

A
S E R I E S
O F
S E R M O N S,
UPON THE MOST
IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES
O F O U R
HOLY RELIGION,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOLUME II.



Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. PAUL.

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S E R M O N I.

The Sanctification of the Lord's Day.

Rev. i. 10. *I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day.*

IT is allowed by all who believe there is a God, that he ought to be worshipped. If he is to be worshipped, there must, from the nature of things, be some time appropriated for this purpose. To grant that a duty must be done, and no time allotted for its performance, involves in it an impossibility. Wherefore it is absolutely certain that God must be worshipped by all his rational creatures, and they must have a due proportion of time for this high and important end. And can time be better employed than by prayer, homage, adoration and praise to our Creator, preserver and benefactor. The question is not, whether there be a God, whether divine worship should be given to him, and whether a portion of time should be allowed for this purpose, but what is that season or portion of time, which ought to be designated or set apart for this solemn or grand design. Here the reason and investigation of man must be nonplussed. Whether a fifth, sixth, or eighth, or any other division of time would be a proper pro-

portion must far transcend his enquiries. Here where the light of nature must fail, divine revelation has given us infallible direction. God has been pleased to correct all the wandering conjectures of men, and appoint one day in seven to be separated for his special service and to be kept holy to himself; and this has the honor conferred upon it in our text of being stiled *the Lord's day*. It is also said St. John was in the Spirit on this day. This may be predicated of him both in an extraordinary, and in an ordinary manner. He was in the Spirit as he was under the influence of a divine efflatus, or a supernatural inspiration, affording him all the glorious truths and grand visions recorded in this sacred book. Or he was in the Spirit in an ordinary way, as is common with christians, who have pleasure in God, delight in his worship; who have holy exercises of heart, and are in proper frames of mind.

All that can be attended to at present on this subject will be briefly to show,

First, that God has appointed a seventh part of time for the high and important duties of religious worship, of public adoration, homage and praise.

Secondly, consider the manner in which this appropriated and sanctified time ought to be employed.

As to the first, it is abundantly apparent from the whole of divine revelation. This world may with propriety be divided into two epochs or grand periods. The one from creation to a still more wonderful and greater event, to wit, The completion of the redemption of man in the humiliation and resurrection of the Son of God. That person of the Trinity, who was the distinguished agent in causing the existence of this world, was and will forever be the most pre-eminently dis-

tinguished personage in its recovery from the most perfect and absolute ruin. The perfections of Godhead were conspicuously displayed in the stupendous works of creation. Here almighty power, inconceivable wisdom, and incomprehensible goodness shone forth with infinite lustre; but when the work of redemption was performed, all these perfections burst forth with superior splendor, and a multitude of others which never could have been conceived but by its glories. In the former exhibition the angels of God sang together for joy, the latter they look into with an astonishment at the wonders of God far transcending their conceptions and their praise. In this display of the extension and plenitude of divine attributes the great minds of cherubic and seraphic millions are lost and absorbed. All heaven is struck mute at the exhibited Godhead in the salvation of man.

Both these great periods are illustrated by an appropriation of a seventh portion of time, for the worship of this great Creator, and this glorious Redeemer. For the first, the seventh day from the creation was appointed for the commemoration of the same, and other adventitious circumstances which arose in the church throughout that grand era of more than four thousand years; for the second, the first day of the week has been assigned as a memorial of Christ and his resurrection for the recovery of ruined man, and which will be continued till worlds and time shall be no more.

First, the Sabbath from the creation to the Resurrection of Christ was the seventh day of the week. Thus we read, "on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made" and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." Here the day after God had finished all his works, and the first day of man's existence was set apart for holy purposes. It is pronounced, blessed and sanctified. Not that there was any more

holiness infused into this portion of time than any other. No irrational creature is capable of inherent holiness. This is the exclusive property of beings intellectual and immortal. Yet common existences have been appointed, blessed and consecrated of God to promote the holiness and happiness of the rational system. Thus the tabernacle was holy, the temple holy, all their utensils holy, &c. that is, they were set apart for religious purposes ; so the seventh portion of time from the beginning was sanctified and blessed by God for the purpose of special, divine and public worship.

This was the usage from the creation to Noah, and from that period to Moses by the slender intimations we have in these patriarchal ages. We read, *that in process of time*, Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. The translation is here vague and uncertain. The original is clear and distinct, " In the end of the days, or on the last of the days," that is on the last day of the week, or on the Sabbath, they brought their respective offerings, and worshipped God. This assures us that a Sabbath was observed among the children of Adam.

It is evident that in the days of Noah one reckoning of time was by weeks. In his long and dark confinement in the Ark, he sent out a Dove which returned, and after seven days sent her forth again, and she returned with an olive leaf in her mouth ; and after seven days he sent her out again and she returned no more. This history instructs us, that in Noah's time, days were numbered by sevens, or there were then weeks. And the awful solemnity of the circumstances in which Noah and his family were, must point out to us a patient waiting for the sacred days, which could be none other than the Sabbaths they had been accustomed to observe.

Before I proceed further on this subject, allow me to remark, that some learned names have contended, that the first day of the week from man's creation was the Sabbath till the giving of the law from mount Sinai. Folio pages of Bedford and others have been expended upon this subject, but their great labours have had only a feeble influence in the conviction of christians, and the great end designed by these good men, has been rather injured than aided by their toils. The undoubted fact is that the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath from the creation to the promulgation of the Sinai law ; and from that period to the resurrection of the Saviour there has been no dispute about the day.

It is evident the seventh day of the week was observed for sacred purposes as a standing usage in the church previous to the awful solemnities of the communications from the Arabian mountains.

When the church of God was wandering in the wilderness, between Egyptian slavery and the promised land, and were miraculously fed with Manna from heaven, they were appointed twice as much bread on the sixth day of the week as any other. Notwithstanding this, some despisers of the Sabbath, which has been the case in all ages, went out on the seventh day to look for the usual bread, and not finding it, received a severe rebuke for their disobedience and profanity, and the injunction for the observation of the Sabbath was repeated to them. " God gave you on the sixth day the bread of two " days ; abide ye every man in his place. Let no man go " out of his place on the seventh day ; so the people rested on " the seventh day." Thus it is certain it was to be sanctified and kept holy before the giving of the law. When this grand event took place, the observation of the Sabbath was inserted in the decalogue with a peculiar description. From that time to the commencement of the next great era of the world, it is

allowed by all to be attended to by the church. This appears from the numerous directions respecting it, throughout the writings of Moses and the Prophets, a detail of which would far exceed our present limits.

When Christ arose from the dead the same proportion of time was still continued for the private and public exercises of religion, but the day was changed from the seventh to the first, which will and must be observed in commemoration of his resurrection, the most astonishing event that ever took place in this world, or can to the end of time.

This change is demonstrated from the following considerations.

First, on the very day our Lord had arisen, the disciples assembled together in the evening, and it is said with a peculiar emphases, "It was the first day of the week," and both to sanctify that time, and this solemn assembly, Jesus appeared in the 'midst of them, and pronounced this blessing, "Peace be unto you." Their hearts were filled with gladness, and he reiterated the benediction. Then he confirmed their commission to go forth and preach salvation to a ruined world, and that all their sins should be remitted upon the terms proposed in the gospel. Thus the first christian sabbath received a glorious sanctification.

Secondly, just eight days after this solemnity, the disciples again met, and Christ met with them, and repeated the same blessing, "Peace be unto you," again sanctifying the time and their assembly as before. Something very remarkable took place on this Lord's day evening, to wit, removing the unbelief of Thomas, and affording him all the evidence he desired and filling his heart with joy, so that his soul burst forth in raptures, crying out, "My Lord and my God."

Thirdly, the day of Pentecost was also a great day among the followers of Christ, and this was on the first day of the week. Pentecost was always fifty days from the passover, therefore as our Lord arose the day after the passover, this distinguished period fell out on the first day of the week. Christ by his Spirit was present in this great assembly when three thousand were converted by the preaching of St. Peter, and initiated into the christian church by the holy ordinance of baptism. This was a great sabbath, and perhaps there will never be such another, till the time will come that a nation will be new born at once. But the argument is the first day of the week was in an effectual manner the sabbath of christians or the great day of the Lord. And allow this addition that Peter's converts, ever after continued in his doctrine ; one of which must evidently be, their observance of this day as holy time, in commemoration of Christ and for the purposes of religion.

