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S E R M O N S

ON THE

Most USEFUL and IMPORTANT

S U B J E C T S.

ADAPTED TO THE

FAMILY and CLOSET.

By the Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, *A.M.*
Late President of the College at *Princeton* in *New-Jersey*.

In THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. III.



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C O N T E N T S

O F

V O L U M E III.

S E R M O N XXII.

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Perdition of Sinners.

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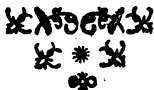
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SERMON




S E R M O N XXII.

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



I P E T E R IV. 18.

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


T HIS text may found in your ears like a message from the dead, for it is at the request of our deceased friend * that I now insist upon it. He knew so much from the trials he made in life that if he should be saved at all it would be with great difficulty, and if he should escape destruction at all, it would be a very narrow escape; and he also knew so much of this stupid, careless world that they stood in need of a solemn warning on this head, and therefore desired that his death should give occasion to a sermon on this alarming subject. But now the unknown wonders
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* The person was Mr James Hooper; and the Sermon is dated Aug. 21. 1756.

of the invisible world lie open to his eyes; and now also he can take a full review of his passage through this mortal life; now he sees the many unsuspected dangers he narrowly escaped, and the many fiery darts of the devil which the shield of faith repelled; now, like a ship arrived in port, he reviews the rocks and shoals he passed through, many of which lay under water and out of sight, and therefore now he is more fully acquainted with the difficulty of salvation than ever. And should he now rise and make his appearance in this assembly in the solemn and dread attire of an inhabitant of the world of spirits, and again direct me to a proper subject, methinks he would still stand to his choice, and propose it to your serious thoughts, that "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

The apostle's principal design in the context seems to be to prepare the Christians for those sufferings which he saw coming upon them on account of their religion. "Beloved, says he; think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you, *verse* 12. but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of CHRIST's sufferings:" it is no strange thing that you should suffer on account of your religion in such a wicked world as this, for CHRIST the founder of your religion met with the same treatment, and it is enough that the servant be as his master, *ver.* 13. only he advises

wises them that if they must suffer they should take care that they did not suffer as malefactors, but only for the name of CHRIST, *ver. 14, 15.* " But, says he, if any man suffer as a *Christian* let him not be ashamed, *ver. 16.* " for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of GOD." He seems to have a particular view to the cruel persecution that a little after this was raised against the Christians by the tyrant *Nero*, and more directly to that which was raised against them every where by the seditious Jews, who were the most inveterate enemies of christianity. The dreadful destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was plainly foretold by CHRIST in the hearing of *St Peter*, was now at hand. And from the sufferings which Christians, the favourites of Heaven endured, he infers how much more dreadful the vengeance would be which should fall upon their enemies the infidel Jews. If judgment begin at the house of GOD, his church, what shall be the doom of the camp of rebels? If it begin at us Christians who obey the gospel what shall be the end of them that obey it not? Alas! what shall become of them? "*Them that obey not the gospel of God*" is a description of the unbelieving Jews, to whom it was peculiarly applicable, and the apostle may have a primary reference to the dreadful destruction of their city and nation, which was much more severe than all the sufferings the persecuted Christians had then endured. But I see no reason for confining the

4 *Saints saved with Difficulty, and Serm. 22.*

apostle's view entirely to this *temporal* destruction of the Jews: he seems to refer farther to that still more terrible destruction that awaits all that obey not the gospel in the *eternal* world; that is to say, if the children are so severely chastised in this world what shall become of rebels in the world to come, the proper state of retribution? How much more tremendous must be their fate?

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

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

" appear

Serm. 22. *the certain Perdition of Sinners.* §

“pear in very different circumstances, and the
“horror of the prospect is hardly supportable.”

St Peter here supposes that there is something in the condition and character of a righteous man that renders his salvation comparatively easy; something from whence we might expect that he will certainly be saved, and that without much difficulty: and on the other hand, that there is something in the opposite character and condition of the ungodly and the sinner that gives us reason to conclude that there is no probability at all of their salvation while they continue such. But he asserts that even the righteous whose salvation seems so likely and comparatively easy is not saved without great difficulty; he is *just* saved, and that is all: what then shall we conclude of the ungodly and the sinner whose character gives no ground for favourable expectations at all? If our hopes are but just accomplished with regard to the most promising, what shall become of those whose case is evidently hopeless? Alas! where shall they appear?

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

1. I shall point out the principal difficulties, which even the righteous meet with in the way to salvation. And,
2. I shall mention those things in the condition and character of the righteous which render his salvation so promising and seemingly easy, and then shew you that if with all these

B 3 . . . favourable

6 *Saints saved with Difficulty, and* Serm. 22.

favourable and hopeful circumstances he is not saved but with great difficulty and danger, those who are of an opposite character, and whose condition is so evidently and apparently desperate, cannot be saved at all.

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

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

It must also be observed that a religious life

is

(a) 2 Peter i. 10, 11.

is attended with the most pure and solid pleasures even in this world, and they who choose it act the wisest part even with respect to the present state: they are really the happiest people upon our globe. Yet were it otherwise the blessed consequences of a religious life in the eternal world would make amends for all, and recommend such a course, notwithstanding the greatest difficulties and the severest sufferings that might attend it.

But notwithstanding this concession the Christian course is full of hardships, oppositions, trials, and discouragements. This we may learn from the metaphorical representations of it in the sacred writings, which strongly imply that it is attended with difficulties which require the utmost exertion of all our powers to surmount. It is called a *warfare* (b); *fighting* (c); the graces of the Christian, and the means of begetting and cherishing them, are called *weapons of war*: there is the *shield of faith*; the hope of salvation, which is the *helmet*; the *sword of the spirit*, which is the word of God (d). The end of the Christian's course is a *victory after conflict* (e). And Christians are *soldiers*, and as such must endure *hardships* (f). Now a *military life* you know is a scene of labour, hardships, and dangers, and therefore so is the Christian life, which is com-

B 4 compared

(b) 1 Tim. i. 18.

(c) 2 Tim. iv. 7.

(d) 2 Cor. x. 4. Ephes. vi. 13—17.

(e) Rev. ii. 7. (f) 2 Tim. ii. 3.

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pared to it in these respects. It is also compared to a *race* (g), to *wrestling*, and the other vigorous exercises of the *Olympic games* (h); to walking in a *narrow way* (i), and entering in at the *strait gate* (k). This, my Brethren, and this only, is the way to salvation. And is this the way in which you are walking? Or is it the smooth, easy, downward road to destruction? You may slide along that without exertion or difficulty, like a dead fish swimming with the stream; but O! look before you, and see whither it leads!

The enemies that oppose our religious progress are the *Devil*, the *World*, and the *Flesh*. These form a powerful alliance against our salvation, and leave no artifice untried to obstruct it.

The *things* of the world, though good in themselves, are temptations to such depraved hearts as ours. Riches, honours, and pleasures spread their charms, and tempt us to the pursuit of flying shadows, to the neglect of the one thing needful. These engross the thoughts and concern, the affections and labours of multitudes. They engage with such eagerness in an excessive hurry of business and anxious care, or so debauch and stupify themselves with sensual pleasures, that the voice of God is not heard, the clamours of conscience are drowned, the state of their souls is not enquired into,
the

(g) Heb. xii. 1, 2.

(h) Ephes. vi. 12. Luke xiii. 24.

(i) Matt. vii. 14.

(k) Luke xiii. 24.

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

The *men* of this world also increase his difficulties. Their vain, trifling, or wicked conversation, their ensnaring examples, their persuasions, false reasonings, reproaches, menaces, and all their arts of flattery and terror have sometimes a very sensible effect upon him. These would draw him into some guilty compliances, damp his courage, and tempt him to apostatize, were he not always upon his guard; and sometimes in an inadvertent hour he feels their fatal influence upon him. As for the generality

nerality they yield themselves up to these temptations, and make little or no resistance; and thus are carried down the stream into the infernal pit. Alas! how many ruin themselves through a base, unmanly complaisance, and a servile conformity to the mode? Believe it, Sirs, to be fashionably religious and no more, is to be really irreligious in the sight of God. The way of the multitude may seem easy, pleasant, and sociable; but, alas! my Brethren, see where it ends! it leadeth down into destruction (1).

But in the next place the greatest difficulty in our way arises from the corruption and wickedness of our own hearts. This is an enemy within, and it is this that betrays us into the hands of our enemies without. When we turn our eyes to this quarter what vast difficulties rise in our way! difficulties which are impossibilities to us unless the almighty power enable us to surmount them. Such are a blind mind, ignorant of divine things, or that can only speculate upon them, but does not see their reality and dread importance; a mind empty of God and full of the lumber and vanities of this world. Such are an hard heart, insensible of sin, insensible of the glory of God, and the beauties of holiness, and the infinite moment of eternal things. Such are an heart disaffected to God and his service, bent upon sin, and impatient of restraint. Such are wild, unruly

(1) Matt. vii. 14;

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unruly passions thrown into a ferment by every trifle, raised by vanities, erroneous in the choice of their objects, irregular in their motions, and extravagant in the degree of attachment. And such difficulties are strong un governable lusts and appetites in animal nature, eager for gratification, and turbulent under restraint. And how strangely does this inward corruption indispose men for religion! Hence their ignorance, their security, carelessness, presumptuous hopes, and impenitence. Hence their unwillingness to admit conviction, their resistance to the holy Spirit and their own consciences, their love of ease and impatience of sorrow for sin, and of solicitude about their eternal state. Hence their contempt of the gospel, their disregard to all religious instructions, their neglect of the means of grace, and the ordinances of CHRIST, or their careless, formal, lukewarm attendance upon them. Hence their earthy-mindedness, their sensuality, and excessive love of animal pleasures. Hence it is so difficult to awaken them to a just sense of their spiritual condition, and to suitable earnestness in their religious endeavours. And hence their fickleness and inconstancy, their relapses and backslidings, when they have been a little alarmed. Hence it is so difficult to bring their religious impressions to a right issue, and to lead them to JESUS CHRIST as the only Saviour. In short, hence it is that so many thousands perish amidst the means of salvation.

These

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

Finally, the devil and his angels are active,
powerful,

Serm. 22. *the certain Perdition of Sinners.* 13

powerful, and artful enemies to our salvation. Their agency is often unperceived, but it is insinuating, unsuspected, and therefore the more dangerous and successful. These malignant spirits present ensnaring images to the imagination, and no doubt blow the flame of passion and appetite. They labour to banish serious thoughts from the mind, and entertain it with trifles. They give force to the attacks of temptations from the world, and raise and foment insurrections of sin within. And if they cannot hinder the righteous man from entering upon a religious course, or divert him from it, they will at least render it as difficult, laborious, and uncomfortable to him as possible.

See, my Brethren, see the way in which you must walk if you would enter into the kingdom of Heaven. In this rugged road they have all walked who are now safe arrived at their journey's end, the land of rest. They were saved, but it was with difficulty: they escaped the fatal rocks and shoals, but it was a very narrow escape: and methinks it is with a kind of pleasing horror they now review the numerous dangers through which they passed, many of which they did not perhaps suspect till they were over*. And is this the way in which you

- * There, on a green and flow'ry mount,
Their weary souls now sit;
And with transporting joys recount
The labours of their feet.

Eternal

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you are walking? Is your religion a course of watchfulness, labour, conflict, and vigorous exertion? Are you indeed in earnest in it above all things in the world? Or are not many of you lukewarm *Laodiceans* and indifferent *Galilio's* about these things? Your religion (if it may be so called) is a course of security, carelessness, sloth, and formality. Alas! if all the vigour and exertion of the righteous man be but just sufficient for his salvation, where, O where shall you appear? Which leads me,

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

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

It is the habitual character of a righteous man to be temperate and sober, chaste, just, and charitable; to revere the name of GOD
and

Eternal glories to the King
That brought them safely thro';
Their lips shall never cease to sing,
And endless praise renew.

WATT'S'S *Hymns.*

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and every thing sacred, and religiously observe the holy hours devoted to the service of God. This is always an essential part of his character, though not the whole of it. Now such a man looks promising; he evidently appears so far prepared for the heavenly state, because he is so far conformed to the law of God, and free from those enormities which are never found in the region of happiness. And if such shall scarcely be saved, where shall those of the opposite character appear? Where shall the brute of a Drunkard, the audacious Swearer, the Scoffer at religion, the unclean, lecherous Wretch, the Liar, the Defrauder, the Thief, the Extortioner, the Sabbath-breaker, the Reveller, where shall these appear? Are these likely to stand in the congregation of the righteous, or to appear in the presence of God with joy? Is there the least likelihood that such shall be saved? If you will regard the authority of an inspired apostle in the case I can direct you to the places where you may find his express determination (m). " Know ye not that the
" unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom
" of God? Be not deceived; neither Fornica-
" cators, nor Adulterers, nor Abusers of them-
" selves with mankind, nor Thieves, nor Co-
" vetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor
" Extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of
" God." (n) " The works of the flesh are
" manifest, which are these, Adultery, Forni-
" cation,

(m) 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

(n) So Gal. v. 19—21.

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"**estion, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Hatred,**
" **Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Here-**
" **fies, Seditions, Envyings, Revellings, and**
" **such like; of the which I tell you before,***
" **that is, I honestly forewarn you, " as I have**
" **also told you in time past that they who do**
" **such things shall not inherit the kingdom of**
" **GOD." (a) "The Fearful," that is, the**
" **Cowardly in the cause of Religion, " the Un-**
" **believing, and the Abominable, and Mur-**
" **derers, and Whoremongers, and all Liars,**
" **shall have their part in the lake that burneth**
" **with fire and brimstone."** You see, my Bre-
thren, the declarations of scripture are express
and repeated on this point. And are there not
some of you here who indulge yourselves in
one or other of these vices, and yet hope to be
saved in that course? that is, you hope your
Bible and your Religion too are false; for it is
only on that supposition that your hope of sal-
vation can be accomplished. Alas! will you
venture your eternal All upon the truth of
such a blasphemous supposition as this? But,

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

The righteous are characterized as persons
that honestly endeavour to perform all the du-
ties they owe to GOD. They devoutly read
and hear his word, and make divine things
their study; they are no strangers to the throne
of

(a) Rev. xxi. 8.

of grace; they live a life of prayer in their retirements, and in a social capacity. They make their families little churches, in which divine worship is solemnly performed. Let others do as they will, as for them and their houses, like *Joshua*, "they will serve the LORD (p)." They gratefully commemorate the sufferings of CHRIST, and give themselves up to him at his table; and seriously improve all the ordinances of the gospel. In short, like *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, "they walk in all the statutes and ordinances of GOD blameless (q):" this is their prevailing habitual character. And there is something in this character that gives reason to presume they will be saved; for they now have a relish for the service of GOD, in which the happiness of Heaven consists: they are training up in the humble forms of devotion in the church below for the more exalted employments of the church triumphant on high. Now if persons of this character are but "scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly appear," who persist in the wilful neglect of these known duties of religion? Can they be saved who do not so much as use the means of salvation? Can those that do not study their Bible, the only directory to eternal life, expect to find the way thither? Can prayerless souls receive answers to prayer? Will all the bliss of Heaven be thrown away upon such as do not think it worth their while importunately to ask

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it?

(p) *Joshua* xxiv. 15.

(q) *Luke* i. 6.

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

3. If they that are *more* than externally moral and religious in their conduct, that have been born again, created in CHRIST JESUS to good works, as every man that is truly righteous has been; if such, I say, be but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who rest in their meer outward morality, their proud self-righteous virtue, and their religious formalities, and have never been made new creatures, never had the inward principle of action changed by the power of God, and the inbred disorders of the heart rectified? Where shall they appear who have nothing but a self-sprung religion, the genuine offspring of degenerate nature, and never have had a supernatural principle of grace implanted in their souls? Has that solemn asseveration of the amen, the faithful and true witness, lost all its force, and become a falsehood in our age and country?

— Verily,

Serm. 22. *the certain Perdition of Sinners.* 19

" Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man
" be born again he cannot see the kingdom of
" Heaven (r)." Is there no weight in such
apostolic declarations as these? " If any man
" be in CHRIST he is a new creature; old things
" are passed away, and behold all things are be-
" come new;" and all these new things are
of GOD (s). " Neither circumcision availeth
" any thing, nor uncircumcision;" that is, a
conformity to the rituals of the Jewish or Chris-
tian religion availeth nothing, but the new crea-
ture (t). Can men flatter themselves they shall
be saved by the Christian religion in opposition
to these plain, strong, and repeated declarations
of the Christian Revelation? And yet are there
not many here who are entirely ignorant of
this renovation of the temper of their mind,
of this inward heaven-born religion?

4. If they that are *striving* to enter in at the
strait gate, and *pressing* into the kingdom of
Heaven (u), do but just obtain admission; if
they who forget the things that are behind,
and reach after these that are before them, and
press with all their might towards the goal do
scarcely obtain the prize, what shall become of
those lukewarm, careless, formal, presumptuous
Professors of christianity who are so numerous
among us? Where shall they appear who have
" but a form of godliness without the power (v),"
and have no spiritual life in their religion, "but

C 2

" only

(r) John iii. 3.

(s) 2 Cor. v. 17.

(t) Gal. vi. 15.

(u) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

"only a name to live (*w*)?" If those whose hearts are habitually solicitous about their eternal state, who labour in earnest for the immortal bread, who pray with unutterable groans (*x*), who in short make the care of their souls the principal business of their life, and in some measure proportion their industry and earnestness to the importance and difficulty of the work; if such are but scarcely saved with all their labour and pains, where shall they appear who are at ease in *Zion* (*y*), whose religion is but a meer indifferency, a thing by the by with them? If we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven unless our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and the Pharisees (*z*), where shall they appear whose righteousness is far short of theirs? And are there not many such in this assembly? Alas! my Brethren, where do you expect to appear?

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

Faith in **CHRIST** is an essential ingredient in the character of a righteous man: and faith cannot be implanted in our hearts till we have been made deeply sensible of our sins, of our condemnation by the law of **GOD**, and our utter inability to procure pardon and salvation by

(*w*) Rev. iii. 1.

(*x*) Rom. viii. 26.

(*y*) Luke xiii. 24.

(*z*) Luke xvi. 16.

(*a*) Amos vi. 1.

(*b*) Matt. v. 20.

by the merit of our repentance, reformation, or any thing we can do. And when we are reduced to this extremity then we shall listen with eager ears to the proposal of a Saviour. And when we see his glory and sufficiency, and cast our guilty souls upon him, when we submit to his commands, depend entirely upon his atonement, and give up ourselves to God through him, then we believe. Now if they who thus believe, to whom salvation is so often ensured, be not saved but with great difficulty, where shall those appear who never have experienced those exercises which are the antecedents or constituents of saving faith? who have never seen their own guilt and helplessness in an affecting light; who have never seen the glory of God in the face of JESUS CHRIST; who have never submitted to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and who do not live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God? Alas! are they likely to be saved who are destitute of the grand prerequisite of salvation? And yet is not this the melancholy case of some of you? You may not be avowed unbelievers; you may believe there is one God, and that JESUS is the true Messiah: in this you do well, but still it is no mighty attainment, for the devils also believe and tremble, and you may have this speculative faith, and yet be wholly destitute of the faith of the operation of God, the precious faith of God's elect; that faith which purifies the heart, produces good works, and unites the

soul to JESUS CHRIST. Certainly the having or not having of such a faith must make a great difference in a man's character, and must be followed by a proportionally different doom. And if they that *have* it be but scarcely saved, I appeal to yourselves, can they be saved at all who have it not?

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

It is the character of the righteous that he is deeply affected with sorrow for his sins in heart and practice; that he hates them without exception with an implacable enmity; that he strives against them, and would resist them even unto blood; that his repentance is attended with reformation, and that he forsakes those things for the commission of which his heart is broken with sorrows. Now repentance appears evidently to the common reason of mankind an hopeful preparative for acceptance with God and eternal happiness: and therefore if they who repent are saved with great difficulty where shall they appear who persist impenitent in sin? Where shall they appear who have hard unbroken hearts in their breasts, who are insensible of the evil of sin, who indulge themselves in it, and cannot be persuaded to forsake it? Can you be at any loss to know the doom of such after CHRIST has told us with his own lips, which never pronounced an harsh censure, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish (c)." And

(c) Luke xiii. 3,5.

And are there not some of this character in this assembly? Alas! there is not the least likelihood, or even possibility of your salvation in such a condition.

7. The righteous man has the love of GOD shed abroad in his heart, and it produces the usual sentiments and conduct of love towards him. GOD is dearer to him than all other things in Heaven and Earth, the "strength of his heart, and his portion forever (*d*)."^a His affectionate thoughts fix upon him (*e*); he rejoices in the light of his countenance (*f*), and longs and languishes for him in his absence (*g*). His love is a powerful principle of willing obedience, and carries him to keep his commandments (*b*). He delights in the law and service of GOD, and in communion with him in his ordinances. Now such a principle of love is a very hopeful preparative for Heaven, the region of love, and for the enjoyment of GOD. Such an one would take pleasure in him and in his service, and therefore he certainly shall never be excluded. But if even such are but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who are destitute of the love of GOD? There are few indeed but pretend to be lovers of GOD, but their love has not the inseparable properties of that sacred passion. Their pretence to it is an absurdity, and if put into language would be

C 4

such

(*d*) Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

(*e*) Psalm lxiii. 6.

(*f*) Psalm iv. 7. (*g*) Psalm xlii. 1, 2. & lxiii. 1. Cant. iii. 1.

(*b*) 1 John v. 3.

24 *Saints saved with Difficulty, and* Sermon. 22.

such jargon as this, "LORD, I love thee above
" all things, though I hardly ever affectionately
" think of thee; I love thee above all, though
" I am not careful to please thee; I love thee
" above all, though my conduct towards thee
" is quite the reverse of what it is towards one
" I love." Will such an inconsistency as this
pass for genuine supreme love to GOD, when it
will not pass for common friendship among
men? No, such have not the least spark of
that heavenly fire in their breasts, but their
carnal mind is enmity against GOD. And are
these likely to be saved? likely to be admitted
into the region of love, where there is not one
cold or disloyal heart? likely to be happy in the
presence and service of that GOD to whom they
are disaffected? Alas! no. Where then shall
they appear? O! in what forlorn, remote re-
gion of eternal exile from the blessed GOD?

