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SERMONS

SELECTED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE LATE

MOSES HOGE, D.D.

By which, "He being dead, yet speaketh." HEBREWS xi. 4.

RICHMOND:

N. POLLARD, PUBLISHER, FRANKLIN OFFICE.

1821.

DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA, To wit.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the thirtieth day of May, in the forty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States of America, John B. Hoge, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“Sermons selected from the manuscripts of the late Moses Hoge,
D. D. *By which, “He being dead, yet speaketh.”* Heb. xi. 4.

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned.”

RD. JEFFRIES,

Clerk of the District of Virginia.



PREFACE.

DURING his life, Dr. Hoge was often solicited by his friends, to favour the public with a volume of Sermons. In his view, however, insuperable obstacles opposed themselves to a measure, the usefulness of which, few persons that knew him, were so ready to question as himself. The hope which was entertained that among his manuscripts, a number might be found prepared by himself for publication after his death, has not been realized. A careful examination of his papers containing materials for several volumes, has yielded the result of only a single discourse composed with the view of being presented to the public. The original manuscripts which have furnished matter for the ensuing pages, appear for the most part to have been written hastily and at different periods, during intervals of leisure

too short to permit the progress of the Author through his subject without interruption. They bear few traces of any subsequent revision. And the apprehension is felt that the most of them will not entirely meet those expectations which the writer's reputation as a preacher has not failed to create. While it is admitted that both in sentiment and in style they are much inferior to what they would have been if prepared by himself for the press, it is believed that the portion of absolute merit which they possess, renders them not totally unworthy of public approbation. It is needless to enquire whether this consideration alone would justify their publication, since the willingness of Dr. Hoge is ascertained that, after his connection with the world should terminate, any use might be made of his papers which promised a contribution to the public good. It was not, there is reason to believe, unknown to him that a posthumous publication would more probably depress than elevate his reputation. And his acquiescence in it, under such circumstances, adds another to the many demonstrations with which his life abounded, that he was habitually influenced by motives infinitely better than the love of fame.

To the highest elevations in the sacred desk, which he ever reached, it is believed, he was borne by the inspiration of some impressive occasion, rousing to intense exercise that vigor of mind and that ardor of feeling by which he was distinguished. Capable of making his way without difficulty through his subject and of giving instantaneous expression to his sentiments in appropriate and energetic language, it was unnecessary for him to depend in his public addresses on a pre-composed discourse. When he did resort to this method of preparation for the pulpit, he often, in delivering his Sermons, introduced such improvements both in matter and expression, as gave the aspect of finished compositions to those on which but little care had been expended. The imperfect developement of some topics must be ascribed to his habit of amplifying in the pulpit what he had hastily sketched in the closet. In accounting for the abrupt termination of a number of the discourses, it is proper to state that he deemed it generally advisable to close them with an application accommodated to the occasion and circumstances of the audience. Usually this part of his discourses was entirely extemporaneous. Indeed, many of those perform-

ances in which he rose above his common level, were wholly of this character.

No apology can be necessary in a work of this sort for the occasional coincidence of general subjects and of subordinate topics, in discourses written at distant intervals and delivered at different places. Nor under such circumstances is it strange, that in different discourses, a paragraph, the same in substance and very similar in language, should sometimes occur. This not unfrequently happens even when a work is prepared by the Author for the press, and when all its parts pass in rapid succession under his eye.

To the Sermons it has been thought inexpedient to prefix any biographical notice of the Author. Such a notice would not do him justice without extending farther into the volume than could be permitted. It is, however, expected that a sketch of his life and character, now in preparation will be published in a separate volume, at no very distant period.

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SERMON I.

MINISTERIAL PIETY.

1 COR. IX. 21.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached the gospel to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

THAT a man may preach the gospel to others and afterwards be himself a cast-away, is too evident to require proof. For there is, certainly, nothing in the external offices of ministerial duty beyond the reach of an unsanctified heart. And, as the attention which we, my brethren in the ministry, ought to pay to the souls committed

* The Synod of Virginia met at Lexington Oct. 1810. The duty of opening the meeting with a sermon unexpectedly devolved on Dr. Hoge, in the absence of the moderator. The substance of the following discourse was delivered on that occasion. It was afterwards reduced to writing by request of the Synod, with a view to its publication. That publication was prevented by a reason that need not be specified. It was the author's intention to inscribe it to the members of the Synod of Virginia,—And to them it is now affectionately dedicated.

to our care has been a common theme of discourse at the opening of this Judicature; it will not, I hope, be thought improper to devote this discourse to a very different subject—the attention we ought to pay to our own salvation. Of the difficulties with which a subject of this nature must necessarily be attended, I am not unapprised. If incautiously managed, it may, too probably, be not only unprofitable to you but also injurious to others.

Should there be among the individuals composing this audience, any who are waiting for an occasion of dissatisfaction either with the gospel or its ministers, it is highly probable that the discourse I am about to deliver will furnish them with the occasion they desire; or, at least, with something which it will be easy for them to wrest both to our disadvantage and their own destruction. But shall we be deterred by abuses of this nature, from attempting to perform the kindest office in our power to our brethern in the ministry? This will hardly be expected.

But our religious advantages are so various, and so great that the measure in contemplation may, perhaps, be thought unnecessary. No preacher of the gospel will, however, I am confident, entertain such a sentiment. It will, indeed, readily be acknowledged that the religious advantages of stewards of the mysteries of God are numerous and great: but so also are their disadvantages. And

that we need all the assistance which can in this way be afforded us, the text I have chosen is itself a sufficient evidence. *I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away.*

Here we may observe that this great apostle did not consider himself so sure of salvation, or rather that his assurance was not of such a nature as to supersede the necessity of the most effectual precautions to guard against the reverse. And yet if there ever was a man who had a right to entertain such a sentiment, Paul appears to have been that man. Delivered from a state of nature and brought into a state of grace by the most extraordinary means; exalted to the third heavens that he might be raised above the fear of earth and hell; in labours more abundant than any of his fellow apostles, and expressly assured by a revelation from Jesus Christ of grace sufficient for him: but notwithstanding all this, he considers it necessary to employ the most effectual precautions in his power to guard against a final disappointment.

Lest that by any means when I have preached the gospel to others, I myself should be a cast-away. Not that the apostle was really in a state of uncertainty with respect to his final destiny. This would not accord with that full assurance of a happy immortality, which he has elsewhere expressed in the most

peremptory language. No, my brethren, we must not imagine this most faithful servant, to have been in a state of painful uncertainty with regard to the ultimate issue of all his toils and conflicts in the Christian cause. But he had not learned to separate the MEANS from the END, as the manner of some Theologians is. This may be strikingly illustrated by a very memorable event in naval history. When Paul was on his voyage to Rome the vessel which carried him being overtaken by a tempestuous wind, to support the desponding minds of his companions in danger, he positively assured them, that there should be "*no loss of any man's life, but only of the ship.*" And this he did by an express revelation from God himself. But notwithstanding this, when he observed the shipmen, whose ministry was necessary to conduct the vessel to land, about to abandon it, he as expressly declared to the centurion and the soldiers, "*Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.*" And thus, though fully assured that he should obtain the rewards of a faithful servant, yet in order to this he knew perseverance in a course of holy obedience to be indispensably necessary. Yes, my brethren, though he knew most assuredly that he should not be a cast-away, yet he also knew, that with a view of guarding against this most tragical event, it was incumbent upon him to *keep under his body and to bring it into subjection.* And happy would I think

myself, should it be in my power to suggest any thing from this interesting subject, which might have a tendency to induce each of us to "*go and do likewise.*" In attempting this however, instead of confining myself to the meaning of our text as it respected the apostle Paul, I shall take the liberty of introducing such reflections as it seems calculated to present to the mind of an ordinary minister. And, in this view, it seems to me to contain something indescribably solemn and impressive. *Lest that by any means, when I have preached the gospel to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* Though we are not permitted to suppose the apostle to have been under any uneasy apprehensions for his own fate when he committed these words to record, yet who of us, my brethren, can attentively read them without some emotions of anxious apprehension for himself?

That a natural man of any considerable talents and attainments in Literature, should be disposed to preach the gospel in connexion with any well regulated Church in our country, does not, it will readily be acknowledged, seem very probable. For the official duties he would be required to perform, and the life he would be expected to live, in such a connexion, cannot reasonably be supposed to accord with the predominant affections of an unsanctified heart. And a man thus qualified for the sacred office might have turned his attention to some more

lucrative and less perilous employment. For my own part, I acknowledge myself well satisfied that every member of our Synod, has been induced to enter upon the arduous work of the gospel ministry from a sense of duty—from a hope, that having himself obtained mercy of God, it might be in his power to do something for the honour of his Redeemer, and the salvation of his fellow-men. But it is certainly possible for a man to be under the influence of zeal, and that even for God, which is not according to knowledge. And it must be of great importance for us to be well assured that this is not our case. Paul could say, “*I so run not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.*” To avoid, therefore, the fate of *a cast-away* he had nothing to do but to persevere with diligence and fidelity in the course in which he had already made the most extraordinary progress. But is this the case with each of us, my brethren? There is certainly much reason to apprehend the reverse. Now to avoid the fate of *a cast-away*, the first thing which will claim our particular attention is, to see that we are in the way, the straight and narrow way that leads to eternal life. It is not my intention, however, to undertake a statement of the evidences by which this important case is to be decided. With these evidences you are, I doubt not, generally, well acquainted. I have thought, nevertheless, that it might not, perhaps, be amiss to take notice of a

few of the many instances, in which a preacher of the gospel may be in peculiar danger of entertaining a too favourable opinion of the state of his soul.

1. The nature of our office renders much attention to religious subjects indispensably necessary. That we may have it in our power to explain the Holy Scriptures to our people, we must read them with much attention, and make them the subject of daily meditations. Nor will this alone be sufficient to qualify us for so great and perilous an undertaking. No: we must also avail ourselves of all the light which has been thrown upon the sacred writers by the best Commentators and Theological Writers. And this will require much religious reading and reflection. But I need not enlarge in a case so very evident. It is easy to see that no man, let his talents be what they may, can be properly qualified for the place I now occupy without much attention to religious subjects. Should a preacher of the gospel then consider this attention, which our office renders so indispensably necessary, as a satisfactory, or even probable evidence, of true piety, he may in this way be most miserably deceived.

2. As the harvest is great and faithful labourers few, it seems to be the good pleasure of a Sovereign God, sometimes to employ the labours of men destitute of real piety, for the conversion of sinners and the edification of the church. It must by no means

be imagined, that the efficacy of the ministrations of the gospel depends upon the piety of its ministers. The faithful labours of pious ministers do, indeed, appear to be much more generally, and extensively blessed, than the labours of unconverted men. Nay, the life and ministry of the latter seem, upon the whole, to be the greatest curse that has ever befallen the church. We are not, however, warranted to conclude that none of this unhappy class are at any time used as instruments for promoting the designs of Divine mercy towards our guilty race. The reverse appears to be not unfrequently the case. What a moving consideration! A preacher preaching a gospel, which is to some of his people the savour of life unto life, while it is to himself the savour of death unto death;—instrumental in snatching others as brands from the burning, while he is plunging his own soul in deeper guilt, and, it is much to be feared, in deeper ruin, too, forever! The designs of Divine mercy, in this case may, it is true, be accomplished, by a supernatural influence upon the minds of the hearers, without any assistance being afforded to the preacher. There is, however, reason to think that it is sometimes otherwise; that the preacher is, on such occasions, not unfrequently the subject of a Divine influence also: the principles of natural religion and virtue being greatly strengthened at the same time that the natural sensibility of his heart is powerfully

excited. And in various ways, which we cannot understand, he may be assisted in the discharge of ministerial duty. Such assistance is, we have reason to fear, too often considered as satisfactory evidence of vital piety. But for this there can be no just ground. How often have inflamed affections and a heated imagination been mistaken for supernatural aid. Admitting, however, a preacher to have satisfactory evidence that he has been thus highly favoured, it is impossible for any assistance of this nature to constitute a better evidence of an interest in the peculiar favour of God, than miraculous and prophetic gifts. And we have apostolical authority to assure us that between these gifts and charity, or genuine religion, there is no necessary connexion.

3. Does a preacher feel sensibly for himself and the people committed to his care? Is he zealous in the discharge of ministerial duty? Does he address the immortal souls for whom he must give an account to God, with earnestness and affection? This is well. I would to God we were all more engaged in this great work than we are! It must not, however, be forgotten that all this is within the reach of an unsanctified heart. Selfish as apostate man by nature is, it is impossible for any one who believes his Bible to be true, not to feel deeply interested in the future state of his fellow-men.—Fearless of the future consequences of sin, as the

children of men for the most part are, it is not uncommon for an impenitent transgressor to tremble under the apprehension of the wrath to come. And, under the united influence of these affections, it is, certainly, possible for a preacher to be very much engaged both for himself and for his people. And yet have we not reason to apprehend, that some preachers consider the zeal and affection with which their ministerial duties are performed, as a good evidence of genuine religion? A most dangerous error, certainly. We know well that it is far from being uncommon for men, whose lives and whose doctrines are in direct opposition both to the doctrines and the precepts of the Bible, to be very zealous in propagating their most pernicious sentiments. The history of the church, in all ages since its first establishment, affords abundant proof of this mortifying truth.

4. A delight in the law of God, after the inward man, is justly considered as a scriptural characteristic of real piety. But as it is the business of a minister of the gospel to illustrate the nature of this law to his people, and to refute the various objections, which a carnal heart will be ever ready to raise against it, while thus employed, even a natural man, may, it appears to me, be led to form a very favourable opinion of the law he is advocating--an opinion so favourable, that he may be in danger of mistaking it for this high and holy affection.--

Similar observations might be made with respect to a cordial approbation of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. While a minister is zealously engaged in recommending this salvation to others, he may, there is reason to believe, be so struck with a sense of its necessity and suitableness to the case of an apostate sinner, as to imagine himself heartily pleased with it, and consequently entitled to all the blessings it secures to every true believer, at the same time that he is destitute of all just regard either to evangelical or moral righteousness.

5. A delight in reading and studying the Holy Scriptures is, we have reason to believe, not unfrequently considered, by preachers, as well as others, an evidence of genuine religion. And it will readily be acknowledged that none but real believers rightly appreciate these sacred records.—But it seems utterly impossible for any preacher, who believes his Bible to be from God, not to hold in high estimation a book of such incalculable value, and to which he is so much indebted. And habit has, we know, in such cases a very powerful influence. Not that any force of habit will ever be able to reconcile a carnal heart to the spirituality and extent of the Divine Law, or to the self-abasing genius of the gospel of Christ. This, nothing but the energies of divine grace can do. We have just seen, however, how the character in view may

be induced to form a very favourable opinion of both. And in the Holy Scriptures there is much to entertain every attentive reader, and, especially, every well informed mind and cultivated taste? The very extraordinary scenes there presented to our view might, one would think, be sufficient to arrest, and fix, forever, our attention. Not, indeed, the unvaried uniformity of uninterrupted glory and happiness—but PARADISE LOST and REGAINED; a new world rising from the ruins of the old! and that by a long series of the most astonishing and glorious expedients. I may safely venture to affirm that neither the boldest excursions of romantic fancy, nor the deepest colourings of the tragic muse, ever presented to the mind of man any thing equally calculated to touch the heart and captivate the soul, as the real facts contained in the Scriptures of truth. Nor is there any eloquence comparable to that of no inconsiderable part of the sacred volume. What variety united with the utmost simplicity, what beauty in the midst of the most astonishing sublimity, what energies of the affections, do we find in these hallowed pages! Nothing, surely, can be more illusive, than to suppose, that merely a delight in Biblical studies will constitute a satisfactory evidence of the piety of a gospel minister.

6. Should any man undertake to separate what the Great Teacher sent from God has indissolubly joined together, Faith and Good Works, and make

either, in a state of mutilation, the foundation of his everlasting hopes, he must be most miserably deceived. And yet, we have reason to fear, that no inconsiderable number even of the sacred order, most presumptuously do this: and that in direct and manifest opposition to the most luminous and abundant scriptural evidence of their inseparable union! one class relying upon what they most absurdly call evangelical faith without works, that is a faith that does not work by love, and is not accompanied by good works; while the others trust to what they with equal absurdity call, good works—works which do not spring from a true and living faith.—But as I have no reason to suppose, that any of the brethren I am addressing have so learned Christ, this simple statement of the case may suffice.

Thus have I endeavoured to point out a few of the many ways, in which preachers of the gospel may be led to entertain a too favourable opinion of the state of their own souls. It is, however, by no means my intention to intimate that well-informed preachers are, upon the whole, more liable to this species of deception than their hearers. Their superior knowledge of human nature and of the nature and scriptural evidences of genuine religion ought, it seems to me, to do more than compensate for the peculiar dangers to which they are exposed.

And may I not hope, that the observations I have taken the liberty to submit to your consideration, will operate as an inducement to us all to examine ourselves with the greatest impartiality, whether we be in the faith; and not to rest without scriptural evidence that we are really in the way that leads to eternal life. But we must by no means suppose that when this is accomplished, our work is done. In order to avoid the fate of a *cast-away*, we must also *keep under our bodies and bring them into subjection*. This is, certainly a reasonable service. Shall a system of flesh and blood—a body originally composed of the dust of the earth govern us, and bring the powers of an immortal mind into a state of inglorious servitude? No, my brethren, we must not suffer ourselves to be thus abased and degraded.

I keep under my body. How? Not, surely, by monkish austerities or macerations, corporal penances or severities of any kind; but by the strictest temperance, by occasional fasting, it is probable, by a series of laborious exertions in the Christian cause, and, in a word by all the various measures best calculated to render the body, with all its appetites and affections, subservient to the best exercises and interests of an immortal mind. “*Every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it that they may obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I there-*

fore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one who beateth the air. But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

From this passage it evidently appears that there is in our text an allusion to the measures employed by the combatants in the Isthmean Games, in order to obtain a conqueror's prize. Very extraordinary are the privations to which these ambitious men submitted, and the labours and hardships they underwent, to prepare themselves for the rude conflict. And to these preparatory measures, as well as to the conflict itself, the apostle had, no doubt, in this instance, an express reference. This being admitted, it will evidently follow, that the life which he thought it incumbent on him to live to avoid the fate of a *cast-away*, was a life of strenuous conflict and great self-denial. And such, my brethren, proper allowance being made for the different sphere in which we move, is the life which we also ought to live, for the same purpose. We are not, indeed, as this apostle was, called upon to enter the lists with flesh and blood in a literal sense—to contend with furious and blood-thirsty persecutors of the church. From this the good Providence of God has mercifully exempted us. It is not, however, to contests of this nature, but to such as are common to the followers of Christ in every

age, that, he seems chiefly to allude in the words of our text. For here we have no mention of any violence done to him by others, but only of the energetic measures which he thought proper to employ with a view of bringing his own body into subjection, or, in other words, of that life of daily conflict and self-denial which he thought it his duty to live that he might not be a *cast-away*. It is, however, only to a few instances of that self-denial to which ministers of the gospel seem to be under peculiar obligations, that the limits I must observe, will allow me to solicit your particular attention. And in the first place, I would take the liberty to recommend to you, what I solemnly enjoin upon myself, an exemplary moderation with respect to secular interests. Shall *Stewards of the mysteries of God* be ambitious to be rich! This would be a miserable prostitution of their sacred character. *He that striveth for the mastery must be temperate in all things. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*—That a state of opulence might render our ministry more respectable in the estimation of the world, and afford us various opportunities of superiour usefulness to our fellow-men, will readily be conceded. But are we sure that we should be able to withstand the temptations of that perilous state, and disposed to avail ourselves of its superiour advantages

for promoting the great cause in which we are engaged? We are not. *How hardly*, says our Lord, *shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And, surely, with equal propriety may we say, How hardly shall a rich minister be faithful to his great Trust! Shall we then be solicitous to obtain what would, probably, prove a dangerous snare, and a real injury both to ourselves and to our people? Surely not.

After the view we have just taken of the perilous situation of a rich minister, can it be necessary to observe, that *if riches increase*, that if a minister should have larger possessions than is common for one of our order, he ought *not to set his heart upon them*, or value himself on that account. Shall an Ambassador of a Redeemer who had not where to lay his head, value himself on account of any thing so extraneous to his character as large earthly possessions? No, my brethren, the man whose glorious office it is to be the honoured instrument of detaching others from the love of this world, must not himself love the world, or glory in any of its possessions or most admired distinctions.

Should a minister be poor—should he have but a small portion of the goods of this world, let him not murmur or despond, or even relax in such exertions as he may have it in his power to make, to promote the best interests of the souls committed to his care—“*Poor, but making many rich.*” What

dignity in abasement is here! Compared with such beneficence, what are all the riches and possessions of this world! Compared with such a character, how despicable do the most successful plunderers of nations appear!—And how insignificant the richest man on earth who is not *rich towards God!*

It must not, however, be imagined that we wish to exempt a minister from a duty incumbent upon all men—that of providing for himself and his own house. No: let him pay every reasonable attention to secular interests. But let him do this in humble confidence, that while he is faithfully serving a Master who has the hearts of men, and the elements, all under his control, he shall not want. But let him, especially, *use this world as not abusing it.* Let it be his daily care to manifest such a noble superiority to the little interests of time, as will raise him above even the suspicion of being under the influence of a mercenary principle.

Has the God of heaven been pleased to distinguish any of you, my brethren, by great intellectual powers? Let him who is thus highly favoured be thankful for his superiour advantages of doing good in the world; but let him not be elated with this distinction. In gifts of this nature there is no merit, nothing worthy of praise. No: it is not great talents, but the proper use of such as we have, that will entitle us to the approbation of our Maker and our Judge.—Great intellectual powers!

Perilous distinction! Peculiarly awful must be the responsibility of such a minister. For *to whom much is given, from him shall much be required.*—It is not, however, I am disposed to think, great, but rather moderate talents, which have been most useful in the church. To men of eminent abilities the church is, indeed, very much indebted. To humble the pride of infidelity, she numbers among her sons and her most affectionate advocates, a bright constellation of the first geniuses in the world. But to humble the pride of genius also, the observation just now made will, I am persuaded, be found to be perfectly correct. How often do we see great talents miserably prostituted! What for the most part is the object of a great genius? Mere instruction and usefulness? No: but rather to shine, to astonish, and transport. And for all this the *gospel ministry* furnishes ample scope. Nor will we undertake to affirm, that a preacher may not, in a certain subordinate, consecrated sense, aim at all this, without incurring any just censure.—Consider my highly favoured Brother, the exalted nature of the work assigned you; the Majesty of that Saviour in whose name you speak; the worth of a soul redeemed by his blood, the perilous situation of a sinner on the verge of destruction; the danger of being yourself *a cast-away*; and let genius exert its utmost energies. Enlighten, convince, persuade, transport; and shine as a star of the first

magnitude. But never presume to arrogate any praise to yourself: let all be ascribed to the unmerited goodness and grace of God. The most eloquent, the most powerful, the most luminous and seraphic discourse that you shall ever have been enabled to deliver, will fall far beneath the dignity of your THEME. Yes, there are depths in the love of Christ which you cannot fathom; there is a malignity in sin which you cannot comprehend; there is a grandeur, a sublimity, and an importance in everlasting concerns of which you can form but very faint conceptions; and what seems still more mortifying, there are energies in the gospel of Christ, both for the conversion of sinners and the edification of the church, to which you never can do justice.

What then shall we think of a man who approaches the altar of God to *sacrifice to his own net, and to burn incense to his own drag*? Who ascends the pulpit not to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, but himself? Who undertakes to display the unsearchable riches of Christ, that he may have an opportunity of unfolding the riches of his own genius? Who urges the strongest arguments he can devise against a life of impenitence and unbelief, not so much with a view of preventing the destruction of sinners, as to show how well he can reason? Who entreats the guilty by the most awful and alluring considerations not to die, not so much from a desire

to prevent that awful event, as to let his audience see how eloquently he can speak? And who, sometimes, even melts into tears over impenitent and obstinate transgressors, not so much in hopes of softening them down into a willing submission to the grace of the gospel, as that he may manifest the sensibility and goodness of his own heart! Humble penitent! take courage and foster desponding apprehensions no longer. Be not afraid that the thunders which are restrained, while this impious man thus boldly invades the honours of his avowed Lord and Master, will ever be let loose against thee; ever hurled against the head of a contrite suppliant.

Let us beware, my brethren, that we do not thus in any instance or degree, prostitute our sacred trust. Let us, with the greatest caution, guard against being at all elated on account of any talents we may suppose ourselves to possess. Let us never presume to arrogate to ourselves the praise of any thing we do. No: we must ascribe all to the grace of God. "*Not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*" *The honour that cometh from man* must never be our object. Nor must we even think of any thing done by us, with self-congratulation or complacency. If God is pleased to assist us in the discharge of our duty, and to bless our ministry, we ought to be very thankful; and to rejoice that God is glorified, the kingdom of Christ advanced,

and immortal souls saved through our instrumentality. But we must never suffer pride or self-congratulation to mingle with and pollute our joy.—Should we voluntarily do this, should we thus exalt ourselves, God will most assuredly humble and abase and mortify us.

And are we, then, perhaps it will be objected, to have no regard to our own character and estimation in the world? Yes, my brethren, great regard. We ought to employ all the measures in our power to deserve the character of able and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. But not for the sake of vain applause; not that we may *be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi*; but that we may have it more effectually in our power to accomplish the great objects of our ministry. That we may have it more effectually in our power to convince gainsayers; to persuade the impenitent not to die, and to afford more effectual aid to our fellow-christians in all the trials and temptations of the present life: and thus, finally, to lay our reputation at the feet of our crucified Redeemer, who made himself of no reputation for us.

But we must never envy a Brother who bears away the Palm of superiority from us, or whose labours are attended with more success than ours. Nor must we ever have recourse to vain and unnecessary contests about character, as the manner of some even of the sacred order is. Contests of this nature will, I am persuaded, be for the most part

unnecessary, even though we should have been slanderously defamed. There may, possibly, be some exception; but I think very few. A minister of the gospel should endeavour to render all measures of this nature absolutely unnecessary, by acquiring a character which cannot be aspersed; by shining with a radiance sufficient to repel and disperse the dark fumes of calumny and defamation as fast as they arise.

A minister of the gospel must not withhold from his people, any doctrine, or truth, which he shall judge necessary for their edification, because it may be unpopular, nor may he connive at any sinful custom, because it may be fashionable, where Providence has cast his lot. It is, indeed, far from being my wish to recommend any unnecessary strictness, in opposition to the customs and manners of the age in which we live. The attempt, however, which has so often been made, and always without success, to reconcile religion with the predominant manners and customs of the world, must ever be found impracticable. Equally far am I from recommending an attention to the unessential peculiarities of a party in the pulpit. For a preacher to put off his people, who are either hungering, or famishing, for the bread of life, with the dry husks of controversy, and that about matters confessedly not essential to their edification, is in my opinion a miserable prostitution of his sacred office. But

doctrines there are, and doctrines, to which the carnal heart, and the wisdom of this world, will ever have strong objections, which are, nevertheless, of too much importance in the Christian system, to be omitted out of respect to any man or number of men.

A minister of the gospel must deny himself the pleasure and advantage of literary pursuits and theological researches, when the ignorant among his people are to be instructed, when the sick are to be visited, when the dying are to be assisted in their last conflict; or when in any other way he can render more essential service to the great cause in which he is engaged than by the studies of the closet. Nor is he permitted to consider any service too humiliating, or any toil or suffering too great for him to undergo, for the honour of his Lord, and the best interests of his fellow-men.—Not that he should, without evident necessity, wear out his constitution and shorten his days, by oppressive labours or services of any kind. Quite the reverse. But when duty calls, let him never count the cost, never shrink from any toil or any sufferings. No, not even though his life were to be spent in the service of his Lord and Master. *For he who thus loseth his life shall find it.*

But would not such zeal, such diligence, such exertion, and, especially, would not such self-denial, render a minister of the gospel very miserable?

No: but on the contrary, they would render him one of the happiest men on earth. The faithful and diligent Christian, who thus denies and humbles himself, will the once humbled Redeemer *delight to honor* and exalt. While *he lives not to himself* but to his Divine Master, his Divine Master will *manifest himself to him as he does not to a less faithful disciple*, and grant him more satisfactory evidences of an interest in his peculiar favour.— And what is self-denial, of which we are all so much disposed to be afraid, but a return from a state of miserable thralldom to the liberty of the children of God; a return from vanity, and an endless series of vexing disappointments to the great source of all enjoyment; a return from sin and folly to righteousness and peace and joy unspeakable. What is it, my brethren, that mars the peace and darkens the evidence of a real believer? Is it not the strength and prevalence of unsanctified affections? Now to deny one's self is to mortify these affections. And this is the same thing as to say, it is to become spiritually minded, and *to be spiritually minded is peace as well as life*.

Thus we may see that to *keep under our bodies and to bring them into subjection* is the readiest way to obtain satisfactory evidence of a state of grace. Even a conscientious discharge of the duty itself will furnish surer evidence of genuine religion, than the highest ecstasies of religious joy. Nay it may

justly be considered as the touch-stone of gospel sincerity: a minister without real religion may do much, and suffer much; may make great sacrifices; and take much pains to get his heart fervently and affectionately engaged, both in the closet and in the pulpit. But to *keep under the body and bring it into subjection*; to retire into ourselves and commune closely and much with our own hearts; to trace out with impartial accuracy its most intricate foldings, that every guilty propensity, and affection and desire may be subdued, and every thought brought into obedience to Christ; to prefer his honour to our honour, and the interests of his kingdom to our own temporal interests; to *set our affections on things above and not on the things of this world*; and, in a word, to *live no longer to ourselves, but to him who died for our redemption*—here is labour which none but a faithful servant will undergo; here is a conflict which none but a faithful servant will maintain; and here is a cross which none but a disciple indeed, will take up.

Supported by a lively sense of the favour and presence of God, what is toil, what is suffering, what are all the hardships and difficulties which a minister has to encounter in the discharge of his difficult office? Happy man! Whatever may assail him from without, he has peace, he has a heaven in his own breast. Wherever he goes, he carries with him a sweet savour of the knowledge

of his God and Saviour, and thus holds out, as he has opportunity, to the view of his fellow-men, *the word of life*. His life is a most instructive sermon. To the fulness of his Saviour he has daily access for *grace to help in time of need*. To his people, therefore, he goes forth *in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace*, and his labours are blessed. He does *not run as uncertainly, nor fight as one that beateth the air*. What must he feel when the souls which he has been instrumental in rescuing from the jaws of destruction, *rise up and call him blessed*? What will he feel when his faithful though imperfect services shall meet the decided approbation of his Saviour and his Judge?—*“ Well done good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”* Happy people who are blessed with such a minister. What might they not obtain through his ministry and intercession?—*for like a prince he has power with God*. Yes, my brethren, he is a blessing not only to the people committed to his care, and to the particular society to which he belongs, but also to the whole church and the world. For it is, especially, such characters who have the honour to be the *Light of the world and the Salt of the earth*.

But where, my brethren, shall we find these interesting truths exemplified and exhibited to view in their full lustre? Where shall we find such a minister—such a *burning and shining light*? Alas!

how is our gold become dim, and our most fine gold changed! How very different, for the most part, are the preachers of our times from the primitive heralds of the gospel! It is far from being my intention to become *an accuser of the brethren.*—For the number of faithful pastors with which the church is blessed in our day, we ought to be very thankful. But if we wish to contemplate the character I have been attempting to describe in its highest glory, and to see the truth I am endeavouring to illustrate exemplified in its fullest evidence, we must go back to the ages of primitive Christianity. And even here, the great apostle of the Gentiles claims our particular attention. Where shall we find labours like his, or self-denial like his? And yet so far was he from being overwhelmed or cast down, that he seems to have been the happiest man on the face of the earth. No where do we meet with such bursts of joy and triumph, as in his epistles. In the midst of his greatest sufferings he could say, “*I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful, in all our tribulation.*” And perfectly correspondent to so triumphant a career, is the closing scene of his life. “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me on that day.*”

But what, my brethren, must be the condition of a preacher who refuses to pay any proper attention to the duty exemplified in the text? Can he be happy? Will he be likely to enjoy much of the consolations of the gospel which he undertakes to preach? So far from it, that such an unfaithful servant cannot, reasonably, expect to possess any satisfactory evidence that he is in a state of grace.—And without this evidence how shall a man undertake to discharge the arduous duties of so sacred an office? How shall he denounce the terrors of the Lord against others, while he has so much reason to consider himself in the same condemnation? How shall he venture to explain the nature of genuine religion to others, while he has so much reason to fear that he is a stranger to it himself? A man who has no just sense, either of his danger or responsibility, may, perhaps do all this, and pass on in his guilty career without much uneasiness.—But this a truly pious man cannot do.

How many perplexing considerations must rush into the mind of a pious minister in a state of awful uncertainty with respect to the approbation of his Maker, and his final destiny? Not merely, as is the case with others, ‘Have I reason to fear that I am in the way to ruin?’ But, in addition to this painful apprehension, ‘have I reason to fear that I have usurped an office to which I had no just claim?’ that I have *run without being sent?* that I have

undertaken to point out to others the way to heaven without knowing it myself?—that I am only *a blind leader of the blind*?—that I have been misleading souls committed to my care?—*and that after I have preached to others I myself shall be a cast-away!*

And will not these considerations be sufficient to induce each of us to observe, with the most earnest attention, the great duty contained in our text? Need I, my brethren, entreat you to consider what it is to be *a cast-away*? Was it not compassion for the souls of men which induced you to forego easier and more lucrative employments, for the arduous and perilous office of the *gospel ministry*? Have you not often traced the gloomy outlines of the infernal prison, that you might, by the terrors of the Lord, deter your people from the way that leads to destruction? Is it not your daily, and hourly, and anxious, inquiry what can I do, what measures not already tried in vain shall I adopt, to preserve from endless ruin the precious souls committed to my care? And while you are thus engaged for others, will you neglect yourselves? While you see the danger to which your people are exposed, and tremble for them, will you not provide for your own safety? While you are thus zealously and affectionately preaching the gospel to others, will you suffer yourselves to be cast away?

Thus, my brethren, have I endeavoured to give as clear and comprehensive a view, as my limits would admit, of our danger, and the measures suggested in the text for guarding against that danger. And if the attention I have paid to this subject, should only prove a means of making a deeper and more influential impression of our responsibility upon my own heart, while my span of life is lengthened out, I should consider the trouble this discourse has given me amply rewarded. But should I also have reason to expect, that this feeble effort will be of some real advantage to the members of our Synod in general, no language could furnish appropriate terms to express my obligations for such a favour. Ah! should it prove the means of preserving one dear Brother from being *a cast-away*, eternity would be too short to show forth the riches of the grace to which this glorious event must be ascribed. I can safely say that for each of you I feel a tender solicitude. To you I feel myself united by very solemn and endearing bonds. We are fellow servants of the same Great Master, have the same gospel to preach, the same enemies to oppose, the same difficulties to encounter, the same conflict to sustain, the same race to run. Our work, our danger, and our responsibility are the same. With many of the members of this body have I often met in our ecclesiastical Judicatures. With no inconsiderable number *have I often*

taken sweet counsel and gone to the house of God in company. With the greater part have I frequently sat down at a Communion Table, that bond of mutual love among brethren in Christ. But if after all this any of us should be *cast away*, how will the scene be changed! How does David lament his fate, when he was only for a few days banished from the house of God! “*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them into the house of God, with a multitude that kept holy day.* Should any of us then, my brethren, be *cast away*, with what unutterable anguish will a recollection of the privileges we have once enjoyed, after they have been forever lost, fill our souls? No more joyful meetings in ecclesiastical Judicatures; no more *going to the house of God in company* with dear friends; no more preaching or hearing of the gospel forever. But the subject is too awful to pursue. Did we know assuredly, that such will be the fate of an individual belonging to our Synod, how would it alarm and distress us! Did we know assuredly that I, who speak, some of you who occupy the place of hearers, or some absent member, will be a *cast-away*, what anxious apprehensions, and what searchings of heart, would it occasion! And ought we not to be as jealous each for himself, and as solicitous for our fellow-members as in the case just stated? In Christ’s own family, among his

chosen disciples, there was one insincere professor. And if there be none of that description among us, we have certainly abundant reason to be thankful.

And now, my brethren, before I take my leave of you, permit me to request you to turn your attention to the people committed to your care. See what a large proportion of them are perishing in sin. And are we sure that we have done every thing in our power to prevent their destruction?—that no more effectual measures can be adopted than those already employed, for their salvation? Let us not be too hasty in concluding that we have exhausted all the treasures of Divine mercy, either with respect to ourselves, or our people,—that no superior assistance for ourselves in the discharge of ministerial duty, or more effectual grace for them, is within our reach. *The hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.* I will venture to affirm there is one thing which we might do for them more than we have yet done. We might pay greater attention to ourselves—to the state of our own souls. Ah! did we feel for ourselves as we ought, we should soon see a glorious change in the state of our people. We should then feel for them, preach to them, pray for them, and live for them, in a way that would scarcely fail to be attended with the happiest effects.

And now, my brethren, of the Laity, suffer me to offer a few things to your consideration before I conclude. Can you behold, with unfeeling hearts, your Ministers exposing themselves to such peril on your account—striving at the risk of an aggravated destruction, should they perish, to accomplish your salvation? And shall it be to any of you in vain?

Are not your souls as precious as the souls of your Ministers? And if it be such an awful thing to perish as a preacher, must it not also be an awful thing to perish as a hearer of the gospel? Should we perish together, you may perhaps behold us in some lower vault of despair; but will this be any alleviation of your misery?

Should you baffle all the efforts of your Ministers to preserve you from destruction, what excuse will you offer, what plea will you devise in arrest of judgment in the great day of general retribution? Will you plead the inefficacy of the means instituted for your salvation? Ah! these means have been efficacious for thousands of the greatest transgressors; and why not in your case also? Are any of you disposed to alledge, that if some preacher of superior eminence had preached to you the gospel, you would have been persuaded? And will any of you venture to the bar of God with this plea? Do it not. There you will see many condemned for not obeying the gospel, when it was preached by a prophet, by an apostle. Nay, there you will see

many condemned for not obeying the gospel when it was preached by the Great Lord of both!

Do not expect too much from your Ministers.—Remember that they are men not angels. And were they even angels, they could do nothing for you without a diligent co-operation on your part. If the God of heaven has appointed Ministers to preach the gospel to you, will you not hear it and obey it, that you may not die but live for ever? Waste not the precious time given you for a much better purpose, in devising vain excuses. The time is not far off when you will be stripped of them all. And, surely, there cannot be a greater infatuation than to waste in this way your day of grace—the only season allotted for your repentance and amendment of life—the only season allotted for your preparation for an endless eternity.

Though the subject I have been endeavouring to discuss, has a more particular reference to Ministers of the Gospel, you will not, it is hoped, consider it inapplicable to your case. The way to heaven is the same for you, as for your Ministers—the same straight and narrow way of self-denial and mortification. If you would avoid the fate of *a cast-away*, it is required of you as well as of them *to keep under your bodies and bring them into subjection*. And while your Ministers are zealously labouring and exposing themselves to so much danger for you, will you do nothing for them? Will you

not be helpers of their joy, and strengthen their hands, and afford them all the assistance in your power in their arduous works? Is not the great cause in which they are engaged, your cause also? It is the cause of God and of humanity.

Look around you, my Christian brethren, and behold the ignorance, the impiety, the profligacy of the world still lying in wickedness—behold the multitudes every where perishing in sin, and say, Is it not time to awake from your guilty slumbers? *is it not time to seek the Lord until he come and rain righteousness upon us*, upon our churches, and our country. Ah! would only all the friends of Zion of every name, laying aside their most unnatural animosities, and disputes of little importance, thus unite with one heart and one soul in the great cause of our Common Christianity, we might soon expect to see better times—*times of refreshing* from the presence of the Lord. Yes, we might, then, confidently expect that *our heaven would shower down righteousness and our earth bring forth salvation*. Let us then, dear brethren, ministers and people, unitedly resolve, in dependence upon grace, that whatever others may do, we will exert ourselves with zeal and perseverance in this great cause—or in other words that we will *keep under our bodies and bring them into subjection, lest that by any means after we have preached, or heard, the gospel, we ourselves should be cast away!*

SERMON II.

THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

1 COR. II. 4.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom; but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power.

THE apostle Paul had the honour of being *a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel.*—And it may truly be affirmed that *Satan's kingdom fell as lightning from heaven*, when he preached the gospel. He appears to have been one of the most eloquent, and he was certainly one of the most diligent and successful preachers in the world. It was not however, we find, to his eloquence or diligence, but to the holy energies of the Spirit of God that he ascribes his astonishing success in the gospel ministry. *My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom; but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.*

To demonstrate a thing is to show or prove it to be true.

By *the demonstration of power*, therefore, we are, I think, to understand the miracles which were performed at Corinth in attestation to the truth of the gospel. But *the demonstration of the Spirit* seems rather to refer to those internal influences of divine grace upon the heart of a sinner, without which no external evidence would be of any ultimate advantage.

From the 4th verse of this chapter compared with the 14th, we may see that this acceptance must, at least, be included. *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Now had the Apostle intended by *the demonstration of the Spirit* nothing more than prophecy or miracle, or any other external evidence, might not the natural man have understood that kind of evidence? Most certainly he might.

There must, then, have been an internal demonstration or illumination accompanying the gospel, as it was preached by Paul at Corinth to render it successful. And that this must always be the case, when it becomes *the wisdom of God and the power of God to the salvation* of those who hear it,

is the proposition which on this occasion I shall endeavour to establish.

1. Now it seems to me, that at least a presumptive argument for the truth of this proposition, may be derived *from the manner in which the gospel was preached* by Paul at Corinth. The Corinthians appear to have entertained a very remarkable predilection for subtile philosophical disquisitions, and a pompous theatrical kind of eloquence. This the false teachers knew; and of this vicious taste they seem to have availed themselves. Had the gospel, then, which Paul preached been unattended by any Divine influence to render it effectual, would he not have had recourse to similar measures to ensure its reception at Corinth? No doubt he would. But his upright soul disdained mean and dishonest artifices. His *speech* in private conversation and his *preaching* in public, *was not with enticing words of man's wisdom*. And this, admitting his preaching to have been attended with a divine influence to render it effectual, is just what might have been expected.

But had the success of the Apostle's ministry among the Corinthians rested upon his own management and address, it would have been an instance of great infatuation in him, to have discarded the most likely means to procure its reception, and to have put his dependence upon a spurious demonstration which no one had ever seen or experienced.

2. But *the extraordinary success* attending the preaching of the gospel by Paul, and his fellow labourers constitutes a still more conclusive evidence. Very strong were the prejudices of both Jews and Gentiles, against the humbling doctrines of the cross. To the one they were a *stumbling block*, to the other *foolishness*. And the power of the State with all the wisdom of this world was on their side. And can it be reasonably supposed that a few illiterate fishermen, and mechanics could, without any supernatural assistance, oppose with success the wisdom of the wise and the power of the mighty? Can it be reasonably supposed that it could have been possible for such men, by their utmost unassisted efforts, to have borne in triumph the banners of the cross to the ends of the then known world—overturning in their progress the temples of pagan superstition, and every strong hold that stood in the way? No! it was divine grace that armed them for the field, supported them in the arduous conflict, and gave them the victory over such numerous hosts of powerful enemies.

3. This will, however, appear with still more resistless evidence when we consider *the astonishing change in the moral world which the gospel has accomplished*.

It may truly be affirmed that *the wolf and the lamb have been made to dwell together, and the lion to eat straw like an ox*. The most ferocious

passions have been softened into all the gentleness of a meek and quiet spirit; and *the churl has been made bountiful*. The profanest tongue has been taught the language of praise and holy adoration; and the most licentious and impure have become *the temples of the Holy Ghost*, wherever this gospel has prevailed in its native efficacy. Would you see this moral, this transforming, this new creating power of our holy religion most strikingly exemplified, turn your attention to the 6th chapter of this epistle, 9—11th, verses. “*Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” How very different too are *the fruits of the Spirit* as they are presented to our view in the Epistle to the Galatians, chap. v. 22. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*” And is there an individual present, disposed to ascribe a change so astonishing and so divine, to the eloquence of men or of angels?

4. Very powerful is the opposition which is in the heart of every man by nature, to the pure and holy religion of Jesus Christ. So powerful that nothing but *the power of Divine Grace* can remove

it. Have you, my brethren, considered attentively the perilous situation of an impenitent sinner?—Exposed every moment to all that is most revolting to human nature, to death in its most awful import, to death eternal. But a glorious deliverance from this death is revealed to us in the gospel: and though it cost our Gracious Deliverer dear; cost him his life, yet it is offered to us *without money, and without price.*

Why then does not every transgressor instantly accept of this deliverance? Strong most undoubtedly must be that opposition of heart to the religion of Jesus Christ, which is capable of rejecting all these powerful motives. If the gospel required some great sacrifice; if it enjoined some grievous and intolerable service; if it would deprive us of all comfort, and render us insupportably miserable in this life, it would not be so strange that frail humanity should be disposed to reject it. Though even in this case, it would certainly be much better for us to prefer temporal to eternal misery. But when the gospel only requires us to be happy in this life, that we may be happy through the endless ages of eternity; and since there is nothing but this opposition of heart to hinder any one, acquainted with the holy and benign genius of the gospel from accepting all the blessings it reveals: the opposition capable of resisting all these inducements must certainly be very powerful, too powerful for any hu-

man eloquence to overcome. If human eloquence, if the most solemn and impressive addresses were sufficient to accomplish the salvation of sinners, the people of Israel would not have been dispersed among the nations of the earth. No: they would undoubtedly have been to this day in possession of their own land; for what can exceed the eloquence employed by their prophets for their reformation and everlasting peace? If human eloquence in its highest perfection were sufficient to save the hearers of the gospel, we may be sure that none of the hearers of our Lord and Saviour would have perished. For *never man spake like this man*. If the most solemn and impressive preaching were sufficient to preserve a soul from destruction, we might assuredly conclude that none of the hearers of the great apostle of the Gentiles would have been lost. For though he disdained to have recourse to the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, he certainly spoke with astonishing energy. Similar observations might, I am disposed to think be made with respect to the primitive preachers in general; and not only to them, but also to no inconsiderable number of their successors down to our own times.

Something more than the most solemn and impressive preaching must be necessary to the conversion of a sinner. Were it otherwise, Moses would have had no occasion for the awful intercessory address, "*Ah! this people have sinned*

a great sin, and have made them Gods of gold. Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written." Had human eloquence been sufficient for the conversion of a sinner, the seraphic Isaiah would not have been forced to exclaim, *Lord who hath believed our report.* And still more especially, were the most instructive and impressive discourses sufficient for the conversion of a sinner, our Lord and Saviour would not, we may be sure, have had any occasion for the following moving address; "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together. If thou hadst known the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!*"

But if there were windows in heaven, if the best instructions were enforced by signs in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, would not this avail for the reformation of the boldest offender? No: my brethren. For such a sentiment there can be no just foundation. Behold the Israelites at the Red Sea, while the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh are pressing on their rear. Nothing less than a miracle can preserve them from instant destruction. They are not, however, abandoned to the will of an exasperated enemy. No; the sea is made to recede, and to leave them a safe passage on dry land, while their enemies are overwhelmed by its returning waves.

And what was the consequence? Were the Israelites reformed from their idolatrous and wicked practices? Far from it. They confessed the hand of God in their deliverance; sang his praise; and relapsed into idolatry again. The law was delivered from Mount Sinai amidst a variety of awful as well as miraculous tokens of the Divine Preserver. And what was the result? "*All that the Lord saith we will do,*" was the resolution, or at least, the promise of the astonished spectators.—And yet forty days had not elapsed before this very people prostituted themselves before a molten calf. But the miracles of our Saviour alone, are a sufficient proof of the sentiment I am endeavouring to establish. The resurrection of Lazarus may be mentioned as an instance. The fact was undeniable. Were the Jews then, who saw, or had the most satisfactory information of this glorious miracle, converted from the error and impiety of their ways? So far from it, that in their opposition to the religion of Jesus, they even proceeded to the daring impiety of plotting the death of Lazarus.—Nay even from the still more astonishing scene of his own resurrection; they retired smiting their breasts, it is true, but we have no satisfactory evidence that any of them were induced by all they had seen and heard to become his disciples.

The opposition of an unsanctified heart to the holy religion of Jesus, is certainly too strong to be

overcome by such means. *For the carnal mind is enmity against God*, and nothing, therefore, but the power of Divine grace can remove this enmity. External evidences may convince the judgment; miraculous exhibitions may even do more than this, may overawe the heart, and consume it with terror; but it is utterly impossible for such scenes to inspire the heart with supreme love to a holy God. Love must be voluntary, it can never be the offspring of force. Did our apostasy consist only in ignorance, instruction alone might perhaps be sufficient to remove that ignorance, and to excite every holy affection in the heart: but this is far from being the case. It is to God himself; to the true God in his holiness, and not exclusively to erroneous ideas of his perfections, that the unsanctified heart is opposed; and, consequently, manifestations of his real character, unaccompanied by the sanctifying influences of his grace, would be more likely to increase than to overcome that enmity.

5. The scriptural representations of *the nature of the change which takes place in the conversion of a sinner*, will not allow us to ascribe it to *any power less than divine*. It is *a new creation*; and can any thing, create itself? It is *a resurrection* to a new life; and can any thing raise itself from the dead? To raise a soul from a state of spiritual death, or which is the same thing, to make us in a spiritual acceptance new creatures, must certainly require a Divine power or supernatural agency.

The doctrine I have been endeavouring to establish is certainly the doctrine of the holy scriptures. This will appear from promises of converting grace. "*A new heart also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.*" It may also be inferred from the divine threatenings. "*My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*" And it is evidently recognised in the language of prayer and supplication. "*Take not thy holy Spirit from me.*" But we need not insist upon evidence of this nature. We have the most express declarations of the word of God, to establish the important truth I am advocating. This you may see in John i. 13. "*Which are born, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" It would be easy to find *line upon line* to the same purpose: but these declarations appear to me abundantly sufficient.

But will God in very deed thus interest himself in our behalf? Will he thus exert his own Almighty agency to prevent our destruction? Why not my brethren? Did he not exert his agency in our creation? And can it be incredible that he should do the same to prevent that existence we have derived from him, from becoming an eternal curse? Would it be any trouble to him to give efficacy to his own sacred institutions? Certainly not,

And shall we call in question his beneficence or his mercy, after he has given his own Son to expiate our offences? We must not thus dishonour our Maker and our Redeemer.

But might I not venture to appeal in this instance to what must have fallen under your own observation? Have you not sometimes seen one of your own acquaintances or friends, arrested by the power of Divine grace, and made a very different creature from what he was before? This is far from being an uncommon case in our Country.—Often have the cavils of the Infidel been silenced in an instant: often have some of the most *stout-hearted and far from righteousness* been made to bow to the authority of a crucified Saviour. Often too, have the pollutions of an unsanctified heart been opened up to the view of the proudest moralist, who confidently imagined himself *rich and increased in goods*. Nor is it, by any means, uncommon for some of the most virulent opposers of the gospel, to be constrained to set their dying attestation to its truth: some in the triumphs of exulting faith; others in the convulsive agonies of despair.

Now, what are we to think of these things?—Are they all illusions? I might, it seems to me, venture to refer you to your own experience by way of reply. Have you no evidences of the truth of this doctrine written upon the inmost tables of your own hearts? I now address myself to the

most incredulous of the present audience. Have you no misgivings of heart; no forebodings that all is not right within you? Could any of you venture to appear before the tribunal of final Judgment without a Saviour; without an Advocate? Are you not convinced that something ought to be done, by way of preparation for your eternal state? Nay, are you not conscious of irresistible impressions of these great truths upon your hearts, in a way to you altogether unaccountable? *Quench not the Spirit*, dear brethren! Acknowledge the hand of God in these impressions. Cherish them with affectionate attention, and you will, there is reason to hope, soon have an evidence in your own breasts of the reality of efficacious grace, which no sophistry of earth or hell will be able to wrest from you.

But will not the doctrines we are endeavouring to establish, lead to enthusiasm? Not when correctly understood. They who ignorantly look for new revelations, or immediate inspiration, are certainly in great danger of taking a heated imagination, or some unaccountable impulse, for a supernatural influence upon the heart. And under this imposing idea, they may, it must be acknowledged, be carried away into the wildest extravagance.—But it is not for inspiration, or a new revelation that we plead. All such expectation we consider delusory and vain. All we insist upon, is, that while *a Paul plants, or an Apollos waters, God is*

pleased to grant an increase; is pleased to enlighten the mind and sanctify the heart; or, in other words, that the Holy Spirit assists the mind of a convinced sinner, to form just ideas of Divine truth, at the same time that the heart is made to relish their spirituality. And this is accomplished in a manner so perfectly correspondent with the exercise of our own reason in the acquisition of knowledge, that it is often impossible to trace with certainty the agency of Divine grace in this glorious work, in any other way than that of comparing its results with the word of God.

But what occasion, perhaps some of the people present may be still disposed to say, what occasion for a supernatural influence to convince us of sin? Do we not all know that we are sinners? Yes, we know it: but the unenlightened mind does not know it aright. Have we, my brethren, all *chosen that good part which shall not be taken from us?* Have we all *fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us* in the gospel? Are we all engaged in *working out our salvation with fear and trembling?* Surely that knowledge of sin which suffers the sinner to go on with little or no concern, in sin, must be very defective. Ah! my brethren, would it please the great *Author and Finisher of faith* to accompany this discourse with *the demonstration of the Spirit*, what a glorious change would it occasion in the state of the people I am now addressing!

SERMON III.

MYSTERIES OF REDEMPTION.

1 PETER I. 12.

Which things the angels desire to look into.

GREAT objections have been made against the gospel of Christ by men of perverse minds, ever since its first publication to the world. To the greater part of the Jewish nation it has been, and still continues to be, *a stumbling block*; and even in our age of boasted light, there are no inconsiderable numbers of men, wise in their own esteem, who venture to pronounce it *foolishness*. But whatever unbelievers may imagine, the gospel must certainly be *worthy of all acceptation*; otherwise it would not attract the notice and regard of the holy angels. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

That we may with the greater ease enter into the meaning of these words, their connexion should

be observed. “ *That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto us, they did minister the things reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*” Thus it evidently appears that the things which the apostle Peter assures us that *the angels desire to look into*, are the things pertaining to the salvation of sinners, as foretold by the Prophets, and fulfilled by our Lord and Saviour in the fulness of time.

Nor is it a hasty view of these things, such as curiosity, if it has a place in innocent minds, might occasion, that these pure intelligences are represented as taking. The terms the apostle uses are very

significant, intimating that these celestial spirits *stoop down*, that with prying attention they may investigate the Mysteries of Redemption. In this form of expression, there seems to be an allusion to the bending posture of the cherubim over the mercy seat. This attitude points out in a very beautiful manner the affectionate desire with which their antitype, the holy angels, would search into the astonishing dispensations of mercy to the children of men. And it may also be intended to indicate the temper of mind with which they are disposed to contemplate *the deep things of God* which neither men nor angels can fathom. Not with a haughty mein and airs of self-sufficiency, like the supercilious Infidel who scorns to believe what he cannot comprehend; but with lowly reverence as it becomes creatures of the most exalted order, when employed in contemplating mysteries at once so holy and profound. Let us then with correspondent reverence proceed to enquire, what in the dispensations of mercy to sinners, is calculated thus to engage the devout attention of these celestial Spirits.

The *first intimations of mercy to fallen man*, would, we have reason to believe, *strike these benevolent spirits with pleasing astonishment, and afford them much delight*. The angels do, no doubt, *excel in benevolence as well as in strength*. And for man, they seem to have an affection, as for a

younger Brother. When the foundations of the earth were laid for our accommodation, *these morning stars sang together, and even shouted for joy.* Upon a sinner's return to God *there is joy in heaven.* They are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation, and seem to keep a constant watch around the tabernacles of the people of God. There is, therefore, abundant reason to conclude that the first intimations of mercy to our guilty race, would afford them inexpressible delight. Of an event apparently so improbable, there is no reason to suppose that they could have entertained the smallest hopes. Their own apostate brethren they had seen cast down from heaven and consigned to hopeless ruin. How then would they rejoice to find that man was not consigned to the same inexorable doom!—that their Creator and ours *can be just and the justifier of a sinner!*

The wisdom of God in affording to the children of men in former ages such discoveries of his mercy and grace, as were most happily adapted to their peculiar situation, and best calculated to introduce the glorious dispensation we enjoy, is no doubt one of the *things which the angels desire to look into.*—Should the full splendours of perfect day burst upon our world in an instant, would it not be both unnatural and inconvenient! And might not such a dispensation in the moral world have been equally

unnatural and inconvenient, when the whole plan of gospel salvation is taken into view? To reform the rude manners of savage nations and bring them to a state of civilization, is commonly a work of ages. Is it then reasonable to expect the Church of God to arrive at a state of full perfection in a day? Had the Jews under the old dispensation enjoyed our light, it might have defeated the whole scheme of Salvation through a crucified Saviour. For *had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory*. One thing is certain, that the plan adopted by infinite wisdom is wisest and best, and it is probable that the angels might know it to be so.

The *exact accomplishment* of all the predictions which respect the Redeemer, *the angels*, no doubt, *desire to look into*.

