*, says St. Peter, *but his own precious blood*. 1 Peter i. 18, 19. In short, he is altogether lovely, alto-

gether precious. Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious stones in the universe, cannot represent his worth. O that a thoughtless world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then say to his friends, *Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?* I enlarge upon this article with the more pleasure, as I doubt not but the experience of several among you can affix your Amen to what I say, and to much more. I am now but complying with the request of one of my friends,* at the distance of near four thousand miles, who writes to me thus:—"Dear Sir, recommend Him to poor sinners, recommend Him to poor believers, as a most wonderful Saviour and Redeemer; abundantly able to deliver them from all that hell and sin can do to destroy them. O that his divine excellencies and worth could be set forth! Surely the most abandoned sinners would fall before him with ravishment and wonder."—These are British sterling thoughts concerning this precious stone, my brethren, and I hope the same thoughts are to be found among you. O! that they were universal among us, and among all the sons of men!

4. This stone is a sure foundation. "Such, (says Mr. Hervey,) as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world.—The rock of ages, such as never has failed, never will fail those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes upon this immoveable basis." The foundation is sure, because it is of divine appointment. *Behold*, says the Lord God, who has authority to make the appointment, *behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a*

* Mr. Benjamin Forfitt, of London.

precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. It is also sure, because of the extent of his power, the perfection of his righteousness, and the eternity of his existence. But these I have already touched upon. Indeed his excellencies are so sweetly blended and complicated, like the colours of the rainbow, that it is hard to describe one of them, without running into another.

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

5. This is a corner-stone. "It not only," says Mr. Hervey, "sustains, but unites the edifice: incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages and manifold denominations, here, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love; hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy." To this purpose, and in this style, speaks the apostle: *He is our peace who hath made both; that is, both Jews and Gentiles, one, one regular, compact, magnificent superstructure, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom you, [Gentiles,] also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Ephes. ii. 14, 20, 22. Materials for this sacred temple are collected from thrones and cottages, from bond and free, from Jews and Gentiles, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and

America; but notwithstanding these distinctions, they are all united in this corner-stone; all harmoniously compacted into one regular, magnificent temple, where the God of heaven delights to dwell.

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

Having thus illustrated the particular properties of this stone, I shall take notice of this general property of it, that it is a foundation. So it is repeatedly called in my text, "It is laid in Zion as a foundation:" It is a sure foundation. It must be the foundation, and have the principal place in the spiritual building, or none at all. *No other foundation, says St. Paul, can any man lay, than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And he must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstruc-

ture cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with his in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. To make our own merit the ground of our claim to his righteousness; that is, to hope that God will save us for Christ's sake, because we are so good as to deserve some favour at least for our own sakes, this is to lay a foundation of stone upon a quicksand. The stone would have stood, had it been in its proper place, that is, at the bottom of all; but when it is founded upon the sand, it must give way, and all the superstructure must fall. This is the grand fundamental mistake of multitudes in the christian world. They all own Christ is the only Saviour; but then the ground of their expecting salvation through him, is not his righteousness, but their own. Their own worthless works, which their ignorance and vanity call good, lie at the bottom of all their hopes, as the first foundation; and Christ's righteousness is rather a part of the superstructure, than the entire foundation. This is *the refuge of lies*, the delusive hiding-place which multitudes are building all their lives with a great deal of pains, and, when they think themselves provided with a strong everlasting mansion, suddenly they feel themselves swept away into destruction by the overwhelming torrent of divine indignation.

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

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

Would you then know whether you are really built upon this sure foundation? If so, I shall

willingly assist you to make the trial. And for this purpose I solemnly propose a few questions to your consciences in the sight of God.

1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build any where else with hopes of safety. If you have ever fled to him as a hiding place, you have seen it was your last refuge. And have all your false hopes, all your refuges of lies been swept away? Have you seen that honours, riches, pleasures, and all the world, were but breaking bubbles? Have you been sensible that your own righteousness was a rotten foundation, and that you were just ready to sink every moment under the burden of your sins, and to be swept away by the torrent of divine vengeance? Like a sinking man, you have been ready to catch at every twig or straw for support; but were you obliged at length with Peter, to turn to Christ, and cry out, *help, Lord, I perish?* Have you let go every other hold, and taken fast hold of him as the only support? Have you given up all other grounds of hope, and as poor, guilty, perishing, helpless creatures, placed your whole dependance upon this foundation? If you can honestly give a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it looks encouraging: but if not, you may be sure you are building upon some sandy foundation; you are lurking in some refuge of lies, and must be overwhelmed at last in inevitable ruin.

2. Have you ever been sensible of the preciousness, the excellency, and the stability of this divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Christ, it has been at once an act of the last necessity, and of the most free choice. O! how precious did this stone appear to you! like the loadstone, it had a strong attraction upon you, and you

were effectually drawn to it. You need go no farther than your own hearts to find the truth of what I have said of the preciousness of Christ: the preciousness of his strength, his righteousness, and every thing in him. *To you that believe, he is precious.* 1 Pet. ii. 7. This is the assertion of an apostle concerning all believers, without exception. And shall I conclude this is the real sentiment of this assembly concerning Christ? Shall I conclude it, brethren? O shall I allow myself to be so happy? Does your conscience tell you there is ground for your saying that Christ is precious to you? Alas! is it not quite the reverse with many of you?

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

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

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

While you are not founded upon Christ, you shall, you must unavoidably, sink forever. There is nothing that can support you. Build your hopes ever so high, the fabric will fall, and bury you in its ruins. Nay, this only foundation of hope and happiness will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, the occasion of your more aggravated guilt, and more dreadful destruction. There are a few texts of scripture which I would ring like peals of alarming thunder in your ears. *The same Lord of hosts who shall be for a sanctuary to his people, shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, for a gin and a snare; and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and snared, and taken.* Isa. viii. 14. *Unto you that believe,* says St. Peter, *he is precious; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word.* 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. If this stone be not made by you the foundation of your hopes, it will fall upon you and crush you in pieces. Remember the declaration of Christ himself, *Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken; that is, whosoever shall reject him while in a humble form in the days of his flesh, shall perish, but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder; that is, whosoever shall reject him in his state of exaltation, shall perish in a still more terrible manner.* And will not all these alarming considerations have

weight with you, to persuade you to make him your only foundation?

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

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

Behold, ye poor sinking souls, behold with wonder and gratitude: here is a sure foundation for you: cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it, and it will support you. Say no more, "Alas! I must sink forever under this mountain of guilt;" but turn to Jesus, with sinking Peter, and cry, *Help, Lord, I perish*; and he will bear you up.

Yes, whatever storms may blow, whatever convulsions may shake the world, you are safe.

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

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

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

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

we be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly Zion, where it will appear full to our view, and be the object of our delightful contemplation forever and ever!

SERMON XXIX.

THE NECESSITY AND EXCELLENCE OF FAMILY-RELIGION.

I TIM. V. 8. *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

THE great Author of our nature, who has made us sociable creatures, has instituted various societies among mankind, both civil and religious, and joined them together by the various bonds of relation. The first and radical society is that of a family, which is the nursery of the church and state. This was the society instituted in Paradise in the state of innocence, when the indulgent Creator, finding that it was not good for man, a sociable creature, to be alone, formed an help meet for him, and united them in the endearing bonds of the conjugal relation. From thence the human race was propagated; and when multiplied, it was formed into civil governments and ecclesiastical assemblies. Without these associations the worship of God could not be publicly and socially performed, and liberty and property could not be secured. Without these, men would turn savages and roam at large, destitute of religion, insensible of the human passions, and regardless of each other's welfare. Civil and religious societies are therefore wisely

continued in the world, and we enjoy the numerous advantages of them. But these do not exclude, but presuppose domestic societies, which are the materials of which they are composed; and as churches and kingdoms are formed out of families, they will be such as the materials of which they consist. It is therefore of the greatest importance to religion and civil society that families be under proper regulations, that they may produce proper plants for church and state, and especially for the eternal world, in which all the temporary associations of mortals in this world finally terminate, and to which they ultimately refer.

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

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

The apostle, among other things, in this chapter is giving directions how widows should be treated in the church. If they were widows indeed; that is, widowed and entirely destitute of relations to support them; then he advises to maintain them at the public expense of the church. (ver. 3, 9. 10.) But if they were such widows as had children or nephews, then he orders that they should be main-

tained by these their relatives, and that the charge should not fall upon the church. (ver. 4, 16.)

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

By a man's *own* are meant poor relatives, who are unable to support themselves. And by his *house* are meant those that are his domestics, and that live with him, as wife, children, servants. The former a man is obliged to provide for, but especially the latter; and if he neglect it, he has denied the faith in fact, however much he may profess it in other words; he is no christian, nor to be treated as such: nay, he is worse than an infidel; for many heathens have had so much humanity and natural light, as to observe their duty, supporting their domestics and such of their relatives as could not procure a subsistence for themselves.

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

“This,” some of you will say, “is excellent doctrine, and this is our favourite text, which we often descant upon to justify our eager pursuit of the world. This commandment have we kept from our youth up; and, as we exert ourselves to provide estates for our children, we are not chargeable with any guilt in this case.” But stay, sirs; before you peremptorily conclude yourselves innocent, let me ask you, are your domestics, your wives, children, and servants, nothing but material

bodies? If so, I grant your duty is fulfilled by providing for their bodies. If they are only formed for this world, and have no concern with a future, then it is enough for you to make provision for them in the present state. They are like your cattle, upon this hypothesis, and you may treat them as you do your beasts, fodder them well, and make them work for you. But are you so absurd as to indulge such a thought? Are you not fully convinced that your domestics were made for eternity, endowed with immortal souls, and have the greatest concern with the eternal world? If so, can you think it sufficient that you provide for their bodies and their temporal subsistence? I appeal to yourselves, is there not as much reason for your taking care of their immortal spirits as of their perishing bodies? Ought you not to be as regardful, and as laborious for their comfortable subsistence in eternity as in time? Nay, is not your obligation to family-religion as much more strong, as an immortal spirit is more important than a machine of animated clay, and the interests of eternity exceed those of this transitory world? If then he that does not provide for his domestics a competency of the necessaries of life *has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, what shall we say of him that neglects their souls, and takes no pains to form them for an happy immortality? Surely he must be worse than one that is worse than an infidel; and how extremely bad then must he be! He has more than denied the faith, however confidently he may profess it.

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

Several of you, my hearers, I doubt not, have long since formed and practised Joshua's resolu-

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

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

Though nothing can animate a minister more than the prospect of success, yet he is not to regulate his conduct wholly according to this prospect. He must labour to deliver his own soul, by warning even such as may not regard it. He must declare the whole counsel of God, whether they hear, or whether they forbear. I shall, therefore, my dear brethren, endeavour honestly to bring you this day to Joshua's resolution, *that you and your houses will serve the Lord*; and let him who is hardy enough to despise it, prepare to answer for it at the supreme tribunal; for he despiseth not man, but God.

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

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

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

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

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

As to the parts of family-religion, they are prayer, praise, and instruction. We and our families stand in need of blessings in a domestic capacity, therefore in that capacity we should pray for them; in that capacity too we receive many blessings; therefore in that capacity we should return thanks for them; and singing of psalms is the most

proper method of thanksgiving. Further: Our domestics need instructions about the great concerns of religion; therefore we should teach them. But I need not stay to prove each of these branches to be a duty, because the following arguments for the whole of family-religion, will be equally conclusive for each part of it, and may be easily accommodated to it. Therefore,

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

To prepare the way, I would observe that you should hear what shall be offered with a mind in love with your duty when it appears. You would not willingly have a cause tried by one that is your enemy; now *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, and consequently while you retain that carnal mind, you are very unfit to judge of the force of those arguments that prove your duty towards him. If you hate the discovery, you will shut your eyes against the light, and not receive the truth in love. Therefore lie open to conviction, and I doubt not but you shall receive it from the following arguments.

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

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

God is the most excellent of beings, and therefore worthy of homage in every capacity, from his

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

Again, God is the author of our sociable natures, and as such claims social worship from us. He formed us capable of society, and inclined us to it: and surely this capacity ought to be improved for religious purposes. Is there any of you so hardy as to say, "Though God has made me a sociable creature, yet I owe him no worship as such, and will pay him none?" You may as well say, "Though he formed me a man, and endowed me with powers to serve him, yet as a man or an individual, I

will not serve him." And what is this but to renounce all obligations to God, and to cut yourselves off from all connexion with him. Now if your social nature lays you under an obligation to social religion, then it must oblige you to family-religion, for a family is the first society that ever was instituted; it is a radical society, from which all others are derived, therefore here social religion began, (as it must have begun in families before it had place in other societies,) and here it ought still to continue.

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

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

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

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

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

then be maintained in your families? They should be nurseries for heaven; and that they cannot be, if you banish devotion from them.

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

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

If you deny that religion is advantageous, you may renounce the name of christians; yes, and of men too. Religion places its subjects under the blessing and guardianship of Heaven; it restrains them from those practices which may be ruinous to them in time and eternity; it suppresses such

dispositions and passions as are turbulent and self-tormenting; and affords the most refined and substantial joys.

Now I appeal to yourselves whether it be not more probable that your family will be religious, if you solemnly worship God with them, and instruct them, than it would be if you neglected these duties? How can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family-religion? Can prayerless parents expect to have praying children? If you neglect to instruct them, can you expect they will grow up in the knowledge of God and of themselves? If they see that you receive daily mercies from the God of heaven, and yet refuse him the tribute of praise, is it not likely they will imitate your ingratitude, and spend their days in a stupid insensibility of their obligations to their divine Benefactor? Is it as likely they will make it their principal business in life to secure the favour of God, and prepare for eternity, when they see their parents and masters thoughtless about this important concern, as if they saw you every day devoutly worshipping God with them, and imploring his blessing upon yourselves and your households? Their souls, sirs, their immortal souls are entrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, while you neglect to maintain your religion in your families? Will you not be accessory to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last! Therefore, if you love your children; if you would make some amends to your servants for all the service they do to you; if you would bring down

the blessing of heaven upon your families; if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age; if you would deliver your own souls—I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives.

4. You are to consider family religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace. How great the privilege to hold a daily intercourse with heaven in our dwellings! to have our houses converted into temples for that adorable Deity whom the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain! to mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! to vent the overflowings of gratitude! to spread the savour of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps and in anthems of praise! to have our families devoted to him while others live estranged from the God of their life! if all this does not appear the highest privilege to you, it is because you are astonishingly disaffected to the best of Beings. And since the Almighty condescends to allow you this privilege, will you wickedly deny it yourselves? If he had denied it to you, you would no doubt have cavilled at it as hard: you would have murmured had he laid a prohibition on your family and told you, “I will accept of worship from other families: they shall converse with me every day; but as for yours, I will have nothing to do with them, I will accept of no worship from them; you may not make mention of the name of the Lord.” How would you tremble if God had marked your families with such a

brand of reprobation? And will you put this brand upon them with your own hand? Will you deny that privilege to your families which would strike you with horror if God had denied it? Will you affect such a horrid singularity, that when other families are admitted into a familiar audience with the Deity, you will keep off from him, and pay him no homage in yours!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daniel ran the risk of his life rather than omit this duty, which some of you omit with hardly any temptation. When the royal edict prohibited him, upon penalty of being cast into the lions' den, he

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

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

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

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

for every good thing has been abused by hypocrites to disguise their secret villany.

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

The apostle Paul, having given various directions about relative duties in families, subjoins, *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.* Col. iv. 2. Peter exhorts husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, &c.—that their prayers might not be hindered. 1 Pet. iii. 7, which certainly implies that they should pray together. And here I may observe by the by, what is perhaps immediately intended in this text, that beside the stated worship of God, common to all the family, it may be very proper for the husband and wife to retire for prayer at proper seasons by themselves together. As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize those things that could not be prudently mentioned before others. But to return: we are enjoined to *pray always with all prayer and supplication.*—Ephes. vi. 18, and surely family-prayer must be included in these comprehensive terms.

As to family-instruction, it was expressly enjoined upon the Israelites. *These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.* Deut. vi. 6, 7, and xi. 19. They were commanded to instruct their domestics in the nature and design of the ordinances of that dispensation, particularly the passover. Exod. xii. 26, 27. And the Psalmist

mentions all the wonderful works of God as what ought to be taught by parents to children from age to age. And must not parents now be under even superior obligations to inform their children of the more glorious doctrines and ordinances of the gospel? Again, It is enjoined as a duty common to christians in general, though they should not be united in one family, *to exhort one another daily*, Heb. iii. 13, and *to teach and admonish one another*. Col. iii. 16. How much more then is it our duty to teach, and admonish, and exhort our families, which are more particularly entrusted to our care?

As to family-praise, it is a duty, because thanksgiving is so often joined with prayer in scripture, Phil. iv. 6. Col. iv. 2. 1 Thess. v. 17, 18, and psalmody must be owned the most proper method of expressing thankfulness by such as own it a part of divine worship. *The voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, Psalm cviii. 15, an expression that may properly signify, *praising God in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*, as we are commanded. Col. iii. 16.

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

If you from henceforth make conscience of this important duty, it will be a most happy omen to your families, and to this congregation. If the

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

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

Remember, sirs, that the omission of a known, practicable duty against the remonstrances of your conscience, is a certain evidence that you are entirely destitute of all religion; and therefore I must discharge the artillery of heaven against you

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

I proceed,

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

Now it is more than intimated in scripture, that it should be performed every day, and particularly morning and evening. Thus the sacrifices under the law, which were attended with prayer, were offered daily, morning and evening. To this the Psalmist alludes: *Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, which was offered in the morning, and the*

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

under that notion; and what time so proper for this as evening and morning? Therefore, my brethren, determine to begin and conclude the day with God.

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

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

That you are authorized and obliged to all this, is evident from God's commending Abraham for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

is demonstration that every calling which he allows you to follow will afford time for it.

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

2nd Objection. "I have not ability to pray; I am too ignorant."

If you had a proper sense of your wants, this plea would not hinder you. Did you ever hear a beggar, however ignorant, make this objection? A sense of his necessities is an unfailing fountain of his eloquence.

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

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

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

3d Objection. "I am ashamed."

But is this shame well grounded? Is it really a shame to worship the God of heaven, and share in the employment of angels?

Are sinners ashamed to serve their master?

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

4th Objection. "But, alas! I know not how to begin it."

Here, indeed, the difficulty lies; but why will you not own that you were hitherto mistaken, and that you would rather reform, than persist obstinately in the omission of an evident duty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERMON XXX.**THE RULE OF EQUITY.**

MATT. VII. 12.—*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

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

their common Parent, the highest excellence, and the original of all authority and obligation.

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

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

to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

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

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

II. Consider the reason of it.

III. Open its excellency.

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

Lastly, Shew the necessity and advantage of observing it.

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

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

1. That we should do that to others which we would expect and wish from them upon a change of condition, or if they were in our circumstances and we in theirs. Every man should be treated according to his character and station; and therefore that conduct which may be proper towards me in my station, may not be proper towards another in a different station: but let me suppose myself in his place, and he in mine, and then that behaviour which I would expect from him, the same I should observe towards him. Thus, for example, a magistrate is bound to protect his subjects, and to behave towards them as he would desire a ruler to behave towards him if he were a subject; but he

is not bound to yield that submission to his subjects while a ruler, which he may justly demand of them. The rule in such cases is, let every man act in character; let him perform to others those duties which he would desire from others if they were in his circumstances, and he in theirs; and where there is a sameness of circumstances, there, and there only, his duty to others must be the same that he expects from them.

2. We should make only our reasonable and lawful expectations from others the rule of our conduct towards them. A man may expect and wish very extravagant and sinful things from others: he may desire another should give him all his estate, or gratify his wicked lusts and passions by some criminal compliance: such desires are by no means to be the rule of conduct; for we cannot, indulge them, nor others comply with them, without acting wickedly and unreasonably. But those things which we may desire and expect from others, consistently with right reason, religion, and the laws of society, those things we ought to perform to them; those things which our consciences justify, and not those to which inordinate self-love or some extravagant passion may prompt us.

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

be the rule and measure of our actions or expectations; for our own consciences cannot approve of them in our sedate and impartial moments. I proceed,

II. To consider the reason of this precept.

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

what I am to him, and therefore I am obliged to treat him as I would justly expect he would treat me; we are equal, and consequently our obligations are equal, and our duties mutual or reciprocal. Hence you see that this precept is the most reasonable thing in the world. My next business is,

III. To open the excellency of it.

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

2. Its conciseness: it is what I may call a portable directory, which you may always carry about with you and easily recollect; and therefore you need never be at a loss to know your duty. You may always know your own expectations and desires; do to others then what you would expect and desire from them, and you are right; you do all that the law and the prophets require you to do. Tedious precepts and long discourses are not so easily learned or remembered; but the shortest

memory cannot fail to recollect this concise command.

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

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

IV. To mention some important instances of particular cases to which this excellent rule ought to be applied. And here I shall throw a great many things together without method, that my description may agree the nearer to real life, in which these things happen promiscuously without order.

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

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

*———Tu tibi legem dixisti.

On the other hand, we may consider this rule negatively. Do you desire that another should not entertain angry and malicious passions against you? that he should not envy your prosperity, nor insult over you in adversity? that he should not take the advantage of you in contracts? that he should not violate the laws of justice in commerce with you, nor defraud you of your property? that he should not injure your reputation, or put an unkind construction upon your conduct? Would you expect that if you were a servant, your master should not tyrannize over you, and give you hard usage; or that if you were a master, your servant should not be unfaithful, disobedient, and obstinate? are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others? then you have prescribed a law for your own conduct: do not that to others which you would not have them to do to you: treat every man as another self, as a part of the same human nature with yourself. How extravagant and ridiculous is it that you should be treated well by all mankind, and yet you be at liberty to treat them as you please? What are you? What a being of mighty importance are you? Is not another as dear to himself as you are to yourself? Are not his rights as sacred and inviolable as yours? How came you to be entitled to an exemption from the common laws of human nature? Be it known to you, you are as firmly bound by them as any of your species.

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

Were I reading to you a lecture of moral philosophy in the school of Socrates or Seneca, what I have offered might be sufficient. But in order to adapt this discourse to the christian dispensation,

and make it true christian morality, it is necessary I should subjoin two evangelical peculiarities, which are the qualifications of that virtue which God will accept.

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

The second qualification of evangelical virtue or true christian morality, is, that you perform it in the name of Christ, or that you depend not upon the merit of your obedience, but entirely upon his mediatorial righteousness to procure acceptance with God. Without this all your actions of charity and justice, however fair and splendid they appear in the eyes of men, are but proud philosophic virtue, utterly abhorred by an holy God. But with this evangelical temper, you will be accepted as serving God, even in serving men. And O! that with these qualifications this rule may regulate the conduct of each of us! I am sure there is reason enough for it, if the greatest necessity, or the greatest advantage can be a reason. Which consideration leads me,

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

1. The observance of this rule is absolutely necessary to constitute you real christians. I hinted at this in the beginning of my discourse; but it

is of such vast importance, that it merits a more thorough consideration. A christian not only prays, attends upon religious ordinances, discourses about religion, and the like, but he is also a strict moralist; he is just and charitable, and makes conscience of every duty to mankind; and morality is not only ornamental but essential to his character; and it is in vain for you to pretend to the christian character without morality. An unjust, uncharitable christian, is as great a contradiction as a prayerless, or a swearing christian. You can no more be a good man without loving your neighbour, than without loving your God. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother,* and neglects the duties he owes to him, is really in darkness even until now, (1 John ii. 9.) let him pretend what he will. Therefore, if you count it of any importance to be christians indeed, you must do to others what you would have them do to you. No inward experience, no religious duties, no zeal in devotion can make you true christians, or entitle you to the charity of others as such, without a proper temper and behaviour towards mankind. I would have you, my dear brethren, to be complete finished christians; if there be any thing in the world that I have at heart, it is this: I would have christianity appear in you in its full glory, unmaimed and well-proportioned; and, therefore, I would have you to be not only zealous in devotion in secret, in your families, and in public, but also just, honourable, and faithful in all your dealings with mankind; kind, affectionate, meek and inoffensive in your conduct towards them; in short, that you should treat them as you would have them treat you. You find a great deal of fault with the conduct of others towards you, but consider, have they not equal reason to blame your conduct towards them? My dear

brethren, be yourselves what you would have others be: would you have them to be better than yourselves? Would you meanly resign to them that true honour? Do you desire that they should be better christians and better men than you? What an awkward, perverse, preposterous humility is this? But,

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

we'll say that moral honesty is but villany, because many who pretend to it are knaves, and make that pretence to carry on their knavery with more success. It must also be confessed, that many discover much of their enmity against religion itself, by raising a clamour against the bad lives of its professors; and that there is much less ground for the objection than they would have you believe. The true secret is this: they hate strict religion themselves, and would find some umbrage to expose it in others, in order to excuse or defend their own neglect of it, and as they can find no objection against religion in itself, they abuse all its professors: and if it is evident that their visible conduct is good, they would find out some secret flaw; and if they can discover no glaring defect in their duty to God, they pry into their conduct towards man, to discover some secret wickedness: and, alas! in too many instances their malignant search is successful; and they find some that make a mighty profession, who are secretly guilty of some mean or wicked artifices in their transactions with men. Now they think they have found them out, and surmise, "They are all such; they pray and make a great stir about religion, but they will cheat and lie, when they can do it clandestinely, as readily as their neighbours." This imputation, when made to christians in the bulk, is not only ungenerous, but utterly false. But it must, alas! be owned, that the fact, upon which it is founded is true with regard to some. And what a melancholy thought is this! The innocent, I mean the consistent and uniform professors of religion, suffer by this conduct of their false brethren; for the same artful hypocrisy will be surmised of them; and religion itself suffers by such conduct; for it gives a disadvantageous idea of religion, as though

it were, all show and ostentation, and made its most zealous votaries no better in reality than those that neglect and despise it. My brethren, I seriously tell you, I know of nothing in the world that would have a more efficacious tendency to propagate christianity through the nations of the earth, than the good behaviour of its professors. The impiety and bad morals of those that make no profession of religion is evident to all; and if all that profess it would live according to their profession, then the difference would be discernible to all; and even common sense would teach an heathen that it is a difference much for the better; and the world would soon conclude there is something singularly excellent and divine in a religion that sanctifies every thing within its reach, and makes its subjects so evidently better than all mankind besides: they would need no laboured arguments to convince them of this point; their own consciences would afford them sufficient evidence of it, and then it would be sufficient to make an heathen a christian to bring him into the acquaintance of christians; and it would be impossible there should be such a thing as a deist or an infidel free-thinker in a christian country: he would receive conviction from the practice of every one about him, and he would not be able to shut his eyes against it. I am sorry, my brethren, the case is so much the reverse through the generality of the christian world. It is really melancholy that the name of a christian should raise in a stranger any ideas but those of justice, benevolence, and every thing honourable and excellent. I am sure our religion, as we find it in the Bible, is such; but, alas! how different, how opposite is the christian world! Those that trade among infidels, or that are employed as missionaries among the heathen, can inform you

what a fatal obstruction the bad lives of its professors is to the propagation of our holy religion. Why should they embrace a religion which leaves the morals of its followers as bad or worse than their own! This inquiry the light of nature teaches them to make; and is it really hard to answer it satisfactorily. When a Turk could turn upon a christian, who insinuated that he lied, with this reprimand, "What! do you think I am a christian, that I should lie?" When an Indian can tell a christian missionary, "If your religion be so much better than ours, as you say it is, how comes it that you white people are no better than we? Nay you have taught us many vices, which we knew nothing of till our acquaintance with you?" I say, when Turks and Heathens can make such repar-tees, is there any prospect that christianity should be received among them? Alas! no. The same thing may be applied to those careless, vicious, impious multitudes among ourselves, who do indeed usurp the name of christians but can hardly be said to make any profession of christianity, as their whole lives are openly and avowedly contrary to it. If all who make a stricter profession were to live in character, it would soon afford conviction to these profane sinners: they could not but see the difference, and that it is a shocking difference for the worse on their side. And now, my brethren, shall our holy religion suffer? shall nations be prejudiced against it? shall multitudes of souls be lost by our misconduct? O! can you bear the thought of incurring such dreadful guilt! Well, if you would avoid it, observe the sacred precept in my text. On the other hand, would you not contribute all in your power to render your religion amiable in the world, to convert mankind to it, and thus save souls from death? If you would,

then observe this divine rule. Let the world see that you are really the better for your religion, and that your singular profession is not a vain, idle, ostentatious pretence. I have this particular much at heart, and therefore you will bear with me that I have enlarged so much upon it.