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

1. You may hence see the work of salvation is
not that easy, trifling thing which many take it
to be. They seem mighty cautious of laying
out too much pains upon it; and they cannot
bear that people should make such ado, and
keep such a stir and noise about it †. For their
part they hope to go to Heaven as well as the
best of them without all this preciseness. And
upon these principles they act. They think
they

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

they can never be too much in earnest, or too laborious in the pursuit of earthly things, but religion is a matter by the by with them, only the business of an hour once a week. But have these learned their religion from CHRIST the founder of it, or from his apostles, whom he appointed teachers of it? No, they have formed some easy system from their own imaginations suited to their depraved taste, indulgent to their sloth and carnality, and favourable to their lusts; and this they call christianity. But you have seen this is not the religion of the Bible: this is not the way to life laid out by GOD, but it is the smooth downward road to destruction. Therefore,

2. Examine yourselves to which class you belong, whether to that of the righteous, who shall be saved, though with difficulty, or to that of the ungodly and the sinner, who must appear in a very different situation. To determine this important enquiry recollect the sundry parts of the righteous man's character which I have briefly described, and see whether they belong to you. Do you carefully abstain from vice and immorality? Do you make conscience of every duty of religion? Have you ever been born again of GOD, and made more than externally religious? Are you sensible of the difficulties in your way from *Satan*, the World, and the Flesh? And do you exert yourselves as in a field of battle or in a race? Do you work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

trembling, and press into the kingdom of God? Are you true Believers, Penitents, and Lovers of God? Are these or the contrary the constituents of your habitual character? I pray you make an impartial trial, for much depends upon it.

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

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

I shall conclude with a reflection to exemplify the context in another view, and that is,

“ If

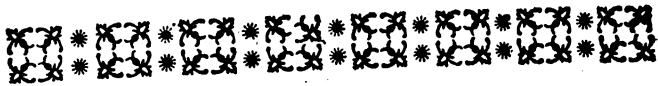
Serm.22. *the certain Perdition of Sinners.* 27

“ If judgment begin at the house of God what shall be the end of them that obey not the “ gospel ?” If the righteous, the favourites of Heaven, suffer so much in this world, what shall sinners, with whom God is angry every day, and who are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, what shall they suffer in the eternal world, the proper place for rewards and punishments, and where an equitable Providence deals with every man according to his works? If the children are chastised with various calamities, and even die in common with the rest of mankind, what shall be the doom of enemies and rebels? If those meet with so many difficulties in the pursuit of salvation what shall these suffer in enduring damnation? If the infernal powers are permitted to worry CHRIST’s sheep, how will they rend and tear the wicked as their proper prey? O that you may in “ this your day know the things that “ belong to your peace before they are forever “ hid from your eyes (i) !”

(i) Luke xix, 42.

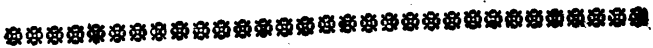


S E R M O N



S E R M O N XXIII.

Indifference to Life urged from its Shortness and Vanity.



I CORINTHIANS VII. 29,30,31.

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



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

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

his heart from it, and preparing for his last remove into that world in which he must reside, not for a few months or years as in this, but through a boundless everlasting duration. Such a situation requires habitual constant thoughtfulness, abstraction from the world, and serious preparation for death and eternity. But when we are called, as we frequently are, to perform the last sad offices to our friends and neighbours who have taken their flight a little before us; when the solemn pomp and horrors of death strike our senses, then certainly it becomes us to be unusually thoughtful and serious. Dying beds, the last struggles and groans of dissolving Nature, pale, cold, ghastly corpses,

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

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

these are very alarming monitors of our own mortality : these out-preach the loudest preacher ; and they must be deaf and senseless rocks, and not men, who do not hear and feel their voice. Among the numberless instances of the divine skill in bringing good out of evil this is one, that past generations have sickened and died to warn their successors. One here and there also is singled out of our neighbourhood or families, and made an example, a MEMENTO MORI, to us that survive, to rouse us out of our stupid sleep, to give us the signal of the approach

proach of the last enemy, death, to constrain us to let go our eager grasp of this vain world, and set us upon looking out and preparing for another. And may I hope my Hearers are come here to-day determined to make this improvement of this melancholy occasion, and to gain this great advantage from our loss? To this I call you as with a voice from the grave; and therefore "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

One great reason of mens excessive attachment to the present state, and their stupid neglect to the concerns of eternity, is their forming too high an estimate of the affairs of time in comparison with those of eternity. While the important realities of the eternal world are out of view, unthought of, and disregarded, as, alas! they generally are by the most of mankind, what mighty things in their esteem are the relations, the joys and sorrows, the possessions and bereavements, the acquisitions and pursuits of this life? What airs of importance do they put on in their view? How do they engross their anxious thoughts and cares, and exhaust their strength and spirits? To be happy, to be rich, to be great and honourable, to enjoy your fill of pleasure in this world, is not this a great matter, the main interest with many of you? Is not this the object of your ambition, your eager desire and laborious pursuit? But to consume away your life in sickness and pain, in poverty and disgrace, in abortive schemes

schemes and disappointed pursuits, what a serious calamity, what an huge affliction is this in your esteem? What is there in the compass of the universe that you are so much afraid of, and so cautiously shun? Whether large profits or losses in trade be not a mighty matter, ask the busy anxious merchant. Whether poverty be not a most miserable state, ask the poor that feel it, and the rich that fear it. Whether riches be not a very important happiness, ask the possessors; or rather ask the restless pursuers of them, who expect still greater happiness from them than those that are taught by experience can flatter themselves with. Whether the pleasures of the conjugal state are not great and delicate, consult the few happy pairs here and there who enjoy them. Whether the loss of an affectionate husband and a tender father be not a most afflictive bereavement, a torturing separation of heart from heart, or rather a tearing of one's heart in pieces, ask the mourning, weeping widow, and fatherless children, when hovering round his dying bed, or conducting his dear remains to the cold grave. In short, it is evident from a thousand instances that the enjoyments, pursuits, and sorrows of this life are mighty matters; nay, are all in all in the esteem of the generality of mankind. These are the things they most deeply feel, the things about which they are chiefly concerned, and which are the objects of their strongest passions.

But is this a just estimate of things? Are the
affairs

affairs of this world then indeed so interesting and all-important? Yes, if eternity be a dream, and Heaven and Hell but majestic chimeras or fairy lands. If we were always to live in this world, and had no concern with any thing beyond it; if the joys of earth were the highest we could hope for, or its miseries the most terrible we could fear, then indeed we might take this world for our all, and regard its affairs as the most important that our nature is capable of. "But THIS I SAY, Brethren," (and I pronounce it as the echo of an inspired apostle's voice) "this I say, the time is short;" the time of life in which we have any thing to do with these affairs is a short *contracted** span. Therefore "it remaineth," that is, this is the inference we should draw from the shortness of time, "that they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; or using it to excess †; for the fashion of this world,* these tender relations, this weeping and rejoicing, this buying, possessing, and using this world, passeth away." The phantom will soon vanish, the shadow will soon fly off; and then they that have wives or husbands in this transitory life will in reality be as though they had

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none;

* συνιστάμενοι.

† κατὰ χρόμους.

none; and they that weep now, as though they wept not; and they that now rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that now buy, possess, and use this world, as though they had never had the least property in it. This is the solemn mortifying doctrine I am now to inculcate upon you in the further illustration of the several parts of my text; a doctrine justly alarming to the lovers of this world, and the neglecters of that life which is to come.

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

And what is it he is introducing with all this solemn formality? Why it is an old, plain, familiar truth universally known and confessed, namely, That the time of our continuance in this world is short. But why so much formality in introducing such a common truth as this? Because, however generally it be known and confessed,

yesterday? And how little a way can you trace it back till you are lost in the forgotten unconscious days of infancy, or in that eternal non-existence in which you lay before your creation? But they are but very few that drag on their lives through seventy or eighty years. Old men can hardly find cotemporaries. A new race has started up, and they are become almost strangers in their own neighbourhoods. By the best calculations that have been made, at least one half of mankind die under seven years old. They are little particles of life, sparks of Being just kindled and then quenched, or rather dismissed from their suffocating confinement in clay, that they may aspire, blaze out, and mingle with their kindred flames in the eternal world, the proper region, the native element of spirits.

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

expostulate with our Maker as *David* once did upon that supposition, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain (a)?"

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

That as the time of life is short *absolutely* in itself, so especially it is short *comparatively*; that is, in comparison with eternity. In this comparison even the long life of *Methuselah* and the *Antedeluvians* shrinks into a meer point, a nothing. Indeed no duration of time, however long, will bear the comparison. Millions of millions of years, as many years as the sands upon the sea shore, as many years as the particles

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(a) Psalm lxxxix. 47.

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

MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*, Book I. l. 65.

cles of dust in this huge globe of earth, as many years as the particles of matter in the vaster heavenly bodies that roll above us, and even in the whole material universe, all these years do not bear as much proportion to eternity as a moment, a pulse, or the twinkling of an eye to ten thousand ages; not as much as an hair's breadth to the distance from the spot where we stand to the farthest star or the remotest corner of the creation: in short, they do not bear the least imaginable proportion at all; for all this length of years, though beyond the power of distinct enumeration to us, will as certainly come to an end as an hour or a moment; and when it comes to an end it is entirely and irrecoverably past: but eternity, (O the solemn, tremendous sound!) eternity will never, never, never come to an end! eternity will never, never, never be past!

And is this eternity, this awful all-important eternity, entailed upon us! upon us the offspring of the dust! the creatures of yesterday! upon us who a little while ago were less than a gnat, less than a mote, were nothing! upon us who are every moment liable to the arrest of death, sinking into the grave, and mouldering into dust one after another in a thick succession! upon us whose thoughts, and cares, and pursuits are so confined to time and earth as if we had nothing to do with anything beyond! O! is this immense inheritance inalienably ours! Yes, Brethren, it is: Reason
and

and Revelation prove our title beyond all dispute. It is an inheritance entailed upon us, whether we will or not; whether we have made it our interest it should be ours or not. To command ourselves into nothing is as much above our power as to bring ourselves into being. Sin may make our souls miserable, but it cannot make them mortal. Sin may forfeit an happy eternity, and render our immortality a curse; so that it would be better for us if we never had been born: but sin cannot put an end to our being as it can to our happiness, nor procure for us the shocking relief of rest in the hideous gulph of annihilation.

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

And how shall we spend this eternal duration
D 4 that

that is thus entailed upon us? Shall we sleep it away in a stupid insensibility or in a state of indifference, neither happy nor miserable? No, my Brethren, we must spend it in the height of happiness or in the depth of misery. The happiness and misery of the world to come will not consist in such childish toys as those that give us pleasure and pain in this infant state of our existence, but in the most substantial realities suitable to an immortal spirit, capable of vast improvements, and arrived at its adult age. Now, as the apostle illustrates it, we are children, and we speak like children, we understand like children; but then we shall become men, and put away childish things (b). Then we shall be beyond receiving pleasure or pain from such trifles as excite them in this puerile state. This is not the place of rewards or punishments, and therefore the great Ruler of the world does not exert his perfections in the distribution of either; but eternity is allotted for that very purpose, and therefore he will then distribute rewards and punishments worthy himself, such as will proclaim him God in acts of grace and vengeance as he has appeared in all his other works. Then he will *show his wrath, and make his power known on the vessels of wrath who have made themselves fit for destruction, and nothing else; and he will show the riches of the glory of his grace upon the vessels of mercy whom he prepared beforehand for glory* (c).

Thus

(b) 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

(c) Rom. ix. 22, 23.

Thus Heaven and Hell will proclaim *the* God, will shew him to be the Author of their respective joys and pains by their agreeable or terrible magnificence and grandeur. O eternity! with what majestic wonders art thou replenished where JEHOVAH acts with his own immediate hand, and displays himself godlike and unrivaled in his exploits both of vengeance and of grace! In the present state good and evil are blended; our happiness has some bitter ingredients, and our miseries have some agreeable mitigations: but in the eternal world good and evil shall be entirely and forever separated; all will be pure, unmingled happiness, or pure, unmingled misery. In the present state good and evil are blended; our happiness has some bitter ingredients, and our miseries have some agreeable mitigations. But in the eternal world, good and evil shall be entirely and forever separated: all will be pure unmingled happiness, or pure unmingled misery. In the present state the best have not uninterrupted peace within; conscience has frequent cause to make them uneasy. Some mote or other falls into its tender eye, and sets it a weeping. And the worst also have their arts to keep conscience sometimes easy, and silence its clamours. But then conscience will have its full scope. It will never more pass a censure upon the righteous, and it will never more be a friend, or even an inactive enemy to the wicked for so much as one moment. And O what a perennial fountain
of

of bliss or pain will conscience then be! Society contributes much to our happiness or misery. But what misery can be felt or feared in the immediate presence and fellowship of the blessed GOD, and JESUS the friend of man; of Angels and Saints, and all the glorious Natives of Heaven? But on the other hand what happiness can be enjoyed or hoped for, what misery can be escaped in the horrid society of lost, abandoned ghosts of the angelic and human nature; dreadfully mighty and malignant, and rejoicing only in each other's misery; mutual enemies, and mutual tormentors bound together inseparably in everlasting chains of darkness! O the horror of the thought! In short, even an *heathen** could say,

“ Had I an hundred tongues, an hundred mouths,

“ An iron voice, I could not comprehend

“ The various forms and punishments of vice.”

The most terrible images which even the pencil of divine inspiration can draw, such as, “ a lake of fire and brimstone, utter darkness, “ the blackness of darkness, ~~an~~ never-dying “ worm, unquenchable, everlasting fire,” and all the most dreadful figures that can be drawn from all parts of the universe, are not sufficient to

* Non, mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,

Ferrea vox, omnes scelerum comprehendere formas,

Omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina possum.

VIRG. *Æn.* VI. l. 625.

to represent the punishments of the eternal world. And on the other hand, "the eye," which has ranged through so many objects, "has not seen; the ear," which has had still more extensive intelligence, "has not heard; nor has the heart," which is even unbounded in its conceptions, "conceived the things that God hath laid up for them that love him." The enjoyments of time fall as much short of those of eternity as time itself falls short of eternity itself.

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

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

And what then have we to do with time and earth? Are the pleasures and pains of this world worthy to be compared with these? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" the enjoyments and sufferings, the labours and pursuits, the laughter and tears of the present state are all nothing in this comparison. What is the

the loss of an estate or of a dear relative to the loss of an happy immortality? But if our heavenly inheritance be secure, what though we should be reduced into *Job's* forlorn situation, we have enough left more than to fill up all deficiencies. What though we are poor, sickly, melancholy, racked with pains, and involved in every human misery, Heaven will more than make amends for all. But if we have no evidences of our title to *that* the sense of these transitory distresses may be swallowed up in the just fear of the miseries of eternity? Alas! what avails it that we play away a few years in mirth and gaiety, in grandeur and pleasure, if when these few years are fled we lift up our eyes in Hell tormented in flames? O what are all these things to a candidate for eternity! an heir of everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery!

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

The first branch of the inference refers to the dear and tender *Relations* that we sustain in this life. "It remaineth that those that have wives," and by a parity of reason those that have

have husbands, parents, children, or friends dear as their own souls, "be as though they had none." St *Paul* is far from recommending a stoical neglect of these dear relations. That he tenderly felt the sensations, and warmly recommended the mutual duties of such relations appears in the strongest light in other parts of his writings where he is addressing himself to husbands and wives, parents and children. But his design here is to represent the insignificancy even of these dear relations, considering how short and vanishing they are, and comparing them with the infinite concerns of eternity. These dear creatures we shall be able to call our own for so short a time that it is hardly worth while to esteem them ours now. The concerns of eternity are of so much greater moment that it is very little matter whether we enjoy these comforts or not. In a few years at most it will be all one. The dear ties that now unite the hearts of husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend, will be broken forever. In that world where we must all be in a little, little time, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are in this respect like the angels. And of how small consequence is it to creatures that are to exist forever in the most perfect happiness or misery, and that must so soon break off all their tender connections with the dear creatures that were united to their hearts in the present transitory state; of how small consequence is it to such, whether they

they spend a few years of their existence in all the delights of the conjugal state and the social life, or are forlorn, bereaved, destitute, widowed, childless, fatherless, friendless? The grave and eternity will level all these little inequalities. The dust of *Job* has no more sense of his past calamities than that of *Solomon* who felt so few; and their immortal parts are equally happy in Heaven if they were equally holy upon earth. And of how small consequence is it to *Judas* now, after he has been above seventeen hundred years in his own place, whether he died single or married, a parent or childless? This makes no distinction in Heaven or Hell, unless that as relations increase the duties belonging to them are multiplied, and the trust becomes the heavier; the discharge of which meets with a more glorious reward in Heaven, and the neglect of which suffers a severer punishment in Hell.

Farther, the Apostle in saying, that "they who have wives should be as though they had none," intends that we should not excessively set our hearts upon any of our dearest relatives so as to tempt us to neglect the superior concerns of the world to come, or draw off our affections from God. We should always remember who it was that said, "He that loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children more than me is not worthy of me." "He that is married," says *St Paul* in the context, "careth for the things of the world how he may

" may please his wife (d)." But we should beware lest this care should run to excess, and render us careless of the interests of our souls, and the concerns of immortality. To moderate excessive care and anxiety about the things of this world is the design the apostle has immediately in view in my text; for having taught " those that have wives to be as though they had none," &c. he immediately adds, " I would have you without carefulness;" and this is the reason why I would have you form such an estimate of all the conditions of life, and count them as on a level. Those that have the agreeable weights of these relations ought no more to abandon themselves to the over-eager pursuit of this world, or place their happiness in it, ought no more to neglect the concerns of religion and eternity than if they did not bear these relations. The busy head of a numerous family is as much concerned to secure his everlasting interest as a single man. Whatever becomes of him and his in this vanishing world he must by no means neglect to provide for his subsistence in the eternal world, and nothing in this world can at all excuse that neglect.

O that these thoughts may deeply affect the hearts of such of us as are agreeably connected in such relations! and may they inspire us with a proper insensibility and indifference towards them when compared with the affairs of religion

(d) Verse 33.

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

The next branch of the inference refers to the *Sorrows* of life. "It remaineth that they" that weep be as if they wept not." Whatever afflictions may befall us here they will not last long, but will soon be swallowed up in the greater joys or sorrows of the eternal world. These tears will not always flow; these sighs will not always heave our breasts. We can sigh no longer than the vital breath inspires our lungs; and we can weep no longer than till death stops all the fountains of our tears, and that will be in a very little time. And when we enter into the eternal world, if we have been the dutiful children of God here, his own gentle hand shall wipe away every tear from our faces, and he will comfort the mourners. Then all the sorrows of life will cease forever, and no more painful remembrance of them will remain than of the pains and sickness of our unconscious infancy. But if all the discipline of our heavenly Father fail to reduce us to our duty, if we still continue rebellious and incorrigible under his rod, and consequently the miseries of this life convey us to those of the future, the smaller will be swallowed up and lost in the greater as a drop in the ocean. Some desperate sinners have hardened themselves

selves in sin with this cold comfort, "That
 " since they must be miserable hereafter they
 " will at least take their fill of pleasures here,
 " and take a merry journey to Hell." But,
 alas! what a sorry mitigation will this be!
 how entirely will all this career of pleasure be
 forgotten at the first pang of infernal anguish!
 O what poor relief to a soul lost forever to re-
 flect that this eternity of pain followed upon
 and was procured by a few months or years of
 sordid guilty pleasure! Was that a relief or an
 aggravation which *Abraham* mentions to his lost
 son when he puts him in mind, "Son, remem-
 " ber that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy
 " good things (e)?" Thou hadst then all the
 share of good which thou ever shalt enjoy;
 thou hadst thy portion in that world where
 thou didst choose to have it, and therefore stand
 to the consequences of thine own choice, and
 look for no other portion. O who can bear to
 be thus reminded and upbraided in the midst
 of remediless misery!

Upon the whole, whatever afflictions or be-
 reavements we suffer in this world, let us mo-
 derate our sorrows, and keep them within
 bounds. Let them not work up and ferment
 into murmurings and insurrections against
 God, who gives and takes away, and blessed
 be his name! Let them not sink us into aullen-
 dislike of the mercies still left in our possession.
 How unreasonable and ungrateful that God's

(e) Luke xvi. 25.

retaking one of his mercies should tempt us to despise all the rest! Take a view of the rich inventory of blessings still remaining, and you will find them much more numerous and important than those you have lost. Do not mistake me as if I recommended or expected an utter insensibility under the calamities of life. I allow nature its moderate tears, but let them not rise to floods of inconsolable sorrows. I allow you to *feel* your afflictions like Men and Christians, but then you must *bear* them like Men and Christians too. May God grant we may all exemplify this direction when we are put to the trial!

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

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

And let "those that buy be as if they possessed not." This is the fourth particular in the inference from the shortness of time, and it refers to the *trade* and *business* of life. It refers not only to the busy Merchant, whose life is a vicissitude of buying and selling, but also to the Planter, the Tradesman, and indeed to every man among us; for we are all carrying on a commerce, more or less, for the purposes of this life. You all buy, and sell, and exchange in some form or other, and the things of this world are perpetually passing from hand to hand. Sometimes you have good bargains, and make large acquisitions. But set not your

hearts upon them, but in the midst of all your possessions live as if you possessed them not. Alas! of what small account are all the things you call your own upon earth to you who are to stay here so short a time; to you who must so soon bid an eternal farewell to them all, and go as naked out of the world as you came into it; to you who must spend an everlasting duration far beyond the reach of all these enjoyments? It is not worth your while to call them your *own*, since you must so soon resign them to other hands. The melancholy occasion of this day may convince you that success in trade, and a plentiful estate, procured and kept by industry and good management, is neither a security against death nor a comfort in it. Alas! what service can these houses, and lands, and numerous domestics perform to the cold clay that moulders in yonder grave, or to the immortal spirit that is fled we know not where? Therefore buy, sensible that you can buy nothing upon a sure and lasting title; nothing that you can certainly call yours tomorrow. Buy, but do not sell your hearts to the trifles you buy, and let them not tempt you to act as if this were your final home, or to neglect to lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven; treasures which you can call your *own* when this world is laid in ashes, and which you can enjoy and live upon in what I may call an angelic state when these bodies have nothing but a coffin, a shroud, and a few feet of earth.

Finally,

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

E. 3

eating,

(*f*) Luke xii. 19, 20.

* κατά χράμην. So it is rendered by Dr Doddridge and others.

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

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

Some critics apprehend this sentence, "the fashion

* ἡμῶν.

† παρῶν.

“ fashion of this world passeth away,” contains a fine and striking allusion to the stage, and that it might be rendered, “ the *scene* of this world passeth away.” “ You know,” says a fine writer † upon this text, “ that upon the stage the actors assume imaginary characters, and appear in borrowed forms. One mimics the courage and triumphs of the hero; another appears with a crown and a sceptre, and struts about with all the solemnity and majesty of a prince; a third puts on the fawning smiles of a courtier, or the haughtiness of a successful favourite; and the fourth is represented in the dress of a scholar or a divine. An hour or two they act their several parts on the stage, and amuse the spectators. But the scenes are constantly shifting, and when the play is concluded the feigned characters are laid aside, and the imaginary kings and emperors are immediately divested of their pretended authority, and ensigns of royalty, and appear in their native meanness.