Very early was the promise of a future Messiah *to bruise the Serpent's head*, given to the world.—And often was this gracious promise repeated and confirmed. In the pages of prophecy, the person, the offices, the life and the death, the resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer are very circumstantially described. Nay, even the very time of his appearance was designated with great precision. And most circumstantially were all these predictions accomplished. The wisdom of God in making the general course of nature, the rise and fall of empires, and the wrath of men and devils conspire in the accomplishment of the predictions of the pro-

phets, and the counsels of eternity is, no doubt, to the angels a subject of delightful contemplation.

Nor could the wisdom of God in preparing the world for the gospel dispensation escape the attention of angelic minds. When Cyrus overturns the Babylonian empire; when Alexander the Great is spreading general havoc through the world; and

Rome's unconquered legions urged their way
Unhurt through every toil and every clime,

his hand unseen was constantly directing the mysterious evolutions, and forming a conspicuous Theatre, on which his Son was to *make his soul an offering for sin*, and display the wonders of redeeming love to all the nations of the world. The vast extent of the Roman empire opened an easy communication for the joyful tidings of salvation to remote regions; their government and arts softened the savage minds of barbarous nations, and rendered them more susceptible of the benign influences of christianity: and the peaceful state of the world under the supremacy of one unrivalled empire afforded a blessed season for the works of righteousness and peace, and the promulgation of the religion of Christ throughout the earth. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

But, it is, we have reason to think, *the glorious and unexpected device* for counteracting the destruc-

tive consequences of sin by the interposition of a Redeemer, that would, in a peculiar manner, interest the attention of angels. That innocence should suffer for the guilty, and thus open the door of mercy for the transgressor, and at the same time afforded an occasion to display the wisdom, the justice, the holiness, and the love of God in their highest glory, is what could not, we may venture to conclude, enter into the heart of an angel to imagine; and what cannot fail to arrest their attention and to furnish them with themes of exalted contemplation. These exalted intelligences can be in no danger of contracting prejudices against this glorious display of divine munificence by vain and foolish allusions to the administration of justice, in criminal cases among men, as has been the case with some arrogant mortals who are not afraid to *speak evil* of what they do not understand. The angels of God know very well that the circumstances which would render it absurd, and a miserable perversion of justice, for an earthly judge to consign to death, an innocent person instead of the guilty, have no place at all in the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ for sinners. No man on earth has a right to dispose of his life at his own pleasure; no man on earth has power to lay down his life and to take it up again; nor is there among the sons of men any who could in this instance reform the guilty criminal, and give him a right to that life

which he had forfeited by his crime. But Jesus Christ had a just right and full power to do all these things. How puerile then, and how contemptible must all the cavils of self-sufficient men against this godlike miracle of mercy appear to the angels of God! These happy spirits see, that, the life which the dying Jesus gave for the redemption of the world is not lost; that he lives again; and from his throne of supreme dominion is continually dispensing the richest blessings upon the children of men. They also see that the guilty whom he has rescued from the grasp of justice by his precious blood, instead of being the worst, are the best members of society on earth, while they live; and that at death they become good citizens of the new Jerusalem. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

The glorious display of the Perfections of the great God which this dispensation of mercy affords, will, we may be sure, fill these Celestial Spirits with adoring wonder. For here mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, meet together; and here all the moral perfections of God shine forth in all their lustre, at the same time that they harmonise to accomplish man's salvation. No longer does unrelenting justice lift the iron rod, and demand, upon the penalty of eternal death, an adequate satisfaction for the insult offered to the Majesty of Heaven, and disorder introduced into the moral world by

sin. For our Surety hath paid our debt to the last farthing, and made a complete atonement for our offences. No longer does inviolable truth require that the threatened penalty should be inflicted upon a penitent, believing sinner; for his Redeemer has endured it himself to the very uttermost. No longer does mercy seem to advocate the wretched sinner's escape in vain. For a way is opened for the richest exercise of unbounded mercy to the most unworthy of our race. Nor does unerring wisdom seem any longer involved in clouds of thick darkness. No: Man was not made in vain. The insidious tempter's infernal arts are not only defeated but made subservient to important purposes in the moral world. Now, to know God and to enjoy him is the highest happiness of the most exalted creature. And I think we may venture to affirm that by contemplating the glorious displays of the divine Perfections which the gospel dispensation affords, angels may learn more of God than it would have been possible to learn in any other way. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

The moral influence of the gospel way of salvation upon the world, must also, without doubt, fill their pure minds with wonder and delight. No sooner does a sinner get a just view of sin as it appears in the cross of his Redeemer than he bursts the fetters of iniquity, pants for God and begins to feel the transforming efficacy of the love of Christ upon his

heart. Under the purifying influences of redeeming love, the libertine becomes a new man; ferocious passions are softened into humanity and gentleness; the rod of oppression crumbles to pieces; animosities, even among such as had been implacable enemies, die; and cordial love unites the heart of man to man. Nor have I any doubt but even these holy intelligences feel the happy influence of redeeming love upon themselves, strengthening every resolution of persevering obedience, and inspiring livelier sensations of gratitude for their happy state. But we have a sure promise of happier days in the church when the benign influences of our holy religion shall be more sensibly felt and evidently seen. When the glory of the Lord *shall cover the earth as the waters do the channels of the sea.* And to these days the angels are, we have reason to believe, looking forward with pleasing expectation.

When Peter wrote this Epistle, the glorious efficacy of the love of Christ was indeed very evident in the holy and devout lives of many thousands of his disciples. But a dismal night of anti-christian darkness was hastening on. Through the gloom, however, these prying intelligences would, it is probable, perceive the dawn of that day of gospel light which arose upon our world at the ever memorable era of the Protestant reformation. And may we not suppose, that these benevolent spirits are still looking forward through the thick cloud

that now rests upon our wretched world, to the glorious scenes which the approaching millenium will introduce? *Watchman what of the night?*—*Watchman what of the night?* is now the anxious enquiry of the friends of Zion among the sons of men. And shall we suppose that the angels who first proclaimed the joyful tidings of our Saviour's birth to the astonished Shepherds, can be inattentive to the signs of the present time? The present state of the world and the great revolutions taking place in our day are, no doubt, highly interesting to them; and it is highly probable that they may perceive what will be the final issue of the various commotions and bloody wars which now embroil the peace, and stain the soil of Europe. And may we not hope that the holy angels who once beheld with pleasure the profligacy and insufferable extortions of Antichrist, combined with the caprice and licentiousness of mighty Kings to introduce our happy reformation, are now rejoicing to observe, how the present disorders and commotions of the world will terminate in the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth?*

In the last place, *we may suppose the angels realising with inexpressible delight the happy consequences resulting from the dispensations of mercy*

* This Sermon was probably composed about the time of the French Revolution.

through a Redeemer to our guilty race in the eternal state.

When the Mystery of God shall be finished; when the last enemy shall be destroyed, and the ransomed of the Lord shall take their seats in glory everlasting, then and not till then, the gospel scheme of salvation shall shine forth into its full splendour. And the holy angels who are admitted to approach the throne of Jehovah, can, we have reason to believe, form juster conceptions of that happy state than we who dwell in tabernacles of clay. These pure spirits were, no doubt, filled with unspeakable pleasure when they beheld the bright emanations of divinity which shone around our blessed Redeemer in a state of deep abasement on earth.—How must they then rejoice to behold him upon the throne of universal empire in heaven. The most illustrious *image of the invisible God and the brightness of his glory*, the angels which excel in wisdom may evidently perceive that vast advantage will be derived to the universe from this method of rendering the Divine perfections, visible as it were to a creature's view. They may also perceive the happy influence of the gospel history on all other worlds now in existence if such there be, and all worlds which shall arise in existence in all the future periods of eternity. From the awful and glorious transactions of our world, the inhabitants

of every system in the universe to everlasting ages may obtain views of the vile nature of sin, and of the wisdom, and all the moral perfections of God, which innocent creatures could not otherwise have obtained, and which may be of infinite advantage forever. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

SERMON IV.

THE ORIGIN OF SIN.

ROMANS V. 19.

By the disobedience of one many were made sinners.

THAT the Great Creator and Lord of the universe must *love righteousness and hate iniquity*, is a truth too evident to be called in question. But man, his highly favoured creature man, is in a state of sin and misery. How shall we account for this? Could this be his original state? Can it reasonably be supposed that so unholy and unhappy a creature as man now is, could originally proceed from the pure hands of a beneficent Creator? As soon might polluted streams originate from a fountain of purest water. How then shall we account for the present state of human nature? Will the greatest philosophers of Greece, or of Rome, or of any other nation afford us any assistance in this interest-

ing inquiry? No, my brethren: *The world by wisdom neither knew God* nor the origin of moral evil. None of the Pagan philosophers can inform us how man became the degenerate, guilty creature he now is. But the mystery is unfolded in the Holy Scriptures. *God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.* Or to use the language of the text: *By the disobedience of one many were made sinners.*

Man in his first and best estate was, indeed, a glorious creature. His understanding was comprehensive and correct, his will and affections were pure and holy, his conscience was in a state of perfect tranquillity and peace. Nothing unholy met with the approbation either of the understanding, or the heart. In a word, man was originally made *in the image of God* his Maker—holy in his humble measure as God is holy. But by disobedience—by voluntary apostasy and revolt, this image has been marred. The natural faculties do indeed remain entire, but in a spiritual acceptation, at least they are greatly impaired. With apostate man God is no longer the object of supreme regard.—It is not from the enjoyment of God that he expects his highest happiness; but from the world;—from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. *How is the gold become dim and the most fine gold changed! The crown is fallen from our heads. Woe unto us for we have sinned!*

But let no arrogance of man presume to impeach the Divine procedure in this instance. *For as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many were made righteous.*

I shall endeavour to establish the proposition that *by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners.*

By *sinners* we are not, it appears to me, to understand the apostle to mean actual transgressors. For it is by our own transgressions that we become such. Should any, however, be disposed to take it in this acceptation it would not materially alter the state of the case under consideration. For if many become actual transgressors in consequence of their relation to Adam, they must inherit from him a depraved nature. And this is certainly the doctrine of the Scripture. In the prosecution of this subject, I shall endeavour to show, *That human nature is in a state of deep depravity or degeneracy, and that this depravity is to be ascribed to the disobedience of Adam.*

1. *Human nature is in a state of depravity.—* And this will, I think, appear with sufficient evidence from the following passages of Scripture:—*God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—The heart is deceitful above all things and des-*

perately wicked; who can know it? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God. They are all gone aside, they altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified. God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions. You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. I know in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The carnal mind is enmity against God. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. But to repeat all the texts of Holy Scripture which might be introduced to the same purpose would be a difficult task. The passages already quoted, appear to me to be abundantly sufficient. And when taken in union, they appear so very plain as not to need any comment. To elude the force of the above and similar proofs of human depravity, many ingenious but very unnatural criticisms are, I well know, employed by the opposers of this humbling doctrine. I shall therefore produce a few argu-

ments in its defence which cannot so easily be eluded.

1. The Gospel of Christ is in the Sacred Scriptures uniformly represented as *good news* or *glad tidings*. Why? Is it good news for innocent persons to be informed that it would be in their power to obtain pardon which they do not need? Is it good news to one in perfect health, to be informed that he is allowed free access to a skilful physician, for the healing of diseases from which he is entirely free? Is it good news to a man that owes nothing to any one, to be assured that an opulent and generous friend is able and willing to cancel all his debts? Surely not. If mankind be not in a state of sin and misery, to hear of the toilsome life and sufferings and death of the Son of God, would be afflictive in the extreme. That so illustrious a personage should abase himself so low, and endure such exquisite and protracted agonies in vain, would, were it a fact, be sufficient to cast a gloom over the face of the universe. If we are not guilty, we do not need pardon and consequently cannot need a Saviour either to procure or dispense it. If we are not guilty *Christ is dead in vain*. And is it possible for any one who believes in the Divine mission of Jesus Christ, thus to blaspheme the Wisdom and the Love of God his Maker?

2. The doctrine of regeneration furnishes another irresistible evidence in support of the proposi-

tion of the text. No doctrine is more clearly taught or more strongly inculcated than the absolute necessity of regeneration, or a change of heart in order to salvation. Our Saviour expressly assures us that, *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. Now, unless we are in a state of depravity, this requisition must be not only unnecessary but quite absurd. If we are by nature the children of God and in a state of complete innocence, nothing would be necessary in order to our complete and everlasting happiness, only, that our innocence should be preserved untainted. Surely the Wisdom of God could readily adopt every requisite measure for this purpose.—And in that case there would be no occasion either for regeneration or a Saviour.

3. The scriptural doctrines of human impotency, and the absolute necessity of supernatural grace in order to our deliverance from the pollution and power of sin, furnish another source of plain and conclusive arguments to establish the depravity of human nature. What are we to understand by this impotency? Any want of natural power to execute the hearty purposes of the mind? No; it is the want of a will—It is the want of a heart—Natural faculties are not wanting.—We have understanding, we have a will, we have affections; we have every faculty which the love and the service of God require, had we only the heart

to exercise them. And since no man has such a heart by nature, since it must be obtained, if obtained at all from God, and that in the way of mere grace, it evidently follows that no man is now in a state of unsullied innocence by nature, or in other words, that we are all by nature in a state of depravity and guilt. Thus we may see that the various offices of the Holy Spirit; his enlightening, sanctifying and invigorating influences, as well as the doctrine of salvation by supernatural grace, all conspire to establish the mortifying truth contained in our text.

But if the express testimonies of the Holy Scriptures confirmed by the most important doctrines of the gospel, be thought by any one insufficient to establish the universal degeneracy of our nature, turn your eyes upon the system we inhabit, and say; Is it credible that such an imperfect and perishable system was intended to be the abode of man in a state of perfect obedience? Why such incessant labour for a subsistence, which might have been afforded by the spontaneous productions of a fertile soil? What are we to think of poisonous plants and venomous serpents? What is the meaning of earthquakes, famines, the desolating volcanoe, and the wide wasting pestilence? Surely nothing but sin could arm the elements against our peace.—What are we to think of the numerous and sore afflictions of this life? Can it be just thus to afflict

the innocent? Are not these afflictions striking evidences of human guilt? So they appear to me. I will, however, readily acknowledge that they are not in my opinion the most conclusive in this interesting case. No; it is not so much poisonous plants and venomous serpents, or the wide wasting pestilence, or any, or all the convulsions of the world of nature, as the envenomed tongue, the contagions of vice and the moral desolations of sin that appear to form the most irresistible evidence of human depravity. What is the earth itself but a great *aceldama*, a *field of blood*? Surely when the streams are thus polluted the fountain cannot be pure.

O shame to men
Devil with devil damned firm concord hold,
Men only disagree of creatures rational,
Waiting each other to destroy.

And can such creatures be in a state of unsullied purity? It is impossible. But do we need such a variety of evidences in so plain a case? A careful attention to what passes in our own breasts might, it appears to me, be abundantly sufficient. Who is most disposed to set himself in opposition to this doctrine? The most upright of the sons of men, the genuine Christian,—whose heart burns with love to God and dilates with the most generous benevolence to his fellow-men? No: my brethren. Of all men on earth he has the most humbling

views of his own natural depravity. Most sensibly does he feel and most pathetically does he lament a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* No; it is the man whose heart is not right with God, who is most disposed to call in question his own depravity. But a little attention to what passes in his own breast might readily convince him of his error.

Let us, my brethren, endeavour to form the least imperfect, since we cannot form perfect ideas of the attributes of God our Maker. *There is none in heaven or on the earth who may be likened unto him.* If all the wisdom and the virtues of all men and all angels were united in one person, it would fall infinitely short of the perfections of God. What then ought we to think of a heart in which there is no love to God—no love to infinite amiableness? Is it possible that such a heart should retain unimpaired the original traces of the image of God? It is impossible. Such a heart must most assuredly be sadly disordered, *desperately wicked*. And such is the heart of every man by nature.

Take a view of the general conduct of our fellow-men upon the earth. What is the chief object of their pursuit? The favour of God their Maker? No: it is for the most part some earthly good—very often some hurtful vanity under the name of good. And when the laws of God come in compe-

tition with some earthly delight—Nay, I might say, when the laws of God and his honour come in competition with some guilty abominable passion, the latter is commonly preferred to the former. And can a stronger evidence of human depravity be required?

Why do any set themselves in opposition to the laws of God in any instance? They are all holy, just and good. And is it possible for any man who would rather violate the Divine law, and consequently set himself in direct opposition to God's holy government, than deny himself a sinful gratification, to have a good heart? Surely not. When this is the case, there can in a moral view, be *no soundness from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot*. When this is the case *the whole head must be sick, and the whole heart faint*.

Do the arguments now adduced appear to any weak and inconclusive? No one will, it is hoped, undertake to say that enmity to God, or which is the same thing, the want of love to him is not a sufficient evidence of moral depravity. This would itself, form an irresistible evidence of the fact. For, were not the mind miserably blinded and the heart sadly disordered by sin, it would be impossible for any one to entertain a doubt in so plain a case.

Is it then the fact, which any one is disposed to call in question? Let him carefully attend to the various exercises and all the most affectionate

desires of his own mind. Is it natural and easy for you or for me to seek our supreme happiness in God our Maker, and the sublime exercises of devotion? It is not. *The flesh which lusteth against the Spirit* even in the consecrated breast of a Christian, is to him a satisfactory evidence of the reverse. And with respect to those who expect their chief happiness from earthly enjoyments, this circumstance alone ought to convince them, that to untainted innocence they cannot possibly have the shadow of a claim. To love the creature more than the Creator must certainly be exceedingly criminal; can be nothing less than idolatry. Whatever we love most, and from which we expect our chief happiness, must be our God. And now may I not be permitted to ask every individual in this assembly; Do you find it easy and natural to delight in the God of heaven as your chief good? Is it natural and easy for you *to love him supremely and your neighbour as yourselves?* If so, it must certainly be equally so to obey his laws; for they are all holy and good, the copy of his holy perfections. Is there then no instance in which you find it difficult to render a perfect obedience to the law of your Maker? No instance in which you omit known duty, or do what you know to be wrong? I cannot suppose that any will undertake to answer these interrogatories in the affirmative. No, my brethren. Conscience if suffered to speak

out will tell every man that he is a sinner, a grievous offender. Miserable condition this!

And is this really the state of human nature? What a solemn overwhelming reflection! What if we should die in this state—with a heart set in opposition to God our Maker and utterly disqualified for happiness in a future life! Here there may be some satisfaction in the gratifications of carnal appetites, and the exercises of the most impious affections. But this will not be the case in a future state! There no objects of sensual desire exist.—The impious and unsocial affections will indeed have in a future state the most unconfined career. But this will be no satisfaction, no advantage to the wicked. No; it will be a great aggravation to their misery. Did the man who now ventures to blaspheme his Maker, see what a great and just God he is setting at defiance, the view would be absolutely overwhelming. Did the malicious and unjust perceive in their extent the consequences of their crimes upon their own peace and happiness even in this life, they would shrink from them with horror. In a future state, the darkness resting upon the atrocity of guilt will be dispersed, and then will be exhibited to the transgressor's astonished view that God whom he has offended, and all the horrible consequences of his crimes throughout an endless duration.

But though it will be readily acknowledged that man is now in a state of sin as well as misery, yet it may be alledged that human depravity is not natural—that it is the result of bad example or a defective education. That much of the wickedness now abroad in the earth ought to be ascribed to these sources will readily be conceded. But why is it that bad, is generally so much more efficacious than good example? Are not reason and conscience and genuine honour, and happiness, both in this life and that to come, on the side of virtue? Most undoubtedly they are. How then does it happen that the former has prevailed in every instance? If man were merely the creature of education and example, when these are good, our youth would be uniformly virtuous,—would fear God and obey his holy laws. But do we not evidently perceive that children enjoying all these advantages manifest the same perverse natural dispositions with others? This is too evident to be denied, and consequently a sufficient refutation of the vain pretence under consideration. No: it is not entirely from education or example that we derive our wicked propensities. In this way they may, and indeed too often are, very much increased; but to ascribe their origin to this source is to set at defiance the evident results of universal experience, as well as the express declarations of the Holy Scriptures. Children who have the best example set before them from their very infancy,

from the earliest dawn of the mental ray, discover the same natural aversion to God and godliness, the same perverseness, the same irregularities of the passions with others. A striking and resistless evidence, that human depravity is not to be ascribed to bad example or defective education.

2. I have already observed that by the term sinners in our text, we are to understand, not actual transgressors, but depraved creatures. It is not the sin of Adam, but our voluntary transgression, that constitutes us actual sinners. But by the transgression of our federal Head, we are constituted sinners by nature, or in other words, we are in a state of great depravity—prone to evil and averse to good. Not that there is in apostate man an original propensity to evil as such, antecedent to any choice made by the mind, or that any one is forced to choose evil, in preference to good, contrary to his will:—but, that such is the present constitution of human nature, that earthly things are preferred to spiritual. We are all naturally disposed to prefer, as our chief good, the world and its enjoyments to God himself, the author of our being, and of all real happiness.

But how it will be said, is any one to blame for acting agreeably to the nature, which he has received from his Creator? How can it be just, to inflict upon us punishment for any transgression or crime, which we did not personally commit.

These objections are, it must be acknowledged, at first view very plausible. I hope however, to convince every intelligent and attentive hearer, that they are by no means insurmountable. And here I must be permitted to take it for granted, that moral as well as natural evil is now in the world.

This is a fact that cannot be called in question. For it is a fact confirmed by daily and incontestible experience, as well as by the infallible decisions of the Holy Scriptures. And this being admitted, it will follow, that the believer in Divine revelation is not exclusively obliged to account for the present state of apostate man. Do any who admit the depravity of human nature, and yet object to the Scripture account of that tragical event, furnish us with a better? This they cannot do. This no one will, I imagine, undertake. Do they then intend to impeach the justice, or the goodness of their Maker? Surely if it be just for God to bring us into existence in our present state of depravity, without any regard to the transgression of a Federal Head and representative, it could not be unjust to create man originally in a state of perfect holiness, and to suffer our whole race to fall from that, to our present state; to the state in which we might, without any impeachment either of the justice or the goodness of our Creator, have originally been made. Nay, to the state in which the objectors, I have in view, must believe we are actually made.

This is so evident as to need neither proof nor illustration. Thus we may see how easy it is to stop the mouth of every caviller against this dispensation, mysterious as it may at first appear.

Now since we know it to be a fact, that man is in a state of depravity, and since the holy Scriptures have assigned for this fact, the only reason which has ever been produced; shall we undertake to reject this account, because it contains something to us incomprehensible? That every moral agent should undergo a trial, before admission into a state of inamissible happiness, is nothing more than ought to be expected. Nothing surely can be more reasonable, than, that there should be a correspondence between the conduct and the state of a moral agent in all the periods of his existence. Endless happiness must certainly be a strong expression of the approbation of the great Creator. But, it is impossible for him to approve of any obedience, that is not perfectly voluntary. It is therefore undoubtedly proper that every moral agent should be placed in a state which will afford an opportunity of rendering or refusing this obedience to the Great Sovereign of the universe. And this was the case with respect to angels as well as men.

Now a trial must imply the possibility of transgression and revolt. If it be impossible for a creature to transgress the law of God, he cannot in a

strict and proper sense be said to be in a state of trial at all. If you suspend a body in the air, to see whether it will fall to the earth, and at the same time hold it up in your hand, this is no trial of the case. Nor could angels or men be, in a strict and proper sense, in a state of trial, had a divine influence been afforded, which would have rendered it impossible for them to sin. Why then should it be thought strange, that man should have become a transgressor, an apostate creature? That the Great Creator could not have prevented this unhappy event, we are far from undertaking to suggest: but this we may affirm, that no advantage or assistance, which man had a right to expect, was withheld.— Or, in other words, at the same time, that he was left to the freedom of his own will, every thing was done which was best to be done, in order to prevent his apostasy. Nay, we may without presumption go farther and say, that it was better that man should apostatize, than, that recourse should have been had to any measures not employed to prevent that tragical event. But let none presume from this representation to conclude, that it was therefore best that man should sin. This will by no means follow from the statement of the case now given. To say that man has in this instance done best, because it was better that Heaven should permit his revolt, rather than use measures which his unerring wisdom did not employ, to prevent it, is

absurd in the extreme. In this way every transgression, the most enormous not excepted, that has ever been committed on earth, might be justified. But I must not take up your time in refuting sentiments at once so impious and absurd.

But why should we suffer in consequence of the transgression of our first parent, for a crime that we did not personally commit? I answer because we are the descendants of an apostate parent. But especially because that parent was constituted our Federal Head and representative. Look around my brethren on the face of the earth. Do you not often see children suffer in consequence of the ignorance, the indiscretion, the follies and the vices, and sometimes the diseases of their parents? This cannot be denied. These sufferings in many instances at least, are evidently inflicted by the God of heaven in the ordinary course of his providence. And this is the same thing as to say, it is just.—Why then in a similar way, may not the children of an apostate parent be punished, for the transgression of that parent? No good reason can possibly be assigned why this may not be the case. Nay, with abundantly more reason, it appears to me that this may be done, for our first parent was also our Federal Head: And therefore what he did, as our representative, naturally falls upon us. Take a view of all the various forms of representative agency, and you will find the interests of the represented,

involved in the conduct of their representative. It will not, we hope, be objected by the ignorance, the impiety, or the petulance of any man, that we did not choose Adam as our representative. No one surely will undertake to imagine, that the Great Creator derives from us his right to govern us.—*He hath made us, and not we ourselves*, and therefore he must undoubtedly have a right to dispose of us according to his pleasure. Does this seem hard? It ought not to be considered a grievance, but a great privilege, that He is pleased to pay a particular attention, both to our temporal and everlasting interests.

What reason have we to imagine, that had we been left to stand or fall for ourselves, we should have acted a better part than our first Father did? None at all that I can perceive; and if not, no injustice has been done us, by appointing Him our Federal Head and Representative. Had it been otherwise—had we been left to stand or fall for ourselves, in the provision originally made for our first parents, by the covenant of Grace, we could not have had any interest. A reflection that ought, it appears to me, to reconcile each of us to this dispensation of Divine Providence. But, if any should be disposed still to demur, let me ask them; Suppose it were in your power to be in a state of perfect innocence, as Adam originally was, and to be permitted in that state to undergo a trial of per-

fect and perpetual obedience for yourselves, and that, without any prospect of pardon through a Mediator, should you fail in a single instance, would you prefer this, to your present state; your present prospects of life and salvation through Jesus Christ? Now how great soever our transgressions may be, pardon is offered to us upon terms the most eligible which imagination can devise, *without money and without price*. No hard or unreasonable conditions are imposed upon us. Nothing but what it is our interest, as well as our duty to comply with. In a word, the way of gospel salvation is perfectly suited to our impotency to do good, as well as our guilt. And is there an individual who would to these prospects, prefer the way of life by *the works of the law*? I can scarcely think this a probable case. And if not, we certainly ought not to object to the dispensation under consideration.—No, instead of finding fault, we ought to be thankful for the grace of the gospel; very thankful, that since *by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; by the obedience of one, many were made righteous*.

Let it not however be imagined, that the dispensations of Gospel mercy are introduced to justify the conditions of the covenant of works. Does the penalty denounced against transgressing or apostate man, imply any thing unjust? No: not in a single instance. You will readily perceive, that to Hea-

ven we could have no meritorious claim, on account of any obedience innocent man could render.—Nay, the Great Creator might, undoubtedly at any time resume his own gift, life itself, at pleasure, even though that life had not been forfeited by sin. Nor could any one have a meritorious claim to perfect happiness, on account of his obedience to the Divine law.

Whatever the goodness of God may lead us to expect, it seems utterly impossible, that any obedience performed by us, should entitle us to perfect happiness. If our enjoyments rise above our sufferings, existence is a blessing. And this it appears to me, is all that even an innocent creature could claim, (admitting the propriety of such a right,) from the justice of his Creator. Does the awful denunciation of death, consign to endless misery, any who have not committed actual sin? Of this we have, that I can find, no evidence. Does it then consign the actual transgressor to any unjust or unnecessary punishment? By no means. Every man's capacity and state and advantages and disadvantages, will be taken into view, and none will in any instance be either unjustly or unnecessarily afflicted. And this we may venture to affirm would have been the case, had a Saviour never appeared to justify an individual of our guilty race. And will not these considerations be sufficient to silence every objec-

tion to the covenant which the God of Heaven was pleased to enter into, with his creature man?

But the Gospel, though not necessary to justify the law of innocence, must by all means be taken into view, in order that we may form just ideas of the measures, which it has pleased the beneficent Creator to employ for our good. We must not imagine that the plan of salvation through a Redeemer was introduced after the fall of man, to counteract the unexpected inroads of moral evil, upon the happiness of moral agents. No: it originated in the councils of eternity, and must consequently have been as much a part of the plan, which the Divine Wisdom had formed for the government of the world, as the *ordinances of heaven* and the laws of nature. Now if you take away any part of this plan, can you affirm with certainty, any thing respecting any other part of it? Had the way of salvation, through an almighty Redeemer been no part of this plan, what evidence have we, that such a creature as man would ever have been brought into existence? None at all, that I can perceive. And if not, how futile, not to say presumptuous, must it be for us to undertake to say how, in case he should be brought into existence, he would have been disposed of by the wisdom of his Maker? It is enough for us to know, that as *by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.*—

Or in other words, *life and death* are set before us in the Gospel; that if we *choose life* we shall never die; and, that even upon the infatuated transgressor who refuses life; who refuses to be saved in the way of the gospel, no unrighteous, no unnecessary punishment will be inflicted. Let us then embrace this glorious overture, and all will be well. We shall arise to a state of blessedness more exalted and more perfect than we lost in Adam: we shall dwell forever in the paradise of God.

SERMON V.

THE CARNAL MIND.

ROMANS viii. 6.

For to be carnally minded is death.

THAT the sinner who perseveres in a course of impenitence and unbelief must die, must be consigned to endless ruin, will be generally admitted by the hearers of the gospel. But how few seem to consider the sentence against the ungodly as already passed, and in a state of execution. And yet this, it appears to me, is expressly affirmed, or at least evidently implied in the words of our text, "*To be carnally minded, is death.*"

This alarming declaration, may, it is true, possibly be only intended to assure us, that they who live and die carnally minded, will most certainly be condemned to final destruction in a future state. When any man has committed a capital offence,—an of-

fence, for which no pardon can be expected, it is not uncommon to speak of him as a dead man.— And in the Holy Scriptures, what will certainly take place, is sometimes represented as having taken place already. Thus, when our Redeemer was just about to offer up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he speaks of the transaction as already past. “*This is my body which is broken for you.*” But when interpreting the Scriptures, we ought never to depart from the most natural, and strictly grammatical sense of language, without evident necessity. And can there be any necessity for supposing, that the present time is used for the future in this instance? I think not. For it is a truth, that *to be carnally minded is death*, in the present state of existence. And this is the proposition which in dependence upon Divine assistance, I shall endeavour to illustrate and confirm on this occasion.

By the term death, we are not to understand merely the separation of the soul from the body; its most natural and ordinary acceptance. For in this sense the spiritually, as well as the carnally minded, die.

No: this expressive term, is in this place used with an evident reference to a still more unnatural and a much more tragical separation; the separation of the soul from God. And this, indeed, seems to be principally intended in the threatening, denounced against our federal head in case of dis-

obedience. “*In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.*” For it was a spiritual, not a temporal death, that our first Parents incurred as the immediate consequence of their transgression. And the execution of a threatening ought, certainly, to be considered the best illustration of its meaning.

The term, which we find in the original, and which in our translation has very properly been rendered Carnal, may, not improbably, have a primary reference to the material part of our nature. As human nature consists of two distinct principles, body and spirit, or matter and mind, they who pay the chief attention to the body, or who expect their chief happiness from sensual gratifications, or even from the enjoyments of the world in any form, are in scripture language denominated carnal; are said to be carnally minded. And that in this acceptance, *to be carnally minded is death*, in the sense just stated, it will not be difficult to show.

This may be fairly inferred from the last clause in this verse. “*To be spiritually minded is life and peace.*” For the one is, we find, placed in direct opposition to the other. And as the latter evidently implies life, in the sublimest sense of that term, spiritual life, so must the former be intended to denote just the reverse, spiritual death; the only death which a soul can be properly said to die.— It would be easy to multiply scriptural testimonies to the same purpose. But the reason assigned in

support of this sentiment by the apostle himself, in the following verse, appears to me abundantly sufficient. *To be carnally minded is death. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.* A solemn and awful charge this. Nay, it is death—spiritual death, most assuredly. But can this be the natural state of man? Is it possible that man, a creature made *in the image of his Maker*, can now be sunk into a state of such deep degeneracy, and be found at enmity with God? Yes, my brethren, it is more than possible: it is a well established fact. I am, however, far from supposing, that the children of men are, for the most part, conscious of this opposition to God their Maker. Nay, it is highly probable that the reverse is the case. It is not, I believe, uncommon for some of the most profligate of our guilty race, to form an idea of God, with which they are well pleased; to consider him as a Being of the most unlimited beneficence. So beneficent, that he will not punish them for their transgressions. But could these workers of iniquity, could any impenitent transgressor be brought to entertain correct ideas of Divine justice; Nay, could he only form correct ideas of the goodness of God, so as to perceive that even this attribute requires his reformation or his destruction, he would, I am disposed to think, either feel a sensible opposition of heart to God his Maker, or be disposed to turn from his iniquity. But, however this may be, nothing is

more common, than for the children of men to mistake their real character, and to be utterly unacquainted with the principles which exercise a controlling influence over them. This is so evident, that it can scarcely have escaped the attention of any careful observer of human life. How often do we observe the avaricious, the proud, and even the prodigal, imagine themselves the very reverse of what their intimate acquaintance perceive them to be. But *the tree is best known by its fruits.* It will, I hope, be readily admitted that no human heart can be in a state of entire indifference to God, our Almighty Maker and Lord of the universe. Among men there may, perhaps, be found some characters so absolutely void of all interesting qualities, as to excite in the heart of an intelligent observer no sensible emotion of any kind. But this can never be the case with regard to the attributes of an all perfect character. The heart that does not love, must be at enmity with, God. And it will, I presume, be admitted, that genuine love to supreme excellence, to infinite amiableness, must be supreme. And supreme love will certainly produce a supreme regard to his honour; and an unreserved respect to all his most righteous and equitable laws. Every instance then, of voluntary disobedience to any of the commandments of God, must be a convincing proof of the want of love to him—of enmity to him. And these instances are by no means

uncommon. There is not a man upon the face of the globe, who has any right to plead exemption from this humiliating charge. Man was originally made *in the image of God* his Maker. And this image, we are assured by an inspired apostle, consisted *in knowledge and true holiness*. But this original glory of our nature, is departed from us. And the loss of this image is, in scripture language, very properly denominated *death*.

But this interesting subject, may, I am disposed to think, be best illustrated by a reference to natural death. For it was, I doubt not, by way of allusion to that solemn event, that the separation of the soul from God was denominated death.

You have all, my brethren, had an opportunity of observing the change made by death upon the human system. The brightest eye loses its lustre; the most comely countenance becomes pale and ghastly. The nervous arm loses its strength, and the most active and enterprising are reduced to a state of entire inactivity. In vain are the fairest prospects presented to the eye; it discerns them not. In vain should the thunders of Heaven, or the harp of an angel address the ear; it is to both alike insensible. The desire of our eyes and the idols of society become offensive; utterly disqualified for all intercourse with the living: and we long to see the lifeless and ghastly remains of those who were dear to us in life, committed to the earth;

ashes to ashes; earth to earth! But this, perhaps, it will be said, is only a figurative representation of a sinner who is *dead in trespasses and sin*. Yes, my brethren, it is a figurative representation; nor is it by any means literally exact; but the resemblance is probably not so distant, as a number may be disposed to imagine. O how often have we attempted, and to how little purpose, to exhibit to the view of benighted transgressors the beauties of holiness and the deformity of sin! They for the most part understand us not. Had the people of this audience correct ideas of sin, would it be possible for an individual to go on a moment longer in a course of voluntary transgression? As soon would he remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments of the dead; as soon would he make his bed in darkness and *say to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my sister*. To an enlightened mind, the pollutions of sin are worse than death and the grave. *Who shalt deliver me from the body of this death!* was the impassioned exclamation of the apostle Paul, under an enlightened and impressive sense of sin. Had we just ideas of the beauty and excellence of holiness, would it be possible for us to rest in the mere general wish only for as much holiness, when about to leave the world, as shall be necessary to qualify us for the enjoyments of the heavenly state? No; my brethren, we should then *hunger and thirst* for

it, as the thirsty *hart pants after the water brooks*. Can any thing be more awful than the representations of the perilous state of an impenitent transgressor in this book? Can any thing be conceived more irresistibly alluring, than the accents of gospel mercy to perishing sinners? And yet, how few are disposed to pay any proper attention either to the one or the other! The greater part of gospel hearers, the greater part, I fear, of the people I am now addressing, seem determined to pursue the way that ends in destruction, whatever the consequences may be. What, my brethren, must be the state of a sinner, who can hear the thunders of Sinai over his head with little or no emotion? What must be the state of a heart that can set at defiance all the overwhelming allurements of the love of Christ? *To be carnally minded, is death.*

In one respect, however, it may appear that the similitude between natural and spiritual death entirely fails. No where, it must, I am afraid, be conceded, do we see more activity, or zeal, or enterprising energy, than among the *carnally minded*!—But for what purpose?—That they may *glorify God* their Maker, and *lay up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come*? That they may *lay hold on eternal life*? For these great purposes they labour not. *For the meat that perisheth*, for the transitory interests of this life, they do indeed often labour hard. And under the influences of

that *fear which hath torment*, they may sometimes be much engaged in religious duties. But to interests purely spiritual and holy they are dead,—absolutely insensible. *For to be carnally minded, is death.*

Were it in my power to do justice to the next instance of resemblance between natural and spiritual death, it would, I fear, be offensive to a number of the people now present. I have indeed seen in some devotional compositions, much praise bestowed upon the lifeless remains of a departed saint.—This idea, however, appears to arise from an imaginary association between the departed spirit and these remains. It is, indeed, a possible case that the enraptured mind may, as it retires, leave some faint traces of its joy upon the unanimated clay.—But these faint traces are insufficient to counteract or to conceal the ghastliness of death. Let it not, however, be imagined that it is by any means our wish to draw the lineaments of apostate man in too dark colours. *Traces of the Image of God*, in which he was originally created, may still be discerned amidst the ruins of his deep apostacy. The *carnally minded* may excel in mental energy, in a happy natural disposition or constitution, may excel in prudence, and, indeed, in many respects be truly amiable. But still *to be carnally minded, is death.* For in the carnal mind there can be nothing amia-

ble. It is the reverse of the image of God, the standard of all moral excellence. It is moral deformity in the most emphatical sense of that term. Or to say all in a word, it is *enmity to God*. And can any thing be more vile, can any thing be more hateful, than enmity to a Being of infinite amiableness? Very intimate is the union between the soul and the body in the present state of existence. Are we delighted with the grand and beautiful scenes of the visible creation or charmed with the powers of harmony? It is through the medium of the bodily organs, that these enjoyments are communicated.—Nor does the mind partake of any pleasure, or partake of any pain to which the body is insensible.

More intimate, however, it appears to me, was that communion which man in a state of perfect innocence enjoyed with God his Maker. In the shades of night, as well as in the light of the sun, *shinning in his strength*; in every shrub of the forest, in every plant in his Garden, as well as in the flowers of the field, and the starry expanse, he beheld God, and enjoyed him. But *what concord is there between Christ and Belial, what communion hath light with darkness; what fellowship is there between a holy God and a carnal mind?* The tokens of the Divine presence and the manifestations of Divine glory in the works of the visible creation, are essentially the same now, that they were in a state of innocence. But to these

tokens and manifestations the carnal mind is strangely insensible. From all the real manifestations of God in his supreme glory—in the glory of his holiness, the carnal mind retires into its own native darkness, and the gloom of spiritual death. Deplorable situation! It is only in God that an immortal mind can find rest and peace. To be cut off then from all communion with God, must be the greatest calamity that can befall such a creature as man. Yes, my brethren, *as to be spiritually minded, is life and peace, so to be carnally minded, is death and misery.*

The representation now given of the guilty and miserable state of a sinner in his sins, will not, I fear, be agreeable to every individual present. This, indeed, is not to be expected. Paul himself *was once alive without the law.* It was not until *the commandment came* with light and power to his heart, that *he died*; that he saw, and felt, and acknowledged himself to be dead in trespasses and sins.

It is with the preachers of the gospel often a subject of anxious inquiry, Why it is so despised and neglected by a large proportion of its hearers?—And I have been sometimes led to apprehend that too little attention for the most part has been paid to the miserable situation of a sinner in his sins; in the horrors of spiritual death. Ah! could all see what it is to be ignorant of God—to be unlike God;

to be unholy as he is holy—to be in a state of enmity to him—to be *dead in trespasses and sins*, with what eager haste should we fly to *lay hold upon the hope set before us?* And as an additional motive to do this, I must observe, that spiritual death, prolonged, will be eternal death: or rather it is eternal death begun. A consideration that ought, surely, to awaken the most secure from security, and to operate as a resistless motive to betake ourselves to that Redeemer, who is *the light of the world* and the life of dying sinners. No, my brethren, it must not be imagined that a great work must be accomplished; that vast power must be employed to fit a sinner for a state of final misery: only let the soul in its present unsanctified state be separated from the body, and thus cut off from all the communications of the Divine goodness, and it will find itself instantly transformed—transformed did I say? Alas! there is no occasion for any change, but that of state and circumstances. Let a miserable sinner whose heart is at enmity with God, be cut off from the restraints of grace, from all mercy and all hope of mercy, and he will instantaneously find himself a guilty, blaspheming fiend—fully qualified for the dreadful works of miserable immortals. But is it possible, perhaps, some of you are ready to exclaim, is it possible that the God of love will inflict such heavy punishments upon

any of the creatures he hath made? Is it possible that he will consign to endless ruin—to everlasting death the work of his own hands, however marred and defaced? Let the inquiry, my brethren, rather be, Will the God of justice exert a miraculous power to deliver from eternal death the soul that leaves the body in a state of impenitence and unbelief?

SERMON VI.

THE GOSPEL WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.

1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

THAT it is our indispensable duty to repent of our sins, and wherein we have done iniquity, to do so no more, appears to be an evident dictate of the light of nature. But whether God will be graciously pleased to forgive our transgressions, upon our repentance and amendment of life, or in any way; the light of nature cannot inform us. Miserable situation this! To be making constant and hasty advances to our final destiny, without having it in our power to know what that destiny is likely to be! To perceive ourselves liable, every moment, to be torn away from all the enjoyments of this

life, without knowing how to secure a happy immortality! Such, my brethren, is the situation of apostate man on earth, without a revelation from God himself, to clear up his doubts, and point out the way in which a sinner may be saved. But, blessed be God! we are not left in this state of uncertainty and doubt. Such a revelation has been afforded us? Yes, my brethren, *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

It seems hardly necessary to observe, that by the term, *Faithful saying*, we are to understand the Apostle to mean, the report of the gospel, or the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ.— And, *that this report is worthy of all acceptation*, I shall in dependance upon divine assistance endeavour to show in the following discourse.

The gospel report is *worthy of all acceptation* because it is *a faithful saying*. It is not a *cunningly devised fable*: but a well attested fact, a glorious reality. And this is what we want. In the time of health and prosperity, it is, indeed, common for the children of men to rest their eternal interests upon the general mercy of God, upon some unsupported conjectures, or presumptuous hope: but in the time of deep affliction; and especially in the hour of death, we shall need something more than conjecture and unsupported hope. When we shall find ourselves just about to close our eyes upon this

amidst such a profusion of his benefits as we receive every day, to call his beneficence in question? Why did he either call men or angels into existence? Was it on account of any advantage, he expected to derive from the work of his own hands? No: it was not that he might receive any thing from them: but that he might be glorified in communication made to them. Why did he bring into existence the admirable system we inhabit? Are the tints of a flower, or the fruits of the earth, or the splendour of a star, any thing to him? No, it was for us *he laid the foundations of the earth and garnished the heavens.* It was for us that he spread out beauty and grandeur over the face of the visible creation. Why does he load us daily with his benefits? Does he need our praise and thanksgiving? Far from it. Very poor, very inadequate are the best returns we can make for the blessings of his goodness. It is that his goodness may lead us to repentance. And even when he afflicts us, he has the same beneficent purpose in view. Thus all the laws of God, and all the dispensations of his providence, whether prosperous or adverse, are calculated for our advantage. And must it not be exceedingly criminal to counteract all the energies of the divine goodness to us? Can you, my brethren, consider what God has done for you, and what you have done against him, and against yourselves, and not tremble? What would you think of a miserable

mortal, who should blaspheme God or any of his adorable perfections? You would not surely consider him as an offender of a very inferior grade. Now every voluntary offender blasphemes, either the wisdom or the goodness of God: For, whatever the understanding may suggest, the language of the heart in this case must be, *The law I am transgressing is not good for me.* This is certainly the same thing, with impeaching the wisdom or the goodness of its divine author. And this is, by necessary consequence, the same thing as to say "*There is no God.*" For if the being we call God, be defective either in goodness or wisdom, he is not God in the proper sense of that term—not a Being of infinite perfections.

And what are we, my brethren, to think of the state of a sinner, capable of all this atheistical impiety? Surely, he must be in a most perilous situation. Surely, he must stand in the most absolute need of a pardon, from that God against whom he has sinned. And this pardon the gospel of Christ offers to him. Nor is it possible to obtain it in any other way. Such a transgressor must also stand in equal need of grace, to sanctify his nature, and qualify him for the holy enjoyments of heaven. And this grace can be obtained, only through the gospel of Christ. And do we need any further proof, that it is *worthy of all acceptance?*

Thus we may see, that, if it be necessary to be happy in a future state; if it be necessary for us to escape the everlasting wrath of God, the salvation of Jesus Christ must be indispensably necessary for us; must be *worthy of all acceptation*. It will not I hope be necessary to describe *the terrors of the Lord*, in order to shew that they are too terrible for us to endure: or the joys of heaven, to show that they are worthy of our attention. Instead of dwelling upon subjects so common and familiar, I would observe:

That the gospel is *worthy of all acceptation*, because it is perfectly suited to an otherwise hopeless case. The law we had broken, our Redeemer has perfectly fulfilled; and the penalty to which we have become obnoxious, he has endured to the very uttermost. So that *God can now be just and the justifier of the guiltiest sinner who believeth in his Son*. But we can no more believe, in our own strength, than render a perfect obedience to the law of God. Nor is this required. We are required to believe in Christ, not in our own strength, but as assisted by his grace. He is mercifully pleased to send his Spirit, *to convince us of sin and of righteousness and of judgment*. Nor is the believer left to make his way, through hosts of powerful and opposing enemies in his own strength. No: the promise is "*As thy day is, so shall thy strength be. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*"

The gospel of Christ is *worthy of all acceptance*, because it is worthy of God, as well as perfectly suited to the miserable condition of man. Here the wisdom of God shines conspicuous. Here divine justice is arrayed in all its majesty, at the same time that mercy appears in all its glory. Here the sanctions of the divine law have their full efficacy, at the same time that the transgressor is preserved from destruction. And are not these observations sufficient to show that the salvation of Christ is *worthy of all acceptance*? Need I mention the miseries from which it will preserve, or the blessedness to which it will exalt all its subjects? These representations may be supposed to be quite familiar to your minds. In a word, there is nothing grievous or afflictive from which it will not preserve or in a short time deliver—nothing great or good—nothing conducive to the dignity or happiness of man, which it will not secure and confirm. It *has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*. And I must be permitted to add, it is a free salvation—free as the air in which we breathe—free as the light of *the sun which shines* without discrimination *upon the just as well as the unjust*.

And now may I hope that these considerations will prevail? Will any of you reject a salvation, so worthy of God and so perfectly suited to your case? Will any of you disobey the express command of God your Maker, and slight the most

astonishing exhibitions of his grace? Consider the expense at which this salvation has been procured. There is something absolutely overwhelming in the thought! It was bought with blood; with blood divine; with the blood of our innocent Redeemer. A price of infinite value! And will you slight or reject it? Do it not. Consider what you will lose, and that forever. Consider the abyss of misery into which you will plunge your own souls if you do—and be wise.

May I then hope that these considerations will prevail with every individual? I cannot help fearing the reverse will be the unhappy case, with some of you. And must I give up an individual to everlasting destruction? *O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the insensibility and infatuation of impenitent offenders! I call heaven to record against you that life and death, the blessing and the curse have, once more, been set before you. O that you would all without exception choose life, that you may live, and be happy in the salvation of your Divine Redeemer forever!*

SERMON VII.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

THE doctrine of justification through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, is justly considered a fundamental article of the Christian faith. And it is an article, to which great opposition has been made, by the enemies of our holy religion. It is not, however, from open and avowed enemies, that the Church has most to apprehend. No: it is from the hands of her professed friends and teachers, that she has received the deepest wounds. Against all the machinations of the former, she will be upon her guard; but when the latter undertake to subvert the true faith, under the specious pretence of purifying it from all adventitious admixtures, their

insidious attempts are often attended with great success. And, such appears to have been the case in the Church of Galatia. Her teachers had caused her to err from the simplicity of the faith, as it is in a crucified Redeemer—endeavouring to bring her into bondage, to the abrogated rituals of the Jewish law. And, this they did, not from their own conviction it seems; but, that they might conciliate the good will of the persecuting Jews, and on that ground secure to themselves all the respect from persecuting heathens, which they were disposed to pay to the Jewish name.

This simple statement of the case, to which the Apostle had an evident reference in the words of our text, will be sufficient to account for any thing that might, at first view, appear abrupt in his manner of treating those Judaising teachers. When an unenlightened heathen, or any other man, proposes, in the spirit of candour, his objections to the cross of Christ, he is certainly entitled to a respectful attention. But, when Christian teachers endeavour to subvert the faith of a crucified Redeemer out of fear of persecution, or from an idolatrous regard to their own reputation in the world, they can have no just claim to similar attention. It might, also, be observed, that the moment the Apostle turned his attention to the method of salvation through a suffering Redeemer, it seems to have opened to his view, in such lustre, as scarcely to allow him leisure

for a more argumentative discussion of the subject. In holy disdain, therefore, of conduct so disingenuous and base, and in utter defiance of all objections from every quarter, he boldly avows the object of their disgust, as the subject of his greatest triumph. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And it is to a few observations, with a view of *vindicating this holy resolution*, that the attention of this audience is respectfully solicited.

In what else, my brethren, can a miserable apostate sinner have a right to glory! Not surely in himself, in his own righteousness, or wisdom, or strength. Man was, indeed, in his first and best estate, a truly dignified creature. His understanding was clear as the light of heaven; his will was pure and holy; and all his passions and affections were directed to their proper objects, and in a state of perfect harmony. Yes; man was originally made *in the image of God* his Maker; *holy as he is holy.* But this is not his present state. Look abroad through the earth we inhabit. Can it be supposed, that so inhospitable a system was intended as the residence of creatures in a state of perfect innocence? It is, certainly, reasonable to believe, that our earth has undergone very material changes, in consequence of the deep apostasy and guilt of its inhabitants. What are we to think of the numerous and heavy afflictions of this life? Would in-

nocent man be *born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards?* No. To suppose this, would be an impious reflection upon the goodness of our Maker. But, we are not left to rest a matter of such importance, merely upon these evidences, conclusive as they appear to be. Were man in a state of innocence, he would most assuredly *love the Lord his God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself.* But this is not the case. For did he love God supremely, he would certainly render a cheerful and unreserved obedience to all his holy laws. And did he love his neighbour as himself, he would in that case, *do to others as he would have them do unto him.* Every instance then, of impiety towards God, or injustice towards our fellow-men, forms a conclusive evidence that man is not now in a state of innocence. Yes, my brethren, the blasphemies which daily insult the heavens, the curses denounced against the life and soul of a brother, with all the innumerable instances of fraud and injustice towards our fellow-men, form so many conclusive evidences, that *our glory is departed;* that we are in a state of deep apostasy and guilt; and, consequently, that we have no reason to glory in our own righteousness. Nor can any man have a right to glory in his own wisdom or strength. For *the world by wisdom knew not God.* Nor can he, by any exertions of his own, secure himself either against the miseries of this life or those of a future

state. No, my brethren, we have nothing of our own in which to glory. For we have nothing of our own to defend us, either from the fear or arrests of divine justice. *The crown is fallen from our heads. Wo unto us for we have sinned. But in the cross of our Saviour we may glory:* for,

It affords a most interesting and instructive exhibition of the love of God to our guilty race. Placed in this obscure corner of the universe, far from the throne of his glory, and exposed to so many heavy and protracted calamities, we might have been led to call in question his regard to our welfare. Nay, we might have found it difficult to determine, whether it was that we might be happy or miserable, that we have been brought into existence. The works of nature do, indeed, afford a variety of very interesting exhibitions of the divine goodness. But these exhibitions are intermixed with such awful manifestations of the divine displeasure, against our guilty race, that it is not easy, by the light of nature, to arrive at any well grounded confidence, in the good will of God towards us. That we have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, we know. And this is the same thing as to say, we have forfeited all claim to his favour. Nor, can we, from all the bounties of a common Providence obtain any satisfactory evidence, that it will be possible for us upon any terms, to secure, the forgiveness of our transgressions. But, when we turn

our attention from the varied influence of the elements of nature upon our happiness, to the cross of Jesus Christ, what a most instructive scene opens to our view! *If God so loved the world, as to give his own Son* to expiate our crimes, *how shall he not with him freely give us all things?* What a joyful—consoling reflection! That the ever blessed God, who needs not our services, nor the services of the most exalted order of angels, should thus mercifully interest himself in our behalf! How astonishing is the reflection! Well may angels stoop down, that with the profoundest attention they may contemplate the glorious scene; the stupendous display of divine mercy. Despisers of the cross of my Saviour! who will deliver you from the fear of future punishment? What will appease the anguish of an accusing conscience; support you under your afflictions; and turn your eyes undaunted on the grave? Will the faint emanations of the general goodness of God to our apostate race; emanations which seem almost absorbed by the thick clouds which surround us, give you rest and peace? After you deduct the inevitable calamities of life from its enjoyments, will the scanty balance of happiness, if indeed, such a balance can be found, give you any assurance of happiness beyond the grave? It is impossible. Miserable situation for a reflecting mind! To stand tottering on the verge of the eternal world, without any security against a

wretched immortality; any satisfactory evidence that God will be mercifully pleased to forgive sin upon any terms! Such is the miserable condition of the despisers of the cross of Christ.

But how, perhaps, it will be enquired, can the sufferings of an innocent person in the room of the guilty, secure us from future punishment? It is not, my brethren, necessary for us to comprehend the reasons of this mysterious dispensation. It is enough for us to know, that it is *the will of God* to extend mercy to miserable offenders of our guilty race, in this way. It is but little we can know, either of the works of God, or the dispensations of his Providence. *His ways are in the deep waters*, and his footsteps none can trace. I would ask the objectors to this glorious device, whether they are disposed to consider it most for the honour of the God of heaven to consign to inevitable destruction the whole human race without exception, or to open a way for their restoration to the favour of God? The former, they will not, surely, undertake to affirm. And, will any one venture to maintain, that it is consistent with the Justice of God to receive a guilty offender into favour, without any satisfaction for his offences? Suppose the Ruler of a little spot of earth which we denominate a kingdom or a state, were to proclaim universal pardon to the transgressors of the civil law, what would be the consequence? Great anarchy and confusion most

undubitably. Now the government of God embraces all earthly governments, and worlds in the widely extended universe. And as man is the same creature under the divine, that he is under human government, have we not then reason to apprehend that universal license to commit iniquity in the former case, would be as fatal as in the latter? Yes, my, brethren, and more so, it appears to me. Though a man were released from all the penal sanctions of human laws, he might nevertheless stand in awe of a divine sanction: but if the latter be taken away, the daring transgressor will not, there is reason to apprehend, be much afraid of the former. What is death, to one who has nothing to fear beyond the grave?

But not to insist upon observations of this nature, it will be sufficient to show how the interposition and sufferings of our Redeemer are calculated to make a satisfaction for human guilt; or in other words, to support the honour of his holy throne, at the same time that mercy is extended to the transgressor. And, in order that this interesting subject may appear in a just light, it will be proper to consider attentively, the design of the penal sanctions which the God of heaven has been pleased to annex to his law; or why he has determined to punish the children of men for their transgressions. It cannot, surely, be because he delights in the miseries of his creatures. This is utterly inconsist-

ent with all just ideas of his beneficence: it must be, for some beneficent purpose that he inflicts any punishment upon his own moral offspring. It must also be with the same benevolent design that he has given us a system of laws, and condescends to exercise any government over us. For it is impossible that he should stand in any need of either men or angels, in the character of either subjects or servants. Thus we may see that whatever purposes beyond our comprehension, our great and good Creator may have to accomplish by us, all the dispensations of his Providence towards us, may be considered as having an express reference to our advantage. And, can it be of any consequence to us or to the universe, what measures he is pleased to employ for this purpose, provided they are calculated to accomplish that end? Look abroad through the world of nature, and you will often find that many important purposes are brought about in a very unexpected way. When a pestilential air is to be purified, not only the salutary breeze, but tempests also, and sometimes wide wasting hurricanes are employed for that purpose. Nor is it, by any means, uncommon for a raging fever or some excruciating pain, to be excited in the human system, with the merciful intention of rescuing it from the grasp of some dangerous disease. And thus is it also, in the moral world. Often are severe and desolating judgments employed for the reform-

ation of a guilty nation. Nor is it exclusively in the way of mere doctrinal instruction, and the gentle influence of Divine grace upon the heart, that individuals are reclaimed from the error of their ways. How often are our temporal possessions wrested from us, or some dear friend or relation laid in the dust, that we may be taught to expect our happiness from the everlasting Jehovah, and not from any mortal enjoyment.