3. The observance of this sacred rule of equity would have the most happy influence upon human society, and would make this world a little paradise. If men did to others whatever they would have others do to them, such a conduct would put an end to a great part of the miseries of mankind. Then there would be no wars and tumults among the nations, no jealousies and contentions in families, no oppression, fraud, or any form of injustice, no jars, animosities, and confusions in neighbourhoods; but human society would be a company of friends, and justice, equity, love, charity, kindness, gratitude, sympathy, and all the amiable train of virtues, would reign among them. What an happy state of things would this be! How different from the present! And shall not each of us contribute all in our power to bring about such a glorious revolution.

4. The observance of this rule is a piece of prudence with regard to ourselves. It is of great importance to our happiness in this world, that others should treat us well. There are none of us absolutely independent of others; we are not able to stand as the butt of universal opposition; or if we are now in happy circumstances, we stand upon a slippery place, and may soon fall as low as our neighbours. Now, the readiest way to be treated well by others, is to treat others well ourselves. If you would have others to behave agreeably to you, you must do so to them; do what you expect from them. Men often complain of bad neighbours,

when they are the occasion of it, by being bad neighbours themselves. There is hardly any place so bad, but a benevolent, inoffensive man may live peaceably in it; but the contentious will always meet with contention; for they raise the storm which disturbs them. Therefore, if no other argument has weight with you, for your own sakes, observe this divine rule.

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

I shall conclude with one or two reflections.

1. If this be the rule of your conduct, alas! how little true morality is there in the world! Men

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

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

things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us think on these things. Phil. iv. 8.

SERMON XXXI.

DEDICATION TO GOD ARGUED FROM REDEEMING MERCY.*

1 COR. VI. 19, 20.—*What! know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

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

It is high time for me to assert, and for you to acknowledge, God's right to you; for have not many of you behaved as if you thought you were your own, and had no master or proprietor? Have you not practically said, with those insolent sinners; the Psalmist mentions, *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Psa. xii. 4; for have you not

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

refused to employ your tongues for the honour of God, and spoke what you pleased, without any control from his law? Have you not said by your practice, what Pharaoh was bold and plain enough to speak out in words, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Exod. v. 2. Have you not aimed at pleasing yourselves, as if you were not bound to please the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, whose authority confines the stubborn powers of hell in chains of everlasting darkness, and sets all the armies of heaven in motion to execute his sovereign orders? Have you not followed your own inclinations, as if you were at liberty to do what you pleased? Or if you have in some instances restrained yourselves, have not the restraints proceeded, not from a regard to his authority, but from a regard to your own pleasure or interest? Have you not used your bodies, your souls, your estates, and all your possessions, as if they were your own absolutely and independently, and there were no God on high, who has an original and superior claim to you, and all that you are and have? Do not your own consciences convict you of these things? Is it not then high time for you to be made sensible whose right you are? that you are not your own, but God's?

This reason would render this subject very seasonable at any time. But there is another reason which peculiarly determines me to make choice of it to-day; and that is, the greatest business of this day is, to surrender and devote ourselves to God as his servants forever. In so solemn a posture as at the Lord's table, in so affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happiness, and with such solemn emblems as those of bread and wine in our hands, which represent the broken body and flow-

ing blood of Jesus, we are to yield ourselves to God, and seal our indenture to be his. This is the solemn business we are now entering upon. And that we may perform it the more heartily, it is fit we should be sensible that we are doing no more than what we are obliged to do; no more than what God has a right to require us to do, seeing we are not our own, but his.

The apostle speaks of it with an air of surprise and horror, that any under the profession of christianity should be so stupid as not to know and acknowledge that they are not their own, but God's! *What!* says he, *know ye not, that ye are not your own?* As if he had said, can you be ignorant in so plain a point as this? Or can you be so hardy, as knowing the truth, to practise contrary to knowing it? Knowing you are not your own, dare you act as if you were your own? Acknowledging that you are God's, dare you withhold from him his property? Will a man rob God? Shall not his professed servants serve him? Since your bodies and your souls are his, dare you use them as if they were absolutely your own, and refuse to glorify him with them?

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

And his property in you depends upon such firm foundations as cannot be shaken without the loss of your being, and your relapse into nothing. If you made yourselves, you may call yourselves your own. But you know the curious frames of your bodies were not formed by your hands, nor was it your feeble breath that inspired them with those immortal sparks of reason, your souls. A greater

absurdity cannot be mentioned, than that a creature should be its own creator; for then it must act before it had a being. You owe your being to a divine Original, the Fountain of all existence. It was Jehovah, the uncreated, all-creating Jehovah, who so wonderfully and fearfully formed your bodies, and who is likewise the Father of your spirits. And what right can be more valid than that founded upon creation? It is a right founded upon your very being, and which nothing but the entire loss of being can destroy. He that makes servants out of nothing, has he not a right to their service? Did he form your souls and bodies, and may he not require you to glorify him with them? Can you call them your own, or dare to dispose of them as you please, without any regard to God, when you would have had neither soul nor body, nor been any thing at all, if it had not been for him? You think you have such a right to a thousand things as entitles you to the use of them; but shew me one thing, if you can, to which you have such a right as God has to you, to your whole souls and bodies, to you, who have no master upon earth, and who are your own property in exclusion to all the claims of your fellow-creatures. Did you produce out of nothing any of those things you call yours? No, you only bought them with money, or you formed them into what they are, out of materials already created to your hand. But it is Jehovah's right alone that is founded upon creation. And will you not acknowledge this right? Will not your hearts declare even now, "My Maker, God, this soul and this body are thine; and to thee I cheerfully surrender them? The work of thine own hands shall be thine by my free and full consent; and I renounce all claim to myself that is not dependent upon and subordinate to thee."

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

ter's crib; and will not you know and acknowledge your divine Benefactor and Preserver? He has nourished and brought you up as his children, and dare you rebel against him?

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

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

They are sometimes taken in a proper sense, and sometimes in an improper, in the sacred scriptures.

I shall particularly consider the word *redeem*, which most frequently occurs, as a specimen of the rest.

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

While the former are hardened more and more in wickedness in the furnace of hell, the fallen offspring of Adam are purified by his Spirit, and made a peculiar people, a people distinguishable from all others by their purity and zeal for good works, and peculiarly his above all others. St. Peter also uses the word *redeem*, in the same sense, to signify deliverance from sin. *Ye know*, says he, *that ye were redeemed from your vain conversation by the precious blood of Christ.* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.— This is a very glorious redemption indeed, much more illustrious than the deliverance of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian bondage; which is so often called redemption.

Again, Jesus Christ has redeemed; that is, delivered his people from the guilt of sin; and consequently from the wrath of God, and the punishments of hell. *He obtained eternal redemption for his people.* Heb. ix. 12. *Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Thess. i. 10. All the saints that are now in heaven, and all that shall be added to their happy number in all the future ages of the world, are indebted to him for their great, their everlasting deliverance. To Jesus they owe it, that they have the actual enjoyment of complete happiness, and the sure prospect of its everlasting continuance, instead of feeling the vengeance of eternal fire.— To Jesus they owe it, that they rejoice forever in the smiles of divine love, instead of sinking under the frowns of divine indignation. To Jesus they owe it, that they enjoy the pleasures of an applauding conscience, instead of agonizing under the pangs of guilt, and the horrors of everlasting despair. To Jesus they owe it, that their voice is employed in songs of praise and triumph, instead of infernal groans and howlings. To Jesus they are indebted for all this; and they are very sensible of

their obligations; and their everlasting anthems acknowledge it. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall hear them ere long, singing with a loud voice, *Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* Rev. v. 9. *These are they which are redeemed from the earth, and from among men, as first-fruits unto God and the Lamb.*—Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

Thus you see that taking the word Redemption in a lax improper sense, as signifying deliverance, though without a price, that we may be said to be bought or redeemed by Jesus Christ. But if we take the word in a strict and proper sense, it signifies a particular kind of deliverance; namely, by the payment of a price. And it is in this way that Jesus redeemed his people. *He gave himself, says St Paul, a ransom for all.* 1 Tim. ii. 6. And himself has told us, *the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.* Matt. xx. 28. Now a ransom is a price paid to redeem a thing that was forfeited, or a person that was held in captivity and slavery. So to redeem an estate, is to pay a price equivalent to it, and so to recover it. To redeem a prisoner or a captive, is to lay down a price as an equivalent for his liberty. In this sense Christ bought his people with a price, or redeemed them with his blood as the ransom. This will lead us to conceive of his work in our salvation in various views.

He is said to *redeem us to God by his blood.* Rev. v. 9. This implies that we were lost to God, because justice required we should be given up to punishment, and God could take no pleasure in us. We were lost to God, just as a criminal delivered up to justice is lost to his family and his country. But Jesus pays the ransom to divine justice with his own blood; that is, he bears the punishment in

his own person, which justice demanded of the sinner; and hereupon, the poor, helpless, lost sinner is recovered to God, becomes his property again upon the footing of mercy, and recovers the divine favour which he had lost. The blessed God, as it were, recovers his lost creature, receives him with delight from the arrest of justice, safe, and unhurt, and rejoices over him as redeemed from eternal death. Now, like the father of the prodigal in the parable, he gives orders for public rejoicings, through all the heavenly court, saying, *It is meet we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found.* Luke xv. 38. And again, *I will save him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.* Job xxxiii. 24. Again, Jesus is said to redeem us from the curse of the law: *God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.* Gal. iv. 4, 5. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13. Here you see what he redeemed us from, namely, the curse of the law, the penalty threatened in the law to disobedience; and also the manner in which he redeemed us, namely, by becoming a curse for us, or suffering the penalty in his own person which was due to us for disobedience. This representation supposes that the law of God has demands upon us, demands of punishment, and that it detains us as prisoners under arrest till these demands are answered by some adequate satisfaction. Now the Lord Jesus entered into our law-place, and by his sufferings made a satisfaction equivalent to the demands of the law: and it is this satisfaction that is called the ransom by which he redeemed us. By his obedience and sufferings all the demands of the law are completely answered, so that now the prisoner is

dismissed, the captive set free, set free upon the footing of a ransom, or for and in consideration of full payment made. By this a way is opened for the salvation of sinners upon the plan of the gospel; that is, by the righteousness of Jesus imputed to them upon their believing in him; imputed to such as have no personal merit, but must sink into everlasting condemnation, if dealt with according to the rigour of the law. Thus Jesus is made to believers righteousness and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30, righteousness to answer the precept of the law, and redemption from its penalty.

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

Thus you see the death of Christ may be called the great price with which we are bought, and by which all spiritual and everlasting blessings were bought for us. As for believers, it is beyond all dispute that they have been thus dearly bought; and on this account they are not their own, but God's. They are his on the footing of redemption; and therefore he has the strongest claim to their service. O! shall not those favoured crea-

tures whom he has redeemed from hell, redeemed from sin and Satan, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, devote themselves to their Deliverer as his servants forever? Can you bear the thought of withholding his own from him, when he redeemed you when lost, and purchased a right to you by the blood of his Son? one drop of which is of more value than a thousand worlds!

A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.

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

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

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

glorify him with both, upon the footing of redemption.

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

Here you are ready to inquire, What is it to glorify God with our souls and bodies? I answer in short, The connexion intimates that it consists in using our souls and bodies, and all that we are and possess, not as our own, but as his; that is, that we serve him with all the powers of both. We should consider our understandings as his, and therefore employ them to think of him and know him: our wills as his, and therefore choose him: our love, our desire, our joy as his, and therefore love, desire, and rejoice in him above all: our sorrow, our indignation, and all the various forms of our irascible passions as his, and therefore level them against his enemies, particularly against sin: our consciences as his, and therefore regard them as his deputies; our powers of action as his, and therefore to be governed by his authority. We should consider our whole souls as his, and therefore not willingly harbour any thing in them that may displease him; no chosen darkness, vanity, or error in the mind: no enmity, no coldness, or lukewarmness in the heart. We should love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; because our hearts, our souls, our minds, and strength are his; his, and not our own. So also our bodies are his, and therefore all our members should be instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Your eyes

are his, therefore let them glorify him by viewing the wonders of his word and works. Your ears are his, therefore let them hear his voice. Your tongues are his, therefore use them as instruments of praise, and of making known his glory. In short, you are all entirely his, therefore be all entirely devoted to him. You are his servants, even when you are serving yourselves; therefore whatsoever ye do, even in your own affairs, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not to men. This is to glorify God with your souls and bodies, which are his. And this should be your universal practice in all your actions; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether you live, you should live to the Lord: and whether you die, you should die to the Lord: that living and dying you may be the Lord's.* Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

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

Consider how entirely, and how long you have unjustly detained his own property from God. Have you not lived to yourselves, and not to him? Have you not used the faculties of your souls, and the members of your bodies, your time, your estates, and your all, as if he had no right in them, but they were entirely your own? Has not *self* been the ruling principle in you, as if you had no Mas-

ter in heaven; or as if no blood had been shed upon Mount Calvary to purchase a superior right in you? You have thought your own thoughts, spoke your own words, consulted your own pleasure, and followed your own will; as if you usurped the disposal of yourselves, and did not acknowledge a superior. When were your thoughts, your words, your time, your powers of action, devoted to the Lord that bought you? The patience of God has lent some of you many days and years, but which of them have you used for his glory? And is it not high time for you now to return to your rightful Master, and to *render to God the things that are God's?*

Again, Consider, that while you have thus lived to yourselves, you have most unjustly usurped a right to what was not your own. Did you make yourselves? Did you redeem yourselves? Have you preserved yourselves? Is it you that gave the least virtue to the food to nourish you? Can you enable the earth to support you, or the air to heave your lungs with the breath of life? Can you recover yourselves when sick, or revive yourselves when dying? Can you make yourselves happy in the world of spirits, and provide for yourselves through an immortal duration? If you can do these things, you may set up for independency with a better grace, and call yourselves your own; and you may boldly lift up your faces to heaven, and tell the Sovereign of the universe, you will not be obliged to him, but he may take away from you all that is his, and leave you to shift for yourselves. But are you not struck with horror at such claims as these? You must then acknowledge you are not your own. And what aggravated sacrilege have you been guilty of, in robbing God of his right! If he that robs you of a little money is punished with death for

the crime, what do you deserve who have robbed God of your souls and bodies, and that all your life long? O! will you not this day restore him his own? He will accept it again, when freely restored, though abused, dishonoured, and rendered unfit for service by you.

Farther, If you will not give up yourselves to God, pray what will you do with yourselves? You are not capable of self subsistence, or independency. A new-born, naked, helpless infant may as well refuse the breast, reject the mother's care, and set up for itself, as you pretend to shift for yourselves independently of the God that made you, and the Saviour that redeemed you. Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die and putrify. If you will not give up yourselves to God, whom will you choose for your patron? Will you yield yourselves to sin and Satan? Alas! that is but to submit to a merciless tyrant, who will employ you in sordid, cruel drudgery, and then reward you with death and destruction. Will you give up yourselves to the world, to riches, honours, and pleasures? Alas! what service can the world do you when it is laid in ashes by the universal flames of the last conflagration? What service can the world do you when your unwilling souls are torn away from it, and must leave all its enjoyments forever and ever? Will not the God of grace prove a better Master to you? Has he ever forsaken any of his servants in their last extremity? No; he has promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. v. And the long train of his servants, through thousands of years, bear an united testimony, that they have always found him

faithful to his promise. And why then will you not choose him for your Master? Alas! if you refuse, you become what I may call the lumber and rubbish of the universe; useless to yourselves, and lost to God and your fellow-creatures, a property not worth owning. While you call yourselves your own, you degrade yourselves, and lose all your dignity and importance; you cut yourselves off from all happiness, and can expect no other heaven than what such guilty, helpless creatures as you can create for yourselves. If you will not voluntarily surrender yourselves to God, he will not own you as his, but leave you to yourselves, to shift for yourselves as you can. *He will hide his face from you, according to his threatening, that he may see what will be your end.* Deut. xxxii. 19, 20. And O! what wretched outcasts, what poor, helpless orphans will you then be!

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

Let me conclude this exhortation with the more forcible, though plain and artless language of another.* *Consider when judgment comes, inquiry will be made, whether you have lived as your own,*

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

or as his that bought you. Then he will require his own with improvement. Luke xix. 23. "The great business of that day will not be so much to search after particular sins or duties, which were contrary to the scope of heart and life, but whether you lived to God, or to your flesh; and whether your time and care and wealth were expended for Christ in his members and interest, or for your carnal selves? You, that Christ hath given authority to, shall then be accountable, whether you improved it to his advantage. You that he hath given honour to, must then give account whether you improved it to his honour. In the fear of God, sirs, cast up your accounts in time, and bethink you what answer will then stand good. It will be a doleful hearing to a guilty soul, when Christ shall say, I gave thee thirty or forty years time; thy flesh had so much in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and labouring; in idleness and vain talking, and recreations, and other vanities; but where was my part? How much was laid out for promoting my glory? I lent you much of the wealth of the world: so much was spent in provisions for your backs and bellies; so much on costly toys, or superfluities; so much in revengeful suits and contentions: and so much was left behind for your posterity; but where was my part? How much was laid out for the furtherance of the gospel, or to relieve the souls or bodies of your brethren? I gave thee a family, and committed them to thy care to govern them for me; but how didst thou perform it? O! brethren, bethink you in time what answer to make to such questions. Your Judge hath told you that your doom must then pass according as you have improved your talents for him; and that he that hideth his talent, though he give God his own, shall be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnash-

ing of teeth. Matt. xxv. 30. How easily will Christ then evince his right in you, and convince you that it was your duty to have lived to him? Do you think, sirs, that you shall then have the face to say, I thought, Lord, I had been made and redeemed for myself? I thought I had nothing to do on earth but live in as much plenty as I could, and pleasure to myself, and serve thee on the by, that thou mightest continue my prosperity, and save me when I could keep the world no longer; I knew not that I was thine, and should have lived to thy glory?—If any of you plead thus, what store of arguments hath Christ to silence you! He will then convince you that his title to you was not questionable. He will prove that thou wast his by thy very being, and fetch unanswerable arguments from every part and faculty; he will prove it from his incarnation, his life of humiliation, his bloody sweat, his crown of thorns, his cross, his grave: he that had wounds to shew, after his resurrection, for the satisfaction of a doubting disciple, will have such scars to shew then, as shall suffice to convince a self-excusing rebel: all these shall witness that he was thy rightful Lord.

And now, my brethren, may I not presume that I have carried my point, if I had only to do with your reason? Does not your reason plead in favour of resigning yourselves to God this day? Take notice, I again proclaim God's right in you. Can any of you deny this claim? Certainly you dare not. Well then, let heaven and earth bear witness, that you were all claimed this day as God's property upon the footing of redemption; and not one of you dared to deny it. Therefore, *render to God the things that are God's.* May I hope you now feel your hearts beginning to yield? I make the proposal to you all; to you, masters and freemen,

as well as to you slaves: shall we all this day, with one consent, devote ourselves to God as his servants? Will you allow me, as it were, to draw up your indenture, and speak for you? I hope I am willing to lead the way, and will you follow me? Methinks I hear you say, "Yes, we are willing: after many struggles and reluctances, we are at length willing, and can hold out no longer." But hold! I am afraid some of you know not what you are going about. And if you rashly and inconsiderately engage in the service, you will soon desert it. As soon as the force of persuasion has ceased, and the flow of passion is over, you will retract all. Therefore I must put you back, till I inform you of some things with relation to this contract, that you may make sure work, an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

Take notice then, 1. Your resignation of yourselves must not be the act of mere nature, without much greater assistance; but you must be urged and sweetly constrained to it by the holy Spirit making you willing by his power. Whatever professions you may make, whatever external forms of self-dedication you may force yourselves to use, yet your hearts are by no means willing; nay, they are utterly averse to this surrender, till they are changed by divine grace. This, indeed, should not discourage you from making the attempt: for it is while you are making the attempt, you are to hope for the assistance of divine grace. But I mention the necessity of divine power, lest you should mistake the efforts of mere nature under the constraints of persuasion, or in a warm fit of passion, for an hearty voluntary surrender of yourselves to God. The same thing is to be applied to your future performance of your engagement. As you cannot, of yourselves, rightly devote your-

selves to God, neither will you be able, of yourselves, to perform your vow. Therefore be humble and self-diffident in this transaction. Entertain no sanguine expectations from yourselves, or you will be surely disappointed. Trust in divine strength for all, for that alone is sufficient for you.

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

3. You must resign yourselves to God at all adventures, resolving to be his, whatever your attachment to him may cost you; though it should cost you your reputation among men, a part, or even the whole of your estate; nay, though it should cost you your life. Blessed be God, we are now in such happy circumstances, that our duty to him is not likely to do us much injury, even in this world, where persecution and tribulation is the usual lot of his servants. Resignation to him may indeed expose you to a senseless laugh or a sneer, to reviling and calumny; but who that has the spirit of a man within him, would be so meanly complaisant as to offend his God, and lose his heaven, in order to shun the ridicule and contempt of fools? Fools they are, if tried by the standard of true wisdom, however wise they may be in other respects. This is but a slight kind of persecution to one that makes a proper estimate of things, which

cannot so much as make a finger ache, or raise the skin into a moment's pain. But times may yet change with us. The day may yet come, when the servants of Christ among us may be called to forsake *father and mother, and wife and children, and lands, and even to lay down their lives, for the sake of Christ.* This would be no unusual event: the servants of the crucified Jesus have been a company of cross-bearers, if I may so call them, from age to age; and their religion has cost them dear in the estimate of the world, though they are always immense gainers by it in the issue. This persecution, even to death, therefore, you may perhaps meet with, and it is proper you should insert this article into the contract, that you will part with life for Christ's sake. Perhaps your indulgent Master may not insist upon it, and yet perhaps he may: it is therefore necessary you should consent to it. And what do you think of it? Does not this article cause some of you to draw back? Let me add,

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

These, brethren, are the qualifications of an acceptable surrender of yourselves to God; and are you willing to be his upon these terms? Or will you refuse and perish? Deliberate upon the matter, and come to some conclusion. *Choose ye, in this day, whom ye will serve.* May I hope you answer me to this purpose: "We have weighed the case impartially; we see difficulties before us, if we

become the Lord's servants; but notwithstanding these difficulties, we are resolved upon it: his we will be who bought us with his blood?" Is this your determinate resolution, my dear brethren? Then make the transaction as solemn and explicit as you can, and follow me; I say, let all, white and black, old and young, follow me, while I speak for you; "Lord, here is a poor sinner, thy creature, redeemed by the blood of thy Son, that has long been a slave to other masters, and withheld from thee thy just and dear-bought property; here, Lord, I would now, freely and without reserve, devote and surrender myself, my soul and body, and my all to thee, to be universally and forever thine. And let the omnipotent God, let angels and men, be witness to the engagement."

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

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

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

SERMON XXXII.**THE CHRISTIAN FEAST.**

1 COR. V. 8.—*Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

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

Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude, yet it is justly supposed to have a particular reference to this institution, which has the same place under the gospel-dispensation which the pass-over had under the law. St. Paul had very naturally guided into the style of the Jewish law concerning the paschal supper, in the directions he had been giving concerning a scandalous member of the Corinthian church: and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity, when he comes to speak of the gospel-dispensation, and particularly of the Lord's supper. He had directed the church of Corinth to cast the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, because if they should tolerate such a corrupt mem-

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

signified by the unleavened bread, namely *sincerity and truth*.

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

My design is to show you the principal ends of the institution of the Lord's supper: and as I go along to delineate the character of those who are fit to attend upon it; for by knowing the former, we may easily know the latter.