“ Just so this world is a great stage that presents as variable scenes, and as fantastical characters; princes, politicians, and warriors, the rich, the learned, and the wise: and on the other hand, the poor weak and despised part of mankind possess their several places on the theatre; some lurk obscurely in a corner, seldom come from behind the scenes,

E 4

or

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

“ or creep along unnoticed; others make a
 “ splendid show and a loud noise, are adorned
 “ with the honours of a crown, or possessed
 “ of large estates and great powers; fill
 “ the world with the glory of their names and
 “ actions; conquer in the field, or are labori-
 “ ously employed in the cabinet. Well, in a
 “ little time the scene is shifted and all these vain
 “ phantoms disappear. The king of terrors
 “ clears the stage of the busy actors, strips
 “ them of all their fictitious ornaments, and
 “ ends the vain farce of life: and being brought
 “ all upon a level, they go down to the grave
 “ in their original nakedness, are jumbled to-
 “ gether undistinguished, and pass away as
 “ a tale that is told.”

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

supreme tribunal in their true characters, “and
“ can no more be varnished over with fraud-
“ lent colouring †.”

Others apprehend the apostle here alludes to some grand procession, in which pageants or emblematical figures pass along the crowded streets. The staring crowd wait their appearance with eager eyes, and place themselves in the most convenient posture of observation; they gape at the passing shew; they follow it with a wondering gaze; and now it is past; and now it begins to look dim to the sight; and now it disappears. Just such is this transitory world. Thus it appears; thus it attracts the eager gaze of mankind; thus it marches by in swift procession from our sight, to meet the eyes of others; and thus it soon vanishes and disappears*.

And

† *Dunlap's Sermons*, Vol. I. p. 215.

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

- “ The empty pageant rolls along;
- “ The giddy unexperienc'd throng
- “ Pursue it with enchanted eyes:
- “ It passeth in swift march away,
- “ Still more and more its charms decay,
- “ Till the last gaudy colour dies.

See HYMN CCLXVIII.

Lucian has the best illustration of this passage, in this view, that I have seen, DIALOGUE XXXII. *Murphy's Edit.* — Ἐδίμοι μὲν

ὁ τῶν

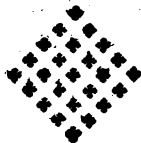
And shall we always be stupidly staring upon this empty parade, and forget that world of substantial realities to which we are hastening? No, let us live and act as the expectants of that world, and as having nothing to do with this world, but only as a school, a state of discipline, to educate and prepare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

O! that I could successfully impress this exhortation upon all your hearts! O! that I could prevail upon you all this day to break off your over-fond attachment to earth, and to make ready for immortality! Could I carry this point, it would be a greater advantage than all the dead could receive by any funeral panegyrics from me. I speak for the advantage of the living upon such occasions, and not to celebrate the virtues of those who have passed the trial, and received their sentence from the supreme Judge. And I am well satisfied the mourning rela-

ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίῃ πομπῇ τινι μακρᾷ προσοικίαι· χορηγεῖν δὲ
 κ' διατάττειν ἕκαστα ἢ τύχῃ, διάφορα κ' ποικίλα τοῖς πομπωτικαῖς
 χήμασι προσάπινα. Τὸν μὲν γὰρ λαβῶσα ἢ τύχῃ, βασιλικῶς
 δισκυάσει τιάρων τε ἰσθμεία, κ' δορυφόρους παρεδῶσα, κ' τὴν κε-
 φαλὴν σίψασα τῆ διαδήματι· τῷ δὲ, οἰκίτην χήμα σπείθηκε· τὸν δὲ
 τινα, καλὸν εἶναι ἰκόνησι, τὸν δὲ ἄμορφον κ' γελοῖον παρῆσκυάσει·
 παρῆσκυάσει γὰρ οἶμαι δεῖν γινώσκειν τὴν θείαν. Πολλάκις δὲ διὰ μέ-
 σης τῆς πομπῆς μετίβαλε τὰ ἴδιον χήματα, ἐκ ἰῶσα εἰς τὸ τέλος δια-
 πομπωῦσαι, ὡς ἰταχθῆσαν, ἀλλὰ μετεμφύσασα ——— Ἐπεὶ δ' αὖ
 δ' ὁ τῆς πομπῆς καιρὸς παρέλθη, τηλικαῦτα ἕκαστος ἀποδύς τὴν σκευ-
 ῆν, κ' ἀποδυσάμενος τὸ χημαμίαν τὸ σῶμα, ὡς σπιρὴν ἢ σπῆν, τῆ
 γίγνεται, μηδὲν τῷ πλησίον διαφέρειν. κ.τ.λ.

relatives of our deceased friend, who best knew and esteemed his worth, would be rather offended than pleased, if I should prostitute the present hour to so mean a purpose. Indeed, many a character less worthy of praise often makes a shining figure in funeral sermons. Many that have not been such tender husbands, such affectionate fathers, such kind masters, such sincere upright friends, so honest and punctual in trade, such zealous lovers of religion and good men, have had their putrifying remains perfumed with public praise, from a place so solemn as the pulpit; but you can witness for me it is not my usual foible to run to this extreme. My business is with you, who are as yet alive to hear me. To you I call, as with the voice of your deceased friend and neighbour, **PREPARE! PREPARE** for eternity! O! if the spirits you once knew while clothed in flesh should take my place, would not this be their united voice, "**PREPARE! PREPARE** for eternity! ye frail short-lived mortals! ye near neighbours to the world of spirits! ye borderers on Heaven or Hell; **MAKE READY!** loosen your hearts from earth, and all that it contains; weigh anchor, and prepare to launch away to the boundless ocean of eternity, which methinks is now within your ken, and roars within hearing." And remember, "this I say, Brethren," with great confidence, "the time is short: it remaineth therefore," for the future, "that they that
" have

" have wives, be as if they had none ; and
" they that weep, as if they wept not ; and they
" that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not ; and they
" that buy, as if they possessed not ; and they
" that use this world, as not abusing it : for
" the fashion of this world," all its scheme of
affairs, all the vain parade, all the idle farce of
life, " passeth away." And away let it pass, if
we may at last obtain a better country, that is,
an heavenly : which may God grant for Jesus's
sake. Amen.



SERMON



S E R M O N XXIV.

The Preaching of CHRIST crucified
the mean of Salvation.



I CORINTHIANS I. 22, 23, 24.

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

IF we should consider Christianity only as an improvement of natural religion, containing a compleat system of morality, and prescribing a pure plan of worship, it is a matter of the utmost importance, and worthy of universal acceptance. In the one view it is necessary to inform the world in matters of sin and duty, and reform their vicious practices; and in the other, to put an end to that foolish and barbarous superstition which had
over-

62 *The Preaching of CHRIST crucified* Serm.24.

over-run the earth, under the notion of religious worship. And these ends the Christian religion fully answers. Never was there such a finished system of morality, or such a spiritual and divine model of worship invented or revealed, as by the despised *Galilean*, and the twelve fishermen that received their instructions from him.

But this is not the principal excellency of the Gospel; and did it carry its discoveries no farther, alas! it would be far from revealing a suitable *religion for sinners*. A religion for sinners must reveal a method of salvation for the lost, of pardon for the guilty, and of sanctifying grace for the weak and wicked. And, blessed be God, the Gospel answers this end; and it is its peculiar excellency that it does so. It is its peculiar excellency that it publishes a crucified CHRIST as an all-sufficient Saviour to a guilty perishing world. It is its glorious peculiarity that it reveals a method of salvation every way honourable to God and his government, and every way suitable to our necessities, and that is, by the sufferings of CHRIST the founder of this religion. This is the ground, the substance and marrow of the Gospel; and it is this, above all other things, that its ministers ought to preach and inculcate. It should have the same place in their sermons which it has in that Gospel which it is their business to preach, that is, it should be the foundation, the substance, the center, and drift of all.

This

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

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

64 *The Preaching of CHRIST crucified* Serm. 24.

else had been worth knowing. Indeed he openly avows such a neglect and contempt of all other knowledge in comparison of this. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my Lord (b)." The *Crucifixion* of CHRIST, which was the most ignominious circumstance in the whole course of his abasement, was an object in which he gloried; and he is struck with horror at the thought of glorying in any thing else. "God forbid, says he, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST (c)!" In short, he looked upon it as the perfection of his character as a christian and an apostle to be a constant student, and a zealous indefatigable preacher of the cross of CHRIST.

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

(b) Phil. iii. 8.

(c) Gal. vi. 14.

display of divine power to be found in the universe.

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

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how mysterious was his expedient! and yet how glorious and effectual! "For after that, "in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom "knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." (*ver. 21.*) This was the contrivance for effecting what all the wisdom and learning of the world could never effect; the plain unadorned preaching of CHRIST crucified; which, both for the matter and manner of it, was counted foolishness.

But how did the world bear this mortification of their intellectual pride? And what reception did this divine scheme meet with when revealed? Alas! I am sorry to tell you. The prejudices of their education were different; but they were unitedly set against the Gospel. The Jews had been educated in a religion established by a series of miracles; and therefore they were extravagant in their demands of this sort of evidence. Notwithstanding all the miracles CHRIST was working daily before their eyes, they were perpetually asking him, "What sign shewest thou?" Those that are resolved not to be convinced will be always complaining of the want of proof, and demanding more to vindicate their infidelity. As for the Greeks, their prejudices were of another kind: it was even a proverb among them, that "miracles were for fools*" and therefore they did not desire that sort of evidence.

* θαύματα μωγῶν.

dence. But "they seek after wisdom." They had been accustomed to fine orations, strong reasoning, and a parade of learning; and these were the evidences they desired to recommend a doctrine to them. And, finding the doctrine of CHRIST crucified had none of these embellishments, they despised and rejected it as foolishness and nonsense.

The method of salvation by the crucifixion of a supposed malefactor was so extremely opposite to the reasonings, pride, and prejudices of Jews and Gentiles, that they could not bear it. The Jews expected the Messiah would appear as a victorious temporal prince, who, instead of falling a prey to his enemies, would subdue them all with an irresistible power, and advance the family of *David* to universal empire. And of all other deaths, that of crucifixion was the most odious and abominable to them, because, according to the custom of the *Romans*, it was the punishment only of slaves, and by their own law, it was pronounced accursed: "for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (b)". Hence, by way of contempt, the Jews called the blessed JESUS, The *hanged* man *. Nay, this was a shock to the faith of the Apostles themselves until their Jewish prejudices were removed by better information. Finding that instead of setting up a glorious kingdom, their

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master

(b) Gal. iii. 13. Deut. xxi. 23.

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master was apprehended by his enemies, and hung upon a cross, they had nothing to say, but " We trusted this was He that should have " delivered Israel : " we simply thought so ; but alas ! now we see our mistake (c). No wonder the cross of CHRIST should be a stumbling-block to such as had imbibed such notions of the Messiah. When instead of the power of signs and miracles, which they were extravagantly demanding, they saw him crucified in weakness, they could not admit the thought that this was that illustrious person, whom their prophets had taught them to expect under the character of an universal king. They were so dazzled with worldly glory, and so insensible of their spiritual wants, that they had no notions of a spiritual Saviour, and a kingdom of grace ; nor could they see how such prophecies were accomplished in one that only professed to deliver from the slavery of sin and Satan, and the wrath to come. Hence they stumbled at the cross, as an obstacle which they could not get over. When CHRIST called *Lazarus* from the dead, he had crowds of followers, who attended his triumphant procession into Jerusalem as a mighty conqueror. And when he had fed so many thousands with a few loaves, they were about forcibly to make him king ; for they knew that one who could raise his soldiers to life after they had been killed, and support an army with so little provisions,

(c) Luke xxiv. 21.

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

As for the *Greeks*, who were a learned philosophical people, it seemed to them the wildest folly to worship one as a God who had been crucified as a malefactor; and to trust in one for salvation who had not saved himself. Their *Jupiter* had his thunder, and, according to their tradition, had crushed the formidable rebellion of the giants who made war against Heaven: their *Bacchus* had avenged himself upon the despisers of his worship; and the whole rabble of their deities had done some god-like exploit, if the fables of their poets were true. And would they abandon such gods, and receive in their stead a despised *Nazarene*,

zarene, who had been executed as the vilest criminal by his own nation? Would they give up all their boasted wisdom and learning, and become the humble disciples of the cross, and receive for their teachers a company of illiterate fishermen, and a tent-maker from the despised nation of the Jews, whom they held in the utmost contempt for their ignorance, bigotry, and superstition? No, the pride of their understandings could not bear such a mortification. If their curiosity led them to be St *Paul's* hearers, they expected to be entertained with a flourish of words, and fine philosophic reasoning; and when they found themselves disappointed, they pronounced him a babler (*d*) and his preaching foolishness.—*Corinth*, to which this epistle was sent by St *Paul*, was a noted city among the *Greeks*; and therefore, what he says upon this head was peculiarly pertinent and well applied.

The prejudices of *Jews* and *Greeks* in this respect outlived the apostolic age, as we learn from the writings of the primitive fathers of the Christian church, who lived among them and were conversant with them. *Trypho* the Jew, in a dialogue with *Justin Martyr*, about an hundred years after St *Paul* wrote this epistle, charges it upon the christians as the greatest absurdity and impiety, that “they placed their hopes in a crucified man”*. *Justin*, after

(*d*) Acts xvii. 18.

* — Ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων σταυρωθέντα. τὰς ἐλπίδας ποιούμενοι. P. 227.

after long reasoning, constrains him at length to make fundry concessions, as, that the prophecies which he had mentioned did really refer to the Messiah; and that according to these prophecies, the Messiah was to suffer. "But," says the Jew, that CHRIST should be so ignominiously crucified; that he should die a death which the law pronounces accursed, this we cannot but doubt; this I yet find a very hard thing to believe: and therefore if you have any farther evidence upon this head, would willingly hear it." † Here you see the cross was a stumbling-block which the Jews could not get over in a hundred years; nay, they have not got over it to this day. *Lactantius*, about three hundred years after CHRIST's birth, observes, that the sufferings of CHRIST were wont to be cast upon the Christians as a reproach: it was thought a strange and scandalous thing, that they should worship a *Man*; a man that had been crucified, and put to the most infamous and tormenting

F 4

death

† The passage in full runs thus — Καὶ ὁ Τρύφων, ἰσχυρῶς εἶπεν, ὅτι καὶ πάν τὸ γένος ἡμῶν τὸν Χριστὸν ἐκδέχεται, καὶ ὅτι πᾶσαι αἱ γραφαὶ αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτὸν εἴρηται, ὁμολογῶμεν καὶ ὅτι τὸ Ἰησοῦ ὄνομα διδουσαῖ με τῷ τῷ Ναυῆ υἱῷ ἐπικληθὲν ἐκδότως ἔχει καὶ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ, καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ φημι· εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀτίμως οὕτως γαυρωθῆναι τὸν Χριστὸν, ἀπορῶμεν· ἐπικαίρατος γὰρ ὁ γαυρωθῆναι ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λέγεται εἶναι ὅστις πρὸς τὸ αἶμα δυσσεβῆσαι ἔχει. παθητὸν μὲν τὸν Χριστὸν ὅτι αἱ γραφαὶ κηρύσσουσιν, φανερὸν εἶναι· εἰ δὲ διὰ τῆ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κηκατησθῆναι πάντας, βυλόμιθα μαθεῖν, εἰ ἔχεις καὶ περὶ τούτου ἀποδοῦξαι.
P. 317. Apud Justinam Lutet. Parisior. 1615.

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death by men *. An heathen, in *Minutius Felix*, is introduced as saying, “ He who re-
 “ presents a man punished for his crimes with
 “ the severest punishment, and the savage
 “ wood of the cross, as the object of their
 “ worship, and a ceremony of their religion,
 “ ascribes a very proper altar to such abandon-
 “ ed and wicked creatures, that they may
 “ worship that which they deserve to hang up-
 “ on. †” And referring to the barbarous per-
 secutions they then groaned under, he jeers
 them; “ See here, says he, are threatenings
 “ for you, punishments, tortures, and *crosses*,
 “ *not to be adored, but endured* †.” “ The calum-
 “ niating *Greeks*, says *Athanasius*, ridicule us,
 “ and set up a broad laugh at us, because we
 “ regard nothing so much as the cross of
 “ **CHRIST** §.”

Thus, you see the doctrine of the cross
 was, of all other things, the most unpopular
 among Jews and Gentiles, and the most dis-
 agreeable

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

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

† Ecce vobis minæ, supplicia, tormenta, etiam *non adoranda, sed subeunda cruce*, P. 11.

§ — Διαβόλους Ἑλλήνις χλευάζουσι, καὶ πλατὺ γελῶσι καθ' ἡμῶν· ὁδὸν ἔτιον ἢ τὸν ταυρὸν τῷ Χριστῷ προσφίεοντι. Orat. contra Gent. P. 1.

agreeable to their taste. A man could never expect to shine, or to cut a figure as a man of sense and learning, by making this the subject of his discourses. But will *Paul* give it up, and display his talents upon some more acceptable theme? This, as a fine scholar, he was very capable of; but he abhors the thought.

“ Let the Jews and *Greeks* desire what they please; we, says he, will not humour them nor gratify their taste: however they take it, we will preach CHRIST crucified; though to the Jews he should prove a stumbling-block, and to the *Greeks* foolishness. And there are some that relish this humble doctrine. To them that believe, both Jews and *Greeks*, whether learned or unlearned, whether educated in the Jewish or Pagan religion, however different their prejudices, or their natural tastes, to all that believe, notwithstanding these differences, CHRIST, that is, CHRIST crucified, is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The wisdom and power of God are not the only perfections that shine in this method of salvation by the cross; but the apostle particularly mentions these, as directly answering to the respective demands of Jews and *Greeks*. If the Jew desires the sign of power in working miracles, the believer sees in CHRIST crucified a power superior to all the powers of miracles. If the *Greek* seeks after wisdom, here, in a crucified CHRIST, the wisdom of God shines in the highest perfection.

What-

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Whatever sign or wisdom the Jew or *Greek* desires and seeks after, the believer finds more than an equivalent in the cross. This is the greatest miracle of power, the greatest mystery of wisdom in all the world.

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

We

(*) Gal. i. 9.

We are to consider the apostles as sent out into the world to reform and save the corrupt and perishing sons of men, and the preaching of CHRIST crucified as the mean they used for this important end. This is the formal view the apostle had of preaching CHRIST in this place, *viz.* as a mean found out by the wisdom of GOD to save them that believe, after that all the wisdom of the world had tried in vain to find out a method for this end. This is evident from *ver. 21.* "After that the world by all its wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the foolishness of preaching," that is, by the preaching a crucified Saviour, which the world counts foolishness, "to save them that believe." This is the excellency of this preaching, this is the reason why the apostle could not be prevailed upon by any motive to desert it, that it was the only mean of salvation. And it is in this view I now intend to consider it. And if your everlasting salvation be of any importance to you certainly this subject demands your most serious attention.

I have been the longer in explaining the context, because it is so closely connected with the subject I have in view, and reflects light upon it. And I shall only add, that preaching CHRIST *crucified* is the same thing as preaching salvation through the *sufferings* of CHRIST. His sufferings were of long continuance, even from his conception to his resurrection; and they were of various kinds, poverty, weariness,

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ness, and labour, hunger and thirst, contempt
and reproach, buffeting, scourging, and a thorny
crown. But there are two words, which
by a *Synecdoche* are often used in scripture to
signify all his sufferings of every kind, from
first to last; *viz.* his *blood*, and his *cross*. And
the reason is, the shedding of his blood, and
the death of the cross, were the worst kind and
highest degree of his sufferings. In his cruci-
fixion all his other sufferings were united and
centered: this was a compleat summary, and
consummation of them all; and therefore, they
are all frequently included under this. In this
latitude I shall use the word in this discourse;
which I hope you will take notice of, that no
part of the meaning may escape you.

Our enquiry shall be

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

These reasons may be reduced under two ge-
neral heads, *viz.* That through the crucifixion
of CHRIST, and through that only, a way is
really opened for the salvation of sinners.—
And that the preaching of CHRIST crucified
makes such a discovery of things, as has the
most direct tendency to bring them to repen-
tance, and produce in them that temper which
is necessary to salvation. Or, in other words,
in this way salvation is provided, and sinners are
made

made fit to enjoy it; both which are absolutely necessary.

Our world is deeply and universally sunk in sin. Men have cast contempt upon the divine government, broken the divine law, and so incurred its penalty; they have forfeited the favour of God, and rendered themselves liable to his displeasure. Had mankind continued innocent, there would have been no difficulty in their case. It would be very plain what would be fit for the divine government to do with dutiful subjects. But alas! rebellion against God has made its entrance into our world, and all its inhabitants are up in arms against Heaven. This has thrown all into confusion, and rendered it a perplexing case what to do with them. In one view indeed, the case is plain, *viz.* that proper punishments should be executed upon them. This would appear evidently just to the whole universe, and no objection could be made against it, though the criminals themselves, who are parties, and therefore not fit judges, might murmur against it as unmerciful and severe. But the difficulty is, how such rebels may not only be delivered from the punishments they deserve, but made happy forever? If they cannot be saved in a way that displays the perfections of God, and does honour to his government, a way in which sin will meet with no encouragement, but on the other hand; an effectual warning will be given against it; a way in which depraved creatures may be sanctified,

tified, and made fit for the pure blis of Heaven ; I say, if they cannot be saved in such a way as this, they cannot be saved at all : their salvation is quite impossible ; for each of these particulars is of such importance, that it cannot be dispensed with. God is the best and most glorious being in himself, and it is infinitely fit he should do justice to his own perfections, and exhibit them in the most Godlike and glorious manner to his creatures : to do otherwise would be to wrong himself, to obscure the brightest glory, and dishonour the highest excellency. This therefore cannot be done : men and angels must be happy, in a way consistent with his glory ; otherwise they must perish : for the display of his glory is a greater good, and a matter of more importance than the happiness of the whole creation. God is also the moral governor of the world. And his government over our world is a government over a country of rebels : and that is a tender point, and requires a judicious management. An error in government in such a case may have the most fatal consequences, both as to the ruler, and his subjects in all parts of his dominions. A private person may, if he please, give up his rights, may pardon offenders, and conceal his justice, and other qualities for government. But a ruler is not at liberty in this case. He must maintain his character, make known his capacity for government, and support the dignity of the law :
other-

otherwise, all might rush into confusion and lawless violence. If the ruler of a small kingdom on our little globe should fail to discover his justice; if he should pardon criminals, and admit them into favour, and into posts of honour and profit, without giving proper expressions of his displeasure against their conduct, and a striking warning against all disobedience, how fatal would be the consequences? how soon would such a ruler fall into contempt, and his government be unhinged? And how soon would his kingdom become a scene of confusion and violence? Criminals might like such an administration: but, I appeal to yourselves, would you choose to live under it? Now how much more terrible and extensively mischievous would be the consequences, if the universal ruler of men and angels, and of more worlds than we have heard the fame of, should exercise such a government over our rebellious world? It would be reproachful to himself; and it would be injurious to his subjects: in short, it might throw heaven and earth, and unknown regions of the universe, into confusion †. He must therefore display his own rectoral virtues; he must maintain the honour of his government, he must shew his displeasure against disobedience, and deter his subjects from it; I say, he must do these things
in

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

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

Now the way of salvation through CHRIST crucified most compleatly answers these ends in the most illustrious manner.