Fourthly, in St. Paul's history we have a remarkable instance of his celebration of the first day of the week as the christian sabbath. In his journeying, he came unto Troas and waited for the assembling of the disciples. They had met seven days before, no doubt for their usual worship, but he tarried for their sacramental occasion, therefore thus we read, " On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, and continued his speech until midnight." This shows us, the first day of the week was their sabbath and the season of their holy communion. I will make no other remarks from this, and all the preceding observations on the first day of the week as the christian sabbath, only that the evening was a solemn and most important portion of holy time.

Fifthly, an argument of great force to show the first day of the week is the christian sabbath, is derived from St. Paul's

direction to the Corinthian and other churches, respecting an important duty, which must be performed in their solemn meetings for public worship. Thus he speaks, "Now for the collection of the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." It is here a granted case, that all the christian churches assembled on the first day of the week as their sabbath to perform public worship; hence he enjoined this as a duty incumbent on them at that season. From these things it is evident that the first day of the week was the christian sabbath, and that it was a standing usage among the christians, and placing all these things in one view, it is evident the first day of the week ought firmly to be held by christians, and duly sanctified as their sabbath.

Passing by a multitude of arguments employed by christian writers in favor of the first day of the week to be observed as a common and public day for religious worship, the whole is fully established in

The first place from our text, wherein it is in striking language denominated the Lord's day. That is, it was instituted by our Lord for holy purposes; as we say the Lord's supper, the Lord's table, the cup of the Lord, the Lord's prayer, &c. all which show, these things were peculiar to him and matters of his special divine institution, and therefore obligatory upon all christians.

Agreeably to our Lord's appropriation of the first day of the week for religious service, and the practice of the apostle's from the very day of his resurrection, this day has been observed by christians as the sabbath throughout all ages from the beginning of christianity down to the present time, and will continue to be sanctified to the end of the world.

Having laid before you these few considerations for the refreshment of your minds, the confirmation of your faith, and the encouragement of your practice, in the observance of the day of our Lord's resurrection as the holy sabbath, I proceed

Secondly, to consider the manner in which this appropriated and sanctified time ought to be employed.

Let it be here observed, we are allowed as great a portion of the twenty four hours of the Lord's day for rest by sleep, refreshment by food, taking care of our cattle, &c. as on other days. We are allowed also all the works of necessity, such as defending ourselves against thieves, robbers and enemies, extinguishing fires, sailing in the open seas, keeping furnaces in blast, &c. Besides these, the works justly implied in the term mercy ought to be performed on this day, such as visiting the sick, administering to their comfort, and relieving the distressed of the poor. All these and more than can be enumerated are works of mercy. It is the duty of Physicians, Surgeons, and all the train of that line to visit their patients and go when called, but I apprehend they ought not to tarry from public worship more than what evident necessity requires.

These allowances being made, which could be easily established from scripture and reason, but I presume, they are perfectly obvious to the judgment, conscience, and feelings of every christian. Therefore I pass on to the plain duties of sanctifying the Lord's day.

St. John was in the Spirit on this day. We shall understand it at present, a spiritual and holy frame of mind, in

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which all christians ought to be, so as in the tempers of their heart, to be prepared for the duties thereof. A very brief description of their frame and duties must suffice at present.—Remember, was the great introduction to the sabbath under the law, and no word can be more properly introduced to awaken our attention to the solemnities of the Lord's day under the gospel.

In the morning when we awake, the first thought which should strike the soul of the christian, is this is the morning my Lord and precious Saviour arose from the dead and completed the grand work of the redemption of sinners. With the putting on of my cloaths, I wish to put on the immaculate robes of Christ's righteousness. Now I bow my knee before him to confess my sins, and praise him for all the wonders and benefits of his redeeming love.—I arise to bless his name, to worship with my family and prepare for the public service of the sanctuary.—I have worshipped my God and my Saviour with my whole heart in the church.—I return to meditate on the instructions of his house, to feed upon his word, to examine, catechise instruct, and exhort my family, to pray with them, and thus I conclude the day of my Lord.

This is a summary view of a sabbath day's duty and exercise. This is making it a delight, this is being in the Spirit on the Lord's day. This is the duty of all. It is a frame and practice preparatory for heaven, and for the eternal sabbatism which remains for the people of God.

A few counsels and directions shall close this discourse.

As I have been very concise and summary on the observation of the Lord's day, I hope an indulgence will be granted me in the advisory part of this subject.

My first advice is, that you bless God for the institution of a Lord's day. It is a happiness to man and beast, to all creation, saints and sinners. Therefore all ought to praise the Lord. Wherefore all those who unnecessarily travel on the sabbath, do any common work, post their books secretly in their shops, look over their bills of lading, all these, they are excluded from eternal felicity, without a gospel repentance, which is fixed by an eternal and irreverfable decree of heaven, must perish. And whatever they may think in the transitory moment of satanical delusion, death will immediately stop their journeys, close their ledgers, settle all their accounts, finish their business, raise the curtain, and close the whole scene.

A second advice to christians is, when the Lord's day returns ; that they apply to the business of the sacred season as reason informed by revelation directs. This in the christian system is of wide extension ; private meditation, self-reflection, self-consideration, self-examination of the past life, especially of the past week, this is near to the religion that leads to heaven.

Allow me here to mention the practice of the primitive christians, the reformers, and our fathers. Besides personal and family devotions, it was usual with parents to take their children alone, urge them to an attention to the things of religion, dehort them from vice and every thing of that nature, impress upon their tender minds the love of God and the duty of prayer, and thus exhort and pray with each of their lambs alone. When this was the case, there was order, sobriety and religion in families and societies.

A third counsel is, to all who acknowledge a Lord's day, carefully to remember, and in this remembrance, it shall be left to your own judgments, to regulate yourselves ac-

cording to the word of God. From the education and instruction of this congregation, I fear not to leave this reference to your own consciences. If the Lord's day is not properly observed in this town, is conscience inattentive to its office? Is it neglected, profaned by idleness, the omission of private, family, and public worship? Have you not always had an abundance of instruction on this head? Let conscience decide, and God will surely be our judge. Numerous are the doctrines and exhortations you have had on this subject, and it is probable this will be the last from your aged minister. All things are drawing the curtain, the course of my terrestrial sabbaths are finishing, and thro' the most unmerited grace ever conferred upon any sinner, I hope soon to enter upon an eternal sabbatism where there will be no six day's intervention.

The subject I leave with you, with your children, with God and your own consciences, in the recollection of that commandment, which you have heard ever since you were capable of distinguishing sounds, and which you have all learned and believe. "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, "nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, "nor the stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days "the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in "them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord "blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." O that God might always endue us with his Spirit, that we might ever be in the same on the Lord's day!

S E R M O N I I.

A General Contemplation on the Nature and Duty of Prayer.

James vi. 16. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man,
availeth much.*

PRAYER is a solemn and important duty incumbent upon all the children of men. It is of such a nature, that all who neglect it, surely live without God in the world. It is not merely a positive institution of heaven, such as many of the ceremonial rights of the law, and baptism and the Lord's supper under the gospel. But it is perfectly of a moral kind arising from the eternal nature, reason and propriety of things. If there be a God and rational creatures, there originates from such a state, a relation of things and duties, which it seems impossible to be superseded. God forbid, that any conception of poor limited and ignorant sinners should attempt the circumscription of the omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely perfect supreme. Yet all nature declares there is a God and he must be worshipped. A praying homage, a dependent spirit, a grateful mind, and a submissive soul is the whole of his adoration, and adding hereto the

practical performance of relative duties between one reasonable creature and another, completes the whole sum of natural religion.

The relation of a rational creature, capable of feeling its existence and dependence upon its Creator, upholder, and benefactor, must surely acknowledge this dependent existence, and be under obligations of gratitude, supplication and praise.