The Lord's supper partakes of the general nature of those divine institutions which are called sacraments: in this, "That it is intended to represent things spiritual by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas, and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood." As we have not only rational minds, but also animal bodies endowed with senses, God has wisely adapted his institutions to the make of human nature, and called in the assistance of our eyes* and our ears to help our conceptions of divine things, and to affect our minds with them. And this method is agreeable to the nature of mankind; God has been pleased to use it in every age, and under every dispensation of religion. The tree of life was the sacrament of the first covenant; a sensible confirmation to Adam that he should obtain eternal life by his obedience. The rainbow was

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

appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with Noah, that the world should no more perish by a deluge; and we have not only the assurance of the divine promise, but we may receive the confirmation through our eyes by beholding that illustrious sign in the clouds. Circumcision and the passover were noted sacraments of the covenant of grace, under the Jewish dispensation; and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appointed in their room, and answer the like ends under the gospel. In all these ordinances God consults our weakness, and, as I observed, makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds. Indeed this method of representing and confirming things by sensible signs and significant actions is so natural and expressive, that men have used it in all ages in their transactions with one another. It was remarkably in use among the ancients; and it is not quite laid aside in our age, which does not abound in such methods of representation. In our age and country it is usual to confirm contracts by annexing seals to an instrument of writing; to confirm an agreement by shaking hands; to signify love by a kiss, and complaisance by bowing; and we sometimes give some token as a memorial to a parting friend. I mention these low and familiar instances that I may, if possible, give some just ideas of a sacrament to the meanest capacity. It partakes of the general nature of these significant signs and actions, and is intended, like them, to strike our senses; and through that medium to instruct or affect our minds: and such a sign, such a seal, such a significant action is the Lord's supper in particular.

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

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

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

The Lord's supper in this view is to be looked upon as a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they see it, they may remember him. Our Lord knew we should be very apt to forget him; and therefore, that the memory of his sufferings might never be lost, he instituted this ordinance; and by the humble elements of bread and wine, he represents himself to our senses as broken under the burden of his sufferings, and shedding his blood. Corn, out of which bread is made, which is first threshed, then ground in a mill, then baked in an oven, is a very proper emblem to signify the violences which our Lord's sacred body endured; and wine pressed from the grape, and poured into the cup, is a striking representation of his blood, which was forced from him by the crushing weight of his agonies.

Therefore there was a peculiar propriety in appointing these elements to be the memorials of his sufferings.

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

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

Self-examination is a necessary preparative to this ordinance. *Let a man examine himself, says the apostle, and so let him eat of this bread, and*

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

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

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

*So Horace uses it;

———Non ego perfidum
Dixi Sacramentum.

To this practice probably St. Augustine, about fourteen hundred years ago, refers, as well known to his hearers, when he addresses them thus: "Ye know, my beloved, that the soldiers of this world, who receive but temporal rewards from temporal masters, do first bind themselves by military sacraments or oaths, and profess that they will be faithful to their commanders; how much more then ought the soldiers of the eternal King, who shall receive eternal rewards, to bind themselves with the heavenly sacraments or oaths, and publicly profess their fidelity to him!"*

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

This shews the peculiar propriety of this ordinance as following upon baptism, especially with regard to those that were baptized in infancy, as we have generally been. In baptism our parents offered us up to God as his servants, and members of the christian church, before we were capable of personal choice, or doing any thing for ourselves; and when we arrive to years of discretion, it is expected we should approve of what they did, by our own personal act. Now the Lord's supper is an institution in which we may make their act our

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

own, and acknowledge that we may stand to the contract they made for us. And as often as we partake of it, so often we make this profession. And hence by the way, you may see that such who neglect this ordinance when they are grown up to a capacity of acting for themselves, do virtually renounce their baptism, and disown the act of their parents in devoting them to God. Their parents were to act for them no longer than while they were incapable to act for themselves; and now when they are arrived at that age, and refuse to confirm the act of their parents, they practically disown it, and wilfully make heathens of themselves: and consequently they proclaim themselves rebels against Christ; for what but rebels are we to account such who refuse the oath of allegiance when tendered to them, and that over and over?

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

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

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

it is a ratifying sign or seal of the covenant of grace, which is founded in my blood.

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

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

to stand to the articles on his part; that he is as ready to give his Son and all his blessings to such as believe, as he is to give bread and wine as signs and seals of them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hence also you may learn that none but such as make a credible profession of the christian religion have a right to this ordinance. If it be a sign of the communion of saints, and if we should love

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

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

This is a communion of a more divine and exalted kind than the former; and it is often mentioned in scripture as the privilege of the people of God. *Our fellowship*, says St. John, *is with the*

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John i. 3. *The communion of the Holy Ghost* is a part of the apostolical benediction, which we also use at the close of our religious assemblies.

This communion consists partly in that intercourse which is carried on between God and his people, partly in the community of property, and partly in the interchange of property. There is a spiritual intercourse carried on between him and them. He communicates his love and the influences of his Spirit to them; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship. Hence he is said to dwell in them, and to walk in them. 2 Cor. vi. 16. *And our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, in which he resides.* 1 Cor. vi. 19. Christ speaks of this mutual intercourse in the strongest terms; *If a man love me, my Father will love him, and I will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23. There is also a kind of community of goods between Christ and his people. They are children of the same Father, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren; they are joint heirs of the same inheritance. They have a fellowship in his sufferings, Phil. iii. 10, and are sharers in the glory and bliss of his resurrection and exaltation. The relation between them is often represented by that between husband and wife, between whom all things are common. Hence the apostle argues, that *if we are Christ's, then all things are ours.* 1 Cor. iii. 21. *ad fin.* There is also an happy interchange of property between Christ and his people: happy for them, though it was terrible to him. He took their sin upon him, and they have his righteousness in

exchange. He endured the death they had incurred, and they enjoy the life he obtained. He assumed the curse due to them, and they have the blessing transferred to them which was due to him. Here again the conjugal relation may be a proper illustration. As the wife is entitled to the inheritance of her husband, and he is answerable for her debts and obligations, so Christ made himself answerable in behalf of his people, for all their debts to the law and justice of God; and they are entitled to all the blessings he has purchased. O what a gracious and advantageous exchange is this for us!

Now the Lord's Supper is a very proper emblem of this communion, and a suitable mean to cultivate it.* It is the place where Christ and his people meet, and have their interviews. He, the great Master of the feast, feeds them at his own table, upon his own provisions, in his own house, and they eat and drink, as it were, in company with him; and thus it is a social entertainment between them. There he favours them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him; and they draw near to him with humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech and conversation with him. There, under the elements of bread and wine, he makes over to them his body and blood, and all

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

the blessings purchased by his sufferings; and they receive them with eager desire: they cast their guilt and unworthiness upon him, and give themselves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them. There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciously acknowledges their title good. There is a solemn exchange made between them of guilt for righteousness, of misery for happiness, of the curse for a blessing, of life for death. Christ takes the evils upon himself, and they cast them off themselves upon him; and he makes over the blessings to them, and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, and, as it were, sitting down together at one table, like husband and wife, or parent and children, is a very proper emblem and representation. And I doubt not but some of you, upon such occasions, have enjoyed the pleasures of communion with him, which gives you an high esteem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design, than is in the power of any language to afford.

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

Having thus shewn you the principal ends of this institution, and the qualifications necessary in those that would partake of it, I shall subjoin this one general remark, "That it is evident from all that has been said, that persons who live vicious and irreligious lives, whatever their profession be, have no right to this ordinance, and should not be admitted to it by the officers of the church, till

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

thing is absurd and impracticable. *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.* 2 Cor. vi. 14—17. As to public offences, the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, which is binding upon all the ministers of Christ: *Them that sin, that is, that sin publicly, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* 1 Tim. v. 20. To the same purpose he speaks to Titus; *a man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject,* Tit. iii. 10, or cast out of the church. This indeed is immediately intended of fundamental errors in principle, but it may undoubtedly be applied to vicious practices; for, as Archbishop Tillotson justly observes, “The worst of heresies is a bad life.” As to private offences against a particular person, in which the church, as such, is not concerned, private measures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, till they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprised of it; and if he pay no regard to that authority, he is to be excluded from the society. This is according to Christ’s express direction, in Matt. xviii. 15, &c. *If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen-man and a publican.* There is nothing more plain in scripture, than that scandalous members should be cast out of the church; and an excessive indulgence is most severely censured. St.

Paul orders Timothy to *turn away from such as have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.* 2 Tim. iii. 5. He lays the weight of his apostolic authority upon the christian church in this case. *We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.* 2 Thess. iii. 6. The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are severely threatened by Christ himself, for tolerating the corrupt sect of the Nicolaitans, and the followers of Balaam's and Jezebel's profane and loose practices, and not casting them out of their communion. Rev. ii. 14, &c. And the church of Ephesus is commended for her strict discipline, and *that she could not bear them that were evil, and had tried pretended apostles, discovered and rejected them as impostors.* But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies, for abundant evidence of the necessity of this holy discipline. Here St. Paul warmly rebukes the Corinthian church for allowing a scandalous member to continue in communion with them; and solemnly charges them to cast him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the god of this world. And this he strongly describes, in order to strike terror into the offender, as a delivering him over to Satan. He urges this wholesome severity, as a proper expedient to bring the offender himself to repentance, and especially to keep their church pure. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* And just so the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt the whole society. It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline, that the primitive church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathens and idolaters. And it is the want of this that has so scan-

scandalously corrupted the generality of our modern churches, whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess. Let not us imitate them, but pity and pray for them, lest we become a mere mass of corruption, like them. The apostle forbids not only all religious communion, but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more shy of them than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. *I wrote to you, says he, not to keep company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world: that is, "I do not mean that you should break off all intercourse with the fornicators of this world, who are professedly of the world, and make no pretensions to christianity; or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world:"* all places are so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them without leaving human society altogether. *But now I have written unto you, says he, not to keep company, if any one that is called a brother, a christian brother by profession, here lies the emphasis, if any one that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not to keep company with such an one, no not to eat.* 1 Cor. v. 10, 11. Cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with such a one: do not make a choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much less in the sacred feast of the Lord's supper.

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority to the faithful exercise of discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of mankind, yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make a com-

pliment of the ordinances of Christ, it is at our peril. It is therefore the most unreasonable and absurd thing for persons by their offences to constrain the officers of the church to animadvert upon them, and then to take it ill that they faithfully do their duty. All that is required of them is a profession of deep repentance for their misconduct and a promise of reformation for the future. And is this too much to do to repair the injury they have done to religion, to satisfy the society to which they belong, and restore themselves into the charity of their brethren, whose hearts are so grieved by their conduct? Or are they indeed determined not to repent and reform, but go on in their wicked courses? Then they have nothing to do with the peculiar privileges of the christian church, and, therefore, should not claim them. It is in vain here to object, "That none can forgive sins but God, and therefore they will not confess them to man." For, as I told you, every member of the christian church ought to give his fellow-members some evidence that he is indeed one of their body, and worthy of their charity. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into some scandalous sin inconsistent with his profession, he does not so much as profess his repentance? It is only God that can pardon the sin, as it is done against him: but the church is also offended, and every society as well as the particular person who is offended, has a right to demand satisfaction.-- Hence we are commanded to *confess our faults to one another*, James v. 16, and that is a proud, impenitent creature indeed, unworthy of a place among christians, who thinks it a mighty thing to make this small satisfaction. The incestuous Corinthian was brought to repentance by the wholesome severities used with him. And upon this, the apostle,

in his second epistle, advises them to *forgive him*, (which implies, that in some sense the offence was against the church; and, in that sense, that they had power to forgive him,) *that they should comfort him, and confirm their love towards him, lest he should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow.* 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. And shall we be more obstinate than an incestuous, excommunicated Corinthian?

As this subject naturally came in my way, and as it is necessary for us as church-members to have right ideas of gospel-discipline, I have taken this opportunity to enlarge on it; and I hope you will so remember it, as to render all instructions on this head needless hereafter.

I now proceed to what is more practical.

Let me as an herald of Jesus Christ proclaim to you the business of the next Lord's day. We are going to commemorate the most important event that ever happened upon our globe; an event accomplished about seventeen hundred years ago, but never to be forgotten; an event that extends its happy consequences to the remotest periods of eternity, I mean the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for us. And who among you is prepared and willing to commemorate this grand event? Where are the broken-hearted penitents? Where the lovers of a crucified Saviour? Where the happy persons that believe in him with all their hearts? Come, take the dear memorials of your precious Redeemer; come, refresh your souls once more with the sweet remembrance of his love. O! shall his dear name be forgot among us? What! forgotten, after all he has done, after all he has suffered for us? Can you bear the thought? We are going to profess openly before a scoffing world, that we are the servants and disciples of a crucified Christ; we are going to put on the badges of his servants,

and wear his livery; to enlist as volunteers under his banner, and swear allegiance and fidelity to him. And where are those that are willing to join with us? *Who is upon the Lord's side? Who?* Come ye that will have Christ for your Master, come enter your names in his list: be fixed and determined for him. *How long will ye halt between two opinions?* It is a plain case and requires no long time to deliberate. Come ye that would stand among his people at his right hand at last, come now with prepared hearts, and mingle among them at his table. We are going to enter into an everlasting covenant with our God, and to set our solemn seal to the contract. And who among you gives his consent? Who is willing to take the Lord Jesus for his only Saviour and Lord, and to give himself up to him entirely and forever? Who will avouch the Lord to be his God, that He may avouch him to be one of his people? How are your hearts, my brethren, disposed in this respect? Do they give a full consent? And are you willing from this time to renounce and abjure all your lusts and sinful pleasures? In short, do you consent to the covenant of grace? If so, come and confirm it with that solemn oath and seal. God and Christ are agreed to the proposal; and if you agree, the happy contract is made: it is established firmer than the pillars of heaven; and if you had them, you might venture ten thousand souls upon it. We are going to maintain communion with the saints, and sit down with them at the same table of our common Lord. And who of you would join yourselves with that little flock, that despised but happy few? If you would mingle with them in heaven, separate from the wicked world, and join them now; and as a token of it eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with them. But we are going to

maintain communion of a still more exalted kind: communion with the Father of our spirits, with the Son of his love, and with the Holy Ghost.— And where are they that pant and languish for this sacred and divine fellowship? Come to the table of the Lord, the place of interview, and you may humbly hope to meet him there. There you may pour out your hearts to him with all the freedom of intimacy and filial boldness, and there you may receive the tokens of his love.

My brethren, if, upon careful self-examination, you find reason to hope you have the qualifications of acceptable communicants, which I have described, I require you, in the name of that Jesus who expired upon the cross for you, a name which one would think should have some weight with you; in his endearing, irresistible name, I require you to come to his table. This is not only your privilege, but your duty; and you cannot neglect it, without the basest ingratitude and wickedness. Shall Jesus, when he views the guests around his table, find your seat empty? Alas! shall he have reason to say, “What! has such a one turned his back upon me? I bought him with my blood, and have I deserved to be thus treated by him?” O! my brethren, is it come to that pass with you that you stand in need of persuasions to commemorate that Saviour who laid down his life for you? Had he been as shy of a cross as you are of his table, as backward to die as you are to commemorate his death, alas! what would have become of you?

What are the obstructions and discouragements that lie in your way? Mention them, and methinks I can remove them all in a few words, when the case is so plain. Do you urge, that you are afraid you are not prepared? But have you examined yourselves impartially by what I have said? Are

you sure you have the qualifications mentioned? If so, your way is very clear. Or if you are not sure, does it appear probable to you? If so, you may humbly venture. Or if you cannot go so far as a probability, have you some trembling hopes? hopes which, though they often waver, yet you cannot entirely cast away, though you admit all the evidence you can get, and are desirous to know the very worst of yourselves. Why, if you have even thus much of encouragement, I would advise you to come, though with trembling. If you are impartial in self-examination, and yet cannot after all discover that you are destitute of those qualifications I have mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that you are deceived: persons are never deceived in this case but by their own carelessness and partiality; therefore take courage. If you look out with a careful eye, there is little danger of your splitting on this rock.

Or are you afraid that you will not be able to perform your sacramental vows, but may apostatise from your God? But I need not tell you that your strength is entirely from God: and I appeal to yourselves, whether it be most likely you will obtain strength from him in the way of duty, or in the neglect of it? My brethren, do you do your duty, and leave the consequence to him. Trust in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raise you up if you should fall. It is not his usual way to desert those that, sensible of their own weakness, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himself by promise that he will not do it; but you *shall be kept by his power through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pet. i. 5, and *he will never leave you nor forsake you*, Heb. xiii. 5, therefore in his strength, humbly make the adventure.

As for such of you as have not the qualifications described, and yet are communicants at the Lord's table, I have a few serious considerations to offer to you.

1. Did you never observe that solemn warning of St. Paul, which, like a flaming sword, hovers round the table of the Lord to guard it from your profanation? *Whosoever shall eat of this bread, and drink of this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; and eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himself.* 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. Keep off, therefore, ye unholy sinners, lest the weight of this tremendous curse fall upon you and crush you to ruin.

2. To what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted can do this, without an interest in Christ, an universal holiness of heart and life. And will you incur such dreadful guilt, without answering any valuable end by it?

3. How absurd is it for you to pretend friendship to Christ in this ordinance, when your hearts are not well affected towards him! This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a seal; but what do you set your seal to, when you do not heartily and practically consent to the covenant of grace? How can you hold communion with the saints, when you are none of them? Or with God, when you neither know him nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his servants, when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people, when you belong to the camp of the gloomy god of this world? Will you act the part of Judas over again, and compliment Christ with a traitorous kiss? What absurdity, what gross hypocrisy, what a

daring insult is this? Can Omniscience be imposed upon by such pretensions? Or will a jealous God let them escape unpunished? Do but read a part of the fiftieth Psalm: you will see your doom, ver. 16—22. *Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do, that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?—These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. O, sirs, consider, it will be a poor plea at last to have it to say, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence? and thou hast taught in our streets. The supreme Judge will, notwithstanding, pronounce the dreadful sentence upon you, Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Luke xiii. 26, 27.*

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance; and in the use of which you may hope to obtain proper qualifications? His word, prayer, meditation, and such means, are for the common use of saints and sinners, and intended to beget as well as to confirm grace in the hearts of men. But the Lord's supper is the peculiar privilege of such as are true christians already; and is intended only to cherish and improve true religion where it is begun. Therefore your partaking of it without this grand preparative, is preposterous, and directly contrary to the order of divine appointment. Sinners, go first upon your bended knees before God; cry to him with all the earnestness of perishing creatures, for converting grace. Think upon your miserable condition, and never take off your thoughts from the melancholy contemplation, till your hearts are

deeply affected. Read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you have succeeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels and men, will bid you welcome.

5. Consider how aggravated your punishment will be, if you continue in your present condition. To sink into hell from the table of the Lord! O! what a terrible fall! They that perished from Sodom and Gomorrah, though their punishment will be intolerable, will be but slightly punished in comparison of you. A lost communicant!—One that went to hell with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Saviour, as it were, in his mouth! O! methinks such an one must be the most shocking sight in the infernal regions. How will lost angels, and lost heathens, wonder and stare at you as an horrible phenomenon, a dreadful curiosity! How will they upbraid you, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! art thou also become as one of us?” To tell the truth without reserve, I cannot but tremble at the thought of seeing such of you on the left hand of the Judge. O! what a shocking figure will you make there! Therefore do not make the profanation of the body and blood of Christ the whole of your religion, but begin where you should, in earnest endeavours after a new heart and life, in the use of the means appointed for that end.

But there are some of you, perhaps, who may take encouragement from hence, and think you are safe, because you have not been guilty of profaning this solemn institution. You are conscious you are not prepared, and therefore most contentedly stay away. There are, no doubt, sundry of you who have lived in this neglect all your lives. I have a

few things to say to you, and I pray you to apply them to yourselves.

1. Consider what it is you say, when you declare you are unfit for this ordinance. There are some that seem to make a merit of it, that they stay away from a sense of their want of preparation. But what is this want? It is the want of all love to God, of faith in Christ, of repentance for sin; it is the want of holiness of heart and life, and every good thing; it is to be without pardon, without a title to heaven, without any interest in the righteousness of Christ; it is to be a slave to sin and Satan, an heir of hell, a poor perishing creature, liable every moment to be cut off, and sink under the weight of divine vengeance: this is your case if you are unfit for this ordinance. Nothing but such things as I have mentioned can render you unfit. And is this a safe case? Can you contentedly rest in it? Alas! is there so much merit in neglecting to remember Christ in this institution, as will render your case safe, and indemnify you? Must you not be shocked at the thought?

2. Are you using all proper means to obtain preparation, with the utmost diligence and earnestness? Or are you inactive and unconcerned about it? If so, it is plain you love to be unprepared: you take pleasure in being disqualified to remember the Lord Jesus. And while you are careless about this, you are virtually careless what will become of you, careless whether heaven or hell will be the place of your everlasting residence: and O! what will be the end of such a course! and how terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you that you have lived so many years in the world, without affectionately commemorating that Saviour who died for you, without devoting yourself to God, consenting to

his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? O! is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in suffering so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by neglected? what can be a more aggravated wickedness?

4. This neglect clearly proves that you have no regard for Jesus Christ. You do perhaps insist upon it that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love: *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Now this brings the matter to a short issue. There is no command in the whole Bible more plain than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the wilful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus. With what face then can you pretend that you love him? Your love is reprobated, and will not stand the test.

5. Let me remind you of what I observed before, that, by the neglect of this ordinance, you practically renounce your baptism. You are now of age to act for yourselves, and you have not approved of the act of your parents, by ratifying it in your own person, therefore you abjure it; you renounce the blessed Trinity, in whose name you were baptised, and to whom you were devoted; and you give yourselves back to an horrible trinity of another kind, to the world, to sin, and the devil. And are you indeed willing to have no more to do with the God that made you, and with Jesus of Nazareth? Pause and think before you agree to such a dreadful renunciation. But, alas! you have agreed to it already, by refusing to renew your early dedication in your own persons. Therefore the best you can now do is to recall your renunciation and immediately acknowledge the act of your parents as your own.

I would inculcate this particularly on young people. You that are eight or ten years old, or more, you have sense enough to act for yourselves in so plain a case. And what are you resolved upon? Will you be Christ's or Satan's? You cannot avoid choosing one or the other for your master; for not positively choosing Christ, is virtually choosing the devil for your Lord, and hell for your home. If you stand to the act of your parents in dedicating you to God, come make it your own at his table. Such young guests would be an ornament to it: and O! that we may early see you there, properly prepared?

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourselves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you list. Your obligations do not depend upon your consent. You were born the servants of God, and you will continue under obligations to be such in spite of you. Is he not the most excellent of Beings, your Creator, your Lawgiver, your Preserver, your Redeemer? And do these things infer no obligation upon you? Have you not also, in sickness, or under horror of conscience, made vows and resolutions in your own persons? And are you free to sin still? The truth of the case is, do what you will, you are under the strongest obligations to God, and you cannot shake them off; and if you will not observe these obligations to duty, you must submit forever to your indispensable obligation to punishment. And he will make you know that he has a right to punish you, if you will not acknowledge his right to your obedience.

7. What avails it that you can avoid the Lord's table, when you cannot possibly shun death, or avoid his tribunal? Here try all your art, and you will find it in vain. And if you are not prepared

for this ordinance of worship in the church on earth, much less are you prepared for those more exalted forms of worship in the church in heaven! What then will become of you?

In short, it is a national sin in our country, that the table of the Lord is contemptible; that men who call themselves christians live in the wilful neglect of that ordinance which was appointed by him, whom they acknowledge as the Founder of their religion, to be a memorial of himself. Alas! the very memory of Christ is almost lost among us. *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Jer. v. 9.*

Perhaps some of you will say, "You shut us up in a strange dilemma indeed. If we come unprepared, we sin; and if we stay away, we sin; and what then shall we do?" My brethren, I thus shut you up, on purpose that you may see what a wretched case you are in, and that there is no safety for you while you continue in it. You are shut up under a necessity of sinning, and the best choice in such a condition can be only the lesser evil; though even that is extremely aggravated. Whether you come or stay away, you grievously sin: it is all sin, peril, ruin, and misery all through: you should neither come unprepared, nor stay away unprepared; that is, you should not be unprepared at all. Your want of preparation is in itself a complication of wickedness; and whatever you do in that state, you are neither safe nor in the way of duty: it is altogether a state of sin and danger. The only way of safety and duty is to seek for preparation immediately, and with the utmost earnestness, and then to come to the Lord's supper. And O! let me set all this congregation upon this work before we part to day, and make

it the business of this week. You have spent many a week about things of less importance, and will you refuse one to this great work? Now set about it; now begin to look into the state of your neglected souls; now recollect your sins; look in upon your depraved hearts; look back upon a miserable mis-spent life; look forward to death, eternity, and the divine tribunal just before you; look to Jesus in the agonies of crucifixion on Mount Calvary; and O! Look up to God in earnest prayer for his mercy. Let these things follow you home to your houses; let them dwell upon your hearts night and day. Do not laugh, or talk, or trifle them away; for O! they will rebound upon you with overwhelming weight at last, if you now turn them off. O! that God may prepare a people for himself in this poor place! O! that he would visit this barren spot with the showers of divine grace! And may he prepare our hearts for the rich entertainment before us! **AMEN.**

SERMON XXXIII.

THE NATURE AND BLESSEDNESS OF SONSHIP WITH GOD.

1 JOHN III. 1, 2. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

THOUGH the schemes of divine Providence run on with the most consummate harmony, and will at last terminate in the wisest ends, yet, to the undiscerning eyes of mortals, confusion reigns through this world, and nothing appears, in this infant state of things, in that light in which eternity, the state of maturity, will represent every thing. This remark is particularly exemplified in the dispensations of grace towards the heirs of heaven. Though they are not in such unmingled darkness, even in this region of ignorance and uncertainty, as to have no evidences at all of their being the objects of divine love, and regenerated by the holy Spirit, but may, in some shining moments at least, conclude that they are even now the sons of God, yet they can form no adequate ideas of the immensity of that love which has adopted them as the sons of God, and made them heirs of heaven, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There are indeed such rays of this love, that, like a flash of lightning, break through the cloud that surrounds them, as

cast them into a pleasing consternation, and make them stand and pause in delightful astonishment. In a kind of transport of ignorant admiration, they are often exclaiming, *What manner of love is this!* how great, how vast, how immense, how unaccountable, how incomprehensible, that love which has given us, us rebellious sinners and heirs of ruin, the title of the sons of God, and the many privileges of such relation! Behold what sort of unheard of, unparalleled love is this! behold it with intense observation and grateful wonder.