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

Justice and clemency, duly tempered, and exercised with wisdom, is a summary of those virtues that belong to a good ruler. Now these are most illustriously displayed in a happy conjunction in CHRIST crucified. Justice shines brighter than if every sin had been punished upon

upon offenders, without any mercy ; and mercy and clemency shine brighter than if every sin had been pardoned, and every sinner made happy, without any execution of justice. Mercy appears in turning the divine mind with such a strong propensity upon the salvation of sinners ; and justice appears, in that when the heart of God was so much set upon it, yet he would not save them without a compleat satisfaction to his justice. Mercy appears in providing such a Saviour ; and justice, in inflicting the punishment due to sin upon him, without abatement, though he loved him more than the whole universe of creatures. Mercy, in transferring the guilt from the sinner upon the surety, and accepting a vicarious satisfaction: justice, in exacting the satisfaction, and not passing by, sin, when it was but imputed to the darling Son of God. Mercy, in pardoning and saving guilty sinners: justice, in punishing their sin. Mercy, in justifying them though destitute of all personal merit and righteousness: justice, in justifying them only and entirely on account of the merit and righteousness of CHRIST. Thus the righteousness or justice of God is declared not only in the punishment; but in the *remission* of sins (*f*): and we are justified *freely* through his *grace*, and in the mean time by the *redemption* that is in JESUS CHRIST (*ver. 24.*) Mercy appears in providing a Saviour of such infinite dignity: justice, in refusing a satisfac-

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tion

(*f*) Rom. iii. 26.

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tion from an inferior person. Mercy, in forgiving sin: justice, in forgiving not so much as one sin without a sufficient atonement. Mercy, rich free mercy towards the sinner: justice, strict inexorable justice towards the surety. In short, mercy and justice, as it were, walk hand in hand through every step of this amazing scheme. They are not only glorious each of them apart, but they mingle their beams, and reflect a glory upon each other. By this scheme of salvation by the cross of CHRIST also the honour of the divine government is secured and advanced. The clemency and compassion of God towards his rebellious subjects are most illustriously displayed, but in the mean time he takes care to secure the sacred rights of his government. Though innumerable multitudes of rebels are pardoned, yet not one of them is pardoned until their rebellion is punished according to its demerit in the person of the surety. The precept of the law, which they had broken, was perfectly obeyed; the penalty which they had incurred was fully endured, not by themselves indeed, but by one that presented himself in their place; and it is only on this footing they are received into favour. So that the law is magnified, and made honourable, and the rights of government are preserved sacred and inviolable, and yet the prisoners of justice are set free, and advanced to the highest honours and blessedness.

2. In

2. In this way of salvation God's hatred to sin is discovered in the most striking light; the evil of sin is exposed, in the most dreadful colours; and so an effectual warning is given to all worlds to deter them from it. Now it appears that such is the divine hatred against all sin, that God can by no means connive at it, or suffer it to pass without punishment; and that all the infinite benevolence of his nature towards his creatures cannot prevail upon him to pardon the least sin without an adequate satisfaction. Nay, now it appears, that when so malignant and abominable a thing is but imputed to his dear Son, his co-equal, his darling, his favourite, even He could not escape unpunished, but was made a monument of vindictive justice to all worlds. And what can more strongly expose the evil of sin? It is such an intolerably malignant and abominable thing, that even a God of infinite mercy and grace cannot let the least instance of it pass unpunished. It was not a small thing that could arm his justice against the Son of his love. But when he was but made sin for us, and was perfectly innocent in himself, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up unto death, the shameful, tormenting, and accursed death of the cross. Go, ye fools, that make a mock at sin, go and learn its malignity and demerit at the cross of Jesus. Who is it that hangs there writheing in the agonies of death, his hands and feet pierced with nails, his side with

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a spear, his face bruised with blows, and drenched with tears and blood, his heart melting like wax, his whole frame racked and disjointed; forsaken by his friends, and even by his Father, tempted by devils, and insulted by men? Who is this amazing spectacle of woe and torture? It is JESUS, the eternal Word of GOD; the man that is his fellow; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth; his beloved Son, in whom he is well-pleased. And what has he done? He did no wickedness; he knew no sin; but was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And whence then all these dreadful sufferings from Heaven, Earth, and Hell? Why, he only stood in the law-place of sinners; he only received their sin by imputation. And you see what it has brought upon him: you see how low it has reduced him: and what an horrid evil must that be, which has such tremendous consequences even upon the darling of Heaven? O! what still more dreadful havock would it have made, if it had been punished upon the sinner himself in his own person? Surely, all the various miseries which have been inflicted upon our guilty world in all ages, and even all the punishments of Hell do not so loudly proclaim the terrible desert and malignity of sin, as the cross of CHRIST! And hence it follows, that in this way of salvation the most effectual warning is given to the whole universe to deter them from disobedience. Rebels are pardoned, and made
happy,

happy, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to others to repeat the transgression. And this was the tender and critical point. If rebels can be pardoned without reflecting dishonour upon the government and doing injury to the society, it is well: but how this shall be done, is the difficulty. But by the strange expedient of a crucified Saviour all the difficulty is removed. Sinners can no more presume upon sin, with a pretence that the supreme ruler has no great indignation against it; or that there is no great evil in it; for, as I observed, his hatred to sin, and the infinite malignity of it appear no where in so striking and awful a light as in the cross of CHRIST. Let a reasonable creature take but one serious view of that and sure he must ever after tremble at the thought of the least sin. Again, though sinners are pardoned in this way, yet no encouragement is given to the various territories of the diverse dominions to flatter themselves that they also will be forgiven in case they should imitate the race of man in their rebellion. There is but one instance that we know of in the whole universe of the forgiveness of sin, and the restoration of rebels into favour, and we are so happy as to find that only instance in our guilty world. But what a strange revolution has been brought about, what amazing miracles have been wrought in order to prepare the way for it! The eternal Son of God must become a man,

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

3. In this way provision is made for the sanctification of sinners that they may be fit for the fruitions and employments of the heavenly state. Their taste is so vitiated that they have no relish for that pure bliss, and therefore can no more be happy there, than a sick man can relish the entertainments of a feast. And they are so far gone with the deadly disease of sin, that they are not able to recover themselves; nay,

may, they are not so much as disposed to use means for that end. They are estranged from God, and engaged in rebellion against him; and they love to continue so. They *will* not submit, nor return to their duty and allegiance. Hence there is need of a superior power to subdue their stubborn hearts, and sweetly constrain them to subjection; to inspire them with the love of God, and an implacable detestation of all sin. And for this purpose the holy Spirit of God is sent into the world: for this purpose he is at work from age to age upon the hearts of men. And though he be most ungratefully resisted, grieved, and despitefully treated, and he gives up many to the lusts of their own hearts, yet, numerous and glorious are the conquests he has gained over rebellious sinners. Many a stubborn will has he sweetly subdued: many an heart of stone has he softened, and dissolved into ingenuous repentance like snow before the sun: many a depraved soul has he purified, and at length brought to the heavenly state in all the beauties of perfect holiness. And hence it is that there is any such thing as true religion to be found upon earth, and that any of the sons of men are recovered to obedience and happiness. But for this inestimable blessing we are indebted to a crucified CHRIST. It is the dear purchase of his blood, and had it not been so purchased, it would never have been communicated to our guilty world; and consequently never would one

rebel have submitted, never would one heart have felt the love of GOD, among all the sons of men.

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

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

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

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

If a representation of the most moving, the most alluring and most alarming matters can affect

90 *The Preaching of CHRIST crucified* Sermon. 24.

affect the mind of man, certainly the preaching of the cross cannot be without effect; for,

1. The preaching of a crucified Saviour gives the strongest assurance to the guilty sons of men that their offended God is reconcilable to them and willing to receive them into favour again, upon their penitent return to him. The provision he has made for this end, and particularly his appointing his Son to be their Saviour, and delivering him up to the death of the cross for them, leaves no room for doubt upon this head. It is full demonstration that he is not only willing, but that his heart is earnestly set upon reconciliation; otherwise he would not have been at such infinite pains and expence to remove obstructions, and clear the way for it. Now this is an assurance that the light of nature could never give. It leaves us dreadfully in the dark. And indeed, nothing but an express declaration from God himself can inform us what he intends to do with criminals that lie entirely at mercy, and that he may do what he pleases with. The heathen world were either stupidly thoughtless about this point, or full of anxiety, and their philosophers, amid all their boasted knowledge, could only offer them plausible conjectures. And yet this assurance is necessary to keep up religion in the world, and encourage rebellious sinners to return to obedience; for with what heart can they serve that God, as to whom they fear he will accept of no service

vice at their hands, or return to him, when they have no encouragement that he will receive them? The hope of acceptance is the spring of repentance and all attempts for reformation; and when once the sinner concludes there is no hope, he lies down inactive and sullen in despair, or confirms himself in impenitence, and gives the full rein to his lusts. This the psalmist observed long ago: "There is forgiveness with thee, O LORD, that thou mayst be feared (g)." The fear of God is often used in scripture for the whole of religion; and so it seems taken here. As much as to say, "There is forgiveness with thee; and thou hast assured us of it, that religion might be preserved in the world; that mankind may not abandon thy service as wholly in vain; or give up themselves to sin, as despairing of acceptance upon their repentance." O! what an acceptable assurance must this be to a guilty trembling sinner! And how suitable a remedy to such sinners is the preaching of the cross of CHRIST, which alone gives them this welcome assurance!

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

(g) Psa. cxxx. 4.

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

My Brethren, let me make an experiment upon you with the cross of CHRIST, and try with that weapon to slay your sins, and break your hearts. Can you view such agonies, and question the love that endured them? Or can you place yourselves under the warm beams of that love, and yet feel no love kindled in your hearts in return? What! not the love of a worm for the dying love of a God! The apostle *John* reasons very naturally, when he says, "We love him, because he first loved us (b)*. Love for love is but a reasonable retaliation; especially the love of a redeemed sinner for the love of a crucified Saviour. St *Paul* felt the energy of this love irresistible: "The love of CHRIST constraineth us (i);" or according to the emphasis of the original word *, it carries

(b) 1 John iv. 19.

(i) 2 Cor. v. 14.

† οὐκ ἐξ ἡμῶν. So Dr *Doddridge* translates it.

is away, like a resistless torrent. "And it appeared to him so shocking, that he could not mention it without weeping, that any should be enemies to the cross of CHRIST (*k*). Hear what expectations *he* had from the energy of his cross, who himself hung upon it. " I, " says he, if I be lifted up from the earth, will " draw all men unto me (*l*). " This the evangelist teaches us to understand of the manner of his death, *viz.* his being raised up from the earth, and suspended on the cross. There, sinners, he hung to attract your love; and can you resist the force of this attraction, this almighty magnet? JESUS, if I may so speak, *expects* that this will carry all before it: that every sinner who sees him hanging there will immediately melt into repentance, and be drawn to him by the cords of love. And O! can you find in your hearts to resist? Where then is gratitude? Is that generous principle quite dead within you? I must honestly tell you, if the love of a crucified Saviour does not attract your love, nothing else will: you will continue his enemies, and perish as such. This is the most powerful inducement that can be proposed to you, all the reasonings of the ablest philosophers, all the persuasions of the ministers of the Gospel, all the goodness of God in creation and providence, will never prevail upon you, if your hearts are proof against the attraction of the cross. But, blessed be his name

(*k*) Phil. iii. 18.

(*l*) John xii. 32.

name who died upon it, many an obstinate and reluctant heart has this cross allured and subdued: and O! that we may all feel its sweet constraints!

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

stretching him upon the cross, and slaughtering him, and yet not mourn over them? O! can you indulge the murderous things that shed his blood? Then you practically pronounce him an impostor, and join the cry of the Jewish rabble, "Crucify him; crucify him."

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

For an application,

1. Hence we may learn our great happiness in enjoying the preaching of CHRIST crucified.

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96 *The Preaching of CHRIST crucified* Serm. 24.

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

2. Hence we may learn the shocking guilt and danger of our modern infidels, the Deists, who like the *Greeks*, count the preaching of CHRIST crucified foolishness, and deny the LORD that bought them. This is to reject the
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best, the last, the only remedy. Now let them consult their feeble reason ; let them go to the oracles of wisdom in the heathen world, and ask of them how guilty offenders may be restored into favour, in consistency with the honour of the divine perfections and government? Alas! they can find no satisfactory answer. Now also they have lost the strongest motive to love and obedience, when they have turned away their eyes from the cross. They have lost the most full and amiable view of the divine nature and perfections that ever was exhibited to the world. Should they shut their eyes against the light of the sun, and abhor all the beauties of nature, it would not be such an astonishing instance of infatuation. St *Paul* represents it as the most amazing folly, nay, a kind of witchcraft and incantation, that any should desert the truth, that had ever had a view of CHRIST crucified. " O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes JESUS CHRIST hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you (m)?" What wickedness, what madness, what an unnatural conspiracy against their own lives must it be for men to reject the only expedient found out by infinite wisdom and goodness for their salvation? What base ingratitude thus to requite the dying love of JESUS? Can such monsters expect salvation from his hands? no; they will fully cut themselves off

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(m) Gal. iii. 1.

from all hope, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. If the cross of CHRIST does not break their hearts, it is impossible to bring them to repentance: the last and most powerful remedy has proved ineffectual: the last and strongest effort of divine grace has been used with them in vain. Since they obstinately reject the Sacrifice of CHRIST, there remains no other Sacrifice for their sin, and nothing awaits them but a fearful expectation of wrath, and fiery indignation, which shall devour them as adversaries.

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

est affections? And has the view of it melted our hearts into the most ingenuous relentings for sin, and given us such a hatred against it, that we can never indulge it more? My brethren, put such questions as these home to your hearts, and endeavour to come to some just conclusion with regard to yourselves.—And if the conclusion be against you, then,

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

5. You may entertain the joyful hope of salvation; of salvation through one that was insulted as not able to save himself; of crowns of glory through him that wore the crown of thorns; of fulness of joy through the man of sorrows; of immortal life through one that died upon a cross; I say, you may entertain a joyful hope of all this; for in this way of salvation there is no hinderance, no objection. GOD will be glorified in glorifying you, the law magnified in justifying you. In short, the honour of GOD and his government concurs with your interest; and therefore if you heartily embrace this plan of salvation, you may be as sure that GOD will save you, as that he will take care of his own glory, for they are inseparably connected. And do not your hearts, dead as they are, spring within you at the thought? Do you not long to see your Saviour on the throne, to whose cross you are indebted for all your hopes? And O! will you not praise his name while you live, and continue the song through all eternity? Are you not ready to anticipate the an-

them of heaven, " Worthy is the Lamb that
 " was slain, to receive power, and riches, and
 " wisdom, and strength, and honour, and
 " glory, and blessing : for thou hast redeemed
 " us unto GOD by thy blood (n)."

Finally, let me congratulate § my reverend Brethren on their being made ministers of the new testament, which reveals that glorious and delightful subject CHRIST crucified in full light, and diffuses it through all their studies and discourses. The *Lamb that was slain* is the theme that animates the songs of angels and saints above, and even our unhallowed lips are allowed to touch it without profanation. Let us therefore, my dear Brethren, delight to dwell upon it. Let us do justice to the refined morality of the gospel : let us often explain and enforce the precepts, the graces and the virtues of christianity ; and teach men to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. But let us do this in an evangelical strain, as ministers of the crucified JESUS, and not as the scholars of *Epictetus* or *Seneca*. Let us labour to bring men to an hearty compliance with the method of salvation through CHRIST ; and then we shall find it comparatively an easy matter, a thing of course, to make them good moralists. Then a
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(n) Rev. v. 9, 12.

§ The Author towards the end of the Discourse writes, *At a Presbytery in Augusta, April 25. 1759.* which accounts for this particular Address to Ministers.

short hint of their duty to GOD and man will be more forcible than whole volumes of ethics, while their spirits are not cast in the gospel-mould. Thus may we be enabled to go on, till our great master shall take our charge off our hands, and call us to give an account of our stewardship!






S E R M O N XXV.

Ingratitude to G O D an heinous but
general Iniquity.



2 CHRONICLES 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 man, 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
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on 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, so 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

midate 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 stile 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, (o) 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

(o) 2 Kings xix. 35.

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 yeats 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

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, compleat 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,

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to provide for us in the helpless days of infancy, and direct or restrain us in the giddy precipitant years of youth: the blessing of being born in the adult age of the world, when the improvements of art are carried to so high a degree of perfection; of being born, not among savages in a wilderness, but in a humanized, civilized country; not on the burning sandy deserts of the torrid zone, nor under the frozen sky of *Lapland* or *Iceland*, but in a temperate climate, as favourable to the comfort and continuance of life as most countries upon earth; not in a barren soil, scarcely affording provision of the coarsest sort for its inhabitants, but in a land of unusual plenty, that has never felt the severities of famine: the blessing of not being a race of slaves, under the tyranny of an arbitrary government, but free-born *Britons* and *Virginians* in a land of liberty: these birth-right blessings are almost peculiar to us and our nation. Let me enumerate also the blessing of a good education; good at least, when compared to the many savage nations of the earth: the blessing of health for months and years: the blessing of raiment suited to the various seasons of the year: the blessings of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest; the agreeable vicissitude of night and day; the refreshing repose of sleep, and the activity and enjoyment of our waking hours; the numerous and refined blessings of society, and the most endearing relations; the
blessings

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
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of nature according to which they act. These are but channels, channels cut by his hand, and he is the source, the ocean of blessings. Creatures are but the hands that distribute his charity through a needy world, but his is the store from which they derive their supplies. On this account therefore we should receive all these blessings as gifts from God, and feel ourselves obliged to him, as the supreme original Benefactor. Besides, it is very probable to me, that in order to bestow some of these blessings upon us by means of natural causes, God may give these causes a touch to turn them in our favour, more than they would be according to the established course of nature; a touch so efficacious as to answer the kind design; though so gentle and agreeable to the established laws of nature, as not to be perceivable, or to cast the system of nature into disorder. The blessings conveyed in this way, are not only the gifts of his hand, but the gifts of his *immediate* hand.

Therefore let God be acknowledged the supreme, the original Benefactor of the world, and the proper Author of all our blessings; and let all his creatures in the height of their benevolence and usefulness, own, that they are but the distributors of his alms, or the instruments of conveying the gifts of his hand. Let us acknowledge the light of yonder sun, the breath that now heaves our lungs and fans the vital flame, the growing plenty that is now bursting its way through the clods of earth, the water that

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 backwards, and take a review of a length of ten, twenty, forty, or sixty years; and what a series of deliverances rises upon us! Deliverances from the many dangers of childhood, by which many have lost their limbs, and many their lives; deliverances from many threatening and fatal accidents; deliverances from exquisite pains, and from dangerous diseases; deliverances from the gates of death, and the mouth of the grave; and deliverances

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

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 as the original efficient, whatever creatures he is pleased to use as his instruments. Fortuitous accidents are under his direction; and necessary causes are subject to his controul. Diseases are his servants, his soldiers; and he sends them out, or recalls them, according to his pleasure.

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

Dare you now make the enquiry, What returns has this divine Benefactor received from you for all this goodness? Alas! the discovery which this enquiry will make may convict, shock, confound, and mortify us all; for we are all, in a prodigious degree, though some much more than others, guilty in this respect, guilty of the vilest ingratitude. Alas! are there not many of you that do not return to God the gratitude of a dog to his master? That brute

I 2 •

animal,

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 monstrous, ingratitude, the most base, unnatural, and yet indulged ingratitude? How do you resent it, if one, whom you have deeply obliged, should prove ungrateful, and use you ill? But it is impossible any one of your fellow-creatures should be guilty of such enormous ingratitude towards you as you are guilty of towards God; because it is impossible any one of them should be

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 towards 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 (p). GOD sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved (q)." The com-

I 3

forts

(p) John iii. 16.

(q) John iii. 17.

forts of this life alone would be a very inadequate provision for creatures who are to exist for ever in another, for what are sixty or seventy years in the 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?" 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 oeconomy 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

(r) Rom. viii. 32.

are instituted. For this end heaven is prepared and furnished with many mansions; the pearly gates open, and dart their splendors from afar to attract our eyes; and things which the eye, that has seen so many things, had never seen; which the ear, that has had still more extensive intelligence, had never heard; nor the heart of man, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, had never conceived, are brought to light by the gospel. Nay, for this purpose, your salvation, *Sinai* thunders, Hell roars and throws out 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 oeconomy of Providence towards our world, Heaven and earth, and in the sense mentioned, hell itself, are striving to save you. The strongholds of sin and Satan, in which you are held prisoners, are attacked in kindness to you from all quarters. What beneficent efforts, what heroic exploits of divine goodness are these! And blessed be God these efforts are not in vain.

The cœlestial regions are fast peopling, tho' 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 him, 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 (f)." 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 *Papish* 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

(f) Isa. liii. 11.

which have been mentioned? Gifts of infinite value, and infinitely dear to the giver; provisions for an everlasting state; an everlasting state of as compleat 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, and 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 peculiarly 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

fouls 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 in 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

lowed you to converse with him in his ordinances, with the heart of a friend. He has, as it were, unlocked his peculiar treasures to enrich you, and given you an unshaken title to the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. He has made you his own, his own in a peculiar sense; his people, his friends, his children. You are indeed his favourites. You were so 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 rest 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 (t)". His love to you is an unbounded ocean, that spreads over eternity, and makes it, as it were, the channel or the ocean of your happiness. In you he intends to shew to all worlds what glorious creatures he can form of the dust, and of the polluted fragments of degenerate human nature. What is all the profusion of kings to their favourites, what are all the benefactions of creatures, nay, what are all the bounties of the divine hand itself, within the compass of time, when compared to these astonishing, unparalleled, immortal, infinite, god-like favours? They all dwindle into obscurity, like the stars of the night in the blaze of noon.