But divine revelation far surpasses all that natural religion can dictate, and herein we have not only enjoined the obligating nature of prayer, but infallible directions respecting it and its object, the manner in which it ought to be performed, and, the motives and encouragements to the same.

It is not only a duty, but an high honor conferred upon the creature by positive institution, and it is an astonishing privilege, in the wondrous condescension of heaven, granted to sinners. To bow before the majesty of God, to acknowledge our dependence upon him, to make known our wants, and offer up the desires of our hearts to him, is an honor, dignity and glory conferred upon the human race, transcending their conception and their praise.

However wonderful it may be, as all that flows from God is wonders, the commandment ought to be embraced with profound adoration; "Pray without ceasing, pray always" "with all prayer and supplication." The import of these precepts will hereafter be explained.

The best definition or description of prayer is in beautiful simplicity given in our chatechism, "The offering up our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name

"of Christ." In other words, prayer is an expression of the heart, sensible of our wants, acknowledging our dependence upon God, and in faith of his infinite sufficiency, through Christ Jesus to supply the same.

In these days of gospel light, no christian will dare to object against the duty of prayer, because God is omniscient and immutable. Prayer was never designed to inform God of any thing of which he was ignorant. The thought disrobes the divine character, mutilates his omniscience, and such a depreciation implicates blasphemy. Neither is prayer intended to move God to change. He is the Lord who changeth not. But its intention is to encrease our own knowledge in various respects, and that we ourselves should be moved and changed; brought near to God, humbled in his sight, conformed to his pleasure, and thus rendered meet for the reception of blessings. Wherefore the whole effect of prayer is to be on ourselves; and its nature is to declare the glory of God, to shew forth his perfections, and to raise the creature to become an object of blessings.

God has fixed a special constitution and rule for the conduct of his rational creatures in this world, and given a sure revelation of the same. A part of this establishment is; that his people should feel his fulness, be sensible of their own wants, and apply to him in sincerity of heart, agreeably to the manner of his direction, by fervent prayer and supplication for all things necessary for them. Before God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were brought to feel their evil case, and to cry unto him because of their hard bondage. In the same manner previous to that great deliverance brought for them at the red sea, when the sea was in front and the Egyptian army on their rear, and all things portended their immediate destruction. in this tremendous situation, they prayed

and cried unto the Lord, and God quickly sent them relief, and they soon saw their enemies overwhelmed in the sea. Thus the disciples of Jesus when in a dreadful storm, the ship covered with waves and just ready to sink, in this distress, they prayed saying, " Lord, save us, we perish." The winds and waves were checked and there was a great calm. The woman of Canaan before she obtained healing for her daughter, came to the feet of Jesus, and in earnest supplication cried, " Lord help me." The prodigal son becomes sensible of his wants, bows before his father, confesses his misconduct and requests the lowest station beneath his roof, in order to his obtaining mercy.

Hezekiah when the sentence of death had been passed upon him, turned his face towards the wall, wept and prayed unto the Lord ; his prayers were heard, his life spared and fifteen years were added to his days.

Innumerable are the instances to shew that prayer is the constitution of God in respect to sinful men, for their obtaining favours and blessings. The Psalmist so strongly illustrates this point, that he declares its origin is in the nature of God, and he enters it in his book as a part of the divine character. " He is a prayer hearing God, and to him all flesh shall come,"

In our text, every motive, argument, and encouragement are combined to impress upon the hearts of christians the high importance and absolute necessity of this duty. " The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In these words the apostle not only exhorts to prayer in general, but to extraordinary prayers in special cases. " Is any among you afflicted, let him pray : Is any sick among you, let him send for the elders, (or presbyters) of the church, and let them pray over him." After this he gives them a dis-

tinguishing commandment, "To pray one for another that they might be healed." Thus let persons feel a due sensibility of their wants, a proper dependence upon God, and offer up the desires of their hearts in the way of his ordination, and they have certain grounds of assured hope that their believing wishes will not be disappointed.

In this apostolic assertion respecting prayer, three things ought to command the attention of christians.

First, the nature of prayer, it ought to be *effectual, fervent*.

Secondly, the qualification of the person, "*a righteous man*."

Thirdly, the effect of the addresses, they *avail much*.

A few observations on each member of the text will terminate the subject.

The first observation in the text, regards the nature of prayer, it is to be *effectual, fervent*. In the original there is but one word expressing this quality. It is too strong to be expressed by any English term, hence our translators chose two. The word *effectual* was rather an unhappy selection, because it seems to impose a tautology on the sentence. What is *effectual* *availeth much*. No other idea can be communicated hereby, than that which is *effectual* is prevalent. The only English term expressive of the original, long since introduced for the enrichment of our language is derived from it, the word *energetical*. "The energetical prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The term signifies that which is *in-wrought*, importing the efficacy or influence of the Holy Ghost powerfully exciting such a prayer in the heart. Hence a right and ac-

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ceptable prayer is pouring out the desires of the soul in faith before God. There is no proper prayer, only what is of this nature and complexion. All prayers of this nature will surely be heard and answered. That is, they will be answered directly in the things prayed for, or perfectly fulfilled in blessings, which are most for God's glory and the creature's good. This lies at the foundation, and is the essence of every true prayer, that God may glorify himself, promote the happiness of the moral system, and every individual composing the same. Our success in prayer may be always known by the views of the mind, the sensibility of the heart, the submission of the will, and fervor of the affections. When God intends blessings to his people, whether temporal or spiritual, it is his usual method to raise in them, a sense of their necessities, create in them, earnest desires, and in consequence of their feelings and fervent supplications, their minds are calmed, or the favours are bestowed. Let us then always pray with a proper sensibility of our wants, and a suitable dependence upon the divine all-sufficiency, power and goodness through Christ, and disappointments will not take place. Let us especially cultivate that powerful in-wrought prayer of the Holy Spirit, which maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered. We must command our souls to attention in this duty. The Psalmist says, "I lift up my heart to thee." The heart which rises in energetic prayer to God by faith in Jesus Christ makes a most acceptable offering. It is like the ascension of the sweet perfumes from the ancient censers of incense ; to which Solomon alluded when he said, "Who is this that cometh in pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" Therefore whatever we lack, whether wisdom or any thing else, let us in faithful humility present our requests to God, in full assurance, "He gives liberally and upbraids not." The more earnest and fervent any soul is in prayer to God, the more will he love him. Thus saith the Psalmist in all the glow

of animated affection, "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications; because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Whatever our wants are let us ask of God fervently and not doubt a denial. "Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them. This is the confidence that we have concerning him that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." If we want temporal comforts, let us in prayer believe, he feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies of the field. If spiritual blessings, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find help in time of need." When we pray, let our faith be in exercise and our confidence firm. "Ask in faith nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."

Unbelief may be said to be the canker worm of prayers. Its misgiving language is, "Can the Lord prepare a table in this wilderness? If the Lord should open the windows of heaven can this thing be?" Unbelief in prayer has its foundation in scruples, hesitations and corruptions, which cannot now be attended to. Some future time when the heart of unbelief will be considered, these things will come into review. To illustrate the form, fervency, and sensibility of prayer, all which is placed before us, in the lives of the scripture saints, such as Jacob, Moses, Noah, David, Daniel, and Job, must at present be omitted, to make room for a

Second, consideration in our text, to wit, the qualification of the praying person, "a righteous man."

By righteous man is evidently not to be understood, one who is perfectly righteous, but a person just similar to ourselves. This he instances in the case of Elias, "A man sub-

“jest to like passions as we are.” He was a good man, yet subject to sins and infirmities like others. Wherefore by righteous man here must be understood, one who is evangelically righteous, one who is renewed by the power of divine grace, united to Christ by faith, clothed by his righteousness, and entered into the way of sanctification. The person who is thus righteous in a Gospel view of this term, tho’ far from perfection, his prayers offered by faith thro’ the mediation of Christ, will surely find acceptance. Abel received the divine testimony in favour of his offerings and prayers, while his brother was rejected, and his presents of gratitude and praise from an infidel heart. Allow me to make this remark, that Cain believed not in a sacrifice for his sin. Hence his offering was an imaginary gratitude to God, without any sense of his sinfulness and unworthiness. And the reception of his brother’s offering, which was of the sacrificial and bloody nature, which exhibited his belief of the atoning blood of a mediator, filled his whole soul with indignation and purposes of revenge. The spirit of Abel is in all believers, and the spirit of Cain would still murder all the friends of God. “By faith Abel offered unto God, a more excellent sacrifice than Cain by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying his gifts.” If we would expect our prayers to be heard, let us see to it, that we be righteous persons. None other will prevail or find acceptance with God.