[People of Richmond! why have so many of your beloved citizens, so many of your friends and relations been lately removed by a most tragical disaster?* Was it a mere accident, think ye? This is impossible. For the Great Creator certainly governs the world which he has made. And if he superintends the fate of nations and extensive communities, he must necessarily superintend the fate of the families and individuals also, of which nations and larger communities are composed. And are we then to consider this calamitous visitation as an instance of pure vindictive displeasure? No, my brethren. The cheerful light of the sun and the rich variety of blessings daily bestowed upon us by a beneficent Deity, forbid the impious idea. The afflictive scene was no doubt intended to assist us in getting our affections detached from the things of this transitory state and set upon things above.]

* The burning of the Theatre in 1811.

And have we any reason to complain? Ought we to think it strange, that the Great Creator should employ unexpected measures in order to reconcile the world to himself, and thus to preserve miserable offenders from final destruction? Most assuredly, we have not. If from the closest attention it is in our power to pay to this interesting subject, the measures adopted for our salvation, shall appear calculated, as far as we can judge, to accomplish that great object, this surely is all we have a right to require. And that this is, in fact, the case, may, it appears to me, be made very evident in a few words.

To what is the perverse conduct of guilty offenders to be ascribed? Is it not in a great measure to the want of consideration? Did guilty transgressors seriously consider the tendency and ultimate consequences of their impious conduct, would they persevere as they do in the way of ruin? Certainly not. And is it possible for the most insensible offender on the face of the earth, really to believe, that the Great Redeemer died for him, and yet not be led to enquire, What have I done? How great a transgressor must I be? What incomprehensible evil must there be in sin? How extremely perilous must my situation be, when such a sacrifice was necessary for my pardon! Could the boldest transgressor on earth perceive his guilt, and his danger, as they are exhibit-

ed to our view in the cross of Christ, can it be supposed that he could persevere in his guilty course of life a moment longer? No, he could not do it. Could the highwayman see that the villainous inroads he is making upon the peace and property of his fellow-men, will bring him to an ignominious end, would he go on adding crime to crime, as he does. No; it is the hope of impunity that emboldens him to do this. Did the debauchee see himself, as he will shortly appear to all: could he properly realize his lost reputation, his broken constitution, his exhausted spirits, and his premature grave; would he launch out into those excesses which cannot fail to have so fatal a termination? This is scarcely to be supposed. But especially, could transgressors of every name only form correct and impressive ideas of the infinitely more tragical consequences of sin in a future state, would they harden themselves in their trespasses, and refuse to be reclaimed? It seems to be utterly impossible. Who can bear the thoughts of lying down in everlasting sorrow and despair?

Now in the Cross of Jesus Christ, we have a most awful and impressive view of the consequences of a sinful life. Since *God spared not his own Son*, when standing in the stead of sinners, will he spare a finally impenitent transgressor? Most assuredly he will not. And, could we bear up under that weight of wrath which fell so heavy

on him? Behold him in the garden of Gethsemane, overwhelmed with a load of insupportable sorrow, bathed in tears and blood, and let your own hearts suggest the proper reply. With the nature and consequences of sin as exhibited in the Cross of Christ full in view, it seems scarcely possible for any one to harden himself in a course of deliberate impenitence and unbelief. It is, however, enough for us to show, that the cross of Christ has a powerful tendency to induce us to act a very different part. And this, it appears to me, is abundantly manifest, from the observations already made upon this subject. Whatever transgressors may do, sure I am that the awful scene is happily calculated to make deep and lasting impressions of guilt, upon every reflecting mind and susceptible heart—happily calculated to induce each of us to resolve, that whatever others may do we will not persevere in a course of sin—will not venture one step nearer the pit of destruction. Neither the waters of the general deluge, nor the flames of Sodom and Gomorrha, nor all the earthquakes, famines and pestilences in the world—no: nor all the vaults of darkness and despair, can afford such an awful and impressive view of the perilous situation of impenitent sinner, as the cross of Jesus Christ. And what merits particular attention is, that as far as natural means can be efficacious, this astonishing scene is happily calculated to inspire

the heart with love, as well as with awe. It is not, my brethren all the thunders of Sinai; no, nor all the terrors of the infernal Tophet, that can change the heart and give us the tempers and dispositions which are indispensably necessary to qualify us for the pure enjoyments of the heavenly state. But the astonishing displays of the mercy, the grace, and the love of God presented to our view in the cross of Christ, must have a powerful tendency to melt the heart, into all the pious sensibility of the most cordial affection. And as it is the means which Divine wisdom has instituted for our salvation, we have, certainly, much reason to hope that while we contemplate with solemn attention the astonishing scene, the great *author and finisher of faith* will render it effectual. Yes, my brethren, *the preaching of the cross is*, to them who pay to it a proper attention, *the wisdom of God, and the power of God. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

If, however, any of our guilty race should refuse to pay such attention to these instructive, these awakening, and these transforming exhibitions of the Divine perfections, the cross of Christ is not to blame. It was never intended to be efficacious in the salvation of those who turn from it, in disdain; or with thoughtless levity. The cross of Christ will, nevertheless even in their case, answer an important purpose. For while it becomes to

them the savour of death unto death, their aggravated ruin will be rendered an instructive example to others. Does this seem hard? If any choose to reject the blessings of the gospel, is it not reasonable that they should be permitted to do so? It will not, surely, be alledged that any one should be forced to be happy. How is it possible for any one to be forced to believe in Jesus Christ? Where there is a disposition, there is no occasion—no room for force. And where the disposition is wanting, no force could avail. But why have not all men this disposition? You might as well ask, Why were angels and men constituted free agents? If life as well as death be set before us, with every assistance afforded which we can reasonably expect, to enable us to choose life, is it not enough? And surely it ought not to be considered strange, that the destruction of voluntary transgressors should be made an instructive example to others. It is so in civil governments. While the criminal dies for his transgressions, he is made a solemn warning to others. And it is so, also, in the natural government of God, or in the ordinary dispensations of Divine Providence. While the debauchee becomes a martyr to his intemperance, his tragical fate is a solemn admonition to others, to avoid those guilty courses which have been so fatal to him. And it would certainly be impious to complain, because the God of Religion is the same with the God of nature.

The knowledge of God must, certainly, be of the greatest importance to an intelligent creature. And it is, as appears to me, in the dispensations of gospel mercy, and particularly in the person and mediatorial character of Jesus Christ, that he is known to the greatest perfection. Far, indeed, am I from affirming that the apostasy and recovery of man ought to be considered as necessary for this purpose. We may, nevertheless, safely affirm that angels never knew as much of God before.

It will not, surely, be imagined that any innocent creature in the universe would take encouragement, to rise up in opposition to the laws and government of God, from a view of the way in which mercy is extended to guilty sinners of our apostate race. No, my brethren; a pardon bought with blood, with the blood of the Son of God, must have a very different tendency; must have a tendency to confirm the innocent in their resolutions of persevering obedience, at the same time that a most astonishing manifestation of the grace and mercy of God is presented to their view. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is an exclamation, in which all the earth ought to unite with the Apostle of the Gentiles. Nay, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and the glorious device of salvation through a crucified Redeemer shall be universally known, it would not, it appears to me, be extravagant to

suppose that this joyful acclamation, will resound from all the abodes of innocent and happy immortals through the widely extended universe.

But is it not very astonishing that the innocent Redeemer should suffer for guilty sinners of our apostate race? How astonishing soever it may be—for the innocent to suffer for the guilty is far from being an uncommon case. How often do parents, and sureties, and friends suffer in consequence of the conduct of the guilty. Nay, more than half the calamities of human life appear to originate in this source. True; but not in a penal way—not to make satisfaction for their transgressions. It is, nevertheless, under the government of the same righteous Governor of the universe, who never does any thing amiss. And the atoning efficacy of our Redeemer's sufferings is, certainly, so far from being an objection to his cross, that it is one of the strongest arguments which can possibly enter the heart of man in its favour.

But would it be right, would it be consistent with the laws of eternal justice, for an earthly judge to accept of an innocent in the room of a guilty life? By no means. This would be an evident perversion of justice. No man has a right to dispose of the life which he has received from the great Creator, at his pleasure. Nor has any man power, either to raise himself from the dead, or reform the ransomed criminal. Could he do all this, no govern-

ment on earth would have a right to refuse such a generous substitute. And our Redeemer had a right—had power both to lay down his life, and to take it again; and, what merits particular attention, he has power to reform the ransomed criminal and render him a good citizen, both of earth and of heaven. It is, therefore, easy to see that the boasted objections to the cross of our Saviour, which have been so often proposed with so much assurance, have really no weight—do not bear upon the interesting case. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

What! glory in the shameful, accursed death of the cross! perhaps some of you are ready to exclaim. No, my brethren. In the cross of Christ there is really nothing shameful, nor any curse, except what he endured for us. We are so accustomed to unite in our ideas and language, the crime with its punishment, that it is neither uncommon nor improper to denominate punishment originating in guilt, shameful. But, strictly speaking, it is not the punishment, but the crime that is so. When a guilty criminal is attached to a cross, or suspended upon a gibbet, there is, strictly speaking, nothing infamous in this. The infamy consists in the crime that deserves such punishment, and not in the punishment itself. Even in the sufferings of a future state, there is nothing infamous. The infamy consists in the sins committed in this life, and not in

the sufferings intended to counteract the ruinous tendency of his immoral conduct as far as it respects the happiness of others. Surely, then, if any one suffers innocently—suffers without having done any thing to deserve it,—without having committed any fault, it cannot be reproachful to him. Were an innocent citizen unjustly condemned to death, would he be entitled to less esteem on that account? Surely not. But should a man suffer not only innocently but meritoriously—suffer in consequence of his attachment to virtue and truth, it is so far from being to him a reproach, that it would be a great honour. He would be honoured as a martyr.—Should a man devote himself to death for his country --for the temporal advantage of his fellow-men, it is considered by all nations as honourable in an eminent degree. And if it be honourable to die for the temporal advantage of others, how much more so must it be to die for their eternal advantage, for the salvation of the soul? Thus we may see, that in the cross of Christ there is nothing of which the Apostle had any reason to be ashamed, and every thing which can constitute the justest ground for the highest exultation. For our Redeemer had done nothing to deserve to suffer. But he had done every thing to entitle him to the highest esteem, and the profoundest homage of the children of men.—*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!*

SERMON VIII.

CORDIAL FAITH.

ROMANS X. 10.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

THERE is scarcely a man in the world so completely abandoned, as not to acknowledge and respect the force of moral obligation, in some of its most obvious and important branches. That we ought *to do to others as we would have them do unto us*, is a sentiment deeply engraved on the heart of man. Nor is it possible for any one to live in deliberate neglect of this most reasonable duty, without being condemned by his own conscience as well as by his fellow-men. It will, also, be readily admitted by all who believe in the existence of a God, that some regards are due from such creatures as we are, to the great Creator and governor of the world; that we ought to re-

vere his glorious majesty, and uniformly obey all the laws he has been pleased to enjoin upon us; that we ought never to speak or even think of him with irreverence, or in any instance set ourselves in deliberate opposition to his holy will.— Nay, will it not, also, be admitted that we ought to love as well as fear the God who made us, and from whom all our mercies are derived? Nothing, surely, can be more reasonable than to love infinite amiableness, and that with a supreme affection.— What sentiments would you entertain of a character who, instead of loving should hate God? Hate his Maker and his Benefactor! Is it possible for the most degenerate of our apostate race, to contemplate such a character, without the most decided disapprobation? Should any man perceive in himself, a heart set in direct opposition to the perfections of God his Maker, would it not disturb his peace? Would it not confound and overwhelm him? Or, should he be conscious that he is living in the deliberate violation of any of his most righteous and equitable laws, would not his conscience accuse and condemn him as a guilty and wicked creature? How is it then, my brethren, that the children of men can live from day to day, and from year to year, in open and direct opposition to the gospel of Christ, to the great law of faith, and feel little or no compunction on that account? Are the claims which our fellow mortals have upon us so sacred,

that we cannot violate them with impunity? And are no regards due to that great friend of man, who has done more for us than any man ever did, or could do? When the great God condescends to address us in the light of nature, are we not bound to revere and to obey him? And are we bound to pay no respect to him when speaking to us by his Son, sent down from heaven at once to expiate our offences, and to give us a clearer revelation of his will? This surely will not be affirmed. We are conscious of guilt when we violate the moral law of God in whatever way it may be known to us; for we know, nothing but the want of a heart or disposition can render us incapable of obeying this law. But many of the hearers of the gospel seem to suppose, that it may be entirely out of their power to obey the law of faith, how earnestly soever they may desire to do so. Now this appears to me to be a very dangerous error. And very happily do the words of our text seem calculated to correct it. For it is *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*; and consequently it must, also, be with the heart, that man disbelieveth to his own destruction.

The term *righteousness* has, I believe, for the most part an evident reference to *the moral temper and conduct of man*. Here, however, it must mean *the way appointed by God for a sinner to become righteous in his sight*; or which is the same thing,

the way which he must take to obtain forgiveness of sin and eternal life. 'This will appear very evident from the following passage:—"*By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.—That he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" From this passage we may learn, not only that the term righteousness in our text has an evident reference to the way, the only way which a sinner can take in order to become righteous in the sight of God, or which is the same thing, the only way which he can take to obtain the forgiveness of sin and eternal life; but, also, that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way appointed by the great Lord of the universe for that great purpose. Salvation by the works of the law is become impossible for us sinners. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way, which it is in our power to take, in order to obtain an interest in the favour of God, and final deliverance from the ruins of the fall. And, blessed be God! it is a way *worthy of all*

acceptation—a way perfectly suited to our impotency, as well as to our guilt. For no hard or rigorous conditions are imposed upon us. A glorious salvation; just such a salvation as we need, is provided and offered to us in the gospel, *without money and without price*. And nothing is required, only that we should consent freely to receive, what is freely offered; or in other words that we should believe in Jesus Christ for that salvation, which we cannot procure for ourselves. Nor is there any thing hard to be understood, or hard to be performed, in the work of believing, provided there be a willing mind. There is nothing to hinder any one from believing in Jesus Christ, who is willing to be saved in the way of the gospel. *For it is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*. And this is the sentiment, which I intend to illustrate and establish on this occasion.

In our text we have a very interesting representation of the nature of saving faith—that faith which justifies a sinner and entitles him to eternal life.—*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*.—Nor are we left at a loss to know what we are required to believe. This is plainly stated in the preceding verse. *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*” Nor can any thing be more evident than that a belief in the resurrection of Christ.

involves a belief of the gospel history in general:— and particularly that *God so loved the world as to give his Son to be the Saviour of the world*; and that he has done and suffered all that was necessary, in order to procure our salvation. And these great truths must be believed, not merely with the understanding, but also with the heart. To *believe with the heart*, is heartily to approve of the truth to which the understanding gives its assent; or, it is to believe with tempers and dispositions correspondent to the nature of that truth. Now, that there is a wide difference between such belief and a cold intellectual assent, or a mere assent of the understanding, is very manifest. It has, I doubt not, often appeared strange to a large proportion of this audience, that any man possessed of common sense should suffer himself to become a slave to intoxicating drink, and yet how common is this vice in our country! But, can it be a doubtful case, whether sobriety and temperance be preferable to so miserable a thralldom as this evidently is? No, my brethren: they who have drunk deepest of the enchanting cup, are, for the most part, fully convinced that a sober, temperate life, is better than that which they have been induced to live. But they believe not with the heart, with the moral tempers necessary to produce their reformation. Similar remarks might be made with respect to the prodigal, who is wasting his estate and ruining his constitu-

tion in riot and debauchery. Nay, even the highwayman who lives by rapine and plunder, is well persuaded, that an honest, industrious life, is abundantly better than the course he is pursuing. But he believes it not with the heart, with the dispositions necessary to induce him to abandon that guilty course of life. And thus it is, for the most part, with the hearers of the gospel. They believe that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. They believe the gospel to be true, and that there is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved: but they do not generally believe with the heart—with a correspondent moral temper. And when this is the case, it is impossible that the gospel should be attended with a proper efficacy upon their lives. We must, by no means, imagine that the moral influence of the gospel depends entirely, or chiefly, upon the strength of our belief, or the degree of our assent to the truth of the gospel. The lowest degree of assent which deserves the name of belief, accompanied by a correspondent moral temper, will prove efficacious, while the highest, in which the heart has no share, will be absolutely fruitless. Mere intellectual belief never has, nor can it ever have, any moral influence on any one. Were it possible to render a man entirely indifferent to his own happiness, no danger would alarm, no prospects of happiness would excite him. Were a man divested of

every moral principle, no address to the conscience would have any influence upon him. It is not a mere perception of the real state of things, but the affections of the heart, that constitute the great springs of human action in the world. The common occurrences of life furnish clear illustrations, and the fullest confirmation of this interesting truth. Why is it that one man is instantaneously prompted to relieve a person in evident distress; while another stands and looks on, with a cold unfeeling heart? Is it because the former believes more assuredly than the latter, that the person to whom he is offering relief, is in a state of real distress? No, my brethren, it is because he has more humanity, and more compassion for the unhappy sufferer. This is beautifully illustrated in the parable of the good Samaritan. There is no reason to suppose that the priest and the Levite were less sensible of the wretched situation of an unhappy brother, who in travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, had fallen among thieves, than the good Samaritan. The priest was so far from doing any thing for him, that, lest he should seem to be under the necessity of performing, in this instance, the part of a brother, and a minister of righteousness, he turned from the sight, and *passed by on the other side*.—The Levite did, indeed, draw near and take a distinct view of the unhappy case, but afforded no relief. But very different was the conduct of the good Samaritan.

The moment he beholds the miserable sufferer, he flies to his relief, binds up his wounds, sets him on his own beast, conducts him to an inn, and secures for him there, every necessary accommodation at his own expense. For he had a heart to feel, even for a stranger in distress. Yes, my brethren, it is the affections of the heart, that constitute the great springs of action in the world. But we need not have recourse to foreign countries, and distant ages, to find an evidence to establish the doctrine of the text. Why is it that the gospel has so little influence upon the people I am now addressing? Is it because they are for the most part very doubtful, whether it be from heaven, or from the craftiness of designing men? I imagine not. Much has indeed been said, and much has been written against the religion of Jesus Christ, in our day. And it must be acknowledged, that some of the manuals of Infidelity have been composed with great address—that the most plausible objections to Christianity have been dressed up in a form too well calculated to impose upon the unwary reader, who is not disposed to investigate the subject, with the attention it deserves. But is it not very astonishing, that any man should, in the sober exercise of his reason, reject the gospel, and that at the awful hazard of final ruin, should it prove true, without attending to the evidence upon which it rests? Can there be greater infatuation? Were a man ca-

pable of such extravagance in folly, such astonishing presumption, brought to assent to the gospel as true, would that assent give it a proper influence upon his moral conduct! There is certainly no just reason to think so. No, my brethren, the man who is capable of rejecting, without the most careful examination, a religion which has been embraced by the wisest and best men in every age, since it has been known to the world, would, we may reasonably conclude, be capable of acting in direct and deliberate opposition to its holy dictates, were he even compelled to assent to it as true. For as it is *with the heart, man believeth to righteousness*, so it is with the heart, that man disbelieveth unto destruction.

To believe with the heart, is certainly more than a mere intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel. Both in the 2d and 3d chapters of John's gospel, we read of a number of Jews who believed in Christ, at the same time that they were the servants of sin. And we are expressly assured that Simon Magus the sorcerer, believed, when he was evidently in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. Now it is evident, that such characters could believe only with the understanding, or with a mere intellectual assent; for had they believed with the heart, they would have been the servants of righteousness. It is not, I believe, very uncommon for a disobedient hearer of the gospel, to try

to persuade himself, and perhaps others also, that were it not for some doubts, which he may erroneously suppose himself to be constrained to entertain, respecting the truth of the gospel, he would instantly obey it. And in this way, many, it is probable, will continue to flatter and deceive themselves, until a belief in the gospel can be of no advantage to them.—But could persons of this description be prevailed upon to consider the case with the attention which its importance deserves, they might, it appears to me, for the most part at least, be readily convinced of their mistake. Were the greatest temporal interest, and the greatest temporal calamity set before them under similar conditions, what would be the consequence? Would they sit still, and waste their time in idle complaints of the want of evidence? No my brethren, every bosom would instantaneously take fire, and no exertions would be wanting in such a case. Or at least, the exceptions to this statement would, I am persuaded, be very few. And what are the greatest temporal interests and calamities, when compared with the never ending felicities and miseries of a future state? Not so much as a single grain of sand is to the whole earth, or a single drop of water is to the whole ocean. Surely these considerations ought to do more, than over-balance the advantage which the interests of time derive from being visible and near at hand. Ah! the concern-

ments of eternity are not far off. They will soon be visible also. Let a few more days pass away, and we shall find ourselves in the eternal world, in an unchangeable state, the associates of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; or outcasts from the favour of God, and exiles from his presence forever. Why then is it that these solemn and awful prospects have so little influence upon the impenitent hearers of the gospel? The case, alas! is very plain. The salvation of Jesus Christ is a holy salvation. To such a salvation, the heart of man has naturally a strong aversion. And this is the chief reason why such multitudes reject, for the present, the grace of God, brought near to them in the gospel. To real christians, Jesus Christ is precious in all his offices. In their esteem his laws are not less precious than his grace, and his righteousness. To them his very name is, as precious ointment poured forth. But with unbelievers it is far otherwise. Jesus Christ may, indeed, be highly esteemed by them as a Saviour from the wrath to come. But to his laws and government they have very strong objections. To the perverse heart of man, how disagreeable is it to be brought into a state of entire subjection to the will of another! This is especially the case, when that will is in direct opposition to our own. And such is the case with every unsanctified heart, and the pure and holy laws of

Jesus Christ. These holy laws will not suffer a single lust or idol to be spared, or a single duty to be neglected. They do not, indeed, require perfection as the condition of salvation. But they require truth and sincerity in the inmost recesses of the heart. They require us to *deny ourselves, to take up our cross and to follow our crucified Redeemer* whether it be *through evil or good report*. They require us to *put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ*; to be humble, and meek, and lowly in spirit as he was: to imitate his patience, his beneficence, his zeal, and his love both to God and man. They require us to imitate all the graces and virtues which shone so brightly in his life and in his death. They require us to *seek the kingdom of heaven in the first place*. It is not necessary to proceed farther. These observations upon the laws of Christ, seem abundantly sufficient to establish the truth I have endeavoured to confirm.

SERMON IX.

PURIFYING HOPE.

1 JOHN iii. 3.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.

VERY defective are the sentiments which even the hearers of the gospel seem, for the most part, to entertain of the nature of the religion of Jesus Christ. Every real believer will readily acknowledge it to be an admirable expedient, for procuring penitent offenders the pardon of sin and a title to eternal life. But its tendency to purify the heart, and deliver it from the pollution as well as the guilt of sin, is too little regarded. In this view, however, it certainly merits our particular attention. In this view, as well as on account of the pardon it dispenses, it is *worthy of all acceptance*.—For at the same time that it opens a way for the

communication of sanctifying grace; its doctrines, its rites, and its most exalted hopes, have a direct tendency to purify the heart. "*Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not 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.—And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.*"

For miserable mortals to be adopted into the family of God on earth, and acknowledged as his sons and daughters, is, certainly, an instance of astonishing condescension. What may not they, who are so highly favoured now, expect in a future state? This, language cannot express; the heart cannot conceive. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he—when our Lord and Saviour shall appear, we shall be like him.* Why? *because we shall see him as he is.*—We may rest assured that the Wisdom of God, will never admit an individual into heaven, who is not qualified for its high and holy exercises. It may also be observed, that the contemplation of the unveiled glory of the Son of God may, for ought we know, have a tendency to transform more and more into his likeness, even the saints in heaven. Thus it is, certainly on earth. *Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord; we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* And he that hath this hope, the hope of

being like Christ in heaven *purifieth himself even as he is pure. Purifieth himself.* This expression merits particular attention. It is not affirmed that the true disciple *has* purified himself. No: this is represented as the daily and constant business of his life. Nor does he rest in any attainment. But taking his Lord and Saviour for his model, he goes on from one degree of faith and love, and holiness unto another, purifying himself even as he is pure. *He that hath this hope*—not merely the hope of happiness in a future state, or, the hope of being delivered from final ruin through the merits of Christ. Many alas! possess this expectation who never purify themselves. No: it is not merely a hope of future happiness; but a hope of being like Christ in a future state, that has such a purifying efficacy upon a believer on earth. The design of the religion of Christ is, not merely to deliver us from the guilt; it is also intended to deliver us from the power and pollution of sin; it is intended to retrace upon the heart the image of God, which we have lost by our apostasy from him. And this is the same thing as to say, it is intended to subdue and finally eradicate every guilty passion and impure affection; that divine *love may not only be shed abroad in the heart*, but exercise an unrivalled and undisturbed dominion there; or, in other words, it is intended to render the believer *pure as he is pure.* I need scarcely observe, that this expression must

not be taken in the most extensive sense. It is not for a sinful mortal to expect to be as pure, as holy, as the immaculate Redeemer, as the holy Jesus, *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* This would be too much for the most exalted angel to arrogate to himself. But it is the unspeakable privilege of his humblest disciple on earth, to bear a real resemblance to his Lord and Saviour; *to be holy in some measure as he is holy.* And under the purifying influence of the Christian hope, this resemblance will, he has ground to expect, be in a state of daily advancement.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall endeavour to show *that the Christian hope is necessarily attended with a purifying efficacy upon the heart and the life of the true believer.* To show that the Christian hope is attended with such efficacy, did I say? Defective as the sentiments of gospel hearers appear generally to be upon this subject, very few of them will, it is probable, undertake to call in question this interesting truth. I ought, certainly, to endeavour to do much more than merely to establish the proposition in our text. Yes, my brethren, I ought to exhibit the purifying efficacy of the hope set before us in the gospel, in the point of view best calculated to produce its holy influence upon every believer present; nay, I ought, as far as it is in my power, to exhibit the interesting truths contained in the text, in a point of view

so awfully alluring, as to have a powerful tendency to subdue the most refractory and insensible heart into a willing subjection to the gospel of Christ.—*Who is sufficient for these things?* But to proceed.

1. The Christian hope has a purifying efficacy upon a true believer, because he evidently perceives the absolute necessity of a holy temper to qualify him for the happiness it sets before us. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.* But the unholy, the impure in heart, shall not, cannot see him; can neither form just ideas of the excellence of his moral character, nor be happy in that excellence. No: let an unsanctified sinner be admitted to the apartments of the courts of the Lord in heaven; place him before the throne of his Maker, and surround him with the brightest effulgence of his glory, it would be no advantage to him. In the midst of all this light, his soul would be in darkness. He would find himself utterly destitute of a capacity to understand the meaning of such exhibitions of the divine glory; or, suppose him to possess such capacity, the view would be to him quite overwhelming and utterly insupportable. It must, indeed, be admitted, that vicious characters may perceive the essential difference there is between virtue and vice, and that the former is greatly preferable to the latter. But do such characters form correct ideas of the amiableness of the one, and of the deformity of the other? Certainly not. Were this

the case, they would quickly burst the fetters of iniquity and reform their lives. It must also be acknowledged, that the impure in heart, may see that there is a real excellence in the moral perfections of their Maker. But these ideas must be very defective. Were not this the case, they would be necessarily constrained to love him with a supreme affection; and this is the same thing as to say, that they would cease to be impure, and consequently, would cease to live in a course of habitual and allowed transgression of his holy commandments. Every instance, therefore, of voluntary and habitual transgression manifests a heart destitute of the knowledge of God; destitute of just ideas of his moral perfections. Now, we know, that instances of this nature, are far from being uncommon on earth. And what reason have we to suppose the scene would be reversed in heaven? The manifestations of the divine glory, exhibited to our view, in the dispensations of the gospel on earth, are sufficient to lead every upright heart to the knowledge and the love of God. And what reason have we to suppose, that the heart of a miserable offender, who lives in a state of forgetfulness of God, and in a state of opposition to his most equitable laws, amidst the full blaze of gospel light, would be illuminated and transformed to love, by the brightest splendours of his throne in heaven? Can a man that has no ear for musick, relish its

most harmonious numbers? Can a man who has no taste, relish, or even understand the beauties of an elegant composition? It is impossible. And equally disqualified, must be the impure in heart for the enjoyments of heaven. *What communion can there be between light and darkness? what fellowship between Christ and Belial?* What intercourse between a holy God, holy saints, or holy angels, and the impure in heart, an unholy sinner?

2. The Christian hope operates, with a true believer, as a powerful motive to purify himself, as his Lord and Saviour is pure; because it is, in his estimation, of the highest value. He is not entirely ignorant of the nature of the happiness, which he has in prospect. "*This is life eternal,*" says our Saviour, "*that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" And this, in some measure, is now the happiness of all, who are *begotten to a lively* and scriptural *hope* of eternal life. Nor is there any knowledge which a real Christian desires so much. He would much rather acquaint himself with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, than with the whole universe beside. Here, however, he can only *see as thro' a glass darkly*. After all his researches, it is but little he can know of the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed him. But in heaven, he will no longer *see as thro' a glass darkly, but face to face*. *Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it*

doth not 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. And this must be the highest honor, and most exalted happiness, a creature can possibly obtain. What is it that gives a disciple the greatest uneasiness and distress on earth? Is it the inroads which conflicting elements have made upon his peace? No, it is his unlikeness to God, prostituted affections, and the passions in disorder. What is it that constitutes the misery of hopeless immortals in a future state? Deep dungeons of eternal darkness; lakes of ever burning sulphur; or all the thunder-bolts of divine vengeance, hurled against the head of the guilty transgressor? No, my brethren, it is unlikeness to God; or, in other words, a heart at enmity with him. Hence that wild disorder of guilty affections, and ungoverned passions, which will rend and tear the tortured breast forever. Hence those chains of darkness, which will weigh down in the fathomless abyss, the miserable transgressor. Now according to the horrors of a heart at variance with God our Saviour, must be the blessedness of the man, who shall behold him as he is. For he shall be like him, holy, in his humble measure, as he is holy. And, this is the same thing as to say, he shall be eminently qualified for all the enjoyments of an immortal creature.—It is not merely from considerations of this nature, that the children of God

derive their knowledge of that happiness, which is in reserve for them. No, of the nature of this happiness, they have even in the present state of darkness and imperfection some foretaste. They have experienced *the wormwood and the gall* of a heart at enmity with God. They know what it is to have the breast rent and torn with disordered and conflicting passions;—what it is to suffer the remorse of an accusing conscience. They also know what it is to be reconciled to God, and to their own consciences; what it is to have *the love of God shed abroad in the heart*, and to enjoy communion with him and with the saints. And how insupportable must be the thought of losing all this happiness, and suffering all this misery forever. Powerful motives, surely, to induce the children of God to purify themselves, even as their Lord and Saviour is pure.—We must not, however, rest the interesting case entirely on such motives as these, powerful and pure as they evidently are. No, the real believer, in this interesting case, is actuated by motives still more powerful; or, at least, still more sublime. When he compares his present situation and hopes, with his former state of unregeneracy and unbelief; and, especially, when he realises what his Saviour has done and suffered for him, it is impossible for him not to feel a deep sense of obligation, accompanied by an affectionate desire to make some returns for such love. But what re-

turns shall he make? Will the Lord be pleased with *thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil?* Will he be pleased with any sacrifices, in which the heart has no share? No, my brethren. A heart purified from the pollution of sin is the most acceptable offering he can present to his gracious deliverer, who came to purify to himself a peculiar people, and to render them zealous of good works.

3. What a man hopes and waits for with the greatest earnestness, will of necessity, occupy much of his thoughts. And contemplations upon objects so pure and holy as those of the Christian's hope, must have a direct tendency to purify the heart. How is it possible for any one to behold the Holy Jesus, labouring and toiling for us, exposed to the bitterest reproach for us, suffering, dying upon the accursed tree for us, and yet imbibe nothing of his spirit? How is it possible for any to contemplate him now at the right hand of his Father, shining in all the splendors of his Father's holiness, and at the same time arrayed in all the majesty of dying love, without loving him, and becoming like him? *Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, from one degree of purity to another.*

4. Lastly:—the Christian's hope has a purifying influence upon the true believer, because he considers all his actions, and all his thoughts and desires

ever open to the inspection of the pure and holy eyes of his Redeemer.—Does the daring transgressor know that he is sinning in the presence of his Judge, who will, most assuredly, render to every one according to his works? If he knows this, it is impossible that he should consider it as he ought. The Christian not only knows, but he also lays to heart, this most impressive truth, as it is taught in the holy Scripture. Yes, he considers himself always in the presence of his Lord and Saviour, whose approbation he is most solicitous to obtain—always in the presence of his merciful Redeemer, who will not fail most mercifully to reward the humblest labours of genuine love in a disciple—and always in the presence of the Judge of all the earth, who will not suffer the impenitent transgressor to escape with impunity.

SERMON X.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THINGS UNSEEN AND ETERNAL.

2 COR. iv. 18.

We look not at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

“ IF in this life only we have hope in Christ,” says the apostle, in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, *“ we are of all men most miserable.”* Great, indeed, are the trials and afflictions, to which the primitive preachers of the gospel were exposed. They had, in a very emphatical and peculiar sense, to *deny themselves and to take up their cross*. They had to face the frowns of the world, and the rage of infernal powers. They were not permitted to proclaim to perishing transgressors the salvation of Jesus Christ, without exposing their lives to imminent danger. We must not, however,

conclude that they were, upon the whole, more wretched than other men. Their peculiar trials and afflictions were more than compensated by enjoyments, which are also peculiar;—by enjoyments *with which a stranger intermeddleth not.*

In the chapter, out of which, the words of our text are selected, the truth of this observation is, in a very striking manner exemplified and confirmed. In the name of a number of his suffering brethren as well as in his own, Paul could say: “*So then death worketh in us: We are always delivered unto death—always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.*” But Paul and his suffering brethren, were far from sinking under the weight of their afflictions. In the triumphs of Christian joy they could also say; “*We are troubled on every side yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken —Knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and present us with you. For which cause we faint not; but tho’ our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day. Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*” May such views of everlasting interests be our comfort under all the calamities

of life, and our support in the solemn hour of death!

I. Now that this may be the case, we must turn away our eyes from viewing vanity; we must turn aside from all the allurements of this world, to contemplate with fixed attention, the great concerns of eternity. Why is it, my brethren, that these great interests are so generally neglected by the children of men? May I not be more particular and ask; why is it that these great interests are so generally neglected even by the people I am now addressing? Have any of you after mature consideration, determined to renounce forever all hope of a happy immortality? Have any of you, after proper attention to the subject, determined that whatever others may do, you will take the transitory interests of this life as your inheritance,—your chief happiness, your all? I cannot adopt this opinion. It does not appear to me possible for one in the sober exercise of his reason, to entertain for a moment, a resolution so desperate. I am fully persuaded, that they who are in the eager pursuit of temporal, to the neglect of everlasting happiness, have not considered the case maturely; do not know what it is they have chosen, and what it is they are rejecting. For did they know this: Nay, could they only be prevailed upon to consider it with due attention, they would undoubtedly act a wiser part. But the apostle Paul and his persecuted bre-

thren did consider with the most profound attention, the interesting case. *We look not*, or as Dr. Doddridge very properly renders the passage, *we are not aiming at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal.* This implies,

1. A hearty as well as a deliberate preference of the latter to the former. Many attempts have been made to reconcile religion with the world. But these attempts have always been, and must always be unsuccessful. God and Mammon, Life and Death are set before us in the gospel. And if we wish to live in the best sense of that term, we must choose life and the way, that leads to it:—we must, without the least hesitation, prefer the favour of God and his service, to all the pleasures of sin; to all the enjoyments of this world.

2. *Looking at the things unseen and eternal*, implies a diligent and persevering attention to the measures necessary, in order to obtain them. Do the children of the world rest in the mere preference of temporary interests, as their inheritance? Do they inquire, *Who will show us any earthly good*, and then repose themselves in a state of torpid indolence? No: they rise early, they put forth their hands upon the rock, and overturn the mountains of difficulty. They *compass sea and land* in pursuit of their favourite enjoyments, the objects of their supreme regard.

And will the christian, think you, content himself with a mere preference of everlasting to temporary interests, without any correspondent exertions to secure the objects of his supreme regard? It is impossible. He has seen, and he has experienced the emptiness and vanity of earthly things. He has also in some measure, seen and experienced the excellence of everlasting interests. He cannot therefore, do otherwise than seek with persevering diligence to obtain them. We do not, indeed, venture to affirm that his diligence is, in this instance, uniformly equal to that which is commonly employed in the prosecution of temporary interests. *For the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light.* But this we can say, that a real christian cannot rest without some evidence of cancelled guilt, and a comfortable hope of a happy immortality. He may, indeed, and too often does, sink into a state of guilty remissness. But this he will lament in the bitterness of his soul. Often in the language of holy David, or in similar expressions, does he cry, "*My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word.*"

"Lord shall I lie so sluggish still,
And never act my part."

And when at any time the Holy Spirit condescends
to breathe upon his languid heart, his strength is

instantly renewed, his zeal takes fire, his affections soar on high, he mounts up as on the wings of an eagle to grasp the prize. Nor is it only in the house of God, and in the exercises of devotion that the Christian feels the importance of everlasting interests and rises above the world. To keep these interests in view, and to press after them with diligence and zeal is the business of his life. To temporary concerns, he will indeed, pay a careful and proper attention. But every interest he counts but loss, and every labour is in his estimation, worse than in vain, which are in no way conducive to the great Interests of eternity. Far from being satisfied, if he can only escape the wrath to come, and be allowed an entrance into heaven, when he is not permitted to stay on earth any longer, it is his affectionate and daily care, to *grow in grace*; to get clearer ideas of spiritual interests, and to feel their quickening, purifying influence more and more. And he is particularly solicitous, as he approaches the end of his mortal course, to be better prepared for the pure visions and enjoyments of the heavenly state.

Thus, to *look not at the things that are seen, but at those which are unseen* will, indeed, require much attention and vigorous exertion. For earth and hell obstruct our course. But these considerations, instead of discouraging or damping the zeal of the faithful disciples of Christ, inspire them with greater ardour in his service. Nor do they con-

sider any attentions too great, or any toils or sufferings too severe, in order that they may maintain the glorious prize in view.

II. I am now led to propose some motives to induce each of us to imitate the Apostle in this instance. And here the superior excellence of things unseen, must certainly claim our particular and serious attention. It will not, however, I am disposed to think, be necessary to dwell long upon this subject, interesting as it must appear to every reflecting mind. 'The insufficiency of *the things that are seen and temporal* to afford us true peace and happiness, will be generally admitted. 'The world may promise much; but have these promises been ever fulfilled to a single individual? No never. They, who have expected their chief happiness from the world, have always been disappointed. In confirmation of this sentiment I might venture to appeal, even to the youth of this assembly. Enchanting as the prospect before them in life may appear, they must know that they have often been disappointed in their expectations from the world. And they may rest assured that, while they expect their *all* from the world, such will always be the case. Go to the aged who know what the enjoyments and the sufferings of this life are, and learn from them, what you have to expect from the things that are seen. And if you would form correct ideas of their comparative value, when everlasting interests are taken

into view. Go to the dying bed of a triumphant Christian, or awakened sinner, and it will instruct you. Could our youth be prevailed upon thus to avail themselves of the experience of others, how much disappointment, and guilt, and misery might they avoid.

What is it in the world, that affords us the greatest satisfaction? Riches, honours, and the pleasures of sense? No, my brethren, but the exercise of the social affections, or friendship in the most extensive sense of that term. But how often does the friend in whom we confide, prove faithless to his trust! "*Man is to man the sorest, surest ill.*" What inroads do groundless jealousies, and the various imperfections of the present state make upon our social intercourse! How often do we see our dearest friends in a state of deep affliction, without having it in our power to afford them any essential relief? And how do we, in our distress, look to them in vain for relief? But in heaven, the scene will be happily reversed. There the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick. Neither pain, nor disease, nor any affliction will find admittance there. Nor will the pleasures of social intercourse be ever marred in that happy state by groundless jealousies, discordant sentiments, or any imperfection. To meet our pious friends and relations there in absolute perfection, where every lovely quality will be lovelier still, and to meet to part no more: what happi-

ness! There shall we also meet, should we be numbered among the righteous, with apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and confessors, and saints of every kindred, and tongue and people.

This, however, will constitute a very inferior part of the happiness of heaven. There shall we meet with our Redeemer, who became incarnate, and toiled, and suffered, and died, and rose again for us. The vision of his glory, will add new charms to the glories of the heavenly state. Nor shall we only behold him at a distance. We shall be near him and shall resemble him. “*Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” Thus we may see, that the things that are not seen, are of vastly superior excellence to all the interests of this life. How great then must the difference appear, when we consider that the latter are temporal, but the former are eternal.

It is possible, that some of the people of this audience may not entirely acquiesce in the representation we have given of the things of this life.—Let it then be admitted that earthly enjoyments may afford all the happiness which the most sanguine, inexperienced youth can imagine. But let it be remembered, that, with all these advantages, they would still be temporal; endure only for a time; and then vanish away like a morning

dream. What then can they avail in that moment, which after a few years at most, will arrive, when our connexion with them shall be broken forever? The solemn period cannot be very remote, when the spring shall, for the last time, clothe the earth in verdure; when the sun, having performed his last revolution, will shed his expiring beams upon the affrighted nations; and the earth with the fruits thereof shall be burnt up. Yes, my brethren, the solemn period is fast approaching, when time itself shall be no more; when all that escapes the general wreck of mortal things shall be swallowed up in the boundless ocean of eternity. For the fashion of the world passeth away. Its pomps and glory, its treasures and enjoyments will soon be buried in its ruins. And, Oh, how small a portion of that fleeting vapour, time, do we enjoy!

How often is the tender infant nipt in the bud, and consigned to an untimely grave! How often is the rising youth cut down in the pride of his strength! Nor is it long before our frail natures, crushed beneath the weight of increasing years, would sink into the dust. Thus transitory as well as vain, are all the enjoyments of this life. Thus in a moment do the pomps and the pleasures, the possessions and the honours of this world pass away. But the things which are unseen and eternal, will endure forever.

The saints in heaven will flourish in unfading youth: after the resurrection, the body will be immortal as the soul. Nor will the faculties of the one, or the power of the other, be in the least impaired by the greatest lapse of ages. Things unseen are all immortal. The new Jerusalem hath everlasting foundations. The flowers of Paradise never wither or decay. The river which proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb, is a never failing stream. Nor will the enjoyments of heaven, like those of this earth ever lose their relish, and pall upon the taste. No: after the greatest waste of eternal ages, they will be ever new and ever growing. How great and how interesting do the things unseen and eternal, from this review, appear; but how inconsiderable the things which are seen and temporal!

May we not then hope that these observations will be sufficient to induce each of us to imitate the apostle in looking chiefly, not at the things which are temporal and fugitive; but at the things which are unseen and eternal?

SERMON XI.

PREVAILING PRAYER.

GEN. xxxii. 26.

I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

THIS may, at first view, appear a very presumptuous resolution. Can it be supposed, that Jacob knew whom he was addressing, in this confident language? Did he know that it was not an ordinary man with whom he was now wrestling; that it was an angel, the angel of the covenant; the Son of God in the likeness of human flesh? Yes, he seems to have known it. This may be inferred, from his extreme solicitude to obtain a blessing from this great Personage. For neither the blessing of any mere man, or ordinary angel, would have been of much account to Jacob, in this trying conjuncture. It may also be inferred from the name, by which he distinguished the scene of this ever memorable conflict. *And*

he called the name of that place Peniel, that is, the face of God, for I have seen God, says he, face to face, and my life is preserved. And such appear to have been the sentiments of the prophet Hosea, who, alluding to this extraordinary event, affirms that Jacob *had power with God—and prevailed.*

But is it not strange, that the Son of God should condescend thus to assume the form or appearance of a man, and in that form to wrestle with Jacob?—that he should take such notice of his servant, and distinguish him by such signal tokens of his great mercy? Yes, it is strange. But it is more so, that he should in the fulness of time assume a real body; that he should become incarnate, and in his human nature enter the lists with the powers of darkness, and die upon the cross for our salvation. But this he has done. And it ought not surely to be considered incredible, that with this scene in view, he should, in this early age of the church, condescend to give his servant Jacob now in deep affliction, a palpable evidence of his future incarnation, and at the same time a palpable demonstration of the power of faith.

The church at this time was only in its infancy. Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, appears to have been the first member of the holy society denominated the visible church. It was, certainly, proper that instructions should be communicated in a manner corresponding to a state of infancy. And this was, we

find, in fact, the case not only in this instance, but generally, under the old dispensation.

When our first parents were expelled from paradise, *a flaming sword turning every way* to guard the tree of life, and to point out the impossibility of obtaining life by the works of the law, was exhibited to their view. The Divine law was delivered upon mount Sinai, in the midst of thunderings and lightnings, and other sensible tokens of the presence of God. When Balaam was to be deterred from uttering a curse against the people of God, an angel was directed to obstruct his way with a drawn sword in his hand. Often were angels, in the likeness of men, dispatched from heaven, with important messages to the children of Israel. And measures of this nature, were happily calculated to awaken an awful attention; to afford a resistless evidence of the existence and providence of the true and living God, and of the reality of the revelations he was pleased to make to apostate man.

Next to Abraham, Jacob appears to have been the most distinguished of the Jewish Patriarchs. From him, the Church, both under the old and new dispensations, was to derive a very expressive denomination. It was therefore proper, that he should undergo such trials as would have a tendency to fit him for his important station, and the part assigned him in future life. And such, undoubtedly, was the scene which claims our particular atten-

tion. Jacob was at this time, in great distress. Esau, whose displeasure he had incurred by adopting some very unjustifiable measures, in order to obtain the paternal blessing, was now on his way to meet him, with four hundred men. This was a force which he was by no means prepared to resist. That Esau's intentions were hostile, he had much reason to apprehend. Nor had he any resource, but in the protection of the God of his Fathers, Abraham and Isaac. To him therefore, he had recourse by fervent persevering supplication. "*O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, return to thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan: and now I am become two bands: Deliver me I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children. And thou saidst I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*" He did not, however, rest in supplications alone. Agreeably to the custom of the times in which he lived, he sent before him a very liberal present, to appease his brother's wrath. And having conducted his family over the ford Jabbok, he was, Moses informs us, *left alone*;

that without disturbance, he might, we have reason to believe, spend the remainder of the night in earnest prayer. How great must have been his surprize when he found himself arrested by the powerful arms of one he knew not, and whom he would probably, at first, suppose to be an enemy from his brother's camp. *And there wrestled with him a man until the breaking of day.* Wrestled with him! And was it, perhaps, some of the people now present will be ready to say, was it consistent with the dignity of the Son of God, to engage in wrestling with his servant Jacob? Yes, it was perfectly consistent. Let me ask the most sceptical in this, or any other audience, have you never met with powerful resistance from an unknown, invisible hand, thwarting your best concerted schemes, withering your strength, and blasting your earthly comforts, that you might be brought to seek your all from God? This is, certainly, far from being an uncommon case. And it ought, most assuredly, to be ascribed to Divine agency. What difference does it make to us, whether this agency is mediate or immediate; whether the co-operation of second causes, is employed in such dispensations of providence, or whether the whole agency is to be considered supernatural and divine?

But Jacob was not a sceptic. He was not a caviller against the great truths, either of natural or revealed religion. No: he was a pious worshipper

of the true God. He was a true believer in the future incarnation of the Son of God. The appeal ought therefore rather to be made to the same character. Say then ye humble disciples of the cross, have you never experienced any similar trials of your faith and your steadfastness in the covenant of your God? Have you never been reduced to such pressings traits, as to be forced to exclaim with this afflicted patriarch in another case, *all these things are against me?* Such trials are certainly by no means uncommon, nor are they without their use. They seem to be as necessary in the Christian life, as storms and tempests in the air we breathe.

And there wrestled with him a man until the breaking of the day. Why? Not, surely to try the efficacy of his natural strength: but to try, and to increase his faith. And nothing, it appears to me, can be imagined better calculated to answer these important purposes.

Jacob was at this time, in great distress and in great fear. God Almighty had, indeed, directed him to return to his country, and promised to make his seed as the sand of the sea. But might he not doubt, whether the promise was absolute or conditional; and if the latter, whether he had fulfilled its conditions, so as to be entitled to its blessings? However this might be, he had we find, already importunately pleaded this gracious promise before God. And he was now, we have reason to believe,

left alone, for this very purpose—that he might even wrestle with God in humble, importunate prayer for his protection and blessing. But, what may we suppose the state of his mind to be; and what horrors may we not suppose to have seized him, when thus, in his own apprehension, he was suddenly arrested by a powerful foe from the camp of his brother! Would he not naturally conclude that the presents he had despatched to appease Esau were inefficacious, and that his beloved family were already cut off; that an armed band has been despatched *to smite the mother with the children?*—But it was not in his power to fly to their relief, whatever their situation might be, and how much soever they might need his assistance. No, he was held in arms from which it was not possible for him to extricate himself. Never it appears to me, unless Abraham be an exception, was the faith of a poor mortal put to a severer trial. But he *cast not away his confidence*, which, in the issue, had a *great recompense of reward*. Nay, he rose in the greatness of his strength, rather in strength not his own; in the strength of *the Captain of his* and our *salvation*, whom he now found, it appears, to be in his arms, and even refused to let him go, until he had obtained from him, the blessing which he sought. “*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*” Nor did he wrestle for the blessing in vain. *As a prince he had power with God and prevailed.*

Trembling penitent! behold your example and your encouragement. We must not imagine, that the throne of grace is less accessible now than it was under the old dispensation; but rather the reverse. We must not imagine, that importunate addresses to this throne, are less acceptable or less efficacious, now, than when Jacob wrestled and prevailed. Nor must we imagine, that an humble determination to be blessed, to take no denial in a case of such extreme necessity, will be less availing now, than when Jacob had power with God. *For the kingdom of God still suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* The language of our text must be highly pleasing to the great Author of our salvation. A regard to our own happiness is a first principle in our nature. It cannot, therefore, surely, be offensive to the author of our existence, to observe a creature acting in conformity to a principle derived from himself. No; *he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but had rather the wicked should turn from his wicked way and live.* When a convinced sinner, then, from a deep sense of that insupportable ruin to which he is exposed by his transgressions, offers up the most importunate supplications for mercy, it must be very pleasing to the great Friend of sinners. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* When we consider what it is to be denied the blessing of God; nothing surely, can be more becoming or more proper than such

language confident as it may appear. It is nothing less, than the loss of every thing most to be desired; and the inflicting of every thing most to be dreaded. O my God, I cannot bear the thought of being forever denied the enjoyment of thyself; of being forever exiled from thy presence; I cannot bear to have every trace of thy image erased from my heart.—I cannot bear the thought of being transformed into a miserable, accursed fiend, to hate and blaspheme thy holy name forever. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.*

Draw near, then, all the Israel of God, from the most strong in faith, to the most timorous and desponding! *What is your petition, what is your request,* what is the most affectionate desire of your heart? Be not afraid to offer it up to your gracious Redeemer in the highest confidence of faith. Are you afraid that you shall dishonour your profession? Are you afraid that you will yet deny your Lord and Master as did Peter? Pray with all the ardour of the most affectionate desire, and in the importunity of a heart that cannot bear to be denied, for strengthening and establishing grace, that you may be *kept by his power, thro' faith unto salvation.*

Are any of you distressed for want of zeal for God; on account of the coldness of your love, the weakness of your faith, and your unprofitableness in the church and the world? Let the prayer of the

primitive disciples, *Lord increase our faith*, be yours: pray earnestly for more love, more zeal; pray for a more abundant communication of a divine nature, and endeavour to pray in the true spirit of the words of our text. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.*

Parents, are you deeply concerned for the salvation of the children which God has given you? Plead in the exercise of prevailing faith, the gracious promise, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed. I will not let thee go except thou bless my children.*

Are any of you, my brethren, concerned, as we all ought to be, for the prosperity of Zion? *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. I will not let thee go except thou bless the Church.*

Are any of you concerned, as we all should be, for the embarrassed state of our country? Offer up your humble supplications to the God of peace and mercy, in its behalf; that he would give an effectual check to the spirit of discord, that he would teach *our Senators wisdom, our officers peace, and our exactors righteousness*;—that he would put a stop to the effusion of human blood in our territories, and in all the earth; and at the same time, afford us every reasonable security for our civil as well as religious privileges. *I will not let thee go unless thou bless my country.* But, perhaps, to a number, such language will still appear bold and pre-

sumptuous. Suppose you were then to reverse the case and say, not *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*; but I will let thee go without thy blessing—I will let thee go without a blessing for myself, my children, my country, or the Church. Could you consent to this? If not, endeavour in all the energies of a triumphant faith, when you offer your supplications for such things as you desire, to adopt the emphatical language of the text, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*.

SERMON XII.

THE ANATHEMA.

1 COR. xvi. 22.

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema
Maranatha.

THIS may seem strange language from an inspired Apostle. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema*, that is, let him be accursed! Have we not reason to apprehend that the Apostle was in this instance, by his zeal for the honour of his Lord, transported beyond the bounds of reason and the limits of his sacred commission? No, my brethren, this is utterly inadmissible.—Paul had certainly a very tender affection for the members of the church at Corinth. This is evident, from the very affectionate epistles which he wrote to them. He was, however, far from supposing, that there were none to be found among them,

destitute of genuine love to Jesus Christ. This, also, is very evident, from several passages in these epistles. And were we to consider Paul, only in the character of a wise and good man, it must appear very improbable, that he would, without necessity, choose to insert, at the end of a long and affectionate epistle, so terrible an imprecation against any of the dear people to whom he was writing. But when we consider him as an inspired writer, such a supposition will appear as impious as it is absurd. For the holy prophets and apostles of our Lord, when denouncing his righteous judgments against incorrigible sinners, did not speak or write from the impulse of their own passions but *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.

There is, indeed, a dreadful *curse* or imprecation contained in these words. And what merits a particular attention, is, that this curse is by an inspired apostle, directly levelled against such as *love not the Lord Jesus Christ*. Nor must it be passed over, without particular attention, that the curse which this great apostle is commissioned to denounce, appears to meet with his hearty approbation. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*. What I have in view, in discoursing upon this subject, is to illustrate the *nature* and to show the *reasonableness* of the aspiration in the text.

I. The term *anathema* properly signifies, something that is *set apart, separated or devoted*. And, as far as I can learn, it is invariably appropriated to such things as are devoted to punishment or destruction.

Some commentators are of the opinion that, in this instance, it signifies the highest kind of excommunication. But it is absolutely impossible for the faithful members of the church, to separate from themselves, and exclude from their society, all *who love not the Lord Jesus Christ* in sincerity, unless they are capable of searching the hearts and trying the reins of their fellow worshippers. For a heart at enmity to Christ, is often concealed under the mask of an apparently moral and sober conversation. It may, also, be observed, that the apostle had already given directions with respect to excommunication in the 5th chapter of this epistle; and it is not likely that he would, just at the close, resume the subject. It appears to me, therefore, much more probable, that the *anathema* in our text, has reference to the *second coming of Christ*, and implies *a separation from the saints in the day of final judgment*. The following words *Maran-atha*, seem to favour this interpretation at the same time that they give a solemn sanction to the imprecation in the text. These words may, it is indeed affirmed, be rendered *the Lord is come*, as well as *the Lord cometh or will come*. But the first

coming of Christ considered without any reference to his second coming, cannot with any propriety be urged as an evidence, that a curse will be inflicted upon the enemies of Jesus Christ; for *he came not to condemn the world*. And it seems at least highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that these solemn words *Maran-atha*, which reflect so much terror upon the Anathema of the text, are intended as an evidence that it will certainly fall upon such as love not the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus it appears with satisfactory evidence, that the imprecation in our text has a reference to the heavy judgments which will most certainly be inflicted upon the enemies of Jesus Christ, in that awful day when he shall come *in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them who obey not his gospel*. And taking this for granted, I would beg leave more fully to unfold the meaning and emphasis of the passage under consideration, by introducing the words of a judicious commentator upon it. "Among the many various interpretations of these words," says Dr. Doddridge, "none seems to me so probable and satisfactory as this—when the Jews lost the power of life and death, they used, nevertheless, to pronounce an anathema on persons, who, according to the Mosaic law, should have been executed; and such a person became an *anathema* or *cherem*, or *accursed*; for the expressions are equivalent. And they had a full persuasion, that the

curse would not be in vain. Now to express their faith that God would one way or another, and probably in some remarkable manner interpose, to add that efficacy to his own sentence which they could not give it; it is very probable, they might use the words *Maran-atha*, that is, in Syriac, the Lord cometh, or he will, surely and quickly, come to put this sentence in execution, and to shew, that the person on whom it falls is indeed *anathema*, *accursed*. In beautiful allusion to this, when the apostle was speaking of a secret alienation from Christ, maintained under the forms of Christianity, (which might, perhaps, be the case among many of the Corinthians, and much more probably may be so among us) as this was not a crime capable of being convicted and censured in the Christian church, he reminds them that the Lord Jesus Christ will come at length, and find it out, and punish it in a proper manner. This weighty sentence the apostle chose to insert between his general salutation and benediction, that it might be more attentively regarded." From this view of our subject, we may see that the anathema in our text imports a separation from the society of the saints in the day of final judgment, and all the curses, which to eternal ages will fall upon the enemies of Jesus Christ. Now the friends and enemies of Christ are members of the same Church, and often sit down at the same communion table; and eat of the same bread, and drink of the same

cup; but then an everlasting separation will take place. The mask will be torn from the hypocrite; he will be exposed to the view of assembled worlds in his real character, and be consigned to the tortures prepared for the devil and his angels.