And now I am almost afraid to turn your thoughts to enquire, what returns you have made

(t) Rom. viii. 38, 39.

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

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! 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 (v)." "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 (x)."

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

One

(v) Luke vi. 35.

(x) Matt. v. 45.

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.*

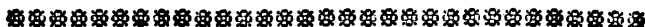


S E R M O N



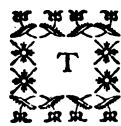
S E R M O N XXVI.

The Sufferings of CHRIST and their
consequent Joys and Blessings.



I S A I A H 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. **

 HIS 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

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

" with grief; one wounded, bruised, oppress-
" ed, afflicted; one brought as a lamb to the
" slaughter; one cut off out of the land of
" the living." And who is He? Were he an
enemy, or a malefactor, we could not but pity
him. But this was not his character, for " he
" had done no violence, neither was there guile
" found in his mouth." And he was so far
from being our enemy that " he hath borne *our*
" griefs, and carried *our* sorrows; he was
" wounded for *our* transgressions; he was
" bruised for *our* iniquities," not for his own.
Were he a child or a friend that had suffered
such things, it would raise all our mournful
and sympathizing passions to hear the history.
But what if this should be " the man that is
" God's fellow," the Redeemer, to whom we
are bound by the most endearing obligations!
a person of infinite dignity, and perfect inno-
cence, our best friend, and our 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, un-
lamented, unbeloved, when even a dying cri-
minal 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 re-
presentation of his sufferings and love would
have any effect upon you? That they might
have this effect is my design in the prosecution
of

of this subject; for that it is JESUS who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the subject of these sufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of passages quoted from this chapter to him in the new testament. This chapter has been a successful part of the scriptures, and there are some now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the *Ethiopian* eunuch was reading, when he asked *Philip*, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of 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 (y)." 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.

VOL. III.

K

I. "When

(y) Acts viii. 32-35.

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 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 way, 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 particle **ON** 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 1 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be *sin*;" that is, a sin-offering "for us," &c.

and the ashes of heifers, would not suffice, and these too he had not. But he had blood in his veins, and *that* shall all go; *that* he will offer up to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made an offering for sin. "His *soul* an offering for sin!" his pure spotless soul! his soul, that was of more value than the whole universe beside! you may find many 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 fore-sight 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 exceeding 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
K 2
pain

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 comfort-
" ed,"* come build upon this rock, and you shall never fall.

Or

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 to offer himself a sacrifice for us. He was under no previous constraint ; subject to no compulsion. This he tells us himself ; " No man taketh my life from me ; but I lay it down of myself (z)." 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 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.

K 3

mies.

* The reason of this ambiguity is, that the original word **חַשִׁים** 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, **נַפְשׁוֹ** which is also feminine.

(z) John x. 18.

mies. 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:" (a) 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 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,

(a) John xviii. 6.

tion, 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 more 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 ever- " more (b)." The man that hung upon *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

K 4

dignity

(b) Rev. i. 17, 18.

dignity and perfect happiness for ever. See! JESUS, " who was made a little lower than the " angels, for the suffering of death, crowned " with glory and honour (c)." 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 (d)." 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 (e)." By his death he acquired universal government, and has the keys of *Ἰδὴ*, the vast invisible world, and of death that leads into it (f). 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 (g)." †

And is the poor, despised, insulted, crucified JESUS thus exalted? Then I proclaim, like the herald

(c) Heb. ii. 9. (d) Phil. ii. 8—11. (e) Rom. xiv. 9.

(f) Rev. i. 18.

(g) Heb. xii. 2.

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

herald before *Joseph*, when advanced to be prime minister to *Pbarah*, **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 now 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 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 upon 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

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 (b).*" 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 for evermore. He lives to communicate his spirit for your sanctification; he lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness; he lives to send down supplies to you according to your exigencies; he lives to make perpetual intercession for you (which is the thing the apostle had particularly in view) to plead your cause, to urge your claims founded on his blood, and to solicit blessings for you. He lives forever to make you happy for ever. And will you not venture to trust your souls in his hands? You may safely do it without fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the supreme 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

(b) Heb. vii. 25.

And does he not 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? *Isaiab* will tell you. "He is exalted that he may have mercy upon you (i)." He has placed himself upon his throne, as upon an eminence, may I so speak, that he may the 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 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 upon 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

(i) *Isai.* xxx. 18.

pressed under loads of suffering, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys? Must you not rejoice that his sufferings for you have had so happy an issue with regard to himself? O! can you be sunk in sorrow, while your Head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain he endured for you! Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all his members; and if you have no reason to rejoice on your own account, yet rejoice for your Head: share in the joys of your LORD.

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

3. My text tells you. "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,

"ly,

ly, 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 (k).“ So unless JESUS had fallen to the ground and died, he would have abode alone; he would have possessed his native heaven in solitude, as to any of the sons of *Adam*: but now by his dying, and lying entombed in the ground, he has produced a large increase. One dying CHRIST has produced thousands, millions of Christians. His blood was prolific; it was indeed “the seed of the church ‡.” And, blessed be God, its prolific virtue is not yet failed. His spiritual seed have been growing up from age to age; and O the delightful thought! they have sprung up in this barren soil, though alas! they too often appear thin and withering. These tender plants of righteousness have sprung up in some of your families; and I trust, a goodly number of them are here in the courts of the LORD to-day. Now, 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

(k) John xii. 24.

‡ 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.

without this we could no more expect it, than wheat without seed or moisture. A part of this seed is now ripened and gathered into the granary of heaven, "like a shock of corn come in in his season." Another part is still in this unfriendly climate, suffering the extremities of winter, covered with snow, nipt with frost, languishing in drought, and trodden under foot. Such are you, the plants of righteousness, that now hear me. But you are ripening apace, and your harvest is just at hand. Therefore bear up under the severities of winter; for that coldness of heart, that drought for want of divine influences, those storms of temptation, and those oppressions that now tread you down, will ere long be over. O! when shall we see this heavenly seed spring up in this place, in a more extensive and promising degree? When you travel through the country, in this temperate season, with which God has blessed our country that was parched and languishing last year, how agreeable is the survey of wide-extended fields, promising plenteous crops of various kinds? And O! shall we not have a fruitful season of spiritual seed among us? May I accommodate the words of JESUS to this assembly, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest (1)?" O! is the happy season come, when we shall see a large crop of converts in this place? Then welcome thou long-expected season!

(1) John iv. 35.

season! But alas! is not this a flattering hope? Is it not, on the other hand, a barren season with us? Is not the harvest past, and the summer over, while so many are not saved? O! the melancholy thought! If it has been so with us for some time, O let us endeavour to make this a fruitful day!

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

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

bought with his blood, and born of his spirit ; and this is the most delightful sight our world can afford him. Some of them may be oppressed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghastly with famine : they may make no great figure in mortal eyes ; but he loves to look at them, he esteems them as his children, and the fruits of his dying pangs. And let me tell you, his eyes are upon this assembly to-day ; and if there be one of his spiritual seed among us, he can distinguish him in the crowd. He sees you drinking in his word 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 but 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 would 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

never constrained you to enquire how you can oblige him? Or what you shall do for him in return? If this be your enquiry, you have an answer immediately: devote yourselves to his service, love and obey him as his dutiful children, that he may save you. If you would oblige him, if you would give him full satisfaction for all the sorrows you have caused him, do this; do this or nothing; for nothing else can please him. Suppose he should this day appear to you in that form in which he once was seen by mortals, sweating great drops of blood, accused, insulted, bruised, scourged, racked upon the cross; and suppose he should turn to you with a countenance full of love and pity, and drenched with blood and tears, and address you in such moving language as this, " See! sinners, see what I suffer for you; see
" at what a dear rate I purchase your life; see
" how I love you. And now I have only this
" to ask of you in return, that you would for-
" sake those murderous sins which thus torment
" me; that you would love and serve me; and
" accept of that salvation which I am now
" purchasing for you with the blood of my
" heart: this I ask with all the importunity of
" my last breath, of bleeding wounds, and
" expiring groans. Grant me but this, and I
" am satisfied; I shall think all my sufferings
" well bestowed." I say, suppose he should address you thus in person, what answer would he receive from this assembly? O! would you

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

his death accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners ; and therefore by denying him this you attempt to degrade him, to rob him of his happiness, and to make him once more a man of sorrows. And can you venture upon such impiety and ingratitude? I tell you, Sirs, it will not do for you to profess his name, to compliment him with the formalities of religion, and to be Christians in pretence ; while you do not depart from iniquity, and while your hearts are not fired with his love. He takes no pleasure in seeing such spurious seed, that have no resemblance to their pretended father ; but he will disown them at last as he did the Jews, and tell them, " Ye are of your father the devil, whose works ye do (m)." 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 free-

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born

(m) John viii. 44.

born descendants of *Britons*, gratify him in this? Or if you refuse, behold I turn to the Gentiles. Some of you poor *Negroes* have, I hope, rejoiced the heart of CHRIST, by submitting to him as your 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 *Negroe*; 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 will all cast you off if CHRIST renounces you. If you will not suffer him to rejoice over you in doing you good, he will
rejoice

ments, 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 a way inconsistent with it. But through the mediation of CHRIST sinners may be saved, and in the mean time the honour of the divine perfections and government secured, and even illustrated. He has made atonement for sin, and answered the demands of the divine law and justice ; so that GOD can now be just, and yet justify him that believeth in JESUS. Hence “ GOD IS IN CHRIST,” observe in CHRIST, “ reconciling the world to himself (n).” His heart is set upon it, and the success of this scheme affords him the greatest pleasure. It is not only your interest, but your *duty* to be saved.

(n) 2 Cor. v. 19.

ed. It is as much your duty to enter into heaven, as to pray, or 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

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

This subject affords strong consolation to such of you as have complied with the method of salvation through CHRIST, since the salvation of sinners in this way is the pleasure of the LORD; and since it is entrusted to the faithful and skilful hands of CHRIST, under whose management it will prosper, you may be sure his pleasure will be accomplished with respect
to

to you, and that the divine scheme shall be carried into compleat 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, which 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 goodwill 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

ed as in birth; let him now see a goodly company of them around his table, that he may be satisfied. Let me remind you that you have caused him many an heavy hour, and much pain and sorrow; therefore let him in return have pleasure and satisfaction from you this day. O! rejoice the heart you have often broken, and let there be joy in heaven over you. Let the angels that are ministering to the saints, and that are no doubt hovering unseen over 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!

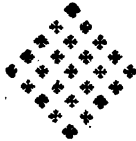
This ordinance is also a seal of the covenant of grace; therefore come to it this day to renew your contract with your God and Saviour; to take him for your God, and to give up yourselves to him as his people, in an everlasting covenant

covenant never to be forgotten. Make a sure covenant; call heaven and earth, GOD, angels and men to be witnesses 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 dependance 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

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




S E R M O N XXVII.

Life and Immortality revealed in the
Gospel.



2 T I M O T H Y I. 10.

*And hath brought Life and Immortality to Light
by the Gospel. **

 O extensive have been the havock and
devastation which Death has made in
the world for near six thousand years,
ever since it was first introduced by
the sin of man, that this earth is now become
one vast grave-yard, or burying-place for her
sons. The many generations that have follow-
ed upon each other, in so quick a succession
from *Adam* to this day, are now in the man-
sions under ground. And there must we and
all the present generation sleep ere long. Some
make a short journey from the womb to the
grave :

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

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 upon our globe, rest a day, a month, or a year, and then fly off for some other regions. It is evident, these were not formed for the purposes of the present state, where they make so short a stay; and yet we are sure they are not made in vain by an all-wise creator; and therefore we conclude they are young Immortals, that immediately ripen in the world of spirits, and there enter upon scenes for which it was worth their while to come into existence. Others spring up and bloom for a few years; but they fade away like a flower, and are cut down. Others arrive at the prime or meridian of human life; but in all their strength and gaiety, and amid their hurries, and schemes, and promising prospects, they are surprized 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 with-

out

out 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 spritely vigorous youth, whose death is the occasion of this funeral solemnity. This earth is over-spread with the ruins of the human frame: it is an huge carnage, a vast charnel-house, undermined and hollowed with 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, and that could think, and will, and exercise the superior powers of reason, are they all utterly extinct, reformed into the yawning gulph of annihilation, and never again to emerge into life and activity? If this be the case, the expostulation of the psalmist upon this supposition seems unavoidable; "LORD, wherefore hast thou made all men in vain (o)." 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,

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(o) Psalm lxxxix. 47.

if 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 used 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,

† ἀφθαρσία.

forever, like its immortal Parent, and shall never be dissolved nor annihilated. In this complex sense we may understand the immortality of which my text speaks.

Now it is to the gospel that we owe the clear discovery of immortality in both these senses. As for the *resurrection* of the dead, which confers a kind of immortality upon our 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 they 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 had an eternal farewell to their bodies, when they dropped them into the grave. They never expected to meet them again in all the glorious improvements of an happy resurrection. But that divine Revelation from whence we learn our religion, opens to us a brighter prospect; it strengthens our eyes to look forwards through the glooms of death, and behold the many that

sleep in the dust awaking; " some to everlasting
 " life, and some to shame and everlasting con-
 " tempt (p)." 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 (q)." 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 (r)?"

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

(p) Dan. xii. 2.

(q) John v. 28.

(r) 1 Cor. xv. 55.

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 that therefore there must be a future state of retribution; for we see mankind are now under a promiscuous Providence, and generally are not dealt with according to their works; and if there be a future state of retribution, the soul must live in a future state, otherwise it could not be the subject of rewards and punishments. These and the like topics of argument have been improved by the friends of Immortality to prove that important doctrine beyond all reasonable suspicion. And because these arguments from reason seem sufficient, some would conclude that we are not at all obliged to the Christian Revelation in this respect. But it should be considered that those are not the arguments of the populace, the bulk of mankind, but of a few philosophic studious men; but as Immortality is the prerogative of all mankind, of the ignorant and illiterate as well as of the wise and learned, all mankind of all ranks of understanding are

equally concerned in the doctrine of Immortality; and therefore a common Revelation was necessary, which would teach the Ploughman and the Mechanic, as well as the Philosopher, that he was formed for an immortal existence, and consequently that it is his grand concern to fit himself for a happiness beyond the grave, as lasting as his nature. Now it is the gospel alone that makes this important discovery plain and obvious to all. It must also be considered that men may be able to demonstrate a truth, when the hint is 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 advanced no further than plausible or probable conjectures. Persons may be assisted in their searches by the light of revelation, but, being accustomed to it, they may mistake it for the light of their own reason; or they may not be so honest and humble as to acknowledge the assistance they have received. The surest way to know what mere unassisted reason can do, is to enquire what it has actually done in those Sages of the *heathen* world who had no other guide, and in whom it was carried to the highest degree of improvement. Now we find in fact that though some Philosophers

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, that, when they draw the conclusion of the soul's existence after death, it is very often from extravagant and chimerical premises; such as the pre-existence of human souls, their successive transmigration from body to body, their being literally particles of the Deity, whom they supposed to be the *Anima Mundi*, the universal Soul of the world, &c. All these premises want the support of proper evidence, and some of them are directly subversive of the proper notion of a future state, as a state of rewards and punishments. Sometimes indeed they seem to reason from better principles, but then they still hesitate about the conclusion, and fluctuate between the presumptions for it and the objections against it. *Socrates* was confessedly the brightest character in the *heathen* world, and seemed to have the fairest claim of any among them to the honour of a Martyr for the cause of truth and virtue; and yet even he, when making his defence before his Judges, speaks in the language of un-

certainty 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, when standing on the brink of eternity, he was not assured whether he was about to leap into the hideous gulph of annihilation; or to pass into some vital region replete with inhabitants. When he was condemned, his last words to the Court were these, "It is time for us to part; I, that I may suffer death, and you, that you may enjoy life: but which of us has the happier lot, is known only to God†." Poor honest *Socrates*! how happy hadst thou been, hadst thou but enjoyed one glimmering ray 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

* Δυσὸν γὰρ θάνατος ἐστὶ τὸ τίθαι· ἢ γὰρ οἷον μηδὲν εἶναι, μηδὲ ἀίδητον μηδεμίαν μετὰ τὸ ἔχειν τὸν τίθειντα· ἢ, κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα, μεταβολὴ τις τυγχάνει ὅσα κ' μετεβλήσῃ τῆς ψυχῆς, πῦ τόπων πῦ ἐνθάδε, εἰς ἄλλον τόπον. *PLATO SOCRAT. Apol.*

† ἤδη ὄρα ἀπίναται, ἰμοὶ μὲν, ἀποθανεῖμαι, ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσομένοις· ὁ πόσιος δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχεται ἐπὶ ἄμεινον πᾶν γὰρ, ἀθάλας παντὶ πλεῖν ἢ τῷ θείῳ. *Ibidem.*

which I hope you do not so much need, but I shall give you some idea of Immortality, in both the senses I have mentioned, and then improve it.

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

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 (t).
" Then this corruptible shall put on incorrup-
" tion, and this mortal shall put on immor-
" tality (v)."

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

(f) John v. 28. (t) Job xix. 26. (v) 1 Cor. xv. 53.

winding sheet? What does this signify, in comparison with their doom at the great rising day, and their state through eternity? My Brethren, you must not let "sin reign in your mortal bodies now, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof," if you would have them raised holy and happy in that awful morning. But you must consecrate your bodies, and keep them holy as the temples of the holy Ghost; and "yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Can you flatter yourselves that bodies polluted with filthy lusts and sensual gratifications shall ever be admitted into the regions of perfect purity? It would be an unnatural element to such depraved constitutions. Shall those feet ever walk the crystal pavement of the *New Jerusalem*, which have been accustomed to run in 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

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 now deny yourselves of your guilty pleasures, not only your soul, that neglected disregarded trifle, must perish; but your body, your dear body, your only care, must be wretched; 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

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 *divina particula aurea*, 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 (x);" but this Soul shall
live

(x) 2 Peter iii. 10.

live secure of existence in the universal desolation ;

“ Unhurt amidst the war of elements,

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

And now, when the present system of things is dissolved, and Time shall be no more, Eternity, boundless Eternity succeeds ; and on this the soul enters as on its proper hereditary duration. Now look forward as far as you will, your eye meets with no obstruction, with nothing but the immensity of the prospect : in that, indeed, it is lost, as extending infinitely beyond its ken. Come, attempt this arithmetic of *Infinities*, and exhaust the power of numbers : let millions of millions of ages begin the vast computation ; multiply these by the stars of heaven ; by the particles of dust in this huge globe of earth ; by the drops of water in all the vast oceans, rivers, lakes, and springs, that are spread over the globe ; by all the thoughts that have arisen 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

• ADDISON.

to those of a new-born infant, or an embryo in the womb. Still will you bloom in immortal youth, and are as far from an end as in the first moment of your existence. O Sirs, methinks it may startle us to view our future selves, so changed, so improved, removed into such different regions, associated with such strange unacquainted beings, and fixt in such different circumstances of glory or terror, of happiness or misery.

Men of great projects and sanguine hopes are apt to sit and pause, and take an imaginary survey of what they will do, and what they will be in the progress of life. But then Death, like an apparition, starts up before them, and threatens to cut them off in the midst of their pursuit. But here no Death threatens to extinguish your being, or snap the thread of your existence; but it runs on in one continued everlasting tenor. What a vast inheritance is this, inalienably entailed upon every child of *Adam*? What importance, what value, does this consideration give to that neglected thing the *soul*? What an awful Being is it? Immortality! What emphasis, what grandeur in the sound? Immortality is so vast an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinity to any thing to which it is annexed, however insignificant in other respects; and on the other hand, the want of this would degrade the most exalted being into a trifle. The highest angel, if the creature of a day, or of a thousand years; what would he be? A fading
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ing 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 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
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the grand concern of an Immortal, and in comparison of it, it does not deserve one thought, what will become of me while in this vanishing phantom of a world. For consider, your immortality will not be a state of Insensibility, without pleasure or pain; you will not draw out an useless inactive existence in an eternal stupor, or a dead sleep. But your souls will be active as long as they exist; and as I have repeatedly observed, still retain all their capacities; nay, their capacities will perpetually enlarge with an eternal growth, and 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 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 besides they are not immortal as your souls are. If these are your portion, what will you do for happiness millions of ages hence, when all these are fled away like a vapour? Are you provided with a happiness which will last as long as your souls will live to crave it? Have you an interest in God? Are you prepared for the fruition of the heavenly state? Do you delight in God above all? Have you a relish for the refined pleasures of religion? Is the supreme good the principal object of your desire? Do you now
accustom

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 upon 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 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
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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 faint, 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 region of spirits. There it now dwells. And what amazing scenes now present themselves to his view? what strange, unknown Beings does he now converse with? There also, my Brethren, you and I must ere long be. We too must be initiated into those grand mysteries of the invisible world, and mingle in this assembly of strangers. We must share with Angels in their bliss and glory, or with Devils in their agonies and terrors. And our eternal doom shall be according to our present character, and the improvement we make of our opportunities for preparation.

And do you, Sirs, make it your main concern to secure a happy Immortality? Do you live as expectants of Eternity? Or do you live as though this world were to be your eternal residence, and as if your bodies, not your souls, were immortal? Does your conscience approve of such conduct? Do you really think it is better for you upon the whole, to commence fashionably wicked, or perhaps 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

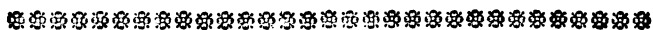
model built for you in a religious education? Which do you think you will approve of in the hour of death, that honest hour when things begin to appear in a true light? And of which think ye will you be able to give the most comfortable account at the supreme tribunal? Brethren, form an impartial judgment 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!*






S E R M O N XXVIII.

JESUS CHRIST the only Foundation.



I S A I A H 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.*

 HE 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
N 4 them

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

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 *Affyrians*, 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, would keep off the deluge of wrath, so that it should not come to them, much less overwhelm them; and they were as secure as if they had made "a covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave *," not to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies," that is, what the prophet calls *lies* "our refuge;" and under what he calls *falsehood* have we hid ourselves, (*ver.* 15.) It is in this connection my text is introduced; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which

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,” “ There-
 “ fore 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 com-
 “ fort 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 your guilty
 “ land.” “ He that believeth shall not make
 “ haste :” that is, “ He that trusts in this re-
 “ fuge shall not be struck into a distracted
 “ hurry and consternation upon the sudden
 “ appearance of these calamities. He shall
 “ not, like persons surprised with unexpected
 “ danger, fly in a wild haste to improper
 “ means for his safety, and thus throw himself
 “ into destruction by his ill-advised precipitant
 “ attempts to keep out of it ; but he shall be
 “ calm and serene, and have presence of mind
 “ to take the most proper measures for his de-
 “ liverance.” 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

“ 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 annulled, 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 the primary sense of the context; and thus, it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. In this view it is very applicable to us, in the present state of our country and nation, when the enemy is like to break in like a flood upon us. But I must add, that it is very likely that even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to JESUS CHRIST. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words when they are applied to any other; and the connection will admit

admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus: " Since the refuge of finners 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 it is contained in the scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-
 " stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth
 " on him shall not be confounded (x)." Taking the passage in this evangelical sense, the general meaning is to this purpose:— The LORD JESUS is represented as a tried, precious,
 and

(x) 1 Peter ii. 4, 6.