A question here arises whether God hath made any promises to the prayers of the unregenerate? This is impossible in the very nature of things. If threatenings may be considered as promises, the whole bible is filled with these against all who entertain evil in their heart. For God to grant good to those, the ebullitions and feelings of whose hearts are perfectly at enmity against him, common sense and all nature rise against the supposition. And the wicked themselves possess the convic-

tions of their own consciences, however stupid and secured they may be, that they cannot be heard. They know amidst all the pains and anguish of their bodies, whatever their wishes and tormenting anxiety may be for relief, the desires of their hearts are not raised to God, in love, faith or a dependence on him in the forms of his appointment, through Jesus Christ. The old and new testament declare, "God will not take sinners by the hand; he will not hear sinners. Those who regard iniquity in their hearts, the Lord will not hear. God will not hear the cry of the hypocrite when trouble cometh upon him. The Lord is far from the wicked, but heareth the prayer of the righteous."

Thirdly, we proceed to lead your consideration of the effects of addresses made to heaven, *they avail much.*

Effectual fervent prayer is powerful and prevaileth with God. The soul in this praying frame, is brought to that state, on which God will surely bestow his blessings. Hence prayer properly offered will never fail of a proper effect. Before God grants his favors, it is his usual method, to bring his people into a sensible, fervent, and praying condition, and to open wide their mouths, that in this way they may be prepared for the reception of the desired supplies. Prayer, says one, is the key, by which the righteous open and lock heaven at pleasure. This is beautifully exemplified in the character of Elijah in our context. He prayed and it rained not, he prayed again and the rains descended. Astonishing is the power attributed to prayer in the holy scriptures. God condescends to speak as if his hands were confined hereby. In the case of the angel wrestling with Jacob, He said, "Let me go for the day breaketh." Jacob replied, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And thus he had strength and power with God and prevailed." The efficacy of the prayer

of Moses is very remarkable. God intreats him to let him alone by solemn and great promises. Thus saith the Lord, "Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." The expression by which God enjoins it upon his people in the prophet Isaiah is very strong, when he says, "Command ye me." Such phrases, while they encourage, must be admired with a holy reverence, and not strained too far, lest the spirit of prayer degenerate into ungodly rudeness. These things are wonders of condescension on the part of the Most High, and point to us, how highly he honors the duty of prayer. Its importance, prevalency and efficacy would be easy to expatiate upon.

But these general meditations upon prayer will be closed at present with a few words of exhortation.

We here see the great influence of this duty when rightly performed, and how highly it is respected by God himself. This therefore should be a sufficient motive to engage us in the diligent practice of it. It becomes such guilty, empty, and necessitous creatures as we are, to bow with all humility, and yet with holy confidence before God, as knowing that he is both able and willing to satisfy all our just desires, and to cause his grace to abound toward his people. Whatever we want let us ask it of him in faith, and we shall not be denied. We may always be importunate, when we are sure the things we wish are agreeable to his will. There is no want, no possible want or desire of a right kind can arise in our breasts or is felt there, to which there is not a promised supply, if the petition be believingly presented. "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Whatever our necessities are, let us with fervent, sensible addresses make them known to God. What is your petition,

and what is your request, and they shall not be rejected. Is it temporal blessings that you want, seek the Lord and fear before him, "He will bless your basket and your store. He will open unto thee his good treasure; the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thy hand. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth forever."

Is it spiritual blessings that we need? God knows of these we are extremely destitute. And what is still worse, we are not duly sensible of our lamentable condition; neither are fervently petitioning the throne of grace for ourselves, our families, our children, or others. How many among us are living under the load of all their guilt, and absolutely insensible that they carry a weight sufficient to sink them to utter destruction. Let all such after so long a time hear the word of the Lord, lay your sins to heart, and repent and pray that your sins may be forgiven you. "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. Call upon me saith the Lord, and I will answer and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

How many doubting christians are there among us, suspended between hopes and fears with regard to their immortal interest. Let all such be more diligent, faithful and fervent in prayer, and if you are the children of grace, you shall surely be comforted, "Ye shall seek me and find me, saith the Lord, when you search for me with all your heart. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and thou shalt glorify me."

Finally, all who have any regard for the prosperity of Zion,

who desire a revival of practical and experimental religion in this day of small things, let them be exhorted to be earnest and abundant in prayer to God, with whom the residue of the spirit is. Be assured if ever there be a revival of vital piety, it will be ushered in by an outpouring of a spirit of prayer and supplication. "Therefore, for Zion's sake, let us not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, let us not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." And may our hearts ever be directed into the love of God and the patient waiting of Christ Jesus.

S E R M O N I I I.

The Duty of Secret Prayer.

Matt. vi. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

WHEN Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, entered upon his public ministry, the Scribes and Pharisees were the most distinguished characters in the Jewish church. They were considered by the mass of the people as persons of extraordinary piety and goodness. They were admired for the orthodoxy of their principles, the strictness of their morals, and the zeal and fervency of their devotions. But all that for which men highly esteemed them was an abomination in the sight of an heart searching God. Thus our Lord views them in these very points for which they were held in admiration, and on which their reputation was established. He assures his hearers "That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness

"of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." In the preceding chapter he exposes and refutes both their doctrines and morals, clearly pointing out the dangerous fallacy of the one and the base hypocrisy of the other.

In this he considers their conduct and the ostentatious ends they acted from, in religious duties. When they gave alms, it was not from love to God, or charity to the poor, but merely to be seen and catch the empty applause of men. When they prayed it was for the same purpose; they stood in the Synagogues or in the corners of the streets, but all was for mere show and to obtain a name as persons of high distinction in religion. Christ declares his abhorrence of all such abominations and commands his disciples to perform their alms without ostentation, and their secret prayers in a private manner. It is secret personal prayer made publicly before spectators, that our Lord here condemns in these Pharisees, and enjoins both the duty and the mode of performing the same in the words of our text; "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. How beautiful is this divine direction, it charms the pious heart, and gives pleasure to the soul of sincerity.

Prayer may be contemplated as of two kinds, public or social, and personal or secret. The former will be attended to in its proper place, the latter is to be the subject of our present consideration.

Personal or secret prayer is that wherein none joins or is present. The person is alone by himself, separated from the view and society of others. None is present but the omniscient, and omnipresent God to whom he offers his addresses. He

represents what are his personal feelings, views, wants and desires. And this is the kind of prayer taught us in our text. In this duty we are to be as secret and as much unobserved as may be. By closet and shutting our door, is evidently intended any place of privacy or retirement, whether it be the house, chamber or barn, the field or woods. The direction to us is to be alone. To affect observation in this service is sinful and odious in the sight of God, and an evidence of gross hypocrisy. This was the condemnation of the Pharisees, and the commandment of our Lord is to his disciples, "Be not ye as the hypocrites."

This discourse of Christ about prayer, plainly implies that it is the indispensable duty of all to pray to God, and that it is particularly incumbent upon every one to pray by himself. The Pharisees are no where blamed for praying, but for their ostentation or affecting observation in their personal devotions. When the manner of performing a duty is directed and enjoined, surely the duty itself is commanded.

Prayer in general whether private or public is a most solemn act of adoration, in which we represent to God our absolute dependence upon him, a sense of our wants and necessities, a belief of his all-sufficiency to supply them, and wherein we humbly implore him for this purpose. In some of these particulars, prayer differs from praise which is an act of adoration also. Praise is an act of adoration in which we ascribe to God, his names, titles, attributes and works, and all his glory; but prayer is a representation of our wants before God, and offering up in faith the desires of our souls for a supply of the same.