Nor will the retreats of infidelity, be any defence against the wrath of the Son of God, in that great day. Whether a man has been a professed friend, or an avowed enemy; whether he has been miserably harassed by *the terrors of the Lord*, or lived in a state of stupid security, if destitute of the love of Christ, he will, when weighed in the balance, be found wanting, and become an everlasting *anathema*.

Nor must we omit to take notice, that the awful doom, to which the enemies of Christ will in that day be consigned, appeared to an inspired apostle so evidently just and necessary, as to meet his hearty approbation. Does this seem hard? Are any of you ready to say, "We thought it was the duty of the apostles of Jesus Christ, as well as the ministers of the gospel and private Christians in every succeeding age, to *bless and curse not*: We thought it had been the duty of all the ambassadors of Christ, to do all in their power to prevent the final ruin of immortal souls, and that, if the labours of their love should be unsuccessful, it behooves them rather to weep over the obstinacy and infatuation which their fellow-men exhibit, than to devote them

thus to an everlasting curse.” But you will permit me to observe, that there is a decree gone forth in the courts of heaven, against the enemies of Jesus Christ, by which they are consigned to an everlasting curse; and it would be an intance of intolerable arrogance in Paul, or any other man, to impeach the justice of this decree, or to say, let not *the will of the Lord be done*. It must not, however, be imagined, that the apostle denounced this anathema against any particular persons of his acquaintance. No: it is directed not against any particular persons, but characters. And in this view, it may be considered as an expression of tender solicitude for the salvation of perishing sinners, and not a desire for their ruin, that induced the apostle to denounce this awful doom. To sound the alarm; to warn the sinner of his danger, and to exhibit to his view, the awful punishment he cannot possibly escape, should he live and die without love to Christ, is to perform the kindest office to perishing sinners in our power.

And taking our text in this view, it is, If I mistake not, one of the most awful representations of the guilt, and absolutely hopeless case of a sinner, who obeys not the gospel, any where to be found. This would appear in a very striking light, had we a just view of the character of the person, here constrained to give incorrigible sinners up to their doom, and even subscribe his hearty approbation of their

condemnation. 'Could we have seen the great apostle of the Gentiles, transformed into a pure flame of love and zeal, while he proclaimed the wonders of Redemption to his fellow men, and besought the guilty not to die; could we have seen him going about, from house to house, *warning every man and entreating every man with tears*, to be reconciled to God; could we have beheld him sustaining, with unyielding fortitude, the toils of so many difficult and tedious journies by land; braving the perils of a boisterous ocean, and all the terrors of a martyr's death, in order that he might *finish the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus*, and be instrumental in saving sinners from destruction; could we have heard his daily and importunate addresses to the throne of grace, in behalf of the people to whom he was appointed to preach the gospel; could we have been witnesses of all these astonishing proofs of his vast solicitude for the salvation of perishing sinners, and then observe him struck, on this occasion, with such a sense of the horrid impiety, and absolutely hopeless case of such as persevere in their enmity to Christ, as to give them up, and even set the seal of his own approbation to their eternal destruction, in the close of an affectionate epistle, what would we have thought? With such a view of the case, would not the imprecation of the text sound more awfully than a thousand thunders on the sinner's ear, and pierce

like a sharp two edged sword the hardest heart? How interesting and how alarming, are the scenes which now present themselves to our view. The Father of mercies *so loves the world as to send his only begotten Son*. And the Son *so loves* and pities our guilty race, as to embrace a bloody death, and arrest the course of the flaming torrents of Divine wrath poured forth against us! And having thus opened a way for our reconciliation with an incensed God, our Redeemer commissions and sends forth a number of sacred ambassadors, selected from among their brethren, to proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel, and to persuade the reluctant sinner to accept of mercy and eternal life. With the utmost alacrity do these heralds of peace enter upon their arduous work; and with much faithfulness do they discharge it. One among the rest is peculiarly distinguished. To the *third heavens* is he raised, that he may see and hear things too sacred and too awful for common mortals to be acquainted with. And, that, having as it were, both worlds in view, he might be the better qualified for the arduous task assigned him. Nor is he unsuccessful in his glorious work. Multitudes believe and are saved. But a still greater number refuse to hear. These he pursues with indefatigable zeal, and addresses in strains of the most persuasive eloquence, conjuring them by the terrors of divine vengeance, by the alluring glories of divine love not to die;

not to slight the mercy and the love of God; not to trample under foot, the blood of the Son of God, and engulf themselves in hell.—But in vain. The infatuated creatures will not hear, will not obey, will not forego the empty and polluted pleasure of sin, for the salvation of Jesus Christ. At length the day of their merciful visitation comes to an end. The irreversible decree goes forth against them. The compassionate Redeemer gives them up and consigns them to destruction, and his zealous and affectionate apostle is constrained to set the seal of his approbation to their irreversible doom. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maran-atha.*

II. But it is time to consider with more particular attention, the foundation upon which this dreadful imprecation rests. *The want of love to Christ.* Nor need we be surprised, that such a man should be exposed to an awful doom. For if he be not a friend, he will be an enemy to Christ; if he does not love he will hate, not a mortal man like himself; (though to hate a good man would be highly criminal;) not an enemy, but his best friend; (though to hate even an enemy is wrong.) Yes, it is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world who gave his life to ransom sinners from eternal ruin, that they despise, reject and hate. And can there be a greater crime? Jesus Christ is not an enemy to our guilty race. Why then, should sinners hate

him? What injury has he done them? Alas, they return evil for his good, and hatred for his love? Ungrateful creatures! is it for a life of toil and sorrow, and the agonies of a cruel death, endured for the redemption of guilty abandoned sinners of our wretched race, that you hate him! And is this your kindness to your friend? Is it thus you requite the compassionate Redeemer? Was ever ingratitude like this? Most astonishing impiety! 'To hate the Son of God, who is *the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person*!' 'To hate the glorious Immanuel in whom all the perfections of deity with all the excellencies of human nature, are united! In whom all the compassions of a God, and the tender sympathies of a guiltless man, meet together and melt into love and pity over the guilty, infatuated, obdurate sinner. And what will the end of these things be? Is it possible for such creatures to escape with impunity? No: without repentance and a new heart, it is impossible. A heart of enmity to Christ would be itself a hell! It evidences such deep degeneracy of nature, and must be attended with such disorder among the passions, as cannot fail to create, in the eternal world, a hell in the sinner's own breast. Were the enemies of Jesus Christ admitted into heaven, it would be no heaven to them. In their ears, *the song of Moses and the Lamb*, would grate harsher than the roaring of the damned. The splendors of the throne of God,

would appear more awful in their view, than the gloom of eternal night. And all the displays and triumphs of redeeming love, like a flood of vengeance would overwhelm and destroy them.

Let not the sinner then, who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, think it hard that he must be excluded from the abodes of joy in heaven. To him they would be abodes, not of joy, but of sorrow, and anguish of soul. Let him not think it hard that he is to be doomed to an everlasting curse. For while he carries with him a heart of enmity to Christ, he cannot be blessed. Nay, he must of necessity be *an anathema*. He carries a curse, a hell in his own bosom. Let him not think it hard that Jesus Christ whom he despises, and rejects, and hates, will, in the day of final judgment banish all his incorrigible enemies from his holy presence with a curse upon their guilty heads; for wherever they should go, they must of necessity carry a dreadful curse with them; and the holy presence of Christ, would, it is probable, be to them the worst hell in the universe. Nor let the man who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, think it hard that the ambassadors of Christ should, if he proves incorrigible resign him to his fate. Alas! what can they do for him! They cannot change the heart. And when no arguments, no entreaties, no tears, no terrors, no love, can have any influence with him, what can be done? If the Father of mercies and

his Son be provoked to give the incorrigible sinner up, and direct an inspired apostle to denounce an everlasting anathema against him, there is *no* hope. *Nothing can be done.*

My brethren, shall I ever be reduced to the dreadful necessity of resigning to such a doom, any of the souls committed to my care? This, I can assure you, would be a hard task. O that I could recommend Jesus Christ, to the esteem and love of every precious immortal soul in this assembly? Is he not worthy of your esteem? Is he not worthy of your supreme love? Is he not your best friend; *a friend that sticketh closer than a brother?* Why then will any of you treat him as an enemy, and reject the offers of his grace?

If you slight and despise *him*, to whom will you look for help, in the hour of your visitation? The united help of men and angels could be of no advantage, if Jesus gives you up. Let me then entreat you once more, by the mercies of God, and the love of Christ, not to continue any longer in a state of enmity to your best friend.

My dear brethren, the time will soon come, when I shall be constrained to resign to their fate, all the dear people of my sacred charge, who love not the Lord Jesus Christ. How painful the reflection! To resign a soul to endless ruin! How awful this! But the time is coming when it will be painful no more. When the *great anathema* shall be pro-

nounced, in the day of final Judgment, against the enemies of Jesus Christ, it will not occasion any grief to the righteous. The father will not then pity his children, nor the wife her husband, nor the sister her brother. The saints will then universally re-echo their hearty *Amen*. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema!*

SERMON XIII.

PERFECT LOVE.

1 JOHN iv. 18.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

A STATE of uncertainty with regard to our final destiny, is a very uncomfortable state. With the certain prospect of everlasting misery; no reflecting mind could enjoy a moment's peace. And in this situation every mind would reflect; every heart would feel; and every breast, the most insensible not excepted, would be racked, and torn with agonies unutterable. We cannot, it is true, undertake to affirm that a real christian is a partaker of these agonies, is subjected to this intolerable distress, in proportion to the doubts he entertains with respect to the goodness of his state. For *being justified by faith*, and having *received the spirit of adoption*,

he is not now, as others are, and as he once was, exposed to the horrors of remorse. It must also be observed, that he always entertains a hope, and that upon good ground, that whatever his present situation may be, he shall sooner or later obtain mercy. And the efficacy of a hope of this nature, to support the mind in a most perilous situation, is strikingly exemplified in a very different character. What numbers are there among the hearers of the gospel, who know themselves to be in a state of impenitence and unbelief, who are, nevertheless, supported in a state of astonishing security, by the very precarious, and we have reason to believe, for the most part, fatal hope, that it will be otherwise before they die. But very different is the influence which the hope of a christian has upon his conduct. Instead of lulling him into a state of guilty security, it encourages him to seek the kingdom of heaven with persevering earnestness. And all who seek in this way, have, certainly, reason to expect that they shall not seek in vain.

But though a real christian is not exposed to the horrors of a guilty conscience as he once was, a state of uncertainty with respect to his future happiness must, nevertheless, be more intolerable to him than to an unenlightened sinner. His own experience will assist him to form some just ideas both of the love, and of the wrath of God, in a future state; and consequently render the apprehen-

sion of being excluded from the one, and consigned to the other, peculiarly afflictive. With him, the salvation of the soul is the *one thing needful*.

How distressing, then, must it be, for him to be obliged to entertain any perplexing doubts upon this subject, And yet, we have much reason to fear, that this is a very common case. A large proportion of the professors of religion do appear, either to rest their confidence upon unscriptural evidence, or to live in a state of great uncertainty, with regard to their final destiny.

And have we not reason to suppose, that there are a number of this character, to be found among the communicants to whom I am now addressing myself? Yes, my brethren, we have much reason to apprehend that no inconsiderable proportion of those who have, to day, sat down with us at a communion table, have done it in a state of perplexity and doubt, which not even the symbols and pledges of a Saviour's love could remove. But can it be the will of God, that the disciples of his Son should live in this state of anxiety and alarm? No: my brethren. He is *the Father of mercies* and the *God of all consolation*. It is his will, that we should *give all diligence to the full assurance of hope*, or in other words, that we should be *perfect in love*, and in this way, obtain relief from all our doubts and fears. For, *There is no fear in love; but per-*

fear love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

It seems hardly necessary to observe, that by the term fear in our text, we are not to understand that filial fear, that holy affection, which derives its origin from profound veneration and supreme love, and is, therefore, justly considered in scripture as a distinguishing characteristic of a true believer.—No, it is evidently that *fear which hath torment*, that awful apprehension of the wrath of God, by which the ungodly are often so miserably harassed, and from which imperfect love does not entirely exempt the children of God. This seems evident from the preceding verse; “*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of Judgment.*”

By *perfect love* the apostle cannot mean an affection, which is absolutely exempt from all imperfection. No such affection is to be found in this imperfect state. This holy affection must be necessarily founded on knowledge; but now we see as through a glass darkly. It is, therefore, impossible that love which is founded upon vision so obscure and indistinct, can itself be perfect. The term *perfect*, when it is used in the scriptures with a reference to poor mortals on earth, is, I believe, always used in a *comparative or relative*, never in an absolute sense. Any thing which is well calculated to answer the purpose for which it is intended,

may be said to be relatively perfect. The term is, however, it appears to me, generally used to denote a high degree of excellence. And this is, most undoubtedly, its acceptation in the words of our text. That holy affection to God and to our fellow-men, which we call love, is, when it rises so high as to exclude that *fear which has torment*, said to be *perfect* in comparison with an inferior degree, which leaves the soul in a state of perplexity, with regard to its final destiny. But when the apostle asserts, that *perfect love casteth out fear*, we are not to understand him to mean, that any one always enjoys the exercise of this holy affection, in such an eminent degree as to preserve him, at all times, from every uneasy apprehension with regard to his future state. Nor do I suppose this to be often, if in any instance, the case. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Perfect love casteth out fear. This is the proposition which I shall endeavour to establish in the following discourse.

1. Perfect love casteth out fear, *because it is certainly one of the best evidences of an interest in the Divine favour.* Nay, it is the fruit of the love of God to its subject. And, consequently, an infallible proof, that he has nothing to fear from the object of his supreme regard. *Every one that loveth is born of God.*

2. Perfect love casteth out fear, *because it is never found alone*. No, it is so intimately united with faith, and humility, and meekness, and all the graces to which the promises of eternal life are made, that where this holy affection is, there will these other graces also be; and thus a bright constellation of unexceptionable evidences of the favour of God, is impressed upon the heart.

3. Perfect love has a *happy tendency to remove from the heart of a believer, all the grounds and occasions of that fear which has torment*. Why do real believers tremble at any time, under the apprehension of the everlasting judgment of God? Is it on account of the blindness of their minds? Because they know so little of God, and the great mysteries of godliness? Perfect love will, in a great measure, remove this blindness. It will disperse the gloom, which impure affections spread over the mind. How readily do we perceive the excellence of what we love! Is it on account of the coldness of their affections? Perfect love will inflame them, or rather it is itself the very reverse of these guilty affections. Is it on account of a hard unfeeling heart? Perfect love will melt and soften the hardest heart, into all the relentings of pious sensibility. Is it on account of the prevalence of guilty ungoverned passions and affections? Perfect love will reduce every rebellious power, and every guilty passion to its own equitable and resist-

less sway. Is it on account of the wanderings of vain imaginations and desires? Perfect love will restrain and fix them upon the centre of supreme excellence. Is it on account of the prevalence of unbelief? Perfect love will render the work of faith easy and delightful. It will be easy to trust in the great object of this holy affection. Is it on account of a slothful, barren, and unprofitable life? Perfect love will inspire the heart with the fervors of holy zeal for the glory of God, and lead to a cheerful, unreserved, and devout obedience to his commandments. And in a word, whatever it may be, that occasions that fear which has torment, perfect love by removing the occasion, will also remove the fear itself.

4. Perfect love casteth out fear, *because it rests upon just views of the Divine perfections.* It is not necessary for us here to enquire, whether the holy principle from which this affection springs, first enlightens the mind, and thus qualifies it to behold the glory of God; or whether the mind is previously enlightened, that the heart being sanctified, may become the seat of this holy affection. It is sufficient for us to know, that the subject of this affection must always possess just ideas of the perfections of its great object. The Divine justice will not therefore appear to him, that stern and forbidding attribute, which it is often thought to be by the workers of iniquity. No, it is an amiable attri-

bute—not less so than goodness itself. Or rather it appears to be Divine goodness, employing the best possible measures, to promote the general happiness of the moral offspring of the Great Father of the universe. And with such apprehensions, how is it possible for one made perfect in love, to fear the everlasting displeasure of a God so glorious in benevolence? So beneficent even in his justice? Well does he know that the God whom he loves, will never consign him to destruction, unless it should be absolutely necessary. But can it be necessary to shut up with the wicked in the vaults of despair, a soul that has no fellowship with them, but hates them with a perfect hatred? It is impossible. Will the God who is love itself, banish from his presence, the soul that loves him and cleaves to him as to its highest happiness? That be far from him; and the impious thought be far from us! Why did he bring us from nothing into a state of existence? Is our existence any advantage to him? Why did he ransom us from the thralldom of sin? Does he need any service we can render him? Why did he exhibit to our view, the vanity of mortal enjoyments, and teach us to seek our all in him? Was it that the heart, violently torn away from all the endearing bonds by which it had been united to its God, might in the dismal vaults of blasphemy and despair, take in large draughts from the vials of his wrath forever? A heart made perfect in love, cannot believe, cannot fear this.

5. Perfect love casteth out fear, *because these two affections are so different from one another—of so opposite a nature, that as the one increases, the other must necessarily decrease.* The perfection of one must be the destruction of the other. The sentiment which forms the chief basis of this observation is, I well know, thought to be very exceptionable by some pious divines, who, with a view of counter-acting most effectually, the selfishness of man, seem disposed to lay the foundation of all genuine love to God, in abstract ideas of his moral excellence. That this holy affection rests upon just sentiments of the moral character of God, will be readily admitted. But there is no necessity for considering this excellence in an abstract view, without any regard to the relation which he sustains to us, or what we may expect from him. No, my brethren, this would, it appears to me, be a species of atheism. To contemplate the Great God as sustaining no relation to us!—when he made and upholds us in existence, and is the author of all real enjoyment. Suppose, if we may be permitted to make so absurd a supposition, that we could behold God, in all his infinite amiableness, grasping the flaming bolts of his vengeance to hurl us to instant destruction, could such a view inspire love? I think not. A regard to our own happiness, is a first principle in the constitution of our nature; and shall we suppose that divine love, that most reasonable of all affections, can be

founded upon the ruins of any essential constituent of man? Nothing can be more absurd. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, is the requisition of our Saviour; not a God to whom we have no peculiar relation. Not that love to God is a selfish mercenary affection. But it must be particularly observed, that, at the same time that we are required *to love the Lord our God with all our hearts*, he is exhibited to us under the endearing relations of Creator, Benefactor and Redeemer. Nor must it be passed over without particular attention, that goodness must be considered as an essential constituent of this amiableness. How?—residing in the Deity without any emanation to any of his creatures? Or as flowing to others but not to us? No, *we love him because he first loved us*.

The sentiment I am opposing, seems to be as inconsistent with the nature of the affection we call love, as it is to the nature of man. As mutual hatred divides and separates its subjects, so does mutual love unite those that are under its influence. This we know is the case with men on earth. And can it be otherwise, when infinite amiableness is the object of our supreme affection? No my brethren; then, more than in any other instance, does it unite the heart to its great object. God sustains to us relations more interesting and endearing than any creature can sustain. He is more intimately present, than any creature can be. No mortal affection

can be compared with his love to his saints; and genuine love to him must ever be supreme. Consequently, the union which arises from the exercise of this holy affection, must be more intimate than any mortal union. Consider attentively the various ways in which the divine amiableness is exhibited, to attract our supreme regard. Is God *the hearer of prayer*? The heart that loves him pours out its complaints with an expectation that they shall be heard. Is he *the Lord God merciful and gracious—pardoning iniquity, transgressions and sin*? The heart that loves him, rests upon him for forgiveness of all his iniquities, all his transgressions, all his sins.—Is *the name of the Lord a strong tower*? *The righteous run thereto, that they may be safe*—Is he *the giver of every good and perfect gift*? The heart that loves him, relies upon him for *grace and glory*; for all that is necessary in time and in eternity.—Is he the Great Author of all enjoyment? The heart that loves him cleaves to him as its supreme felicity. In a word, in whatever character he manifests himself to us, we are required to exercise the affections which correspond with that character. How peculiarly absurd, then, must it be to suppose, that in direct opposition to the requisitions of God himself, our love to him ought to be founded upon abstract ideas of his excellence.

SERMON XIV.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

LUKE xxiv. 32.

And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures.

GREAT must have been the perplexity of the disciples of Jesus Christ, when they saw their Lord and Master extended upon his cross, and laid in the tomb. It must not be imagined, that their baffled hopes would, at once, detach their affections from the object of their highest love. So deeply was the love of their Saviour impressed upon their hearts, that whatever they might think of him while he lay in the tomb, it would require no inconsiderable space of time to erase the sacred impression. Was that Jesus then, in whom we trusted and whom we adored as the Messiah, promised to the Jews, an infamous impostor! Could an impostor

do the works performed by him, or inculcate doctrines so divine as those he taught? But had he been the Messiah, he would, no doubt, have abided forever; and it is a fact that he has been cut off by a violent death and laid in the tomb. Ah! could an impostor assume so divine a form! But on the other hand, could the Lord of life and glory die! Is the scene covered with some mysterious obscurity which shall soon be dissipated? Or, must Israel still remain in bondage and in misery? Must we give up our dearest hopes forever, and be compelled even to execrate and hate a name so dear to us! A strange report has, indeed, reached our ears: his tomb, it is said, is found empty, and the linen clothes laid by themselves. Nay, angels are said to have announced his resurrection; oh! were it true, we should be the happiest of men. But we dare not attach any credit to such an improbable report.

Such, it is probable, were the anxious thoughts and reasonings of the two disciples, on their way from Jerusalem to the village Emmaus. When lo! a stranger of venerable aspect drew near, and went with them. And he said unto them, *What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, and are said.* And one of them whose name was Cleophas, answering said unto him, *Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?*

And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people! And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him. But we trusted, that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre? And when they found not his body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre and found it even so as the women had said, but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village; and he made as though he would have gone further.— But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.— And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he sa-

nished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

O yes, it is he, it is he! We know him. We know him well. His visage, his mien, his accent, and his manner is the same. The same love and pity still beam in his eyes. It is impossible that we should be mistaken. Nay, we have a witness within ourselves which cannot deceive us. We need not visit the place where he once lay, to see that his tomb is empty, and the linen clothes lying apart by themselves. We need not the testimony of angels to assure us of his resurrection. None but Jesus could possess such dominion over all the powers of the soul, could thus control and move the passions, and fire the heart with all the ardours of heavenly affection. *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

The language here used is peculiarly strong and emphatical. *Did not our hearts burn within us?* We have, however, no reason to suppose that it rose above the heavenly flame, the ardors of divine love which it was intended to express. Never do we feel a more sensible affection for a friend, than when some mysterious circumstance which had, for a time, brought his integrity or friendship to us in question, have been happily removed. What then

must these affectionate disciples have felt, when all the objections which they had entertained against the character or friendship of their Lord and Master, were in an instant satisfactorily obviated, by the lustre which their risen Redeemer was pleased to throw upon the predictions of the prophets.

“And did we most unnaturally entertain unworthy suspicions of our dear Lord, at the very time that he was bearing our sins in his own body on the cross? *Ah! fools that we were and slow of heart to believe.* Plainly do we now see that his sufferings and death were foretold by the prophets, and very plainly did he himself declare to us before his death what has since befallen him; so that his death forms, not an objection, but a glorious confirmation of his divine mission. And did he die—die for us? And is he now alive? Is our best friend alive again, and does he live for our salvation? *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* And shall we be again united to his society, and after a short separation dwell in his presence forever.” But we have reason to think that peculiar efficacy, attended the lustre which our Lord condescended on this occasion, to throw upon the Old Testament prophecies; an efficacy which at once filled those highly favoured disciples with the most pleasing astonishment, and set their souls on fire. Their Lord would now, it is probable, appear in their eyes more illustrious and more amiable than

ever, and thus inspire their souls with flames of love before unknown.

But is there nothing analogous to what we have been describing, to be met with in our day? Is cold esteem all that is required of us? Have the words of our Jesus lost their power to penetrate and inflame the heart? No. There are some happy souls in our day, who can, on some solemn occasions adopt, and that with the greatest propriety, the language of the text and say, *Did not our hearts burn within us, when he opened to us the scriptures?*

This is not unfrequently the case, when the glory and the grace of Jesus Christ first open to the view of a penitent sinner, oppressed with an overwhelming sense of his transgressions. How intensely does he love! Ah! were this always the case! Could the Christian always burn in the fervours of his first affection for his Saviour, how sweetly would *the time of his sojourning* on earth pass away. But the reverse is for the most part the case. How often is he constrained to look back with deep regret, to the happy days when first the love of his Saviour broke in upon his soul.—Then what a glorious lustre was shed over every page of the bible. The name of Jesus Christ was to him sweeter than the richest perfumes. Oh! with what emotions of heart could he then follow him from his cradle to his tomb! With what inexpress-

sible delight could he then rove over the promises of his love! How delightful was it to converse with him in prayer, to hear his gracious word, to approach his table, and hold fellowship with his saints!—How precious were his laws, how delightful his service! And oh! how pleasing the hope of an everlasting residence in his immediate presence! But let a few years, sometimes only a few months, elapse, and how changed is the scene! What is the meaning of this astonishing change? The bible scarcely seems to be the same book, it once was. Scarce a single ray of heaven, seems to gild the darkness now resting on these once luminous pages. The name of Christ has almost lost its power to penetrate and delight the soul. And the serious exercises of devotion are become a task, rather than the joy and delight of his soul. “*O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*” Is the mercy of the Lord clean gone forever? It must be acknowledged, that some abatement of sensible affection and enjoyment may be expected to take place in the course of time, from the mere weakness of that nature which God has given us; and I think it not improbable, that a Soverign God may some-

times withhold the communications of his grace, in his abundant mercy by way of trial and necessary discipline. But there is reason to apprehend, that the sad case we have been describing, is for the most part, to be chiefly ascribed to some unperceived elation of mind; to the intrusion of some earthly delight; or to a criminal negligence in the duties of religion. "*In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.*" This is the language of God in reference to the case before us. The backsliding Christian is not left to remain forever in this wretched state: "*Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's den, from the mountains of the leopards.*" And oh, when the interposing cloud is removed, when such gracious accents sound in the ear, and when the cheering rays of the sun of righteousness break out again and shine upon the soul, what ardors of heavenly affection fire the heart! *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

But may we not suppose that the convert grown wise by bitter experience, will now avoid with the utmost vigilance whatever might again envelope his soul in darkness, obscure his future hopes, and damp the ardor of heavenly affection? This he

certainly ought to do; this might be expected. But, alas, this treacherous heart! This body of sin and death! It is not a single instance of this kind that will reform and thoroughly change such hearts as ours!

I might proceed to describe the trials, the conflicts, and the victories of the Christian life; and enumerate a variety of instances, in which it is in the power of some happy soul to exclaim in the words of the text, *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

But I feel myself arrested by a regard to the peace of such as can seldom or never adopt the language of the text, with reference to themselves, as well as by the languors of my own heart. And may not the sincere, even of this description, derive some consolation, from a text, which at first view, seemed nothing but darkness to them.

When the disciples, on their way to Emmaus, felt the fire of divine love enkindling in their souls, they knew not that it was the voice of Christ which they heard. And may not this be the case with some of his disconsolate followers in our day?—What means that tender solicitude, lest the love of thy Saviour should have no place in thy heart?—What means that anxious desire to feel the love of Christ enkindled in thy heart? Are these the anxieties of a heart at enmity with him? They ap-

pear rather to be the anxieties of sincere affection, the fruits of the Spirit, and the pledges of his favour. What means the involuntary joy which this thought, this dear hope inspires, the gladness of heart lighted up in the very countenances of so many of my hearers? Does it not seem to indicate an interest in the love of Christ, which an enemy to his laws and to his gospel, his cross and his throne, can never feel? "Oh, could I only entertain the hope, could I only see satisfactory evidence, that this heart, cold and insensible and faithless as it has been, is truly united to my Saviour in the bond of indissoluble affection, I should be one of the happiest creatures on earth! But ah! should I deceive myself. Should I at last be found an enemy to my best friend, an enemy to my Saviour! How insupportable is the reflection! Oh! for a ray of light to decide the doubtful case. Oh! for a beam of love to fire this cold, this insensible heart with all the ardors of heavenly affection!" Why? Is it merely the fear of damnation that extorts this cry? Say trembling, desponding soul! where dost thou go to rekindle the dying flames of thy affection for Christ in an hour of insensibility? To the flames of hell? Is it not rather to the cross of thy Saviour? Dost thou not find that his glory and his love have more power over thy heart, hard and insensible as it is, than all the terrors of the wrath of God?

My brethren, there is, I am convinced, too much stress laid upon rapturous affections in the Christian world, and often too little upon less dubious proofs of genuine religion. "And did my Saviour die for me? has he cancelled my guilt? will he save me from those devouring flames which roll beneath and exalt me to his throne in heaven? Blessed be God and blessed be my Saviour! O what a glorious deliverance I have found." When such sentiments are, by any means impressed upon the heart of a sinner, as he stands trembling over the gulf of everlasting perdition, it is no wonder that he should rejoice, and even rise to rapturous affections. And these affections may very readily be considered as constituting *joy in the Holy Ghost*, and a sure evidence of the divine favour. But, it too often happens, that such affections are almost as transitory as rapturous. Like torrents rolling down the mountains after a heavy rain, they not unfrequently disappear in a short time. And it is sometimes the case, that the subjects of these rapturous emotions become afterwards more opposed to religion, and more abandoned in morals, than before. Nor is this at all to be wondered at. For affections originating in the fear of hell, and the mercenary hope of heaven, are not the love of Christ; but self love inflamed to rapturous emotion. It is not in Christ that they rejoice, but in themselves. Self is the idol to which they address this devotion. A

devotion more to be dreaded than the greatest insensibility of heart.

And, here I must take the liberty to observe, that all affection not founded in knowledge must be spurious, how high soever it may rise. That preaching, therefore, and those modes of religious worship which are calculated only to inflame the affections without informing the mind, must be essentially defective and dangerous. The ignorant subject of inflamed religious affections, will generally be the most confident of the goodness of his state. His presumption, leading him to arrogance and preparing him for the wildest excesses, will too probably terminate in the foulest crimes. What a pity that the most generous affections of the human heart, should be thus wretchedly perverted to the disgrace of genuine religion and the ruin of the soul.

Such were not the affections now under consideration. These disciples were intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ. And under the energy of his heavenly instruction, while he opened to them the scriptures, their souls were fired with the pure fervors of heavenly affection. *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

May such be the exercises of every communicant on this occasion! It was *in the breaking of bread,*

that our Lord manifested himself to these enraptured disciples. Oh! that he would be pleased to meet with us to day at his table, and open up to our view the glorious mysteries of his love, and fire every heart with the pure flame of heavenly affection. It must not, my brethren, be imagined, that because I would guard you against those unhallowed fires which have done such mischief in the church and in the world, that I am an advocate for a cold and lifeless devotion. Our Redeemer is certainly worthy of our highest affection, of our supreme love. Be not afraid of loving him too much. Endeavour to form correct apprehensions of his character, of his excellencies, of his love to you.— Strive to enter into the most intimate communion with your Saviour; and you shall be enabled to unite with his affectionate disciples in saying, *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

SERMON XV.

PARENTAL DUTY.

EPH. vi. 4.

And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

THE age in which we live, is certainly distinguished by some extraordinary exertions in the Christian cause. Many religious societies have been lately instituted; the Bible has been translated into many languages and widely dispersed. And an unusual number of missionaries have been employed, to carry the light of the gospel to the benighted heathen, as well as to the dark corners of christendom. This is well. These things appear to be tokens for good. But how is it that amidst all these very laudable exertions in this great concern, little attention has been paid to the instruction of the young and rising generation? Do we really wish the reli-

gion of Jesus Christ to prosper and flourish in the world? Of all the measures which it is in our power to adopt, for promoting the great interests of piety and virtue a proper regard to the duty inculcated in our text, must certainly be one of the most effectual. This great duty appears, however, to be very much neglected. And I should esteem it a singular happiness, could I on this occasion, set it in a just light, and enforce it by arguments corresponding to its importance. *And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

It seems hardly necessary to observe, that under the appellation Fathers, Mothers must also be included. The duty here enjoined, must indeed, extend to all the instructors of youth without exception. But it is with peculiar propriety that it is so expressly enjoined upon parents, as they have the best opportunity of discharging it with success.

I. In the first place I shall consider what it is to *bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Now this great duty as it is exhibited to us in the words of our text, implies a proper course of *religious instruction and religious discipline.*

1. We must, and that in early youth, inform our children what is the great design of their existence, and what measures it will be incumbent on them to employ, to render that existence a blessing, and not

a curse. Or, in other words, we must use our best endeavours to make them acquainted with God their maker, and the duties they owe to him and to their fellow men. But to be more particular.

(1.) It is the duty of parents to inform their children, and that at a very early period of life, that there is a God who made and governs the world, and to whom they are indebted for their existence, for life with all its blessings. That He is the best as well as the greatest of beings, possessing every perfection and every excellence in the highest degree; and that he is willing as well as able to deliver them from all evil, and to afford them every necessary good. And here the great book of nature will afford us much assistance. It must be easy, even for children, to conceive that a power capable of bringing into existence the heavens and the earth, can do every thing. The beauty, order, and harmony which meet the astonished eye wherever it turns, will aid their conceptions of the wisdom of their maker: while the light of the sun, the fertilizing shower, and the various bounties which load the revolving year, will furnish them with exalted apprehensions of his goodness. They must not, however, be allowed to imagine that the sun rises and shines in his own strength; that the earth yields its fruits by its own fertility, or that the food they eat, has in itself, a nourishing virtue. No, they must be taught to ascribe all the diversified energies

of the elements, not to any innate virtue residing in them, but to the all powerful and unremitted agency of the great Creator.

But it is chiefly to the holy Scriptures that we must refer our children for religious instruction; for the knowledge of God, and just ideas of the duties we owe to him, and to each other. It is a great mistake, to imagine that the Bible is either too obscure or too sacred, to be put into the hands of children. Notwithstanding its astonishing sublimity, all that it is necessary for us to believe, and all that it is necessary for us to practise, in order to salvation is so plainly expressed as to be intelligible to the capacity of the youngest attentive reader. And the sooner they are made acquainted with its invaluable pages, the more likely will it be to make deep and indelible impressions upon their hearts. It may indeed, to superficial observers, seem strange that so large a portion of the sacred records should be historical. But a careful attention to this subject may convince us, that this is one of the most effectual as well as most engaging measures which can be employed for the religious instruction, of all ages indeed, but especially of the young. Let children then be early taught to read and reverence their Bible; to consider it the best book in the world; and to take it as their guide to eternal life.

And here I must be permitted to recommend, that the attention of children be especially directed

to Jesus Christ, as he is exhibited to us in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, and particularly as he is exhibited in the history of the New. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. In him humility, meekness, love to God, and love to man, and in a word, every divine and every human excellence shine forth in all their glory. *He that hath seen him, hath seen the Father.*

The doctrines of religion as taught by him, assume a charm that cannot fail to delight, at the same time, that they are calculated to make a deep and lasting impression upon every susceptible heart. By the most natural and beautiful allusions to a great variety of familiar objects and ordinary occurrences in life, he has rendered heavenly things plain, even to the capacity of children. There is not a bird that wings the air, not a fountain that springs from the earth to relieve our thirst, not a spire of grass in our fields, not a flower in our gardens, not a star in the firmament, or a shrub in the forest, but is made to convey some heavenly instruction in the most engaging manner. In a word, he has turned the world of nature into a school of spiritual instruction.

But it is not merely as a Teacher sent from God, to point out to us the way of eternal life, that our Redeemer claims our devoutest attention. We must also consider him in his sacrificial character

as the lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Nor, while daily receiving so many favours from parental affection, will it be difficult for children to form some just ideas of the love of God in sending his only Son into the world, to accomplish the great work of our Redemption. In the education of our children, Jesus Christ is, I fear, too much neglected. We exhort them to a virtuous, and warn them against a vicious course of conduct; we tell them that they must love God and keep his commandments; but parents do not seem generally to consider as they ought that Jesus Christ is the way of access to God, for children as well as for adults, and that the knowledge of him and faith in his name, is the only way of salvation for all ages capable of religious instruction.

(2.) The most effectual measures ought to be employed to convince our children, that they need a Saviour; that inheriting a depraved nature from an apostate federal head, they need the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, to deliver them from the power and the pollution of sin; and that having contracted the guilt of many actual offences, they need a better righteousness than their own, to entitle them to the favour of God.

The mortifying doctrine of human depravity, is so plainly asserted in the holy Scriptures, and so evidently exemplified in the general conduct of man on earth, that children may soon be brought to under-

stand it. Nay, it will not be long, before they may become conscious of a war between reason and inclination in their own breasts. Nor must it be imagined, that any thing short of this salutary conviction, will induce them to embrace the mercy of the gospel.

(3.) It has already been observed that children ought to be instructed in their absolute dependance upon God their maker, in a natural acceptation; and it cannot, surely, be less necessary for them to feel their dependance upon him in a spiritual sense. That *every good and perfect gift cometh down from the great Father of lights*, is an article of much importance in the christian system. We must, however, carefully guard them against the common abuse of this truth. They must repeatedly be directed to expect the assistance of Divine grace; not in the wilful neglect of their duty, but in diligent and honest endeavours to perform it to the utmost of their power. Or, in other words, they must be directed to wait upon God for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of his holy Spirit, in a diligent and conscientious attendance upon all the instituted means of salvation.

And here, though it may appear to be a digression, I must take the liberty to observe that children ought to be taught, and that at an early period of life, to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Not that the same seriousness and circumspection

is in this or any other instance, to be exacted from them as may reasonably be expected from the adult. But as the prosperity of Zion, and even the life and power of religion depends very much upon the conscientious discharge of the duties of this day, they ought, most undoubtedly, to be early accustomed to make a proper distinction between this and the other days of the week.

(4.) The various duties which we owe to God our maker, must be set before our children, in the most easy, and at the same time the most engaging light.—To love infinite amiableness with all the heart; to stand in awe of the majesty of the Almighty; to fear his displeasure; to aim at his glory in all we do; to trust his faithfulness; to be thankful for his rich and various benefits, and to render him the homage of the profoundest adoration; are duties so plain as well as reasonable, that children may be made, not only to understand them, but also to perceive them to be nothing more than our reasonable service.

(5.) They should also be well instructed in the various duties which we owe to our fellow men.—That creatures of the same species, inhabiting the same world; in the same state of apostasy and guilt; exposed to the same temptations; and on their way to the same eternal world—should not hate, but cordially love one another, and exert themselves with all diligence and zeal, to promote their mu-

tual happiness, both in this life and a future state.

Will it be necessary to observe, that every instance of parental instruction ought to be illustrated and enforced by a correspondent example? Children are more generally influenced by example than by precept. And if our conduct should be the reverse of our instructions; we have certainly much reason to fear that our children will be more disposed to imitate the former, than to observe the latter. You will not, however, expect on this occasion, a full detail of the various doctrines and religious duties, in which our children ought to be instructed. This would require more than a whole discourse.

2. I now propose to consider the other branch of a religious education which our text inculcates. We must bring up our children in the discipline, as well as in the instruction of the Lord. And with this view, it will be necessary that they be brought to a cheerful and unhesitating submission to parental authority. This great object ought indeed, to be accomplished by the gentlest measures which can be rendered effectual. It is, however, an object of too much importance to be sacrificed to the tenderest sensibilities of parental affection. When brought to this happy temper, children will listen to the instructions of their parents with reverence and respect. This happy temper will render obedience easy and delightful. But if they be suffered

to live under the influence of a peevish temper and ungoverned passions, there is very little reason to expect a favourable result from any course of religious instructions, or any measures it will be in our power to employ for their everlasting advantage. It is not, however, enough for us to teach our children what they ought to believe, and what they ought to practice; we must also, as far as it shall be in our power, restrain them from all sin. Eli was not, it would seem, deficient in good instructions and the tenderest entreaties for the reformation of his transgressing sons. But "*They made themselves vile and he restrained them not.*" And what was the consequence! *They hearkened not to the voice of their father,*" but persevered in their iniquitous courses to his great affliction, and their own destruction.

Yes, we must, as far as it shall be practicable, restrain our children from every vicious practice. And with this view, a particular attention ought to be paid to the company they keep, and the friendships and associations they shall be disposed to form. You would not willingly suffer your children to go near a person infected by the plague, or some pestilential disease. And is not vice, in many instances as infectious as the plague, and infinitely more to be dreaded? Undoubtedly it is. How is it then, that parents so frequently suffer their children to frequent abandoned, or at least, ensnaring com-

pany? Will the few superficial accomplishments which may be acquired from an ungodly world, compensate for the loss of good morals! Whatever parents may imagine, *evil communications will corrupt good manners.*

II. I shall now offer a few remarks respecting the manner in which the duty which our text inculcates, ought to be performed.

1. And here, the first observation which merits our attention, is suggested by the text itself. Parents must not *provoke their children to wrath.* For this caution there may not, indeed, seem to be much necessity in our times. With us, excessive indulgence appears, for the most part, to be a prevailing error. But however this may be, it may not be amiss to observe, that the most gentle and persuasive measures ought uniformly to be employed as far as they can be rendered efficient. Nor should any thing vigorous or severe, be at any time required. It may, indeed, be of much advantage to begin very early to accustom them to various instances of self-denial. But this ought always to be done, in a way calculated to convince them, that it originates in the most affectionate solicitude for their highest good.

2. In the education of children, the depravity of human nature must always be kept in view. They who disregard this caution, can scarcely fail to form very erroneous sentiments, both with respect to

the instructions which they ought to give their children, and that course of discipline and restraint which will be most for their advantage. This is not the place to consider the objections which have been made to this humbling doctrine. The difficulties, with which parents seldom fail to meet in the discharge of this important trust, will be sufficient to prove it to be a well established fact. And to correct it, ought to be the great design of a religious education. To this point, all the rays of religious instruction and all the energies of religious discipline ought to be directed. But is this generally the case? Far from it. The general management of children in our country, at least, and this is probably the case throughout the earth, seems to be much better calculated to corrupt and deprave a pure, than to rectify the disorders of a depraved heart. For example, it is by no means uncommon for parents in providing amusements for their children, to utter in their presence known and intentional falsehoods. And this must certainly be one of the readiest ways which can be devised, to teach them to act the same part. When parents are quite lavish in the praises of their children, they do not, it may be presumed, intend to foment pride and vanity, and self-conceit. But a little reflection might, one would think, convince them that such will, in all probability, be the case. It must not be imagined that when children are taught to be

impertinent, or abusive in the way of amusement, it is with a design to render them so in reality. This however, can scarcely fail to be the case. Nor are we permitted to imagine that when children are treated with that deference and regard which can belong only to the adult, it is with a deliberate design to render them assuming and self-sufficient. But this result is certainly the natural consequence of such treatment. Unhappy innocents! if I may be allowed that term:—hard, indeed, is their fate, when their parents and instructors and friends, instead of adopting proper measures for their edification and salvation, do just the reverse

3. Particular attention ought to be paid to the peculiar temper and disposition of children, as well as to their age. For a mild and gentle disposition will not require the same disciplinary energies, which must be employed in the management of the more turbulent and unyielding. It will, undoubtedly, be best to begin with the most obvious and elementary truths, and to introduce those of more difficult apprehension, as the expanding mind shall become qualified for their reception. These observations however, appear too obvious to need further illustration.

4. Parents will do well, to observe and improve the various occurrences in life, upon which some profitable instruction may be engrafted to the greatest advantage. Does the thunder roar or the light-

ning flash in the heavens? The grandeur and awfulness of the scene, may be made to assist children in their conceptions of the power and majesty of God. Is a member of the family, or some dear friend or relation cut off by death, and laid in the cold and silent grave? This will afford an opportunity not to be neglected, of turning their attention to the great interests of the eternal world. Is a beloved friend and relation, brought from the gates of death, and restored to health? This joyful event may be improved, so as to furnish them with a more impressive sense of Divine mercy.

5. Parents ought also to be very attentive to the manner, in which their instructions are communicated to their children. It is, I believe, now generally admitted, that from a cold unimpressive manner of preaching, little or no advantage is to be expected. And will not the same observation apply to parental instruction? If parents do not sensibly feel the importance of the truths they inculcate on their children, can it reasonably be expected, that children should derive any lasting advantage from such cold and heartless instructions? Certainly not.

6. Parents ought to be much engaged in prayer for their children. It is, I think, a prevailing sentiment among the best informed, that unless the seed of the word which has been disseminated by a preacher of the gospel, be watered by the tears of fervent and persevering supplication to God for his

blessing; little fruit is to be expected from the most impressive sermons. And still less reason, it appears to me, can prayerless parents have, to expect a blessing on their best endeavours to promote the good of the offspring, which God has given them. In every attempt to promote the salvation of others, as well as in the great concern of our own salvation, we are absolutely dependent upon the grace of God. This grace, therefore, we ought to seek with earnest and persevering importunity. Nor ought parents to be discouraged, though they should not have the happiness to see their labours, for the highest interests of their children, immediately crowned with success. Long after their heads are laid in the dust, their prayers in behalf of their children may be heard and answered. And this, from actual observation, we have reason to believe, is not unfrequently the case.

III. It remains to offer some motives to enforce the duty inculcated in the text. *And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Now it will, I hope, be readily acknowledged to be, at once a duty of great importance and of indispensable obligation. You have all no doubt, frequently observed the importance of culture in the vegetable world. What a vast difference is there between a plant or flower in an uncultivated forest, and in a well cultivated garden. And can it be supposed

that cultivation is less necessary in the moral than in the natural world?

In a state of perfect innocence, a course of moral culture might not have been, perhaps, indispensably necessary. In the minds of our children, we do not find that fair and expansive germ of every moral virtue, which requires nothing but the energies of intellectual culture, and the genial influence of revolving suns to bring it to perfection. No my brethren! Let cavillers against the Mosaic account of the apostasy of man say what they will, we evidently perceive in our children such tempers and dispositions, as will require all the energies of moral culture and judicious restraint, in order that they may be qualified and disposed to act with propriety, the part allotted them in this life. Look abroad in the world, and observe the ignorance and profligacy of a large proportion of our youth. See how many of them are rushing with eager haste to a premature grave! How many live to the grief, as well as to the disgrace of their parents! How often are the most promising talents prostituted, and all their parents' fondest hopes forever blasted! And have you any security that such will not be the fate of your children, should you neglect their education? You have not. Would you wish to see your children happy, and respected in this life? Would you wish them to be the comfort and the support of your declining years? Would you wish to secure

them from all the tragical consequences of flagitious vice? Then *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

But it is principally in a much higher view, that I must take the liberty of urging upon you the faithful observance of this duty. The present life is intended only as an introduction to a future state of endless misery, or of endless happiness. And it must certainly be your indispensable duty to adopt the most effectual measures in your power, to prevent the ruin and secure the everlasting happiness of the children God hath given you. Do parents verily believe that there is a future state? That when the dear remains of their children are deposited in the dust, *the soul must return to God who gave it*, and enter upon an unchangeable state? Do they verily believe this, and yet neglect to tell their children so?—neglect to tell them what they are; what they must shortly be; and what measures they ought to adopt, in order to be delivered from final ruin! Can they behold their own children in the way to endless destruction, and yet make little or no exertions for their deliverance from this most perilous situation? This, were it not too evidently exemplified to be called in question, would appear absolutely incredible. The parent who neglects the temporal interests of his children, will meet your decided disapprobation. What then are we to think of the parent, who neglects their everlasting

interests, neglects the souls of his children; the souls that must live when the body dies; that must live forever, and that in a state of endless happiness or endless misery? Must not the guilt of such parents be unspeakably great? Yes, my brethren, we want words to express it; we want ideas rightly to conceive it. And even though we could do both, the representation would, we have reason to fear, in too many instances, give offence instead of producing any salutary impression.

But the time is coming, when you will form just ideas of this interesting case. When about to bid them a last adieu, and go into that state where you can do nothing more for them, you will probably know how to appreciate the advantages of a religious education. Or should you see any of them die ignorant of God and without hope; and especially, should they, as has been the case, charge their destruction to the inattention and neglect of their parents, how will you sustain the dreadful imputation? But whatever may be the circumstances attending your departure, or that of your children from this world, you will meet them again; meet them before the bar of final judgment: and should you there find their destruction charged to your account, how will you be able to bear the weight of such a charge?

How is it, my brethren, that you are so tremblingly alive to every thing that can effect the hap-

piness of your children, in this life, and so regardless of their everlasting destiny? Is a child arrested by some dangerous disease? The parents seem to be the greatest sufferers. Every thing that aggravates the complaint, is guarded against, with the most sedulous attention. No effort is spared to afford the most effectual and instantaneous relief. But why is their tenderness limited to this transitory state? Why do they not with equal, with infinitely greater solicitude, labour to preserve them from a miserable immortality? Surely they do not consider the case as they ought. *And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* But do we not often see children, perhaps it will be objected, who enjoy all the advantages of a good religious education as bad as others? This may, sometimes, no doubt be the case. But do you not often see the reverse? No inconsiderable number thus educated, become a great comfort to their parents and the support of their declining years; and what is of still greater importance, no inconsiderable number thus educated, become the brightest ornaments in the church of Christ. And certainly, this ought to be sufficient encouragement, cheerfully to undertake and faithfully to perform this important duty. Nor when the children of professing parents, are found in the way of destruction, are we warranted uniformly to conclude that they have resisted the influence of a good education. Every

professor does not faithfully discharge this great trust. I might say more. It is not, I fear, by any means uncommon, even for pious parents, when *weighed in the balance to be found wanting*, in this respect. In a word; when we consider how very imperfectly this duty is generally performed, and the powerful temptations to which children in our country are exposed, it ought, by no means to be thought strange, that it should so often fail in the accomplishment of its object? “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*” This declaration, notwithstanding some apparent objections will, I am persuaded, be found a truth abundantly verified in general experience?

What a happy change should we shortly see in our families, in our churches, and even in our country, were the great duty I am endeavouring to enforce, faithfully observed? The preaching of the gospel must ever be, in a great measure, destitute of all saving efficacy, where a religious education is neglected. But a good religious education would not only have a tendency to prepare the young mind for the reception of divine truth; but also, for reducing it to practice; for becoming a doer of the work as well as a hearer of the word.

It has not, I hope, escaped the attention of the youth of this audience, that this discourse, though addressed to parents, is principally intended for their advantage. Since it is the indispensable duty

of parents to *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, it must certainly be your duty to listen with reverence to their instructions, and to submit with the greatest cheerfulness to their authority. Be assured, that your parents have your interests very much at heart; that whatever they enjoin, and whatever they may prohibit, they have this uniformly in view. *Honour then, your father and your mother*, and do all you can to render them happy in the discharge of their duty to you—Young as you are, you must die; you must die soon; and you may die in your youth. *Hear then, the instruction of thy father, and receive with dutiful attention, the law of your mother*, and be wise—wise unto salvation. Listen not to the voice of any seducer, who would entice your feet into the way of ruin. Youth is the happiest season for the acquisition of knowledge, and the improvement of the heart; for obtaining every thing which will be necessary to happiness in this life, and in that which is to come. Never does religion appear so irresistibly alluring, as when it is exhibited in the life and conversation of a well informed youth; never does youth appear so engaging, as when it is adorned with the graces of religion.—Children do not provoke your parents to wrath. Do not slight or despise their instruction. Do not resist their authority, but suffer them to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

SERMON XVI.

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST.

2 COR. v. 14.

For the love of Christ constraineth us.

NEXT to our own salvation, that of the people committed to our care, ought, certainly, my brethren in the ministry, ever to lie nearest our hearts. And it has become my duty once more to address you upon this interesting subject. A very difficult—nay, it appears to me a very perilous undertaking. God grant that I may be able to execute it, so as to promote our mutual edification!

In our day it is not uncommon for the ministers of the gospel, to sink into a state of great remissness, together with the people of their sacred charge. This, however, was far from being the case with the apostle Paul. In the discharge of the great

trust committed to him, he was very zealous—instant in season and out of season. Nay, He counted not his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish the ministry which he had received of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Nor did he labour in vain. The seals of his ministry were very numerous. Thousands of perishing sinners, rescued from the guilt and thralldom of sin, knew how to appreciate such extraordinary labours. But it was not easy for the wise men after the flesh, to comprehend the reasons of a conduct, so totally different from all the maxims of their boasted wisdom. And the faction at Corinth were, it seems, presuming enough to charge him with insanity and madness, on account of a zeal which appeared to them at once so preposterous and intemperate. With Paul it was, we are well assured, a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. In defence, nevertheless, of his conduct in this instance, he condescended to offer the short but truly dignified apology, contained in the words of our text and the preceding verse. "*Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us.*"—As if he had said.—The cause in which we are engaged is the most important, which can occupy the powers of an immortal mind. It is nothing less than the highest honour we can render to God our Maker, and the most essential

service we can do to our fellow-men. And is it possible that we can be too earnestly engaged, in promoting these great objects? Our Redeemer is worthy of our utmost zeal and our highest gratitude. For though *he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But while we were yet enemies Christ died for us. And he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again.* And when we consider these things, it is impossible to be unmoved or inactive. When we reflect upon the love of Christ to us, our zeal is awakened within us, our souls take fire, and we feel ourselves borne away as by a resistless torrent in his service. And such, my brethren, is the manner in which we, in our humble measure, ought also to endeavour to fulfil our ministry, if we would save ourselves, and the people of our sacred charge. And here I wish it to be attentively observed, that it is not merely the necessity of real piety or genuine religion, but the *necessity of the love of Christ in its constraining influence*, that, on this occasion I intend to evince. And with this view I must beg your attention to the following considerations.

1. *No inferior principle will be sufficient, to induce any one to acquire that knowledge which our sacred office requires.*

The sacred volume which we justly consider as the standard of our faith, and the only rule of our practice, is a book of vast comprehension. It extends from the beginning to the end of time, from the origin of the world to its dissolution, embracing besides the doctrines we ought to believe, and the laws we must obey, prophecies which we ought to understand, and a great variety of events, with which we ought to be intimately acquainted. It is a book that was written in languages very different from our own, and with an allusion to a great variety of customs, rites and ceremonies, not in use among us; in a word, it is a book which requires more pains to understand it, as a Teacher ought to understand the standard of his faith, than one who is not under the influence of this animating principle, will be likely to take. But should it be otherwise, he will be in great danger of endeavouring to explain the doctrines, and to reduce the requisitions of our holy religion, to a correspondence with his own exercises and religious state of mind. And in this way, he will, there is reason to fear, do great injury to the people who look to him for instruction, as well as to the great cause in which he is engaged. Nay, I am disposed to think that such a man will not be able to form correct ideas of what it most

concerns, both preachers and their hearers to understand, I mean what is most spiritual and divine.—For how can a man understand the nature of affections he does not possess, or of a life he does not live? *The carnal mind cannot know the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned.* Now as far as any man is destitute of the holy principle under consideration, so far must he be carnal, and consequently disqualified for spiritual and holy perceptions of divine truth. Every affection of the human heart, has a language correspondent to its peculiar nature. And if a man is not in possession of the affection itself, how shall he form correct ideas of the language belonging to that affection? It is impossible. And may not this be one reason, why commentators of great penetration and profound erudition, are often so miserably bewildered, when they attempt to explain some of the most spiritual and important passages in the holy scriptures?

2. *No principle of inferior influence to the constraining love of Christ, will induce any man to undergo the various and difficult labours of the ministerial office.* If any one has chosen to appear in this sacred character, from a hope of living in a state of ease and indolence, he has made a most wretched choice. He is either destitute of just conceptions of the nature of the gospel ministry, or else he does not intend to fulfil its various duties. It is not

enough for us to acquit ourselves in the pulpit, so as to escape the censures, or even so as to carry with us the applauses of our hearers. This may often be done at the expense of a good conscience, while the most important object of a ministerial address from the pulpit is neglected, and no proper measures are employed to awaken secure sinners, or slumbering Christians to any just sense of their danger and of their duty. Besides, there are a great variety of attentions indispensably necessary to a faithful discharge of ministerial duty, that nothing but the constraining influence of the love of Christ can command. Among these, may be mentioned, profound meditation upon divine subjects, self-examination, self-denial, and the various duties of retired devotion. And while these are neglected nothing will be done aright. The preacher, who in these exercises is remiss, cannot possibly feel for himself as he ought, nor be heartily and affectionately engaged for his own salvation. And surely, he who neglects himself, and does not feel as he ought for himself, cannot feel as he ought for his people.—Nay, my brethren, without the constraining influence of the love of our Saviour, we can never think of him or speak of him to others, or preach his gospel, or do any thing in our holy office in a proper manner.