Ye trifling sons of men, abstract your thoughts from the toys of earth, and here fix your attention; here look and gaze, till you are so transported with the survey of this love, as to be engaged to the most vigorous endeavours to be partakers of it. Our brethren in grace, that share in the same privilege, do you especially pause, behold, and wonder. Let all your admiring powers exert themselves to the utmost in the contemplation of that love which has bestowed upon you so gracious, so honourable a distinction as that of sons of the King of heaven. And ye blessed inhabitants of heaven, who know the import of this glorious title, and the riches of the inheritance reserved for us; ye angels that are happy in your Maker's goodness, but have not been distinguished with redeeming grace, look down from your celestial thrones, look down to this contemptible earth, and view the greatest exploit of divine infinite love; for surely no achievement of Almighty grace among your various orders through the vast of heaven, can equal this, that we rebellious worms should be called the sons of God, the highest title in which you can glory. Behold, and wonder, and adore with us, and supply our defects of praise. You see farther into the secrets of this mystery of

love than we in our present state, who can only pause in silent admiration, or vent our blind conjectures upon it. *What manner of love is this?* therefore give all your contemplative powers a loose upon a theme you can so deeply penetrate.

Farther, As the sons of God in their present state cannot comprehend that love which has conferred this title upon them, so they know not fully the glorious import of the title: they only know in general, that when their Father appears they *shall be like him*, but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeness is: it doth not yet appear, even to themselves, what they shall be. Their liveliest imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will ere long be: they are utter strangers to their future selves. They know themselves only at present in their infancy; but when these little children of God, these babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fullness of the stature of Christ, they will be prodigies to themselves, and mysteries which they cannot now conceive. In this world we are accustomed to little and obscure things, and our thoughts are like their objects; we see nothing sufficiently glorious to suggest to us any proper images of the glory of the sons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The splendour of the meridian sun, the grandeur of kings, and the parade of nobles, are but obscure shadows of the glory and magnificence of the meanest pious beggar, of the poorest Lazarus that ever languished upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven. The difference is greater than that between Job upon the dunghill, lying in ashes, and covered with ulcers, and Solomon in all his glory. However, amidst all our ignorance, we may rest confident in this, that if we

are now the children of God, we shall be conformed to him when he appears to us in all his glory on the other side of death, and especially when he appears in the clouds in all the majesty of the universal judge, when every eye shall see him: and though we should know no more than this in general, we may rest implicitly satisfied that we shall be inconceivably glorious and happy, since the perfection of our nature consists in conformity to God. We may be sure that that state which the apostle here, by unerring inspiration, calls a likeness to God, the standard of all excellency, must be as perfect as our nature can bear. The apostle having said, that *when he shall appear, we shall be like him*, subjoins, *for we see him as he is*. This vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the evidence, or as the cause of our likeness to God when he shall appear. Considering it as an evidence, the meaning is, "It is evident that we shall be in some measure like to God when he appears, otherwise we could not bear the full vision of his glories! we could not see him and live." It is also evident the apostle here speaks of the vision of God as an happiness, and the blessed privilege of his sons. Now to see God could afford no pleasure to such as are not like to him: they would be shocked and confounded at the sight, and shrink from it, and by how much the clearer the vision, by so much the more they would hate him, because by so much the more they would discover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a sufficient evidence of our likeness to God, that we can bear the vision of his naked perfection with pleasure, for none that are unlike to him can bear it. Considering the passage in the other view, which probably was what the apostle intended, as the cause of likeness to him, it means, that the full

and direct views of him will be transformative and efficacious to change the beholders into his likeness. As the light shining upon glass renders it transparent, or as the sun diffuses its lustre into a diamond, and gives it an intrinsic radiancy, so the discoveries of the divine perfections will impress their image upon the minds they illuminate. Their views will not be superficial and speculative, nor attract an idle gaze, but they shall be vital, efficacious and impressive; and no wonder if such views, which we now know so little of, should produce a perfection we can now so little conceive.

If the sons of God are such strangers to the riches of their present title, and the dignity and glory of their future selves, no wonder a blind world should not know them. If it does not yet appear to themselves what they shall be, much less does it appear to others, who are strangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and, therefore, cannot discern his children by their resemblance to him. This the apostle may intimate when he says, *It doth not appear* (that is, it doth not appear to others,) *what we shall be*; and we are led to this sense by the former verse, *therefore the world, the general run of mankind, who are strangers to God, know us not*; that is, do not distinguish, love, and honour us, who are the children of God, *because they know him not*. As they are ignorant of our Father, and disregard him, so they accordingly treat us. They look upon us with contempt, and are wholly ignorant of our heavenly extraction and dignity, and thus it will be till we shine in all the glory of the children of so illustrious a king, and possess the inheritance of the saints in light: then, to their confusion, they shall discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Mal. iii. ult.—I shall,

I. Show you what is the import of the glorious title, the sons of God.

II. Mention some instances of the present ignorance of the sons of God, with regard to their future state. And,

III. Show in what respects they are mistaken and unknown to the world.

I. I shall show what is the import of this glorious title, the sons of God.

It is evident that the title is used here, not in so general a sense as elsewhere, where it signifies no more than the creatures of God, Luke iii. ult.—(Acts xvii. 28, 29,) for here it is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of true christians, in which the world in general does not partake. In the sense of the text, it implies that believers are born again of God; that they are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and that they are the heirs of heaven.

1. To be the sons of God, implies that they are regenerated, or born of him.

He is a son who is begotten and born; and, therefore, to be a child of God, supposes that we are begotten by him. This seems to be the peculiar foundation of that sonship the apostle here has immediately in view; for it is the thought of being born of God, mentioned in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, that seems to introduce the text, and wraps him away, in the fourth verse of this chapter, into that transported exclamation, *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!*

This new birth you have often heard me describe, as a thorough universal change of a corrupt rebellious sinner into an affectionate, penitent, obedient servant of God. His views of things, and dispositions towards them, are happily altered.

which produce a correspondent change in his practice. But I cannot enlarge without excluding the other subjects of my discourse.

I pray God you would seriously consider the importance of this spiritual birth, and not vainly deem yourselves the sons of God while you are strangers to it: you may as well become the sons of men without being generated by human parents, as the sons of God without being regenerated by supernatural grace; for the scripture has repeatedly declared the absolute necessity of it in various terms. All that become the children of God are born of him, and *not of blood*, or by natural generation, nor *of the will of the flesh*, or by any natural propensions of theirs, nor *of the will of man*, or by the best endeavours of others with them.— John i. 12, 13. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* begets them again, 1 Peter i. 3, and creates them anew, Ephes. ii. 10, so that *old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new*. 2 Cor. v. 17. And Christ himself, who best knows the terms of admission into heaven, has assured us with a *verily, verily*, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. John iii. 3, 5. And this is the declaration of infallible inspiration, that *neither circumcision avail-eth any thing, nor uncircumcision*; that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewish or Christian religion is of no avail to salvation, *but the new creature*. Gal. vi. 15.

2. They that are the sons of God are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and this is implied in their title.

God here treats us with his usual condescension in expressing divine things in the humble language of mortals, by metaphors borrowed from affairs amongst men, that are familiar to us. Therefore

form an idea of the usual privileges which a child enjoys from a gracious and powerful father, and leave proper room for the infinitely superior perfections of our heavenly Father to those of the most excellent human parents, and you may from the analogy know something of the peculiar privileges of the children of God. A son, you know, has liberty of access to his father, however great; he obtains his requests; he has the guardianship and compassion of his father; and is seasonably corrected by him for his good. And thus our heavenly Father deals with the children of his grace.

He gives them liberty of access to him in prayer and the institutions of the gospel. He not only allows them to attend upon his ordinances, which many do that continue strangers to him, but at times he enlarges their hearts, so that they find themselves near him; they are admitted into his presence-chamber in free audience with him, and pour out all their hearts before him, vent their complaints, beg a supply of their wants, and render their grateful acknowledgments for his mercies. This temper of mind is so suitable to their relation as the sons of God, that the holy Spirit, as the author of it, is called the Spirit of Adoption; and the children of God are not capable of exercising this filial freedom at pleasure, but just as he enables them to *draw near with humble boldness to the throne of grace*. Rom. vii. 14, 15, 26, 27. Heb. x. 22, and 2 Cor. iii. 17. And the holy Spirit, as a Spirit of liberty and adoption, is a privilege entailed upon the sons of God, and which they at times enjoy. Gal. iv. 5, 6.

Again, As the children of God have liberty to address their father, so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. An human parent is ready to give good

gifts to his children, and much more is our heavenly Father. Thus Christ reasons in the most familiar and moving manner, in Matt. vii. 7—11, and Luke xi. 11—13, and he seems to intimate that this privilege is implied in the relation, by repeating the endearing term Father, in Matt. vi. 6, 8, 9. *Pray to thy Father—and thy Father shall reward thee—Your Father knoweth what things you have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye. Our Father, &c.*

Again, the children of God are entitled to his protection and compassion. His guardian care is celebrated in Psalm xci. and Psalm cxxi. and his tender compassion in Psalm ciii. 13, Isa. lxiii. 9, and in numberless passages that speak of *his bowels of mercy, his compassions, &c.*

Another privilege of the children of God is, that they are seasonably corrected by his fatherly displeasure. This indeed they are too apt to count a calamity rather than a privilege; but since his correction is necessary for their reformation, since it proceeds from the benevolence of a Father, and not from the vengeance of an incensed Judge, since it is intended for their benefit and not for their destruction, since they are supported under it, and it has a proper measure and seasonable end, and since it will be more than compensated with future rewards, it follows, that their chastisement is one of their blessings, and as such it seems promised rather than threatened, and mentioned as a badge of the sons of God, Ps. lxxxix. 30—34, Heb. xii. 5—13, and many of the children of God have found reason to praise him for this wholesome severity. Ps. cxix. 67, 68, 71. Upon this principle St. James exhorts them to *rejoice when they enter into divers temptations*, James i. 2, and St. Peter tells them that they will befall them only *if need be*. 1 Pet. i. 6.

3. The children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and their relation implies a title to it.

They are born to a crown, begotten to *an inheritance incorruptible and that fadeth not away, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. *If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 16, 17. Gal. iv. 7. And how vast their inheritance is, you may learn from Rev. xxi. 7, and 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

What advancement is this to mean, sinful, miserable creatures! Out of prison they come to reign. They are raised from the dunghill, and set among the princes of heaven. No wonder the apostle should exclaim, *Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*

Thus I have briefly shown you the glorious import of your relation, the sons of God; and you see it should be the greatest concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the children of God, you have been supernaturally begotten by him, as I observed before, (James i. 18,) and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honour him; (Mal. i. 6;) you love and fear to offend him, and cheerfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulness; you are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4, and bear the lineaments of his holiness. But if it be otherwise with you, as I fear it is with many, if you be not conformed to the moral perfections of God and bear his image, if you have not the dispositions of dutiful children towards him, but the temper of the devil, and do his works, then *you are of your father the devil.* And though you may resent this, as the Jews did, the charge is fixed upon you. Therefore awaken

all the importunity of your souls, and cry to him for regenerating grace, that you also may become the sons and daughters of the living God. But if you find these characters of the children of God which I just now mentioned, then *rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice: you are happier than princes, more great and honourable than the sons of earthly kings.* You cannot now form any ideas what miracles of glory and blessedness your Father will make of such mean, guilty, and wretched things as yourselves. Which introduces what I next proposed.

II. To mention some instances of the ignorance of the sons of God with regard to their future state.

It is true indeed, and some of you, I doubt not, know it by experience, that the children of God in some shining moments enjoy prelibations of heaven, and even now *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8, just as a child in infancy stumbles upon a manly thought; and as the first dawnings of reason may give a child some obscure hint of the masterly reasonings of a mature genius; so from these foretastes of heaven, the sons of God may form some faint idea of the perfection of its happiness in full enjoyment. They find these dispositions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will constitute their blessedness; and they now find so much real happiness in the exercise of such dispositions, though in an imperfect degree, as fully convinces them that nothing is necessary to make them completely happy but the perfection of such exercises, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is they have not yet experienced; their highest thoughts fall short of it;

and it doth not yet appear to them what they shall be in the following particulars.

1. It doth not yet appear what they shall be with respect to the enlargement of the faculties of their souls.

That the human soul is capable of vast enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimensions, is evident; and we find by experience its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the close of life, especially in men of a studious turn. And we may be sure that, when like a bird out of a cage, it gets loose among its kindred spirits, and flies at large in its proper elements, its faculties will be vastly improved: otherwise it would be overborne and crushed with the weight of glory; it would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightness, like a mole that has wrought itself into day-light. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exercises, so, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the soul would be incapable of exercising them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted services of that mature world. You may therefore rest confident in this, ye sons of God, that your little souls will then be vastly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of riper years, so it is with you. Compare your present selves with your infant-selves, and you will see a vast difference even in the present state; and how vast the difference between what you now are and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the proper region, the natural elements of spirits! Beloved, you are now the sons of God; and he will make you such beings as becomes so near a relation to such a Father; and what prodigies can he make of you! He that could make you what you are out of nothing, in the

course of a few years, what can he make you out of what you now are, through the series of everlasting ages! How can he mature and enlarge your souls from one degree of perfection to another! so that, in some future period, you will no more resemble what you are now, than you now resemble what you were in the womb, or upon the breast. Your understandings, through an endless duration, may be still brightening, without ever coming to their meridian; and your views be still enlarging though still infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that souls so improved should be united to bodies suited to them. Which leads me to observe,

2. It does not yet appear to you what kind of glorious bodies you will have after the resurrection.

We are sure they will still be material bodies, otherwise they would not be bodies at all. But matter we know is capable of prodigious refinements. Yonder globe of light, the sun, is of the same original matter with a clod of earth, and differs only in modifications. How vast the difference between this animal flesh on our bodies, and earth and water! and yet they are originally the same. Earth and water are the materials of which grain and other vegetables, that animals feed upon, are formed; and our bodies consist of grain formed into bread, and of the flesh of beasts: so true is it, not only with respect to Adam, but all his posterity, that they are but dust. In short, there is a transmutation of matter into a surprising variety of forms, wherever we cast our eyes: the linen we wear was once earth, that was first refined into flax, then formed into thread, then woven into what we now see it. Thus our bodies may be changed in a most amazing manner, and yet con-

tinue substantially the same. St. Paul tells us, that they will be spiritual bodies, 1 Cor. xv. 44, that is, so exquisitely refined, that they will resemble proper spirits, as near as it is possible, while they retain their materiality; and elsewhere he says, that *the Lord Jesus will change our vile body, that it may be formed like unto his glorious body.* Phil. iii. 21. Such is the glory of Christ's body in its now exalted state, that the splendours breaking from it struck Paul and his fellow-travellers to the ground, and deprived him of sight for three days; how illustrious then must those bodies be that resemble his, though we allow him a suitable superiority! This the apostle intimates by representing the change of the bodies of saints at the resurrection as a mighty exploit of God's all-subduing power. Phil. iii. 21. We are sure the body will not then be a clog to the active spirit, but a proper instrument for the employments of heaven. It may be free from the law of gravitation, and capable of moving every way with equal speed; it may be nimble and quick as a glance of lightning; it may be adorned with a visible glory more bright than the sun in its meridian lustre, like the body of Christ on the mount of transfiguration. Matt. xvii. 2. Dan. xii. 3, and Matt. xiii. 43. It will then be incapable of pain, sickness, and death, Isa. xxxiii. 24, 1 Cor. xv. 33, and will no more feel hunger and thirst, nor any of the appetites of animal nature, Rev. vii. 16; it will be capable of the most excellent sensations of pleasure through every organ; and a suitable companion to an improved and glorified soul. Such bodies will the saints have: but what is it to have such bodies, we have now no experience; and shall never know till the glorious morning of the resurrection.

3. It doth not yet appear to us what it is to be perfect in holiness.

However enlarged and glorious our souls and bodies should become, we should be still miserable without a proportionable perfection in holiness. Now this, alas! we do not as yet know. We humbly hope some of us know what it is to feel the spark of divine love in our breasts. We hope we have tasted some small drops of bliss, though intermingled with gall and wormwood. We know what it is to exert our feeble powers in the service of the blessed God, and in contemplating and admiring his excellencies; but alas! sin still cleaves to us, and deadens our powers; numberless imperfections attend our best moments. But oh! to have all the powers of soul and body enlarged; to exert them to the full stretch in the exercises of heaven; to find them animated and directed by the most consummate holiness, and free from every the least taint of sin, what an inconceivable state is this! O how unlike the present! Sure in such a state we should hardly know ourselves: it would astonish us to find that we, who had been so long accustomed to be assaulted and perplexed with some guilty thought or sinful inclination, should at once commence perfectly free from it; that we, who have so long made such languid essays, should find all our powers full of unwearied immortal vigour! what an happy surprise will this be!

4. It does not yet appear what will be the employments and services of the heavenly world.

We know, from the plain declarations of sacred writ, that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of nature and grace, celebrating the praises of God, and prostrate adorations before him, will be no small part of the happiness of a future state. But we have no reason to suppose that it will consist entirely in contemplation and adoration. A state of

activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will separate spirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in these mortal regions? A very pleasant employ to generous and benevolent minds! Will they be ambassadors of their Sovereign to the most remote parts of his empire, to bear his messages, and discharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important services to the present and future creations, and the instruments of divine beneficence to worlds now unknown? A philosophic curiosity would pry into these things, and even a pious thirst for knowledge would be satisfied: but, alas! we know not what answer to give to these inquiries, till the light of eternity shall break on us. But,

5. The sons of God, in consequence of their improvements, natural and moral, and of their exalted services and employments, will be made so exquisitely happy, as they can have now no ideas of the felicity.

We know not what it is, in the present state, to have every want supplied, every desire satisfied, and all our vast capacity of happiness filled to the utmost; and therefore we can form no just conceptions of our future selves, when we shall be thus perfectly happy.

Behold, ye sons of God; behold the wonders that open before you! see to what vast things you are born! Can you survey this mystery, and not be lost in pleasing wonder, and cry out, *Behold! what manner of love is bestowed upon us!*

Alas! can you forget your own happiness; and let your thoughts and affections run out upon the things of this world, as if they were your portion? Shall the King's sons thus degrade their dignity, and depreciate their inheritance?

And you, unhappy sinners; ye who are not the sons of God by regeneration, what do you think of your case, when it is the very reverse of all this? Your souls, indeed, will be enlarged, but enlarged only that they may be more capacious vessels for torment: and your bodies shall be made strong and immortal; but it will be to bear strong, immortal misery. Instead of becoming perfect in holiness, you will arrive to an horrid perfection in sin. As all sin will be rooted out from the hearts of the children of God, so all the virtuous and amiable qualities you might retain in this world, will fall from you: and as the children of God will be transformed into pure unmingled holiness, you will degenerate into pure unmingled wickedness, and consequently you must be as miserable as they will be happy; and all your enlarged capacities will be as full of torment as theirs of bliss. I may therefore adapt the text to you, sinners: now you are the children of the devil; *but it doth not appear what you shall be*; you know not what prodigies of vengeance, what miracles of misery you shall be made; therefore awake from your carelessness and neglect, and seek earnestly to become the children of God.

III. And lastly, I proceed to shew in what respects the sons of God are unknown to the world, and mistaken by them.

The irreligious world may see a considerable difference between those that are, in the judgment of charity, the children of God, and others; but this they rather look upon as an odious singularity, than as a peculiar glory and excellency. They may see their life is not according to the course of this world; and, if they were witnesses to their secret devotions, or could penetrate their hearts, they would see a vastly greater difference; but by how

much the greater difference, by so much the more they hate them. And though they still profess a mighty veneration for religion, yet, wherever it appears, they hate, oppose, and asperse it; not indeed under that honourable name, but under some odious character that will cloak their wickedness, and the more effectually expose it. They love religion, they say, and God forbid they should speak a word against it; but they hate hypocrisy, preciseness, &c. and wherever a person appears remarkably religious, they will be sure to brand him with some of their odious names. Thus living christianity and its professors, have always met with more contempt and hatred in the world, than easy and pliable, or even the most profligate and abandoned sinners.

Now this is owing to the ignorance of the world as to what the sons of God shall ere long be. They do not look upon them as such favourites of Heaven; otherwise they would not dare to despise them at such a rate. The sons of God are princes in disguise; and therefore they are not known by a blind world, who, as they are ignorant of their Father, cannot discern his features in them.

O, sinners! could you but see in all his future glory, the meanest saint whom you now contempt and ridicule, how would it astonish you! it would tempt you rather to the extreme of adoration than contempt; how willingly would you change conditions with him!

Well, stay a little, and there will be a full *manifestation of the sons of God*. Romans viii. 19. You will then see those whom you now account stupid mopish creatures, that have no taste for the pleasures of life, shining more glorious than the sun; happy as their natures can admit, and, in their humble sphere, resembling God himself.

It is, however, all things considered, an instance of divine wisdom, that *it does not yet appear* to themselves or to others what the sons of God shall be. Such a manifestation would quite stun and confound the world, and strike it into a torpid consternation. It would render the children of God utterly impatient of the present life and its enjoyments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth; it would put an end to the necessary activity about temporal concerns, break off the designs of providence, and quite alter the form of administration in this world. Therefore the manifestation is wisely put off to the most proper season.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

First, What a state of darkness and imperfection is this! We slipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation: and we shall be, ere long, we know not what. Alas! how short are our views! all before us is impenetrable darkness, and we can see but a very little way behind us. What small cause then have the wisest of us to be elated with our own knowledge! In comparison of angelic beings, and even of our future selves, we see no more than the mole grovelling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly, But what surprising discoveries of things will flash upon us when we enter the other world! O! my brethren, when we ascend the heavenly mount, and take large surveys all around of the immensity of the works of God, when the unveiled perfections of the Deity suddenly shine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our waking from the sleep of death, how shall we be lost in wonders! What scenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How shall we be

astonished at ourselves, and ready to vent our surprise in some such strains as these! "Is this I, who so lately was grovelling in yonder world? how changed! how ennobled! how glorified! Is this the soul that was once so overrun with the leprosy of sin! once so blind and dark! once so perverse and depraved! so feeble and weak! tormented with vain anxieties and trifling cares, or transported with empty joys and delusive prospects! is this the soul that had so many hard conflicts with temptations, that felt such shocks of jealousy, and so often languished under desponding fears of seeing this glorious place! O how changed! how free from every anxious care! unmolested by so much as a guilty thought! nobly triumphant over sin and sorrow, and all that is feared in its mortal state! And is this my once frail, mortal body? my incumbrance in yonder world! how amazingly transformed! how gloriously fashioned! O to what a pitch of excellency and bliss can almighty grace raise the meanest worm! and O! in what raptures of praise should I celebrate this grace through all eternity!" Thus we may think the glorified saint would express his wonder. But alas! we know just nothing about it. The sensations and language of immortals are beyond our comprehension. But,

Thirdly, We are just on the brink of this surprising state. A few years, perhaps a few moments, may open to our eyes these amazing scenes: the next day, or the next hour they may flash upon us; and O! where are we then? in what a strange world! among what new beings! and what shall we then be? O! how amazingly transformed! Should you see a clod from beneath your feet, rising and brightening into a star, or shining like the noon-day sun, the transformation would not be half so astonishing. Then we have done with all beneath

the sun; all the little things of this trifling world will vanish at once like a vapour; and all before us will be the most important and majestic realities. Therefore,

Fourthly, how astonishing is it that we should think so little of what is before us! that we should still stumble on in the dark, thoughtless of these approaching wonders! Ye sons of God, what are you doing, that you think no more of your relation to God, and your heavenly inheritance? If a large estate, or the government of a kingdom should fall to you to-morrow, and you were told of it beforehand, would it not always dwell upon your thoughts, and keep you awake this night with the eager prospect? What! would things comparatively low fix your attention? and can you be thoughtless of a glory and bliss that infinitely surpass all your present conceptions? And you, unregenerate sinners, though I cannot say you are near to glory, yet I may assure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its solemn wonders: this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your present condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miserable forever. Therefore,

Fifthly, O sinners, why do you not labour to become the sons of God now while you may? Consider what prodigies of misery, what monuments of vengeance you will soon be, if you continue unregenerate! Alas! sirs, it does not yet appear what you shall soon be, otherwise you could no more rest in your present case, than upon the top of a mast, or upon burning coals. And, poor creatures, have you a mind to be initiated into these horrid mysteries of wo, and be taught them by experience? Will not you believe the repeated declarations of eternal truth, that they are intolerably

dreadful, and that, till you are the sons of God, till you are born again, and have the dispositions of children towards him, you cannot have a moment's security for escaping them? Alas! I must pity you; and I call upon all the children of God to pour out the tears of their compassion over you.

Sixthly, Let me call upon all the sons of God in this assembly to admire his love in conferring this dignity upon them. *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we shall be called the sons of God!* Consider what you were, guilty, rebellious creatures, condemned to everlasting tortures; and you will own, that to be just delivered from hell, though it had been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favour for you: but for you to be the sons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be transformed into happy somethings that you can now form no ideas of, and this too at the expense of the blood of God; what love is this! Go home, and forget it if you can. I may as well bid you live without breathing if you can.

Seventhly, Let me conclude with this reflection: how honourable, how happy, how glorious, are the sons of God! how immense their privileges! how rich their inheritance! Why then are they so backward to enter upon it? how unaccountable, how absurd their eager attachment to this world, and their unwillingness to die! Why so much afraid of ascending to their Father's house? Why so shy of glory and bliss? Why so fond of slavery and imprisonment? O, my brethren, be always on the wing, ready for flight, and be always looking out and crying, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*—
Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.**A SERMON ON THE NEW YEAR.**

JER. XXVIII. 16.—*This year thou shalt die.**

WHILE we are entering upon the threshold of a new year, it may be proper for us to stand, and pause, and take a serious view of the occurrences that may happen to us this year, that we may be prepared to meet them. Future contingencies are indeed unknown to us; and this ignorance is as agreeable to our present state, and as conducive to our improvement and happiness, as our knowledge of the things which it concerns us to know. But though we cannot predict to ourselves the particular events that may befall us, yet the events of life in general, in a vague indeterminate view, are not so contingent and unknowable as to leave no room for rational suppositions, and probable expectations. There are certain events which regularly happen to us every year, and, therefore, we may expect them this year. There are others sometimes occur in the compass of a year, and sometimes do not; such are many of the blessings and afflictions of life; of these we should be apprehensive, and prepare for them. And there are events which we know are before us, and we are sure they will occur: but at what particular time they will happen, whether this year or next, whether this day or to-morrow, is to us an utter uncertainty. Such is that interesting event, the close of the present life, and our entrance into internity.