The sense and feeling of our wants at best is but very weak and imperfect, both in regard to the things we need and the

greatness of our necessity. Our real conceptions of these matters, alas ! how feeble in comparison of what they ought to be ! but God perfectly understands and knows what is most proper and expedient to be bestowed upon us. And blessed be his name, he confers not according to our contracted supplications but he gives liberally and upbraids not.

We shall here make a few observations.

First, to impress upon every conscience, the importance of prayer, keeping in view the effect it has upon this secret duty.

Secondly, place before you, from reason and revelation, the ~~in~~refragable obligation every person is under to perform secret prayer, or to pray by and for himself.

First, to impress upon the conscience, the necessity of this duty. Is it not a thing exceedingly rational, fit and suitable, arising from the relation of creatures to their God ? Whether we consider our own state and condition, or the character of our Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, nothing can be brought into view of superior suitableness and propriety.

Our own state and condition manifests the sinews with such a glare of light, that to neglect it, exhibits an awfully wicked spirit and a reprobate temper.

First, are we not poor, indigent and dependent creatures ? Have we any fund in our nature either of subsistence or happiness ? Are we not in ourselves absolute weakness and insufficiency ? Is it not then meet, that we should acknowledge truth that things are with us as they really stand ? Is not God in reason the first and most proper being to whom it becomes us to make such an acknowledgement ? It is only by prayer, by an humble declaration of our true state, and a representation

of our dependent circumstances, with all our wants and deplorable necessities we can open the same to the only fountain of relief. Wherefore to restrain prayer is to spurn at the acknowledgment of our being indigent, desolate and dependent creatures. It is despising a confession of facts required by infinite authority, and is not only unbecoming, but profane and very absurd.

Secondly, prayer is the duty of every individual, originating from the nature and character of God. Let reason answer this question, "Is it not in God, we live, move and have our being?" Can any creature breathe, exert a single movement, supply his wants, or furnish himself a support, comfort and happiness. God is the fountain, from whence every good flows, acknowledged or not. It is rational then, that a sufficiency in this source for a supply of the wants of all creation should be confessed, which is the great employment of prayer.

If there be two things certain, our dependence upon God, and his sufficiency to answer all our sensibilities, does not reason dictate the suitable statement of this whole situation before him? This only can be done by a praying representation. God knows whether there is a feeling of these things previous to the acknowledgment, but even the absence of it, cannot take away the propriety and decency of such a confession. If we have any respect to God, we shall from the nature and manner of its operation, adore him by prayer, and wish for grace, support, peace, consolation and felicity from him.

Thirdly, prayer disposes and prepares the heart for the reception of mercies. We are often indisposed and unprepared for blessings. If in this temper, they could be conferred, how could they be accepted, but with all the indecency of an unfeeling and ungrateful heart? A great cause of persons not making proper returns for favours is, they were neither disposed or

prepared by a sensibility of their state or wants to receive them. Hence innumerable mercies of God are lost upon us, because of the absence of a prepared heart.

This preparation of heart originates from a sense of our dependence, our wants and necessities. Mercies bestowed in consequence of these impressions are entertained with propriety and gratitude, and the soul exhorts the glory of God. The frame of mind forms the soul to be a recipient of favours designed. It reduces the person to the state and circumstances in which he ought to be. He feels as he ought ; feels his unworthiness ; and that it would be just in God to frown on his requests and spurn him from his presence.

Thus prayer fits the heart for the receipt of mercies, quickens and revives it, and prepares for their reception. It tends to our comfort and refreshment, to direct our hearts and eyes to God, and in this way to bring in a world of hope and confidence to the soul.—I proceed,—

Secondly, to place before you, the great design of our Saviour's instruction, the irrefragable obligation every person is under to perform secret prayer, or to pray for and by himself.

Will any suppose themselves acquitted from this obligation by being present in the prayers of the family or church. They may ignorantly impose on themselves, that nothing more in the way of prayer is requisite. But let them remember our Lord here requires something different, and that there is such an emphasis laid upon it that it would seem to exalt it in some respects above all the variations of social and public prayer. Let every thing be done in order. The one is to be done, and the other not left undone. Family, social and congregational prayer is to be performed, but private and personal prayer is

perhaps of greater consequence. One thing is certain, in neglect of the latter, the former will be of no avail. To show that personal prayer is of essential consequence to our salvation, let the following things be observed.

First, personal religion is of the highest concern to every individual. The first attention of each one ought to be about and for himself. He ought to be concerned for his children, family and society, to seek and pray for their peace, prosperity, and salvation. Yet in religion every one must attend to his own case, whether he is parent or child, master or servant, or whatever distinction may be attributed to his individual character, this is a first thing obligatory upon him, to take care of his own soul. Would every individual attend to his own salvation, the whole world would be happy. If the soul of any other were more precious and important than a persons own, this might change the complexion of his anxiety; but there is no such thing in nature, reason or revelation. Although God hath ordained the salvation of others every man's concern, yet he hath enjoined upon each, that his own soul should require his primary attention. If he loses that, a world, and a thousand worlds cannot make compensation. Let every one remember the care of his own soul is committed to him.

Now if a man's concern with God and religion be in the first place of personal moment, it must surely follow, that personal religion is of the highest consequence. Hence secret prayer as an essential branch of piety must be attended to by every individual. Whatever may be his devotion in the prayers of the family, church or society, it cannot plead an apology for the neglect of this duty. An attention to this secret duty prepares him for this public service. And if this be disregarded, all his public exhibitions of adoration, however splendid and showy in the eyes of men, will be nothing before God.

Secondly, all the reasons which can be adduced for public and social worship, apply with irresistible force, to inculcate the duty of secret prayer. Are we to pray with and for others, absurdity itself cannot say, we are not to pray for ourselves. The reasonableness of the duty of prayer arises from the nature and state of man; from his necessities wants and dependence. Is there any fountain in ourselves, either of being, comfort, support or felicity? All nature arises, and the decision is, there is *none*. This shows it to be a most meet and rational procedure, that we should, by prayer and supplication make application to God, who is the only source from which supplies can be had. Is every individual wanting, needy and dependent, hence it is evident to demonstration, that every individual ought to pray. Young and old, male and female, bond and free, from the highest to the lowest ranks of mankind, all are under this indispensable obligation.

Thirdly, every man's case in innumerable instances is peculiar. There may be a similitude in the cases of others, to our own, yet it can hardly be found that the circumstances of even any two persons can for any time continue the same. Every person has a peculiarity of difficulties, temptations, doubts and distresses, which can be expressed to no one but God. They ought to be opened to none other. Therefore it is the duty of every person to pray secretly and by himself.

Fourthly. Secret prayer is especially a persons own act, and is more expressive of duty and obedience in some respects, than family, social or public prayer. When we unite with others, whether we lead or follow, we ought to make the duty our own. We may afford our presence in social adorations, and not a single exercise of prayer in our hearts. Social prayers become our own, when the feelings of our souls go forth with the offered petitions.

But secret and personal prayer is more in the nature of it our own act. The conceptions, words, sentiments and operations of our minds are in an unrestrained manner our own. Therefore this kind of prayer manifests a distinguishing respect and obedience to God. Persons may and do attend public worship in the church from a thousand sinister motives ; from political considerations, from a love of decency and applause, from education, from fear of singularity, disreputation, &c. But none of these reasons can influence in the present case. It cannot be performed for the sake of fashion or show, but from a feeling of duty. If this be our constant practice some higher motive must sway the mind than those mentioned. And thus it is a greater proof of obedience and regard to the commandments of Christ. The stated conscientious practice of this duty, either shows a personal love to God supremely or a fear and tenderness of heart, which prohibits disobedience. The latter may not be deemed perhaps a motive of the most exalted kind, yet however this may be, it manifests a state and temper of mind vastly superior to that, by which a person casts off fear and restrains prayer before God. The conclusion in the latter case is, the person is given over of God, and is preparing for swift destruction.