Consider, my brethren, the most deplorable situation of the world of mankind lying in wickedness.

How far from God! How near to destruction! On what a dreadful steep do impenitent sinners stand! And O what fiery billows roll below!—Should their feet slide, should some sudden blast arise and sweep them away in this condition, they are forever lost. Let us hasten to their rescue.—Let us try to snatch them as *brands from the burning*. Let us address them—How? With an insensible heart, with a heart that cannot pity, cannot feel for them? No, my brethren, this would be absurd, this would be unnatural; and it would in all probability be in vain. In this way, we shall scarcely be able to procure any proper attention; much less can we reasonably expect that such heartless addresses will be the means of making upon their minds any lasting impressions. Do we need a proof of this! Alas; my brethren, we have, I am much afraid, too many resistless evidences of it every time we ascend the pulpit to preach the gospel. What multitudes among our people continue in a state of deep security, after all we have done for them! How often do we observe the labours of a minister, whose piety we have no reason to call in question, attended with little or no apparent fruit? It is not merely the love of Christ dwelling in the heart of a preacher that will qualify him, for his arduous task: No, it must dwell in him so abundantly, that he will feel, and sensibly feel its constraining influence. Without this, a preacher

will not be likely to be instrumental in any considerable degree, in promoting the salvation of his fellow-men. A very little attention to the nature and design of our sacred office will, it is presumed, be sufficient to establish this sentiment. It must not be imagined, that nothing more is required of us, than a certain round of ministerial services, discharged in a way that will secure to us the good will of the people of our sacred charge. It is indispensably required of us, that we do our utmost to save the souls committed to our care from final ruin. And in the execution of this arduous office, we must expect to meet with great difficulties. It will, as has already been observed, be often times difficult to procure any serious attention to the great interests of a future state. But this is not enough. The secure in sin must be awakened to a deep sense of their guilt and danger. And we shall often find our utmost exertions for this purpose, absolutely fruitless. And how difficult must it be to persevere in proper exertions for this purpose, after we have repeatedly done our utmost in vain!—*Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone!*—Nothing, it appears to me, but the constraining influence of the love of Christ can, in this trying case, secure us at once from a criminal remissness, and a paralyzing despondence. No other principle will be sufficient to bear us up and carry us on to the closing scene of life, in those zealous and uninter-

mitted exertions, which it is our indispensable duty to employ for their salvation.

But the want of success is not the only difficulty we may expect to meet with. *Prophecy not right things. Prophecy smooth things*—*prophecy deceits*, will not improbably be the requisitions of some of those whom we address. Not that any would choose to adopt such language. But some of them will, in all probability, be offended with the overwhelming lustre of the truth; will be offended, when their faults are brought to light and their transgressions set in array before their view; or when an attempt is made to wrest from them their delusive hopes, and tear away every refuge of lies in which they trust. And it may be, while you are doing your utmost for their salvation; while you are instructing, admonishing, entreating them in all long suffering, and the tenderest affection; nay, while you are weeping in secret places for them, and bearing them upon your hearts in the most fervent and affectionate addresses to that God, who only can take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh; they will neglect you, and make the most unkind returns for all these labours of your love.—And can any thing but the constraining influence of the love of Christ, support and bear you onward in all the best exertions in your power for their eternal good, under such circumstances of discouragement and affliction?

No, my brethren, without the constraining influence of the love of Christ, you cannot feel for them, remonstrate with them, preach to them, pray for them, or do any thing as you ought for their salvation. Nay, without this holy inspiring principle, you cannot feel or be engaged as you ought for yourselves, much less for others. Consider, my brethren, how your blessed Saviour accomplished the great work of redemption. Was it by the mere exercise of his infinite intelligence and almighty power? Did he, as in the great work of creation, form in the councils of eternity, the stupendous plan, and bring it to perfection by the single act of his will? No, my brethren, our salvation was not to be accomplished upon such easy terms. It was the work of Almighty love—of laborious, agonizing, dying love. It was the work of a Love that could make any sacrifice, undergo any trial and labour, and endure any sufferings for us. And can we reasonably expect to be instrumental in saving the souls committed to us, without correspondent exertions of love towards them for that purpose? Surely no.

But do we not sometimes see preachers of the gospel, in appearance, at least, very zealous, in the discharge of ministerial duty, who, nevertheless, afford convincing proof that they have no love to Jesus Christ? It must, indeed, be admitted, that this is the case. But it is in appearance only, not

in reality, much less is it uniformly in all the various duties of their office, that this zeal is displayed. Or, what is too often the case, it is a zeal for a party, not for Christ and the souls of men. Should we, however, admit it in some instances, to be real, arising from the native fervours of a susceptible heart; yet, much fruit cannot reasonably be expected from it. All the fires of unsanctified affections will communicate no christian warmth. Nay, we may safely affirm, that no great advantage can reasonably be expected, even from the highest affections and most zealous exertions of a heart which, while it is, upon the whole, right with God, is in a state of such declension, that the constraining influence of the love of Christ can scarcely be considered as the governing principle there. But what may we not expect from the constraining influence of this principle?

3. *No inferior principle will possess equal efficacy in the interesting case under consideration.*

1st. This principle *leads to ministerial fidelity, as it is the best qualification for ministerial duty.* That love to our fellow men, which just views of the love of Christ cannot fail to produce, will render a preacher of the gospel very solicitous for the salvation of his fellow men, and consequently operates as a powerful motive, to use all the measures in his power to promote their everlasting interests. Without love to God, there is no true love to men, con-

sidered as accountable, immortal creatures. And no inferior principle can incline and enable us to discharge, towards them, our duty with fidelity. Neither a regard to our own interest in all the periods of our existence, nor a regard to our own reputation, nor an attachment to the interests of a party, nor the strongest affection for our people which can reside in an unsanctified heart, will ever induce us to undertake, and faithfully to discharge, the numerous and very difficult duties we owe to them. That zeal which arises from these or similar sources, will, for the most part, prove only like a torrent, rushing from the mountains in the time of rain; very violent, perhaps, while it lasts, but quickly exhausted. Whereas it is an abiding principle, that we want to actuate us in our ministerial course. A principle not too violent in its operation, for the feeble powers of humanity to support it to the end of life; and one which like the sun shining in its strength, will at once invigorate and cheer the mind of man. And such a principle is the love of Christ. It will assist us much in forming just ideas of the worth of the soul, and the incalculable importance of everlasting interests.

Some assistance in this respect may, indeed, be derived from the whole system of material nature, for it must have been with an ultimate reference to the soul of man—to everlasting interests, that the foundations of the earth were laid, and our heavens

stretched out as a curtain. But when we turn our attention from the old to the new creation, when we behold a better earth and better heavens rising to our view; and especially when we consider the foundation upon which they rest, the cross of our Divine Saviour, we may well say, *Lord what is man that thou art mindful of him?* Under such views, a miserable worm seems to rise from his native insignificance, and assume an importance in the great scale of rational existence before unknown.

2. The love of Christ *will be efficacious in this case, because it will render our duty, our delight.* A man of great integrity may, indeed, do much from a sense of duty, even when the work is by no means agreeable to him. But how much more may we expect from one, who finds himself in his element, while he is discharging his duty; when it is to him *his meat and drink*; when he is abundantly happier thus employed, than in any other way. When the various duties of the gospel ministry are rendered delightful to us, it will be in our power to do more, and in a better manner, than if they were discharged merely as a task, which we dare not neglect. Turn your attention to the children of the world. Observe their astonishing and persevering activity. Observe with what efficacy as well as zeal, they labor day and night. What is it supports them, and bears them on in a career of such various and difficult labours? Is it merely or

chiefly a sense of duty? No, it is principally the pleasure they take in such pursuits and exertions.

To what are we principally to ascribe the different degrees of progress observable among students, at a seminary of learning? To the difference in their natural capacities? By no means. This may, indeed, in some degree, be very properly taken into the account. But the difference of their proficiency is to be chiefly ascribed to a correspondent difference, in the delight with which they apply to their studies. And so it must be in ministerial labours, as well as in secular and scientific pursuits. *The harvest is great, and well qualified labourers are few.* This is a common, and it appears to me a just complaint. But what a single labourer may do, whose work is his delight; who is borne on by *the constraining love of Christ*, as by a resistless torrent, is almost incredible. The very imperfect account we have of the astonishing labours of the apostle Paul, will exemplify, in a most striking light, the propriety of this remark. And even in modern times, the ministry of a Xavier, a Welsh, a Brainerd and many others will be sufficient to cover us with confusion.

3. The love of Christ in its constraining influence, *will also be attended by gratitude, in an elevated degree.* And gratitude is certainly one of the most influential, as well as exalted principles, which can actuate the heart of man. Were all the

labours of the life of a minister of the gospel, considered as nothing more than a proper expression of obligation, for what Christ has done for him, it would not, to a heart, under the constraining influence of his love, be thought too much.

4. The constraining influence of the love of Christ, must contribute to a faithful discharge of ministerial duty, *because it will excite an earnest and affectionate desire, to promote his honour and glory in the world.* And with this view, a preacher who feels this holy influence, will be induced to live as it becomes an ambassador of Christ; will shine a light in this dark world, at the same time that he is zealously engaged in labouring for the salvation of the people, committed to his care. Nay, we may safely affirm, that this is one of the most effectual measures which can be employed, for the edification and salvation of his fellow men.

5. The constraining influence of the love of Christ, *will give his example a peculiar force.* And how is it possible for a preacher, who pays a proper respect to the example of *the great preacher of Righteousness*, sent down from heaven, to be remiss in the discharge of his sacred office? Did he labour and toil, and suffer so much for the salvation of our guilty race, and shall we consider any thing in our power, too much to do for the salvation of our brethren?

I might proceed with observations of this nature, until the setting of the sun. But to what purpose would it be? You are all, I doubt not, already convinced, that the constraining influence of Christ's love, would do much for us, for our people, and the interests of genuine religion in the world; and that no inferior principle can possibly supply the place of this holy affection. But what will a mere conviction of this truth avail? If this be all the fruit of this discourse, I shall have laboured in vain. With this conviction, we may return from this exercise as cold and as lifeless as we came. I ought, were it in my power, to exhibit the love of Christ in those overwhelming glories, which at once, astonish and fire the heart with a correspondent affection. But how shall I undertake this? Its height I cannot reach, its depth I cannot fathom. Its length and breadth I cannot measure. Nay, its origin I cannot trace, nor is it in my power to describe its glorious consequences. The love of Christ surpasses comprehension and description. It never entered into the heart of man to conceive it. The love of Christ will be the astonishment, the delight, the theme and the song of saints and angels through the endless ages of eternity. But why these general reflections? What will they avail us? How often does the philosopher, after exploring with an astonished eye the wonders of the heavens and the earth, return into himself as ignorant of God, and

as far from the love of God, as before he entered upon his laborious researches! And we have certainly reason to fear, that after such general reflections upon the love of Christ, we may return to our people, may appear in the pulpit as destitute of its constraining influence as we came here. No, my brethren, it is not a general view of this incomprehensible subject in which the mind may for a time be lost in astonishment, that will be sufficient for us. It is an appropriating, palpable, realizing view; a view that will take fast hold of the heart, a view that will incorporate itself with the ordinary and daily concerns of life—a view that will be likely to be carried home with us, to accompany us while we lie down and rise up, while we go out and come in; in a word, that we may expect to carry with us through all the diversified scenes of future life.—Such is the view of this great subject that our impotence requires.

Consider, my brethren, the nature of sin. The desolations it has wrought in the earth. The deplorable state of a transgressor given up to its ruinous consequences forever. And remember this might have been our case. Consider what our Redeemer has done in the councils of eternity, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on Calvary for us. View him with *a visage more marred than any man's*—with his raiment stained in blood, in all the mysteries of wo, for us. Did he drink to the very dregs

the cup mingled for us? Did *he bear our guilt and carry our sorrows?*—was he made a curse for us? Did he die for us, rise from the grave for us; does he now sit at the right hand of the Father as our intercessor? Is it *in him we live and move and have our being?* And is it through him that we hope to live forever in a state of endless happiness? Consider these things, and say what are the returns we owe—and consider what are the returns we have made? What have we done for him who died for us? What have we done for the souls committed to our care? Look back, my brethren, upon the time of your unregeneracy and unbelief; when you were in the way of ruin—making haste to destruction. Did he arrest your desperate course? Did he find you in darkness and translate you into his marvellous light? Did he find you in chains and set you at liberty? Did he cancel your guilt and teach your hearts to love what you had once hated; to love God and holiness? Did he snatch you from the very grasp of eternal death, and save you from hell? And will you not have pity upon your own flesh and blood, as he had pity on you? Can you behold, with hearts unmoved, the deplorable state of a soul for whom he died, while it is *dead in trespasses and sins?* Can you behold such numbers of the souls committed to your care on the very verge of destruction, and yet do nothing

for their rescue? Will you not fly to their relief? open your hearts to them? address them in all the fervour of the tenderest compassion? Will you not remonstrate, plead with them, and even agonize for their salvation? “*How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel?*”

SERMON XVII.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED.

MARK xvi. 15.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

WHEN our Jesus undertook the work of creation, he had only to say, "*Let there be light, and there was light,*" Let there be a world, and there was a world, Let there be a commodious habitation for man, and the system which we inhabit arose into existence without delay. But the work of Redemption was not to be accomplished upon such easy terms. No, my brethren, in order to accomplish our Redemption, it was necessary that the law we had broken should be fulfilled, and that its penalty which we had incurred should be endured. But this great work was now accomplished. Our Redeemer had *magnified the law and made it honourable*, and its penalty he had endured to the very

uttermost. Thus a way was opened for the deliverance of sinners of our apostate race, from the guilt, the pollution and the thralldrom of sin.

It would have been easy for that Power which gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead, to have carried on the glorious work of salvation, without the institution of a gospel ministry, and the co-operation of any of the children of men. But his holy will was otherwise. Having laid the foundation of a kingdom, against which the gates of hell should never be able to prevail, it was his good pleasure to commission and send forth a number of his humble followers, to publish the glad tidings of his salvation to the ends of the earth, and preach the gospel to every creature.

It must not, however, be imagined that this sacred commission was limited to the apostles and the first preachers of the gospel. No, the apostles were indeed distinguished by gifts and power, and a dignity, to which their successors in this great work have no claim. But the promise accompanying this important commission, as it is recorded by the evangelist Matthew, "*I am with you always to the end of the world*" is a plain intimation that the gospel should be preached by the apostles and their successors to the end of time: and consequently we may consider the address originally made to the apostles as extending to ministers of the gospel in

our age also; *Go preach the gospel to every creature.* What an important, awful commission! What, my brethren, are the little interests of earthly kingdoms and states, when compared with the great interests of the kingdom of Jesus Christ—the vast concerns of eternity!

The last words of a dying father or friend, are justly considered worthy of particular regard. And surely the last words, the last injunction of our risen and ascending Redeemer, must claim the profoundest and most affectionate attention. *Preach the gospel to every creature.* But how shall sinful dust and ashes undertake the perilous task? How little, alas! do we know of the holy Jesus and his blessed gospel; how very limited is our knowledge of the Divine law which we have violated, of the evil of sin, of the nature and excellence of holiness, and of the most dangerous situation of an impenitent transgressor! How little do we know of the worth of a soul! How weak is our faith, how languid our zeal, how cold our love! And what shall we say in this perplexing case? Shall we say with his servant Moses; *Send we pray thee by the hands of whom thou wilt send this sacred embassy, but we pray thee have us excused?* No, my brethren, the awful charge is committed to frail and weak instruments, that *the power may be and appear to be of God.*

The gospel, properly signifies good news or glad tidings. "*Fear not,*" said the angel to the shepherds, "*for behold I bring unto you glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people.*" And with the greatest propriety is it thus denominated. Very tragical indeed, are the consequences of our original apostasy from God our Maker. And still more so, may I not say, are the bitter fruits of our own voluntary transgressions. Where alas! is the original glory of our nature? *How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! From the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot there is no soundness, no spiritual health.*

The human frame does, no doubt, still retain much of its original form. But its original vigour, its former glory, its immortality is gone. *All flesh is now become as grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field.*

How dark, how benighted the mind of man, where the candle of the Lord once shone with such heavenly lustre! How alienated from the love of God is the heart of apostate man! How debased his best affections! And how insupportable the vengeance which hangs over the head of an impenitent transgressor! Our innocence, our glory, our peace are gone. Yes, my brethren, they are gone; but our case is not a hopeless one. "*O Zion that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain, O Jerusalem, that bringest good*

tidings lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God! Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. He shall bring forth Judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his laws. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."

Yes, my brethren, the gospel proclaims a glorious, a complete and eternal deliverance, from the guilt, from the power and from the pollution of sin. The gospel proclaims a perfect deliverance, from all the tragical consequences of the fall, and opens to our astonished view, prospects of glory and happiness, far superior to that which we have lost by our apostasy and guilt. The pardon of sin, the adoption of the sons of God, and the heaven of Jesus Christ are brought near to us in the gospel. For it assures us that "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" "*Sing O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it,*

shout ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein." For a glorious, a complete and eternal salvation is offered to us in the gospel, "*without money and without price.*" Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "*hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*"

That the gospel proclaims a full and free pardon of sin, seems to be so evident from the Scriptures, as scarcely to need particular proof. *In Jesus Christ we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.* And is not this a blessing worthy of all acceptance?

Sin is an evil of incalculable magnitude. For a creature to set up his own will, in opposition to the will of the Great Creator, and Lord of the universe—what presumption! what arrogance! what heaven daring impiety! and in how many, and in what flagrant instances have we all done this? To worship and serve the creature more than the Creator; can any thing be more impious? And yet, who can undertake to exempt himself from the charge? Say my brethren, what is the object of your chief desire? Is it the knowledge and enjoyment of God your maker? Or is it rather some earthly good, your farms, your merchandize, or some of the perishing enjoyments of this transitory state? Now this is idolatry. Let no man deceive

himself. Whatever we love more than God, is to us an idol. And are there not many things which we have preferred—are there not many things which a number in this assembly still prefer to the God of heaven? We have certainly reason to fear that this is the case. Most alarming thought! Is there an individual present, who would venture to appear before God in judgment, with such guilt upon his conscience? Consider the dreadful punishments inflicted upon idolaters under the old dispensation. And can idolatry be less offensive under the new? My brethren, it is dreadful to live a moment in this awful impiety. What then must it be to die in it?

It is certainly our duty, not only to love God with a supreme affection, but also to worship him with profound veneration. What then must be the guilt of those who love him not, worship him not, serve him not? Who aim not at his glory—who have no proper regard to the duties they owe to him? And are there not a number of these characters present? Are there not a number in this audience, who have never seriously considered what their duty to God their maker is; who scarcely know what it is they owe to him? Nay, are there not some here, who, instead of revering the majesty of God, are in the habit of blaspheming his great and dreadful name, and yet are scarcely sensible that they have done any thing amiss?

Many and great are the blessings afforded us by the Great Father of mercies; but have we rendered unto the Lord according to the benefits received from him? Far from it. And must not ingratitude be a crime of high demerit?

Many and very important are the duties we owe to our fellow men. But in instances innumerable, we have come short of these duties. We have not paid that attention even to their temporal happiness, which we ought to have paid. And there are, we have reason to fear, but few among us who have paid any proper attention to the everlasting happiness, even of their dearest friends. And must not this be an instance of very criminal omission? What then shall we think of wilful violations of our duty to our neighbor in any instance? Could we answer for such conduct before the throne of the God of Love?

It was certainly for some important purpose, that man was brought into existence, and entrusted with the glorious powers of an immortal mind. But for what purpose? Was it that he might exhaust all his energies, in the low pursuit of the enjoyments of this perishing world? Surely no: It was that he might, under the assisting influence of divine grace, prepare for a more exalted state of existence—for that immortality which our Saviour hath brought to light by his gospel. What then must be their guilt, who have done nothing in this

great concern? And especially, what must be the guilt of those who instead of *working out their own salvation with fear and trembling*, have been zealously engaged in *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*? And are there not a number, even of this unhappy character here to day?

Our sins are not only of a crimson die, they are also numerous. We may have been inattentive to them, or have forgotten them; but they stand in record before God in heaven. Ah! could our transgressions, the sins of our youth, of advancing years, our sins as parents, as children, and in all the relations of life; our sins of omission as well as of commission—Could all our sins of every description be set at once before our view, in all their aggravation, what would be our condition? Is it possible that an individual in this assembly, could, with such a view, venture into the presence of God his maker, without a pardon, without a Saviour, without a better righteousness than his own? No: the most hardy and adventurous would shudder at the thought. Miserable offenders! I bring you glad tidings. Jesus Christ has made an expiation for sin; he has borne the wrath of God for us. He has done every thing, and suffered every thing necessary to open the door of mercy to the returning penitent. *God can now be just, and the justifier of the guiltiest sinner that believeth in his Son.* Accept then of

this salvation, believe in your Saviour, and then *your sins, though they should be as scarlet, shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Preach the gospel to every creature. To the rich and to the poor; to the learned and the unlearned; to the aged and to the young, to the greatest offender and the fairest moralist, to every age and character, and description of men. Arduous task! Difficult undertaking! But I must, as God shall enable me, endeavour to fulfil the important trust.

Has the Great Lord of the universe, bestowed upon any of you, my brethren, large temporal possessions? Be thankful for this instance of his distinguishing goodness. Riches do, indeed, too often prove a snare to those who possess them. *How hardly do they who have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!* This, however, ought not to be ascribed to riches, but to the depravity of human nature. No; riches well improved and properly employed, are a great blessing. How many wants might they relieve, what grief might they prevent or assuage; how much vice might they overawe and restrain. How many excellent geniuses might they rescue from obscurity, and raise to some important station in the Church or State! How many pious or benevolent institutions might they support, and in a word, of what extensive utility might they be, both to the bodies and the souls of men! And

shall a distinction, capable of answering such important purposes become a snare, and the occasion of aggravated ruin? Let it not be. How sad to be torn from great earthly possessions, at death, and reduced to complete and eternal indigence! Now, the gospel of Christ is the only security against this tragical fate. Obey this gospel then, and *use the world as not abusing it.* Thus *make to yourselves friends of the unrighteous Mammon.* And then shall you pass, by a happy transition, from the possessions of this life, to the treasures of eternity.

Whatever reception the rich may be disposed to give the gospel, may we not hope that the poor will attend to it and be obedient? Has the Great Disposer of all events, given you only a small portion of the possessions of this life? Murmur not on this account. He knew, it may be, that great possessions would have proved to you not a blessing but the reverse, and on this account withheld them from you in mercy and not in judgment. Do you wish for riches? Obey the gospel and you shall be rich. Believe in Jesus Christ and his unsearchable riches—the vast treasures of eternity, shall be your's, and that forever. Ah! will you be poor in this life, and in the eternal state also? *Preach the gospel to every creature—he that believeth shall be saved.*

The gospel of Christ is not beneath the attention of the learned. The world by wisdom—mere

human wisdom cannot know God. As our Sun can be seen only by rays reflected from himself, so that knowledge of God which accompanies salvation, can be derived only from divine teaching. In this respect, therefore, all mankind are upon equal terms.

Let none, however, imagine that it is our intention to depreciate the advantages of a liberal education. No: well improved, it is a *pearl of great price*. But in what does true learning consist? Is it merely the knowledge of the works of God, without any just ideas of the perfections of the Great first Cause of all things? Is it the knowledge of what we are accustomed to denominate the laws of nature, without any just conceptions of our own nature, and of the various duties resulting from the relations, which we sustain to God our Maker, and to one another? No: this is spurious learning—a kind of learning which fosters vanity and self-conceit. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that the learned of this description, should often reject a gospel which is calculated to stain the pride of all such vain imaginations. To such we shall, there is great reason to fear, preach the gospel in vain. But the truly learned, who, from the variety and extent of their researches, are led to form some correct ideas of God their Maker, and of the ignorance, the weakness and the dependent state of man, as well as of the wisdom and goodness of God, will not,

there is reason to hope, reject the most illustrious display of the Divine Wisdom ever exhibited to the world, and the only medium through which it is possible for any man to be made wise unto salvation. Shall they who take such pains to acquire useful knowledge in this life prefer to the light of the gospel, the faint glimmerings of unenlightened nature? To be plunged from the light of science into the darkness of eternal night—how unsupportable! Ye men of science embrace the gospel of Christ, and it will conduct you through the darkness of the present state, along the most delightful and luminous paths in this life, to those regions of unclouded light, where you shall know as you are known, and complain of darkness and uncertainty, and doubt no more.

But it is the lot of a very great proportion of mankind, to be deprived of the advantages of what is properly termed a liberal education. Nor is this circumstance by any means to be regretted. It is, certainly, enough for every one to possess that knowledge which his respective situation and calling in life requires. All men without exception, even the African who cannot read, may, with proper attention acquire all that doctrinal instruction necessary for salvation. And it has been already observed that, with respect to instruction of a still higher nature, all are upon equal terms. It would be, therefore, in vain, for any one to say, we have

no learning, we cannot read the Bible, and this being the case, it cannot be necessary for us to trouble ourselves about the mysteries of salvation. And about what then would you trouble yourselves? About the passing vanities of this vain life? Are not your souls as precious, as the souls of the most learned and best instructed on earth? Is it not as necessary for you as for others to acquire that knowledge, which is indispensably necessary in order to salvation? If you cannot read, for this very reason you ought to hear the gospel with the deepest attention, that you may in this way, under the teaching of Divine Grace, be made acquainted with the things which belong to your eternal peace. Be assured that the time is hastening on, when you cannot remain ignorant of these great interests. And O how insupportable would it be, should you open your eyes upon them, for the first time after they shall be forever removed from your reach.

Preach the gospel to every creature—to the aged and the young! My aged friends, I am sincerely concerned for you. Your day is almost spent.—The night—the night of entire inactivity is at hand, in which no man can work. Are you then prepared for your approaching dissolution? Prepared for death and a future judgment? If not, your case is hard indeed. How will you be able to break the force of vicious habits—habits which have been gathering strength for many days, and weeks, and

years? How will you get your affections, which have been so long rivetted to earthly things, set upon things above? Nay, how will you get a heart to make in good earnest the attempt. I am very much afraid that the gospel will be preached to you in vain. I am very much afraid you will die as you have lived—that you will die in your sins, and perish forever. Does this seem an unseasonable intimation? Is it discouraging? Are any of you disposed to say, if such be our case, we may sit down in despair, there is no hope for us? I should be extremely sorry to say any thing, which might have the remotest tendency to lead to this dreadful resolution. No, my aged friends, you must not despair. I bring you glad tidings. *The grace of Jesus Christ is sufficient for you* also. The grace of Jesus Christ is sufficient to burst the fetters of the most inveterate habits, and to inflame with all the ardors of heavenly affection, the most insensible heart.

It is not so much the difficulty of the work, that makes me tremble for you, as a fear that you will not be engaged by any arguments and entreaties, to undertake it in good earnest. But why should this be the case with any of you? Ah! my co-evals, what can the earth do for you or for me, that any of us should, for the wretched remains—the very dregs of the pleasures of sin—for the poor delights of time and sense—delights which will be-

come more insipid every day, forfeit all claim to the favour of God, and a happy immortality? Are the few hours intervening between the present and your last on earth, too much to devote to the great interests of eternity? Oh! that I could prevail with you, even at this late period, to begin in good earnest, the great work of life! Do any of you intend to die as you have lived? If not, why delay a moment longer? How can you allow yourselves to delay on the very brink of the grave? In a very few years, it may be, in a few days or hours, your state will be unalterably fixed—And are any of you then, still halting between two opinions in this great concern? What a miserable state! What a wretched infatuation!

Ah! ye young, you are yet in the morning of life, and in the morning of your day of grace. Turn your attention to this most moving and most instructive scene. Behold your aged acquaintance, on the brink of the grave, observe how careless and secure they, for the most part are, and be wise. Have you any reason to suppose, that should you neglect eternal interests, until you become old, you would be more disposed to attend to them at that period, than are your aged friends and acquaintances? You have not: and will you rest your eternal state upon so desperate a hope? Do it not. Should you grow old in sin, you will in all probability, be as reluctant to begin the great work of repentance

and amendment as others, at that unpromising period of life, generally are found to be—as reluctant as you can be now, nay, might we not say more so? For the longer the heart remains under the fetters of iniquity, the more dark and insensible is it likely to become. Why are any of you disposed to put off a work so indispensably necessary, a moment longer? Is it not because it is even now very disagreeable; what then will it become under the united influence of age and inveterate habits? But why look forward to a period to which not many of you can reasonably expect to live. What multitudes are cut off in the flower of youth! what multitudes in the highest vigour of mature life! Rest not, my young friends, I beseech you, a matter of such importance, rest not your salvation upon the vain hope of repentance, at a period of life which you have little reason to expect to see, and which, should you see it, there is so little reason to expect you will properly improve. Youth is the fittest, the happiest season for religious attentions.

the intolerable doom which awaits him; before it be forever too late. Surely then, we ought to enquire without delay; and that with the most solemn and impartial attention, what is the decision of the Judge of all the earth in our case.

In every age of the church, there have been false teachers who have opposed truth and its faithful ministers. And through *the cunning craftiness* of some of these *deceitful workers*, a number of the Corinthians were, it appears, so far perverted and misled, as to undertake to call in question the apostleship of Paul himself, at the same time that they were obliged to acknowledge themselves to be *the seals of his apostleship*, if not still in a state of unregeneracy and death. It is, therefore, with the utmost propriety, that the apostle Paul endeavours to turn their attention from him, who had preached to them the gospel of Christ, to themselves, that they might ascertain whether or no they had any claim to the character of true believers. For if they should find themselves in the faith, it must be an instance of great presumption, as well as inconsistency to doubt his claim to the apostolic character; and if they should find the reverse to be the unhappy case, it would be much better and more becoming them to lay their deplorable situation to heart, than to spend their precious time in cavilling against his faithful ministry.

We must not imagine that the duty here enjoined was peculiar to the Corinthian Church. No: it is the duty of the hearers of the gospel in every age. And the address originally made to the Corinthian Church, we may justly consider as now made to the people of this congregation. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates.*

To be *in the faith*, in the sense of the text, is to be a true believer. This is evident from the following clause; *know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates.* So intimate is the union between Jesus Christ and the true believer, that he is said to be *in them* and they *in him*. Christ is said to be in believers—How? by a mere nominal profession? No, but by the in-dwelling of his holy Spirit, to enlighten the mind and sanctify the heart: and the happy subjects of these holy influences are, certainly, in a state of grace, are real believers. By the term *reprobates* we are not, I think, to understand such as are consigned to irreversible destruction, but such as are disapproved of by the judge of the earth—such as are in a state of unbelief, and consequently exposed to final perdition.

Before I proceed to show *how we are to examine ourselves so as to ascertain whether or no we are in the faith*, it may not perhaps, be amiss to offer a few considerations to prove that the duty here en-

joined is not *impracticable*, that it is possible to *know* whether we are *in the faith*.

I. And the injunction itself, one would think ought to be considered sufficient evidence in this case. Can it be supposed that an inspired apostle, would have enjoined upon the Corinthians a duty which it was not in their power to perform? We are not allowed to adopt a sentiment so derogatory to his sacred character. Nor must it be imagined that the Corinthians principally alluded to in this address, enjoyed advantages for the performance of this duty, superior to those enjoyed by professors of religion in our day. For instead of possessing a more abundant communication of divine influences, they were for the most part, or at least, a number of them, we have reason to conclude, utter strangers to the grace of God. The same apostle in his address to the Hebrews, exhorts them to *give diligence to the full assurance of hope*. A plain evidence that this assurance is attainable.

But not to rest the interesting case upon these considerations, obvious and conclusive as they appear to be, I would observe that if there be a real distinction between a state of nature and a state of grace, and if we have faculties to perceive that distinction, it must be possible for us to know what our state is. That there is a real distinction between the states just mentioned, cannot be doubted by any believer in divine Revelation. Nor are the

lines of this distinction so obscurely drawn, as many are disposed to imagine. When the righteous shall appear in one brilliant assembly, at the right hand of their Redeemer and Judge, there will be no difficulty in distinguishing them from the miserable transgressors who shall stand on the left. And the difference is as real now as it will be then. All the lineaments of the image of God, which will be then exhibited in a state of absolute perfection, are now distinctly drawn. And, on the other hand, the very reverse, which will then be seen in the wicked, to the astonishment of the universe, may be justly considered as constituting their real character now.

And can it be reasonably supposed, that the human mind is incapable of discerning so great and well defined a distinction? The scriptural representations of the characteristics of these two widely different states will not allow us to adopt this sentiment. There is, you all know, a very manifest distinction between light and darkness; liberty and thralldom, life and death, love and hatred. And such are the expressive emblems which the holy Spirit has been pleased to employ, to distinguish between a state of nature and a state of grace. We have the express authority of this Divine Revelation, to assure us that every believer has been *translated out of darkness into marvellous light*—from a state of miserable thralldom into *the liberty of the*

sons of God—that he has been raised to life from a state of spiritual death; and that instead of being under the influence of a carnal mind, *the love of God is shed abroad in his heart*. We are not, indeed, warranted to affirm, that the states intended to be illustrated by these figurative representations, are as easily distinguished as the emblems themselves.—But when images, the most expressive and distinct in nature, are employed to give us correct ideas of a state of nature and a state of grace, it seems to be an evident intimation, that it is not impossible for us to distinguish the one from the other. We can easily distinguish light from darkness. And when a sinner is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things, though he may be at a loss to know whether his views be those of a truly illuminated mind; yet he can hardly be supposed to be unconscious of new perceptions. As the captive, who has been rescued from a state of thralldom, will be assured of his liberty, so an emancipated sinner, will, we may reasonably conclude, know that he is not as he once was, under the power of sin. Were I to ask you whether you know that you are alive, or that you love the dearest friend you have on earth, the question might appear impertinent. And can we suppose that a sinner, who from a state of spiritual death, has been made alive to God, and brought to love him with a supreme affection, will be entirely unconscious of any new

sensation or affection? No, my brethren, it is quite absurd to imagine, that so great a change, as regeneration is, in the word of God, described to be, should take place in the heart of a sinner, and yet, that he should know nothing about it. It must, nevertheless, be acknowledged, that though perfectly conscious of a change, he may often find it very difficult to determine, whether it be that change which the scriptures require, in order to salvation or not. But even in this, he is not left without resource. By careful attention to his life, he may often bring the doubtful case to a satisfactory issue. For between the life of a believer and that of an unbeliever, there is often a more evident distinction, than can be discerned in the dispositions and affections of the heart. While the latter *minds the things of the flesh*, and expects his chief happiness from the world; the other *minds the things of the Spirit*, and looks to the Great Author of his existence, for his highest enjoyments. While the one lives in some secret, if not open transgression; the other maintains in the general course of his life, *a conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards man*. If false teachers may be known by their fruits, so most undoubtedly, may even an *almost christian*, be distinguished from a true believer.

Nor must we forget the promise of the Spirit to *lead into all truth*. The anointing, the witnessing,

and the sealing of the Holy Spirit, may be confidently expected by the faithful and diligent disciple, to put the interesting case beyond all reasonable doubt. And surely, persons so highly favoured, may know themselves to *be in the faith*.

To all these evidences, we must add the many instances of an assured faith, to be met with in the Scriptures. "*I know*," saith Job, "*that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day, upon the earth: And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. But as for me, says David, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I wake with thy likeness. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, says Asaph, and afterward receive me to glory. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Nor is the language of assurance less common in the new testament. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For we know that if our earthly house of*

this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall give at that day, and not to me only, but unto all that love his appearing."

Thus we may see that the language of assurance, is quite familiar with saints in Scripture. Nor have we any reason to ascribe this to the miraculous or extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. These extraordinary operations were intended to establish the truth of christianity, and not to assure the individual of his own salvation.

The religion of Jesus Christ was the same thing then as it is now, and the evidences of true piety, the same then that they are now. The enlightening, sanctifying and sealing influences of the Spirit of God, were by no means peculiar to the prophets or apostles, or to any particular age of the church. It therefore evidently follows, that what was attainable then, is also attainable now. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves.*

II. Let us now illustrate the manner in which this important duty ought to be performed.

We must beware that we do not expect evidence

not to be obtained. We are not to expect an angel to be despatched from heaven, as was the case with Daniel, to assure us that we are objects of the love of God. We are not to hear a voice rolling through the air, to tell us that our sins are forgiven, as Luther is said to have done, when his mind first began to be enlightened by the doctrines of the reformation. We must not expect a supernatural revelation to banish our fears and calm the agitations of a wounded spirit; or which is nearly the same thing, we are not to imagine that the spirit of God will, in *an immediate and direct manner*, bear witness with our Spirits, that we are the children of God. To this Divine agent, we must, indeed, ascribe the work of regeneration; to him also, we must ascribe the excitation of grace in the heart, to such lively exercise, as to render that exercise evident to the mind. This is a *witness*, an *anointing*, a *sealing* and an *earnest*, which is perfectly rational and intelligible. But an impression intimating the pardon of sin in any other way, at least in any immediate and direct way, must either be a supernatural revelation or perfectly unintelligible.

It is not necessary to be able to tell the time, or the place of our conversion, or the particular means by which it has been effected. Nor is it indispensably necessary to have passed through what is commonly called a *law work*—accompanied by terror and succeeded by great joy. It is enough if we can

ascertain that the work has been done; that we are *new creatures, that we have passed from death to life*, though we should not have it in our power to ascertain when, or by what particular means it has been accomplished. *By the law indeed is the knowledge of sin.* But if we obtain such views of our state by nature, as to see and feel our need of Jesus Christ in all his meditorial offices, it is enough. Nor is it by any means essential, whether or no these discoveries have been attended by any remarkable terrifying apprehensions: or whether they have or have not been succeeded by extraordinary joy. If, when we compare our hearts and our lives with the word of God, we can lay a just claim to the evidences there given us of a state of grace, we ought to be satisfied.

What we have to examine into, and respecting which we are *to prove ourselves*, is whether we are *in the faith*, or which is the same thing, whether *Christ be in us*, whether Christ is in us by the enlightening and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit. We must examine ourselves, that we may see whether we have been taught of God, or in other words, whether we have ever seen the excellence of divine things. And in this view it may be proper to enquire, whether our present views of God are not essentially different from what they once were. It is, however, of more importance to enquire, whether our apprehensions of these

things be such as the Scriptures ascribe to real believers, or whether we perceive their real excellence.

That God our Maker is a Being of infinite perfections, is a truth to which all men may give their assent. But all men do not perceive the divine beauty and glory of his moral character. For if they did, all would infallibly love and obey him.—But this we know, is not the case. It, therefore, evidently follows, that a man may believe God to be a Being of infinite perfections, who does not perceive the divine beauty of his character. That is to say, the sensations of the heart, do not in this instance correspond to the dictates of the understanding. And why? Because the heart of a natural man, is carnal—and consequently in direct opposition to the glory of God. Now it is very plain that no one can form just conceptions of the beauty and excellence of that which he hates—of that which is in direct opposition to the predominant affections of his heart. But let this opposition be removed, let the carnal heart be taken away, or in other words, let a principle of spiritual life be communicated, and the excellence of the moral character of God will be instantaneously perceived. And is this the case with us? Do we approve of the moral character of God our Maker? Are we pleased with his law in its utmost spirituality and extent? Are we pleased with the gospel of Christ,

and that not only as it is the way of obtaining salvation from misery, but also, because it is the way of obtaining salvation from the power and pollution of sin? Are any of you disposed to say, how can we know this? Attend to the honest and uninfluenced dictates of your own hearts? Will it still be said, how can we know what our hearts dictate in this interesting case? I reply just as you would in any other case. But perhaps our hearts may deceive us. Let me ask you then, where do you find your chief happiness? Is it in God or in the world? If it be in God, you have seen his glory as it is manifested to the true disciples of Christ. Are any of you constrained to say, we cannot tell. Let me ask you again, do you evidently see how you could rest in God and be happy, if the darkness abiding on your minds were only removed? And is this the natural unconstrained language of the heart? When you trust in Jesus Christ for deliverance from the wrath to come, do you also trust in him for deliverance from the power and the pollutions of sin?— And do you know what it is to relish and affectionately desire an interest in his salvation? Does nothing on earth, nothing in heaven, appear to you so desirable as to be made holy as he is holy? If your hearts reply in the affirmative, be thankful for it, but do not rest here. No, we must carefully observe the influence which our views of divine things have upon our daily conduct. This is, in

my opinion, the best, the most infallible way of ascertaining whether you be in the faith. *He that doth righteousness is righteous.* A cheerful, unreserved obedience to the law of God, is the best evidence of genuine religion. *The branch that brings forth fruit* is most certainly united to the vine.—Is there no sin, however fashionable and lucrative it may be, which we dare indulge? Is there no duty, however offensive it may be to a carnal heart, which we dare omit? Do we love the ordinances of God? *Is a day in his courts better than a thousand?* Do we call *his Sabbaths a delight*, and consider it a high privilege to be admitted to sit down at his table? Is his word precious to our souls? Do we take *his testimony as our heritage forever?* If such be our views and our lives, we have certainly good reason to believe that we are *in the faith; that Christ is in us*; and we in him. But if not—if the reverse be our case, we ought, it appears to me, to conclude without hesitation, that we are still in a state of unregeneracy and condemnation. What an awful reflection! My brethren, what are the sentiments which you have been induced to entertain of yourselves from this view of the evidences by which we ought to examine ourselves?

SERMON XIX.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST SHEWN FORTH.

1 COR. xi. 26.

For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the
Lord's death till he come.

BETWEEN the natural and the spiritual world, there appears to be a beautiful and striking analogy. We must, by no means, imagine that the plan of the visible creation was instituted with an exclusive reference to so transitory a state, as that of innocence proved to be. *Known unto God are all his works* and all the events of time *from the beginning of the world*. When the sun was brought into existence and suspended in the firmament of heaven, to give us the light of day, he was also intended to be an emblem of the sun of righteousness, the spiritual light of a benighted world. It was not merely to administer to our temporal necessities,

that water was made to spring from the earth in ten thousand refreshing and fertilizing streams.— This salutary element was, we may assuredly conclude, intended to afford us a very interesting representation of the still more salutary influences of the Spirit of God upon the heart of man. Nor do the materials of bread rise from the ground, nor is the fruit of the vine impregnated with so rich a juice, only for the support and comfort of this mortal life. No, my brethren, bread and wine were intended to be emblems of the body and blood of our Saviour, or in the language of the text, *To shew the Lord's death till he come*. When invisible interests are thus embodied, as it were, and presented to us under sensible forms, it has a tendency to make a deeper impression upon the heart, at the same time that the mind is assisted in forming clearer conceptions of their sacred import. This is, we have reason to think, one reason why the children of men are so desirous to have every invisible object, of much interest, presented to the eye under some visible resemblance. And it was, no doubt, in conformity to this principle in our nature, that spiritual blessings have in every age of the world been exhibited by sensible signs. Even in a state of innocence, *the tree of knowledge of good and evil* and *the tree of life*, were appointed to be tokens and seals of the divine favour. And if such representations were necessary in that state, how

much more so must they be now in our present state of deep apostasy. Let us then, with the most serious attention, consider the nature of the ordinance we are this day to celebrate, as it is presented to our view in the words of our text. *For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

As the death of Christ is an event of the last importance to the children of men, it is necessary that it should be *shewn forth*, that it should be proclaimed and made known to all nations, to the end of time. It has been customary over all the earth to erect monuments, to institute festivals, and a variety of other memorials to perpetuate to succeeding generations the memory of illustrious deeds, and transactions of peculiar interest. And what, my brethren, are the battles that have been fought and the victories which have been obtained; what are the rise and fall of empires; what are all the exploits of the most illustrious heroes; what are all the most celebrated transactions of mortals, in comparison with the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ? Nothing has ever been done; nothing has ever taken place on earth of equal, of comparable importance, to our guilty race. It is, therefore, with the greatest propriety, that a solemn memorial of this great work has been instituted to perpetuate its memory to the latest ages.

We naturally wish to be remembered by the living, when we shall be numbered among the dead. The thoughts of having our memory forever blotted out from the earth, is far from being agreeable to the mind of man. And a variety of vain, expensive and foolish measures have been resorted to, by short sighted mortals, with a view of preserving their names from oblivion. The proudest monuments, which have been reared for this purpose, have perished from the earth. And even where the monument is still to be seen. the name it was intended to eternize has for the most part been erased from it, as well as from the memory of man. But our Jesus had only to take bread and wine, as he was celebrating the last paschal supper with his disciples, and set them apart to be memorials of him in the character of a crucified Saviour, and these simple elements have testified of him—*have shewn forth his death* in the worshipping assemblies of his disciples, in every age and nation to the present day.

When a beloved friend or relation is about to be separated from us by death, how anxious are we to have some tender memorial of his friendship and affection, which it will be in our power to preserve while we live. And it was, when our Lord was about to be separated from his affectionate disciples, that he instituted this holy ordinance. What must have been their distress and apprehensions, upon

finding that He was going to leave them without any visible Head or Protector, in the midst of their numerous, powerful and most inveterate enemies! But he did not leave them comfortless. No, he assured them, that he would not be unmindful of them after his departure; that he would still be with them in a spiritual sense; in a manner much more important and interesting than a man can be with his friend on earth: and as a memorial of his unchangeable love; as a medium of endeared communion with them after his ascension to heaven; and as a pledge of his coming again to receive them to the mansions he was going to prepare for his humble followers, he instituted the ordinance we are this day to observe in remembrance of him.—We must not, however, imagine that it was exclusively for the sake of the beloved companions of his tribulation on earth, that this holy ordinance was appointed. No, my brethren, it was for us as well as for them. It was for the comfort, the edification and establishment of all his disciples to the end of the world, that he consecrated the elements of bread and wine to be the memorials of his dying love and grace.

But to be more particular: These elements are happily calculated to shew forth the sufferings and the death, which our Redeemer endured for sinners of our apostate race. The breaking of the bread, and the pouring out of the wine, constitute very ex-

pressive emblems of the agonies he endured, when his body was broken on the cross, and his blood was shed for us. What he endured, however, from the hands of his enemies, was, we have reason to believe, far from being the whole of his sufferings. And it has been supposed by many pious men, that the processes ordinarily observed in the preparation of these elements for our use, are intended to assist our conceptions of this solemn and inexpressibly awful mystery—the sufferings he endured from his Heavenly Father. It must, however, be observed that it was *bread and wine*, and not the materials of which these elements are composed, that were appointed to be symbols in this ordinance. Besides, I am very doubtful whether such remote analogies, will accord with the divine simplicity of scriptural allusion. But, however this may be, I am persuaded that such allusions would afford us very little assistance upon this interesting subject. There are no resemblances in the universe, that can furnish us with adequate apprehensions of what our Redeemer endured from the justice of his Father, when *the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him*. But should any one enquire, Why did the innocent Redeemer submit to such incomprehensible distress?

This holy institution will furnish us with a very satisfactory reply. For *his body was broken and his blood was shed for us*. Not merely or chiefly

to confirm the truth of the doctrines he taught, but also *for the remission of our sin. The Lord was pleased to lay upon him the iniquities of us all.* Much zeal has, I well know, been employed in opposition to this fundamental article of our holy religion—the justification of a sinner through the imputed righteousness of a suffering Redeemer. With a view of divesting the blood of Christ of all its meritorious and atoning virtues, arguments have been most adventurously drawn from sources which lie beyond the comprehension of man. With the same view, some of the plainest texts in the Bible have been tortured upon the rack of criticism. Nay, for the invidious purpose of reducing our blessed Saviour to a level with an ordinary martyr, a bold and impious blow has been aimed at the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. But in vain. For as long as the pious and unsophisticated christian shall sit down at a communion table, to eat consecrated bread, as an emblem of *the body of Christ which has been broken for him*, and to drink consecrated wine, as an emblem of *the blood of Christ which has been shed for the remission of his sins*, he must be so irresistibly led to consider the death of Christ as an expiatory sacrifice for human guilt, that no sophistry will ever be able to banish the impression from his heart.

And what sentiments, my brethren, ought we to entertain of that personage, who has been able to

make an adequate satisfaction to the justice of God, for the transgressions of an apostate world? Shall we consider him nothing more than a mere creature? A careful attention to the nature of sin, may be sufficient to convince us, that such a sentiment is utterly inadmissible. What should we have thought, had we been told that Stephen shed his blood for us, or that Paul died to expiate our transgressions? Could we rest our salvation upon such a foundation? We dare not. It is easy to see that a mere creature, could render no higher obedience than the law of God requires of him, and consequently, that he could make no satisfaction for the sins of any other creature. No blood but that of a divine person, could satisfy the justice of God for the sins of men. Christ, it is true, suffered only in his human nature, but his Divinity must be considered as imputing an inconceivable virtue to all that he did, and suffered for us in that nature. I must be permitted to add, that while the doctrine of atonement maintains its ground, that of human depravity cannot consistently be given up. For were man by nature innocent, he would stand in no need of the interposition and death of an atoning high Priest, to satisfy for his sin. To preserve him from ruin, nothing in this case would be necessary, but the preservation of his innocence. And the providence of God Almighty would certainly be sufficient to do this, without the interposition of a suf-

fering Redeemer. Thus we may see, that this holy institution is happily calculated to establish the belief, at the same time that it perpetuates the memory, of some of the most fundamental articles of the Christian Religion.

The emblems of bread and wine, afford us a very interesting representation of the glory and fulness of the salvation of Jesus Christ. The nourishing and strengthening virtue of the bread, is well calculated to assist our conceptions of the life-supporting and invigorating influences of his grace. We must not imagine that a sinner is raised to a state of independence upon his Saviour, as soon as the image of God which had been lost by the fall, is retraced upon his heart. No, my brethren, the most eminent saint on earth, has no more power to preserve from destruction the principle of divine life communicated to him in the day of regeneration, than he has to preserve his mortal body from the grave. And it would be well for every disciple, were this important truth deeply impressed upon his heart. For it might preserve him from much fruitless toil, and from many a severe disappointment. Our utmost exertions in the Christian life will be absolutely fruitless, or at least attended with little advantage, unless we labour and strive, in reliance upon the grace that is in Christ. The most advanced Christian on earth is utterly incapa-

ble of doing any thing acceptable to a holy God without the aid of his Saviour. But the weakest can do all things, through Christ strengthening him. Let not then the strongest presume, nor the weakest despond. Christ is the bread of life. He will do more for the soul that trusts in him, than the bread we eat can do for our mortal bodies. Bread with all its nourishing virtues, cannot always preserve from the grave. But he that lives a life of faith upon Jesus Christ, shall never die. Nor is the reviving, the cheering and cordial influence of the wine, less happily calculated to represent the comfort and peace, the joy and gladness of heart, which spring from faith in a crucified Saviour. Are any of you, my brethren, ready to sink into despondency on account of the number and the aggravations of your offences?" *Take this cup of salvation* and give thanks to *the name of the Lord* for the efficacy of the blood of your Saviour, for the efficacy of the blood which cleanses the foulest stains of sin. Are any of you *in heaviness by reason of manifold* infirmities and imperfections?— Does the too frequent prevalence of guilty unsanctified affections, disturb your peace and disquiet your minds? Are you distressed because you cannot love your God and Saviour more, and serve him better? Here is a sovereign remedy for all your complaints. A balm for every malady, and

grace to help in every time of need. Jesus Christ is the great physician of souls. Apply to him in that character and you shall be made whole.— You shall be delivered from the guilt, and domination of sin.

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SERMON XX.

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

MAT. xxvi. 29.

But I say unto you, that I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

IN forming just conceptions of any character, it is of great advantage to have an opportunity of viewing it, in some of the most trying situations in human life. In the ordinary course of events, to maintain a decent and respectable demeanor is easy. But when the storms arise and the angry billows begin to roll and break upon our heads, it is a very different case. Often has a lofty oak, that long withstood the force of ordinary winds, yielded to the violence of a tempest. And to many a fair reputation, have seasons of powerful temptation been fatal. Nor is it seldom that seasons of this nature occur in this probationary state. It is, however, in the clos-

ing scene of life that we have for the most part, the best opportunity to learn what is in man. Death is an honest hour. At the approach of death the hypocrite lays aside his mask, while modest unassuming worth, ventures forth to open view. That all who tremble at the solemn prospects of an opening eternity, are unprepared for that state, we dare not affirm. But when the reverse is the case, when the pious man is observed to meet death without fear, he rises in our estimation, and assumes a dignity before unknown. It is not, my brethren, in the field of blood and slaughter, that true heroism is displayed to the greatest advantage. No, it is on a dying bed, or rather on the scaffold of a martyr for the truth, that real courage is best attested. To behold without dismay the gradual approaches of the king of terrors, is a better evidence of true heroism, than rushing into his arms amidst the shouts of warriors and the clangors of the trumpet. But when the holy martyr triumphantly embraces the flaming stake, or calmly ascends the bloody scaffold, as a voluntary witness to the truth of the gospel, human nature is presented to view in its highest glory. If these remarks be allowed to be just, how peculiarly interesting to us, must be the last hours of the life of our Saviour. Never were there any trials, like those through which he had already passed. All that the malice and subtlety of earth and hell, could devise against him had been

tried, and tried in vain. But now *his hour and the power of darkness* was come. His enemies, who had formerly made so many unavailing attempts upon his life, were now to be successful. Already had an infamous traitor in his own family, entered into a most wicked conspiracy against his life. The cross upon which he was on the following day to die, for the sins of the world, may be considered as present to his comprehensive view. And well did he know what he was to suffer both from the hands of his implacable enemies, and from his heavenly Father. Does he then shrink from the bitter cup and attempt to make his escape? Far from it. Calm and collected he sits down with the companions of his tribulations at the last paschal supper, institutes a solemn memorial of his dying love, and assuages the grief of his sorrowful disciples by the most consoling considerations, assuring them, that after the impending calamities shall be overpast, he will meet them again in a better world, and celebrate with them a richer feast than this world can afford. “*But I say unto you that I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.*”

And much did the apostles need the consolation contained in this gracious promise. For their Lord and Master was just about to be taken from them by a cruel death, and laid in the grave—an event

for which they were not prepared—an event which they do not appear to have expected; and by which they appear to have been thrown into the greatest perplexity. From this perplexity they were indeed quickly relieved, by our Lord's resurrection from the dead; but he arose to abide with them, only the short space of forty days. And when this period was elapsed, he bid them a long adieu, and ascended to his throne in heaven—leaving his disciples exposed to the rage and malice of their implacable enemies. Nor my brethren, are the disciples of Christ in our day, in a state of such unmixed prosperity, as not to need as well as the primitive disciples, all the consolation derivable from this blessed hope. Let us then attentively consider the happiness of a future state, as it is exhibited under this expressive emblem, *New Wine*.

Were we, as some commentators do, to consider the words of the text, as having a reference to the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth, after his resurrection from the dead; even in this acceptation, it would have been peculiarly interesting to the apostles. For *they were glad when they saw the Lord* after this glorious event; and were admitted to eat and drink with him again in the land of the living. We have, however, no evidence that he ever drank wine at any of those repasts. Nor, had this been the case, do we perceive why it ought to be denominated new wine. It was un-

doubtedly a much more exalted entertainment, our Lord had in view, when he uttered the words of the text, even that high and intimate communion with himself, to which every real disciple will be admitted in a future state. What a glorious and interesting prospect to every sincere disciple! When the patriarch Jacob beheld his son Joseph, whom he had given up as lost, coming forth to meet him, not now dressed in a party-colored coat, as when last dismissed from his presence, but invested in all the glory of a ruler in Egypt, in the transports of joy unutterable, he is forced to exclaim, "*Now let me die, since I have seen thy face because thou art yet alive.*" What then must have been the transports of the apostles of our Lord, when after weathering all the storms of persecution, they found themselves once more in the presence of their Redeemer, to behold his glory without a veil, and to drink new wine with him at a table that shall never be drawn! Nor my brethren, are we sure that our joy would be less than theirs, upon being admitted for the first time to behold in his exalted state, that *visage which was so sadly marred* for us as well as for them. As our Lord had just instituted and administered to his affectionate disciples, the sacrament of the Supper, it was no doubt with a reference to that sacred ordinance, that he denominated the wine which he will drink with his saints in heaven, *New wine.* And it is by keeping this reference in

view, that the import of the gracious declaration in the text, will be best illustrated.