*This Sermon was preached at the college at Nassau-Hall, and consequently to a number of young persons, Jan. 1, 1761. The author died the 4th of February following.

That we must die, is as certain as that we now live; but the hour or year when, is kindly and wisely concealed from us, that we may be always ready, and stand in the posture of constant vigilant expectation; that we may not be surprised. But certainly it becomes us to reflect seriously upon the mere possibility of this event happening this year, and realize to ourselves those important consequences that result from this supposition. The mere possibility of this may justly affect us more than the certain expectation of any other futurity. And it is not only possible, but highly probable, death may meet some of us within the compass of this year. Yes, it is highly probable that if some prophet, like Jeremiah, should open to us the book of the divine decrees, one or other of us would there see our sentence, and the time of its execution fixed. *Thus saith the Lord—this year thou shalt die.* There some of us would find it written, “This year thou shalt enjoy a series of prosperity, to try if the goodness of God will lead thee to repentance.” Others might read this melancholy line, “This year shall be to thee a series of afflictions; this year thou shalt lose thy dearest earthly support and comfort; this year thou shalt pine away with sickness, or agonize with torturing pain, to try if the kind severities of a father’s rod will reduce thee to thy duty.” Others, I hope, would read the gracious decree, “This year thy stubborn spirit, after long resistance, shall be sweetly constrained to bow to the despised gospel of Christ. This year shalt thou be born a child of God, and an heir of happiness, which the revolution of years shall never, never terminate. O happy and glorious event! May we hope this mercy is reserved among the secrets of heaven for any thoughtless impenitent sinner among us! And that the decree

will bring forth this year! this year which finds us in a dead sleep, stupidly careless of our everlasting interest, and which, if like the preceding, will be a season of thoughtless impenitence and presumptuous security! Others perhaps would read this tremendous doom, "This year my spirit, so long resisted, shall cease to strive with thee; this year I will give thee up to thine own heart's lusts, and swear in my wrath thou shalt not enter into my rest." O! dismal sentence! None can equal it in terror but one, and that is, *depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire:* and the former is an infallible presage of the latter.* Others (O! let our souls dwell upon the thought!) would probably find the doom of the false prophet Hananiah pronounced against them: *Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die.*

This year you may die, for your life is the greatest uncertainty in the world. You have no assurance of another year, another day, or even another moment.

This year you may die, because thousands have died since the last new year's day; and this year will be of the same kind with the last: the duration of mortals; a time to die. The causes of death, both in the human constitution and in the world without; will exist and operate in this year as well as in the last.

This year you may die; for thousands of others will die: it is certain they will, and why may not you? What peculiar security have you to confide in?

This year you may die, though you are young; for the regions of the dead have been crowded with persons of your age; and no age is the least security against the stroke of death.

This year you may die, though you are now in health and vigour, and your constitution seems to promise a long life; for thousands of such will be hurried into the eternal world this year, as they have been in years past. The principles of death may be even now working within you, notwithstanding the seeming firmness of your constitution; and you may be a pale, cold, lifeless corpse, sooner than the invalid whose life is apparently near its close.

This year you may die, though you are full of business, though you have projected many schemes; which it may be the work of years to execute, and which afford you many bright and flattering prospects. Death will not consult your leisure, nor be put off till another year, that you may accomplish your designs. Thousands have died before you, and will die this year amidst their golden prospects, and while spinning out their eternal schemes. And what has happened to them may happen to you.

This year you may die, though you have not yet finished your education, nor fixed in life, but are preparing to appear in the world, and perhaps elated with the prospect of the figure you will make in it. Many such abortive students are now in the dust. Many that had passed through a laborious course of preparation for public life, and had inspired their friends, as well as themselves, with high hopes, have been snatched away as they were just stepping upon the stage: and this may be your doom also.

This year you may die, though you are not prepared for it. When death shows you his warrant under the great seal of heaven, it will be no excuse to plead, "I am not ready." Though the consequence of your dying unprepared will be your

everlasting ruin, yet that dreadful consideration will have no weight to delay the execution.

This year you may die, though you deliberately delay your preparation, and put it off to some future time. You may fix upon the next year, or the decline of life, as the season for religion; but that time may never be at your disposal. Others may live to see it, but you may be engulfed in the boundless ocean of eternity before it arrives, and your time for preparation may be over forever.

This year you may die, though you are unwilling to admit the thought. Death does not slacken his pace towards you, because you hate him, and are afraid of his approach. Your not realizing your latter end as near, does not remove it to a greater distance. Think of it or not, you must die: your want of thought can be no defence; and you know not how soon you may feel what you cannot bear to think of.

This year you may die, though you may strongly hope the contrary, and flatter yourself with the expectation of a length of years. You will not perhaps admit the thought of a short abortive life; but notwithstanding this, you may be a lifeless corpse before this year finishes its revolution.

Thus it appears very possible, that one or other of us may die this year. Nay, it is very probable, as well as possible, if we consider that it is a very uncommon, and almost unprecedented thing, that not one should die in a whole year out of such an assembly as this. More than one have died the year past, who made a part of our assembly last new year's day. Therefore let each of us, (for we know not on whom the lot may fall,) realize this possibility, this alarming probability, "This year I may die."

And what if you should? Surely you may be startled at this question: for O! the surprising change! O! the important consequences!

If you should die this year, then all your doubts, all the anxieties of blended hopes and fears about your state and character will terminate forever in full conviction. If you are impenitent sinners, all the artifices of self-flattery will be able to make you hope better things no longer; but the dreadful discovery will flash upon you with the resistless blaze of intuitive evidence. You will see, you will feel yourselves such. If you lie under the condemnation of the divine law, you will no longer be able to flatter yourselves with better hopes: the execution of the penalty will sadly convince you of the tremendous truth. To dispute it would be to dispute the deepest heart-felt sensations of the most exquisite misery. But, on the other hand, if your fears and doubts are the honest anxieties of a sincere, self-diffident heart, ever jealous of itself, and afraid of every mistake in a matter of such vast importance, you will meet with the welcome demonstration of your sincerity, and of your being unquestionably the favourites of heaven. Sensation will afford you conviction; and you will believe what you see. In short, the possibility that this year may be your last, may be joyful tidings to you. If you die this year, this year you shall be in heaven, imparadised in the bosom of God. And is it possible your salvation is so near! Transporting thought!

It would be easy to enumerate several happy consequences of death with regard to those who have spent their life in preparation for it; and the nearness of death, instead of striking them with terror, may heighten the transport of expectation. It would afford me no small pleasure to trace those

blessed consequences, and it would be an act of kindness and compassion to the heirs of heaven, many of whom go on mourning and trembling even towards the regions of happiness, as though they were going to the place of execution, and anticipate but very little of those infinite pleasures which are so near at hand. But I intend to devote the present hour chiefly to the service of a part, perhaps the greater part of my hearers, who are in a more dangerous and alarming situation, I mean such who may die this year, and yet are not prepared; such who are as near to hell as they are to death, and consequently stand in need of the most powerful and immediate applications, lest they be undone forever beyond recovery.

To you therefore, my dear brethren, my fellow-mortals, my fellow-candidates for eternity, whose everlasting state hangs in a dread suspense, who have a secret conviction that you are not qualified for admission into the kingdom of heaven, and who cannot promise yourselves that you shall not sink into the infernal pit this year, but upon this supposition, which is the most precarious and doubtful in the world, namely, that you shall live out another year; to you I would address myself with affectionate tenderness, and yet with plainness and pungency. And I beg your most solemn attention to an affair of infinite moment, to which you may not have another year to attend.

This year you may die: and should you die this year, you will be forever cut off from all the pleasures of life. Then farewell, an everlasting farewell to all the mirth and gaiety, the tempting amusements and vain delights of youth. Farewell to all the pleasures you derive from the senses, and all the gratifications of appetite. This year the sun may lose his lustre as to you; and all the love-

ly prospects of nature may become a dismal blank. To you music may lose all her charms, and die away into everlasting silence; and all the gratifications of the palate may become insipid. When you lie in the cold grave, you will be as dead to such sensations as the clay that covers you. Then farewell to all the pompous but empty pleasures of riches and honours. The pleasures both of enjoyment and expectation from this quarter will fail forever. But this is not all.

If you should die this year, you will have no pleasures, no enjoyments to substitute for those you will lose. Your capacity and eager thirst for happiness will continue, nay, will grow more strong and violent in that improved adult state of your nature. And yet you will have no good, real or imaginary, to satisfy it; and consequently the capacity of happiness will become a capacity of misery; and the privation of pleasure will be positive pain. Can imagination feign any thing more wretched than a creature formed for the enjoyment of the infinite good, pining away forever with hungry, raging desires, without the least degree of gratification! banished at once from the supreme good, and from all created enjoyments that were wont to be poorly substituted in his stead! Yet this may be your case in the short compass of the following year. O! what a terrible change! What a prodigious fall!

Should you die this year, all your hopes and prospects as to a future life will perish abortive. Several of you now are in a state of education, preparing to enter upon the stage of the world; and you are perhaps often pleasing yourselves with gay and magnificent dreams about the figure you will make upon it. You may be planning many schemes to be accomplished in the several periods

of a long life: and are perhaps already anticipating in idea the pleasure, the profit, or the honour you expect to derive from their execution. In these fond hopes your affectionate parents, friends, and teachers concur with generous pleasure. But, alas! in the swift revolution of this beginning year, all these sanguine expectations and pleasing prospects may vanish into smoke. Youth is the season of promise, full of fair blossoms; but these fair blossoms may wither, and never produce the expected fruits of maturity. It may perhaps be the design of heaven, that after all the flattering hopes and projects, and after all the pains and expense of a liberal education, you shall never appear upon the public stage; or that you shall vanish away like a phantom, as soon as you make your appearance. Certainly then you should extend your prospects beyond the limits of mortality; extend them into that world, where you will live to execute them, without the risk of a disappointment! Otherwise,

If you die this year, you will not only be cut off from all the flattering prospects of this life, but from all hope entirely, and forever. If you die in your sins, you will be fixed in an unchangeable state of misery; a state that will admit of no expectation but that of uniform, or rather ever-growing misery; a state that excludes all hopes of making a figure, except as the monuments of the vindictive justice of God, and the deadly effects of sin. How affecting is the idea of a promising youth cut off from the land of the living, useless and hopeless in both worlds! fallen from the summit of hope into the gulf of everlasting despair! Yet this may be your doom, my dear youth, your doom this very year, if you should die in your sins.

If you should die this year, then all the ease and pleasure you now derive from thoughtlessness, self-

flattery, and suppressing the testimony of your consciences, will forever be at an end. You will then be obliged to view yourselves in a just light, and to know the very worst of your condition. The secret plaudits of self-flattery will be forever silenced, and conscience will recover itself from that state of insensibility into which you have cast it by repeated violences, and, as exasperated by your ill treatment, it will become your everlasting tormentor; it will do nothing but accuse and upbraid you forever: you will never more be able to entertain so much as one favourable thought of yourselves. And what a wretched state will this be! for a man to be self-condemned! to disapprove of his whole past conduct! to be pleased with nothing in himself, but heartily, though with horror, to concur in the condemning sentence of the supreme Judge, and the whole creation! to esteem himself a fool, a sinner, a mean, sordid wretch; an enemy to himself, and the whole universe; a self-destroyer, an outcast from all happiness, and from the society of all happy beings; an unlovely, odious, useless, miserable, despairing creature forever! O miserable situation! Does it not alarm you to think you may be so near it?

If you should die this year, you will be deprived forever of all the means of salvation. All these are confined to the present life, and have no place in the world of eternal punishment. There the thunders of the divine law roar; but the gentle voice of the gospel never sounds. There the Lion of the tribe of Judah rends the prey; but never exhibits himself as a Lamb that was slain, an atonement for sin, and the Saviour of the guilty. There conscience exerts its power, not to excite the medicinal anguish of kindly repentance, but the hopeless horrors of everlasting despair. There

Jehovah works, but not to enable the sinner to work out his own salvation, but to touch all the springs of painful sensation, and open all the sources of misery in the criminal. There mercy no more distributes her bounties, but justice reigns in her awful rigours. There the sanctifying Spirit no more communicates his purifying, all-healing influences, but sin, the great Apollyon, diffuses its deadly poison. In a word, when you leave this state of trial, all the discipline of the present state, all your advantages for salvation, all the means of grace, and all the encouragements of hope will be forever removed out of your reach; and consequently all possibility of your salvation will cease forever; for when the necessary means are taken away, the end becomes utterly impossible. Therefore,

If you should die this year, all your hopes of heaven will vanish forever! No more happiness for you! You have received your portion in this life, a few years of sordid, unsatisfactory happiness; and an entire eternity of misery, permanent, exquisite, consummate misery, follows behind! No more honour for you, but shame and everlasting contempt. No more intellectual amusements and pleasing studies! no more gentle beams of science! but the blackness of darkness forever! intense pouring upon your hopeless wretchedness! tormenting recollections of your past folly and madness in voluntarily rushing into the pit! No agreeable companion! no sympathizing friend! no relaxation! no pleasing exercise! no encouraging prospects! no comforting reviews! no friendly intercourse with heaven! no token of love! no gift of grace from the Father of mercy! none of the conscious joys of self-approbation! no hope in the future! no relief from the past! no refuge, no escape, at the expense of existence, into the

gulf of annihilation! but above, an angry God and a lost heaven! behind, a mis-spent life and opportunities of salvation irrecoverably lost! within, a guilty, remorseful conscience, an implacable self-tormentor! around, malignant, enraged ghosts, mutual tormentors! before, an eternity of hopeless misery, extending infinitely beyond the ken of sight! O! tremendous doom! who can bear the thought?

And is it possible it should be so near to any of us? Where is the unhappy creature, that we may all drop our tears over him? Where is he? Rather, where is he not? An impenitent sinner is almost every where to be found; and that is the wretched creature who stands every moment upon the slippery brink of this horrible precipice; and this year, nay this hour, for what mortals or angels know, he may be thrown down, engulfed, and lost forever.

And is this a safe situation for you, thoughtless, fool-hardy mortals! Does it become you in such a situation to be cheerful, merry, and gay; or busy, restless, and laborious in the pursuits of this transitory life? Does it become you to dread nothing but the disasters and calamities of the present state, or spin out your eternal schemes of grandeur, riches, or pleasure, in hopes to accomplish them within the narrow, uncertain limits of time allotted to you? Alas! before another year has run its hasty round, the world and all that it contains, all its pursuits and enjoyments, all its cares and sorrows, may be as insignificant to you as the grandeur of Cæsar, or the riches of the world before the flood. Earthly riches or poverty, liberty or slavery, honour or disgrace, joy or sorrow, sickness or health, may in this year become as little your concern, and be as much nothing to you as to

your coffin, or the dust that shall cover it, or to Judas that has been gone to his own place above seventeen hundred years.

Does it not rather become you to turn your thoughts to another inquiry, "Is it possible for me to escape this impending danger? Where, how, whence may I obtain deliverance?" If you are not desirous seriously to attend to this inquiry, it will be to no purpose for me to solve it: to you it will appear as a solemn trifle, or an impertinent episode. But if you will lay it to heart, if you will, as it were, give me your word that you will pay a proper regard to it, I shall enter upon the solution with the utmost alacrity.

I assure you then, in the first place, your case is not yet desperate, unless you choose to make it so; that is, unless you choose to persist in carelessness and impenitence, as you have hitherto done. If you now begin to think seriously upon your condition, to break off from your sins, and attend in good earnest upon the means appointed for your salvation, there is hope concerning you; yes, miserable sinners! there is hope that this year, which now finds you in so deplorable a state, will introduce you into another, under the blessing of heaven, safe from all danger, and entitled to everlasting happiness.

I presume you all know so well the external means you should use for your salvation, that I need not particularly direct you to them. You all know that prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, meditation upon divine things, free conference with such as have been taught by experience to direct you in this difficult work; you all know, I say, that these are the means instituted for your conversion: and if you had right views of things, and a just temper towards them, you

would hardly need instruction or the least persuasion to make use of them. But to give you such views, and inspire you with such a temper, this is the difficulty. O! that I knew how to undertake it with success! I can only give you such directions as appear to me proper and salutary; but it is the almighty power of God alone that can give them force and efficacy.

You must learn to think, to think seriously and solemnly upon your danger, and the necessity of a speedy escape. You must retire from the crowd, from talk, dissipation, business, and amusement, and converse with yourselves alone in pensive solitude.

You must learn to think patiently upon subjects the most melancholy and alarming, your present guilt and depravity, and your dreadful doom so near at hand, if you continue in your present condition. The mind, fond of ease, and impatient of such mortifying and painful thoughts, will recoil, and fly off, and seek for refuge in every trifle: but you must arrest and confine it to these disagreeable subjects; you must force upon it these medicinal pain, as you often force your stomach, when your health requires it. There is not any moroseness in this advice; no ill-natured design upon your pleasure and happiness. On the other hand, it is intended to procure you more pleasure and happiness than you can possibly obtain any other way: it is intended to prevent many sorrowful days and years, nay a complete eternity of misery.—The alternative proposed to you is not, whether you shall feel the bitter anguish of repentance, or not; whether you shall be pensive and serious, or not; whether you shall think upon gloomy and alarming subjects, or not: This is not at all the state of the case; for you must feel the sorrows of re-

pentance; you must be thoughtful and pensive; you must confine your minds to subjects of terror: you must, whether you will or not; it is utterly unavoidable. But the only alternative proposed to your choice is, whether you will voluntarily submit to the kindly, hopeful, medicinal, preventive sorrows of repentance in this state of trial, which will issue in everlasting joy; or be forced to submit to the despairing pangs, and useless destructive horrors of too late a repentance in the eternal world; which will only torment you, but not save you; which will be your punishment, and not a mean of your reformation, or a preparative for happiness. Whether you will confine your thoughts for a time to the contemplation of your present miserable circumstances, while hope irradiates even the darkest gloom of discouragement, and the gospel opens such bright and inviting prospects beyond those melancholy views that now first present themselves to your thoughts; or whether you will choose to pine away a doleful eternity in sullen, intense, hopeless porings upon your remediless misery, in pale reviews of past folly, and shocking surveys of endless ages of wo before you. This is the true state of the case; and can you be at a loss what choice to make! Does not the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, of self-interest and self-love, as well as the voice of God, direct you to choose a few serious, sad, solemn, sorrowful, penitent hours now, rather than to invert the choice and to purchase a few hours of presumptuous ease at the expense of a wretched, despairing eternity? O choose life, that you may live. While you indulge a trifling levity of mind, and a roving dissipation of thought, there is no hope you will ever seriously attend to your most important interest, or use the means of grace in earnest. Hence it is that I

have made it so much my endeavour to-day to make you serious and thoughtful. To enforce this, let me repeat what I think cannot but have some effect; especially as it comes not from the priesthood, but the court; and from a courtier as eminent as England ever boasted.

“Ah! my friends! while we laugh, all things are serious round about us. God is serious, who exerciseth patience towards us: Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us: the Holy Ghost is serious who striveth against the obstinacy of our hearts: the holy Scriptures bring to our ears the most serious things in the world; the holy sacraments represent the most serious and awful matters: the whole creation is serious in serving God and us: all that are in heaven and hell are serious:—How then can we be gay?”

I pray you, my dear brethren, yield an immediate compliance. Do not delay this great affair for another year, till you are sure you shall live another year. You may perhaps have time enough before you to work out your salvation, if you immediately begin to improve it: but, if you loiter, you may perish for want of time: the riches of the world will not be able then to redeem one of those precious hours you now squander away.

Let me now make you one of the most reasonable, salutary, and advantageous proposals that heaven itself can make to you: and that is, that you endeavour to enter upon this new year as new creatures. Let the old man with his affections and lusts die with the old year. *Let the time past of your life more than suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh. What profit had you then in those things of which you should now be ashamed?—*How shocking the thought that your old guilt should follow you into the new year, and haunt

you in future times! O begin this year as you would wish to end your life! Begin it so as to give hopes that your future time will be so spent as to render death harmless, and even welcome to you.

Let the possibility suggested in my text have due weight with you: This year you may die.

But perhaps some of you may be inverting this consideration, and whispering to yourselves, "This year I may not die:" and, therefore, there is no immediate necessity of preparation for death.— But what if you should not die this year, if you still delay the great work for which your time is given you! Alas! if you persist in this, one would think it can give you but little pleasure whether you die this year or not? What end will your life answer, but to add to your guilt, and increase your punishment? What safety can another year afford you, when you must die at last? What valuable end do you intend to answer in future life? Do you purpose to spend this year as you have your past years? What! in offending your God! abusing his mercies! neglecting the precious seasons of grace! hardening yourselves more and more in impenitence! adding sin to sin, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! Is it worth your while to live for such horrid, preposterous purposes as these? Can you wish for another year with these views? Could you venture to pray for it? Will the prayer bear to be put into words? Come, put on the hardness of an infernal ghost, that you may be able to support yourselves under the horror of the sound. "Thou supreme Excellence! Thou Author of my being, and all my powers! Thou Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge of the world! I have spent ten, twenty, or thirty years in displeasing thee and ruining myself; but I am not yet satisfied with the pleasures of such a con-

duct. Grant me, I pray thee, another year to spend in the same manner. Grant me more mercies to abuse; more time to mispend; more means of grace to neglect and profane." Could you now fall on your knees, and present such petitions to Heaven? Surely you could not. Surely your frame would shudder; nay, would not the heavens gather blackness, and the earth tremble at the sound! But have your temper and practice no language? Language expresses the thoughts and intentions of the mind; and are not the habitual temper and practice a more certain discovery of the thoughts and intentions than mere words? words, which may be spoken without a thought, or in a passion, and which may soon be heartily retracted? But the temper and practice is a steady and sure rule of judging, and decisive of a man's predominant character? Therefore, while your temper and practice are agreeable to such a prayer: that is, while you are disposed to spend your time that God gives you in sin and impenitence, you are perpetually insulting Heaven with such petitions, and that too in a manner much more expressive and strong than if you should utter them in words. And can you quietly bear the thought of this horrid blasphemy, which you are constantly breathing out against Heaven? Can you wish and pray for another year for this purpose? What though you should not die this year? Will this exempt you from death in another, or from the punishment of a mispent life? Alas! no; this will only render you a greater criminal, and a more miserable wretch in eternity. One year of sinning will make a dreadful addition to your account.

Therefore conclude, every one for himself, "It is of little importance to me whether I die this year, or not; but the only important point is, that

I make a good use of my future time, whether it be longer or shorter." This, my brethren, is the only way to secure a happy new year: a year of time, that will lead the way to an happy eternity.

SERMON XXXV.

AN ENROLMENT OF OUR NAMES IN HEAVEN THE
NOBLEST SOURCE OF JOY.

LUKE X. 20. *Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.**

THIS is the answer Christ gave to his disciples, when returned from their mission, flushed with victory over the most mighty and most malignant enemies, the infernal powers. *Lord, say they, even the devils are subject to us, through thy name.* This they probably mentioned with a tincture of vanity, and were secretly proud of their new power, which their Master had given them. Though they owned it was his gift, they gloried in it, as conferring some new honour and dignity upon themselves. And probably like the rest of their countrymen, their heads were filled with notions of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and his conquests over the other nations of the earth in favour of the Jews; and inferred that they should have an irresistible power over their enemies on earth, from the power they had been enabled to exercise over evil spirits, so much more mighty, and seemingly unconquerable.

* A sermon preached at Hanover, in Virginia, January 14, 1759.

Their Lord and Master, among other things in his answer, checks this secret vanity, and points out to them a superior cause of joy. *Rejoice not in this; that is, rejoice not so much as you do, rejoice not principally in this, that the spirits, (that is, evil spirits,) are subject to you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven; as if he should say, "Though you may safely rejoice in the victory you have obtained through my name over the powers of hell, yet you ought to take care that it be not a vain, selfish, carnal joy, a joy springing from the gratification of your own ambition. And take care also, that it does not run into excess: for I will shew you a much greater cause of joy than even this; and that is, that your names are written in heaven. It is possible, that while you are casting the devil out of the bodies of others, your own souls may be under his power, and you may be his miserable slaves forever. But since your names are written in heaven, you are safe; and that is cause of joy indeed. Rejoice in this above all other things."*

How should we rejoice, and perhaps boast, if the mighty powers of hell were subject unto us, and we could make them fly at a word! But the meanest christian is more happy than this, and has cause of greater joy.

For the farther explication of the text, it is only necessary to inquire, what is meant by their names being written in heaven?

Heaven is here compared to a city or corporation, in which a list or record is kept of all the citizens or freemen who are entitled to its privileges and immunities. And therefore, to have our names written in heaven, signifies to be citizens, or freemen of the heavenly city; that is, to have a

right to an inheritance there, and to all its privileges and enjoyments.

This naturally suggests a very important inquiry, the decision of which may hold us all in an anxious suspense: "How may I know, (may each of us ask,) whether my unworthy name be written in heaven? who can open and read the records of heaven, and shew me whether my name is registered there?"

I answer, This is a secret that may be discovered; for all that have their names written in heaven, may be distinguished by their characters, their temper, and practice, while upon earth. And their characters are such as these:

1. They are deeply sensible of the vanity of all earthly things, and that heaven alone is a sufficient portion and happiness. All that are registered as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, have a superlative esteem of that privilege, and count all things but loss in comparison of it. Matt. vii. 24—26, and xiii. 45, 46. And is this your character? Are your hearts in heaven? or are your highest affections confined to the earth?

2. All that have their names written in heaven have a heavenly nature; a nature very different from that of the men of this world, and like that of the citizens of heaven. And is this your temper? or is it earthly and sensual?

3. All that have their names written in heaven have a peculiar love for all their fellow citizens, who are heirs of heaven. They love them as members of the same corporation with themselves. 1 John iii. 14.