Fifthly, a species of hypocrisy will attend us in all our services in this imperfect and corrupted state, but peradventure less hypocrisy can enter into this duty than others. He must be a hypocrite of an enormous size, who can be a hypocrite alone when there is no motive or inducement to it, none to applaud, or praise his devotions : none but God is present, and all know that sincerity is with him the only acceptable offering.—In private the soul as it were undresses, lays aside all the pomp of public homage, and unreservedly pours out his whole heart, in all its wants, distresses, and desires. It is here freed from the

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restraint of the public eye, and all critical observation. Here he enjoys perfect liberty to unbosom and unburden himself. He may here pray and pause, meditate a while, and pray again. Secret prayer is not only a duty, but it is a high and eminent privilege. How precious is it to retire from every eye, how sweet to tell his whole heart, and to converse with God.—The gospel minister, who has prayed a whole day, and led the devotions of his congregation, twenty minutes retirement has often given him more spiritual pleasure, joy and delight than all his public performances. In the former he has done his duty, the imperfections, hypocrisy and meanness of which causes him to weep in secret, but in private converse with God, where he can open his whole soul, and spread all that is in it before heaven, here is pleasure and consolation that the world cannot know. And this which is the experience of Godly ministers, it may often be the case with pious christians. You have prayed, you have heard, your souls have been instructed and refreshed by the ordinances of the church, but have you not felt more extatic pleasure in a few moments retirement than in all these public offices. Wherefore secret prayer and holy meditation is a duty of the highest importance, for all who wish for holiness and happiness.

Having attended to this matter on common and rational considerations, let us review what the scriptures declare both in precept and example. Our Lord's injunction in the text is nothing more than a correction of foolish ostentation, and a reduction of this duty to its proper place in the system of religion. Secret prayer was not a new institution, but in force from the nature of things, and by revelation from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and its obligation must continue with the existence of the world. Let us cast our minds to the ancient scriptures on this head, and we will find it neither a novel nor merely a christian doctrine. It was always a duty, and always in practice by the people of God. Did not Abra-

ham's servant pray alone, when he came to the place where he was to find a wife for his master's son? Did not Isaac go out to pray and meditate in the field? Did not Jacob weep and make supplication in solitude, on his way to Bethel? Time would fail me to mention Moses, Aaron, Samuel, Noah, Daniel and Job, who in secret were powerful intercessors with God. Hannah prayed alone at the time of offering incense. David arose at midnight to perform this secret service. Cornelius was a devout person and a man of prayer. Peter to be in private went up to the house top to pray. But of all the instances of secret prayer our Lord's example, as in all other things shines forth with brilliant lustre. We read of his going to a mountain, to the wilderness, to a garden and other private places to pray and converse with his Father. He rose before day, retired at night for this purpose. He was fervent in his devotions, and sometimes offered up his supplications with strong cries and tears. All pious people, in all ages, have made conscience of this duty. To this we have a beautiful allusion in the revelation, of an Angel, "Standing at the altar of incense before the throne that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints." If we respect the commandments of God, the conduct of the wise and good, throughout all ages, it must be allowed that secret prayer is an indispensable duty, and the neglect of it involves the highest degree of criminality.

A word or two must close the subject.

All will acknowledge every thing said upon this obvious duty to be just, rational, scriptural and proper. Are there any who neglect it, their misconduct cannot be proved by men, but all is open to the all seeing God. Such negligence is reproached by the brutal creation. The most stupid animals feel their wants and their dependence upon the hand of their supplier. "The Ox knows his owner and the Ass his master's

"crib," but dreadful is the thought, God's people, neither consider, pray, nor are they thankful. Those who have lived a multitude of years in the non-performance of this duty, it is scarcely worth while to address them ; but this exhortation shall be particularly directed to the children and youth of this flock. I am, my precious young friends, going off the stage of life, and you are coming on to take the place of your Fathers in Church and State ; remember you are God's and absolutely dependent upon him. In him you live, move and have your being. You are not your own, you are God's by creation, Christ's by baptism, and you belong to the Holy Trinity for your preservation. God bears you on his hand, if he withdraws it for a moment, you sink and perish forever. Have you ever had a feeling sentiment of your dependence ? If you have Godly parents, they have taught you to pray ; they have prayed with you alone, and put praying words into your tender mouths. My counsel is when you pray, to consider what the words import and mean. What do you ask, when you pray that God would preserve and bless you ? Does it not import that you are poor helpless and needy creatures, and that God, alone is the only source of supplies ? When you ask the forgiveness of your sins. This implies a knowledge and sensibility of your guilt, that you deserve to be rejected of him forever. When you cry for the sanctification of your natures, you must be sensible this is a blessing which God only can bestow.

My dear youth, my hope, the hope of your parents and the hope of the world, allow me to entreat you to pray. The task is not hard. When you awake in the morning, let your thoughts be turned to God in praise and gratitude for his watchful care of your preservation in your lumbering and unguarded hours. Without his guardian protection, sleep would have been your death, and your beds your grave. In the evening, you should recollect the mercies of heaven through the day, and by prayer and gratitude offer up your evening

~~serious~~. I think I could ~~pass behind~~ the curtain with more pleasure, if I left my dear people and their children all at prayer. Should I arrive at Heaven to make the report, that all my congregation, parents and children were a praying people, the celestial arches would ring with songs of praise.

S E R M O N IV.

The Duty of Family Prayer.

Joshua xxiv. 15. *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

RELIGION in all its doctrines, commandments and duties, is a most reasonable thing. Nothing is required of mankind, but what right reason supports. Family worship is that branch of our holy religion to which your serious attention with all friendliness and tenderness is at present invited. If this can be a duty demonstrated from the reason of things, and the state of society, and the same confirmed by the practice of pious people, and all revelation pours in its influence, for its corroboration, then I trust, christians will no longer treat it with neglect. We enter upon this duty, with high expectation, and propose nothing less, than to collect all reason and revelation in its favour.

Consider the determination of Joshua in our text. He was the greatest character in military, civil and religious respects of that age. He was the immediate successor of Moses, exalted

above all the children of men, to converse with God face to face, as a friend. This Joshua commanded three million of the best people, that ever constituted the Israelitish nation, which were dignified with the title of being the peculiar people of God. Was this extraordinary man, pre-eminent in all his relations? He stands thus distinguished in religion. And among all the duties of piety, his family service shines with a brilliant lustre. He comes forth before the whole nation, which he had long directed, instructed, comforted and led to the possession of the promised land, with this divine resolution. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." O that the great men of the earth could be induced to imitate this great example.

This chapter is the conclusion of the life and administration of Joshua. He recapitulates to them in brief narration, the wonders God had performed for them and their fathers. He leaves his last charge with them, to serve the Lord: Religion he resigns to their choice. All religion must be a free and voluntary election. He states to them his own purpose in the words of our text, both with respect to his personal and family Godliness.

We shall consider,

First, the duty of family prayer.

Secondly, show the consequences arising from the performance of this service, and the neglect of it. As to the

First, in such an assembly as this, there can be no necessity of describing what a family is, or whose business it is to lead in the worship of it. Every one knows that the head of the family or some person deputed by him, is to be the mouth in this service.

First, if families are societies dependent upon God, and originating from his institution in the nature of things, and enjoy opportunities and advantages to unite in social adoration, then family worship is a duty of divine ordination. That families are societies arising from the nature of things, and from the superintending providence of heaven, none can deny ; then the heads of those families have great authority and advantages, each one has power to restrain and direct all under his roof ; to inflict penalties upon children and servants, who refuse his authority, and to eject the refractory from his household. He possesses an absolute interest in the affections of his family ; hence he enjoys the most perfect advantage, to engage them willingly and freely in this pleasing duty. A duty happy to him and a blessing to all in his house. Blessed is the house where God is acknowledged and dwells.

It will be granted by all who profess the christian name, that all the gifts of God and all talents received from him, ought to be improved in obedience to his will ; but are not the advantages and opportunities of divine homage in a family capacity, distinguishing talents. I commit this argument to the head of every family. You love your dear families and wish their prosperity ; O ! that God would persuade you to the pleasure of praying with them.

Secondly, all who have fit opportunities for the worship of God, ought carefully to improve the same. Families have these opportunities in perfection. Hear the word of God in the matter. " I will that men pray every where, lifting up " holy hands without wrath and doubting. Continue in prayer " and watch in the same, with thanksgiving, and whatever ye " do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, " giving thanks unto God and the Father by him ; continue " instant in prayer, praying always with all prayer and sup-

"plication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints ; pray without ceasing, in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." To this tide of revelation, many streams will be added in the sequel which I hope will bear down all opposition to this doctrine.