1. The knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified, is undoubtedly of high and everlasting importance to us sinners. And happily calculated are the elements of bread and wine to aid our conceptions of his glory, his fulness, and especially his suitableness to our case. It is, however, but little we can know of him with all our advantages in the present state, where *we see only as through a glass darkly*. But in heaven it will be otherwise. There we shall see face to face, and *know even as we are known*; know him as *God over all*, and God and man in one person:—Yes, my bretheren, the disciples of Jesus Christ will, in a future state, obtain much more comprehensive ideas of his divine perfections, his human excellencies, of all his offices, and transactions than can be obtained on earth. And as the knowledge of a conspicuous and influential character on earth, embraces the most remarkable occurrences of the age and country in which he lived; So the knowledge of Jesus Christ in a future state, will comprehend the most important transactions of eternity, and that we have reason to think, in every part of the universe. Yes, my brethren, the disciples of Christ will then have a clear and satisfying knowledge of the great plan of salvation, as originating in the counsels of eternity, as it was accomplished in time; and as ex-

tending its benign influence, we have reason to believe, not only to the countless myriads of the Redeemed, but also to all holy and happy intelligences in the whole universe, through the endless ages of eternity. Now when vice triumphs and prospers, while tyrants and oppressors are established in power, at the same time, that the virtuous and upright are overwhelmed in distress, we are sometimes ready to faint in our minds, and exclaim, is there a God in heaven who regards the transactions and condition of man on earth? But then it will be made manifest how the rise and fall of empires, *the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noon day*, famines, earthquakes, peace and war, the wrath of men and the rage of hell; and in a word, how all natural and even moral evil has been so directed and controlled as to coincide with this astonishing plan. And then also, shall we have a satisfactory knowledge of the various events which have befallen ourselves. Afflicted disciples of Jesus Christ! tossed with tempests and not comforted, dismiss your complaints and wait for the light of heaven to unravel your perplexities. Then you shall find why a dear friend or relation has been consigned to a premature grave; why your strength has been wasted with pining sickness; why your schemes for earthly happiness and peace have been baffled and defeated. Yes, you will then have a most satisfactory knowledge of

the way, through which the Lord shall have conducted you to a state of everlasting happiness and peace. Communicants! when at any time the clouds began to disperse, and the glory of your Redeemer to dawn on your souls at his table on earth, what was then your joy? And what think ye would it have been, had every cloud been removed? Well, in heaven this will be the case. In heaven, every cloud and obscuring mist will be dispersed, and your exulting spirits left exposed to the brightest irradiations of your Redeemer's glory forever.

2. We must not imagine that bread and wine in the sacramental supper, are only intended to serve as symbols of our Redeemer's love. While the humble communicant is sitting at the table of his Lord and Master, he has reason to hope, that the grace represented under these sacred emblems will be afforded, or in other words, that the holy ordinances will be attended with a sanctifying efficacy upon his heart. What is it, Communicants, that you wish for most at this sacred table? A lively manifestation of pardoned guilt? No:—this is indeed a great privilege. But to have a heart to love as you are loved, or in other words, to become more like the glorious object of your supreme regard; to be made holy as your Redeemer is holy, is a still greater privilege. And it is for this that the true disciple pants with the greatest ardour. But how imperfect is our love, and every other grace in this

state of darkness and imperfection! In heaven it will be otherwise. Neither a dark mind nor a cold heart will be found there. When we shall know as we are known, we shall love as we ought to love. *Beloved, we do not know what we shall be; but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

3. From the view just taken of this sacred institution, we may evidently see that it is a medium of communion with our blessed Saviour. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* To know him, to be in any measure like him, to love him, and to be loved by him, is to have fellowship with him. Nor is it seldom the case that the humble communicant is admitted to sensible manifestations of his love at his table on earth. But in the present state, all our spiritual attainments, all our graces as well as our knowledge of Christ, are very imperfect. And yet it may safely be affirmed, that one hour of sensible communion with Christ, even here, is of more value than all the delights of time and sense. What then will the christian enjoy, where every obstruction to the most intimate and holy communion with his Lord and Master, shall be removed; where his knowledge, his love, every grace and every power of the mind, shall be brought to a state of absolute perfection? When a disciple

thus qualified for the most intimate and exalted communion with his Lord and Master, is admitted to contemplate his glory without a veil, and to drink new wine with him, at his table in heaven, no language can express the elevation of his joy.

4. The sacramental supper is also intended to be a medium of communion between the disciples of Christ with one another. And happily is it calculated to answer this important purpose. When the disciples of Christ sit down at the same table, eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup, in commemoration of the love of Christ, it must have a powerful tendency to unite their hearts to one another in the endearing bonds of christian love. A very great part of the happiness attainable on earth, arises from cordial friendship and the exercise of kind affections. But there is no friendship to be compared with that, which, originating in the love of Christ, is cemented by his blood, and fostered by his grace. When a number of sincere and affectionate disciples meet at the table of their Lord and Master, or on any other occasion to reciprocate the overflowings of Christian friendship and affection, it is a little heaven on earth. .Votaries of pleasure! who call for the harp and the violin, who have recourse to the gambler's board, the festive assembly, or the comic muse for entertainment, we envy you not. We have no occasion for any of those wretched expedients to kill time, or disperse

the clouds of melancholy. The native effusions of Christian friendship vibrating from heart to heart, have vastly greater charms for us. And if *the communion of saints* in this imperfect state, be so delightful, what will it be in heaven, where none of the circumstances which mar its perfection on earth, will have any place; where the disciples and friends of Jesus Christ will be admitted to drink new wine, with him and with one another in the highest exercise of mutual love! What will it be, my brethren, to meet with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; with the prophets who foretold, and the apostles who published to the ends of the earth, the coming of our Lord; with the martyrs; with all those eminent and holy men by whose labours our souls have at any time been edified, with all the saints of every age and nation, from the beginning to the end of the world! Be comforted ye pious mourners, who are in distress for the loss of pious relations, you shall meet them again in a state of better society than this earth can afford; and meet them to part no more.

5. The sacramental supper is considered as a seal of the Covenant of grace, and to the worthy communicant a sure pledge of eternal life. And they who shall be permitted to *drink new wine* with Christ in his Father's kingdom, will consider it as a pledge of his everlasting love—as a sure evidence that there shall be no more condemnation to them,

no end to their happy state forever. Here the disciples of Christ sometimes meet at his table, and on other occasions hold sweet communion with him and one another; but these occasions are of short continuance, and soon pass away, to return no more. But the high and holy communion to which they will be admitted in heaven, will never be interrupted, will last forever. There will they meet with their Lord and with one another, to part no more. Nor will any communicant in that happy world ever sit down to drink new wine, with his Redeemer and his saints, with a trembling hand or a mis-giving heart, as it not unfrequently is the case, in this vale of misery and darkness. There clouds, and darkness, and doubts, and fears are known no more.

SERMON XXI.

THE SACRAMENTAL COVENANT.

DEUT. xxix. 10—15.

Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel; your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into a covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath. But with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not with us here this day.

THAT the God of heaven should grant to our apostate race a revelation of his holy will is, certainly an instance of astonishing mercy. But He has done more than this. He has been pleased to present to our view, a great variety of the most powerful motives which the heart of man can con-

ceive, as inducements to obey his will and be happy. Nay, that nothing calculated to impress the mind; to secure a just regard to the Divine will, and thus to guard the transgressor from the way of ruin, might be omitted. He has even condescended to enter into a solemn covenant-relation, with sinners of our guilty race; promising to be to them a God, at the same time that they bind themselves by solemn obligations to be his people. Yes, communicants! it is under the character of *Covenanters* with the God of heaven, that I am, on this occasion, to address myself to you. And so it was also, under the old dispensation. It has pleased the Great Father of mercies to dispense, in every age of the Church, the blessing of the gospel, in the way of a *covenant-transaction*. And the instance of this nature presented to our contemplation in the words of our text, merits a very particular attention. “*Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel. Your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water. That thou shouldest enter into a covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee. That he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to*

Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Well did Moses understand the force of a covenant-engagement to be the Lord's. And as he was just about to resign his sacred charge of the Israelites, and appear in the character of an accountable servant, before the Judge of all the earth, the God of Israel; he did not think it proper to rest a cause he had so much at heart, as their future destinies, entirely upon the most powerful motives to obedience, which it was possible for the heart of man to conceive. No: he also brought them under all the obligations implied in a most solemn covenant-engagement, to a steadfast perseverance in the service of God from generation to generation.

The first thing then that demands our attention is, the nature of the covenant contained in the words of our text.

That it was in the name of God and by his express authority, that Moses acted in this instance, will not be called in question by a believer in Divine Revelation. And this being admitted, it must have been, either *a covenant of works or a covenant of grace*. For these are the only covenants entered into with man, by the God of heaven. But it could not be a covenant of works. For this was made with Adam, in the character of a federal head to his posterity. And it has never been renewed since its violation by him. It requires, as its condition, not only perfect obedience but absolute innocence.—

Were a man, who has once been a transgressor, to obey the whole law for the time to come, this would not entitle him to the promised reward. For the law of works, certainly, requires perfect obedience, in all the periods of our existence. What would we think of a Prince, who should offer to his rebellious subjects, the various immunities of good citizens, upon the condition of having conducted themselves uniformly as it becomes good citizens? This would be an insult, not a favour. And shall we suppose, that the God of heaven would thus tantalize his own moral offspring? Would he say unto us sinners, "If you have never been sinners, if you have never transgressed my law, and if you will keep it perfectly for the time to come, you shall live? No, my brethren. We must not entertain such blasphemous ideas of our beneficent Creator. *The law* instead of being exhibited to us, under the form of a covenant of works, is now *a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*. It might also be observed, that to offer an apostate sinner life upon condition of perfect obedience, would be to offer life upon an impossible condition; and consequently the supposition is absolutely inconsistent with the wisdom, as well as with the goodness of God. We may, therefore, assuredly conclude, that the God of heaven, neither in this instance, nor at Mount Sinai, nor in any other instance, ever entered into a covenant of works with apostate man.

But may we not consider the God of Israel in the character of a temporal King, entering into a civil covenant with that highly favoured people, and promising them temporal blessings, only in case of obedience to him in that character? By no means. This is a most degrading idea of the Great Sovereign of the universe, and altogether unworthy of his infinite perfection. As civil government is of God, and indispensably necessary in a state of civilized society, for him to give laws to his people Israel, for the regulation of their conduct in that state, is natural and proper. But to consider the God of heaven, as condescending to become the temporal King or Governor of any nation upon earth, merely or chiefly with a view to their temporal happiness, is impious as well as absurd.

No, my brethren; we must not entertain such unworthy sentiments of the Father of all the inhabitants of the earth. When he was pleased to select the Israelites as a peculiar people, it was undoubtedly, with an ultimate reference to their everlasting interests, but not to their interests exclusively. It was *that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the believing Gentiles*, throughout the whole earth, as well as upon believing Jews. The covenant made with Abraham, or rather with Abraham's Lord, must be considered as the foundation of the subsequent stipulations, or covenant-engagements, he has been pleased to enter into, in

every succeeding period to the present time. Yes, my brethren, it must be considered as the foundation of all the laws, and rites, and ceremonies, and observances, as enjoined upon the Israelites, as well as of the spiritual privileges afforded us. In this view the Jewish polity is worthy of God: in any other view, it would have been unworthy of Moses or any other well-informed legislator. That the view we have given of the solemn transaction under consideration is just, may be inferred from the terms of the covenant. "*That he may be unto thee a God.*" What does this expression mean? Is it, that he might give Israel the land of Canaan for a possession, accompanied with various other temporal immunities? No: we are assured by an inspired apostle, that if this were all, he would have been ashamed to have been called their God. That this expression has a reference to future, as well as temporal happiness, appears with resistless evidence from the explanation given of it by our Lord himself. For since the resurrection from the dead, is established from the expression, it must also imply that state of happiness which is connected with that glorious event. Let the most vigorous imagination exert its utmost powers in this interesting case.—Is it possible for any one to form an idea of a greater degree of spiritual happiness, than to have the God of heaven to be our God? It is not. And this is the blessedness promised in the covenant

made with the Israelites on this occasion. “ *Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God. Your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the children of Israel. Your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of wood unto the drawer of water. That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day. That he may establish thee for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*”

And would it not, my brethren, be desirable that blessings so invaluable and so indispensably necessary for our apostate race, should be confirmed in the most satisfactory manner? And nothing surely could be a better security than the oath of God himself. This security he was pleased to afford to the children of Israel. “ *That thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day.*” Alluding, no doubt, to the oath by which the blessings of the covenant of grace were confirmed to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. And the same blessings, were, in the same manner, confirmed to the people of Israel on this solemn occasion. Not that the oath of God is more sure than an absolute promise. But as we consider ourselves under

stronger obligations to fulfil an oath, than a simple promise; in condescension to our infirmity, the Great Father of mercies has been pleased to confirm by an oath the promises of his grace. We must not, however, consider the obligation on the part of God as absolute—as securing infallibly to all who are admitted to an external covenant-relation with him, the blessings of the covenant of grace. No: the engagement in a covenant-transaction must be mutual. And peculiarly solemn were the engagements entered into by the people of Israel, on this occasion. They also bound themselves, it appears to me, by a solemn oath, to be the people of God. This seems to be implied in the original expression, translated, *enter into covenant*. Literally it is—“*Pass into covenant*”—alluding, there is reason to believe, to a very significant custom which obtained among the Jews and some other ancient nations in covenant-transactions—that of cutting a slaughtered animal into two parts, and passing between them, as an expressive representation of the fate awaiting the transgressor of so solemn and sacred an engagement. From the following clause also—“*That thou shouldst enter into his oath*”—the same interesting truth may be fairly inferred. For how could the people enter into the oath of God without a similar obligation? But it is unnecessary to enlarge in so plain a case. It was customary with the Jews, as well as other nations, to confirm cove-

nant transactions by an oath. And a very solemn confirmation it is. Have you, my brethren, attentively considered the nature of an oath? It is more than an appeal to God as a witness and a judge in the case. The expression *so help you God*, which is so often uttered with very little solemnity, is not properly speaking a prayer: No, it is a solemn imprecation. And the meaning is, if you faithfully fulfil your obligation, may God help and save you; but should you violate your oath, may he neither help nor save you. So that the juror, the person who comes under the obligation of an oath in any case, stakes his salvation upon the faithful performance of the part he has engaged to act.

Thus we may see what was the nature of the covenant entered into, on this occasion, by the people of Israel; that it was not a covenant of works, but a covenant of grace, and that as God condescended to engage, under the solemnity of an oath, to be their God, so did they bind themselves by an oath to be his people. And what appears to me to merit particular attention, their little ones, and even unborn posterity, were included in the sacred transaction. *Ye stand all of you this day before the Lord your God, your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel. Your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water. That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the*

Lord thy God and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day."

That the expression *with him that standeth not here with us this day*, is to be considered as including posterity, there is no just reason to doubt. For we have express evidence to prove, that posterity was included in the Covenant made at Sinai, as you may see in the 5th chapter of this book. *The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers—with our fathers only, but with us, even with us, who are all of us here alive this day.* And every attentive reader may observe, that in all succeeding ages, the posterity of Israel was considered as sustaining a covenant-relation to God. The propriety of such a dispensation, will not be called in question by any one who believes that Adam was constituted our federal head, or who believes that the second commandment, denouncing punishment upon the posterity of transgressing parents, originated in divine benevolence.

The communion table is also a covenant-transaction. It will not, however, be necessary to take up much of your time in establishing this truth.—The words of institution alone, seem to be conclusive in this case. *This is the New Testament*, or as it is commonly and more correctly rendered, "*The new covenant in my blood.*" Written in blood, and ratified by blood; by the blood of the Son of God. The primary design of this institution does, indeed,

seem to be an affectionate commemoration of the dying love of our Saviour. But how? As love in which we have no interest? No, my brethren, we receive in this ordinance, bread as an emblem of *his body which was broken for us*, and wine as an emblem of *his blood which was shed for us*. These elements are then, undoubtedly, to be considered as tokens and pledges of all the blessings of the covenant of grace. And this is the same thing as to say, that Jesus Christ in this ordinance engages to afford to the believing communicant, all the blessings he hath procured for his real disciples by his death. And can it be supposed, that a communicant can sit down at the table of his Lord, and there receive these pledges of his love, there commemorate his love in dying for him, and yet not avow him as his Lord and Master? It is impossible. This avowal is contained in the very nature of the solemn transaction. And whosoever thus explicitly, and under such solemn forms, confesses Jesus Christ before men, professes himself to be a disciple of Christ, and must certainly come under very solemn obligations to live as it becomes a disciple. Yes, he binds himself by the body of Christ which was immolated for him, and by the blood of Christ which was shed for him, to be an affectionate and faithful disciple forever. The language of this transaction, as it respects the worthy communicant, is, *I am not my own; I am bought*

with a price: Therefore, I will glorify my God and my Saviour in my body and my spirit which are his.

The elements of bread and wine, are symbols of communion with Jesus Christ. "*The bread which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?*" And can there be any concord between Christ and Belial? Can we hold communion with him, and with the enemies of his holy kingdom? It is impossible. Jesus Christ is in Heaven, and we upon this earth. To him we cannot have local access. No, we can hold Communion with him, only by a heart like his, and a life like his; in the exercise of holy affections towards him, and in receiving gracious communications from him.

The elements used in this holy ordinance, are solemn tokens of the remission of sin through the efficacy of a Saviour's blood, which was shed for that very purpose. But our Redeemer did not come to save his people in their sins. No: he came *to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Nothing then, can be more inconsistent than that a communicant should receive these solemn tokens, of the pardon of all his offences, and then live in sin, for which his Saviour died.

In this ordinance, there is a solemn profession made of our inexpressible obligations, for the blessing of redemption. And shall we present our thanksgiving to our Redeemer, under such solemn

forms of inexpressible obligation, and then render his redemption of no effect to us, by living in sin? Nothing can be more inconsistent.

This holy institution is also a token of communion, and consequently of the most unfeigned love among the disciples of Christ, who meet at the same table; and therefore, it must constitute a strong obligation, in that view, to fulfil to them, all the various duties incumbent upon brethren in the Lord.

These observations will, it is hoped, be sufficient to show how very inconsistent it must be for a man to appear at a Communion table, among the disciples of Jesus Christ, and afterwards to live not as a disciple, but as a man of the world, as an *enemy to the cross of Christ*. But if it be inconsistent to act such a part, it is because the reception of the symbols of the love of Jesus Christ, implies an engagement to live as it becomes a disciple to live. And consequently, the communion table is a covenant-transaction.

Trembling Communicant! be not afraid of being too firmly bound, to be the faithful servant of so great and so good a master. I might rather have said, be not afraid of having your heart united to your Lord and Redeemer, by bonds too sacred, too indissoluble—by bonds too strong and too endearing, ever to be broken!

SERMON XXII.

THE CITIZEN OF ZION.

PSALMS cxxxvii. 5, 6.

If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

THE predictions of the prophet Jeremiah, against the guilty inhabitants of Judea, were now most terribly fulfilled. The tribes of Israel had long since been dispersed among the Gentile nations, and now Jerusalem was laid waste. The temple of the Lord was burned with fire, Judah was gone into captivity.

To a people so affectionately attached to their country, and the religious institutions of their fathers, as were the Israelites; these events must have been inexpressibly afflictive. To be banished from the land of promise, and cut off from the service of

the sanctuary, was in the estimation of a pious and devout Israelite, one of the greatest calamities that could befall him on earth. David may be introduced as an evidence in this case. When driven to the wilderness of Judah by the persecutions of Saul, how earnestly does he long for the courts of the Lord! *“O God thou art my God, early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.”*

How deep then, must the afflictions of the children of Judah have been, when with a long and sad captivity in prospect, the privileges and blessings which they had lost by their crimes, occurred to their remembrance. *“When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me, for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy day.”* And very much do these afflictions seem to have been aggravated, by the cruel mockings they had to endure from their unfeeling oppressors. *“By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.”* What cruelty!

Did these haughty oppressors verily expect to extort a song from their miserable captives, in this hour of pungent distress? It seems scarcely possible. It must not be imagined that it was merely the satisfaction of hearing a song they had never heard before, that the people of Babylon had in view. No: this cruel request was, no doubt, made in impious derision of the God of Israel, and the hope of that people in his protection. As if they had said, "Often in your own country have you boasted of the power of your God, to protect you against the most powerful combinations of invading foes. Often have you in your songs of praise, exalted him above all the gods of other nations. Now let us hear you sing upon the banks of the rivers of Babylon, one of these triumphant songs to the honor of your Almighty protector. Now magnify his great name, for the protection he hath afforded you." And in this view how appropriate, how sublime is the reply of these miserable captives! "*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*" "Oh daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us." As if they had said, "Do you then expect us to sing a song of Zion, now when Zion is become a

desolation? Shall we renounce our faith in the God of our fathers, and profane his worship by singing one of the songs appropriated to the service of the temple, in these unhallowed regions? Sooner shall our harps hang neglected on these willows, and warble the praises of our God no more. Sooner may our right hand lose the faculty of motion, and our tongue the powers of harmony. No, haughty Babylonians, no! Our bodies are, indeed, in your power; but our souls are not yet so humbled and debased as to be induced by any terrors, or any sufferings to comply with so cruel and wicked a demand. Be not too much elated with your victories. You have, indeed, laid our city and temple in ruins. You have torn us away from our beloved country, and reduced us to a state of miserable thralldom. But the God whom we serve, and whom you impiously deride is able to avenge our wrongs. Nor will he fail to do it at the appointed time, secure and fearless as you appear to be. We rest assured, that agreeably to the predictions of our prophets, the now useless harp shall yet be employed in Zion, to praise our God for deliverance from your cruel domination."

Very powerful were the temptations, by which these miserable captives were beset, to abandon the interests of Zion, to renounce forever a God that had delivered them into the hands of their merciless enemies, and to fall in with the idolatrous rites of

their new masters. But neither the desolations of Zion, nor the contempt to which their religious rites and observances must expose them among other nations, nor the prospect of a long and rigorous captivity, nor all the charms of one of the finest countries in the world; not any, nor all these things could induce them to forsake the covenant of their God, and abjure the religion of their fathers. The very dust and ruins of Zion, were, in their estimation, preferable to all that was most enchanting in the world besides. So far were the pious Israelites, who had been inviolably attached to the interests of Zion in her prosperity, from abandoning those interests, now that she was in a state of ruin; that, brought to a sense of their iniquity by the heavy inflictions of deserved punishment, no inconsiderable number who had been faithless and refractory in their own country, were, we have reason to believe, induced to unite with the author of this Psalm, in the affectionate language of the text, "*If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*"

If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy!—This seems to be an exposition of the former clause, *If I forget thee O Jerusalem*; and I regard it as one of the most striking and interesting representations

of the character of a faithful and affectionate citizen of Zion, to be found in the whole book of God.

It is scarcely to be supposed, that any man who believes in the divine origin of our holy religion, can be so abandoned as not to wish that religion may prosper and prevail. But how few appear to prefer the prosperity of Zion to their highest earthly joy? Yet this must, undoubtedly, be the case with every faithful and affectionate citizen. The most earnest inquiry of an *Israelite* indeed, is not, "*What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?*" But rather, "*By whom shall Jacob arise for he is small?*" No intelligence is so welcome, or affords him so much satisfaction, as an account of the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Nor does any thing afflict him so much, as the decline of religion in the world. It is with Zion that his joys rise and fall. Is he in adversity? Is he poor and despised? If Zion prospers, all is well. But he cannot be satisfied with the most prosperous circumstances, while *the ways of Zion mourn*, and her interests are in a declining state.

Nor will the faithful and affectionate citizen of Zion rest in mere aspirations for her welfare; but according to the talents with which he is endowed, and his situation and opportunities in life, he will exert himself to promote her good. *When he riseth up and when he lieth down; when he sitteth in the house and walketh by the way*, the most solicitous

and affectionate inquiry of his heart is, What can I do for him who died for me, and for *the church which he hath purchased with his own blood*? What measures shall I adopt most effectually to promote the honour of my Divine Master, and the salvation of my fellow-men?

Is he in affluent circumstances? Very cheerfully will he honour the Lord with his substance, and devise and execute liberal things for the more extensive diffusion of the means of salvation in the world. Nor with less cheerfulness will he throw in his mite for that purpose, should it be out of his power to do more. Is he clothed with a dignified character? Does he move in the higher walks of life? Most gladly will he employ all his superior influence for the honour of the illustrious personage, who *made himself of no reputation* for us. Nor can any situation of life be so obscure, as to conceal from the view of his acquaintance, the light which it is his constant care to reflect around him wherever he goes, for the edification of his fellow-men. *If I forget thee O Jesusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: If I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy.*

Well might this pious Levite thus affectionately remember Jerusalem. For this famous city, may justly be considered as comprehending all that was most dear to a faithful Israelite. Jerusalem, the

metropolis of Judea, the land of promise, which the God of heaven was pleased to wrest from the impure hands of the idolatrous Canaanites, and to give to his peculiar people, Israel, was certainly one the most illustrious cities upon the face of the globe. “*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo! the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it and so they marvelled; they were troubled and hasted away. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces that ye may tell it to the generation following.*” But it was the temple of the Lord which the great Jehovah had chosen for his residence, and the ark and the mercy seat, where he appointed to meet and commune with his chosen people, that constituted the highest glory of this celebrated city. There did the Lord of hosts establish the throne of his glory, and *ordain a testimony in Jacob*. Thither did the tribes of Israel go up to worship, to present their offerings and to leave their vows. “*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.*”

Under the theocracy of the Jews, their civil and religious interests were so blended together, that the term Jerusalem may, with the greatest propriety be considered as comprehending both. It was, we have reason to believe, chiefly on account of its religious privileges and advantages, that it was so highly admired and affectionately remembered by this pious Levite. And in this sense the Jerusalem of the Jews, is our Jerusalem also.

We must not imagine that the church of Christ, under the old dispensation, was a different society from his church under the new. This would be as absurd as to suppose, that by a change of the forms of its government and worship, a family would be transformed into a different family. The great object of religious worship and the way of salvation, are the same in every age of the world. There never was, and there never will be, any but "*one Lord, one faith, one baptism?*" And if a typical Jerusalem, and the hope of a Messiah to come, were so precious in the estimation of pious Israelites, while the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, how glorious in our eyes ought our Jerusalem to be, now that *the Lord is come into his holy temple*, has conducted his humble followers into its most sacred apartments, and abolished the shadows of the old dispensation forever. With what emotions of heart, ought an affectionate disciple to trace the sacred footsteps of his Redeemer,

through all the astonishing scenes of his trials and sufferings on earth? With what emotions of heart ought he to follow his Lord and Master from the village of Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane, and to the hill of Calvary, where *he made his soul an offering for sin* and changed the face of the universe. *If I forget thee, Bethlehem, If I forget thee, Jordan, If I forget thee, Gethsemane, If I forget thee, Cross of my Saviour, let my right forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof my mouth!*

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? But all comparisons of this nature, beautiful and striking as they are, fall far short of the glory they are intended to illustrate.—As far as the soul surpasses in dignity and importance, the perishable system of flesh and blood, in which it resides, so far does moral excellence exceed in beauty and in glory, all the bright and shining orbs of heaven. And the church of Christ is distinguished by the moral image of her Lord and Saviour, by the moral image of him who is *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. This honour have all the saints. And as the moon shines with borrowed rays, so does the church shine forth in rays derived from the sun of righteousness.

It is, indeed, much to be lamented, that the church of Christ is so be-clouded with numerous frailties and imperfections in the present state. Very imperfectly indeed, does she reflect the image of her Saviour to the view of the world. This is the state of her infancy, and much does she suffer from the contagious air she is obliged to breathe on earth. But the time is hastening on when she shall be presented to her Lord, *without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.*

Little do the children of men, for the most part, consider, how much they are indebted to the church of Christ for that peace and harmony, that justice, and humanity, which prevail in civil society; and all the forms of social intercourse. The church is, at once, the *light of the world* and the *salt of the earth.* Were it not for the salutary and powerful influences of the doctrine, the example, and the prayers of the church, the nations of Christendom would, there is reason to believe, soon become so corrupted in their morals, as to shake all the foundations of government, and peace, and harmony, both public and private.

Nor, must the advantages derived by the world from the church, or which is the same thing, from the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man, be limited to those who are called by his name. For *the heathen nations are also given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost*

part of the earth for his possession. And, not to urge the restraining influence of that traditional knowledge which is still among them, and which was originally derived from revelation, we may, certainly, conclude, that the Great Shepherd of Israel, superintends their particular interests, and regulates and manages all things concerning them, in such a way as to make them issue in their final ingathering into his fold, and subjection to his government. The propriety of this reflection will hardly be called in question, by any believer in the Christian religion. And if it be admitted to be just, have we not reason to conclude, that all the virtue, and good order, and happiness, to be met with among them, as well as among the nations of Christendom, ought to be ascribed to this cause?

It was, certainly, to accomplish some important moral purpose, that a benevolent Deity brought man into a state of existence, and formed so fair a system as that which we inhabit, for his accommodation. And this, it appears to me, is the same thing as to say, that it was with an ultimate reference to the Church of Jesus Christ. For what profit, what advantage, can there be in the silence and inactivity of the grave? Separate from the hope of a glorious immortality, what valuable end, can be answered by a short, and wicked, and miserable life on earth? And though important and benevolent purposes will, undoubtedly, be accomplish-

ed by the exemplary punishment inflicted upon the finally impenitent in the eternal state, yet it would be very presumptuous to suppose, that man was originally brought into existence on that account. We have, therefore, it appears to me satisfactory evidence that it was with a particular and ultimate reference to the Church of Christ—to the salvation of the soul that the foundations of the earth were laid, and man brought into a state of existence.—This being admitted, it will follow, that all the dispensations of Providence, both prosperous and adverse from the beginning to the end of time, must have a reference to the same great object. And this is the same thing as to say, that all the revolutions of time—all the great events which have taken place in the world, and what merits particular attention, that all the astonishing miracles by which the christian dispensation was introduced, and the still more astonishing price that was paid for our Redemption—that all those things conspire to form a most interesting and awful illustration, of the dignity and importance of the Church of Christ. We need not then think it strange, that the pious Levite, and they who united with him in the devotion of this hymn, should bind their hearts to the interests of Zion, by all the solemn and sacred obligation of the text. *“If forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning, If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of*

my mouth, If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

In the temple of Jerusalem, it was the custom to praise the God of Israel both with the voice, and the harp and other musical instruments. And to this there seems to be an evident allusion in the solemn execration contained in the text. As if they had said, should we be so base and so impious as to take down our harps from these willows, with a view of profaning the service of the sanctuary, may our right hand lose the habit of playing on the harp, and our tongue be condemned to perpetual silence. And well might a pious Israelite adopt this form of solemn obligation, in the case under consideration. For what good could his right hand, his tongue, or any other member do him—what good could life itself do him in a criminal forgetfulness of God his Maker, and the great design of life.

In our day, gospel hearers are, for the most part, unwilling to come under the obligation of a vow, or even of a promise in sacred things. And for any one to bind himself under an execration or curse, to perform any religious duty would, no doubt, be generally considered an instance of high presumption. The pious Israelites of old, however, seem to have been of a very different opinion. "*Ye stand all of you,*" said Moses, to the covenanting Israelites, "*before the Lord, that thou shouldest en-*

ter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into the oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day," or, as the Septuagint very properly renders it, "*into his curse.*" It was an oath involving a curse or execration, in case of a wilful breach of covenant. And a different opinion is evidently implied in the words of the text.

But can it be necessary for a man to bind himself by such solemn obligations to do his duty? Does a beneficent Creator ever require of us any service, which it is not our interest as well as our duty to render? No: not in a single instance. And can it be necessary, for a man to bind himself by solemn obligations, to do what he knows himself obliged to do by his own highest interest, as well as by the law of his Maker? Is it possible, that man can be in a state of such miserable depravity? Yes, my brethren, it is possible. It is a fact. Nor is this all. So deep is the degeneracy into which we are sunk, that even vows, and all the solemnity of sacramental obligations, are too often found insufficient to bind the children of Adam to a faithful performance of their duty. Yet no one will deny that they are happily calculated to answer this important purpose; happily calculated to remind the faithless heart of its duty and its privilege, and to awaken the languid believer to a becoming zeal in working out his salvation. And of this nature are the obli-

gations which we come under in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Communicants! when you approach the table of your Lord, emulate the example of the pious Israelites. Regard it as your privilege to call to your aid the solemn engagements of the Christian covenant. If the citizens of Zion, even in their deepest adversity, preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy, will you not also *prefer to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?* And, especially when your communion with your Redeemer at his table is sweet, will you not give utterance to the generous sentiments which fill your hearts, and say, *If I forget thee, O table of my Saviour, If I forget thee, Compassionate Immanuel, let my right hand forget her cunning, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I prefer not thee above my chief joy?*

SERMON XXIII.

SALUTARY CHASTISEMENT.

(On occasion of the burning of the Richmond Theatre in 1812.)

MICAH vi. 9.

Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

ON a late occasion I intimated a design of making some reflections at this time, upon a very tragical event which has taken place in the metropolis of this state; an event well known to the people of this congregation; an event which cannot be uninteresting to any of our citizens, and in which, some of the people present are deeply concerned. It is not, however, my intention to treat the subject as I would do, were I called upon to address the bereaved citizens of Richmond, on the mournful occasion. No: my intention is only to point out the improvement which we ought to make of the awful scene. And with this view, I have chosen the

words which have just been recited in your hearing. *Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

Very peculiar were the favours, which the great governor of all the world was pleased to bestow upon the people of Israel. From the bondage of Egypt had they been rescued by an outstretched arm. Through a waste and howling wilderness had they been conducted to the land of promise, by a variety of miraculous attentions. Nor were they left anxiously to enquire, *wherewithal shall we come before the Lord and bow ourselves before the high God?* No, their divine deliverer was pleased to grant them both oral and a written revelation, to teach them what is good and what was required of them. But when Micah prophesied, as had too often been the case before his time, the greater part of that highly favoured people had become so ungrateful and so impious, as to refuse to hear and obey the voice of their teachers. Instead, however, of giving them up to that destruction to which they had rendered themselves obnoxious, Jehovah was mercifully pleased to have recourse to milder measures for their reformation;—to some signal instance of salutary chastisement, emphatically denominated a *Rod*: at the same time that the prophet was dispatched to exhort them in the words of our text, *Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

Nor, my brethren, are we in a situation so dissimilar to that of the Israelites, as to render the

address in our text inapplicable to us. We also are a highly favoured people. We have not indeed, been miraculously delivered from a state of civil thralldom, and put in possession of a land of promise; but we have, and that by a series of remarkable providential interpositions. been preserved from such a state, and we find ourselves in possession of one of the finest countries on the face of the globe. The law has not been delivered to us from mount Sinai, amidst the most awful tokens of its divine original; but we have the same law with other books of the Jewish scriptures, and besides them, the New Testament for our instruction. Prophets are not sent to us with new revelations from the God of heaven: for such revelations, since the New Testament has been added to the Old, are not necessary. But we enjoy the inestimable advantage of a standing gospel ministry, as well as a written revelation. And what is the fruit? What return for all these instances of almost unexampled goodness? Have we been thankful for our civil and religious privileges? For the tranquillity and peace we have enjoyed amidst the desolations of Europe? Have we been thankful for the gospel and a written revelation? Have we improved as we ought, these distinguished favours and advantages? No, my brethren! this has not been generally the case. Whoever will be at the pains to acquaint himself with the charges brought

against the revolting Israelites, in the days of Micah, may readily perceive, that our guilt, as a nation, bears an alarming resemblance to theirs. We hope however, that a similar resemblance will not be found in the punishment about to be inflicted on us. But we are not sure of this. Dark and lowering are the clouds, which have been for some time collecting over our heads. Nor do we know how soon, or to what extent we may yet be partakers in the plagues of Europe. Already has the spirit of discord, and its never failing concomitant, defamation, made some inroads among our citizens—already have the usual sources of our wealth been greatly diminished. I am also disposed to think, that our seasons for some years past, have not been altogether as favourable as formerly—that droughts and inundations, hurricanes, and fatal, if not pestilential diseases, have been more common and disastrous, than in the days of our fathers. But, however, this may be, I have no intention to occupy so extensive a field on this occasion. No, it is only to the catastrophe which has lately taken place in Richmond, that I would now solicit the attention of this audience. And to this very afflictive event, the words of our text appear to me, by no means inapplicable; *hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

That the term *rod* is often used in the holy scriptures, for any punishment or chastisement inflicted

upon the children of men, for their iniquities, is too evident to require proof. And that the tragical scene now under consideration, ought to be contemplated in that light, is a truth which I shall endeavour to establish in this discourse. And this will naturally lead us to consider what improvement we ought to make of this extraordinary event.

I. I am then to prove that the unhappy fate of our fellow citizens, who perished in the Theatre of Richmond, ought to be considered a chastisement for sin.

An event of such consequence to the happiness and comfort of hundreds and thousands of surviving friends and relations, cannot reasonably be supposed to have taken place by chance. No, my brethren! nothing ever did, nothing can take place by chance in the proper acceptation of that term. In the world of nature, nothing can take place without a physical cause. And of every cause merely physical, God and not chance, must be the author.

It must not be supposed, that a Being of unerring wisdom, would create the world, and such a creature as man, without having some important purpose to accomplish by his glorious work. And this is the same thing as to admit that he governs the world, he has made. To suppose that man and the elements, thrown out loose and lawless in the boundless dimensions of space, would ever answer any great and important purpose, is quite absurd. And

as great events arise oftentimes from apparently inconsiderable causes, to superintend and direct the former, must necessarily imply the superintendence of the latter also.

Philosophers do, indeed, frequently refer us to laws said to be originally impressed upon matter. But, if by these laws, be intended any thing different from divine agency, they must either be material or immaterial. If the former, they can only operate as second causes, and second causes always imply a first. If the latter, they must possess a most astonishing degree both of energy and intelligence, which ought never, it appears to me, to be ascribed to any mere creature. Were this however, admitted, what is done by this almost omnipotent creature, being done by the appointment and direction of the great Creator, may consequently with the most rigid propriety, be ascribed to him. Thus we may see, that according to the justest decision of philosophy, nothing can ever take place on earth by chance. And this decision is confirmed and established, beyond all reasonable contradiction, by the holy scriptures.—*Is there evil in the city*—the evil of punishment, the prophet most undoubtedly intends—and *the Lord hath not done it?* A form of interrogation which evidently rejects the impious idea as utterly inadmissible. *O Assyrian the rod of mine anger*, saith the Lord of hosts to the blood-thirsty Nebuchad-

nezzar; who was waging an unjust war against the people of Israel: consequently, he was, even in that instance, acting under the control of a God whom he knew not. *You meant it for evil*, saith Joseph to his unnatural brethren, *but God meant it for good*, and, consequently, he must have appointed it for that purpose. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing*, said our Saviour to his disciples, *and not one of them can fall to the ground without your Father*. Nay, he assured them, that *the very hairs of their head were all numbered*, and the objects of providential care. And what seems still more remarkable; at the same time that we are assured that God cannot be the author of sin, we find that actions, such as he has expressly prohibited, are ascribed to him. This is, certainly, a plain evidence that nothing can take place without his agency or permission.

Now, if the Great Governor of the world lighted up the flames which reduced to ashes the Theatre of Richmond; if it was under his control, that this event took place; he must, certainly, have had some important purposes in view in this most calamitous case. Did the God of love, who cannot delight in the misery of his creatures, behold with delight so tragical a scene? Not, surely, considered merely in itself. No: he must, most undoubtedly, have intended it to answer some important purpose, or he would not have inflicted so dreadful a

calamity upon the unhappy sufferers, and upon their surviving friends. Now punishment is either *penal and vindictive*, or it is inflicted in the way of a *salutary chastisement*. And can there be any room for doubt in which of these acceptations it ought to be considered, as it respects survivors? It would be rash, and an instance of high presumption, for us to undertake to say, that it was purely *penal and vindictive*, even as it respects the unhappy victims themselves. It might, for ought we know, have been best for them to be thus snatched away by a sudden stroke. Their sufferings, however extreme imagination may paint them, were much less than is generally imagined, and only of a moment's duration. And what their state in a future world now is, or what it would have been had they escaped this tragical fate, it does not belong to us so much as to conjecture. The only light in which we are warranted to consider this event is, that of a severe and salutary chastisement. And not the less salutary, because severe.

II. Thus am I naturally led to consider what it is *to hear the rod and who hath appointed it*; or in other words, what improvement we ought to make of the present afflictive dispensation.

1. It ought to teach us not to expect our chief happiness from any earthly enjoyment. For we have nothing sure; nothing on earth but what may be wrested from us in a moment. Of this solemn

truth the Metropolis of our State has had an awful example. How in a moment have the most flourishing and happy families been dismembered, and thrown into the wildest distractions!

How suddenly has the voice of joy and gladness, been turned into wailing and the bitterest lamentation for a husband, a wife, a son or a daughter, snatched away by an unexpected stroke! Surely then, we ought not to expect our chief happiness from such enjoyments. No, we ought to set our affections on things above, and not on the fleeting enjoyments of this transitory life.

2. We ought always to be ready for our last hour, always ready to *give up our accounts to the Judge of all the earth. For in an hour when we think not, our Lord will probably come.* Little did the people who perished in the Richmond Theatre expect, when leaving their homes, that they should see them no more. Little did they expect that they were to be summoned from the theatre to the bar of judgment. But so it was. Who can describe or imagine their amazement, when they found the house on fire, and that there was for them no escape from the spreading flames? But especially, who can conceive their astonishment when they found themselves not in a theatre, not before a throne of grace, but before the bar of God to receive a sentence never to be reversed? Nor have we, my brethren, any security against a similar fate. Ac-

cidents from which no injury is apprehended, may in a moment be to us as fatal as the resistless flames of the Richmond Theatre. Surely then we ought always to be prepared for our last hour and final account.

3. It might not, perhaps, be amiss to take occasion from the disaster under consideration to enquire into the propriety of Theatrical exhibitions.—It is not, however, I am disposed to think, a case that needs much discussion. We cannot, indeed, from a solitary instance of this nature, justly infer the unlawfulness of such amusements. But when the numerous accidents of this nature which have taken place—the numbers which have perished in Theatres, when compared with those who have been consumed in buildings of any other description are considered, there appears to some to be reason to think that the Great Governor of the world has, in this way intimated his holy disapprobation of such exhibitions. I acknowledge, however, that it is chiefly from their nature and influence on the hearts and lives of their votaries, that we are to decide this interesting case. Are these amusements calculated to promote the interests of piety or morality among the spectators? This will hardly be alledged. And if it be not a fact, these amusements are utterly indefensible. For they cannot be supported without considerable expense; nor attended on without the loss of what is more

valuable than gold and silver—the loss of time.—Now we are stewards of our temporal possessions, and must give an account in the day of judgment of the manner in which we have disposed of them, as well as of the improvement we have made of every moment of our time. It is, I well know, often alledged, that the Theatre might be made a school of moral instruction. But if we may judge from the experience of the ages that are past, we may reasonably conclude, that it never will be thus conducted. I have never been within the walls of a Theatre. But from the performances which are acted there with high applause, we may easily perceive, that they are calculated not to improve but corrupt the heart—are not unfrequently an outrage upon every pious sentiment, and even such as a modest man would blush to hear.

Such it appears to me is the improvement we ought to make of this disastrous event.

Often have I endeavoured by the most powerful considerations contained in the word of God, and the ordinary occurrences of life, to turn the attention of the people who assemble for public worship at this place from the delusive vanities of this life, to the great interests of a future state. But I fear with regard to the greater part in vain. These things are become so common and familiar, that they excite for the most part, there is reason to apprehend, but little attention and make but little im-

pression. I was, however, in hopes that so extraordinary a scene as that which is now before us, might be attended with a more salutary and abiding effect. It is, certainly, calculated not only to excite attention, but also to make on every susceptible heart an impression not easily to be effaced. It is, it appears to me, the most tragical event that has ever taken place in our country, one of the most tragical events that has ever happened in the world. When thousands are cut off in the field of battle, it is, indeed, a very tragical, but it is not an unexpected event. When thousands are swallowed up alive by an earthquake, it is a very awful scene, but it is to be ascribed to the immediate hand of God, and was, therefore, absolutely unavoidable. But for theatrical amusements there can be no necessity. The calamitous event which we have to lament, was neither expected nor was it unavoidable. Ah! could we have seen the crowds thronging to the Theatre in all the gaiety of their elevated spirits; could we have heard their general cry for mercy! mercy! when they saw there was for them no way of escape; could we have seen through the windows as some of the spectators did, groups of young ladies clasped in each other's arms in the very midst of the flames, and could we have seen the affrighted citizens rushing to the awful spot to learn the fate of their dearest friends; and could we have heard the streets of Richmond resound with

the heart-rending cry, My husband! my wife! my brother! my daughter! what should we have felt? Could any heart be so faithless as ever to lose the impression? O Richmond! Richmond! what hast thou suffered? How in an instant has thy joy been turned into mourning. How many flourishing families have, in a moment, been reduced to the deepest adversity. How many of thy citizens are languishing under afflictions which nothing but the Balm of Gilead can heal!

We have reason, however, to hope that the afflictive scene will be of lasting advantage to that city. That it will, under the divine blessing, be the means of turning the attention of many of its inhabitants from vain amusements to rational delights—that it will be the means of preserving many a bereaved mourner from everlasting sorrow and distress.—Heart-rending thought! Dear bought salvation, I had almost said. Was the sudden and tragical death of so many dear friends, necessary to awaken you to a sense of your duty—necessary to preserve you from endless death?

Yes, my brethren, there is something almost insupportable in the idea that so many respectable citizens should be immolated, I had almost said upon the altar of mercy, for the salvation of surviving friends. But moving and overwhelming as it is, would it not be more insupportable to consider them as torn away by such a tragical fate, without

any respect to the advantage of their bereaved and distracted relatives? Most undoubtedly it would. Ye mourners of Richmond, why this inconsolable grief? Turn your attention from the horrors of the awful scene to the benevolence of your Maker.—*Hear the rod and who hath appointed it*, and you shall find comfort; you shall find in God a better friend than any you have lost. You shall find in religion higher enjoyments than you ever did in the society of departed friends. There is a *Balm in Gilead*, even for the deepest wounds which now rankle in your agonising hearts. Ah! should the sudden and ever to be lamented fate of your friends be the occasion of deliverance from an infinitely greater calamity, you will have abundant reason to bless God forever for his great mercy to you.

And are not we generally, my brethren, in a somewhat similar state? Have we not all lost some dear friend or relation, under circumstances which ought to be considered as a voice from heaven? “*Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it?*” Nay, are we not very nearly concerned in the event which has been the occasion of indescribable distress to the inhabitants of Richmond? Are we not one people? Inhabitants of the same country, and the same state? And shall the untimely fate of so many of the inhabitants of our metropolis, be in vain in regard to us? Ye young and gay! Will you not take warning and be wise? Will you not

henceforth break the fetters of every vain amusement, and seek for happiness where no temptations to your virtue are to be found? Will you not *hear the rod and who hath appointed it?* Will you suffer yourselves to be seduced and undone by any of the temptations of youthful life, after such solemn warnings, and so many opportunities of being acquainted with your danger and your duty? You may depend upon it that the fascinating forms of youthful amusements will always disappoint your expectations. Learn then from the example in your view, from the youth who perished in the Richmond Theatre, to seek for pleasure from a purer source; from an intercourse with God and his Son Jesus Christ, and the exercises and hopes of genuine religion.

SERMON XXIV.

THE CONTROVERSY WITH CHRISTENDOM.

MICAH vi. 1, 3.

Hear ye now what the Lord saith. Arise! contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord hath a controversy with his people and he will plead with Israel. Oh my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

WHEN the great sovereign of the universe, is pleased to give us a system of laws for the regulation of our conduct; it ought, undoubtedly, to be considered as a striking evidence of merciful regard to our happiness. For it would be impious to suppose the God of love, to grant us a revelation of his holy will, and enjoin upon us a just regard to any precept whatever, with no other design than that of subjecting us to an aggravated destruction. But when God is pleased to display in our view, the riches of his grace in the gospel of his Son, we

ought certainly to consider it as a more expressive token of his good will to us. What then, shall we think of our situation, when he condescends to plead with us; when the great Creator seems to lay aside his sovereign authority, and invites transgressors to enter into a controversy with him; to bring forward all their complaints, and grievances, and excuses:—when he condescends to address them as he does in the words of our text. “*O my people what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*” May we not then conclude, that his anger is turned away, that he will most assuredly forgive; that he will by no means inflict upon a people so highly favoured and so highly honoured, any punishment for their iniquities? No, my brethren! such language sounds in my ear, more awful than the thunders of mount Sinai.—Such language appears to me, the last address of departing mercy. And that such was really the case in this instance, the text itself seems to be a plain intimation. *Hear ye now what the Lord saith: arise contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear O mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.* Surely the great Creator and sovereign of the universe, would not have thus turned away from his own peculiar people to address the insensible mountains and hills

in a common case. Much less can it be supposed that he would have appealed to the mountains and hills, and deep foundations of the earth, as judges between him and his people, had he not been about to bring the controversy he had with them, to a speedy and awful close. And the result exhibited in the dispersion of the Israelites, over the face of the earth, and their dereliction in that miserable state, to the present time, may be considered as a satisfactory evidence, that we have not mistaken the real meaning of this interesting passage.

And have we not reason my brethren, to fear that the God of Israel has also a controversy with us; with the people of this congregation, with our country, with the church; and the inhabitants of Christendom in our days? I am really disposed to adopt this opinion. It is, however, only a few of the many reasons which might be assigned in its support, which the limits I must observe, will, on this occasion allow me to propose to your serious consideration.

With this view, permit me to call your attention to the resemblance between the conduct of transgressing Israel, and that of the nations who take to themselves the christian name.

1. The first instance of this resemblance, of which I shall take notice, is ignorance of God and of the revelation he has been pleased to afford us. *The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but*

Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me saith the Lord. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth his appointed times, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense to their drag. Thus we see, that ignorance of God and of his law, and of his providence, constituted no inconsiderable part of the charge he was pleased to bring against his people Israel. And have we not reason to apprehend that a large proportion of the present inhabitants of christendom, are in the same condemnation? There are indeed, few to be found in a christian country, who do not profess to believe that there is a God who made the world. But there are many among us, and probably in every christian country, who do not appear to have any just conceptions of the perfections and providence of God; who entertain ideas of his mercy, utterly inconsistent with divine justice: and who ascribe the various events which take place in the world, not in any proper sense to divine providence, but to luck, or chance, or fortune, or to some fortuitous concurrence of unknown circumstances. And this may certainly be considered as a species of practical atheism. What avails it to acknowledge the existence of a Being we call God, if the sentiments we entertain of him.

be utterly inconsistent with the attributes absolutely essential to an all perfect character?

For our ignorance of the laws of God, we have less excuse than had the people of Israel. It was not easy for them to obtain a copy of their Scriptures; but we can obtain not only the Old Testament, but also the New at a small expense. Nor is it a work of great labour, to acquaint ourselves with the doctrines essential to the belief, and the precepts essential to the practice of a real christian. But how few, in our highly favoured country, appear to have done this! What multitudes are there among us, almost as ignorant of the way of salvation, as the heathen, who know not God! And though some other nations, who do not enjoy superior privileges, have perhaps, improved them to greater advantage, yet the observation will undoubtedly be found in a great degree applicable to the nations in general, who are distinguished by the christian name. And is not this a great crime in the sight of the God of heaven? Has he not committed to us, *the great things of his law*, with a solemn charge to acquaint ourselves with them, and to *teach them diligently to our children*? But how few pay any proper attention to these great duties? And what might appear scarcely credible, were it not a well known fact, ignorance in this instance, seems for the most part, scarcely to be considered a reproach. If in secular accept-

ation, any one be unacquainted with his particular profession or business, it is esteemed disgraceful: and must it not be more so, to neglect and misimprove the advantages afforded us, for obtaining a proper acquaintance with the great business of human life? What shall we think of the state of a people, who are sunk into such ignorance of God, and divine things, that they are scarcely disposed to consider their ignorance as a crime, or a reproach? Must not the God of heaven have a controversy with such a people?

2. Ingratitude forms a dark feature in the character of the people of Israel. *A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplication of the children of Israel; for they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the Lord their God. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.* Were the ancient Israelites ungrateful for the many signal favours afforded them? So are modern christians—the nations I mean, who take to themselves the christian name—for much greater favours than any nation under the old dispensation ever enjoyed. What are all the miracles of Egypt; of the wilderness of Sinai, and the land of Palestine, compared with the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh? No more, it appears to me, than the light of the pale moon, compared with the *sun shining in his strength*. What an unspeakable privilege then, must it be to

live under the last and best dispensation of gospel mercy, and to enjoy the pure light of the *Son of Righteousness*, obscured by no veil or shadowy medium? What a privilege is it, to have an opportunity of contemplating our Redeemer, not only as he was exhibited under the shadows and types of the Old Testament; but also as he is presented to our view in the gospel history! What a privilege, to have access to the New Testament as well as to the Old, to learn the way to a happy immortality! What a privilege to inherit the promises of the more abundant communication of Divine influence, at once to enlighten the mind, and sanctify the heart! And what is the consequence? Have the nations of the earth, which enjoy these invaluable and distinguished privileges, been thankful as they ought? No, my brethren: were this the case, they would manifest their sense of obligation by crowding the gates of Zion, to offer up their devoutest acknowledgments for such distinguished blessings. Were this the case, they would esteem *a day in the courts of the Lord better than a thousand*.—Were this the case, they would not misimprove their distinguished privileges, and dishonour the author of all their mercies, as they, for the most part do. And is not ingratitude a crime of crimson dye? It was a maxim even among the unenlightened heathen, that if you call a man ungrateful, you charge him with every crime. And shall not the

Lord plead with us as well as with the ungrateful Israelites, for this crime?

3. So far are the people of christendom from being thankful for the gospel, that all its invaluable blessings have, in many instances, been rejected with scorn and contempt. Nay, the most strenuous exertions have been made to extirpate it from the face of the earth. Never, I am disposed to think, since its establishment in the reign of Constantine, has there been such extensive and systematic and artfully conducted opposition to christianity, as in our age. I am, however, far from considering the opposition of avowed enemies, the most to be dreaded. The corruption of Christianity by impure admixtures; its perversions by such as presume to try the decisions of the wisdom of God, at the bar of their boasted reason, and the wicked lives of false professors have, I am disposed to think, done more essential injury to the Christian cause, than the united exertions of its avowed enemies. And shall not the Lord plead with us, with the inhabitants of Christendom, for these most virulent and insidious oppositions to the kingdom of his Son?

4. The crime for which the Israelites were most commonly reproved by their prophets, and for which the most signal and long protracted punishments were inflicted upon them, by the God of heaven, was idolatry. That a people who had

such evident and numerous manifestations of the vanity of idols, and of the power of the one supreme Deity, should ever relapse into idolatrous worship again, may at first view, seem almost incredible. But where, my brethren, is the mighty difference between an idol in the form of the sun, the moon, the stars, or some renowned hero of antiquity, and an idol in the form of gold or silver? Now we are assured that *covetousness is idolatry*.

That the love of gain is the predominant vice of the present age, is, as far as I am able to ascertain, the opinion of the best informed, both in Europe and America. And is it possible to compare this object of idolatrous affection, with the dignified and expansive powers of an immortal soul, without perceiving that this base passion must be degrading, in the extreme, to the nature of man? To *love the creature more than the Creator*, is certainly a heinous offence. Such it is in the estimation of an inspired apostle, even in a heathen. And much more so must it be in one, who is distinguished by the name, *Christian*. Idolatry of every description, debases the mind, sensualizes the heart, and renders the idolater *a vessel of wrath fitted only for destruction*. And has not the Lord a controversy with the nations of Christendom, for this most heinous crime? Can it reasonably be supposed that he who inflicted such exemplary punishment upon the idolatrous Jews, will spare idolatrous Christians? No.

surely. This ought not to be expected. "*You only, have I known, of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities,*" was the declaration of the God of Israel, to his once peculiar people. This is an evident intimation, that to whom much is given, from them much will be required. And if this be the case, what is likely to be the fate of the nations who enjoy and misimprove our privileges? If the Israelites, who despised the law of Moses, were so severely punished, what may we expect if we resist the light of the gospel and our superior advantages, under the present dispensation of Divine Mercy, to our guilty race? But why should I take up your precious time in speculations of this nature? Why have recourse to scriptural declaration, to historical relations, of what has been inflicted upon the disobedient Israelites, when *the judgments of God are already abroad in the earth*; when the decree of God is not only gone forth against us, but is in a state of dreadful execution? What mean the numerous, the extensive and long protracted wars which have desolated Europe's ensanguined plains? What mean the various other calamities, with which that highly favoured quarter of the globe, has been lately visited? Are they not to be considered as judgments inflicted upon the inhabitants, on account of their transgressions? Most undoubtedly they are. And it appears to me singularly remarkable, that the nations

who have corrupted and perverted the holy religion of Jesus Christ most, have generally been the greatest sufferers. What astonishing revolutions have taken place in those regions of the earth? How many flourishing nations have been reduced to a state of miserable dependance and oppression? What myriads of flourishing and happy families, have been reduced to a state of absolute want, or at least, to poverty and wretchedness? How many parents, and widows, and orphans, are sunk in hopeless grief? Oh Europe! Europe! deeply hast thou drunk of the cup of the Lord's indignation. And are we my brethren, in a state of perfect security? Have we nothing to fear while *the Lord is thus shaking the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land?* Has the gospel of Jesus Christ been preserved pure and uncorrupted in our highly favoured country? Have we a well founded claim to that *righteousness* which *exalteth a nation?* Have no corruptors of the holy religion of Jesus Christ been found among us? Yes, my brethren, many of this description are to be met with. There are many who have endeavoured to undermine all the peculiar doctrines of our holy religion. There are many who have *denied the Lord that bought them*. Nay, there are not a few who have re-echoed the loud cry of the children of European Edom. *Raze it, raze it* even to the foundations thereof. What means that dark cloud which now lowers over our political horizon? Does it not seem to in-

timate that, as we have been partakers with Europe in her sins, we shall also be partakers in her plagues? I am not, indeed, altogether without hope, that the threatening cloud will yet, in some unexpected way be dispersed, and that the inestimable blessings of peace will still be continued to us. We have however, much reason to fear the reverse.* That religion and virtue are, upon the whole, gaining ground in the United States, appears to be a well ascertained fact. But does not impiety and vice; does not a neglect of gospel institutions, and even a contempt for the gospel itself, still prevail to an alarming degree! When our national character and the general conduct of our citizens is taken into view, have we any reason to consider ourselves possessed of that eminence in piety and virtue, which will be likely to shield us from the gathering storm? No, my brethren, this appears to me far from being the case. A merciful God may possibly deliver us from the impending calamity; but not for our righteousness. For as a nation, we are a guilty disobedient people. We deserve to be involved in the wide wasting calamities of revolting Europe.