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 upon 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 immovable 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, and 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

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 fabrick must endure long, for our souls will exist forever; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement forever. The fabrick 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 fabrick 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

blend cities, kingdoms, plains and mountains, seas and dry land, kings and beggars, in one vast heap of promiscuous ruin. Or, to shift the metaphor according to the emphatical variety in my text, the fiery deluge of divine vengeance which has been gathering and swelling for thousands of years, but has been, as it were, restrained and kept within bounds by divine patience, shall then rise so high as to burst through all restraints, and overwhelm the guilty globe, and turn it into an universal ocean of liquid fire. This resistless torrent shall sweep away all the refuges of lies, and them that trusted in them, into the gulph of remediless destruction. We, my Brethren, shall be concerned in this universal catastrophe of nature; and where shall we find a support to bear us up in this tremendous day? Where shall we find a rock to build upon, that we may be able to stand the shock, and remain safe and unmoved in the wreck of dissolving worlds? What can support the fabrick 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 quick-

quick-sand 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 now 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.

I. It is a *stone*: a stone for solidity, stability and durability. "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 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

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

of his people that build their hopes on him, and render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm immoveable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal All upon this rock; it will stand 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 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

foundation that now stands as firm under *Adam*, *Abel*, and *Abraham*, as the first moment they ventured their dependance 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 (z)?" 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,

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and

(z) Matt. xxvii. 46.

and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

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

But

But I must farther observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of "a *tried* stone," it may be rendered "a stone of *trial* †;" or, "a *trying* stone:" that is, this is the true Touch-stone of mens characters. It is this, that above all other things discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose JESUS CHRIST to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring forward and embrace him as a Saviour, they are true subjects to the King of heaven; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to JESUS CHRIST as a Saviour, is not a single command of GOD, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole Law and Gospel; it is the grand capital precept; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of heaven towards the 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;

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but

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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.

righteousness. Nay, instead of making him the foundation of their hopes, they made him a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (a);" and they stumbled and fell into destruction. "CHRIST" crucified, says the apostle, is to the Jews a "stumbling-block (b)." This text made strange discoveries also in the *heathen* world. Many of the sages of *Greece* and *Rome* had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue; they gloried in it themselves, and they were admired and celebrated by the populace. But when this stone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud disdain, and thought it much more safe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of One that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touchstone be applied likewise to the men of this generation, and it will discover a great many counterfeits. You will find some who have an amiable ingratiating conduct, who are temperate, just, charitable, and shine with the appearance of many virtues. You will find others who are very punctual in the duties of religion; they are frequent in prayer, and strict attendants upon all the solemnities of divine worship: all this looks well. But tell them that all this is no sufficient ground for their hopes of the divine acceptance; nay, that they must renounce

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all

(a) Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Peter ii. 8.

(b) 1 Cor. i. 23.

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 (c)." The secret thoughts, reasonings, † and dispositions of many hearts, that were before unsuspected, are revealed by this trial. And I wish it may not make very ungrateful discoveries among you.

As this is a *trying* stone with regard to mens present *characters*, so it will be also as to their final

(c) Luke ii. 34,35.

† διαλογισμοί.

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 fabrick 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 descend- " ed, and the floods came, and the winds blew, " and beat upon that house, and it fell, and " great was the fall of it (d)." 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 of- " fices. In these and in all respects greater " than *Jonah*,—wiser than *Solomon*,—fairer than

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" the

(d) Matt. vii. 24.—27.

“ 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 cloathed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In short, all moral excellency, divine and human, created and uncreated, center in him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his “ *beloved* Son in whom he is “ well pleased,” his elect in whom his soul delighteth. He is precious to angels; “ *Worthy* “ is the Lamb that was slain,” is their eternal song. He is dear to all good men in all ages. “ To you therefore that believe he is precious,” says St *Peter* (e). 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

(e) 1 Peter ii. 7.

“ not corruptible things, such as silver and gold, says St *Peter*, but his own precious blood (*f*).” In short, he is altogether lovely, altogether precious. Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious stones in the universe, cannot represent his worth. O that a thoughtless world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then say to his friends, “ Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?” I enlarge upon this article with the more pleasure, as I doubt not but the experience of several among you can affix your Amen to what I say, and to much more. I am now but complying with a 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

(*f*) 1 Peter i. 18, 19.

* Mr BENJAMIN FORPITT of *London*.

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 founda-
 tion is sure, because it is of divine appointment.
 “ Behold,” says the LORD GOD, who has autho-
 rity to make the appointment, “ behold I lay in
 “ Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone,
 “ a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.” It
 is also sure because of the extent of his power,
 the perfection of his righteousness, and the eter-
 nity of his existence. But these I have already
 touched upon. Indeed his excellencies are so
 sweetly blended and complicated, like the co-
 lours 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 surprize 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

† מוסר מוסר

“ 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 stile 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 (g).” 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

(g) Ephes. ii. 14, 20—22.

* So the original word, *συναμολογημένη*.

spiritual building. Hence he is elsewhere repeatedly called the *chief* corner-stone, and the *head of the corner* (b). 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

(b) Matt. xxi. 42. Psalm cxviii. 22. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17. Acts iv. 11. 1 Peter ii. 7. Ephes. ii. 20.

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

(b) 1 Cor. iii. 11.

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 upon 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 shall 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

“ 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 in-
 spected: 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 incum-
 brances, and you never can be built up again:
 the temple of God will then be compleat, and
 no new stones shall be added to it forever.
 Therefore now is the time to discover funda-
 mental 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 now 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 never will
 build upon CHRIST while you can build any
 where else with hopes of safety. If you have
 ever fled to him as your hiding-place you have
 seen

† חסות signifies *hope*, as well as *refuge*.

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 load-stone it had a strong attraction upon you, and you were effectually drawn to it. You need

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 (i)."
This is the assertion of an apostle concerning all believers without exception. And shall I conclude this is the real sentiment of all in this assembly concerning CHRIST? Shall I conclude it, Brethren? O! shall I allow myself to be so happy? Does your conscience tell you there is ground for your saying that CHRIST is precious to you. Alas! is it not quite the reverse with many of you?

3. Where is your habitual 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

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whatever

(i) 1 Peter ii. 7.

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 un sanctified 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 cornerstone which GOD has appointed, and built upon a quick-sand? 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 never so high the fabrick 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

“ 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 (k).
 “ 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 (l).” 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 never so high a deluge; let temptations
 make never 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

(k) *Isai.* viii. 14.

(l) *1 Peter* ii. 7, 8.

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 your guilt intolerable, and are you ready to sink under it? Or are you sinking under a load of sorrow? Whatever be the burden cast it upon the LORD, and he will sustain you. This foundation is able to bear you up, however great the pressure. Come ye that are weary and heavy laden, come, and build your hopes and place your rest here. O! what joyful tidings are these! I hope they will prove a word in season to some soul that is weary.

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

Behold, ye poor sinking souls, behold with wonder and gratitude: here is a sure foundation for you; cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it, and it will support you. Say no more, "Alas! I must sink 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,

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 compleat and adorn the super-structure; but when they are laid at the bottom of all they will prove but a quicksand.

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

Behold, ye glorious Angels, behold the firm foundation divine Love has laid for the salvation of guilty worms. It is as firm as that on which you stand. Are the affairs of mortals beneath your notice? No, we are concerned with *JESUS* too who is your head; and our connection with him must give us an importance in your view. Therefore join with us in cele-

brating the praises of this Foundation. This precious Stone appears to you in all its splendors : its brilliancy dazzles your admiring eyes. We also admire it as far as we know it ; but to us it is like a foundation laid deep under ground, that supports us though we see it not. When shall we be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly *Zion*, where it will appear full to our view, and be the object of our delightful contemplation for ever and ever !



SERMON



S E R M O N XXIX.

The Necessity and Excellence of
Family-Religion.



I T I M O T H Y 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.



TH E 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 humane 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 pre-suppose 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

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 expences of the church, *ver.* 3, 9, 10. But if they were such widows as had children or nephews, then he orders that they should be maintained by these their relatives, and that the charge should not fall upon the church, *ver.* 4, 16.

He supposes that the relatives of some of them might be unwilling to put themselves to this expence, and to engage such to their duty, he in the text exposes the unnatural wickedness of neglecting it. " If any man 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

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

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

"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 pre-emptorily conclude yourselves innocent, let me ask you, Are your domestics, your wives, children, and servants, nothing but material bodies?

(*m*) 2 Thess. iii. 10.

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 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

then must he be? He has more than denied the faith, however confidently he may profess it.

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

Several of you, my Hearers, I doubt not have long since formed and practised *Joshua's* resolution; "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (*n*)."
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 (*o*)."
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

(*n*) *Josh.* xxiv. 15.

(*o*) *Psalms* cxviii. 15.

“ 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 obligations to this duty, should notwithstanding live in the wilful and habitual neglect of it. For persons to omit it for want of instruction about its obligation might be very consistent with a tender conscience, and nothing would be necessary to bring such to the practice, but to convince them it is their duty, which it is very easy to do; but to omit Family-religion in our circumstances, my Brethren, discovers such a stupid indifferency about religion, or so inveterate an aversion to it, that it is lamentably doubtful whether a conviction of the duty will determine you to the practice of it. When persons have long habituated themselves to sin against light, it is hard to take any effectual measures to deal with them. All that the Ministers

nisters of the Gospel can do, is to convince their understandings, to persuade, to exhort, to invite, to threaten, but such are accustomed to resist these means, and now they find it no great difficulty to master them. I therefore make this attempt with discouragement, and hardly hope to succeed with such of you as have hitherto obstinately fought against conviction; and the attempt is still the more melancholy as I know, that if what shall be offered does not prevail upon you to make conscience of Family-religion, the additional light you may receive will but render you more inexcusable, encrease your guilt, and consequently your punishment. This is one of the tremendous consequences of the ministry of this neglected, disregarded gospel, that may strike ministers and people with a solemn horror. However I am not without hopes of success with some of you, who have not yet been cursed with an horrid victory over your consciences. I hope that when you are more fully convinced of this duty you will immediately begin the practice of it. But though I had no expectation of success, I am still obliged to make the attempt, Though nothing can animate a Minister more than the prospect of success, yet he is not to regulate his conduct wholly according to this prospect. He must labour to deliver his own soul by warning even such as may not regard it. He must declare the whole counsel of God, whether they hear or whether they forbear. I shall therefore

therefore, my dear Brethren, endeavour honestly this day to bring you to *Joshua's* resolution, " that you and your houses will serve the " LORD ;" and let him who is hardy enough to despise it prepare to answer for it at the supreme tribunal, for he despiseth not man, but GOD.

I would not have you perform any thing as a duty till you have sufficient means to convince you that it is a duty ; and I would not confine you to an 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 from Scripture-Revelation.

II. Shew in what seasons, or how frequently Family-religion should be stately 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

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,

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 (*p*):" that is, he still deserves more blessing and praise than we can give him. Hence it follows, that our capacity is the measure of our obligation to serve him; that is, in whatever capacity we are that admits of service to him, we are bound to perform all that service to him, because he justly deserves it all. Now we are capable of worshipping him as a family, for family-devotion, you must own, is a thing possible in itself, therefore we are bound to worship him in that capacity. If any of you deny this, do but put your denial into plain words, and you must shudder at yourselves: it must stand thus, "I

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" must

(*p*) Nehem. ix. 5.

“ must own that such is the excellency of the
 “ Deity, that he has a right to all the homage
 “ which I can pay him in every capacity ; yet
 “ I owe him none, I will pay him none in the
 “ capacity of an head of a family. I own I
 “ owe him worship from myself as an indivi-
 “ dual, but my family as such shall have no-
 “ thing 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 in-
 clined us to it, and surely this capacity ought
 to be improved for religious purposes. Is there
 any of you so hardy as to say, “ Though God
 “ has made me a sociable creature, yet I owe
 “ him no worship as such, and will pay him
 “ none ?” You may as well say, “ Though he
 “ formed me a man, and endowed me with
 “ powers to serve him, yet as a man or an
 “ individual, I will not serve him.” And what
 is this but to renounce all obligations to God,
 and to cut yourselves off from all connection
 with him ? Now if your social nature lays you
 under an obligation to social religion, then it
 must oblige you to Family-religion, for a fa-
 mily 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

place in other societies) and here it ought still to continue.

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

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from

(q) 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

from them to him? You also every moment stand in need of many 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 him no wor-
 “ ship, shall serve him no more than if we had
 “ no concern with him.” Can you venture upon such a declaration as this?

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

That families were founded by God may be inferred from the creation of different sexes, the institution of Marriage, and the various relations among mankind, and from the universal agency of his providence (*r*).

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

(*r*) Psalm lxxviii. 6, and cxiii. 9.

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 (*f*)?" 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

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feed

(*f*) Mal. ii. 15.

seed be raised in so corrupt a soil? Therefore if you omit this duty, you live in families in direct opposition to the end of the institution, and deny your domestics the greatest advantage they can enjoy as members of a family; a consideration which leads me to another argument.

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

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

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

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 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 to 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

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continue

continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives.

4. You are to consider Family-religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace. How great the privilege to hold a daily intercourse with heaven in our dwellings! to have our houses converted into temples for that adorable Deity whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain! to mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! to vent the overflowings of gratitude! to spread the favour 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 to 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 upon your family, and told you, "I will accept of worship from the families around you, 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

How would you tremble if God had marked your families with such a brand of reprobation? And will you put this brand upon them with your own hand? Will you deny that privilege to your families which would strike you with horror if God had denied it? Will you affect such an horrid singularity, that when other families are admitted into 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 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 (t); and such were *Micah's* (v). 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

(t) Gen. xxxi. 34.

(v) Judges xvii. 4, 5.

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. (x)"

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,

(x) Gen. xviii. 16, 18.

archs, particularly in *Gen.* xxvi. 25. and *Gen.* xxxv. 1, 3. and *Gen.* 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* (y).

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 (z). 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 (a)."

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 (b).

These illustrious patterns we find under the dark dispensation of the old Testament. How much more zealous should we be who enjoy the

(y) *Job* i. 5.(z) *2 Sam.* vi. 20.(a) *Psalms* ci. 2.(b) *Dan.* vi. 10.

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 (c); by which he probably means the religious families of *Nymphas*, and that pious pair *Priscilla* and *Aquila*. And *Cornelius* is an instance peculiarly observable, who, though an heathen and ignorant of the coming of CHRIST, "feared GOD (an expression that often signifies to worship GOD) with " all his house; and prayed unto GOD alway;" that is, at all proper seasons. And when a divine messenger was sent to him to direct him to send for *Peter*, we are told he was praying in his house; that is, with his domestics, as the word often signifies (d).

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,

(c) Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15.

(d) Acts x. 2, 30.

too, for every good thing has been abused by hypocrites to disguise their secret villainy.

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

The Apostle *Paul*, having given various directions about relative duties in families, subjoins, "Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving (e)." St *Peter* exhorts "husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, &c.—that their prayers might not be hindered (f);" 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 (g);" and surely Family-prayer must be included in these comprehensive terms.

As

(e) Col. iv. 2.

(f) 1 Pet. iii. 7.

(g) Ephes. vi. 18.

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 fittest in thine house (b)." They were commanded to instruct their domestics in the nature and design of the ordinances of that dispensation, particularly the passover (i). And the *Psalmist* mentions all the wonderful works of God as what ought to be taught by parents to children from age to age (k). 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 (l)," and to "teach and admonish one another (m)." How much more then is it our duty to teach and admonish and exhort our families, which are more particularly intrusted to our care?

As for Family-praise it is a duty because thanksgiving is so often joined with prayer in scripture (n), and psalmody must be owned the most proper method of expressing thankfulness by such as own it a part of divine worship.

(b) Deut. vi. 6, 7. and xi. 19.

(i) Exod. xii. 26, 27.

(k) Psalm lxxviii. 3-7. (l) Heb. iii. 13. (m) Col. iii. 16.

(n) Phil. iv. 6. Col. iv. 2. 1 Thess. v. 17, 18.

ship. "The voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous (o)." 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 to 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

(o) Psalm cxviii. 15.

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 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* (*p*)," 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
" on

(*p*) 1 Kings xiv. 13.

" on thy name (q)." Observe here, that you are ranked with *heathens* that know not GOD, and that the divine fury is imprecated upon you, and it shall fall, it shall fall speedily upon your devoted heads and your prayerless families, unless you fly out of its reach by flying to the LORD in earnest supplications in your houses. Will you rather run the venture, will you rather destroy yourselves and your domestics too, than spend a quarter or half an hour morning and evening in the most manly, noble, heavenly, evangelical exercises of devotion? Surely you are not so hardy, surely you are not so averse to GOD, and careless about your own welfare, and that of your dearest relatives and domestics? I request, I beg, I adjure you by your regard to the authority of GOD, by your concern for your own salvation and that of your families, by the regard you bear to the interests of Religion in this place, and your poor Minister, that this may be the happy evening from whence you may date the worship of GOD in your houses; that this may be the blessed æra from which you and your houses will serve the LORD,

I proceed,

II. To shew in what seasons or how frequently Family-religion should be stately performed.

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R

Now

(q) Jer. x. 25.

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 sacri-
 " fice (r)." He elsewhere resolves, "Every
 " day will I bless thee (f)." Yea, his devo-
 " tion was so extraordinary that he resolves,
 " Evening and morning, and at noon will I
 " pray, and cry aloud (t)." So *Daniel* perform-
 ed 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-kind-
 " nefs in the morning, and thy faithfulness
 " every night (v)." Farther, Reason directs
 us to morning and evening as the proper sea-
 son 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 with-
 out imploring the divine blessing upon them?
 And as to the evening, how can you venture to
 sleep

(r) Psalm cxli. 2.

(f) Psalm cxlv. 2.

(t) Psalm lv. 17.

(v) Psalm xcii. 1, 2.

sleep without committing yourselfs 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 (x) ; " that is, seek him under that notion ; and what time so proper for this as evening and morning?

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

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

In all societies there must be a subordination, and particularly in families, and it is the place of the head of such societies to rule and direct.

R 2

Particularly

(x) Amos v. 8.

Particularly it belongs to the head of a family, when there is no fitter person present, to perform worship in it, and 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

his house to compel them, at least externally, to serve the LORD (*y*); 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

R 3

for

(*y*) Josh. xxiv. 15.

for your souls? if you think so, what is become of your understandings?

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

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

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

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

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 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?

R 4

Will

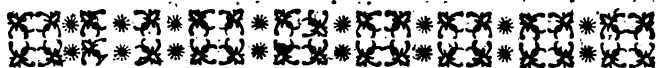
Will you never become religious, till you can obtain the applause of the wicked for being so? then you will never be religious at all.

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




S E R M O N X X X .

The Rule of Equity.



M A T T H E W V I I . 1 2 .

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.

 H R I S T I A N I T Y is not a fragment, but a compleat system of religion; and it is intended and adapted to make us good *entirely* and *throughout*: it teaches us a proper conduct and temper towards *every* Being with whom we have any connection, particularly towards God and our fellow-Men. A Christian is a compleat, 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;

ship; 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

" conscience void of offence towards God and
" towards men." I have made it the great ob-
ject of my ministry among you to bring you
to pay a proper regard to God, as he has re-
vealed 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 gos-
pel 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 perti-
nent or copious than that I have read to you,
which is a fundamental and most comprehen-
sive 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

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

V. 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

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

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

son why another should behave in such a manner to me, there is the very same reason that I should behave in the same manner towards him, because he is to himself what I am to myself, as near, as dear, as important. Is it reasonable my neighbour should make no incroachments upon my property? It is equally reasonable that I should not encroach upon his, for his property is as much his, as my property is mine. Do I expect my neighbour should observe the rules of justice in his dealings with me? then certainly I should observe them in my dealings with him; for he has as good a right to be treated according to these rules by me, as I have to be so treated by him. If it is reasonable that he should be tender of my good name, it is equally reasonable that I should be tender of his. If he should relieve me in my calamities, certainly I am equally bound to relieve him when in the same circumstances. And the reason is plain; he is to himself what I am to myself, and he is to me what I am to him, and therefore I am obliged to treat him as I would justly expect he would treat me; we are equal, and consequently our obligations are equal, and our duties mutual or reciprocal. Hence you see that this precept is the most reasonable thing in the world. My next business is,

III. To open the excellency of it.

And this appears, (1.) from its comprehensiveness: it includes all the social duties of life; it

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 to 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

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

(4.) Another excellency of this precept is, that it is plain and convictive. Common minds may be bewildered, instead of being guided, by an intricate tedious system of laws; but a man of the weakest understanding may easily perceive this rule. It is an appeal to his own sensations. "What would you expect or wish from others? How would you have them treat you?" Surely you cannot but know this: "well, treat them just in the same manner." This is also a most convictive rule; every man that thinks a little must immediately own that it is highly reasonable: consult your own consciences, and they will tell you, you

VOL. III. S need

need no other adviser, and you are self-condemned if you violate this precept. It is written upon your hearts in illustrious indelible characters: it shines and sparkles there, like the *Urim* and *Thummim* on the breast of *Aaron*.

I am,

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

Would you desire that another should love you, be ready to serve you, and do you all the kind offices in his power? Do you expect your neighbour should rejoice in your prosperity, sympathize with you in affliction, promote your happiness, and relieve you in distress? Would you have him observe the rules of strict justice in dealing with you? Would you have him tender of your reputation, ready to put the kindest construction upon your actions, and unwilling to believe or spread a bad report concerning you? Do you desire he should direct you when mistaken, and labour to reclaim you from a dangerous course? In short, do you think it reasonable he should do all in his power for your good, in soul, body, and estate? Are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others towards you?

III. Then

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 behave towards you ? Consider and determine the matter ; and you will know how you should behave towards your servants. The same thing may be applied to Rulers and Subjects in general, to Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Neighbour and Neighbour.