4. If your names are written in heaven it is the chief business and concern of your life to obtain an interest in heaven. This is not the object of languid, lazy wishes, or of lukewarm, spiritless

prayers; but of your vigorous, anxious, persevering desires. And do you thus seek the kingdom of heaven? Matt. x. 12. Luke xvi. 16.

These marks must suffice at present to assist you in self-examination; and I beg you would bring them to your hearts, and see if they will stand this test.

If your names are written in heaven, then my text authorises me to tell you, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy. But on the other hand,

If your names are not written in heaven, there is nothing in the world that can happen to you, that can be a cause of rational lasting joy to you.

I. If your names are written in heaven, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy. This will appear by an induction of particulars.

Are you rich in this world? Has God blessed your industry and frugality, so that you are in easy, affluent circumstances? This is cause of joy and gratitude to God, as it furnishes you with the materials of earthly happiness, frees you from many anxieties and painful wants, and puts it in your power to enjoy the generous pleasure of doing good with your substance. But what is this, when compared with the blessing of the sanctified use of riches, and the assurance that God has given you, that all things shall work together for your good? what is this to the unsearchable riches of Christ and that fulness of grace and glory, in which you have an interest? Rejoice more in this than in thousands of gold and silver.

Or if you are not in affluent circumstances, are you above extreme want, and able by your labour

and industry to provide yourselves and your dependants with the necessaries of life? This is the happiness of most, even of the poor in our country; and this is cause of joy. But what is this to the happiness of having provision made for your subsistence through everlasting ages? Is it not superior cause of joy, that when you are stript of all the enjoyments of the present life, you shall also be delivered from all its wants and labours, and shall not only have a bare sufficiency, but a rich overflowing abundance of happiness, equal to the capacities of your souls in their highest enlargements? In this you may warrantably rejoice, and you cannot run into excess.

Do you enjoy health of body? In this rejoice: but how trifling a cause of joy is this to that of your souls being in health and prospering, and bearing the symptoms of immortal life and vigour!

Are your bodies free from diabolical possession? Rejoice not so much in this, but rather rejoice that the devil is cast out of your souls, and that you are not under his spiritual tyranny.

Are you happy in your friends and relations, and every domestic blessing? Rejoice not so much in this as that you have the most honourable relations and friends in heaven. God is your father; Christ is your Saviour, your elder brother, your friend; the Holy Ghost is your sanctifier: the angels and all the saints are your fellow-servants, your brethren of the household of God.

Do you rejoice in the salvation of your country, and that you are delivered from the hands of your savage and perfidious enemies on earth? Rather rejoice that you are delivered from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and from the condemnation of the divine law.

Do you rejoice that our forces have been victorious over our enemies? Rather rejoice in the victory which the Captain of your salvation has gained for you over your spiritual enemies. Rather rejoice in the victory you are enabled to gain over sin, Satan and the world, through the blood of the Lamb. Rather rejoice to see your lusts slain, or at least mortally wounded, and dying in your hearts.

Do you rejoice that you have the prospect of living in safety and peace in your country? Rather rejoice that you have peace of conscience, and peace with God, through Jesus Christ; and that you shall enter into everlasting peace whenever you leave this restless world.

Do you rejoice that your earthly possessions, your property and liberty are safe? Rather rejoice that your heavenly inheritance is safe; and that whatever becomes of the kingdoms of the earth, you have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, eternal in the heavens.

Do you rejoice that you live under the government of a good king? and that you enjoy the blessings of our happy constitution? This is a peculiar happiness indeed; but rejoice not so much in this, as that you are the subjects of the King of kings, and under a dispensation of grace, and the government of a Mediator. *The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice.* Psalm xcvii. 1. Rejoice, above all, in this, that you and all your affairs are under the direction of a divine hand, that will manage all for your good. Rejoice that ere long you shall be admitted to the court of the heavenly King, and see him in all his glory.

Do you rejoice that your life is prolonged, while so many are dropping into the grave around you? Rather rejoice that you are not to live always in

this most wretched world. Rejoice that death itself, your last enemy, will not be able to do you any lasting injury, but only convey you home to your Father's house, and the full possession of your heavenly inheritance.

Do you rejoice that you enjoy the gospel and the means of salvation, and that these invaluable blessings are not likely to be torn from you by the hands of Indian savages and Popish idolaters? This indeed is cause of rejoicing; but how much more ought you to rejoice that the gospel and the means of salvation are made effectual by divine grace for your conversion and sanctification! Many enjoy them as well as you, to whom they are of no service, but an occasion of more aggravated guilt and ruin.

Let me therefore persuade you to rejoice, not only as a privilege, but as a duty. God enjoins it upon you by the same authority by which he requires you to pray, or to love himself or your neighbour. *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.* Psalm xxxii. 11. *Rejoice evermore: rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice.* 1 Thess. v. 16. It is decent and congruous that you should now rejoice in that, in which you shall rejoice forever. And, on the other hand, it is highly unbecoming that you should walk towards heaven melancholy and dejected, as if you were going to the place of execution. Let sinners be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, who stand every moment on the slippery brink of eternal misery. Sorrow and lamentation become their circumstances. But will you always mourn and droop, who stand every moment on the threshold of heaven, and know not but you may be there before another sun shall rise? how indecent is this! There-

fore rejoice with all your hearts, that your worthless names are written in heaven. This is greater cause of joy than if they were registered in the annals of fame, or among princes of the blood royal.

And do not excuse yourselves from this agreeable duty, by saying, "I would rejoice, if I were sure my name is written in heaven: but, alas! I am not:" for is not this uncertainty your own fault! the effect of your own negligence? Besides have you not some cheerful hopes and probabilities, and even some transient assurance? and is not this cause of joy to creatures that deserve to be left under the pangs of everlasting despair?

Let me advance a step farther, and tell you, that you should rejoice that your names are written in heaven, not only more than in all other causes of joy, but also in opposition to all causes of sorrow.

What though you are poor in this world, when the heavenly inheritance is yours? That you are despised among men, when you have the honour of being the sons of God? That you are weak, or sick and pained in body, when your souls are recovering from the deadly disease of sin? That you are the slaves of men, when you are free of the heavenly city, members of the same corporation with the armies of heaven, and sharers in the liberty of the sons of God? That your enemies should prove victorious over you upon earth, when you shall certainly overcome at last? That your mortal relations and friends die, when your heavenly Father and all your spiritual kindred live, and you cannot be bereaved of them? In short, what though you endure all the afflictions that can crowd upon one man in the present life, when they are all short and transitory, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and when

you will soon arrive in the land of rest, beyond the reach of every misery? In spite of all these calamities, rejoice; *rejoice and be exceeding glad, since your names are written in heaven.*

But I must proceed to address another class of hearers; and to them I must say,

II. If your names are not written in heaven, you can have no cause of solid, rational, and lasting joy in any thing. This also I shall illustrate by an induction of particulars.

Rejoice not that you are rich, or at least enjoy the comforts of life, while you are destitute of spiritual and everlasting riches. Will it be any pleasure to you to pass from a splendid well-furnished house into the regions of horror and darkness? From faring sumptuously every day, to suffer the extremities of eternal want? From gay and merry company, to the society of the lost spirits in hell? From all the luxuries of life, to weep, and wail, and gnash the teeth for ever? From wearing silks and laces, and every form of finery, to be wrapt in sheets of infernal flame? Alas! what joy can you take in all the advantages that riches can give you, while you must be stript of them all so soon, and feel a terrible reverse? Many who are styled worshipful, honourable, and hear nothing but titles of dignity among men, are vile, despicable creatures in the sight of God, and must ere long sink into shame and everlasting contempt. Many a body adorned with whatever riches can procure, is animated by a poor worthless soul, full of sin, and void of the beauties of holiness. And can you rejoice in such trifles as these? A man that has a gangrened foot may as well rejoice that it is covered with a silken plaister; or a criminal, that he is carried to the gallows in a coach of state.

Besides, remember, how hardly shall rich men enter into the kingdom of God! It is an human impossibility; but it is not impossible to Omnipotence. As riches increase, temptations increase; temptations to love the world more, and to think less of heaven; temptations from pride, flattery, hurry, company, &c. And can you rejoice that your salvation is made more difficult? that you, who are apt to stumble at straws, have mountains thrown up in your way? Alas! if this were rightly considered, would the wealthy and affluent be so resolute and eager in the pursuit of riches?

What though you are in good business, and prospering in the world, while you are not doing the work of your salvation, nor carrying on a trade for heaven, and your hurry of business is a great occasion of this pernicious neglect?

What though you enjoy health of body, while your souls are dead in trespasses and sins, and your health is no security against death or hell? What though you enjoy friends and relatives, while the great God is your enemy? Or mirth and pleasure, when they will end in eternal howlings, and you will be upbraided with them another day, like *Dives, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time didst enjoy thy good things?*

What though the French and Indians are routed? alas! the devil and your sins are still lords over you! What though your country is safe, when you shall stay in it but a very little time, and you have no place prepared for you in heaven? What though you are the free-born descendants of Britons, and never were in bondage to any man? alas! you are the slaves of sin. What though you live under the government of the best of kings, while you are the captives of the prince of darkness, and the King of heaven is your enemy? What though your

bodies are not exposed to the sword of your fellow-mortals, when you are liable every moment to the sword of divine justice? What though you are safe, as to your outward estate, when your immortal souls are in danger? *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or to enjoy the gospel, while you receive no advantage from it, but abuse it to your more aggravated ruin? What avails it that God is merciful, when you have no share in his mercy, and never will, if you continue in your vain, carnal joy? That Christ died for sinners, while you wilfully exclude yourselves from the blessed effects of his death?*

In short, what upon earth, or even in heaven, can afford you any pleasure or rational joy, while your names are not written in heaven, and you are not using earnest endeavours to be admitted citizens there? alas! your case calls for sighs, and tears, and sorrow, rather than joy. What have you to do with politics, news, and the fate of armies and kingdoms, while you know not whether you will be out of hell one day longer.

And as the joy of the righteous, in having their names written in heaven, may swallow every other joy, so your sorrow, on account of your names not being written there, may swallow up all other sorrows. Be sorrowful on this account, above all other things.

Have you lost your friends, your relatives, your estate? This is sad; but O! it is nothing to the loss of God, of heaven, and your souls. All will be lost ere long, if you continue in your present condition. Are you poor in this world? That is but a trifling affliction, compared with that everlasting poverty you must ere long suffer. Are you mean and despised by men? Alas! what is that to your being despised and abhorred by the God that made you?

Are you the slaves of men? This would be trifling, and you need not care for it, were it not that you are slaves to sin and Satan, and under the condemnation of the divine law. Are you disordered in body? That is nothing to the disorders of your souls. Are you afraid of natural death? alas! what is that to spiritual death, which has seized your souls, and the eternal death which is but just before you? In short, nothing in all the world ought so to distress and grieve you as this, That your names are not written in heaven.

Therefore, instead of vain rejoicing, and mirth, and gaiety, I must read to you the denunciation of Jesus Christ against you; *But woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.* Luke vi. 24, 25.—And call upon you as the apostle James does, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.* James v. 9. And again, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.* James iv. 9.

I can honestly assure you, I am no enemy to the pleasures of mankind. But it is because I love you, that I wish you may return home sad and sorrowful from this place; for I well know, you are forever undone, unless you turn to the Lord; and that you never will turn to him, without rending of your hearts, weeping, and mourning. Joel ii. 12.

If your joy and mirth were rational, I should say nothing against it; but is it not frenzy and madness to be merry in the chains of sin, under the wrath of God, and upon the brink of eternal ruin?

Is it not also dishonourable to God? Is it as if you should tell him to his face, that you can be

merry and happy without his favour, and that you care nothing for his displeasure?

I should not reprove your mirth, if it were harmless; but, alas! it will ruin you if you indulge it. For, let me tell you, such sinners as you cannot become converts, without alarming fears and deep sorrows. Without this you never will be in earnest in your religious endeavours.

You will tell me perhaps, “you see christians cheerful, and sometimes merry; and why may not you be so?” I answer, (1.) There is a great difference in your case and theirs; they have a lively hope of everlasting happiness; but you can have no hope in your present condition. And may not they rejoice, while you have cause to mourn and weep? What would you think of a criminal under condemnation, if he allowed himself in that mirth and amusement, which may be lawful and becoming in others? (2.) The christians you know now are cheerful with good reason; but did you know any of them under their first convictions; were they cheerful then? then, when they received a sight of their sin and danger, and were in an awful suspense what would be their everlasting doom? Were they merry and gay while they saw themselves without a Saviour, and under the displeasure of God? No; then all was sadness, fear, and sorrow. And this is what your case now requires. Can you expect the same cheerfulness in one under the power of a deadly disorder as in one recovering? or would it be becoming?

Finally, I should not endeavour to damp your joys and turn them into sorrow, if they would last. But oh! they will soon end, and nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will succeed. Look down into that hideous gulf, the prison of divine justice, where Dives and Judas, and

thousands of sinners lie; and can you see no cheerful look, or hear one laugh among them? No, no: they have done with all joy; and must spend a miserable eternity in grief and tears. And will you not rather mourn in time, than mourn forever? will you choose now to receive your consolation? or will you not rather delay it till you have reason to rejoice?

To conclude: Suffer a friend to your best interests to prevail upon you to return home this evening sadly pensive and sorrowful, and to resolve you will never indulge yourselves in one hour's mirth and gaiety, till you have some reason to believe that your names are written in heaven. This is what your own interest requires; and if you refuse, you will unavoidably be sorry for it forever, when your sorrow can be of no service to you. Betake yourselves in serious sadness to the earnest use of all the means of salvation, and you have reason to hope God will have mercy upon you, and turn you to himself. Then you will have reason to rejoice, to rejoice in your temporal blessings, and especially because your names are written in heaven. And then God, and Christ, and angels will rejoice over you, and join in your joy.

SERMON XXXVI.

**THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL BY THE DIVINE
POWER UPON THE SOULS OF MEN.***

2 COR. X. 4, 5.—*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

THIS restless world is now in an unusual ferment; kingdom rising up against kingdom, and nation against nation: magazines filling, arms brightening, canons roaring, and human blood streaming both by sea and land. These things engross the thoughts and conversation of mankind, and alarm their fears and anxieties. But there is another kind of war carrying on in the world: a war, the issue of which is of infinitely greater importance; a war of near six thousand years standing; that is, ever since the first grand rebellion against God; a war in which we are all engaged as parties, and in the result of which our immortal interest is concerned; though, alas! it engages but little of the attention and solicitude of the generality among us; I mean, the war which Jesus Christ has been carrying on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to reduce the rebellious sons of men to their duty, and redeem them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, from their wretched captivity

*A Sermon preached at Hanover, in Virginia, October 17, 1756.

to sin and Satan. This is the design in which the apostles were embarked, and which St. Paul describes in the military style in my text. As some members of the Corinthian church had taken up a very low opinion of St. Paul, his design in the context is to raise the dignity of his apostolic office. And for that purpose, he describes in the military language the efficacy and success of those apostolic powers with which he was furnished for the propagation of christianity, and the reduction of the world into obedience to the gospel. Those powers were such as these; the power of working miracles to attest his divine commission; the preaching of the doctrine of the cross, and the rod of discipline for the reformation of offenders; which in the hands of the apostles, seems to have been attended with the power of inflicting temporal judgments, and particularly bodily sicknesses; and which St. Paul here threatens to exercise upon such of the Corinthians as continued obstinate in their opposition to his ministry.

These powers he here calls weapons of war. This tent-maker and a few fishermen were sent out upon a grand expedition, in opposition to the united powers of Jews and Gentiles, of earth and hell. All the world, with their gloomy god, were ready to join against them. They were ready to oppose them with all the force of philosophy, learning, authority, threatenings, and all the cruel forms of persecution. For the christian cause in which these soldiers of Jesus Christ were engaged, was contrary to their lusts and prejudices, their honour, and secular interests. This opposition of the world to the gospel, the apostle also describes in the military style. Their lusts, prejudices, and interests, their vain imaginations and false reasonings, are so many strong holds and high things or castles in

which they, as it were, fortify and entrench themselves. These they hold and garrison under the prince of darkness; in these they stand out in their rebellion against heaven, and fight against God, against his gospel, and against their own consciences. And with what weapons did the apostles attack these rebels in their strong holds? Not with carnal weapons, such as the heroes and conquerors of the world are wont to use, but with weapons of a spiritual nature, the force of evidence and conviction, the purity of their doctrines and lives, the terrors of the Lord, and the all-conquering love of a dying Saviour. With these weapons they encountered the allied powers of men and devils; with these they propagated the religion of their Master; and not with the sword, like Mahomet; or with the bloody artillery of persecution, like the church of Rome; or by the dragoonade, like the tyrants of France.

What unpromising weapons were these? What avails the light of evidence in a world that loves darkness rather than light, and where lust, prejudice, and interest generally prevail against truth and reason? Is the contemptible weapon of the cross likely to do execution? Are the unpopular, mortifying doctrines of one that was crucified like a malefactor and a slave, likely to prevail against all the prejudices of education, the attachment of mankind to the religion of antiquity, established by law; the policy of priestcraft; the love of gain; the powers of the world; and the various oppositions of the depraved hearts of mankind? Are such gentle and weak weapons as these likely to have any success? Yes, these weapons, though not carnal, were mighty, resistless, all-conquering—but then you must observe, they were mighty through God. The excellency of the power was of God,

and such unpromising arms were used on purpose to shew this. It was he that gave edge to the weapons, and force to the blow. Without the energy of his grace, they could have done nothing, even in the hands of apostles. But, by the might of his spirit, they became almighty, and carried all before them: these contemptible weapons, with his concurrence, pulled down strong holds; cast down towering imaginations, and reasonings that seemed impregnable, and demolished every high thing, every battery, castle, or citadel, that was erected against the knowledge of God, that knowledge of him which the gospel brought to light, and reduced every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. Sinners were brought not only to compliment Jesus with a bended knee, and profess subjection to him with their lips, but to bow their stubborn hearts to him, and let him reign in their affections. That gospel to which they were so averse, gained a complete victory over their minds; their minds, which the Alexanders and Cæsars of the world could not subdue; and reduced not only their external conduct, but their thoughts; not only some thoughts, but every thought, to the obedience of Christ. When God gives the commission, the stately walls of Jericho will fall, even at the feeble sound of rams' horns.

To bring into captivity, is generally understood in a bad sense, and signifies the carrying away of loyal subjects against their wills, into a foreign country, and there enslaving them to the enemy. But here it is a significant catachresis, and signifies the deliverance of sinners from the slavery of sin and Satan, and their restoration into a state of liberty, and into favour with God, and this too by their own free consent. And it is called a captivating, to intimate, that, though when the sinner sub-

mits he does it voluntarily, yet he had really made a strong resistance, and did not submit till sweetly constrained to it; and that he looked upon his state of slavery to sin as a state of freedom, and was as unwilling to leave it as a free-born subject would be to be captivated and enslaved in an enemy's country.

I foresee I cannot take time to do justice to this copious subject. But I shall endeavour to comprise my thoughts in as little room as possible, in a few propositions, to which each head in my text may be reduced. And the whole will be but a short history of the revolt of mankind against the great God, their rightful Sovereign, and their miserable slavery to sin and Satan—of an important expedition set on foot and carried on by the ministry of the gospel, to recover them from their state of slavery, and reduce them to their obedience—of their various methods of opposition to this design; or the various ways in which they fortify themselves against the attacks made upon them by divine grace for this end—of the issue of this siege, particularly the terms of surrender—and their consequent deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan, and their willing subjection to their rightful Lord and Proprietor.

I. All mankind, in their present state of apostacy, have revolted from God, and surrendered themselves slaves to sin and Satan.

We might produce abundant evidence of this from the sacred writings; but as the evidence from plain undeniable fact may be more convictive, I shall insist chiefly upon it. Mankind are secretly disaffected to God and his government in their hearts; and hence they do not take pleasure in his service. They are not solicitous for the honour and dignity of his government. They will not

bear the restraints of his authority, nor regard his law as the rule of their conduct, but will follow their own inclinations, let him prescribe what he will. Nay they have no disposition to return to their duty, or listen to proposals for reconciliation; and hence they disregard the gospel (which is a scheme to bring about a peace,) as well as the law. In short, they will not do any thing that God commands them, unless it suit their own corrupt inclinations; and they will not abstain from any thing which he forbids, for his sake, if they have any temptation to it from their own lusts. These things, and a thousand more which might be mentioned, fix the charge of rebellion upon them. It is undeniable they are disaffected to his government in their hearts, whatever forced or complimentary expressions of loyalty some of them may at times give him. Look into your own hearts, and take a view of the world around you, and you will find this is evidently the case.

But though they are thus disobedient to their rightful Sovereign, yet to sin and Satan, those usurping and tyrannical masters, they are the most tame and obsequious slaves. For these, they will go through the most sordid drudgery, for no other wages than death. For these they will give up their most important interests, and exchange their souls, and their share in heaven, without any retaliation, but the sorry transitory pleasures of sin. Let temptation but beckon, they immediately take the signal, and obey. Let sin command them to hurt their souls and bodies, and perhaps their estates, with excessive drinking, the poor slaves comply. Let sin order them to swear, to lie, to defraud, they submit, though eternal damnation be the consequence. Let sin order them to pursue riches, honour, or sensual pleasures, through

right and wrong, at the loss of their ease, the danger of their lives and the destruction of their souls, they engage in the drudgery, and toil all their days in it. Let sin forbid them to serve God, to attend seriously to his word, to pray to him importunately, in secret and in their families, to reflect upon their miserable condition, to repent and believe the gospel; let sin but lay them under a prohibition to these things, they will cautiously refrain from them; and all the arguments which God and man can use with them will have little or no weight. In short, let sin but order them to give up their interest in heaven, and run the risk of eternal ruin; let sin but command them to neglect and disregard the God that made them, and the Saviour that died for them, they will venture upon the self-denying and destructive enterprise. They will do more for sin than they will do for the great God their rightful Sovereign and constant Benefactor. Sin has more influence with them than all the persuasions of parents, ministers, and their best friends; nay, more influence than the love, the dying groans and agonies of a crucified Saviour. There is nothing so sacred, so dear or valuable in heaven, but they will give it up if sin requires them. Nothing so terrible in hell, but they will rush into, if sin sets them upon the desperate attempt. They are the most tame, unresisting captives to sin. Sin is an arbitrary, absolute, despotic tyrant over them; and, which is most astonishing, they are not weary of its tyranny, nor do they pant and struggle for liberty. Liberty to them has lost its charms, and they hug their chains and love their bondage.—Alas! are there not many free-born Britons in this assembly, who are slaves in this sense? slaves in a worse sense than the poorest negro among us: slaves to sin, and consequently to Satan; for sin is

commander in chief under the prince of darkness, the gloomy god of this world: it is by sin, as his deputy, that he exercises his power, and therefore sinners are in reality slaves to him! This, one would think, would be a shocking reflection to them, that they are slaves of the most malignant being; in nature; a being not only malignant, but also very powerful; that they have broken off from the indulgent and equitable government of the Sovereign of the universe, and sold themselves slaves to such a lawless tyrannical usurper! But, alas! they do not resent the usurpation, nor struggle to throw off the yoke, and regain their liberty. They resign themselves voluntary slaves, and love their master and his drudgery.

This is a very melancholy, but, alas! it is a true history of human nature in its present state. Thus are mankind disaffected to the divine government, and held in a wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is indeed a very dismal and threatening state, and we might tremble for the consequences had we no gospel to inform us of a plan of reconciliation. Here I may borrow the words of one of the greatest and best of christians.* “When we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him; that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? How did it issue? What was the event? and would expect to hear, Why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened and swallowed them up quick; yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear that fire

* Mr. Howe, in his discourse on Reconciliation between God and Man.

and brimstone, flames, and thunder-bolts came down instantly upon them, and destroyed them in a moment, who would not say, So I thought: who could expect better?" But what grateful astonishment may it raise in heaven and earth, to hear that their offended Sovereign has been so far from this, that he has sent his Son, his only Son, to die for them, in order to bring about a peace! and that,

II. He has set on foot an important expedition, and is carrying it on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to recover these rebels from their voluntary slavery to sin and Satan, and reduce them to their duty, and so bring them into a state of liberty and happiness!

This is the benevolent design on which the Son of God came down from his native heaven, and for which he endured the shame and the agonies of the cross. This is the design on which he sent out his apostles into the world, armed, not with instruments of mischief and destruction, but with the most beneficent powers, powers of doing good, the powers of preaching the most important doctrines, of proving them by argument, and the evidence of miracles and prophecies, and of exercising proper discipline upon offenders, to bring them to repentance. To carry on this design, the ministry of the gospel is perpetuated in the world from age to age; and for this purpose, my dear people, I would exercise my ministry among you, I would make an attack upon your hearts to break them open for the admission of the King of heaven. I have continued the siege for near ten years, the space spent in reducing the stubborn Trojans; and now, in the name of God, I once more would renew the attack, and summon you to capitulate and surrender.