These observations will, it appears to me, be sufficient to show that the Lord hath a controversy with us, as well as with the nations of Christen-

*This discourse was delivered a few months previous to the commencement of the late war with Great Britain.

dom in general. And now let me ask what is the controversy which we, which any of us, can have with him. He admits us to state our complaints, to bring forward all our objections to his dispensations, towards us. *O my people what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee; testify against me.* Are any of you disposed to object to the strictness of his laws? But does he require any thing unreasonable or unjust? Any thing which it is not our interest as well as our duty to perform? No, not in a single instance.

Will any of you plead your own inability to obey the laws of God? But is not the gospel intended as an effectual remedy for that inability?

Does the gospel require sacrifices, you are unwilling to make? It may be so: but does it require any which it is not your interest to make? No, not one.

Are any of you disposed to complain of the laws of the Christian life? Are not the rewards of a blessed immortality, a sufficient recompense? What foundation can there be for complaints of this nature? But are no labours to be undergone in a course of iniquity? Yes, "*the way of transgressors is hard.*"

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
discussion of the problem. It is shown that the
problem is of great importance in the theory of
the differential equations of the second order.
The second part of the paper is devoted to a
detailed study of the problem. It is shown that
the problem is of great importance in the theory
of the differential equations of the second order.
The third part of the paper is devoted to a
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The tenth part of the paper is devoted to a
detailed study of the problem. It is shown that
the problem is of great importance in the theory
of the differential equations of the second order.

SERMON XXV.

THE DAY OF ADVERSITY.

ECCLES. vii. 14.

In the day of adversity consider.

It is, certainly, our duty to consider the meaning of all the dispensations of Providence, whether adverse or prosperous. But the former seem to merit particular attention. Prosperity is, indeed, a very significant expression of the goodness of God, and consequently an irresistible claim upon our gratitude. It is, however, far from being any certain evidence of his approbation and favour. Some of the most abandoned transgressors on the face of the globe, are to be ranked among the most prosperous. But adversity ought to be considered a certain indication of the Divine displeasure against sin, and consequently a solemn call to the afflicted to *consider their ways*. Some afflictions, indeed, there are,

which are so intimately incorporated with the present state of mortality, that they ought, by no means, to be considered as the tokens of any peculiar displeasure against the sufferer. But when pestilence, famine or war extend their ravages through a country, it is, certainly, a loud call to serious reflection, and amendment of life. I might, also, observe that, the afflicted are with peculiar propriety called to serious consideration, because there is reason to hope that they will regard the admonition.

In prosperous life, we are too apt not only to forget that we are accountable creatures; but, also, to disregard every attempt to bring us to serious reflections upon our ways. But when any uncommon calamity befalls us, the inquiry, *What is the meaning of this?* and the conviction, *this is for sin, for my sin, or the sin of the nation in which I live,* are not easily avoided.—*In the day of adversity consider.*

I need hardly observe that we are now in adversity. Very interesting and endearing are the relations we sustain to one another. We are members of one great family; exposed to common calamities and common dangers, on our way to the grave, and the same bar of Judgment. And, consequently we ought to cherish with unremitting attention, all the tender sympathies of fraternal affection; and be ever ready to exert ourselves to the utmost of our power, for our mutual advantage.—

But when in open violation of all these sacred obligations to live in harmony, brother rises up in arms against brother, employing all their resources for mutual destruction, it must certainly be a great calamity. Yes, war, however, just and necessary it may be, war even among the savages of the wilderness is certainly an adverse event. What then are we to think of a war among civilized nations, and especially, what are we to think of a war among nations professing the religion of the Prince of Peace! What are we to think of a war between nations mostly descended from a common origin; of nations speaking the same language, professing the same Protestant faith, and united together by so many ties of interest and friendship? It must, certainly, be a great calamity. And it must have appeared so to "The General Assembly" of our church, and to the "President of the United States" when they recommended a day of humiliation and fervent prayer to be observed on this account.

In the day of adversity consider. We are not here informed what we are to consider. This, however, as the judicious Pool observes, may be collected from the preceding verse—*consider the works of God*—not surely his works of Creation but of Providence: or in other words, we are to consider *the origin* and *the design* of our afflictions and *how they ought to be improved.*

1. We are then in the first place to consider *the origin* of the present war. Is it to be ascribed to chance, or to the overruling Providence of God? But can this be a doubtful case? Were I addressing myself to an assembly of Atheists, it might perhaps be very proper to exhibit some evidence that the world we inhabit, that the widely extended universe did not originate in blind chance or undiscerning fatality. But for the audience I am now addressing, this cannot be necessary. And if there be a God who made, there must be a God who governs the world. To suppose that a being of infinite perfections should bring into existence such a world as ours, and such creatures as we are, and then to dismiss the whole from his care, as unworthy of any particular attention, is too absurd to be admitted by any reflecting mind.

Very astonishing indeed, is the magnificence and the extent of the visible creation. But what is this earth on which we live? What are all the planets, and suns, and stars in the illimitable expanse of heaven, compared with the human mind?—a mind originally formed in the image of the all-perfect Creator—a mind capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying God, and of being endlessly happy in him! Surely such a mind must be formed for some great—some important purpose. And I may venture unhesitatingly to affirm, that it is a purpose which could not be accomplished without the su-

perintendance of heaven. And this is the same thing as to say, that the Great Creator is also the ruler of, the world, and all the creatures he has brought into existence.

Yes, by general laws operating uniformly, perhaps it will be alledged. And what are we to understand by these idolized general laws? Any inherent virtue or power residing in sluggish, inert matter? No, my brethren, this is utterly inconsistent with all the known properties of matter as well as with the decisions of the profoundest philosophy. To *mind* then, we must undoubtedly ascribe the general course of nature. To what mind?—to the mind of a creature? Is there a creature in the universe capable of superintending, and directing, and controlling all the revolutions of the earth, and skies, together with all the actions of men, so as to render the whole subservient to any particular and important purpose? It is impossible. No, my brethren: what we sometimes call the laws of nature are nothing but the *unremitting agency of the Almighty Creator*, or in other words, *his will*. For when he wills an event, however momentous it may be, it is not necessary for him to employ any intermediate agents, in order to accomplish his purpose. He has only to will, and it is done. For his will is irresistibly efficacious of itself.

And if there be a general, there must be a particular Providence. Can a ruler of any description

exercise a government over a nation in general, which does not reach the individuals of which that nation is composed? As soon might a teacher instruct his pupils in general, without instructing a single individual of his whole seminary.

How far an original arrangement might be so adjusted as to reach the diversified cases of every individual, it is impossible for us to know. Were it possible for an arrangement of this nature to reach, and direct and control every case, and every event, so as to render each subservient to the great purpose for which the world was made, and man brought into existence, this would be Providence in the most important and interesting sense of that term. This, however, appears to us impossible.— When we consider the incalculable number of events which are taking place every moment, and that as these events were introduced by a long series of preceding events, so must they be connected and blended with succeeding events in forms of endless diversity; to suppose a simple original disposition capable of reaching and governing the whole, seems glaringly absurd. Were this the case, miracles and extraordinary interpositions excepted, it must have been to us and to the whole creation, the same thing as if there had been no God ever since the work of creation was effected. And is it possible for any theist, especially, is it

possible for any Christian to entertain ideas so derogatory to the perfections of God his Maker?

Very different, most assuredly, is the doctrine taught in the holy scripture. There we are informed, that it is *in God we live, and move, and have our being. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,* says our Saviour.

Why should we be reluctant to acknowledge the agency of God upon the works of his hands? Why endeavour by vain hypotheses to relieve the Almighty from the imaginary burden of superintending all his creatures, and the minutest event? Is it possible for any one who has thought a moment upon the interesting case, to imagine that such attention would be too troublesome for him? No one who has any just ideas of his Maker can entertain sentiments so utterly irreconcilable with the attributes of an all-perfect character. To infinite perfection it must, most undoubtedly, be as easy to attend to countless myriads of worlds, with all their inhabitants, and all the events which are taking place in each, as to attend to a single individual, or event. Do any imagine that such attentions would be beneath the dignity of the Great Lord of angels and men? Beneath the dignity of the Creator to superintend the work of his own hands, or to exercise any requisite attention to any thing which he has thought proper to bring into existence! This is more than absurd! It is impious.

Would it be more honourable, think ye, for the Deity *to sit upon the circle of the earth*, or to reside in heaven in a state of entire inactivity, than to believe him to be exercising a continued agency in the management of the great interests of the universe, which he has been pleased to bring into existence? I am really at a loss to know, how so absurd a sentiment should meet the assent of any rational creature.

We are not, however, left to rest a matter of such importance upon the validity of these arguments, conclusive as they appear to be. No; we have in the holy scriptures *line upon line*; evidences too numerous to be detailed, and too pointed and direct to be eluded, to establish the doctrine I am endeavouring to inculcate. There we are assured that the Providence of our Almighty Maker does not rest in generals, but extends to all things and all events, the most inconsiderable, not excepted; that not a sparrow shall at any time wing his flight; that a hair of our head shall not fall to the ground, without the superintendance of our heavenly Father. “*Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? I make peace and I create war; I the Lord do all these things.*” But it is not necessary to insist upon scripture evidence; it is so unequivocal and so abundant, that *he that runs may read it* in passages innumerable. Nor must it be supposed that the divine superintendance extends to

good actions alone. As *God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempteth he any man.* We must, by no means, make God the author of sin. But still he is pleased to control and overrule sin for some valuable purpose. This interesting sentiment, will not, it is hoped, be called in question by any believer in a special Providence. Is it possible, that any one of this description should consider it more honourable for God to permit sin, permit moral evil to spread its pestiferous contagion through the universe, without restraint or control, than to suppose that he permits it with a design to render it subservient to some valuable purpose? Thus it appears to me with resistless evidence that the present unhappy contest in which we are engaged with the greatest naval power on earth, is to be ascribed not to chance or fate, but to the Providence of God.

II. Let us then inquire for what purpose this adverse event has been permitted to occur. And we ought, certainly, to be modest in our researches. The great volume of the Divine purposes has not been opened to us. That it is intended to subserve some beneficent purpose we may warrantably conclude. For *God is love.* He neither delights in the death nor the misery of his creatures. In the eternal councils this unhappy contest may form a connecting link in the chain that reaches to that happy period when *nation shall rise up in arms against nation no more.* In the plan adopted, and now,

there is reason to believe, in rapid execution, for the overthrow of all tyrannick domination over the bodies and over the souls of men, the present contest may, for aught we know, form an essential constituent. A very great change must certainly take place in the religious, and very probably in the political state of the nations of the earth, before the long expected millenium can be introduced—before *the heathen shall be given to our Redeemer for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; before all the kingdoms and states upon the earth shall become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.*

But whatever views of this nature a beneficent Deity may be about to accomplish, we have still abundant reason to believe, that the war in which we are engaged with Great Britain, is intended as a punishment of both nations for their crimes. Great, indeed, have been the privileges; and I may add, great is the guilt of both.

But let us confine our views to our own country. Was ever a nation under heaven distinguished by such peculiar tokens of the Divine favour? Ah! could we behold the degraded millions of our fellow-men who are groaning under the iron rod of tyranny and oppression, how highly should we prize the civil, and may I not add, the religious privileges we enjoy? It is our happy lot to live in a land of gospel vision. We enjoy the unspeakable

privilege of going up to the house of God, to hear his word, and to offer up our thanksgivings in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. No imperious pontiff presumes to dictate to us the rule of our faith, or to prescribe to us the forms of our worship.—Every man is allowed to tender to the great sovereign of the universe, his devoutest homage in the way that is most agreeable to his own conscience, *without any to make him afraid*. The government under which we live is a government of our own choice. The laws we obey are the laws made by our own representatives—by the men of our choice; and if they in our view, at any time, prove oppressive or injurious, we have always at a short interval, an opportunity of obtaining relief in a constitutional way. Nor, must it be passed over in silence, that while we live in a country embracing all the various fruits and treasures of the earth, an extensive ocean has removed us to a happy distance from the contentions of the old world. Happy, surely, must be a people in such a state, if they know their own happiness and be disposed to improve as they ought their distinguished advantages? And what, my brethren, are the returns we have made? Have we rendered unto the Lord according to the blessings afforded us? We have not. When *weighed in the balances* we shall be *found wanting*.

What means that spirit of atheism, practical atheism at least, which seems to pervade, to an

alarming degree, all ranks and orders of men among us? Read our public prints, attend to the conversation of our politicians, and, indeed, of all classes without distinction, and if my information be correct, you will seldom find in either, any reference to the Providence of God. Wise counselors, skilful military leaders, numerous and brave troops—these seem for the most part to be according to the sentiments of our people in general, the great bulwark of our liberties. Are our troops successful? It is generally ascribed not to God, but to *the arm of flesh*. Do we sustain a defeat? It is attributed not to our guilt, nor to Providence. In a word, the Providence of God in those instances, is, as far as I have been able to learn, seldom recognized. All, with very few exceptions, is ascribed to the wisdom, the valour, and prudence of man, or the reverse: but nothing to the all-disposing and governing Providence of God. And *shall not God be avenged of such an atheistical nation as we are?* But, perhaps it will be said, that success in war, or the reverse is to be ascribed to man only, as the means, or second cause, without any intention to exclude a first. This, I doubt not, is often the case; and this may not unfrequently be innocently done. But, surely, on great and solemn occasions, we ought to render our homage to the Great Ruler of the world, in the most explicit language. It is not sufficient that we revere the majesty of heaven in

our hearts: we ought also *to acknowledge him in all our ways*. It is our indispensable duty to *make mention of his righteousness*; and to ascribe our mercies and deliverances to him.

That there are multitudes among us who have never seriously thought upon the subject, is, indeed, highly probable; multitudes who have never seriously enquired whether there be a God and a Providence, or whether all things are to be ascribed to the councils and the arm of flesh. And is not this an instance of very culpable omission? In such a country as ours, under such government as we enjoy, in the midst of scenes so powerful to awaken all the springs of earnest attention, and under such heavens as encompass the earth, how is it possible for any man to be inattentive to these all-important considerations? We need not surely think it strange, that the attention of such unthinking men should be roused by *the confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood*.

But no inconsiderable number have thought on this interesting subject, and as far as we can judge from their writings, their conversation, and their lives, they have come to the desperate resolution to set themselves in direct opposition to the Providence of their Maker in any proper sense of that term.— And is it not better that such impious men should be convinced by the wide-wasting desolations of

war, that *the Lord reigneth*, than live and die in such a deplorable delusion.

Of all the people on the face of the earth, we are, it seems to me, the most inexcusable in our unbelief of Divine Providence. Consider the circumstances under which our fathers took possession of this country. Could any thing but the Providence of God have protected and supported them, and driven out the numerous bands of the heathen before them? Consider, especially, our situation at the commencement of the late revolutionary war. Without government, without arms, without any adequate resources of our own, how did we obtain the victory over the most potent naval power on the face of the earth? Was it by our own wisdom, or might, or exertions? Surely not: What was it that infatuated the councils of Britain, brought to light her secret plots of most dangerous tendency, and rendered her victories the means of subsequent defeat, and made the winds and waves, the descending rains and swelling rivers fight for us? Was it chance or fate, or our own wisdom, or heroic enterprise? No my brethren: It was Providence, the Providence of God our Maker, whom the winds and the sea and all nature obey. Had we been left to the ordinary course of events—had it not been for very peculiar interpositions of Divine Providence, we had been, no doubt, this day in a state of miserable thralldom—*hewers of wood and drawers*

of water for Great Britain. And shall we be permitted to forget this great deliverance with impunity?

What, my brethren, are we to suppose were the designs of the Ruler of the world in his favourable dispensations of Providence towards us? Was it that we might riot upon the riches of a fertile soil for a few days, without any regard to the great design of life? Was it that we might become a great and flourishing nation of Atheists? Was it on account of any or all the temporal advantages attached to our distinguished lot? No: it was, undoubtedly, with an ultimate reference to the great interests of a future state. Separate from these all-important interests, it is of very little consequence whether we are poor or rich, honored or despised, in full possession of all the rights of men, or in a state of miserable thralldom. *For the very fashion of this earth passeth away.*

And now, my brethren, let us ask ourselves, have we been attentive to the great interests of eternity? Have we glorified God by obeying the gospel of his Son? Have we been led by our deliverance from the most iniquitous impositions of Great Britain, to appreciate more highly our deliverance from the thralldom of sin revealed to us in the gospel of Christ? Has this been a general case in our highly favoured country? Far from it. No wonder then that we should be again embroiled in war.—

It is not my intention to represent our people as more irreligious than other nations of the earth.—Nay, I am disposed to hope that the reverse is the case; that we may justly be classed with the most religious. But this is not enough. Our privileges are pre-eminent; and such, also, may it reasonably be expected our piety should be. And if this is not the case, the God of heaven must undoubtedly have a just ground of controversy with us.

That the great interests of vital piety are, upon the whole, slowly gaining ground in our country, I am disposed to admit. But what multitudes among us, are living without God in the world?—What multitudes are living in a state of astonishing indifference to every thing sacred and future? And even among those who profess to believe the truth of the gospel, what a large proportion there are who set at defiance all its holy requisitions? Nor is the number by any means inconsiderable, who have set themselves in direct opposition to the holy religion of Jesus Christ.

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon. The loud cry of European Edom against the Church of Christ, *Raze it! raze it to the foundations thereof!* has been echoed, and re-echoed in our highly favoured country. And is it strange that we should be in a state of war?

Far am I from wishing to represent our people as more abandoned in morals than other nations. But

if the blasphemies which every day insult the heavens; the curses which every day are denounced against the life and soul of a brother; if all the instances of injustice, violence and oppression, with all the works of darkness and of shame were brought to light; if all our crimes of every description were called forth and exhibited at once to our astonished view, instead of thinking it hard that we are involved in a calamitous war, we should perceive abundant reason to bless God that our situation is not worse than it is. But admitting the justice of our sufferings in this instance, what ground have we, perhaps it will be demanded, to expect a reformation in consequence of so dreadful a scourge? What reason?—alas, my brethren, I can hardly undertake to make a reply to this interesting inquiry. My spirits are overwhelmed with trembling awe in this instance. Oh! how often have guilty nations been most severely chastised and yet not reformed at all. How often have guilty nations proved absolutely incorrigible under the chastising rod of heaven? *Why*, says the God of Israel, to his once peculiar people, *will ye be smitten any more, ye will revolt more and more.* Perhaps an event more to be dreaded than war, and famine, and pestilence, and all the scourges ever employed by righteous heaven, for the reformation of any people may await us. It may be, that we shall be left as secure, as careless with respect to future interests, as

impious, and vicious as we are now. Instead of being reformed, it may be, that as a nation, we shall be given up to blindness of mind, and to a hard, unfeeling heart. But, however, that may be, I undertake to affirm, that the present calamitous dispensation if suitably improved, is happily calculated to promote the great work of reformation in our country.

Make the supposition, that the transgressor could see *the arm of the Lord* stretched out to punish him for his crimes. Make the supposition, that upon the commission of a crime, he should hear a voice from heaven—*Do not that abominable thing which I hate*. Would it be possible for any one to doubt, whether such a dispensation would have a tendency to reform him from his crimes? Well: any calamity inflicted upon an individual or a nation for sin, is in the estimation of an enlightened mind, the arm of the Lord stretched out—is a voice from heaven—*Do not that abominable thing which I hate*.

And shall it be in vain? Can any of you resist the motives—the numerous and urgent motives to repentance, and amendment of life now addressing us? After a long peace and almost unexampled prosperity, we are now involved in a calamitous war, a war to which we can see no very probable termination, a war that has already cost us dear—cost us thousands of valuable lives to mention nothing more—a war that has removed from our society a

number of our dearest friends and relations. And whilst they are standing in the breach for us, while they are generously undergoing all the hardships of military life, and exposing themselves to all the dangers of the field of battle for us, shall we be insensible and inactive? Shall we not, while permitted to live at our ease at home, adopt the most effectual measures in our power for obtaining deliverance from so calamitous a state? I must add, should the unhappy contest be prolonged, it is highly probable, that some of the people present may yet fall victims to the devouring sword. Let none imagine that it is our wish to excite any unnecessary apprehension in the mind of any individual present. Much less is it our wish to discourage an individual from hazarding every thing in defence of his country. Our country is invaded and must be defended, let that defence cost what it may. But as on this subject, there is not, that I know of, any diversity of sentiment, I consider it unnecessary to say any thing more. No: when called upon by the laws of your country, take the field in defence of your civil immunities, in defence of all that is most dear to an American. I not only wish you to go; but to go cheerfully. But I wish you to unite *the sword of the Lord* with *the sword of Gideon*, and to go forth trusting not in the numbers or valour of our troops, but in *the God of hosts*; I wish you to go forth ready and willing, if God so

order it, to die in your country's cause. If we are prepared for death, it is certainly a matter of very inferior consequence, whether we die on a bed of down or on the field of battle. And should the reverse be the case, what will a few days added to a life of impiety avail? What advantage would it be to descend from the arms of our friends to the gloomy territories of everlasting discord—the dismal abodes of everlasting contention and strife and war, war with God, and war with one another?

Let none suppose that a regard to the great interests of eternity, would unnerve the arm in the day of battle. Should a man avoid all considerations of this nature, previous to the hour of alarm, how does he know, but as is often the case with a dying sinner, the terrors of death and hell may rush upon him in an instant and overwhelm his heart? Would religion make you faint-hearted in the time of danger? *The wicked, not unfrequently, fleeth when no man pursueth; but the righteous, they who truly fear God are bold as a lion. What though a thousand fall on his right hand, and ten thousand on his left, he shall, if it is best, be preserved in perfect safety; but if not, should he also fall a sacrifice to the cause of his country, it will be no real disadvantage to him. He will only die that he may enter upon a better life.—*

That he may exchange the clangors of war for the songs of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

Does the sentiment I am endeavouring to uphold need proof? Several instances might be mentioned in support of it, were it necessary.

In the day of adversity consider. It is, certainly, incumbent on every man to consider his situation, his temptations and duty in every condition of life, how prosperous soever it may be. But prosperity has for the most part a stupifying effect upon mankind. Adversity, however, is happily calculated to bring us to serious reflection. Have you, my brethren, ever seriously taken into consideration this alarming thought, I have reason from what I suffer, to fear that the God of heaven is displeased with me? From the judgments abroad in our country, we have reason to fear that the God of heaven is displeased with its inhabitants. Oh! when the tokens of divine displeasure wave in the banners of an invading enemy and rest upon the graves of our friends and fellow-citizens, is it not time to lift our eyes and our hearts in humble, fervent supplication to God for relief?

What means the presence of this numerous audience. Waked to serious reflection by the loud call of adversity; have you then come into this house of the Lord in the character of humble supplicants, to unite in the all-prevailing energies of prayer for

yourselves, for your country, and all that is most dear to you on earth? It is well. He is a God of mercy. And prayer—the prayer of faith and sincerity, is very powerful, nay it is altogether irresistible. And we are assured, that *if a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.* To this general declaration there may be some exceptions. According to its real import, however, it cannot fail. But remember, that *if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord has not, promised to hear us.* He may, indeed, as a token of his regard to genuine devotion, reward with the blessing of external peace, even the semblance of it. Ahab's humiliation may be introduced as an instance. It was only apparent, not real. And yet on account of his humiliation the impending stroke was suspended. But we live in gospel times.—More, therefore, may reasonably be expected of us than of Ahab: more, it appears to me, may reasonably be expected of us, than of God's once peculiarly favoured people, or any other nation now on the face of the globe. Let us not then rest in any thing short of a general reformation of heart and life.

In the day of adversity consider. Consider seriously and impartially our guilt, our danger, our duty. Is there reason, my brethren, to apprehend that God Almighty is displeased with us?—displeased with us as individuals or as a nation? And

can any rest easy in such alarming circumstances? If the God who made us be displeased with us, what avails the approbation of the whole earth!—His favour is better than life, but his frowns are worse than death. If God be displeased with us as a nation, what avails the arm of flesh? Rest not until you have an evidence that God is reconciled with you. Rest not until his displeasure shall be removed from the country in which we live. Look forward to eternity. Can you bear his everlasting displeasure. Look abroad through our country, and behold the various and complicated distresses to which many of our fellow-citizens are at this moment exposed. Look around you in this assembly and consider how many of your dearest relations may be quickly torn from your arms and exposed to the greatest hardships and dangers in defence of our country, and repent. Call upon God with a persevering earnestness in this our *day of adversity*. Let every one examine himself, consider what he hath done amiss, and amend his life. And let every one use his utmost efforts to promote the great work of reformation among his fellow-citizens, as far as his influence may extend. Thus let us all in our several places and relations unite in the most strenuous exertions in the great cause which demands our particular attention in this our day of adversity. And let us not rest until the ground of

the Lord's controversy with us shall be removed, until his displeasure shall be turned away, and until *he shall make our enemies to be at peace with us. Thus in the day of adversity consider.*

SERMON XXVI.

REMEMBRANCE OF MINISTERS.

HEB. xxiii. 7.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

WHEN a beloved friend or relative is taken from us, and laid in the dust, to remember him is, indeed, easy as well as natural. I make no doubt, but your much esteemed Pastor has, since you heard of his apparently untimely death, been much in your thoughts. The impressive sermons you have heard him preach, his friendly counsels and advice, together with his dignified aspect and truly ministerial deportment, will, it is probable, frequently occur to your recollection, while you live. This, however, you will permit me to observe, is far from being all that is required in the words of our text. It is your duty *to obey* as well as *remember*

the doctrines of the gospel you have heard him preach, and to imitate his Christian example—to *follow him as he followed Christ*. And happy would I think myself, should it be in my power to exhibit the interesting subject in a light calculated to afford any assistance in this great concern. *Remember them which have the rule over you*, or as the original might be rendered, *your rulers or guides*. From the last clause of the text, it appears that it was not living rulers or guides the apostle had in view, for the term which he employs, has an evident reference not to the general tenor, but to the termination of this ministerial course; and this there is reason to think, was exemplary in the highest degree; for they are thought to have sealed the truth with their blood. *Remember them which once had rule over you*. Yes, my brethren, remember your *Smith* as well as your *Lacy*.

Remember your *Smith*; a name dear to thousands in our country, and still dear to a number in this audience. He was, indeed, *a burning and shining light*. And it was the privilege of some of you to *rejoice in his light*—to live under his efficacious ministry: and this must have been a distinguished privilege. I have, if I mistake not, heard greater orators—preachers of more profound penetration, of a more brilliant imagination, and superior to him in any particular qualification, unless the fervour of his piety be an exception. But a preacher possessing

every ministerial qualification in a degree so eminent, I have never known. Nor do I ever expect again to hear a preacher, whose discourses will be equally calculated for the learned and unlearned, the rich and the poor, the devout christian and the abandoned profligate, in a word, for every character and description of men. I need hardly observe to this audience, that he was the most distinguished instrument in promoting the late glorious revival in our church. A revival which is said to have begun under his ministry, and the fruits of which are still visible in many of our churches. Methinks I still see him stand the accredited ambassador of the Great *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, while every feature and every muscle of his face, every word and action, as well as the lightning of his eyes seem to bespeak a soul on fire. Methinks I still hear his impressive voice denouncing in tones, awful as the thunders of Sinai, the terrors of the Lord against the ungodly, or in accents soft and melodious as the harp of an angel, proclaiming the tender compassions of a dying Saviour. But now he is gone *the way of all the earth*. No more shall we see collected multitudes hang with profoundest attention upon the accents of his lips; or all dissolved in tears, while he entreats the guilty not to die, not to plunge themselves into that ruin which the finally impenitent cannot escape. And even before his departure from

our world, he was by an unsearchable Providence removed. I had almost said, torn away from a beloved and affectionate people.

But a number of you will, we hope, *remember the word of God spoken by him unto you, and follow his faith, considering his conversation.* That he lived a life of fervent as well as exemplary piety, we have satisfactory evidence. But I have no particular account of the state of his mind, in his last hours. His death was sudden, and the disease to which he fell a victim, extremely debilitating. I have, however, in possession, a letter in which he gives an account of his exercises in the time of a preceding dangerous illness. In this letter, after an interesting account of, I think, a hard conflict, he assures us that he was "enabled to triumph over all the terrors of death and the grave."

But it is your late worthy pastor, that you are more particularly called upon to remember, on this occasion, Mr. Lacy's talents as a preacher, were good. Although he was destitute of the advantages of an early education, and for the greater part of his life, encumbered with employments which rendered it impossible for him to furnish his mind with those various treasures of knowledge, human and divine, which it is at least desirable, that a preacher should possess, yet his qualifications for the office he sustained, were respectable. Among these, his piety should be distinguished as

eminent. Under the influence of strong affections he sometimes rose very high. Of this I could mention several remarkable instances. It may however, be sufficient to take notice of one. Some years ago there was in Rockbridge and some contiguous counties, a considerable degree of religious excitement. The Synod of Virginia had met at Lexington. The Lord's Supper was administered on the Sabbath; and on Monday Mr. Lacy was called upon to address an audience, of not less, I suppose, than 2000 people. His discourse was a *word in season* and in power. I could not observe an individual in that numerous assembly, who appeared inattentive or unimpressed. It was a discourse that will, I doubt not, be remembered by a large number of his hearers, as long as they live. Never shall I forget with what a moving emphasis he exclaimed toward the end of his discourse, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah!* He was, most undoubtedly, there to assist his servant to declare with extraordinary energy, his holy word.

He was, as far as I can judge, a faithful preacher, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. To say great or shining things, did not appear to be his aim. He seemed to forget himself, and think of nothing but his hearers and his God. Far from adorning his discourses with the tinsel of human eloquence, his language was always plain, and often forcible. He did not *shun*

to declare the whole counsel of God, out of respect to any man. His preaching was at once happily calculated to alarm the secure, and to comfort mourners in Zion; happily calculated to instruct the most ignorant in his audience, brought down even to the conceptions of the poor African; and here I must take the liberty to observe that when addressing that class, he seemed for the most part, to rise above himself.

He was also a successful preacher. He has, I am disposed to think, left few if any, behind him, whose labours in the gospel, have been more blessed. In the revival already mentioned, he was, I am well assured, a distinguished instrument. Labouring with all his might in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, night and day, as he had opportunity, for the conversion and salvation of perishing sinners. He was punctual in attending the meetings of the judicatures of the church to which he belonged, as well as of the board of trustees of this Seminary. In a word, his heart and his hand seemed to be always ready for every good work.

But now he also is gone,—gone the way of all the earth. You will see his face and hear his voice no more in this world. *Remember them that once had the rule over you, who once spoke the word of God unto you. Remember him!* perhaps some of the people of this audience are ready to exclaim,—Yes, we can never forget the dear man,

who, under God, was the means of opening our eyes and bringing us to the knowledge of ourselves and of our Saviour. His name, embalmed by the tenderest recollections, will ever rest upon our hearts. Well, *remember him*, then, and *the word* that was rendered the power of God to your salvation, and *follow his faith considering the end of his conversation. Follow him as he was a follower of Jesus Christ.* Should you at any time be in danger from manifold temptations, consider the faithful warnings he has given you. Should you find yourselves sinking into a criminal remissness, remember his prayers, and his tears, and tender solicitude for you; and follow his faith in life and in death. I have not seen a very particular account of his last hours. But from every thing I can collect, he died as he lived, in a truly christian manner. Not long before his departure he said, he was not afraid to die—that his trust and confidence were greater than he had anticipated in the time of health. His sufferings were great, but he bore all with exemplary—with a truly christian patience. To be thus suddenly and violently torn away from his absent family and congregation was, certainly, a hard trial, *but thanks be to God* who supported him under it, and *gave him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

But, secure sinners, I tremble for you. What will now become of you? Who will now address

you in the commanding energies of irresistible terror, and snatch you as a brand from the burning? I am much afraid that you will *sleep on and take your rest*, broken and disturbed as it may sometimes be by an accusing conscience, until you shall be awakened to see your heaven forever lost. But we must not absolutely despair of you. It is a common remark that children derive not unfrequently eternal advantage from the long recollected instructions of their parents, after their heads have been covered with the clods of the valley. And may we not hope that such will be the case with you?—Remember then the solemn, the faithful, and the reiterated warnings he has given you, and repent and turn to the Lord before it shall be forever too late.

Trembling penitent, who will now conduct your feet in the way of life? No longer will it be in your power to approach your pastor with the all-interesting inquiry, What must I do to be saved? Nor will the disconsolate believer have any future opportunities of approaching him for a solution of his perplexities and doubts, how distressing soever they may be. No: his time for doing any thing for the people entrusted to his pastoral care is now ended; and your opportunities of deriving any advantages from his ministry, unless it be in way of recollection, are past and gone forever. Remember then him whose delight it was to display the riches

of redeeming grace to you, and who had *the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy laden sinner; and follow his faith.* Make the righteousness of the great Redeemer, as he did, the foundation of your hope in life and in death. And your last end, there is reason to hope, will be like his.

It must, certainly, be the indispensable duty of every member of this congregation, to consider seriously this afflictive dispensation. Is it a token of any particular displeasure against the people once entrusted to his pastoral care? This we cannot undertake to affirm. There is, however, it appears to me, some reason to fear that this may be the case. To enjoy the labours of a faithful pastor is, certainly, a great privilege. And according to our privileges will be the account we shall have to render to our Maker and our Judge at the last day. He was taken off in the midst of his usefulness.— Since I have had the happiness of an intimate acquaintance with him, he appeared to me to be making very considerable advances not only in piety, but also in ministerial qualifications. As he approached the termination of his course, his public addresses became more earnest and impressive.

In his manner, the last year of his life, there was something, that to me at least, was peculiarly interesting. It appeared like some of the last efforts of a faithful pastor for his beloved people. And

such I have reason to think were his own impressions. You will, I doubt not, generally remember his introduction to his last sermon but one delivered in this place. "I have been thinking if this were the last sermon I should ever preach to you, what would be the most proper subject." And I think he intimated that it would probably be one of his last sermons. And though I cannot say, that in a sentimental view it was superiour to his ordinary performances, yet in that discourse, and more especially in subsequent addresses, there was something peculiarly interesting—more of heaven, if I may be allowed the expression, than is often to be found in similar addresses from a preacher to his people. But sink not into despondency. When our Redeemer *saw the people scattered as a flock having no shepherd, he had compassion on them.*—And he is *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.* *Pray ye then the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.* And particularly that he would appoint you another *pastor after his own heart.*

A faithful pastor is taken away, what a solemn call to those who are still spared to endeavour, as far as possible, to make up by increased zeal and diligence, for the loss of those who now rest from their labours. Could I now have access to his surviving brethren in the ministry, *How would I fill my mouth with arguments.* The prosperity of the

church and the progress of vital piety in the world, does not depend so much upon the number of our preachers, as upon their qualifications and faithfulness in the vineyard of Christ. *Grant me*, said Elisha to Elijah, as he was ascending to heaven, *a double portion of thy spirit*. May a double portion of the spirit of them who had once the rule over you, and who had once spoke the word of God unto you—If it is not too great a blessing even for us to ask, I could pray and intreat you, join in the adventurous petition, may a double portion of the spirit of your Smith and your Lacy, ever rest upon the preachers who shall henceforth preach to you the word of God.

But it is not your pastor alone that you have to remember on this mournful occasion. His worthy consort is also laid in the dust. Not long after Mr. Lacy had bid her the last adieu, she was seized with the epidemic—a disease that has been fatal to such multitudes of our fellow-citizens, and in the course of a few days brought to the gates of death. Adam! what hast thou done? What forms of disease, and affliction, and death follow in a hideous train, thy transgression and revolt? How uncertain are all the enjoyments of this mutable world. Let us not, my brethren, any longer put our confidence in man, or expect our happiness from friends or relations, or the most assured forms of earthly enjoyment.—Where can we find a happier family than was that

of our late pastor a few months ago? But how great and how sudden is the reverse. In the course of about four weeks, both the parents have been consigned to an apparently premature grave. But though to us and to the surviving members of the family, this is a most afflictive dispensation, to them it was, I am disposed to think, peculiarly kind and favourable. She was in her last illness supported by the hope, that her husband would, after the lapse of a few fleeting days, return to his children and his pastoral charge again. Nor did he ever hear of her death. Oh! the joyful surprize, when, after a short separation, they met in a better world, met in those happy regions, where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; and met to part no more! Yes, my brethren, I cannot help considering the dispensation, as it respects them, peculiarly favourable. With respect to the character and last hours of our much beloved sister, Mrs. Lacy, it will not be necessary to say much. She was, I have reason to think a *help meet* for him, his greatest earthly comfort and solace. She was *not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work*. In her last illness she appeared to enjoy the supports of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in as great, perhaps I might say greater degree, than when the nature of her disease, and the remedies it required, are taken into view, could have been reasonably expected. The evening before she died, upon being asked if she

was afraid to die, she intimated that she was not, adding "I would not say for the world that he hath forsaken me." Upon being asked if she was in a comfortable state; her reply was, as comfortable as a poor sinner can—leaving the sentence unfinished. In a word, when her life and her death are both taken into view, we have no reason to doubt, but she is now with the venerable partner of her earthly cares and comforts, in those happy abodes, where sorrow and sighing are known no more. What encouragement to live the life of the righteous! What a bright example have their children to imitate. How many prayers are laid up in store for them. *May it be taken knowledge of them that they are the seed whom the Lord hath blessed.*

And now, you in this assembly that are parents, imitate this happy pair. Follow their faith. Bring up your children as they did theirs. And often repeat to them the instructions which they may have heard, but perhaps forgotten. But is there any occasion for such profusion of entreaties? For my part it will never be in my power to forget him while memory lasts. I esteemed him much, as a friend, as well as a fellow labourer in the gospel harvest. Often have I been edified and comforted under his ministry. *Often have we taken sweet counsel together, and gone to the house of God in company.*

But now he is gone, and I, though his senior, am left to unknown trials and afflictions!

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

SERMON XXVII.

HEAVEN PREFERABLE TO EARTH.

PHIL. i. 23.

Having a desire to depart and be with Christ:

To see one of our fellow creatures, cleaving to life with intense desire, at the same time that he is torn from it by the unrelenting hand of death, is very awful. It is, however, far from being an uncommon case. The greater part of the children of men appear to leave the world with great reluctance. When a poor mortal wishes to die, not from a hope of entering upon a happier state, but only that he may be delivered from some overwhelming calamity, this is not preferring death to life. It is only giving death a preference to a state of insupportable affliction.

Very deeply is the love of life implanted in the heart of man! How numerous, how strong and en-

dearing are the bands which unite our hearts to this world! But numerous, strong, and endearing as they are, death is hastening on to rend them asunder. And what is infinitely more alarming, death is hastening on, to usher our souls into the eternal state, where every one must *receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad*. No wonder then, that the guilty sons and daughters of men, should be so unwilling to die. To close our eyes upon all we love on earth, and that under the prospect of opening them upon all we have the greatest reason to dread, in the eternal state, is inexpressibly awful. Surely such a prospect, were it properly realized, would be sufficient to embitter all the enjoyments of this world, and hold our miserable race in a state of painful bondage. But can it be the design of the God of mercy, that the posterity of Adam should live perpetually in this state of anxiety and alarm? No, my brethren, a true disciple of Jesus Christ may rise above the fear of death, and be perfectly willing to die. Nay, it is possible for an affectionate disciple even to long for the happy time, when he shall be permitted to follow his Saviour to the mansions of eternal blessedness, which he hath prepared for his humble followers. *Having a desire to depart and be with Christ.*

We must, by no means, imagine that the high and holy exercise which now solicits our particular at-

tention, originated in the various and sore afflictions to which Paul was exposed for the sake of his Lord and Master. For these afflictions were his glory and his joy. To have *fellowship with Christ in his sufferings*, was in his estimation, a distinguished privilege. Nor must it be ascribed to any want of a due regard for the present life. No man seems to have entertained a higher sense of the value of this life than the Apostle Paul. This we may learn from the 24th verse of this chapter. "*For to me to live is Christ.*" And we find, that notwithstanding his affectionate desire *to depart and be with Christ*, he was still willing to live as long as the edification and peace of the Church might render it necessary. "*I am*" says he "*in a great strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.*" Nor must the exercise so emphatically described in our text, be considered as peculiar to apostles, or to primitive christianity. It ought not, indeed, to be proposed as a criterion by which we are to judge the sincerity of our love to Jesus Christ. There are, I doubt not, many sincere and affectionate disciples, who cannot adopt the language of the Apostle in this instance. It ought not, however, to be considered

as an attainment beyond our reach. There has been, we have reason to believe, in every age of the church, a number who could adopt the same language. *I am in a great strait betwixt two: having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.* Yes, it is far better to be with Christ in heaven, than to be at a distance from him on earth. And this is the proposition I intend to illustrate and establish on the present occasion.

It was certainly for some great, some very important purpose, that the Son of God stooped so low as to array himself in mortal flesh, that he might undergo so many painful labours and severe sufferings on earth. But for what purpose? Was it only to obtain for his people the happiness allotted them in this vale of misery? No: this would not correspond with the astonishing measures employed to accomplish our salvation.

It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that much is done for the true disciples of Jesus Christ even in this life. To be translated from the darkness and the thralldom of sin into *the marvellous light* and liberty of the gospel, is a great privilege. To have the image of God in which man was originally created, retraced upon the heart, is a high honor. To have the affections disengaged from the vanities of the present life, and set upon things above—To be brought to the knowledge and service of God, must be a great happiness. And this

is the happiness of real Christians. Nay, their heaven is already begun. It must not be imagined that the saints will at death, enter upon a state of happiness entirely different in nature, as well as in degree, from any thing enjoyed by them on earth. *To know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is eternal life.* And without this knowledge no man can be a christian. But how little, alas! do the most eminent of his humble followers know of their God and their Saviour on earth! How cold is their love! How languid their zeal! How imperfect every grace! In short, they are still in a state of great imperfection. And shall it always be the case? Have they nothing better to expect from their Lord and Master, than what is attainable on earth? And is this the salvation which has been displayed in such pompous language by the Prophets, and that was ushered in by a long series of stupendous miracles? Was it for this that the Son of God assumed our nature, and in that nature underwent so many painful labours? Was it for this that he sunk under a load of overwhelming sorrows in Gethsemane, and expired in agonies unutterable, on Calvary? No, my brethren, were this all that he has done for his affectionate disciples, he would be ashamed to be called their Saviour. The present state of a Christian when compared with his former state of irregeneracy, is indeed a glorious and happy state; but when viewed in contrast with that in re-

serve for him beyond the grave, it appears to be a state of great imperfection and misery. In a word, the great deliverance which our Redeemer has undertaken is only begun in this life; it cannot be completed until we pass the boundaries of time. And has our Redeemer begun, and shall he not be allowed to bring to perfection the salvation of his people? *Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ.*

And why is it that so few can adopt this language? What is there in this world to detain them here. What ignorance of God? What profligacy of manners! What insults are daily offered to the object of their supreme adoration and love! What forms of wretchedness and distress are presented to their view! What is there in the world corresponding to their exalted hopes, and the high dignity of the sons and daughters of God Almighty? What are the pomps and the glory, the riches and the pleasures of this vain world to the children of *the king of kings*, and the friends and brethren of *the Lord of life and glory*? Nay, what are all the privileges and enjoyments of the Christian life here, compared with the happiness of being with Christ in heaven?

Precious bible! how much are we indebted for the information contained in this book of God.— Here we have an account of the introduction of moral evil and of the measures, which the mercy of

God has employed for our restoration to the blessedness we have forfeited by our crimes. Here we have an account of the holy incarnation, the spotless life and the glorious transactions of our Saviour on earth. Here we perceive traces of that glory, which shone around him with such lustre, wherever he directed his footsteps. But it must be infinitely more satisfactory to see him as he is, and learn from himself *the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of his unfathomable love*. With what diligence do real christians search for Jesus Christ in the revelation he has given us, and the ordinances he has instituted! And when, at any time, they can obtain through these obscure mediums only a glimpse of his glory, it affords them more joy and gladness of heart than the whole world could inspire. What then must it be, to behold the unveiled splendors of his face in heaven? To see those hands which were nailed to the cross to purchase our pardon, wielding the sceptre of universal government? To see that head which wore a crown of thorns for us, bearing the diadem of the universe? To see that *visage that was once more marred than any man's* for us, shining in all the glory of his Father? This must surely be far better than the indistinct views of him which can be obtained on earth. What, my brethren, is the devoutest wish of your hearts? Is it not to be like your Saviour? What is it that gives you the great-

est distress on earth? Is it not your unlikeness to him? If not, I am afraid you know him not. It is the true christian's daily grief that he resembles his Saviour no more, that he loves him no more, and renders him such unworthy services. But in heaven he will love him with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, and with all his strength. Such as wish only for so much religion as will secure them from final ruin, are strangers to the powers of godliness. Nothing less than a perfect conformity to the image of Jesus Christ can satisfy a true christian. But how is this glorious privilege to be obtained? Are we to expect that the power of divine grace will produce it in the heart, while the mind is in a state of lamentable ignorance of Christ himself? No, my brethren, it is when *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord that we are changed into his image*. As the brightest views of his glory we can obtain on earth are obscure and indistinct, our transformation into his image must be very imperfect. But in heaven it will be otherwise. There the disciples of Christ will no longer *see as through a glass darkly*. There are no mists, or clouds, or interposing veils to obscure the brightest beams of his countenance. And what merits particular attention is, that *beholding the glory of the Lord not any longer through a glass darkly, but face to face*, they shall be *holy* in their limited capacity and measure, *as he is holy*. Belov-

ed now are we the sons of God, but 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. Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

To have a heart at variance with God Almighty, and to be under the dominion of ungoverned passions, is a most awful situation. It is not, my brethren, regions of eternal darkness, nor lakes of ever burning sulphur, nor all the vials of divine indignation that constitute the principal misery of the damned; but remorse of conscience, a heart of enmity to God, and the unsufferable outrage of guilty, ungovernable passions. Now, according to the horrors of a heart of enmity against God, so must be the glory and blessedness of a heart that is made perfect in love.

The christian life is uniformly in scripture, represented as a life of conflict. And why? Because we are placed in a world of fascinating allurements, where infernal powers are ever ready to molest our peace, and lead us away from God?—No, it is chiefly because the heart of enmity is not perfectly subdued. Hence that daily and hourly vigilance that is enjoined upon us in the word of God. Hence that strenuous exertion necessary to overcome. But who would choose to live forever in a state of conflict? Happy souls, who are with Christ in heaven! Their labours and conflicts are

forever at an end. And having overcome, they are permitted to sit down with their Redeemer upon his throne, and enjoy with him an everlasting triumph. And is it not better to be triumphing with Christ in heaven, than to be conflicting with the enemies of our salvation on earth?

Many are the afflictions of the righteous in this life. But when they shall arrive where their Lord and Saviour is, their sorrows shall be turned into joy. With his own gracious hand will he wipe away all tears from their eyes, and lead them to fountains of living waters. Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

And when a christian friend or relation can adopt the language of the text and say, *I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better*, have we any right to complain, when the God of heaven is pleased to fulfil his desire? When a sinner is cut off in his crimes, it is nothing more than he deserves. He cannot say that he is treated unjustly. And shall we think it hard when a righteous man is delivered from all the sufferings of this life, and received to a state of happiness, which above all things he desires? Would any choose to live forever in this vale of tears—this state of imperfection? *I would not live always*, was the language of Job, and it is the language of every righteous man. Separate from the hope of a happy immortality, what would this world be? How vain!—

How unsatisfactory! How insupportable! When it is considered only as the scene of our pilgrimage, it is every thing we can reasonably wish. But were it contemplated as our only inheritance, it would be a very different case. *Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*

SERMON XXVIII.

THE PLENTEOUS HARVEST.

On occasion of the Death of the Rev. Charles Kennon.

MATT. ix. 37—38.

Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

ONLY a few months have passed since the people of this congregation were called upon to pay the tribute of their respect and veneration to the memory of their beloved pastor and my much esteemed friend, the Rev. Drury Lacy. And now Mr. Kennon is also numbered among the dead! This to me, at least, is a heavy affliction. "I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came." But we must not murmur or repine. *The ways of the Lord are not as our ways, nor are his thoughts as our thoughts.* Often by the

most unexpected measures, does he accomplish his purposes both of judgment and of mercy towards the children of men.

Why, it has pleased the great Lord of the harvest to remove from us a faithful labourer at so early a period of his life, it is impossible for us to tell. *His judgments are a great*, and to us, a fathomless *deep*. But we know most assuredly, that he never can be at any loss for instruments to do his work.—Should he only speak the word, other *Lacies*, and *Kennons*, and *Smiths*, also, shall arise to gladden the hearts of our people, and promote the great interests of literature and piety in our country. Let us then consider with the most serious attention, the nature of our duty which the text inculcates. *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few, Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The term *harvest* seems to be used with greater latitude in this instance, than it commonly is with us, and to include the time of sowing as well as that of reaping, and gathering when the grain is ripe. But however this may be, between a natural and a spiritual harvest, there is, certainly, a beautiful and striking resemblance. As the seed which is to furnish our tables with bread, must be sown upon ground prepared for its reception, and watered by the *early and latter rain*, before it can be fit for the sickles, so must the seed of the divine word be sown

in a susceptible heart, and watered by the dews of divine grace before it will spring up and bring forth the fruits of righteousness. But it is rather the *extent* than the *nature* of the gospel harvest that demands on this occasion, our particular attention.—

The harvest is plenteous.

Before the coming of Christ, the external dispensations of the gospel were limited to the Jewish nation. But now the time was at hand when the separating wall was to be taken down, and the Gentiles as well as Jews admitted into the church.

At a very early period of the world the promise of a Messiah, who should establish a kingdom of righteousness on earth, was made to the fathers of the Jewish nation. And we are well assured, that about this time, many Gentiles as well as Jews were anxiously waiting for that illustrious event.—

The fields were white unto the harvest. What multitudes attended upon the holy ministry of our Divine Prophet, when he condescended to appear in the character of a Teacher in Israel! Happy people! To sit under the instructive sound of that voice which said, “*Let there be light and there was light.*” Let there be a world and there was a world. What multitudes of Gentiles as well as Jews flocked to the apostolic ministry! In a word, the innumerable multitudes which were translated out of darkness into marvellous light, and added to the church in the early ages of the Christian era,

furnish abundant proof that *the harvest was there, plenteous.*

And are there no *tokens for good* in our times?—What are we to think of the very extraordinary revolutions which have lately taken place in the world? Religious liberty, at least, has certainly been gaining ground in the late troublesome and revolutionary times. What are we to think of the loud cry, “*Come over to Macedonia, and help us!*”—Give us bibles—give us the word of life—send us Missionaries? What mean the extraordinary exertions which have been made in our day, and which are still in successful operation, for promoting the interests of vital christianity in the world? Are not these things tokens of good?

Yes, my brethren, the gospel harvest is still great. More than half the nations of the earth are in a state of Pagan darkness. And even among the nations called christian, a large proportion of the inhabitants continue almost as ignorant of the religion of Jesus Christ as the heathen themselves. Much has indeed been done; but little in comparison with what still remains to be done. And yet, the labourers are few—very far from being sufficient to supply the demands of our own country.

How then are the heathen to be evangelized?—More labourers are indispensably necessary. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The title here given our Redeemer, *Lord of the harvest*, implies, that to furnish the church with preachers is his office. Consoling thought! Often do we see some of our most eminent and successful labourers taken off in the midst of their labours.— But we may rest assured that our Redeemer will not fail to send, or as the original implies, *to thrust out* others in their room. When the dangers to which the primitive preachers of the gospel were exposed, are taken into view—when it is considered that no man could then appear in the character of a christian teacher without doing it at the hazard of his life, it is by no means strange that it should have been necessary in some instances to thrust forth labourers into the gospel harvest. Nor am I sure that there may not be some propriety in the expression, as it refers to duly qualified preachers in our own times of perfect security. A novice, or young convert, who has no just ideas of the difficulties attending the sacred charge, may, indeed, be ready enough to undertake it, may often run before he is sent: but with regard to those who are qualified for the arduous task, it is often otherwise.— Such characters are often disposed to shrink from the awful charge, and require to be *thrust out*—require that *the word of the Lord should become as a fire in their bones*, to use the language of the Prophet Jeremiah, before they will be induced to preach it to others.

In the words of our text we have a very interesting account of the efficacy of prayer. *Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* But why? Not surely to give him any information upon the subject. With the wants of his church he is perfectly acquainted. Nor is he wanting in a disposition to do every thing that ought to be done for its prosperity; yet he has enjoined it upon his disciples to *pray him to send forth labourers into his harvest.* Prayer, must therefore be an exercise well pleasing to him.—That is to say, it must be an exercise of great advantage to us. For it is impossible, that the purest devotion of a frail mortal should be serviceable to our great Redeemer. Yes, prayer is an exercise happily calculated to cherish and promote all the sentiments of piety towards God, and of benevolence toward our fellow-men.

And this, if I mistake not, is especially the case in the instance now under consideration. Fervent, persevering importunity for our own salvation, must be highly pleasing to that God, who delighteth not in the death of a sinner; but importunity in the behalf of others, must be more so, or in other words, it must have a greater tendency to render us like the great object of our worship—*holy as he is holy*, and beneficent as he is beneficent. Are any of you my brethren, disposed to call in question, the efficacy of prayer in this instance? The number of la-

bourers sent forth into the gospel harvest in the primitive ages of the church, might, one would think, be sufficient to remove every rising doubt on this subject. When our Lord enjoined this duty upon his disciples, the labourers were indeed few. John the Baptist, his faithful harbinger, having finished his labours, had entered into his rest. But great was the multitude which quickly appeared in the church, to publish the gospel to the inhabitants of Judea and the surrounding nations; and that no doubt, in answer to the prayer of the disciples.

In our times great additions have been made to the faithful labourers. And may we not safely ascribe this joyful occurrence to the efficacy of prayer? So it appears to me. Not, indeed, exclusively to the prayers of the present generation of the righteous; but to the prayers of the prophets and apostles, and martyrs, and, in a word, to the prayers of the saints of every age and nation. *If the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous person availeth much,* what may we not expect from the united supplications of the whole church? *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?* Why oppose the overwhelming progress of the Christian religion! Our God is a prayer-hearing God; *This has been his memorial in all generations.* And the time cannot be very distant when he will, in a still more remarkable manner, answer the supplications

of his people in behalf of Zion, and send forth labourers to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to all the earth. But shall we rest in prayer alone in this great concern? No, my brethren; with our prayers we must unite our alms. I am much afraid that the children of men do not generally well understand the tenure upon which they hold their temporal possessions from the great Lord of the universe. Many seem to imagine that, provided they defraud no man, they have a right to dispose of these possessions as they please. This is, I fear, a common, and it is certainly a dangerous error. In strict propriety we are only stewards, not proprietors. It must, therefore, be our indispensable duty to use all that we possess, in a way that will meet the approbation of the real proprietor, and the Judge of all the earth. Now let me ask, what would you think of a man who should behold, unmoved, a fellow creature perishing with hunger? Would you not consider him a monster unfit to breathe the vital air? And what, my brethren, is temporal to eternal death? Should a man pray to be delivered from a sin which he was determined to indulge, or for a virtue he had no intention to cultivate, you would not surely imagine, that such hypocritical devotions would be acceptable to the Great searcher of hearts. And can it be supposed that the man who presumes to pray in the words of a well known, but too much neglected prayer,

"*Thy kingdom come,*" while he refuses to contribute any thing to that purpose, can meet the approbation of the Great King of saints? We ought not, certainly, to entertain any such ungrounded apprehensions. As *faith without works is dead*, so prayers without alms, or at least, a disposition to give alms, in this case, must be solemn mockery.

In the last place, from the duty our text enjoins, we may infer, that to lose an able and faithful gospel minister, is a great affliction. And such, as far as we have a right to judge, in a case of this nature, is the loss we have lately sustained. That Mr. Kennon, whose untimely death has led to the reflections which have just been submitted to your most serious consideration, was both an able and faithful minister of the gospel, will not be called in question by any of his intimate acquaintance. It is not my design to enter into a minute description of his character. His natural talents were certainly good, and he appeared to be particularly distinguished by the originality of his genius—a genius which, disdaining every servile restraint, pervades a subject, and examines and decides for itself, without calling any man master, on earth. In his manner of representing his ideas, there was also something original as well as ingenious. Having seldom heard Mr. Kennon preach, I am at a loss as to the grade which ought to be assigned him, in the capacity of a preacher. I do not, however, hesitate to

rank him among our most sentimental preachers. Far from putting off his hearers with loose and empty declamation, he was in the habit of entering deeply into the subject which he undertook to discuss. And though not formal in his manner, his sentiments were arranged in such lucid order, that it was easy to understand and easy to remember his discourses.