If it be the duty of christians to pray every where proper and convenient, to continue in prayer, be instant therein, and to pray always with all prayer, and that without ceasing, these things clearly show, that at all times we should possess a praying frame of heart, and be ready on all fit occasions to perform devotional service. Then it evidently follows that they ought to worship God in their families.

Thirdly, families are the subjects of many mercies, guilty of many sins, and have innumerable wants ; hence it is obligatory upon them to acknowledge the favours of heaven in the most grateful praises, mourn over and confess their sins, and in all humility and earnestness implore the supply of their necessities. Reason and the common feelings of mankind dictate these matters. And all heads of families who live under the light of divine revelation, under proper gospel instruction, and yet habitually neglect this important branch of religion, they live under the condemnation of their own judgments, and the frequent reproaches of their consciences. Well might God by the Prophet Isaiah, exclaim against a wicked and prayerless people saying, "Hear, O ! Heavens, and give ear, O ! Earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his owner and the Ass his masters Crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider."

Fourthly, heads of families are commanded to teach their

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children to pray, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to instruct them in the fear of God and to train them up in the way wherein they should go. Therefore they must surely pray with and for them. It is the duty of families to look to Heaven, that all the good things of providence may be sanctified to them, and prayer is the special appointment of heaven for this purpose. Husbands and wives are enjoined to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life, "That their prayers may not be hindered." This fully proves that they are to pray together. No man omits this duty for conscience sake.

The scripture saints were shining examples of this devotional service both in the Old Testament and in the New. We read that Abraham, the father of the faithful, built an Altar at Shechem, and when he removed to Bethel, he built another there, and called upon the name of the Lord. And this was done with his family. He there worshipped God with his household. His pious care of the religious interests of his family is spoken of in the highest terms of recommendation. "I know him, saith the Lord, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." What is it to keep the way of the Lord? It is walking with him in the practice of every duty. For families to keep his ways, must intend the faithful maintenance of religion in them and this cannot be done, without family devotion and prayer. Isaac and Jacob, had their respective altars, at which they worshipped with their families.—Joshua in our text, is a distinguishing example, whose resolution was, that tho' all Israel should depart from the adoration of God, yet he and his house would serve the Lord.—David is a remarkable instance to our purpose; he had brought the Ark to its place, and spent the day in public homage, then he returned home, "To bless his household." This can admit of no other construction, only to pray and worship with his family.

—Queen Esther and her maidens, “Fasted and prayed together.”—Job continually offered up sacrifices with, or according to the number of his children.—Daniel went into his house, “And kneeled upon his knees three times a day and “prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he did aforetime.”—Cornelius feared the Lord with all his house, & he prayed in the same.—But above all examples to enforce this duty, the conduct of our precious Saviour, holds a pre eminent rank. His disciples were his family, and we often find him praying with them.

Now a duty thus enjoined by reason and revelation, and by the examples of Godly men, cannot be neglected, but at the certain displeasure of the most High. “God will pour out “his fury upon the families, that call not on his name.” Let prayerless families hear this threatening, tremble, repent and reform.

I proceed—

Secondly, to direct your attention to the consequences of performing or neglecting this service. The blessed consequences and great benefits flowing from the sincere and conscientious performance of this family service, can now only be hinted at, and the enlargement left to the contemplations of your own minds. It is beneficial in every point of view. It tends to promote the temporal interest of families, to restrain from vice and extravagance, to encourage industry, frugality, sobriety, and to excite integrity prudence and good order.—It promotes the moral virtues, affection between parents and children, prevents innumerable broils and much unhappiness, it calms the tumultuous passions, creates composure of mind, and sheds abroad through the house, peace, harmony and tranquility

It will strengthen in restraining temptations to dishonesty,

idleness and excess, will encrease humanity, tenderness, charity and every virtue. With respect to all the parts of a family the advantages of social worship are exceeding great, to husbands, wives, children and other domestics. Where is no fear of God, there can be no happiness.

A special benefit of family prayer, is its tendency to revive and promote vital and practical religion. Families are the fountains of all other societies, of congregations, towns and nations. Of what infinite importance is it then to the interests of piety in the world, that religion should be cultivated and practised in them? If neglected here, it must vanish from the earth. Therefore, for God's sake, for the sake of religion, for the sake of the happiness of mankind, as we value the salvation of our families and our own souls, let us attend to the morning and evening sacrifice, to the daily offering of prayer and thanksgiving.

An eminent benefit of this domestic worship, is its tendency to form our families for the better understanding, and improving the public or congregational exercises of religion. They will hereby be led to reverence and sanctify the sabbath, to conduct with decency and gravity in the house of God, to give a serious attention to the preaching of the word, and thus divine service is likely to become useful to them. It has been often remarked that the children of praying families behave better in church than others. It is well observed by a certain author, "That a holy well governed family, is a preparative for a holy and well governed church." Family worship, is like the prophet's "Casting salt into the fountain," it sweetens all the streams, and renders them salutary and useful.

A composed attention to daily prayer, will greatly tend to impress a sense of God and divine things upon the soul, to raise in the mind high and exalted thoughts of the glorious perfec-

tions and excellencies of the great Supreme, and to have an influence upon the whole of our daily walk and conversation. When we begin the day with God, there is ground to hope we will "Be in his fear all the day long." Thus I have briefly stated, before you, some of the benefits flowing from the Godly practice of family worship. It is beneficial for our temporal and spiritual interest, for *this world* and the next, for time and eternity. It is profitable to our own souls, to the souls of our families, and the church of Christ. Now a duty of such high consequence must surely be incumbent upon all governors of households.

But let us also consider for a moment, the unhappy consequences of neglecting this divine service.

They are surely without the special favour of God in this life. They can hope for no blessings from heaven, seeing they desire them not. Their state may be declared in the language of Bildad the Shuhite, "Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God."—If God be not worshipped in a house, there is danger of its becoming the residence of Satan. Vice and iniquity, security and sin will probably prevail in it. The common mercies they enjoy, frequently prove a snare, and are often given them in a way of judgment, and contribute to the hardening of their hearts, and the blinding their eyes.—Children are trained up without religious instruction, without the knowledge, reverence and fear of God.

What will be the deplorable condition of such families, when they shall have entered into eternity, passed trial before the grand tribunal, and their eternal destiny irreversably fixed? Will not prayerless parents curse the day they were constituted heads of households? Will not children curse the parents who had been

the instruments of their existence? Thus they shall sink down under the pressure of Almighty wrath, dwell in devouring flames, blaspheming God and cursing one another throughout the unwasting ages of eternity. Hear this all ye neglecters of God and your duty. When his wrath is kindled but a little, ye shall perish from the way. What will you do when his fury shall be poured out upon you to the uttermost? At his presence the hills fall down, and before him the rocks are melted away. Who then can sustain the storms of his wrath? "I will cut off them that turned from the Lord, and those that have not sought the Lord, nor enquired after him. The wicked say, what is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him. Thou hast not called upon me, O! Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O! Israel, but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities."

Let us relinquish the gloomy ideas respecting the unhappy houses where the voice of prayer is not heard. And O! that all heads of families would immediately adopt the resolution of the Psalmist and say, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O! Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer to thee, and will look up." Or the determination of Joshua, that aged general, who, if his whole host should depart, would stand singular and alone for God; "But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

Two addresses to two different heads of families shall close this discourse.