For this purpose the ministers of the gospel have their arms; they begin the attack with the artillery of the divine law, which thunders the terrors of the Lord against you. They surround you with troops of arguments, which one would think would soon overpower a reasonable creature, and constrain him immediately to submit. They reason the matter with you, and lay before you the wickedness, the baseness, the unnatural ingratitude, and the dangerous consequences of your rebellion. They inform you what a good king and what an excellent government you have rejected; what holy, just, and good laws you have insolently broken; what rich mercies you have ungratefully abused; what long-continued patience you have provoked; and what friendly warnings you have despised. They expose to your view the terrible consequences of your rebellion, if you persist in it: they honestly warn you that *the wages of sin is death*; death in all its terrible forms; death temporal, spiritual, and eternal; that if you continue the unequal war against Heaven, it will issue in your eternal remediless destruction. They open to you the corruption of your natures; the aversion of your hearts to all that is spiritually good and excellent; your innate propensions to sin, and voluntary indulgence of your lusts and guilty pleasures. They put you upon a review of your lives, to recollect your wilful omissions of duty to God and man, and your commissions of known sin, in spite of the restraints of authority, the allurements of mercy, and the admonitions of your own consciences. When they have thus discharged the dreadful artillery of the law, the thunders and lightnings of Sinai against you, the way is prepared for proposing the terms of surrender and articles of reconciliation. They make an attack upon the cita-

del of your heart, with the gentler arms from the magazine of the gospel of peace. They represent your injured Sovereign as reconcileable, reconcileable through Jesus Christ. They give you the strongest assurances from his own word, that he is willing to make up the difference and conclude a lasting peace with you; that upon your laying down your arms, (that is, forsaking your sins and submitting upon his terms,) he will freely pardon all your past rebellion, and receive you again into his favour. They also inform you of the strange method in which this peace may be brought about, consistently with the honour of his character as the Ruler of the world, and with the sacred rights of his government, and that is, through the mediation of his Son, the great Peace-Maker, who, in your stead, has obeyed that law which you have broken, and endured that penalty which you have incurred. They likewise inform you in what manner you are to accede to this treaty, or consent to this plan of accommodation, namely, by believing in his Son, by accepting peace with God, and every blessing as his free gift through Jesus Christ, by a deep ingenuous repentance for your past rebellion, and by devoting yourselves to his service for the future. These overtures of reconciliation they enforce from various topics, which, one would think, you would not be able to resist. They represent to you the riches of divine grace and mercy, and the all-conquering love of Jesus. That contemptible weapon, the cross, is a weapon of tried and well-known energy; many an hard heart has it broken; many an obstinate rebel has it subdued. *They pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God;* and if you should be hardy enough to refuse such a request, they urge it with arguments drawn from its reasonableness in justice

and gratitude, from its being of the last importance to your happiness, as being the only way in which apostate creatures can re-obtain the favour of their injured Sovereign—and from the terrible consequences of a refusal; for unless you submit upon these terms, you may expect nothing but wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour you as adversaries.

You cannot but know, my brethren, that the ministry of the gospel has, with such arms as these, laid close siege to your hearts, year after year. And who would have thought that one heart among you would have been proof against this divine artillery; and stood it out so long? Some of you, I doubt not, have surrendered, and are now the willing subjects of your heavenly King. But, alas! do not some of you still obstinately refuse to submit, and persist in your rebellion? And are you not fortifying yourselves more and more against the attempts made to reduce you to obedience? This naturally leads me.

III. To give you a kind of history of the various ways of which sinners oppose this benevolent design of the ministry of the gospel to subdue them to the obedience of Christ.

Alas! they also have their artillery, with which they labour to repel all the attacks made upon them by the gospel. They, as it were, throw up various lines of intrenchments around them, to defend them against conviction. Particularly,

Sinners hide themselves in the darkness of ignorance; ignorance of God, of Jesus Christ, of the law and gospel, and consequently of themselves. They endeavour to keep up their courage by refusing to know their danger. They make themselves up in ignorance, so that they do not see their almighty enemy, nor the instruments of

death he has prepared for them; and hence they are so stupid as to conclude that neither does he see them, nor can find them out. They also fortify themselves, as it were, in the enclosure of a hard heart; a heart of rock and adamant, which is proof against the artillery of the gospel. This, like an impregnable cave cut in a rock, stands out against all the terrors of the Lord set in array against it. The sinner, shut up in this strong hold, can laugh at the shaking of Jehovah's spear! Let the law thunder out tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish against him; let the gospel attack him with the cross of Christ, with all the love of a dying Saviour, and all the mercy of a reconcileable God, he is still secure, and bids defiance to all these attacks. The rock is impregnable till the power of God gives force to these weapons, and then indeed it begins to tremble; then the sinner is struck into a consternation, and is dreadfully apprehensive he cannot hold out the siege. This natural fortification, (so I may call it, for his ignorance and hardness of heart are natural to him, though dreadfully improved by art,) this natural fortification I say, begins to fail him; and hereupon he sets himself to work upon artificial fortifications, which may enable him to hold it out the longer in his opposition.

He throws up an intrenchment of objections and excuses, or (a little to alter the metaphor,) he discharges whole vollies of objections and excuses against those that besiege him. Perhaps he dares to plead that he is already a dutiful subject of the King of heaven, and therefore that the ministry of the gospel has missed its aim in directing its artillery against him as an enemy. And if to this plea it be answered, that his temper and conduct towards his Sovereign plainly shew that he is really

disaffected to him in his heart, whatever outward professions of duty he may make; he replies, that if in some instances he allows himself in the breach of the divine laws, yet he has no bad design in so doing; that he has a good heart notwithstanding; and that he hopes the King of heaven will not be so strict as to take notice of these things. He objects, that he is as loyal as other people about him, and why may not that suffice; and that, if he should be very punctual and zealous in his duty, he would soon be out of fashion, and draw the contempt and ridicule of the world upon him. He objects, that he has not been so bold and daring a rebel as many others, and therefore he cannot think that so mild and gracious a King will severely punish him. He objects, that he is now too busy about other things, to listen to proposals of reconciliation; and therefore begs that the matter may be put off, at least, till he has finished some important affairs he has now in hand. And he promises, that the next year, or in old age, or upon a death bed, he will submit, and conclude a peace. He pleads that he enjoys a great deal of pleasure under his present master, sin, which he must give up as unlawful, if he should change masters; and that the service of God is a drudgery to him, and that he has no relish for it, and that the laws of the King of heaven are so strict, that he cannot live under them.—These, and a thousand other pleas, the rebel urges to excuse his non-compliance with the proposals of reconciliation; and in these he trusts as a sufficient defence. —

Moreover, the lusts of the flesh; his pride, presumption, and love of ease, the cares of the world, the company of the wicked, who persuade him by all means not to surrender, and furnish him with arms and all the assistance in their power to con-

tinue the war, these are all so many strong holds in which the sinner fortifies himself against the Lord Jesus.

But if the weapons of the gospel prove mighty through God to demolish these strong holds, and the rebel finds they can defend him no longer, then he abandons these out-works, and intrenches himself secretly in his own righteousness. He, as it were, surrounds himself with a line of good works, repentance, and reformation. And now he thinks he is safe. Now he hopes he shall pass for a friend and subject of the King of heaven, as he is holding a place for him, and that the artillery of the law will continue to play upon him no longer. This is the sinner's last refuge; and it is the greatest difficulty of all to drive him out of this. He will not abandon this, till he is driven to great extremity indeed. And here many continue till they are dragged out of it to the tribunal of their supreme Judge.

It must also be observed, that the sinner tries all the arts of dissimulation to secure his strong hold. When he finds he cannot defend himself as an open enemy by his declared hostilities, he feigns a submission; he pretends to capitulate and surrender; but then, he does not cordially consent to all the terms. He makes a reserve of some favourite lusts, and will not deliver them all up to the sword of the conqueror: he has secret exceptions to the conditions of surrender, and will not comply with them all. There are some instances of duty, from which he will excuse himself. In short, his heart is not well affected to the Conqueror. His submission is forced and involuntary, and therefore is resented as the basest treachery by him that searches the heart, and must reign in the hearts of all his subjects.

Are not some of you, my brethren, now intrenched and fortified against the gospel in these strong holds? And such of you as are now the willing subjects of Jesus Christ, may you not recollect, that thus did you once strengthen yourselves in your opposition to him! But he has sweetly overcome your enmity, and constrained you to submit. And this leads me,

IV. To describe the issue of this war, where it is effectually carried on, and particularly the terms of surrender.

The success of this war depends entirely upon the concurrence of the almighty power of God. If the weapons of our warfare prove mighty, it is through God. Let the ministers of the gospel attack the sinner with all the arms with which the magazines of the law and gospel, of scripture and reason, furnish them, they will never subdue one soul to the obedience of Christ: the sinner will still stand it out, and bid them defiance. What is the reason, that there are so many secure, presumptuous rebels among us, though the gospel-ministry has so often and so long played off its artillery against them? The reason is, the weapons of our warfare are not made mighty through God. God does not give edge and force to these arms by the all-conquering power of his Spirit. But when he begins to work, then the hardest sinner begins to tremble, the rocky heart breaks to pieces, and his strong holds are demolished. All his objections are silenced; he is convinced that he is indeed a rebel against his rightful Sovereign; that his rebellion is most unnatural, ungrateful, unreasonable, and the height of wickedness; and that it is a most astonishing instance of condescending grace, that his provoked Sovereign should stoop to treat with him and deign to propose him articles of recon-

ciliation. He sees that he might justly cut him off, without one offer of mercy. He is struck with horror to think that ever he, a poor dependant worm, should engage in a war against the Lord of armies, who has universal nature at his command, and especially that he has dared to stand out so long against him. He is sensible of the danger of delays, sensible that he has been ungrateful and rebellious too long already, and that, if he delay his submission, his mighty enemy may take his strong holds by storm, and put him to the sword. He is now sensible that the slavery of sin is intolerable; that his lusts are tyrannical masters, and will give him no other wages but death; and therefore he pants and struggles for liberty. The artillery of the divine law demolishes the promising intrenchment which he had formed of his own good works, and leaves him naked and defenceless to its vindictive fire. Conscience also calls to the sinner to surrender, to surrender in time, while terms of peace may be obtained, and warns him of the dreadful consequences of continuing the war. The trumpet of the gospel is still publishing peace, and summoning him to submit. The gospel assures him of pardon and acceptance, if he will but surrender. Now also, (if I may so boldly accommodate the military style to this subject.) now provisions and ammunition begin to fail; he finds he can subsist no longer; and, like the prodigal, is *just perishing with hunger*. He finds he can defend himself no longer, but must submit or die. If he continues in arms, he is sure to die; but if he submits, he has some hopes of pardon; for O! he has *heard that the King of Israel is a merciful King*. He must however make the trial. All this time the Spirit of God is at work within, sweetly inclining the stubborn heart to

yield, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. He gives the rebel favourable thoughts of the government of the Conqueror, and the infinite advantages of living under it. In short, he enforces upon the heart all the applications made from without by the ministry of the gospel.

And now the sinner begins to think in earnest of surrendering: now he eagerly listens to the terms of peace; and at length he lays down his arms, submits to the Conqueror, falls at his feet, casts himself upon his mercy, and welcomes him into the citadel of his heart. This is the most happy and important hour the sinner ever saw: the transactions of this hour extend their blessed consequences through all his future life, and to the remotest periods of eternity. It may be necessary for me to inform you more particularly of the manner of this surrender.

1. The sinner surrenders himself as an obnoxious rebel, lying entirely at the mercy of the Conqueror. He has no plea to excuse his rebellion, no merit to ingratiate himself, or procure a pardon. He pleads guilty, and surrenders himself to the will of the Conqueror, conscious that he may do with him as he pleases. His high imaginations of himself are all demolished, his confidence in his own righteousness is entirely mortified, and he has nothing to plead but mercy, free, unmerited mercy. On this he casts himself as his only ground of hope.

2. He surrenders himself entirely upon the terms prescribed by the Conqueror. He is conscious that he has no right to dictate, or to stand upon terms. His province is to submit. The way of reconciliation revealed in the gospel, appears to him infinitely reasonable, and to stand in need of no amend-

ment.—Particularly, he is willing to lay down his arms; that is, to forsake his sins, and to walk for the future in the ways of holiness; or to make the pleasure of his Sovereign the rule of his conduct. Above all it must be noticed, that he is willing to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The mediation of Jesus Christ, the glorious peculiarity of the christian religion, is the only medium through which he would approach to God, and expect reconciliation with him. It is only in the righteousness of Christ he trusts to make atonement for his guilt, and procure the divine favour. In short, he is willing the Conqueror should make his own terms, and he submits, if he may but have his life for a prey. He puts a blank into his hands, desirous he should fill it up with what articles he pleases, and he will cheerfully subscribe to them. His language is like that of Paul, when struck down prostrate at the feet of the persecuted Jesus, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. *Lord, do thou command, and I will obey.* Now the rebel is all submission, all obedience.

3. He submits voluntarily and cheerfully. The power of divine grace has rooted out the enmity of his carnal mind, and implanted the principle of love in his heart. He breaks off from sin and Satan, as from the most cruel usurpers and destroyers; and he submits to Christ, not merely as to an irresistible Conqueror, but as to a Deliverer. He enters upon a religious life, not as a state of slavery and unwilling captivity, but as a state of the most glorious liberty. He submits to the terms of reconciliation, not as the arbitrary impositions of an imperious usurper, but as the gentle and reasonable prescriptions of a wise and good ruler.—He esteems all his laws holy, and just, and good; and with all his heart he acquiesces and rejoices in

the blessed gospel of peace. In short, the rebel's heart is now entirely changed and rendered well-affected to the divine government: and consequently, he cordially and freely submits to it. Once indeed he hated it, and then he did at best but feign submission to it; but now, his enmity being subdued, he surrenders himself with all his heart. It is one of the freest acts of his whole life.

4. He makes an universal **surrender** of himself and all that he is and has to Jesus Christ. He makes no reserve of one favourite lust; but gives them all up to be slain. He makes no secret exceptions to any of the articles of reconciliation, but heartily consents to them all. He devotes his whole soul and all its faculties to God, in and through Jesus Christ; his understanding to know him; his heart to love him; and his will to be governed by him. This is implied in my text; *Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.* Every thought, every passion, every motion of the soul must submit to Christ, and every insurrection of sin in his heart alarms him, as an intestine enemy. He also yields his body to God, and his members as *instruments of righteousness unto holiness.* He also devotes all his accomplishments, his genius, learning, influence, and popularity, his riches, and in short all his possessions of every kind; willing to employ them all in the service of his new Master, or to resign them all, if their preservation should be inconsistent with his duty to him. O! how different a temper is this from that which is natural to the sinner!

Thus the treaty of peace is happily concluded; and he that was once a rebel against Heaven, and an enemy to the cross of Christ, is now become a friend and a loyal subject. The past difference is entirely forgotten and buried, and he is received

into favour, as though he had never offended.—
Once God was angry with him every day, but now he accepts him in the Beloved. Now the prince of hell has lost a captive; and Jesus has the satisfaction of seeing one more of his spiritual seed born unto his family. Now there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, upon this addition to the number of loyal subjects. O! the happy, the glorious peace! O! the blessed change in the circumstance of the poor condemned criminal!

What now remains?

V. We take a view of the true convert's state and conduct in consequence of this reconciliation.

This you may be sure is very different from what it was before. He is now delivered from his sordid slavery to sin, as well as from guilt, and the sentence of condemnation. He is justified and accepted before God, through Jesus Christ, and entitled to an heavenly crown and kingdom. Sin, indeed, is not entirely subdued; it forms frequent and violent insurrections, and struggles hard to recover its former power over him. The old man with his affections and lusts was immediately crucified, upon the sinner's surrender to Christ; but crucifixion is a lingering death, and hence sin is never entirely dead while he continues in this imperfect state: it is every day plotting against him, and labouring to ensnare him. And hence his life is a constant warfare, an incessant conflict. He lives the life of a sentinel, perpetually upon the watch; or of a soldier, night and day under arms. If he is off his guard but for an hour, he is liable to be surprised, and sometimes, alas! he is overcome. But he rises again, and renews the combat, and will rather die than submit: he would resist even unto blood, striving against sin. In short, whatever inadvertences he may fall into, he is ka-

bitually on God's side: he espouses the cause of God in this rebellious world, whatever it costs him. He is an enemy to the kingdom of darkness, and all its interests; and it is the great business of his life to oppose it in himself and others. The longer he lives under the government of King Jesus, the more he is attached to him, and in love with his administration; and it is his habitual endeavour to lead a life of universal obedience.

And now, my brethren, there is an inquiry I would set you upon, and that is, whether you have ever been captivated into a willing obedience to Jesus Christ? I am afraid this matter is not so plainly and unquestionably in your favour, as to render all inquiry into it needless. I am afraid it is dismally dark and doubtful, with regard to some of you, whether you are the servants of Christ or the slaves of sin and Satan. Nay, I am afraid, there are plain evidences against some of you.— However, put the matter to trial, that you may see how it will turn out; for I assure you it is a matter of too much importance to be slightly passed over.

Now it is evident, in the first place, that you are still the enemies of Jesus Christ, unless you have been deeply convinced of your enmity. It is impossible you should be reconciled to him, till you have seen your need of reconciliation; and it is impossible you should see your need of reconciliation till you are convinced that you are at variance with him. Such of you therefore are undoubtedly his enemies, who imagine you have always been his friends.

In the next place, turn the substance of what has been said into so many queries to yourselves, and by these means, you may discover the truth of your case. Has ever the dreadful artillery of the law discharged its terrors upon you? Have you

ever been driven out of all your carnal confidences, and particularly your own righteousness? Have you ever surrendered yourselves to the Conqueror? Has he overcome you by the sweet constraints of his love? And upon what terms did you surrender? Did you surrender as a rebel, lying at mercy? Did you submit to his terms without pretending to dictate any of your own? Did you submit voluntarily and cheerfully? Did you surrender yourselves universally, without any reserve? Do you since endeavour to behave as dutiful subjects? And do you find his service to be perfect freedom?

And now, in consequence of this trial, *Who is upon the Lord's side? Who?* What is your real character? Are you to be ranked among the subjects of Christ, or among the enemies of his crown and dignity?

Could I now collect the rebels together into one company, I would tell them some very alarming things from that God to whom they refuse to submit. Yes, sinner, as Ehud said to Eglon, king of Moab, *I have a message from God to you.* Judges iii. 20.

In his name, and as his ambassador, I warn you of the dreadful consequences of your unnatural rebellion against him. You cannot make good your cause against him. *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered?* All nature is subject to him, and he can order the meanest part of it to be the executiener of his vengeance upon you. If you refuse to submit, you shall as surely perish as you have a being. Of this you have reason to be apprehensive at all times, but especially at this time, when your almighty enemy is attacking your country with the terrors of war, and your neighbourhood with an epidemical raging distemper. Sick-

nesses are his soldiers, and fight in his cause against a rebellious world. *He says to one, Go, and it goeth; and to another, Come, and it cometh.* And are you not afraid some of these deadly shafts may strike you now, when they are flying so thick around you? God has for many a year used gentler weapons with you, but now he seems about to take the citadel by storm. Now, therefore, now without delay, lay down your arms and surrender yourselves to him.

I have also joyful news to communicate, even to you rebels, if you are disposed to hear it; and that is, that your injured Sovereign is willing to be reconciled to you after all your hostilities, if you will now submit to the terms of reconciliation.

Therefore, *I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Christ is not here in person; but lo I am here to manage the treaty in his name, though I also am formed out of the clay.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS ILLUSTRATED IN THE
METHOD OF SALVATION, THROUGH THE SUFFER-
INGS OF CHRIST.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

JOHN XII. 27, 28.—*Now my soul is troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*

SHOULD a favourite child now come running to you, with all the marks of agony in his counte-

nance, and with these words in his mouth, "I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and I know not what to say;" it would raise all the tender sensations of fatherly compassion and anxiety in your breasts, and you would solicitously inquire, "what ails my dear child, what is the cause of your distress?" But here your ears are struck with a more strange and affecting sound; you hear the source of all consolation complaining of sorrow: "I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and in a commotion like the stormy ocean." You see the wisdom of God, the guide of the blind, pausing—hesitating—at a stand—at a loss what to say. And will you not so far interest yourselves in his sorrows, as solicitously to inquire, "What ails my dear Lord?" Judas has not yet betrayed him; the rabble have not yet apprehended him, and dragged him away, like a flagitious malefactor: as yet his face is not dishonoured with spitting nor bruised with blows; as yet I see no crown of thorns upon his sacred head; no nails in his hands and feet; no spear in his side; no streams of blood and water running down his body. He is at liberty, and surrounded with his usual friends: nay, at this time even the despised Jesus begins to grow popular: the humble Jesus, the man of sorrows, has just now entered Jerusalem in triumph, like a conqueror surrounded with the applauses and hosannas of the multitude. Now also the first-fruits of the Gentiles are brought to him: a number of Greek proselytes beg an interview with him, and desire his instructions: a thing so agreeable to him, that as soon as he hears of it, he cries out, *The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.* John xii. 23. And why does my Lord alter his voice so soon? Why, my blessed Jesus, why this sudden fall from joy to trouble, from triumph to sorrow

and perplexity? The reason was, that though his sufferings were not now upon him, yet he saw them approaching: he saw the fatal hour just at hand; and this immediate prospect raises all the passions of his human nature, and throws him into a sea of troubles. He did not fall into his sufferings through inadvertency, or the want of foresight; and his fortitude and resolution were not owing to any hopes of escape, or an expectation of better usage. But we are expressly told, that *Jesus knew all things that should come upon him*. John xviii. 4. He saw the rugged road before him, all the way from his cradle to his cross. He rushed into dangers with his eyes open, and went on courageously to encounter the last enemy, Death, fully expecting to meet him in all his terrors. Now the foresight of sufferings is a peculiar aggravation; it brings them upon the anxious expectant by anticipation: they are reflected back upon him, before they are actually inflicted; and thus the pain of a few moments may be diffused through a length of years. And sometimes the expectation of an evil is more tormenting than the evil itself.* Our happiness is in a great measure owing to our being happily blind to the future,† and ignorant of the calamities before us. But Jesus had not this mitigation of his sufferings: the cross, the scourge, the nails, the crown of thorns, were ever before his mind: so that he could say with yet greater reason than his servant Paul, *I die daily, I am in deaths oft*. By this painful foresight, the crown of thorns was always upon his head; the nails were all his days fastened in his hands and feet; and his whole life was, as it were, one continued crucifixion. How peculiarly aggravated, how long con-

* *Morsque minus poenæ quam mora mortis habet....* OVID

† "O blindness to the future! kindly given."... POPE.

tinued, how uninterrupted do the severities of his sufferings appear, when viewed in this light! and how does this display his fortitude and the strength of his love! though he had this tragical prospect before him, yet he did not draw back or give up the arduous undertaking; but he resolutely held on his way; he was irresistibly carried to meet all these terrors, by his ardent zeal for his Father's glory, and his unconquerable love to the guilty creatures whose salvation he had undertaken.— Sometimes indeed he shews he was a man; that he was capable of all the tender and painful sensations of human nature: and if he had not been such, his sufferings would have been no sufferings. At such times his innocent humanity seems struck aghast, pauses and hesitates, and would fain shrink away from the burden, would fain put by the bitter cup. But immediately the stronger principles of zeal for the divine glory, and love to man, gain the ascendant, calm all these tumults of feeble nature, and irresistibly impel him on to the dreadful encounter in its most shocking appearances. O! the generous bravery of the Captain of our salvation! O! the all-conquering power of his love! The critics are in raptures on the bravery of Homer's Achilles, who engaged in the expedition against Troy, though he knew he should never return. But how much more worthy to be celebrated is the heroic love of Jesus, who voluntarily exposed himself to infinitely greater sufferings, when he foresaw them all, and knew what would be the consequence!

The language of raised passions is abrupt and hurrying; and in such language does our Lord here speak. *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?* “What petition shall I ask of my Father? such an hour of distress is a proper time to

address him. But what shall I say to him? shall I yield to the reluctance of my frail, human nature, that would draw back from suffering? shall I urge the petition my feeble flesh would put into my mouth, and say, *Father, save me from this hour? Father, dismiss me from this undertaking, and resign the glory which thou wouldst gain by the execution of it. Father, if it be possible, save sinners in some easier way; or let them perish, rather than that I should suffer so much for them. Shall this be my petition? No; I cannot bear the thought, that my Father should lose so much glory, and the objects of my love should perish. It was to suffer for these important purposes that I came unto this hour. For this I undertook to be the sinner's Friend and Mediator; for this I left my native paradise, and assumed this feeble flesh and blood; for this I have spent three-and-thirty painful years in this wretched world, that I might meet this dismal hour. And now, when it is come, shall I fly from it, or shall I drop an undertaking which I have so much at heart, and in which I am so far engaged? No; this petition I will not urge, though it be the natural cry of my tender humanity. What then shall I say? Father, glorify thy name. This is the petition on which I will insist, come on me what will. Let the rabble insult me, as the off-scouring of all things; let false witnesses accuse me, and perfidious judges condemn me, as a notorious criminal; let the blood-thirsty murderers rack me on the cross, and shed every drop of blood in my veins, still I will insist upon this petition; and not all the tortures that earth and hell can inflict shall force me to retract it; Father, glorify thy name: display the glory of thy attributes by my sufferings, and I will patiently submit to them all. Display the perfections of thy nature, exhibit an*

honourable representation of thyself to all worlds by the salvation of sinners through my death, and I will yield myself to its power in its most shocking forms. Let this end be but answered, and I am content. This consideration calms the tumult of passions in my breast, overpowers the reluctance of my human nature, and makes it all patience and submission."

I intend, my brethren, to confine myself at present to this part of my text, this petition on which Jesus insists, and in which his mind acquiesces after perplexity and hesitation: *Father, glorify thy name.* And it evidently suggests to us this important truth, that the divine perfections are most illustriously displayed and glorified in the method of salvation through the sufferings of Christ.

This truth I shall endeavour to illustrate, after I have premised that it is most fit and proper that the glory of God should be the last end of all things, and particularly, that it should be his own principal end in all his works. He is in himself the most glorious of all beings, the supreme excellence, and the supreme good; and it is infinitely fit and reasonable that he should be known and acknowledged as such, and that it should be his great end in all his works to represent himself in this light. It is but justice to himself, and it is the kindest thing he can do for his creatures, since their chief happiness must consist in the enjoyment of the supreme good, and as they cannot enjoy him without knowing him. Selfishness in creatures is a vile and wicked disposition, because they are not the greatest or best of beings; but for God to love and seek himself above all, is the same thing as to love and seek what is absolutely best; for such he is. The aims of creatures should reach beyond themselves, because God, the supreme

good, lies beyond them; they should all terminate upon him, and should not fall short of him, as they cannot fly beyond him, because he is the supreme excellence, and it is not to be found any where else. But for this reason he must aim at himself, if he aims at what is absolutely best; for he only is so. For creatures to aim principally at their own glory, to set themselves off, and make it their end to gain applause, is vanity and criminal ambition, because they are really unworthy of it, and were formed for the glory of another, even of the great Lord of all. But for God to make his own glory his highest end, for him to aim at the display of his attributes in all his works, is most decent and just, and infinitely distant from a vain ostentation, because there is nothing else so excellent, and so worthy of a display; his perfections deserve to be represented in the most illustrious light, and demand the highest veneration and love from the whole universe. In short, for God to aim at his own glory in all his actions, is but for him to do justice to infinite merit, to display the most perfect beauty, to illustrate supreme excellence, to exhibit the supreme good in a just light, to procure honour to what is in itself most honourable, and to represent the true God in the most godlike manner: and what can be more fit or decent? a lower end than this would be unworthy of him. This is of more real worth than the existence, or the happiness of ten thousand worlds. And this is the end which he has uniformly pursued in all the steps of creation, providence and redemption. This particularly was his end in the permission of sin, and in the form of his administration towards our guilty world, through a Mediator. As, on the one hand, we are sure that he is not at all accessory to sin, as its proper producing cause, so we may be

equally sure, on the other hand, that it has not entered into the world without his permission; that is, it could not have happened if he had hindered it. Now there were undoubtedly very good reasons for this permission; and one appears evident, namely, that if sin had never entered, it would have been impossible in the nature of things, that some of the divine perfections, particularly his punishing justice and his forgiving grace, should be displayed in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures. Pardoning grace could never be displayed, if there were no sin to be pardoned; nor vindictive justice, if there were no crimes to be punished: and consequently, if moral evil had never been permitted, these perfections must have been forever idle, concealed, and as much unknown, as if they did not belong to the divine nature. But now there is room for the various economy of providence towards guilty creatures, and particularly for the mediatorial scheme of salvation to our world. And I now proceed to shew, that in this scheme all the perfections of God have an illustrious display, and are represented to the greatest advantage.