Nor does he appear to have been deficient in sensibility. But in consequence of the weakness of his voice and feebleness of his constitution, he was, it is believed, under the necessity of imposing a very severe restraint upon every strong affection in the time of preaching. Very far am I from wishing the gospel to be preached in a cold and un-affecting manner. It is impossible to express the great things which belong to the eternal peace of a sinner, with too much energy or affection. I am, nevertheless apprehensive, that a taste for a kind of declamatory, theatrical preaching is becoming too prevalent in our country. Too many of our people appear to go to the house of God as others go to a theatre, not so much to be instructed, as to get their affections strongly excited. And have we nothing to apprehend from a taste of this nature? Yes, my brethren, we have much reason to fear that such hearers will not, unfrequently mistake the mere excitement of natural affections for reli-

gion; and thus go away from the house of God, as vain and empty, and carnal as they came.

It must not, however, be imagined that we are disposed to set ourselves in opposition to lively religion, or to impressive addresses from the pulpit. Quite the reverse. We wish every disciple of Jesus Christ, to possess the life and power of religion in so eminent a degree, as not to require the force of impassioned eloquence to excite his religious affections. We also wish addresses from the pulpit, to be much more impressive than they generally are. But unless the addresses be calculated to enlighten the mind as well as to impress the heart, there is much reason to fear that they will prove ultimately injurious to the interests of genuine religion.

Preachers of superior talents are not always the most useful in the church. Such preachers are too apt to have a greater regard to their own reputation, than to the edification of their hearers. This, however, does not appear to have been the case with Mr. Kemon. His discourses were plain and practical. And his life was an instructive example of the various duties he inculcated upon others from the pulpit—an example not merely of piety towards God, but also of all the virtues most ornamental to the character of man. It is not, however, enough for a preacher of the everlasting gospel to be sincerely pious: he ought to be devout—eminently holy. And in forming a just estimate of the charac-

ter of any man in this respect, it is of great advantage to have access to his most retired apartments, to his closet, and to witness the intercourse which he there maintains with his God and Saviour. But though I have reason to believe that Mr. Kennon, cultivated with much attention and delight, this holy intercourse; yet, not having in my possession his diary, or any documents of this nature, it will not be in my power to do justice to the interesting subject.

The importance of a punctual attendance upon the judicatures of the Church, does not seem generally well understood by the preachers of the gospel. I can, however, scarcely avoid regretting that Mr. Kennon was led to consider this a duty of such indispensable obligation. His health, when he set out to attend a Presbyterial meeting at Petersburg, was, there is reason to think, too infirm for such an undertaking. But, however, this may be, upon the second day after his arrival at that place, he was seized with his last illness. This was, certainly, a severe trial. His prospects in life (unless the imbecility of his constitution be considered as forming an exception) were unusually promising. Had his life been prolonged, he would, I doubt not, have risen to distinguished eminence both in the Church and the republic of letters. But all these flattering prospects were quickly blasted. His faith, however, when thus severely tried, was found unto

praise, and honor, and glory. Though called upon in an unexpected hour to give an account of his stewardship, he does not seem to have been at all alarmed. For him death had no terrors. Nor was he, that I can find, ever known to express any regret on account of what had befallen him, or the least degree of impatience under his greatest sufferings—and his sufferings were often exceedingly severe. The nearer he approached to his last hour the more luminous were his views, and the more assured his hope. And very sorry am I, that it is not in my power to do justice to the solemn and interesting scene. My account of his last hours is very imperfect. I have, however, the satisfaction to be assured by an intelligent correspondent that he departed “With the pæans of victory on his dying lips.” His last words are said to be, Glory! Glory! “*Mark the perfect man and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace.*”

And do you not all, my brethren, wish your last hours to be such as his were? You all hope, no doubt, that it will be well with you when you come to die. But what if your hope should fail you then? Now is the time to prepare for that solemn hour. Oh that you would all so consider your latter end, as to apply your hearts to wisdom! Rest not, my brethren, till you obtain a scriptural evidence of cancelled guilt. Rest not, until you can say with the Apostles of the Gentiles, “*We know that if our*

earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

But why have we been thus early bereaved of so distinguished a labourer in the gospel harvest? I might rather say, why have we been bereaved of two such faithful labourers in such quick succession? Is there not something alarming in the afflictive dispensation? So it appears to me. Let us then search and try our ways and *repent and do the first works*. And let us *pray* with persevering earnestness, *the Lord of the harvest to send us a pastor after his own heart*—a pastor whose labours he will abundantly bless to the people of this congregation.

Ye alumni of our Theological Seminary! I feel for you. Your loss, is, indeed, great. You know with what ability Mr. Kennon acted his part in your Society, as well as with what perspicuity and force of argument, he preached to you the gospel. But now he is gone—gone the way of all the earth. You will not see his face or hear his voice again, until the heavens be no more. And will you not exert yourselves to the utmost to be prepared for the work of the gospel ministry, from which he has been removed? Give yourselves wholly to this great work. Let no seducements allure, or difficulties deter you, from a zealous perseverance in the course of Literary and Theological Studies, requisite for this purpose. Rest not in low attain-

ments in the Divine life; but strive with all your might for eminence in piety, for hearts elevated above the little interests of this transitory life. And by a life and conversation becoming the gospel, endeavour to recommend the holy and benign religion of your Saviour to others. 'This, is, indeed, the indispensable duty of all his disciples. But it is yours in a peculiar manner. In the idea of a student's preparing himself for the gospel ministry just as if it were a secular employment, there is something extremely abhorrent. The sanctity and zeal which you will need as preachers of the gospel, you need now as candidates for the holy ministry. Will the pure spirit of primitive Christianity ever revive again? Let me again exhort and entreat you to give yourselves wholly to this great concern. And if you cannot do this in some good measure, at least, turn your attention to some other calling in which you may be useful in your day and generation; but touch not *the ark of God* with unhallowed hands.



SERMON XXIX.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

REV. i. 7.

Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindred of the earth shall wail because of him.

LONG has that awful sound, a day of judgment! a day of judgment! been heard in the world. But how few seem to regard the solemn prediction as they ought! How many appear to live as if no man would ever be called upon to render an account of himself to God his Maker! Nay, we have much reason to apprehend that some even try to persuade themselves that this is really the case.— This long predicted day of judgment never appears to our view, nor have we ever seen such a day, and therefore, a number seem disposed to hope that it never will appear. Thus it was in the days of Noah. The guilty inhabitants of the old world had

never seen such a flood as that patriarch had announced in case of their perseverance in impiety. And we find, that instead of taking the alarm and repenting of their iniquities *they planted, they builded, they married wives and were given in marriage*, until the time allotted for the exercise of the divine forbearance had passed away—until the flood came and destroyed them all. Thus was it also in the case of Lot. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had never seen such showers of fire and brimstone as the Lord was to rain from heaven.—And we are assured, that when Lot warned his sons-in-law of their danger, *he seemed to them as one that mocked*. But their incredulity did not secure them from the fiery ruin that had been denounced. Nor will our unbelief or our security be any defence against the Son of God, when *he shall be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them who know not God, and obey not the gospel*. What a surprise will the day of judgment be to a careless world! We have no reason to suppose, that the inhabitants of the earth will generally have any greater apprehension of that solemn hour before it bursts upon their view, than we have now. And, when his guilty eye beholds the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, how will the sinner tremble! when summoned to his bar. how will the guilty nations wail.

Behold he cometh! It is with the greatest propriety, that the solemn declaration is introduced by the emphatical term *Behold!* Never has an event equally interesting been announced to the world.—It is an event in which we are deeply concerned; an event which involves the final destinies of all the living and all the dead. And yet it is an event which the children of men are strangely prone to forget. May God in his infinite mercy incline our hearts to realize it to-day. To-morrow may be too late. *Behold, O Christian, he cometh. Let your loins be always girded, and your lamps always burning. Behold, O sinner, he cometh. Prepare to meet thy God.*

Behold He cometh! Who? Is it the man of sorrows, whose visage was once more marred than any man's, and his form than the sons of men?—Is it the humble Nazarene whom the Jews despised, and persecuted, and scourged, and crucified? Yes it is he: but how changed his form! how different his appearance now! Instead of a seamless coat, or the derisive purple, he comes forth arrayed in all the glory of his Father. Instead of the insulting reed, his hands now bear with unutterable dignity the sceptre of the universe. Mark how the heavens and the earth retire from the majesty of his countenance. How then will sinners abide his coming and stand in his presence? But abide his coming they must. *For every eye shall see him.*

The sages of the east will not now need a miraculous star, to conduct them to the presence of their Lord and Saviour. His saints *who love his appearing* will no longer search for him in the visions of prophecy. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even to the west*, so will the rays of his glory overspread the world.

Nor will the sons of infidelity and vice, any longer repeat that taunting question. *Where is the promise of his coming? For lo, he cometh with clouds*, enthroned on a cloud, in the visible regions of the air—where *every eye* may—nay, where *every eye shall see him*.

And oh! how will these workers of iniquity endure the sight! Now they are not willing to see him in the dispensations of his grace, how then will they endure to see him in the dispensations of his justice? But see him they must. The clouds of infidelity and ignorance will vanish at the brightness of his coming, as mist before the rising sun. Nor is there any cavern or dark corner of the universe to which it will be in their power to flee from the lightning of his eyes.

Every eye shall see him. The king and the peasant, the man of letters and the untutored savage, the lisping infant, and the eloquent orator, the inhabitants of Judea and of America, all ranks, and characters, and nations, and generations, Adam, and his youngest son, shall see him. For at his com-

ing the dead shall be raised, the living shall be changed, and all mankind summoned before his bar to receive an irreversible sentence.

And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. By all kindreds of the earth we are not to understand all mankind. No: blessed be God, a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and tongues, will rejoice and be exceeding glad when they see their Lord and Saviour coming in the clouds of heaven for their salvation. But some of all kindreds will wail. Let us enquire who they are, and what is the cause of such deep affliction.

1. *They who pierced him* and died impenitent—died without obtaining repentance and pardon for this most daring transgression, *will wail* when they behold him coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the world. It is particularly remarked that these unhappy wretches shall *see him*. This affectionate disciple had seen his Lord and Master arrested by wicked hands, and most unjustly transfixed to the cross: and it would, no doubt, afford him peculiar pleasure to be assured, that the time would come when the scene should be reversed, when he should appear in the exalted character of the Judge of all the earth, and when all his enemies should be obliged to appear in the character of accountable creatures at his bar. But it is probable, that they who pierced him, are particularly noted on account of

their aggravated guilt. How bitterly will these guilty wretches wail, such of them, I mean, as died in impenitence and unbelief, when they shall behold him upon a throne of universal judgment, and arrayed in glory never yet beheld by mortal eye!

And is this the man whom we hated, and reviled, and persecuted, and in whose blood we embrued our guilty hands? And must we now appear before his righteous tribunal, and there receive our doom? Ah! that overwhelming majesty! Those piercing eyes! That avenging arm! Wretches that we were to raise our guilty hands against *the Lord's anointed*—The Prince of life. His footsteps were distinguished by rays of glory, sufficient to manifest to every honest inquirer, who he was.—But we shut our eyes against the light. We refused to examine the evidences by which his claim to the character of the Messiah promised to the world, was established beyond all reasonable objection. And now our rash and impious prayer is answered with vengeance. His blood is upon our heads; we feel its crushing weight. Ah! the guilt—the curse—the doom we have brought upon ourselves! O that we had never been born! O that we had never seen Jesus of Nazareth! But alas! we have seen and hated, and murdered him; and now we must appear before his dreadful tribunal, to hear our doom and sink to deep damnation.

2. Unbelievers of every age, whether they shall be found to be speculative or only practical unbelievers *will wail*, when they shall behold the Son of God coming in the clouds of heaven, to render a recompense to his adversaries.

The Jews, it may be, have a better plea for rejecting the salvation of Jesus Christ, than it would be possible for modern unbelievers to devise. They saw, indeed, or might have seen a long series of such incontestible miracles, as afforded the most conclusive evidence of his Divine mission. But he was the reverse of that mighty temporal prince they were expecting; and which they ignorantly imagined their prophets had predicted. They had, therefore, in their own apprehension, a plausible pretext for rejecting him and ascribing his miracles to diabolical agency—When they heard this despised Gallilean tell a number of fishermen and mechanics, that *the gates of hell should never prevail against his church*, the prediction might appear to them altogether incredible. After *the Shepherd* should be *smitten and the sheep scattered abroad*, they might confidently expect that his religion would soon come to nothing. But we have seen this prediction verified for the space of eighteen hundred years. Earth and hell have conspired against the religion of Jesus Christ. All that the powers of this world, and the powers of darkness could devise, has been tried against this holy re-

ligion. But in vain. This holy religion still subsists, and grows and spreads more extensively over the world. Besides the indubitable testimonies of witnesses, who saw our Lord, both before his death and after his resurrection; and who also saw and recorded those miraculous works, which no man could perform by his own unassisted power, we have the additional evidence arising from many predictions which have since been very circumstantially fulfilled, and from the testimonies of many myriads who, on a dying bed, or expiring in all the agonies of a martyr's death, have found the gospel to be to them *the power of God and the wisdom of God*. We have also the testimonies of a great cloud of living witnesses, who profess to experience its power and to enjoy its comfort—If after all this, if after the evidences innumerable and irresistible, both internal and external, to establish the truth of Christianity, we should reject it, and revile its divine author, as an infamous impostor, what plea can we devise, what excuse can we offer in our own defence? How will such characters be confounded when they find that there is a Saviour, that the religion of Jesus is *not a cunningly devised fable*, but a glorious reality; in that they have forfeited all claim to its invaluable blessings. How bitterly will they wail when summoned to his bar, to receive the dreadful doom of the unbeliever. Nor will a mere speculative belief—a belief that has no proper in-

fluence upon the heart or the life, be any defence against the terrors of the day of Judgment. To believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save miserable sinners, and that we stand in the greatest need of his salvation, and yet voluntarily to neglect his salvation—voluntarily to neglect the salvation which he has procured at the expense of his precious blood, must be an instance of the greatest infatuation. No tongue can express, no heart can conceive how bitterly such unbelievers will wail when they find themselves forever undone.

But general views of this nature are not so likely to make deep and lasting impressions upon the mind, as a judicious representation of particular characters. It is, however, a very imperfect detail that I can undertake on this occasion.

The miser, who pays more homage to the world, than to the God of Heaven, will wail when he sees the Lord of the universe coming to strip him of all his idolized treasures, and to reduce him to a state of complete and perpetual indigence. The ambitious, who pant for the applauses of their fellow men, who *love the praise of men more than the praise of God*, will wail when they see the Lord of glory coming to strip them of every mortal honor, and to cover them with eternal disgrace.

The kings of the earth, and great men, and the mighty men, and the resistless conqueror, who were too proud to submit to the sceptre of the

humble Jesus, will wail when they see the king of kings coming to degrade them to the level with the meanest plebian.

The profane, who set their mouths against the heavens, and blaspheme the tremendous name of God their Maker, will wail when they behold the Son of God, clothed with divine majesty, coming forth to avenge the insults they have done to his Father and himself.

The malicious and revengeful, who utter horrid curses against their fellow men, will wail when they see the Judge of all the earth, coming to pronounce and execute upon themselves an everlasting curse.

Drunkards, who drown in strong drink, that reason which was given for a very different purpose, will wail when they shall see *the cup of the Almighty's indignation poured out for them without mixture* forever.

The whoremonger and the prostitute, and all the unclean will wail when they behold the holy Jesus coming to bring to light their *works of darkness*, and to *punish them with an everlasting destruction from his holy presence*.

Liars will wail when they see *the faithful and true witness* coming to assign them their part in *the lake that burns with fire and brimstone*.

Gamblers, with the dishonest and unjust of every description, who take an advantage of their neighbour, and endeavour to enrich themselves with any

unrighteous gain, will wail when they behold the righteous and merciful Redeemer, *who restored that which he took not away*, coming to recompense their iniquities upon their devoted heads. Tyrants and oppressors who wantonly disturb the peace and tranquillity of the nations, or who enrich themselves with the spoils of the widow and the orphan will wail when they behold the great *Prince of Peace* and the Judge of the widow and fatherless, coming to avenge the desolations they have wrought in the earth, with all their iniquities upon their defenceless heads.

The votaries of vain and sinful mirth, *who count it pleasure to riot in the day time* and revel in the night, will wail when they see *the man of sorrows* coming to interrupt their polluted pleasures, and to *turn their joy into heaviness* and eternal anguish of heart.

Hypocrites will wail when they see the Son of God, *whose eyes are as a flame of fire*, coming to tear away their mask, to exhibit them in their real character, and to consign them to the regions of darkness and despair, prepared for hypocrites as well as unbelievers.

Self-righteous Pharisees will wail when they shall behold the only Saviour of the world who once came *in the form of a servant to declare his own righteousness for the remission of sin*, coming a second time to stain the pride of all human glory,

and to abase to the same low vault of despair every one that exalteth himself. And when all these guilty wretches, with every other miserable sinner—when the wicked of every character and description, of every age and nation, shall meet together and join in one general wailing, no imagination can paint the horror of the scene.

Now, when the wicked meet together, the hardy sons of vice often inspire the more timorous with courage, and lead them on to still more daring acts of wickedness. But then the wildest consternation will be depicted in every countenance; wherever they turn, prospects of terror and dismay will meet the guilty eye; every face will gather blackness, every impenitent transgressor will weep and wail, and gnash his teeth, and melt away.

SERMON XXX.

DEATH THE BELIEVER'S LIFE.

JOHN xi. 26.

And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*

THESE words were originally addressed to a heart in pain for the loss of a near relation. At Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, there was a worthy family, consisting of a brother, whose name was Lazarus; and two sisters, Martha and Mary. For the members of this family our Lord was pleased to manifest a particular regard; admitting them to the confidence and holy intimacy of

* This discourse was delivered at Leesburgh, Oct. 27th 1804. on occasion of the death of the Rev. Amos Thompson. It is a cause of regret that the part of the Manuscript which relates to Mr. Thompson is so mutilated as to render it impossible to do justice to his venerated character.

friends; as well as to the ordinary privileges of true disciples.

For persons thus distinguished, to expect from such a friend peculiar favour, was very natural.— And, accordingly, we find that when Lazarus was seized with a dangerous illness, his sisters sent without delay, an account of this calamitous event to their Lord and Master, saying, *Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.*

But instead of hastening to the relief of his afflicted friends, as the sisters seem to have expected, he delayed his visit to Bethany until Lazarus had been four days lying in his grave. Of this, though in very respectful language, the sisters seem to complain upon meeting him after their brother's death: *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* And very remarkable is the reply which our Lord condescended to make to Martha on this occasion: *Thy brother shall rise again. I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* As if he had said, “Imagine not, Martha, that thou hast lost thy brother in consequence of my long delay. It would be as easy for me to recal him from the grave, as it would have been to have prevented his death. But whatever my will in this case may be, it does not become thee to *mourn as they who have no hope.* The time is hastening on

when thy brother shall most assuredly rise again. And, in the mean time, the life which my people derive from me in a separate state, is far better than that which he hath lost. To a believer, death is so far from being a calamity, that it is the happiest event which can befall him. So little does he suffer; so little does he lose; and so much does he gain by a separation from the body; that it is only in conformity to the conceptions of mortals, that this separation can, with any propriety, be denominated death. *He that liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*"

It must by no means be imagined, that these expressive words imply nothing more than the believer's certain exemption from *the second death*. This is, indeed, comprehended in the gracious declaration: but there is no reason to conclude that Martha was at all solicitous about her brother's eternal state. It was not the second, but the first death she had in view when she said, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* And it was, no doubt, to this event that our Lord had a direct reference in the words of the text—What a precious cordial for a heart in distress for the loss of a pious relation! What, my brethren, are all the anodynes of irreligion, or the cold prescriptions of infidel philosophy in such a case, when compared with this single declaration; *Whosoever believeth in me shall never die?*

Death is, generally, considered a calamitous event, because it separates the soul from the body; cuts us off from all the enjoyments of this world; and hurries the reluctant soul, through a dark and unexplored way, to an unknown eternal state.— But from an attentive consideration of these particulars it will, I hope, appear, that death is so far from being a real calamity to a believer that it is the happiest event which can befall him: or, to adopt the very expressive style of the text, that according to the ideas commonly affixed to the awful term death, the believer cannot properly be said to die at all. Death will, indeed, separate the soul of a believer, as well as the soul of an unbeliever, from the body. But is this a calamity? Would it be for the interest of a holy soul to be forever united to a frail and sluggish body—forever imprisoned in a shrine of mortal flesh? No: when the immortal spirit has learned how to act a more exalted part in a separate state, it must be its interest to burst all the fetters of mortality, and rise unincumbered to the regions of perfect liberty and peace. God, who is himself a pure and perfect spirit, and *who maketh his angels spirits*, must know how to render a disembodied spirit happy.

The powers of the mind in a separate state will, there is reason to believe, be very much enlarged; capable of a much more extensive view of the perfections and the works of God, than it is possible

for us to obtain in this imperfect state. Nor, when eternity is taken into view, will it be long before the neglected dust of a believer will spring from the dark recesses of the grave, an illustrious form, *a spiritual body*; all made up of glory, energy, and life; admirably qualified to act in perfect unison with the soul in its most exalted exercises. To commit the body to the grave then, that, after it has been purified from all its frailties and imperfections, it may be united to the soul again in a happier union never to be dissolved, is not a calamity to be deplored, but rather a privilege to be highly prized, and earnestly desired.

Nor ought the pain attending our dissolution to be considered any just objection to the declaration of the text. For how severe soever it may be, it will not be of long continuance. We have no just reason to conclude, that the pain of dying will be as intolerable as our fears are apt to suggest.

Thousands who have recovered from a dangerous illness have, I doubt not, suffered more than it is common for the dying to suffer. Death, instead of being thought an instance of such suffering as to render it a terror to a believer, ought rather to be considered the final period of all his sufferings; and the entrance upon a state of everlasting security and joy. *Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*

Death is considered a calamitous event because it will remove us from this world with all its enjoyments; and, particularly, because it will separate us from all our dear friends and relations on earth. But why should a believer regret the loss of this world when he is going to heaven? What is this earth of ours—this little globe of dust on which we live, when compared with the heaven of heavens; with the celestial paradise; and the palace of the great king of kings? What are all the enjoyments of the present state, when compared with those in reserve for the people of God in a state of absolute perfection?

Very affecting, indeed, is the prospect of bidding a long and sad farewell to all our friends and relations on earth. It must not, however, be supposed that the anguish of this sorrowful separation is as sensibly felt by the dying as by surviving relations. And it must certainly afford the dying believer much relief to reflect, that he is not going to an unfriendly, inhospitable region, where the pleasures of social intercourse are unknown; but to the pure regions of love and friendship in the highest perfection; where he will meet with all the pious of every age and nation who are gone before him.—And where all his pious friends and relations, whom he is leaving behind him, will shortly follow; and be united to him again in a much better society than can be found on earth.

Nor need the heart of any christian be terrified at the darkness of the solitary and unexplored way he has to pass. For our Redeemer has gone that way before him; and rendered it quite luminous to the eye of faith. The world which we inhabit is the land of shadows and of darkness; where, at best, we can see *only as through a glass darkly*. But what we call *the valley of the shadow of death* is, in reality, the entrance upon a state of unclouded vision. The moment the believing soul is separated from the body, it will, there is reason to believe, bid an everlasting adieu to all that is dark and gloomy, and find itself instantaneously translated into those regions of pure and everlasting light, where clouds and shadows are known no more. *Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*

But it is a future judgment more than all other considerations, which renders death so terrible to a sinner. My brethren, have you ever seriously realized the solemn scene? Sin is an evil of incalculable magnitude. And we are sinners. *Who can understand his errors?* Who can comprehend the number, or the enormity, of his transgressions? The God with whom we have to do, is, indeed, a merciful God, but he is as just as merciful: and sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be torn from their deep foundations, than his inflexible justice relax one jot or tittle of its vast demands against the sinner. Solemn, awful reflection! But the be-

liever need not be terrified by it, solemn and awful as it is. His Redeemer has stood in the breach; has sustained the heavy stroke; has suffered without abatement the awful inflictions of the justice of God for him. *Thus has the law been magnified and made honourable*; thus has divine justice been perfectly satisfied, and the God of justice reconciled to the believer. And, *if God be for us, who can be against us? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?* Dismiss your fears, ye timorous believers! A future judgment has no terrors for you. The Redeemer in whom you trust will not forsake you in your last conflict—will not suffer you to traverse the valley of the shadow of death alone; nor will he condemn you when brought into judgment before his Father, and before his holy angels. No; he will then acquit you from every charge, own you for his disciples, and receive you to mansions of everlasting blessedness. *Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*

And, are not these considerations sufficient to establish the doctrine of the text. Can it be a calamity to be set at liberty from encumbering flesh—from a weak and sluggish body, which impedes the mind in its noblest flights towards God and heaven? Can it be a calamity to go from the troubled

stream to the pure and inexhaustible fountain of happiness? Can it be a calamity to close our eyes upon all the pomp and glory of this world, that we may open them upon the grandeur and beauty of the heaven of heavens? Can it be a calamity to part with our friends in this imperfect state, that we may be united to the church universal in a state of absolute perfection? Can it be a calamity to resign this poor dying life with all its enjoyments, for such a life as saints and angels live in heaven? No: this cannot, surely, be a calamity; but the happiest event that can befall a believer. Nay, this cannot be death at all, according to the ideas commonly affixed to that awful term. It is in the solemn hour of departure from this mortal state, and not till then, that the believer enters upon life in its highest perfection and richest glories. *Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*

But our ideas of these great things are very obscure, and our *speech badly ordered by reason of the darkness* resting upon the present state. Ah! could our beloved Brother, whose departure has been the occasion of these reflections, be permitted to return; were he allowed to occupy once more the place where I now stand, and preach to us another sermon, what might we not expect from him now upon this important subject? How interesting would it be to hear him relate how *the valley of the shadow of death* was turned into a luminous way before

him! How interesting to hear him describe his sensations, when the angels, who had so long pitched their tents around his dwelling, appeared to conduct him to the celestial mansions! With what emotions of heart should we dwell upon the accents of his lips, declaring the holy ecstasies of his soul when all the glories and felicities of the heavenly state first opened to his view! Oh! with what emphasis could he illustrate the gracious import of this blessed declaration, *whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die*. Ah Christian! I address myself, particularly, to such as have often been edified by his discourses while he resided on earth, couldst thou be permitted to hear him addressing thee from the eternal world once more upon these great and solemn subjects, would it not make a deep and lasting impression upon thy heart—an impression which none of the allurements of this world would ever be able to efface? Sinner! who hast often been warned by him to flee from the wrath of God, and hitherto in vain, couldst thou once more hear his awful voice rolling through the air! “*Prepare to meet thy God,*” would it be possible ever to forget it? Well; from *the house appointed for all living* our departed brother is really addressing this audience; from the cold and silent grave he calls upon us, upon each of us, and that in language more emphatical than I can use, to prepare to follow him. And shall it be in vain! The

time is fast approaching, when, whether prepared, or unprepared, follow him we must. And have you, my brethren, ever seriously realized the death of an unbeliever? *Whosoever believeth in me shall never die.* It is, you will observe, only the believer who is secured from death considered as a calamitous event; while the unbeliever is left exposed to all its terrors. No angel attends his dying bed, to take the charge of his departing spirit: no prospect of meeting his friends and relations in a better world, to soften the anguish of the last adieu. Not a single glimpse of light to mitigate the horrors of the valley of the shadow of death. And when in this hour of distress and alarm, a future judgment is presented to his view in all its terrors, what will he—what can he do? How bear up under the overwhelming prospect? Think of it my brethren, think of it in time. The sudden and unexpected death of our departed brother, is to us a solemn admonition not to delay a moment in a matter of such vast importance. After he was seized with his last illness he had very little time, probably not a single moment which it was in his power to employ in preparing for the eternal world. Had he put off that great work until a dying bed, what might his situation now have been? And have we any security against a similar fate? No: neither youth, nor vigour of constitution, nor the most confirmed

health, nor uncanceled guilt, can promise us length of days, or be the least defence against a sudden death. *Be ye, therefore, ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

SERMON XXXI.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD UNSEARCHABLE.

ROMANS xi. 33.

Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.

IN the scriptural representation of future punishment, there is something peculiarly awful. *Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire, who can bear the thoughts of lying down in everlasting burning! With the lake that burns with fire and brimstone full in view, I do not think it possible for the hardiest transgressor to persevere in a course of open and daring impiety. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that the fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and all liars, and every other flagitious and obstinate offender, should try to discredit the scripture*

account of the intolerable doom, which awaits them in the eternal world. Nor is it at all surprising, that unbelievers should urge that account of future misery as an objection to the truth of the scriptures themselves; for it seems to be the part of candour to acknowledge, that it is one of the most plausible objections, perhaps the most plausible without exception, which they have ever been able to devise against the christian faith. I hope, however, to make it appear, that the punishments denounced against the ungodly in a future state, as well as in this life, instead of forming a just objection to the truth of the scriptures, ought rather to be considered as an evidence in their favour.

With a view of furnishing an easy solution to this objection, some adventurous men have most presumptuously undertaken to strip *the second death* of more than half its terrors. Nay; according to the casuists I have in view, there is no such thing as a *second death* or *hell*, in the proper and natural sense of these terms. What the scriptures call *the second death* and *hell*, they make to be nothing more than salutary chastisement, intended to reclaim such obstinate offenders as refused to be reclaimed in this life. Are *the terrors of the Lord* then, as exhibited in the sacred pages, so insufferable as to strike the workers of iniquity with too great a dread, and to render them too solicitous lest they should *fall into the hands of the living God*?

By no means. The amazing security of the greater part of those who profess to believe in everlasting punishment, shews the very reverse to be the case. Must it not then be an instance of great imprudence, to try to diminish the terror of future punishment, when their influence is already too weak?—when they are already too feeble a check upon the restless and ungoverned passions of more than one half of professing christians? It must indeed be admitted, that there is something incomprehensible as well as inexpressibly awful in the scriptural denunciation of the wrath of God, against incorrigible offenders. But will this warrant a plain contradiction of the express declarations of our Saviour? When he says, the wicked *shall go away into everlasting punishment*; shall we say the wicked shall go, not into everlasting punishment, but only into a state of salutary discipline? When he says, *their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched*; shall we affirm, that their worm doth die, and that the fire shall be quenched? When he assures us, that *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever*; shall we allege, that it ascendeth only for a time? When he asks, *what shall a man give in exchange for his lost soul*; would it be advisable for us to tell him, that the question is impertinent and improper, because no such exchange will be necessary, and because the soul never can be lost? And, out of a great multitude of instances to mention but

one more, when he declares that between heaven and hell there is a great intervening gulf that cannot be passed, shall we say there is no such gulf in the way? Is it prudent, is it safe, is it modest, can it be necessary; nay, must it not be an instance of astonishing presumption, thus pointedly to contradict our Lord and Master?

Paul was, it may be presumed, as well acquainted with the difficulties which attend the judgments, denounced against the sinner both in this life and that which is to come, as any modern christian or deist can reasonably pretend to be. In the former part of this epistle, he had occasion to exhibit some of the most difficult, and to unsanctified nature, the most obnoxious doctrines, contained in the Bible; and among others, that of eternal judgment. Does he then reject this doctrine, as too severe or too incomprehensible to be believed? No: after a review of some of the most mysterious instances of the judgments and determinations of the incomprehensible Jehovah, so far is he from finding fault, that he breaks forth in the language of profound adoration, *O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!*

The term *judgments* in our Bible, especially in the Old Testament, is often used to denote the statutes or laws, which God has been pleased to ordain; but in our text it seems evidently to refer to

the punishments, which the righteous ruler of the world inflicts upon the transgressors of his law, both in this and a future state. These *judgments* are, the apostle admits, *unsearchable*; and all the dispensations of Divine Providence untraceable by us: he is far, however, from finding fault with what is incomprehensible by the most sagacious of short sighted mortals. And shall we, my brethren, presume to find fault with what we understand not, with what the apostle Paul, who had certainly a more comprehensive view of the judgments and ways of God than any uninspired man, adored? Shall we presume to find fault with what no man, no angel can comprehend? Rather let us unite with him in the pious exclamation of the text, *O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!*

As the Great God is himself incomprehensible by us, so are and must necessarily be his ways. This is, we know, the case with respect to the present state. Why he hath been pleased to permit both moral and natural evil, sin and misery, to invade our world we cannot tell. But this he has certainly done.—Man is most assuredly now in a state of sin and misery. Why he does not exert his resistless power for the instantaneous removal of both from his creature man, we know not. And is it strange that we cannot comprehend the reasons which induce him

to permit the continuance of sin and misery, in a future state? Is it strange, that the judgments which the scriptures denounce against the wicked in the eternal state, should be unsearchable by us? Nay; must it not be an instance of astonishing presumption, to discredit these denunciations because they are what they must necessarily be, incomprehensible? But when the apostle represents the judgments of God as unsearchable or incomprehensible, we must not understand him to mean that the grounds upon which they rest, are entirely beyond the reach of the mind of man. It is indeed but little we know or can know with respect to the judgments and ways of God our Maker; we may nevertheless form some just ideas of them. As far as we can understand them, we evidently perceive that they are wise and good; we may therefore justly conclude that what surpasses our comprehension, is also wise and good.

That man should be formed a moral agent, and be left to the freedom of his own will, was undoubtedly proper. And this seems plainly to imply the possibility of apostasy and revolt. Have we then any reason to impeach the wisdom or goodness of our Maker, when an event which was necessarily rendered probable or at least possible, has actually taken place?

That suffering is the necessary and just, as well as natural consequence of sin, we can clearly per-

ceive; and when a future state of rewards and punishments, brought to light by the gospel, is taken into view, it is easy to see that the sufferings inflicted on transgressors in this life, are happily calculated to promote the general interests of man, at the same time that they are calculated to answer important purposes in the moral government of God. And have we any reason to suppose, that the punishments inflicted upon the wicked in the eternal state are not necessary also, and attended with very important and beneficial consequences?

Sin is an offence against a Being of infinite majesty; and must it not, therefore, deserve a punishment in some measure proportioned to his incomprehensible dignity? If so, it seems to deserve an infinite or endless punishment; for, between a punishment limited both in degree and duration and infinite dignity and majesty, there does not seem to be any proportion. This single consideration is, in the opinion of some, a sufficient vindication of the scripture doctrine of future punishments. But however this may be; it will, I hope, be readily admitted that sin deserves to be punished; that the sinner deserves to suffer according to the nature of his crimes; and that, without any regard to the salutary consequences which may arise from his sufferings. Though the transgressor were removed to some corner in the universe, where he could never be seen or heard of again, yet it is, as far as I can

learn, the opinion of all ages and nations, that he would deserve to suffer, even in that situation, a punishment proportioned to the nature of his offences.

This is however, by no means the only reason that we have to assign for the punishments inflicted on transgressors in a future state. Our God is a God of love. It is the peculiar glory of our holy religion to exhibit him in that character; and we have abundant reason to conclude that he never in any instance inflicts punishment on any of his creatures, either in this or in another state, which is not really necessary: or in other words, that these punishments are as real expressions of his love to his moral offspring in general, as rewards conferred upon the blessed in heaven. When the great, the unchangeable Jehovah punishes for sin, we must by no means imagine him to be influenced by revenge or any of the malignant passions that too often possess the breasts of weak mortals, and urge them to take vengeance upon the objects of their resentment. No: when the Deity punishes for sin, it is to accomplish some important purpose—it is, I think I may venture to affirm, to accomplish the greatest good to his moral offspring in general.—That sin is destructive to the happiness of man, is too evident to admit of a doubt. And that punishment or suffering inflicted for sin, is in this life happily calculated to operate as a powerful inducement

to reform the sinner, is also abundantly evident.—To inflict such punishment then, must undoubtedly be an instance not of any thing malignant in the Deity, but of goodness and love.

We must, however, by no means imagine, that the only benevolent purpose that can be answered by penal inflictions upon the transgressor, is his own particular advantage. Should he prove incorrigible, it may be indispensably necessary to make him a warning to others. 'This we know is often the case in human governments, and why should we suppose it may not be also the case in the government of God? How many worlds there may be, besides this little globe of ours, we know not. Nor do we know how many may be brought into existence, after ours shall be no more. We have however abundant reason to conclude, that in the dispensations of Providence both of mercy and of judgment, there is a reference to the good of the Creator's moral offspring in general, which are now or shall hereafter be brought into existence. And who will undertake to say, what punishment it may be necessary to inflict upon the wicked in a future state, as an instructive example to others? How many myriads of innocent creatures may be preserved in a state of innocence and everlasting happiness, in consequence of the penal inflictions upon the wicked of our apostate race, it is impossible to say; this, however we have, it appears to me, a right to say, that

their impunity would, as far as we can judge, be attended with the most serious and alarming consequences.

That the wicked are not uniformly punished, nor the righteous uniformly rewarded in this life according to their works, we have indubitable proof. It is also very evident that some daring offenders, in this life, enjoy high prosperity; while others more moral in their conduct are in great distress. And is it not reasonable, nay does not justice require, that every man should be rewarded according to his works? This, as far as we are able to judge, is the case; and must necessarily be so, if there be a just God in heaven who regards the affairs of men on earth.

Very pleasing indeed, not only to the guilty, but also to every benevolent mind, would be the prospect of universal happiness; of the happiness of the wicked as well as of the righteous beyond the grave. It seems however to be absolutely impossible. For misery is a necessary and inevitable consequence of sin. The happiness of every creature must consist in enjoyments suited to its own particular nature. And a little attention to the nature of the human mind, may be sufficient to evince, that it is only in the enjoyment of God our Maker that we can be happy. But sin cuts us off from all communion with a holy God, and consequently from happiness. Sin introduces disorder among the passions, and is ne-

cessarily followed sooner or later by remorse of conscience. And remorse of conscience would create a hell even in heaven itself. We may see, therefore, that future punishment follows naturally from the part which the sinner acts in this life. And have we any reason to complain, because the Great Ruler of the universe permits the moral as well as the natural world to move on according to the course of nature? Have we any reason to complain, because our Creator does not work a miracle to prevent the sinner from suffering the natural consequence of his own voluntary crimes? Were a man to cast himself headlong into the deep, or plunge a dagger into his bosom, you would not expect that Providence in a miraculous manner would interfere to save his life: or should any one wear out his constitution, and waste his estate by debauchery and riotous living, you would not surely require Providence to work a miracle, in order to retrieve his losses. Why then should any one require a miracle, in order to retrieve the losses of a sinner; or to counteract the natural consequences of his voluntary crimes? This will appear the more unreasonable, when we consider that the impenitent sinner chooses his own unhappy fate. I have now a particular reference to hearers of the gospel, who live and die in voluntary impenitence and unbelief.

Life and death are set before them in the gospel; but they choose death, or at best the way to death; and can they have any reason to complain when they obtain their own choice? Very stupendous are the miracles which have already been wrought, in order to open the way for a sinner's reconciliation with his incensed Maker. And shall those that voluntarily reject this reconciliation, complain because they enjoy not its blessing? A pardon bought with blood is offered to us; and if we refuse to accept it, shall we complain because it is not given to us? Grace to deliver us from the power as well as from the guilt of sin is brought near us in the gospel; and if we refuse this grace, can we reasonably complain because it is not communicated? If we refuse to be saved by Jesus Christ, shall we complain because he doth not save us? If we refuse to be delivered from everlasting death, have we any reason to complain when condemned to that fate, from which we were unwilling to be delivered. Jesus Christ is *the light of life*; but if we choose darkness rather than light, have we any reason to complain when left in darkness forever? Jesus Christ is ready to break our fetters and set our souls at liberty from the thralldom of sin; but if we refuse to be set free, have we any reason to complain when left to wear forever the chains we have chosen? Jesus Christ offers to deliver us from the disorders of the passions and from remorse of con-

science; and if we reject this gracious interference on our behalf, have we any reason to complain when given up to the natural effects of that disorder and remorse? Our blessed Redeemer not only *gave his life a ransom for sinners*, but he condescends to entreat and beseech them to be reconciled to God; nay, he most mercifully conjures them by all the terrors of eternal death and all the glories of eternal life, to accept of his salvation and be happy. And shall we dare to complain of a punishment from which we refuse to be delivered, and which is not sufficient to deter us from sin?

But let us make the supposition that the unchangeable Jehovah should reverse his high decrees, and by a miracle of unaccountable grace, not only deliver the sinner from the guilt but also from the power of sin after death and receive him to the same happiness, the same heaven with the righteous; what would be the consequence? Would it be an addition to the happiness of God's moral offspring in general? So far from it, that it would, we have reason to think, be the ruin of the universe. And is it not better that the whole human race should perish, than that the moral government of God, and with it all order and happiness and peace throughout the universe should be destroyed?

But it will perhaps be said that a less punishment than that denounced in the scriptures, would be sufficient to illustrate the awful glories of divine

justice, deter the innocent from revolt and preserve order among the moral offspring of God. It would certainly be more becoming short-sighted man to fall prostrate in the dust before the majesty of heaven, and cry out in the language of the apostle, *O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the power of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!* than to cavil at dispensations he cannot comprehend.

From the scriptural representations of future punishments, we can assuredly learn that it is something too awful for us to endure. But what is the precise import of the figurative language by which it is pointed out, we know not. That *with God our Maker is terrible majesty* we know: it is, however, but little we can know of his majesty or any other of his perfections. He is to us an incomprehensible God. That sin is the greatest evil in the universe, we may clearly perceive: but the depths of its malignity we cannot fathom. That a system of government extending to all worlds and all ages, and to all the actions of every moral agent now in existence, or that shall hereafter be brought into existence, with all their various connexions and combinations and results, must be very extensive, is very evident; but our ideas of it must be exceedingly obscure. How then is it possible for us to know, that the punishment denounced in the scriptures against the wicked in the eternal state, is

greater than sin deserves, greater than infinite majesty has a right to inflict, or greater than is absolutely necessary to counteract the moral disorder which sin has introduced into the world? But perhaps it will be said, the idea of eternal punishment is too terrible to think of, how then can we endure it? Do not endure it then! What is the design of these denunciations? To teach us what hell is? No: but to induce us to avoid it and lay hold upon eternal life, while the day of mercy lasts. And shall we complain that such denunciations are too terrible, while they are, for the most part, too weak to accomplish the benevolent purpose for which they are intended? And after all what is there in that awful sound *forever, forever*, to furnish daring mortals with a theme of incessant declamation against the justice and sovereign pleasure of God their Maker? Do not the children of men suffer much in this life in consequence of sin? And whether they believe or disbelieve in future punishments, are they not for the most part unwilling to die? Life with all its miseries, is generally considered preferable to a state of non-existence. Nay, who will venture to say that it is unjust for God to inflict upon the children of men the punishment they suffer? Or that it would be so, were this life lengthened out forever? Do we not then plainly see that eternity does not, even in the opinion of the wicked themselves, render their sufferings un-

just. I do not intend by this observation to intimate, that the sufferings of a future state do not rise above the sufferings of the present life: or to form any estimate of the greatness of future sufferings. I only intend it as an intimation, that eternal sufferings are not greater than the crimes for which they are inflicted; are not unjust, sinners themselves being judges. And we are assured in the scriptures of truth, that nothing will be inflicted upon an individual in a future state, but what is perfectly just, what his crimes fully deserve. It is nevertheless true, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. Believe this my brethren, and *flee from the wrath to come*; and instead of cavilling at what surpasses our comprehension, *lay hold on eternal life*: and then to eternal ages, it will be your privilege to exclaim in holy ecstasy and not in despair; “*O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.*”

SERMON XXXII.

PARDON THROUGH THE ATONEMENT.

ROMANS iii. 26.

That he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

To prepare for a future state, ought certainly to be the principal business of human life. This is a truth so obvious, that it cannot reasonably be called in question by any one, who believes in a state of future rewards and punishments. We have, however, much reason to apprehend, that this great work is very much neglected by the greater part even of gospel hearers. Nay, we have reason to fear that no inconsiderable proportion of those who do pay some attention to it, are labouring in vain, *are going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness*

to every one that believeth. And this is in my view a very affecting consideration. To see an individual preferring the transient enjoyments of this life, to a happy immortality is very afflictive. But how much more so must it be, to see so many of our fellow-men taking no inconsiderable pains in this great concern to no purpose?—striving for life—for life eternal, in a way in which it cannot be obtained. Now this is, certainly, the case with all those who are seeking salvation by the works of the law.

When we appear in the character of ambassadors for Christ, to preach the gospel to perishing sinners, every individual of our apostate race, the most careless and the most abandoned not excepted, is certainly entitled to our best exertions for his salvation; but, they who *have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge*, seem to have a peculiar claim to the tenderest sympathy. And it is with a view of affording hearers of this description all the assistance in my power, that I have chosen the subject that has been announced. *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That he might be just and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus.*

We have here a very interesting representation of the way, the only way, in which a sinner of our guilty race can obtain eternal life. It is by grace, through the redemption of Christ. And this astonishing method was, it is intimated, introduced

that God might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

In discoursing on this subject I shall in dependence on divine grace endeavour,

I. To illustrate the necessity of a satisfaction for sin in order to forgiveness.

II. Show that as this satisfaction has been made by Jesus Christ, God can now, in perfect consistency with his justice, pardon the believing sinner.

I. I am then to illustrate the necessity of a satisfaction for sin in order to forgiveness. It will, no doubt, be readily admitted that the creature man must be under a law to the great Creator. For the will of God in whatever way it is made known, must be to him a law. And this law must, most assuredly, have a sanction. Were an angel to descend from heaven with the best system, the wisdom of God could devise in his hands, and should he upon delivering it to us, assure us that it was not intended to have any influence upon our happiness, as no rewards would be afforded to the obedient, nor punishment inflicted upon the disobedient, it would not be in our power to believe him. A law without a sanction appears to be a perfect solecism—a plain contradiction. Take from the best system of laws in the universe their sanction, and they will cease to be laws. They will degenerate into mere counsel or advice, which any person might violate with perfect impunity. And

if a sanction be essential to the existence of a law, its inflictions, unless in cases which admit of a pardon, must be essential to the existence of a perfect government. For in any other case a penalty not inflicted, would lose its efficacy and be of no use. Thus it evidently appears, that the law which God our Maker has ordained for us must have a sanction. This being admitted, it will necessarily follow that the sanction, in case of disobedience, must be inflicted. Shall we, my brethren, presume to call in question the veracity of God our Maker? *Hath he said it, and shall he not bring it to pass?* If no credit can be given to God when he threatens, what dependance can we have upon his truth when he promises? Can it be supposed that the great Lord of the universe would mock his moral offspring, by denouncing against them punishments which he never intended to inflict? Or can it be imagined that when the time of punishment is come, moved with compassion for the miserable transgressor, he changes his mind; that is, ceases to be God?—for a changeable being cannot be God—cannot possess infinite perfection. No, my brethren, such a supposition would be as absurd as it is impious. A penalty not enforced in case of disobedience, would lose its efficacy: nay, a denunciation of this nature could not properly be denominated a penalty at all. For a penalty is not a mere statement or description of a punishment which may or may

not be inflicted, but a declaration of a punishment which, most assuredly, will be inflicted: or, in other words, it is a declaration of what God most assuredly will do, in case of disobedience; and not a declaration of what he probably may not do. Therefore, if you take away from a penalty the certainty of its infliction, you destroy its nature; it ceases to be a penalty, and sinks to a mere description of a punishment, which can have no certain connection with the law to which it is subjoined, and consequently cannot with any propriety be called its penalty.

But it will be perhaps objected, that God may nevertheless have a right to dispense pardons, at least, to the penitent. Earthly rulers do, indeed, in some instances, pardon the transgressor of the civil law, and that without a satisfaction for his offence. And when this power is constitutionally lodged in the ruler's hand, it is no violation of the law. It cannot, however, be brought into common use, without endangering the very existence of the government. But because this may, perhaps, be allowable in imperfect governments, which are to be administered by short sighted mortals, will it follow that it is also admissible in the perfect government of an omniscient God? By no means—sin is an evil of incalculable magnitude. And it is utterly impossible that repentance should be a proper satisfaction for sin. To repent and amend his life is,

indeed, the duty of the transgressor. But when the heart is once alienated from God, how shall he without the aids of divine grace fulfil this duty?

Were we, however, to admit his repentance to be absolutely perfect, it could be no proper satisfaction for former offences. And if God may accept of an improper or imperfect satisfaction, he may, as far as we can perceive, dispense with it altogether. For admitting that one jot or tittle may pass from the law without being fulfilled, according to its true nature and design, why not two, why not the whole? No limits can be set to this dispensing power, provided it be supposed to exist at all.

Now as the moral government of God rests upon the laws he has established, and his laws rest upon their sanctions, if these sanctions fail, the moral government of God would be destroyed. And we are sure that a God of unerring wisdom will never remit the penalty of any of his laws, when remission would be followed by such tragical consequences.

Should any one be still doubtful, whether the penalty of the divine law may not be set aside, let him examine and attentively consider whether this appears, in fact, to be the case in a single instance. What are we to think of the sufferings of this life? Are they not inflictions of the penalty of the divine law? Most undoubtedly they are. Yes, my brethren, the earth is full of awful illustrations of the truth I

am endeavouring to establish. Wherever we turn our eyes we may evidently perceive that the penalty of the Divine law is not set aside in favour of the transgressor, but daily and hourly inflicted, in ten thousand modes of punishment, upon the guilty. Every grave we see opened for a fellow mortal, every disease that invades our frame, and all the various forms of wretchedness on earth, ought to be considered as so many irresistible evidences that the penalty of the divine law is not—cannot be dispensed with; or in other words, that God could not, in consistency with his justice, pardon the transgressor without a satisfaction for his offences. But since this satisfaction has been made, since God in his infinite mercy *has set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, he can now *be just and the justifier of every believing sinner*. And

II. This is the proposition which now claims our most serious attention.

Now that the interesting subject may appear in a just light, it will be proper to consider the design of penal inflictions. Shall we suppose that God Almighty, the Creator and Lord of the universe, is disposed to inflict punishment upon a poor worm of the dust, as a weak mortal is induced to take vengeance on a fellow mortal who has incurred his displeasure. No, my brethren, this is unbecoming the dignity of a wise and good man. And to im-

pute it to the greatest and best of beings, would be insufferable insolence—*God is love*. And all his purposes and transactions must correspond with his nature—must originate in love, and be intended to promote the best interests of his moral offspring in general. The design of the penalty annexed to the divine laws, is not to lay a snare for the unwary transgressor; but to prevent his transgressions and thus to preserve him from destruction. We must not consider the most awful descriptions in the sacred records of the righteous judgments, which a holy God will inflict upon the finally impenitent in a future state, as any evidence of the want of regard to the happiness of man; but, on the contrary, as a strong expression of the love of God to us sinners, and as so many efforts to prevent our ruin.—And are not these denunciations well calculated to answer this benevolent purpose? Most undoubtedly they are. The complaints so often made against their severity, furnish a striking evidence of this interesting truth. True, indeed, it is, that the death and ruin denounced against our first parents proved insufficient for their security. This, however, was not owing to any want of awfulness in the denunciation itself; but to their own culpable inattention and perverseness. We are not, however, to suppose that the only design of a penalty, is to prevent the ruin of an accountable creature. No: should creatures thus guarded prove ungovernable, and

break through all the barriers which the goodness of God has planted in their way to destruction, the punishments inflicted upon them are intended to be a solemn warning to others—a solemn admonition to avoid those guilty courses which must ever be attended with such calamitous consequences. But to be more particular. Is punishment inflicted with the beneficent intention of reforming the offender? Turn your attention to the cross of Jesus Christ. Incorrigible surely must be the transgressor, who can behold the innocent Redeemer suffering for our offences and yet continue in sin.

From this most astonishing transaction we learn, that the persevering transgressor cannot possibly escape with impunity. For if *God spared not his own Son*, can it be supposed that he will spare a sinner who is arraigned before his bar for his own offences? Surely not. And is it possible for the most fearless of transgressors to bear the thoughts of enduring, and that forever, the punishment due to his transgressions, when he contemplates the Redeemer sunk so low beneath a load of sorrow not his own? Or is it possible for the most adamant heart to behold such a glorious display of Divine love to us miserable offenders, and yet remain insensible? Whatever the transgressor may do, sure I am that the astonishing scene is admirably calculated to awaken him to a sense of his danger, and to induce him to lay hold of the hope set before

him in the gospel. All that terror and love can do to wrest the sinner from destruction, is done in the cross of Christ.

Is punishment inflicted by way of example to others? Never surely has an example of this nature been exhibited to the world equally impressive and forcible as that of the innocent Son of God, dying in agonies unutterable for the sins of the world. With such an example in view, it is scarcely to be supposed that an innocent creature in the universe would dare to transgress.

It is not unfrequently the case that a gross offender against the laws of his country is cut off by the hands of civil justice, that he may no longer molest the peace of society? But no such measure can be necessary with respect to the greatest transgressor who is brought to believe in Jesus Christ. No: his disciples become the best members of society on earth—the most inoffensive and the most useful. Instead of cutting themselves off from the society of their fellow-men on earth, they ought, as far as practicable, to be every where to repress and overawe by the sanctity of their conduct the most lawless and abandoned. But I must not enlarge. Imperfect as these observations, confessedly are, they appear to me sufficient to show that the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ are calculated to answer, in the moral government of God, all the purposes which could have been accomplished by

the infliction of demerited personal punishment on the transgressor; and at the same time a variety of most important purposes which could not have been, in this way, effected. And are not these considerations sufficient to show that, *God can now be just and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus?*

In sin there is, indeed, an intrinsic evil for which it deserves punishment, independent of the disorder which it is calculated to introduce into the moral government of God. For it is a violation of the most necessary and reasonable law in the universe. The great law of love to God as well as love to man. That it is an intrinsic evil, may be inferred from the essential nature of the penalty denounced against it. It is not necessary for God to dispatch an angel from heaven, or to hurl the thunderbolts of his wrath, in order to punish a transgressor for his crimes. No, my brethren, the sinner necessarily becomes his own tormentor. Sin darkens the mind, depraves the heart, introduces disorder and misrule among the passions and affections, and plants in the guilty breast ten thousand stings of deep remorse. Sin is also an insufferable insult to the majesty of the great Creator. But in both these instances, the interposition and righteousness of our Redeemer may well be considered a sufficient satisfaction. For the great law of love he hath perfectly fulfilled. And to the God of inflexible justice he hath rendered an homage, which neither men nor angels could ever have rendered. But it

is not necessary for us to undertake to point out precisely in what way the sacrifice of the cross is a satisfaction for sin. It might be enough for us to know that it has pleased the only wise God, in this way to dispense the blessings of his grace to apostate man. When sin is considered merely as an intrinsic evil, or as an offence against God himself, who will undertake to say precisely what satisfaction the great Lord of the universe may see it necessary to require? It is certainly enough, as far as we can judge that the interposition and righteousness of our Redeemer be as well calculated to support the moral government of God, as any personal punishment inflicted upon the transgressor. And the observations already made, are, it appears to me, sufficient to establish this interesting truth.

But can it be right for the innocent to suffer for the guilty? Not in courts of civil justice, it will be readily admitted. For no man has a right to dispose of his life in this way, much less were he to do so could he resume it again. But our Redeemer had power to do both—to lay down his life and to take it again. Were an innocent man to die for a guilty criminal, it would be robbing society of a useful life, and very frequently the prolonging of a guilty one to be a pest on the earth. But the life of our Redeemer was not lost to society. No: though he was dead he is now alive; and lives to dispense the blessings of his grace forevermore. Nor are ransomed sinners pests on the earth. So

far from it, that they are rendered, as was before observed, the best members of society in the world. Thus we may see that this boasted objection, when attentively considered, has really no weight at all. None of the circumstances, which forbid the substitution of an innocent for a guilty life before a court of civil justice, have any place in the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ.

But still, perhaps, the idea of an innocent person suffering for the guilty may appear a strange incomprehensible dispensation. Yes, my brethren, it is strange, that the God of heaven should take such knowledge of us—should give his son to die for us. What are we or any of our apostate race, that for us the Son of God should toil and suffer and die? This indeed is incomprehensible mercy—love that passeth knowledge. But nothing is more common among men than for the innocent to suffer in consequence of the crimes of the guilty. This the parent, the guardian, the friend, the patriot, know by daily experience. What mean the praises bestowed in all ages upon those who have voluntarily devoted their lives to the good of their country? Do they not evidently show that for a man to die for the good of others, is, on some occasions, not only right, but praiseworthy in an eminent degree? And if it be right and praiseworthy in any instance to die for the temporal advantage of man, how much more so to die for their eternal advantage; for the salvation of their never dying souls? Nor must we

limit the benign influence of our Redeemer's sufferings, to the inhabitants of our little globe. No; wherever there is a mind formed after the similitude of the great Creator, throughout the universe, there we have reason to believe, their salutary influence will be felt and acknowledged while everlasting ages roll away. And are not these observations sufficient to show that *God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus?*

Is it of any consequence to us or to any creature in the universe, what measures the wisdom of God employs for the accomplishment of his beneficent purposes, provided they be adapted to the end in view? Now it appears to me we have seen, as far as we can judge, that the propitiatory sufferings of our Redeemer when he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows, and gave his life a ransom for us, are most admirably calculated to accomplish the all important purposes of mercy to our guilty race. And is not this enough? Shall we presume to find fault because the ways of God are above our ways and his thoughts above our thoughts? Rather let us adore the sovereignty of his grace, rejoice that he has laid help on one who is mighty to save, and laying hold on eternal life, await in triumphant hope the high destiny to which he has called us.

THE END.