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

S 2

others

• — Tu tibi legem dixisti.

others which you would not have them to do to you: treat every man as *another self*, as a part of the same human nature with yourself. How extravagant and ridiculous is it that you should be treated well by all mankind, and yet you be at liberty to treat them as you please? What are you? What a Being of mighty importance are you? Is not another as dear to himself as you are to yourself? Are not his rights as sacred and inviolable as yours? How come you to be entitled to an exemption from the common laws of human nature? Be it known to you, you are as firmly bound by them as any of your species.

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

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

The first is, That all our good offices to mankind should proceed not only from benevolence to them, but from a regard to the divine authority, which obliges us to these duties. We should do these things not only *as* they are commanded, but *because* they are commanded.

We

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 (a)."

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

S 3

more

(a) Col. iii. 23.

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 (a), 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 compleat 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

(a) 1 John ii. 9.

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 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 their 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 contentious, as fordid, and covetous as others, and perhaps more so, what will they think of his religion? Will they not think it a cloak for his knavery, and a stratagem to accomplish his own wicked designs? And thus are they hardened in impiety, and confirmed in their neglect of all religion. My Brethren, it is incredible what injury the Christian religion has received from this quarter: the bad lives of professors is the common objection against it in the mouths of *Heathens, Jews, Turks, and Infidels* among ourselves. There is indeed no real force in the objection: you may as well say that all moral honesty is but villainy, because many that 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 order to excuse or defend their own neglect of it; and as they can find no objection against religion in itself, they fall foul of its professors: and as it is evident that their visible conduct is good, they would find

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 shew 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

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 even an *heathen* that it is a difference 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

inform you what a fatal obstruction the bad lives of its professors is to the propagation of our holy religion. Why should they embrace a religion which leaves the morals of its followers as bad or worse than their own? This enquiry the light of nature teaches them to make, and it is really hard to answer it satisfactorily. When a *Turk* could turn upon a Christian who insinuated that he lied, with this reprimand, "What! do you think I am a Christian that I should lie?" When an *Indian* can tell a Christian missionary, "If your religion be so much better than ours, as you say it is, how comes it that you white people are no better than we? Nay, you have taught us many vices which we knew nothing of till our acquaintance with you?" I say, when *Turks* and *Heathens* can make such repartees, is there any prospect that Christianity should be received among them? Alas! no. The same thing may be applied to those careless, vicious, impious multitudes among ourselves, who do indeed usurp the name of Christians; but can hardly be said to make any profession of Christianity, as their whole lives are openly and avowedly contrary to it. If all who make a stricter profession were to live in character, it would soon afford conviction to these profane sinners: they could not but see the difference, and that it is a shocking difference for the worse on their side. And now, my Brethren, shall our holy religion suffer, shall nations be prejudiced

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

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 into 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

of the duties we owe to them will exclude men from the kingdom of God. Of this we have abundant evidence in scripture. I need only refer you to two comprehensive passages, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. in which you see that all unrighteousness, hatred, variance, strife, envy, extortion, and the like, which are offences against men, will as certainly shut the gates of heaven against you as Idolatry or Heresies, which are sins against God. The most plausible experiences, the greatest diligence and zeal in devotion, and the most promising profession of religion will never bring you to heaven, though absolutely necessary in their place, unless you also abound in good works towards men. And shall this argument have no weight with you? Is your eternal salvation an insignificant thing with you? Are you proof against the terrors of everlasting destruction? If you would enjoy the one, and escape the other, "Do to others what you would have them do to you."

I shall conclude with one or two reflections.

(1.) If this be the rule of our conduct, alas! how little true morality is there in the world? Men seem to act as if they were entirely detached from one another, and had no connection, or were not at all concerned to promote each other's interest. Self-interest is their pursuit, and self-love their ruling passion; if that be but
 "promoted,

promoted, and this gratified, they have little or no concern besides. "Let their neighbours look to themselves, they have no business with them." If I shall only mention one particular case under this general rule, namely, Commerce and Bargaining, what a scene of iniquity would it open! Men seem to make this their rule, To get as much for what they sell, and give as little for what they buy, *as they can*; they hardly ever think what the real value of the thing is, and whether the other party has a tolerable bargain of it: "Let him look, say they, to that, it is none of their care." Alas! my Brethren, where are the laws of justice and charity, when men behave in this manner, and yet, alas! how common is such a conduct in the commercial world!

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

“ whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are
“ pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatso-
“ ever things are of good report; if there be
“ any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us
“ think on these things (b).”

(b) Phil. iv. 8.



SERMON



S E R M O N XXXI.

Dedication to G O D argued from
redeeming Mercy.



I CORINTHIANS 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 my 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, free men as well as slaves; I enter a claim to you all as God's right, and not your
VOL. III. T own:

† The discourse is said by the Author to be a Sermon preparatory to the Lord's Supper.

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 (c)?" for have you not refused to employ your tongues for the honour of God, and spoke what you pleased, without any controul from his law? Have you not said by your practice, what *Pharaoh* was bold and plain enough to speak out in words, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice (d)?" 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,

(c) Psalm xii. 4.

(d) Exod. v. 2.

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

The Apostle speaks of it with an air of surprise and horror, that any under the profession of Christianity should be so stupid as not to

know and acknowledge that they are not their own, but God's. "What! says he, know ye not—that you 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 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

vine

vine 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 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 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 de-
 “ pendent upon, and subordinate to thee.”

Again, the providence of God towards you has made you his absolute property, and on this footing he claims your service. You could no more support yourselves in being, than you could give being to yourselves at first. Who but he has preserved you alive for so many months and years ; preserved you, so frail and precarious, surrounded with so many dangers, and exposed to so many wants ? Whose earth have you trod upon ? Whose air have you breathed in ? Whose creatures have you fed upon ? “ The earth is the LORD’s and the ful-
 “ nefs thereof (e) ” ; and consequently all the supports and enjoyments, all the necessaries and comforts of life are his. Shew me the mercy, if you can, which you created. Mention the moment, if you can, in which you supported your own life, independently of the Almighty. Shew me that property of yours, if you can, which is so dependent upon you as you are upon him. This moment, if he should withdraw his supporting hand, you would instantaneously become as entirely nothing, as you were ten thousand years ago. If he should now strip you of all that is his, and only leave you what is originally your own, he would leave you
 nothing

(e) Psalm xxiv. 1.

nothing at all. The earth and all its productions, the air, the light, and your very being would be entirely vanished, and your place would be no more known in the creation. O! that you knew, O! that you felt, O! that you practically acknowledged how entirely you are dependent upon God! And dare you call yourselves your own when you cannot support yourselves in being or in happiness one moment? O! renounce so haughty a claim, and this day give up yourselves to God as his. A son honoureth his father: and since God is your father where is his honour? The dull ox knows his owner, and the stupid ass his master's crib; and will not you know and acknowledge your divine Benefactor and Preserver? He has nourished and brought you up as his children; and dare you rebel against him?

Thus you see the divine right to you may be made good upon the footing of creation and providence. But this is not the foundation of right which the Apostle here has in view, or which I would chiefly insist upon. The ground of claim 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 has 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 (f).” 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 (g).” 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 be easily 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

(f) 1 Peter i. 18, 19.

(g) Acts xx. 28.

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 fordid slavery to its usurped jurisdiction. Sin has still retained its power over fallen angels: through the space of at least near 6000 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*: for these, but not for the former, he purchased sanctifying grace, and this makes the difference. While
the

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 (*b*).^a 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 (*i*).^a " *JESUS* delivered us from the wrath to come (*k*).^a 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 compleat 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

(*b*) 1 Peter i. 18, 19.

(*i*) Heb. ix. 12.

(*k*) 1 Theff. i. 10.

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 (l)." "These are they which were redeemed from the earth, and from among men, as first-fruits unto GOD and the lamb (m)."

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 (n)." And himself has told us, "The son of man came to give his life a ransom for

(l) Rev. v. 9. (m) Rev. xiv. 3, 4. (n) 1 Tim. ii. 6.

"for many"^(o). 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"^(p). 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

(o) Matt. xx. 28.

(p) Rev. v. 9.

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 (*g*). " And again, " I will save him
 " from going down into the pit, for I have
 " found a ransom (*r*). " 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 (*f*). "
 " CHRIST has redeemed us from the curse of
 " the law, being made a curse for us (*t*). " 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 disobe-
 dience. 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 de-
 mands of the law are compleatly answered, so
 that now the prisoner is dismissed, the captive
 set free; set free upon the footing of a ransom,
 or

(*g*) Luke xv. 32.(*r*) Job xxxiii. 24.(*f*) Gal. iv. 4, 5.(*t*) Gal. iii. 13.

or for and in consideration of full payment made. By this a way is opened for the salvation of sinners upon the plan of the gospel; that is, by the righteousness of JESUS imputed to them upon their believing in him; imputed to such as have no personal merit, but must sink into everlasting condemnation, if dealt with according to the rigor of the law. Thus JESUS is made to believers *righteousness* and *redemption* (v); *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 (x), because, when we had forfeited our right to it, it was purchased for us by the blood of CHRIST. Believers are called a *peculiar* (y), or as the word is sometimes rendered, a *purchased* † people. The resurrection is called the *redemption* of our body (z), 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

(v) 1 Cor. i. 30.

* περιποίησις.

(x) Ephes. i. 14.

(y) 1 Peter ii. 9.

† λαός οὖς περιποίησις.

(z) Rom. viii. 23.

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 upon the footing of redemption, and therefore he has the strongest claim to their service. O shall not those favoured creatures whom he has redeemed from hell, redeemed from sin and Satan, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, devote themselves to their Deliverer as his servants 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 (a).”

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?

(a) 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

believers? 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

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 toward 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 connection of the Apostle's reasoning.

Here you are ready to enquire, What is it to glorify God with our souls and bodies? I answer in short, The connection intimates that it consists in using our souls and bodies, and all that we are and possess, not as our own, but 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

fore 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 (b)." "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 (c)."

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

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(b) 1 Cor. x. 31.

(c) Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

ply without any farther excitements. If not, come, and let us reason the matter together.

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

Again, consider, that while you have thus lived to yourselves, you have most unjustly usurped a right to what was not your own. Did you make yourselves? Did you redeem yourselves? Have you preserved yourselves? Is it you that gave virtue to the food to nourish you? Can you enable the earth to support you, or the air to

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 re-

deemed you. Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the Body, that must die and putrify. If you will not give up yourselves to God, whom will you choose for your patron? Will you yield yourselves to sin and Satan? Alas! that is but to submit to a merciless tyrant, who will employ you in sordid, cruel drudgery, and then reward you with death and destruction. Will you give up yourselves to the world, to riches, honours, and pleasures? Alas! what service can the world do you when it is laid in ashes by the universal flames of the last conflagration? What service can the world do you, when your unwilling souls are torn away from it, and must leave all its enjoyments for ever and ever? Will not the God of grace prove a better master to you? Has he ever forsaken any of his servants in their last extremity? No, he has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (*d*)."^(d) 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

(*d*) Heb. xiii, 5.

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 (e)." And O! what wretched out-casts, 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 judg-

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(e) Deut. xxxii. 19, 20.

* MR BAXTER'S *Practical Works*, Vol. IV. p. 714, 715.

" ment comes, enquiry will be made, whe-
 " ther you have lived as your *own*, or as *his*
 " that bought you. Then he will require his
 " own with improvement (*f*). " 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 to know whether you lived to GOD, or
 " to your flesh, 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 autho-
 " rity 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 hear-
 " ing 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 va-
 " nities; 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 su-
 " perfluities; so much in revengeful suits and
 " contentions; and so much was left behind
 " for

(*f*) Luke xix. 23.

“ for your posterity ; but where was my part ?
 “ How much was laid out for the furtherance of
 “ the gospel, or to relieve the souls or the bodies
 “ of your brethren ? I gave thee a family, and
 “ committed them to thy care to govern them
 “ for me ; but how didst thou perform it ? O
 “ Brethren, bethink you in time what answer
 “ to make to such questions. Your judge hath
 “ told you that your doom must then pass ac-
 “ cording as you have improved your talents
 “ for him ; and that he that hideth his talent,
 “ though he give GOD his own,” “ shall be cast
 “ into utter darkness, where is weeping and
 “ gnashing of teeth (g).” “ 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 my-
 “ self ? 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 unanswer-
 “ able

(g) Matt. xxv. 30.

“ able 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 con-
 “ vince 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 claim-
 ed 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 Free-
 men, 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 strug-
 “ gles and reluctances, we are at length will-
 “ ing, and can hold out no longer.” But
 hold!

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 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 yourselves to God, neither will you be able of yourselves

yourselfes to perform your vow. Therefore be humble and self-diffident in this transaction. Entertain no sanguine expectations from yourselfes, 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 yourselfes 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 spi-
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rit 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 ake; 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

(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 by 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

“ 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

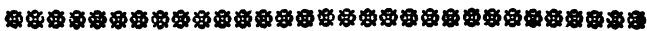
you that you shall surely perish, shall perish by the hand of divine justice as wilful rebels against the highest authority, and as insolently and ungratefully "denying the LORD that bought them." Think on your dreadful doom, and let your hearts meditate terror, till you be delivered from it by a voluntary 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 acknow-
 " ledging 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?"

S E R M O N



S E R M O N XXXII.

The Christian Feast.



I CORINTHIANS 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.



S 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 by 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.

VOL. III.

X

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Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude, yet it is justly supposed to have a particular reference to this institution, which has the same place under the gospel-dispensation, which the Passover had under the law. *St Paul* had very naturally glided into the stile of the Jewish law concerning the paschal supper, in the directions he had been giving concerning a scandalous member of the *Corinthian* church; and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity, when he comes to speak of the gospel-dispensation, and particularly of the LORD's supper. He had directed the church of *Corinth* to cast the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, because if they should tolerate such a corrupt member among them, it would tend to corrupt the whole society. Wickedness is of a spreading infectious nature, and the indulgence of it in one instance may occasion extensive mischief; for, says he, "Know ye not that a little leaven" ferments and diffuses itself, till at length it has "leavened the whole lump?" just so one corrupt member in a church may spread a contagion through the whole. "Therefore purge out the old leaven;" cast out this scandalous offender, and labour also to purge your church and your own hearts from all corruption, that ye may be as a new, solid, and pure lump; for ye are more strongly bound to keep yourselves morally pure, and to guard your church against infection, than the

Jews

Jews were to abstain from all things mixed with leaven at the feast of the passover: for though that feast is no more to be observed, yet that which was signified by the paschal lamb is now come to pass; "CHRIST our passover is sacrificed for us," and the ordinance of his Supper is appointed as a sacred feast, in commemoration of him, and our deliverance by him, as the Passover was commemorative of the deliverance from *Egypt*, and the destroying angel. And this is a stronger reason for the moral 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, sowered our nature, and fermented through our frame; "neither with the leaven of malice or any kind of wickedness;" but renouncing our old temper and practice, and with hearts universally sanctified, and full of love and good-will to all mankind, let us religiously celebrate this gospel-feast with those dispositions which were signified by the unleavened bread, namely, "sincerity and truth."

It was the practice of the Jews, when the passover was approaching, to search every corner of their houses with lighted candles, that they might be sure there was no leaven to be found under their roofs. The Apostle probably alludes to that practice, and exhorts Chris-

tians to a like care in searching and purging their hearts, and the churches to which they belong, that they may be pure, and fit for partaking of so holy an ordinance.

My design is to shew you the principal ends of the institution of the LORD'S supper; and as I go along, to delineate the characters 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. As this method is agreeable to the nature of mankind, God has been pleased to use it in every age, and under every dispensation of Religion. The Tree of life was the sacrament of the first covenant, a sensible confirmation to *Adam* that he should obtain eternal life by his obedience. The Rainbow was appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with *Noah*, that the world

* *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,*

Quam quæ sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus.

HOR.

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." And 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

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 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 dependence upon *his* only ; who feel his love constraining them, and are determined to " live no more to themselves, but to him that " died for them and rose again."

Self-examination is a necessary preparative to this ordinance. " Let a man examine himself, " says the Apostle, and so let him eat of this " bread, and drink of this cup." Therefore, my Brethren, enquire whether this be your character ; if it be not, you have no right to this privilege. It is a shocking incongruity to pretend to commemorate the death of CHRIST without love to him, or penitential sorrows for those sins for which he died. Memorials of friendship and love-tokens are only for friends ;
and

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 leader, and to fight

• So HORACE uses it,

— Non ego perfidum

Dixi Sacramentum.

fight for their country, and never desert its cause.

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

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

This shews the peculiar propriety of this ordinance as following upon Baptism, especially with regard to those that were baptized in infancy,

† Notum est, Dilectissimi, charitati vestræ, quod milites seculi beneficia temporalia à temporalibus Dominis accepturi, priùs Sacramentis militaribus obligantur, & Dominis suis fidem se servaturos profitentur: quantò magis ergo æternò Regi militaturi, & æterna præmia percepturi, debent Sacramentis cœlestibus obligari, & fidem per quam ei placituri sunt, publicè profiteri?

AUGUST. Oper. Tom. x. p. 984.

cy, 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 that we should approve of what they did by our own personal act. Now the LORD'S Supper is an institution in which we may make their act our own, and acknowledge that we 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

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 (*b*)."
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

(*b*) Rom. iv. 11.

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 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

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 to-
" ken 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 ac-
" cording 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 trifle 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 hand-writing, his oath, his seal, to confirm

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

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

Hence this ordinance has been frequently and justly called *the communion*. And St Paul assures us it deserves the name (i). "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

(i) 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

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, &c.?" 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 way, first " be reconciled to thy brother, and then come " and offer thy gift (k)."

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

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Christians.

(k) Matt. v. 23, 24.

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

V. In

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 *Joh*n, is with the Father, and with his Son *JESUS CHRIST* (*i*)."
"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 (*k*). "And our bodies are the temples of the *Holy Ghost*, in which he resides (*l*)."
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
Y 2 "him (*m*)."

(*i*) 1 John i. 3.(*k*) 2 Cor. vi. 16.(*l*) 1 Cor. vi. 19.(*m*) John xiv. 23.

"him." 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 (*n*), 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 (*o*)."
 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

(*n*) Phil. iii. 10.(*o*) 1 Cor. iii. 21, ad fin.

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 [*παρρησία*] full liberty of speech and conversation with him. There under the elements of Bread and Wine he makes over to them his Body and Blood, and all the blessings purchased by his sufferings; and they receive them with eager desire; they cast their guilt and unworthiness upon him, and give themselves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them. There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciously acknowledges their title good. There is a solemn

Y 3

exchange

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

exchange made between them of guilt for righteousness, of misery for happiness, of the curse for a blessing, of life for death. CHRIST takes the evils upon himself and they cast them off themselves upon him; and he makes over the blessings to them, and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, and as it were, sitting down together at one table, like Husband and Wife, or Parent and Children, is a very proper emblem and representation. And I doubt not but some of you upon such occasions have enjoyed the pleasures of communion with him, which gives you an high esteem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design than is in the power of any language to afford.

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

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

“ 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 ex-
clude 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 constitu-
tion 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 with-
out 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 commem-
orate 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 ene-
mies ?

mies? 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 (*p*):" the thing is absurd and impracticable. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath CHRIST with *Belial*? or what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing (*q*)."
 As to public offences the Apostle gives this direction to *Timothy*, which is binding upon all the ministers of CHRIST, "Them that sin, that is, that sin publickly, rebuke before all, that others also may fear (*r*)."
 To the same purpose he speaks to *Titus*, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject (*s*)," 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

(*p*) 1 Cor. x. 21.(*q*) 2 Cor. vi. 14—17.(*r*) 1 Tim. v. 20.(*s*) Tit. iii. 10.

“ is a bad life.” As to private offences against a particular person, in which the church, as such, is not concerned, private measures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, till they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprized of it, and if he pay no regard to that authority, he is to be excluded from the society. This is according to CHRIST’s exprefs 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 pub-
 “ lican.” There is nothing more plain in scrip-
 ture than that scandalous members should be
 cast out of the church; and an excessive indul-
 gence is most severely censured. *St Paul* orders
Timothy to “ turn away from such as have the
 “ form of godliness, but deny the power there-
 “ of (*t*).” He lays the weight of his apostoli-
 cal 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 (*v*).” The churches of *Per-
 gamos* and *Thyatira* are severely threatened by
 CHRIST

(t) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

(v) 2 Theff. iii. 6.

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 (x).” And the church of *Ephesus* is commended for her strict discipline, and “ that she could not “ bear them that were evil, and had tried pretended apostles,” discovered and rejected them as impostors. But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies for abundant evidence of the necessity of this holy discipline. Here *St Paul* warmly rebukes the *Corinthian* church for allowing a scandalous member to continue in communion with them; and solemnly charges them to cast him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the god of this world. And this he strongly describes, in order to strike terror into the offender, as a *delivering him over to Satan*. He urges this wholesome severity as a proper expedient to bring the offender himself to repentance, and especially to keep their church pure. “ Know ye not “ that a little leaven leaveneth the whole “ lump?” And just so the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt the whole society. It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline that the primitive church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathens and idolaters. And it is the want of this that has so scandalously corrupted the generality of our

(x) Rev. ii. 14, &c.

our modern churches; whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess. Let not us imitate them, but pity and pray for them, lest we become a mere mass of corruption like them. The Apostle forbids not only all religious communion, but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more shy of them than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. "I wrote to you, says he, "not to company with fornicators: yet not "altogether with the fornicators of this world:" that is, "I do not mean that you should break "off all intercourse with the fornicators of this "world, who are professedly of the world, and "make no pretensions to Christianity; or "with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the "world:" all places are so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them without leaving human society 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 idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not to keep company with such a one, no not to eat." (1 Cor. v. ver. 10, 11.) Cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with such a one: do not make choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much

much less in the sacred feast of the LORD'S Supper.

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority to the faithful exercise of discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of mankind, yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make a compliment of the ordinances of CHRIST it is at our peril. It is therefore the most unreasonable 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 to restore themselves into the charity of their brethren whose hearts they have 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,

body, and worthy of their charity. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into some scandalous sin inconsistent with his profession, he does not so much as profess his repentance? It is only God that can pardon the sin, as it is done against him; but the church is also offended, and every society as well as particular person who is offended, has a right to demand satisfaction. Hence we are commanded to "confess our faults one to another (y)." 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 that in that sense they had power to forgive him) "that they should comfort him, and confirm their love towards him, lest he should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow (z)." 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 upon it, and I hope you will so remember it, as to render all instructions on this head needless hereafter.

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(y) James v. 16.

(z) 2 Cor. ii 7, 8.