Here I would consider this scheme, both absolutely in itself and relatively, as a part of the grand administration towards the rational world. In the latter view, I shall consider it but briefly, and therefore I shall begin with it.

Considering it relatively, as a part of the divine economy towards the rational world, it concurs with the other parts, to show the amiable and wise variety of the divine government, or in how many ways God can answer his ends, and display his perfections in his dispensations towards his creatures.

The scriptures give us an account of the divine conduct towards two sorts of reasonable creatures, angels and men. And from thence we may also learn the wise variety of the divine dispensations towards them. A part of the angels were preserved in their primitive state of holiness, and a part of them were suffered to fall into sin. But the whole human race was permitted to fall, and not one of them continued in their original state of integrity. A part of the angels are happy forever; and so is a number of mankind. But here lies the difference; the angels are continued in a state of happiness, from which they never fell; but the saved from among men are recovered from a state of sin and misery, into which they fell, to a state of happiness, which they had entirely lost. The angels are entitled to happiness upon the footing of a covenant of works, to which they have yielded perfect obedience; but men are saved entirely upon the plan of the covenant of grace, on account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to them and accepted for them, though it be not originally their own. The angels, having never offended, have no need of a Mediator, or of redemption through his blood. But it is through a Mediator only that guilty mortals have access to God; and they owe their salvation to his death. As to the fallen angels, there was no Saviour provided for them; but *to us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord*. They were never placed in a second state of trial, or under a dispensation of grace, but given up to irrecoverable ruin immediately, upon their first apostacy; but our guilty race is placed under a dispensation of grace, and made probationers for a happy immortality, after their first fall. The devils are irrecoverably lost for want of a Saviour, but the sinners from among men perish by the neg-

lecting a Saviour. All the fallen angels, without exception, are remedilessly miserable; but only a part of mankind share in their doom. The angels stood every one for himself, but Adam was constituted our representative; our concerns were lodged in his hands, and we fell in him. Now what a surprising variety is here! here are some holy and happy beings, that were never otherwise; and some that are recovered to holiness and happiness, who had been deeply involved in guilt and misery: here are some rewarded for their own personal works of obedience; and some are saved by the righteousness of another: here are some that have access to God without a Mediator, and some through a Mediator. Some that have always gone on in an easy, natural tenor of uniform obedience; and some that have passed through various conflicts and temptations, and ascended to heaven from the field of battle; here are some shining in all the glory of native innocence, highly improved, but not new-created; and some repaired from their ruins, and formed anew. Here are some that perish without a dispensation of grace: some without the offer of a Saviour, and some for rejecting the offer. Here are some sinners abandoned forever for the first offence; and some lost by abasing their time of trial and the means of their recovery. What various theatres are these, on which to display the glory of the divine perfections! what amazing wisdom to form so many different models of government, and so conduct and manage them all, as to answer the best ends! If there be any of the divine attributes that are most properly exercised upon sinless creatures that never fell, they meet with a proper object in the elect angels. If there be any perfections that cannot be displayed but upon the guilty, here are guilty men and angels, in the con-

duct towards whom they may shine in their full glory. If there be any of the divine attributes that may be represented in the most illustrious light, in the recovery of lost sinners through the obedience and sufferings of a Mediator, here are thousands saved in this way from among men, who will be the everlasting monuments of their amiable glories. If any of the divine perfections can receive more honour by punishing abandoned criminals immediately given up to remediless ruin, they receive that honour from the everlasting punishment of the fallen angels; or if any of them be displayed to greater advantage, by the punishment of the ungrateful abusers of the means of grace, and a time of trial, the impenitent and unbelieving sons of men are a proper object for them. To all which I may add, that here we have the divine perfections displayed in justification by works and by grace, in inflicting punishment upon the proper offender, and upon Jesus Christ as a surety; and whatever glory may be peculiar to one or other of these ways, or may result from them all conjunctly as one whole, or system of government, all that glory redounds to the divine perfections.—Thus you see the method of salvation through Christ, considered as a part of the grand scheme of the divine government, tends to the illustration of the perfections of God: it is one link in the bright chain; and should it be broken or removed, the whole system and contexture would be shattered or left incomplete. Thus St. Paul tells us, that by the dispensations of grace towards the church, are made known, not only to men, but to principalities and powers, (that is, to the angels,) the manifold wisdom of God, his variegated and beautifully diversified wisdom. Ephes. iii. 10. And O! that our eyes may be enlightened to behold and admire

it! However little this divine scheme be regarded in our blind and ungrateful world, the various ranks of angels cannot behold it with careless eyes: they stoop, and look, and pry into it, with a divine curiosity and an insatiable eagerness, through all eternity. But let us now proceed to a more particular survey of this scheme, considered absolutely in itself; and, in this view, we shall find the divine perfections are displayed more gloriously by it, than by any other; particularly—as to the degree—the harmony—the universality—the grace and benevolence—and the wonderful and surprising manner of the display.

I. By this scheme the divine perfections are displayed in the highest degree possible. It appears that such and such attributes not only belong to God, but that they are in him in the highest perfection. Goodness had already displayed itself all the world over, in giving life and breath, and all things, to the sons of men, from age to age. But what are the blessings of the sun and rain, what are the productions of the earth, when compared to his only begotten Son, the man that was his fellow, whom he loved more than ten thousand worlds! This is an *unspeakable gift*: this the richest gift which even the infinite goodness of God could bestow: almighty love could do no more; this was its *ne plus ultra*. The creation and support of millions of worlds would not have displayed such a degree of love and goodness as this. God had displayed his holiness and justice, and his abhorrence of sin, by the variety of his judgments upon a guilty world; and he will display these attributes to all eternity by the more dreadful punishments of hell. But the subjects of these punishments are creatures of an inferior order; and they have provoked their gracious Sovereign, and most justly.

incurred his displeasure, by their own personal crimes. These he may therefore punish, and yet spare his Son, when he only becomes the surety of the guilty, and he is charged with no sin of his own, but only the imputed guilt of others. The dignity of his person, the greatness of the love of his Father to him, his personal innocence, and the benevolence of his design, plead for him, and seem to promise an exemption, or at least the mitigation of his sufferings. This now is the greatest trial that can be made, whether divine justice be strictly inexorable, whether God can be prevailed upon by the strongest possible inducements to connive at sin, and dispense with his law. Had the doom of the whole created universe been suspended on it, it would not have been so great a trial. And what was the issue? St. Paul will tell you the amazing result, *God spared not his own Son, his proper, peculiar Son, but delivered him up to death.* Rom. viii. 32. When the honour of his justice and holiness were at stake, even the Father would not relent; but with his own mouth, he issues out the dread commission, *Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, smite and spare not.* Zech. xiii. 7. *Now it even pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief.* Isa. liii. 10. And could there be a more astonishing display of justice and the sacred honours of the divine government? could a more striking proof be given of the infinite holiness of the divine nature, the malignity of sin, and his implacable hatred to it? No; all the punishments of hell can never give such an illustrious display of these perfections.*

*How astonishing was the rigid justice of Brutus the elder, who, in spite of all the passions of a father, passed sentence of death upon his own sons, for conspiring against

I might shew how sundry other attributes, particularly wisdom and veracity, are illustrated to the highest degree possible by this scheme; but my time denies me that pleasure.

II. The divine perfections are displayed in the most perfect harmony in this method of salvation: I mean such of them as seemed to jar, to cloud the glory of each other, or to be incapable of being illustrated at once, are now reconciled and mingle their beams, and, instead of obscuring, reflect a glory upon each other. The matter was so circumstanced, that it seemed really impossible to

the liberty of their country. While the amiable youths stood trembling and weeping before him, and hoping their tears would be the most powerful defence with a father! while the senate whisper for the moderation of the punishment, and that they might escape with banishment; while his fellow-consul is silent; while the multitude tremble and express the decision with horror, the inexorable Brutus rises in all the stern majesty of justice, and with a steady voice, not interrupted with one sigh, turning to the lictors, who were the executioners, says to them, "To you, lictors, I deliver them; execute the law upon them." In this sentence he persisted inexorable, notwithstanding the weeping intercessions of the multitude, and the cries of the young men calling upon their father by the most endearing names. The lictors seized them, stripped them naked, tied their hands behind them, beat them with rods, and then struck off their heads; the inexorable Brutus looking on the bloody spectacle with unaltered countenance. Thus the father was lost in the judge: the love of justice overcame all the fondness of the parent: private interest was swallowed up in a regard to the public good, and the honour and security of government. This, perhaps, is the most striking resemblance of the justice of the Deity that can be found in the history of mankind. But how far short does it fall! how trifling were the sufferings of these youths, compared to those of the Son of God! How insignificant the honour of the law and government for which they suffered, to that of the divine! How small the good of the public, in one case, to that in the other!—See Universal History, vol. xi. p. 360. Liv. l. ii. c. 5.

men and angels to display several divine perfections conjunctly. There seemed to be a necessity that one or other of them should be eclipsed; for if grace should be displayed in the universal pardon of sin, without the infliction of punishment, what will become of justice? How will the holiness of God be displayed? how will the honour of the law and the sacred rights of government be secured? But if these be illustrated by the punishment of sin, how will the goodness, grace, and mercy of God appear in diffusing happiness, in conferring blessings on the unworthy, and in relieving the miserable! If sinners are saved without a satisfaction, how will it appear that God is righteous, and hates all moral evil? or if a full satisfaction be made, how will it appear that their salvation is of grace? Can sin be punished, and yet the sinner escape without punishment? What device shall be found out for this? If sin pass unpunished, where is the honour of justice? and if all sinners are punished, where is the glory of grace? If the threatened penalty be not executed, is not the divine veracity rendered suspicious? and if it be executed, what will become of the amiable attribute of mercy? These, my brethren, are a few of the difficulties with which the case was embarrassed and perplexed; and they would have nonplused all created understanding: nothing but the infinite wisdom of God could surmount them. You see that the illustration of one set of perfections seems to cast a cloud over another set. To whatever side the Deity inclines, there seems to be a necessity that he should be but half-glorious, like the sun under a partial eclipse. And is there any method in which he may be represented as he is, all glorious throughout?

“A God all o’er, consummate, absolute,

Full-orb’d, in his whole round of rays complete.”

Yes; such a method is the plan of salvation through Christ. These apparently clashing attributes harmonize; and are so far from clouding each other, that they are each of them displayed to greater advantage than if only one had been singly exercised. They reflect a mutual glory upon each other; and every one appears more illustrious in conjunction with the rest, than if it shone alone with its own peculiar glory. Here justice is honoured by the infliction of the punishment upon Christ, as the surety of sinners; and yet goodness, grace, and mercy shine in full glory in their salvation. They are saved upon the footing of strict justice, because their surety made a complete satisfaction for them; and yet they are saved through grace, because, it was grace that provided and accepted this method of vicarious satisfaction. The honours of the divine government are secured by Christ's perfect obedience to the law; and the philanthropy and mercy of the divine administration are also exhibited in the salvation of those who in their own persons had broken the law. Thus, according to that prophetic oracle, *Mercy and truth are met together, and agreed; righteousness and peace have kissed each other* in perfect friendship. Psalm lxxv. 10, 11. Here also the wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed, in concerting such an amazing plan as would reconcile these seemingly opposite attributes, and advance the honour of all by the exercise of each; and even of that which appeared most inconsistent with the rest. This scheme bears the peculiar seal and stamp of the most finished wisdom. In it are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. O! the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God that appear in it! It was only his infinite wisdom that could invent such a scheme: it surpassed all

created understanding. Hence it is often called *the wisdom of God in a mystery: the mystery which has been hid from ages and generations: and it is said to reveal things which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

To this head I may subjoin, that, in Christ, as Mediator, are reconciled the most opposite and seemingly contradictory characters. Things may be truly and consistently predicted of him which cannot agree to any one subject besides himself. A God-man, divinity and humanity united in one person; the Ancient of days, yet not but 1760 years old; the everlasting Father, and yet the virgin Son, the child of Mary; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and yet the Servant of servants. The highest dignity and glory, and the lowest condescension and humility meet in him. Here is justice punishing every the least sin, and yet grace to pardon the very greatest of sinners. Here are infinite majesty, and the most transcendent meekness: the deepest reverence towards God, and a full equality with him: infinite worthiness of good, and the most perfect patience under the suffering of evil; a submissive, obedient spirit, and supreme and universal dominion; absolute sovereignty and humble resignation. Jesus conquers by falling, saves others by dying himself, and the blood of his heart becomes the grand cure for the dying world. In him we see the highest love to God, and in the mean time the greatest love to the enemies of God; the greatest regard to the divine holiness, and the greatest benevolence to unholy sinners. It would be endless to enumerate all the opposite excellencies and characters that meet and harmonize in Jesus Christ; but these may suffice as a specimen. And what a surprising complication of things is

here! Things that never did, or could meet in any other, harmoniously centre in him. How justly is his name called Wonderful! for as his name is, so is he: and as such, he will appear to all that know him to all eternity. How bright and astonishing is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! "That face, in which sense discovers nothing but marks of pain and disgrace; that bloated, mangled visage, red with gore, covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes, and pale with death, that would be the last object in which the carnal mind would seek to see the glory of the God of life, a visage clouded with the horror of death; in that face we may see more of the divine glory than in the face of heaven and earth."* He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God; that is, in him is the brightest display of his wisdom and power, as well as of his other attributes. But I must proceed.

III. The perfections of God are more universally displayed in the method of salvation through Christ than in any other way.

The wisdom, power, and goodness of God are displayed in the formation of the world; and there are many traces of these perfections, as well as of his justice, discoverable in the government of it. But there is a more full and striking view of these exhibited in the government of the world upon the plan of redemption, with the additional illustration of some other attributes, which would have been unknown or discovered only by some feeble glimmerings, if the world had never been governed upon this plan. Here, as I observed, the goodness of God in all its forms is illustriously displayed: grace in bestowing free favours upon the guilty and un-

*Mac Laurin's Sermon on glorying in the cross

deserving; mercy and compassion in relieving the miserable; patience and long-suffering in bearing so long with provoking obstinate rebels; whereas if there had been no guilt, misery and rebellion permitted to enter into the world; or if no guilt had been pardoned, no misery relieved, no rebellion endured, there would have been no room for the display of grace, mercy and patience. Here justice shines, and shines with peculiar advantage: now it appears to be an inseparable attribute of the Deity, and which he can in no case dispense with. Here veracity appears unstained, in executing the penalty of the law, even upon the darling Son of God. The majesty of the divine government and its sacred rights, these too are represented as inviolable and venerable, and demanding the regard of the whole creation: whereas, if there had been no guilt, there could have been no object upon which the awful honours of divine justice might be displayed; and if all guilt had been pardoned without satisfaction, this majestic attribute, so venerable and so amiable in the character of a ruler, would have been forever concealed; or rather, great umbrage would have been given, that such a perfection did not belong to the supreme Governor of the world. And a judge without justice, a law-giver who does not enforce his laws by proper sanctions, could be agreeable to none but wilful criminals. A petty kingdom of the earth would soon become a scene of lawless violence and confusion under such a ruler; and how dreadful would be the case, if the whole universe were under such a head! Here also is a most illustrious display of divine power. Though Christ was crucified in weakness, yet omnipotence shone even upon the cross. This may seem a paradox. "The Jews thought Christ's crucifixion a demonstration of his want

of power; hence they upbraided him, that he that wrought so many miracles, suffered himself to hang upon the cross; but this was the greatest miracle of all. They asked why he, who saved others, saved not himself: they named the reason, without taking notice of it: that was the very reason why at that time he saved not himself, because he saved others. The motive of his enduring the cross was powerful divine love, stronger than death: the fruits of its powerful divine grace, the power of God unto salvation, Rom. i. 16, making new creatures, raising souls from the dead: these are acts of omnipotence. We justly admire the power of the Creator, in the motion of the heavenly bodies; but the motion of souls towards God as their centre is far more glorious.—The curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. So they found it who first brought it upon themselves. It sunk legions of angels, who excel in strength, from the heaven of heavens to the bottomless pit. And the same weight hung over the head of man. Before man could bear it, before any person could bear his own proportion of it, it behoved, as it were, to be divided into numberless parcels, and distributed among all mankind, allowing every sinner his share. Man, after numberless ages, would have borne but a small part: the wrath to come would have been wrath to come to all eternity. But Christ had strength to bear it all, to bear it all at once, to bear it all alone; and what a glorious manifestation of his might was this! of the noblest kind of might, that he was mighty to save!—*
—I might be more particular, but time will not allow.

IV. The scheme of salvation through the sufferings of Christ gives the most gracious, benevolent, and amiable display of the divine perfections. This is evident at first sight, from this consideration, that by this scheme sinners, such sinners as we, may be saved. O the joyful sound! salvation for the lost, pardon for the condemned, sanctification for the unholy, life for the dead! what can be more agreeable to us! Angels contemplate this plan with eternal pleasure, though they do not need nor receive such blessings from it; and how much more should we who are so nearly interested! Goodness, grace, and mercy, are always the favourite attributes to guilty creatures such as we are, and where do they shine so bright in heaven or earth, as in the cross of our dying Jesus? But you will say, “suppose that the sins of men had been pardoned, and they saved, without the sufferings of Christ in their stead? suppose that the stern attribute of justice had never been displayed in the infliction of punishment either upon sinners, or upon their surety, where would have been the injury? would not the Deity have appeared in a still more amiable light, as all benevolence and mercy” So criminals may surmise, whose interest it is that there should be no such attribute as punitive justice. But I appeal to angels, who are not parties, as criminals are, but competent judges; I appeal to every lover of virtue and piety; nay, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether a ruler without justice would be an amiable character in their view? Would they choose to live under a government where vice, violence, and confusion were not restrained by the execution of the law, but shared in the rewards, or at least, in the indemnity of perfect obedience? would they choose a king, who, through a false notion of lenity and mercy,

would suffer criminals to pass with impunity? Do not the innocent part of the subjects approve of the conduct of their rulers in condemning and executing criminals, as well as in protecting themselves? and what a murmuring spreads through a government, when such are tolerated or approved? The complaint we hear of the excessive strictness of divine justice, the cruelty of eternal torments, &c. is the voice of guilt, and we should regard it no more than the clamours of a band of robbers against the just laws of their country. Justice, my brethren, is not that grim, horrible, and forbidding attribute, which the guilty are apt to imagine; it is not only a majestic, but an amiable, agreeable, lovely perfection; it is a part of the moral beauty of the divine nature; it is essential to the character of a good ruler; it is necessary to the public good; it is absolutely necessary to the exercise of goodness itself. The judicious, well-conducted exercise of goodness is not a promiscuous, indiscriminating communication of happiness at random; but the communication of happiness according to the real characters of the subjects; it supposes a distinction of the obedient and disobedient. No government can subsist without this; and this is the very nature of distributive justice. Hence it follows that the display of divine justice, as well as grace, in the sufferings of Christ, represents the divine nature in an amiable light to us, as infinitely worthy of our love as well as of our fear. But,

V. The way of salvation through the sufferings of Jesus Christ gives the most wonderful and surprising display of the perfections of God. That is a cause of wonder and surprise, which is strange and uncommon, new and unexpected; and certainly we can never meet with things more strange,

uncommon, and unexpected, than in the way of salvation through Christ. I have mentioned some of them already with another view; and now I shall enumerate a few wonders more. At the creation, a world was brought out of a state of non-existence into a being; but in this way sinners are brought into a state of complete happiness and glory out of a state infinitely worse than that of non-existence. In the old creation, as there were no pre-existent materials, or tendency to existence, so there was no resistance: but in the new creation, there is a strong resistance, an obstinate opposition of corrupt nature against the operation; and yet, *behold all things are made new!* Who would ever have thought that the apostate angels should have been abandoned to remediless ruin, while a Saviour is provided for the inferior order of man! Had Adam been plainly informed that He, by whom he and all things were made, should assume his frail and mortal nature, how would he have wondered! And how must angels wonder, to see the Creator and the creature made one person! to see their Lord and Master become man, a man that in his best estate was made a little lower than they! How strange, that guilty mortals should be saved by the death of the Lord of life! How astonishing that a church should be purchased by the blood of God! how strange and surprising, that the reputed son of the carpenter, the despised Nazarene, should be made *head over all things! that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him,* that had been so rudely insulted, and treated as the most contemptible malefactor! That the reputed criminal, condemned by Pilate, and crucified on mount Calvary, should be made the only Saviour, and the supreme Judge of mankind! How strange, that the blood of the cross should restore peace to the earth

and heaven, and be the grand remedy of a dying world! that the guilty should be redeemed by the death of the innocent! that death should be conquered by the death of the Author of life! that the greatest sin that ever was committed on our guilty globe, namely, the murder of the Son of God, should be the occasion of the pardon of sin, even for his murderers! Are not these, my brethren, strange, unprecedented things! can you find any thing like them in heaven or earth? These are objects of grateful astonishment to all the celestial armies through all the periods of their happy immortality.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections and exhortations.

1. You hence see what should principally recommend the gospel scheme to us; namely, that it promotes the glory of God, and gives such an advantageous, amiable, and majestic view of his perfections. This is the grand design of God, and the only design worthy of him in all his works, and particularly in making this constitution. It was this consideration induced the blessed Jesus to go through his painful work, and therefore on this account principally we should delight in this method. And this is the disposition of all those that are conformed to God, and have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Our own salvation should indeed be dear to us, but not merely because it is ours, but because it tends to bring glory to God, the great end of all things. Therefore,

2. They who have never been sensible of the glory of God manifested in this method of salvation, and charmed with the divine perfections displayed therein, have not complied with it, and cannot be saved by it. None can be saved by it, that do not heartily approve of it; and none can ration-

ally approve of it, till they see its glory. It is the characteristic of all true believers, that *God hath shined into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 6, and iii. 18. It is natural to all to desire to be saved: but they are not solicitous about the glory of God; let them be but safe, and the selfish creatures care little for any thing else. But heaven itself is recommended to a pious soul by the thought that it may be brought thither in a way that tends to advance his glory. Alas! if this be the case, how many of you are quite off from the only plan of salvation! you see no peculiar glories in it: and it does not attract your hearts as the grand scheme for illustrating the divine perfections; and consequently, you have no interest in it.

3. Hence see the aggravated guilt of not accepting this method of salvation; it is a hostile attempt upon the divine glory; it is the worst of sacrilege; and as such Jehovah resents it.

4. You may hence see how secure you are of salvation who are upon the gospel plan. Your salvation in this way is for the glory of the divine perfections. God is so far from having any objections against it, that on the other hand, his honour is advanced by it; and therefore he will take the same care of your salvation as he will of his own glory, which is concerned therein.

5. These things may endear the institution of the Lord's supper to you as exhibiting these glories, by sacred emblems, to your senses: therefore you should esteem it, and reverently attend upon it.

It is true, this ordinance represents the Lord Jesus in his lowest state of abasement. But even in his lowest state, there appears a peculiar glory. Here I cannot deny you the pleasure of a quotation

from that excellent man, Mr. Mac Laurin, once my friend and correspondent, now the companion of angels, and an inhabitant of a better world.—
“Even the meanness of Christ did not wholly becloud his glory: many beams shone through the disguise. His birth was mean on earth below: but it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above. He had a poor lodging; but a star lighted visitants to it from distant countries. Never prince had such visitants, so conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other kings have: but he was attended with multitudes of patients, seeking and obtaining healing of soul and body; that was more true greatness than if he had been attended with crowds of princes. He made the dumb that attended him to sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. He had no guard of soldiers, nor magnificent retinue of servants: but, as the centurion that had both acknowledged, health and sickness, life and death, took orders from him: even the winds and storms, which no earthly power could control, obey him; and death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey when he demanded it. He did not walk upon tapestry; but when he walked on the sea, the waters supported him. All parts of the creation, except sinful man, honoured him as their Creator. He had no treasure; but when he had occasion for money, the sea sent it to him in the mouth of a fish. He had no barns nor corn-fields; but when he inclined to make a feast, a few loaves covered a sufficient table for many thousands. Nor was his glory wholly clouded at his death: He had not indeed that phantastic equipage of sorrow that other great persons have on such occasions, but the frame of nature solemnized the death of its

Author: heaven and earth were mourners, the sun was clad in black, and, if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth trembled under the awful load. There were few to pay the Jewish compliment of rending their garments; but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels. He had not a grave of his own, but other men's graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of such a tenant in their territories; but he came there, not as a subject, but as an invader, a conqueror; it was then the king of terrors lost his sting, and on the third day the Prince of Life triumphed over him, spoiling death and the grave."—These are the things, my brethren, this ordinance was designed to commemorate: and certainly these are full of glory.

6. These things may furnish you with proper materials for meditation this day. Fix your thoughts upon the glories of God displayed in a crucified Jesus, take a survey of the scheme of salvation through his blood, as bringing not only salvation to you, but honour to him; and wonder, love, and adore.

Finally, Let us all fall in with this glorious method of salvation; and join with God and Christ, and the whole creation, in glorifying God in this way; and in this way, and none else, we shall find salvation for ourselves.