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 forgotten 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

" 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
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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
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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 apostatize from your God? But I need not tell you that your strength is entirely from God: and I appeal to yourselves whether it be most likely you will obtain strength from him in the way of duty, or in the neglect of it? My Brethren, do you do your duty, and leave the consequence to him. Trust in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raise you up if you should fall. It is not his usual way to desert those that, sensible of their own weakness, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himself by promise that he will not do it; but you "shall be kept by his power through faith unto salvation (a);" and "he will never leave you nor forsake you (b)," 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.

I. 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 (c)."

(a) 1 Peter i. 5. (b) Heb. xiii. 5. (c) 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.

"self." Keep off, therefore, ye unholy sinners, lest the weight of this tremendous curse fall upon you and crush you to ruin.

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

3. How absurd is it for you to pretend friendship to CHRIST in this ordinance, when your hearts are not well-affected towards him? This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a seal, but what do you set your seal to, when you do not heartily and practically consent to the covenant of Grace? How can you hold communion with the saints when you are none of them? or with GOD when you neither know him, nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his servants, when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people when you belong to the camp of the gloomy god of this world? Will you act the part of *Judas* over again, and compliment CHRIST with a traiterous 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
 " faith, What hast thou to do, that thou should-
 " est take my covenant in thy mouth ; seeing
 " thou hatest instruction, and castest my words
 " behind thee ?—These things hast thou done,
 " and I kept silence : thou thoughtest I was
 " altogether such a one as thyself. But I will
 " reprove thee, and set them in order before
 " thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that for-
 " get 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 drunk in
 " thy presence? and thou hast taught in our
 " streets." The supreme Judge will, notwith-
 standing, pronounce the dreadful sentence up-
 on you, " Depart from me, all ye workers of
 " iniquity (*d*)."

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance, and in the use of which you might 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

(*d*) Luke xiii. 26, 27.

der 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 *Gomorrhah*, though their punishment will be intolerable, will be but slightly punished in comparison of you. A lost communicant!—One that went to hell with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Saviour, as it were, in his mouth!—O! methinks, such a one must be the most shocking sight in the infernal regions. How will lost angels, and lost heathens wonder and stare at you as an horrible 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 contentedly stay away. There are, no doubt, fundry 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.

i. 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
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can render you unfit. And is this a safe case? Can you contentedly rest in it? Alas! is there so much merit in your 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 be the place of your everlasting residence: and O! what will be the end of such a course! and how terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you that you have lived so many years in the world without affectionately commemorating that Saviour who died for you, without devoting yourselves to God, consenting to his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? O! is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in suffering so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by neglected? What can be a more aggravated wickedness?

4. This neglect plainly proves that you have no regard for JESUS CHRIST. You do perhaps still insist upon it that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love, " If ye love

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" me keep my commandments." Now this brings the matter to a short issue. There is no command in the whole Bible more plain than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the wilful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus. With what face then can you pretend that you love him? Your love is reprobated and will not stand the test.

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

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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 your not positively choosing CHRIST is virtually choosing the devil for your lord, and hell for your home. If you do stand to the act of your parents in dedicating you to GOD, come make it your own at his table. Such young guests would be an ornament to it: and O! that we may early see you there properly prepared!

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourselves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you list. Your obligations do not depend upon your consent. You were born the servants of God, and you will continue under obligations to be such in spite of you. Is he not the most excellent of Beings, your Creator, your Law-giver, 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

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 (e)?"

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

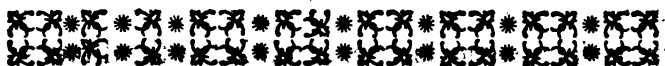
(e) Jer. v. 9.

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 mispent 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
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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.*



S E R M O N




S E R M O N XXXIII.

The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with G O D.



I J O H N 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. Blessed, 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.

 **T**HOUGH 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
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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, [*ποταπῆς*] 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
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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, to view the greatest exploit of divine 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
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not fully the glorious import of the title : they only know in general, that when their Father appears they " shall be like him," but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeness is : it doth not yet appear, even to themselves, what they shall be. Their liveliest imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will ere long be : they are utter strangers to their future selves. They know themselves only at present in their infancy ; but when these *little* children of God, these babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fulness of the stature of CHRIST, they will be prodigies to themselves, and mysteries which they cannot now conceive. In this world we are accustomed to little and obscure things, and our thoughts are like their objects ; we see nothing sufficiently glorious to suggest to us any proper images of the glory of the Sons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The splendor of the meridian Sun, the grandeur of Kings, and the parade of Nobles are but obscure shadows of the glory and magnificence of the meanest pious beggar, of the poorest *Lazarus* that ever languished upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven. The difference is greater than that between *Job* upon the dunghil, 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,
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we shall be conformed to him, when he appears to us in all his glory on the other side of death, and especially when he appears in the clouds in all the majesty of the universal Judge, when every eye shall see him: and though we should know no more than this in general, we may rest implicitly satisfied that we shall be inconceivably glorious and happy, since the perfection of our nature consists in conformity to God. We may be sure that that state which the Apostle here, by unerring inspiration, calls a likeness to God, the standard of all excellency, must be as perfect as our nature can bear. The Apostle having said, that "when he shall appear we shall be like him," subjoins, "for we shall see him as he is." This vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the *evidence*, or as the *cause* of our likeness to God when he shall appear. Considering it as an *evidence*, the meaning is, "It is evident that we shall be in some measure like to God when he appears, otherwise we could not bear the full vision of his glories; we could not see him and live." It is also evident the Apostle here speaks of the vision of God as an happiness, and the blessed privilege of his Sons: now to see God could afford no pleasure to such as are not *like* to him; they would be shocked and confounded at the sight, and shrink from it, and by how much the clearer the vision, by so much the more they would hate him, because by so much the more

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they would discover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a sufficient evidence of our likeness to God, that we can bear the vision of his naked perfections with pleasure, for none that are unlike to him can bear it. Considering the passage in the other view, which probably was what the Apostle intended, as the *cause* of likeness to him, it means, that the full and direct views of him will be transformative, and efficacious to change the beholders into his likeness, As the light shining upon glass renders it transparent, or as the sun diffuses its lustre into a diamond, and gives it an intrinsic radiancy, so the discoveries of the divine perfections will impress their image upon the minds they illuminate. Their views will not be superficial and speculative, nor attract an idle gaze, but they shall be vital, efficacious, and impressive, and no wonder if such views which we now know so little of should produce a perfection we can now so little conceive.

If the Sons of God are such strangers to the riches of their present title, and the dignity and glory of their future *selves*, no wonder a blind world should not know them. If it does not yet appear to themselves what they shall be, much less does it appear to others, who are strangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and therefore cannot discern his children by their resemblance to him. This the Apostle may intimate when he says,

“ It doth not appear, that is, it doth not appear

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" 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 (*f*). I shall,

I. Shew you what is the import of this 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. Shew 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 (*g*); for here

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(*f*) Mal. iii. ult.

(*g*) Luke iii. ult. Acts xvii. 28, 29.

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
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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 (*b*). "The God and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST" begets them again (*i*), and creates them *anew* (*k*), "so that old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new (*l*)." 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 (*m*)." And this is the declaration of infallible inspiration, that "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision;" that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewish or Christian Religion is of no avail to salvation, "but the new creature (*n*)."

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

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God

(*b*) John i. 12, 13.(*i*) 1 Peter i. 3.(*k*) Ephes. ii. 10.(*l*) 2 Cor. v. 17.(*m*) John iii. 3, 5.(*n*) Gal. vi. 15.

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

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 (o)." 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 (p).

Again, as the Children of God have liberty of address to 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 *Psalms* xci. and *Psalms* cxxi. and his tender compassion in *Psalms* ciii. 13. *Isai.* lxiii. 9. and in numberless passages that speak of "his bowels of mercy, his compassions, &c."

A a 4

Another

(o) Rom. viii. 14, 15, 26, 27. Heb. x. 22. 2 Cor. iii. 17.

(p) Gal. iv. 5, 6.

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, *Psalms* lxxxix. 30—34. *Heb.* xii. 5—11. and many of the Children of God have found reason to praise him for this wholesome severity, *Psalms* cxix. 67, 68, 71. Upon this principle St *James* exhorts them to "rejoice when they enter into divers temptations (g);" and St *Peter* tells them that they will befall them only "if need be (r)."

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 (f)." "If we are children, then we

(g) *James* i. 2.(r) 1 *Peter* i. 6.(f) 1 *Peter* i. 3, 4.

" we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs
 " with CHRIST (*t*)". And how vast their inheritance is you may learn from *Rev.* xxi. 7.
 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 dunghil, and set among the princes of heaven. No wonder the Apostle should exclaim, " Behold !
 " what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons
 " of God."

Thus I have briefly shewn you the glorious import of your relation, the Sons of God ; and you see it should be the greatest concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the Children of God you have been supernaturally begotten by him, as I observed before (*v*), and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honour him (*x*) ; you love him, fear to offend him, and chearfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulness ; you are partakers of his divine nature (*y*), 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

(*t*) *Rom.* viii. 16, 17. *Gal.* iv. 7.

(*v*) *James* i. 18.

(*x*) *Mal.* i. 6.

(*y*) 2 *Peter* i. 4.

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 (z)." 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 (a):" † just as a child in infancy stumbles upon a manly thought: and as the first dawnings of reason may

(z) John vi. 44.

(a) 1 Peter i. 8.

† χαρᾶ — δεδοξασμένη, a glorified joy.

may give a child some obscure hint of the masterly reasonings of a mature genius, so from these foretastes of heaven the Sons of God may form some faint ideas of the perfection of its happiness in full enjoyment. They find these dispositions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will constitute their blessedness; and they now find so much real happiness in the exercise of such dispositions, though in an imperfect degree, as fully convinces them that nothing is necessary to make them compleatly happy but the perfection of such exercises, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is they have not yet experienced; their highest thoughts fall short of it; and "it doth not yet appear to them what they shall be" in the following particulars.

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

That the human soul is capable of vast enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimensions, is evident; and we find by experience its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the close of life, especially in men of a studious turn. And we may be sure that, when like a bird out of a cage, it gets loose among its kindred spirits, and flies at large in its proper element, its faculties will be vastly improved: otherwise it would be overborne and crushed with the weight of glory; it would

would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightness, like a mole that has wrought itself into day-light. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exercises, so, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the soul would be incapable of exercising them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted services of that mature world. You may therefore rest confident in this, ye Sons of God, that your little souls will then be vastly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of his riper years, so it is with you. Compare your present selves with your infant-selves, and you will see a vast difference even in the present state, and how vast the difference between what you now are and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the proper region, the natural element of spirits! Beloved, you are now the Sons of God; and he will make you such beings as 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

endless duration, may be still brightning, without ever coming to their meridian; and your views be still enlarging, though still infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that souls so improved should be united to bodies suited to them: which leads me to observe,

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

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

same. St *Paul* tells us, that they will be *spiritual* bodies (*b*); 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 (*c*)."
 Such is the glory of CHRIST's body in its now exalted state, that the splendors breaking from it struck *Paul* and his fellow-travellers to the ground, and deprived him of sight for three days; how illustrious then must those bodies be that resemble his, though we allow his a suitable superiority? This the Apostle intimates by representing the change of the bodies of saints at the resurrection as a mighty exploit of GOD's all-subduing power (*d*). 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 lightening; 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 (*e*). It will then be incapable of pain, sickness, and death (*f*); and will no more feel hunger and thirst, nor any of the appetites of animal nature (*g*):

(*b*) 1 Cor. xv. 44. (*c*) Phil. iii. 21. (*d*) Phil. iii. 21.

(*e*) Matt. xvii. 2. Dan. xii. 3. Matt. xiii. 43.

(*f*) Isa. xxxiii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 33. (*g*) Rev. vii. 16.

ture: it will be capable of the most excellent sensations of pleasure through every organ; and a suitable companion to an improved and glorified soul. Such bodies will the saints have: but what it is to have such bodies, we have now no experience; and shall never know till the glorious morning of the resurrection.

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

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

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 surprize will this be!

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

We know from the plain declarations of sacred writ that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of nature and grace, celebrating the praises of God, and prostrate adorations before him, will be no small part of the happiness of a future state. But we have no reason to suppose that it will consist intirely in contemplation and adoration. A state of activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will separate spirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in these mortal regions? a very pleasant employ to generous and benevolent minds! Will they be the ambassadors of their sovereign to the remote parts of his empire, to bear his messages, and discharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important services to 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,

quiries, till the light of eternity shall break upon us. But,

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

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

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

Alas! can ye 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 show in what respects the Sons of God are unknown to the world, and mistaken by them.

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

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

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

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

would you change conditions with him! Well, stay a little, and there will be a full "manifestation of the Sons of God (b)." 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 employments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth; it would put an end to the necessary activity about temporal concerns, break off the designs of providence, and quite alter the form of administration in this world. Therefore the *manifestation* is wisely put off to the most proper season.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

First, What a state of darkness and imperfection is this! We slipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation, and we shall be ere long we know not what. Alas! how short are our views! all before us is impenetrable darkness, and we can see but a very little way behind us. What

small
 (b) Rom. viii. 19.

small cause then have the wisest of us to be elated with our own knowledge! In comparison of angelic Beings, and even of our future selves, we see no more than the mole groveling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly, But what surprising discoveries of things will flash upon us when we enter into the other world! O! my Brethren, when we ascend the heavenly mount, and take large surveys all around of the immensity of the works of God, when the unveiled perfections of the Deity suddenly shine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our waking from the sleep of death, how shall we be lost in wonders! What scenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How shall we be astonished at ourselves, and ready to vent our surprise in some such strains as these; “ Is this I,
 “ who so lately was groveling in yonder world!
 “ how changed! how ennobled! how glorified!
 “ Is this the soul that was once so overrun with
 “ the leprosy of sin! once so blind and dark!
 “ once so perverse and depraved! so feeble and
 “ weak! tormented with vain anxieties and
 “ trifling cares, or transported with empty
 “ joys and delusive prospects! is this the soul
 “ that had so many hard conflicts with temptations,
 “ that felt such shocks of jealousy, and
 “ so often languished under desponding fears of
 “ never seeing this glorious place! O how
 “ changed! how free from every anxious care!

B b 3

“ unmolested

“ unmolested by so much as a guilty thought !
 “ nobly triumphant over sin and sorrow, and
 “ all that it feared in its mortal state ! And is
 “ this my once frail, mortal body ! my incum-
 “ brance 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 cele-
 “ brate this grace through all eternity !” Thus
 may we think the glorified saint would express
 his wonder. But alas ! we know just nothing
 about it. The sensations and language of im-
 mortals 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 asto-
 nishing. 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 majestick realities. Therefore,

Fourthly,

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 a bliss that infinitely surpass all your present conceptions? And you, unregenerate sinners, though I cannot say you are near to glory, yet I may assure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its solemn wonders: this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your present condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miserable for ever. Therefore,

Fifthly, O sinners, why do you not labour to become the Sons of God now while you may? Consider what prodigies of misery, what monuments of vengeance you will soon be, if you continue unregenerate! Alas! Sirs, it does not yet appear what you shall soon be, otherwise you could no more rest in your present ease 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 should be called the Sons of God!" Consider what you were, guilty rebellious creatures, condemned to everlasting tortures; and you will own, that to be just delivered from hell, though it had been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favour for you: but for you to be made the Sons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be transformed into happy *some things* that you can now form no ideas of, and this too at the expence of the blood of God; what love is this! Go home, and forget it if you can. Cease to love God 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!

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




S E R M O N XXXIV.

A Sermon on the New-Year.



J E R E M I A H XXVIII. 16.

This year thou shalt die. †

 **H I L E** 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

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

tingent and unknowable as to leave no room for rational suppositions, and probable expectations. There are certain events which regularly happen to us every year, and therefore we may expect them this year. There are others which sometimes occur in the compass of a year, and sometimes do not; such are many of the blessings and afflictions of life; of these we should be apprehensive, and prepare for them. And there are events which we know are before us, and we are sure they will occur, but at what particular time they will happen, whether this year or next, whether this day or to-morrow, is to us an utter uncertainty. Such is that interesting event, the close of the present life, and our entrance into eternity. That we must die, is as certain as that we now live; but the hour or year when is kindly and wisely concealed from us that we may be always ready, and stand in the posture of constant vigilant expectation, that we may not be surprised. But certainly it becomes us to reflect seriously upon the mere possibility of this event happening this year, and realize to ourselves those important consequences that result from this supposition. The mere possibility of this may justly affect us more than the certain expectation of any other futurity. And it is not only possible, but highly probable Death may meet some of us within the compass of this year. Yes, it is highly probable that if some prophet, like *Jeremiah*, should open to us the Book
of

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 interests, 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

“ 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, “ De-
 “ part 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 *Hananiab* 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 great-
 est 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-years-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 ope-
 rate 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

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

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

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

upon the stage: and this may be your doom also.

This year you may die, though you are not prepared for it. When death shews you his warrant under the great seal of heaven, it will be no excuse to plead, "I am not ready." Though the consequence of your dying unprepared will be your everlasting ruin, yet that dreadful consideration will have no weight to delay the execution.

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

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

not perhaps admit the thought of a short abortive life, but notwithstanding this you may be a lifeless corps before this year finishes its revolution.

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

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

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 yet 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 lovely prospects of nature may become a dismal blank. To you music may lose

all her charms, and die away into everlasting silence; and all the gratifications of the palate, may become insipid. When you lie in the cold grave, you will be as dead to such sensations as the clay that covers you. Then farewell to all the pompous but empty pleasures of riches and honours. The pleasures both of enjoyment and expectation from this quarter will fail 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 the created enjoyments that were wont to be poorly substituted in his stead! Yet this may be your case in the short compass of the following year. O! what a terrible change! What a prodigious fall!

Should you die this year, all your hopes and prospects as to future life will perish abortive. Several of you are now in a state of education, preparing

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

If you die this year, you will not only be cut off from all the flattering prospects of this life, but from all hope entirely, and forever. If you die in your sins, you will be fixed in an un-

changeable 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 hope of making a figure, except as the monuments of the vindictive justice of God, and the deadly effects of sin. How affecting is the idea of a promising youth cut off from the land of the living, useless and hopeless in both worlds! fallen from the summit of hope, into the gulph of everlasting despair! Yet this may be your doom, my dear youth, your doom this very year, if you should die in your sins.

If you should die this year, then all the ease and pleasure you now derive from thoughtlessness, self-flattery, and suppressing the testimony of your consciences will 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

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 rigors. There the sanctifying Spirit no more communicates his purifying all-healing influences, but sin, the great Apollyon, diffuses its deadly poison. In a word, when you leave this state of trial, all the discipline of the present state, all your

advantages for salvation, all the means of grace, and all the encouragements of hope will be forever removed out of your reach; and consequently all possibility of your salvation will cease forever; for when the necessary means are taken away, the end becomes utterly impossible. Therefore,

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

verably 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 chearful, 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

or slavery, honour or disgrace, joy or sorrow, sickness or health, may in this year become as little your concern, and be as much nothing to you as to your coffin, or the dust that shall cover it, or to *Judas* that has been gone to his own place above seventeen hundred years.

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

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

I presume

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 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 croud, 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

refuge in every trifle: but you must arrest and confine it to these disagreeable subjects; you must force upon it this medicinal pain, as you often force your stomach, when your health requires it. There is no 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 compleat eternity of misery. The alternative proposed to you is not, Whether you shall feel the bitter anguish of Repentance, or not. Whether you shall be pensive and serious, or not. Whether you shall think upon gloomy and alarming subjects, or not. This is not at all the state of the case; for you *must* feel the sorrows of repentance; you *must* be thoughtful and pensive; you *must* confine your minds to subjects of terror; you *must*, whether you will or not; it is utterly unavoidable. But the only alternative proposed to your choice is, Whether you will voluntarily submit to the kindly hopeful medicinal preventive sorrows of repentance in this state of trial, which will issue in everlasting joy; or be forced to submit to the despairing pangs, and useless destructive horrors of too late a repentance in the eternal world; which will only torment you, but not save you; which will be your punishment, and not a mean of your reformation, or a preparative for happiness.

Whether

Whether you will confine your thoughts for a time to the contemplation of your present miserable circumstances, while hope irradiates even the darkeſt glooms 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 expence of a wretched deſpairing eternity ? O chooſe life, that you may live. While you indulge a trifling levity of mind, and a roving diſſipation of thought, there is no hope you will ever ſeriously attend to your moſt important intereſt, or uſe the means of grace in earneſt. Hence it is that I have made it ſo much my endeavour to day to make you ſerious and thoughtful. To enforce this, let me repeat what I think cannot but have ſome effect ; eſpecially as it comes not from the Prieſthood, but the Court ; and from a Courtier as eminent as *England* ever boated.

“ Ah !

" 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 Sa-
 " craments represent the most serious and aw-
 " ful matters. The whole Creation is serious
 " in serving GOD and us. All that are in Hea-
 " ven, or Hell are serious. How then can
 " we be gay?"

I pray you, my dear Brethren, yield an im-
 mediate 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 sal-
 vation, 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 rea-
 sonable, 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 and his
 affections and lusts die with the old year.
 " Let the time past of your life more than suf-
 " fice you to have wrought the will of the flesh.
 " What profit had you then in those things
 " of

"of which you should now be ashamed?" How shocking the thought that your old guilt should follow you into the new year, and haunt you in future times! O begin this year as you would wish to end your life! Begin it so as to give hopes that your future time will be so spent as to render death harmless, and even welcome to you.

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

But perhaps some of you may be inverting this consideration, and whispering to yourselves, "This year I may not die:" and therefore there is no immediate necessity of preparation for Death. But what if you should not die this year if you still delay the great work for which your time is given you? Alas! if you persist in this, one would think it can give you but little pleasure whether you die this year or not? What end will your life answer, but to add to your guilt and increase your punishment? What safety can another year afford you when you must die at last? What valuable end do you intend to answer in future life? Do you purpose to spend this year as you have done your past years? What! in offending your God! abusing his mercies! neglecting the precious seasons of grace! hardening yourselves more and more in impenitence! adding sin to sin, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! Is it worth your while to live for such horrid preposterous purposes as these?

Can

Can you wish for another year with these views? Could you venture to pray for it? Will the prayer bear to be put into words? Come, put on the hardiness of an infernal Ghost, that you may be able to support yourselves under the horror of the sound. "Thou supreme Excellence! Thou Author of my being, and all my powers! Thou Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge of the world! I have spent ten, twenty, or thirty years in displeasing Thee and ruining myself; but I am not yet satisfied with the pleasures of such a conduct. Grant me, I pray thee, another year to spend in the same manner. Grant me more mercies to abuse; more time to mispend; more means of grace to neglect and profane."—Could you now fall upon 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

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 impor-
“ tant 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.

F I N I S.





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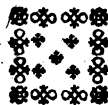
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