First, to those who practise this duty. Those of you who are conscientious and faithful in this precious service, I cordially congratulate you, that God has disposed your hearts to a due attention to the same. Praise the Lord for all his favours

and grace. Every blessing and every good and perfect gift comes down from above, therefore let your hearts be filled with gratitude to God who hath thus formed your judgements and disposed your minds to this exalted and holy duty.—Plead earnestly for an increase of grace to be more fervent and diligent. Think not you have performed the whole service, when you have bowed the knee, and pronounced the round of praying words, but be careful that your addresses arise from a sensibility of heart and from a feeling of soul. If your family devotions are a dull formality, what can be expected from the rest? They kneel, they hear, they rise, and are still the same. Not a devout sentiment of prayer or thankfulness, confession of sin or praise have been awakened in their minds. Why? Because no such thing was in your own. If you would have your families devout, be devout yourselves. If you wish them to feel love, humiliation, and gratitude, feel these graces in your own souls. A feeling heart will cause feeling lips, these will create a devotional spirit all around. When you have performed your best prayers, beware of a dependence on them. Guard against selfrighteousness. Substitute them not in the room of Christ. But when you have done your best, still feel and acknowledge yourselves unprofitable servants.—“The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober and “and watch unto prayer.”—Let not your prayers be long and tedious, but weighty, feeling and solemn. Mumble not over your family prayers in a low and indistinct voice, like a popish *pater noster*, but consider yourselves leading the devotion of others, and raise your voices to a decent pitch that all may hear. Remember our Lord’s declaration, “Where two or “three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the “midst of them, to bless them.”

A second address must be directed to those heads of families who have hitherto omitted this duty. This shall be short. Vain are the words of man. They are as straws cast against a

brazen wall, which can be of no avail unless accompanied by the Almighty power of God. "A Paul may plant and an Apollos water, but it is God who must give the increase." My dear fellow mortals, I know you cannot deny the obligation of the duty, you cannot by all the exertion of genius offer any excuse approbated by your own minds and satisfying to your own consciences. The advantages of this homage, and the dangers of neglecting it have been stated before you ; I shall bring forward no more encouragements, nor terrors upon the subject. The whole matter is left with God and your own souls, the blood of which I pray may not be found in my skirts. Yet I cannot refrain from recommending to your serious consideration our text with its connection, "If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, after all the reasons and inducements laid before you, chuse this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Bear in mind the words of the Prophet. "If God be God, follow him, but if Baal be God then follow him."

SERMON V.

The Great Importance of Family Government.

Sam. iii. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

WERE I asked, what is the greatest blessing or the greatest curse to mankind? My answer would be, the proper or improper government of families. Where families are wisely and skillfully governed, it is a superior blessing to the world. It causes heavenly dews to descend like rain upon the mown grass. Celestial favours are showered down upon governors and governed; the love and promises of God will dwell in that house. And it is blessed individuals, that form a blessed church, town or common wealth. As the well government of families tends to the prosperity and happiness of the world, so the reverse is the most deadly curse. A host of the evils which infest the human race derive their origin from the derangement, ill-government and mismanagement, of families.

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These become schools of Satan, where ignorance, brutishness, sensuality and every vice prevail. Here envy, strife, contention, pride, covetousness, revenge, with all the abominations, which have contaminated human nature, continually reside. From the wickedness of families, the wickedness of society both in church and state proceeds. How important and necessary a work is it, to cast salt into these corrupted fountains? If these sources of evil could be purified, and the viciousness of families cured, it would prevent many of the calamities of the earth. Multitudes of the judgments which fall upon the world are caused by the ill-government of households. Of which we have an awful instance in the melancholy story before us.

Eli seems upon the whole to have been a man of some degree of piety, but was grossly deficient and sinful in one point, to wit. in the government of his family. And his evil conduct here, brought the judgement of God upon himself and his posterity. Hence the Lord appears in vision to young Samuel, and makes known to him the things that were quickly to come to pass, respecting Israel in general and the family of Eli in particular. "Behold, saith the Lord, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle." This tremendous judgement we have upon record in the next chapter, when the army of Israel was defeated by the Philistines, and the Ark of God taken. But all the remaining part of the vision is against Eli and his house. From this our text is taken. "For I have told him, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." This is the denunciation of heaven against this wicked and ungoverned family. The Lord had heretofore informed him by a prophet, and pre-admonished him of the privileges, favours and honors which he enjoyed, of the base conduct of his children, his indulgence and allowance

of them in their iniquitous courses, and that the just punishment of divine vengeance should be inflicted upon him and them. He was not punished without due warning, and he had time given for repentance and reformation. God had said to him by the prophet. "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at my offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honorest thy sons above me. Behold the day is come that I will cut off thy arm and the arm of thy fathers house, and there shall not be an old man in thy house forever, and the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from my altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thy heart, and all the increase of thy house shall die in the flower of their age." Thus he was previously and fully acquainted with his sins for which he was to suffer. He knew that he had not governed his family, according to reason, nor according to the power in his hands, nor agreeably to the commandments of God. Therefore it was determined, that he should be made a public example to all future generations, that rulers of families might fear and tremble, and avoid his unhappy conduct.

But here enquiry may arise, did not Eli govern his family? Did he not reprove his sons for their ill behaviour? And what more could be required? It is true he rebuked his sons, but it was in a manner altogether unbecoming a parent vested with his authority. He treated his wicked children, as many careless heads of families in our day treat theirs. Perhaps they say to their children guilty of the blackest crime, "These things that ye do, my children are not right, they are not of good report therefore be advised to refrain." What sort of reproofs did Eli administer, when his sons had been guilty of such atrocious abominations, that decency prohibits the repetition. He spoke in soft and timid language "Why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil doings by all the people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report, that I hear; ye make the Lord's

"people to transgress." Observe the tenderness and lenity of every word, as tho' he feared and revered his children, rather than they him. Some may be ready to say, what could he have done more? They were arrived to the age of men, and past that correction which might be proper for children. The answer in this case shall be a reference to God himself. He is an infinitely fit and wise judge, and his judgment was quite otherwise. It appears exceedingly probable, from Eli's temper and character, that when they were children, he was sinfully careless and indulgent, and did not even then instruct, correct and govern them as he ought. But God is not displeased, because he reprov'd them, but because he did not rebuke them sharply, and exert his authority in restraining or punishing them according to their deserts. "His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." It is more than probable had they been ruled by a proper discipline, when young, and not been allowed in an excessive license or left to their own heads, when they became men, they would not have acted the flagitious part they did. Attend to the declarations of heaven, God will pour out his judgments, because they were not now restrained, even in their state of manhood. Eli had it in his power as a father, as an ecclesiastical and civil officer, if he could not reclaim them, to have deposed them from the priesthood, banished them from his family, or to have executed upon them the laws of the land; to have brought them before the elders of the city, and there accused them of their crimes, disobedience and rebellion, and they would have been stoned to death, and thus he would have averted evil from his house, and the blessing of God would still have attended him and his family, and it might have suspended the awful judgments which fell on the nation. But he granted them all indulgence in their childhood, and restrained them not when they grew up, therefore for this iniquity will the Lord "Judge his house forever." O! how dreadful a curse is this, to be inflicted, not

only upon himself, but likewise upon his unhappy posterity continually? Should not this alarm the attention of all heads of families, lest being defective in point of government, we should procure the angry resentments of heaven, not merely to ourselves, but also to our miserable offspring. This was evidently Eli's unhappy case, that God was incensed against him for not governing his house with that holy discipline which was his duty. This easy man when his children offended, seems to have taken no notice thereof; when their heinous conduct was such, that they ought to have been expelled from his family or put to death, all he said to these miscreants, who were the vilest of the vile, was, "Nay, my sons, this is no good report that I hear." And perhaps, he would not have said so much as this, only that the people kept dunning in his ears the enormous wickedness of his sons. Wherefore, my brethren, let us all be solemnly exhorted from this melancholy example to govern our households according to reason and the word of God.

In order to the well governing of any family, three things appear to be absolutely necessary; authority, wisdom and religion. Those who have entered into the office of governors of families, whether they have undertaken it from rational or passionate motives, their duty now, is to seek after and cultivate those qualifications, which may enable them to fill their office with propriety and usefulness.

First, those who are governors, let them maintain a just, tender and dignified authority in their houses. This was Eli's sin, he had a family, but no authority therein. Where there is a destitution of this, you will be lightly esteemed by those whom you ought to rule. When your authority is lost, you possess no longer the power of government. If you desire the smiles and blessings of heaven upon yourselves and families, endeavour to keep, maintain and support a proper authori-

ty in them. Let your household know your authority is not an assumed power, but that it arises from the nature and relation of things, that it is an ordinance of God, and he is the God of order and not of confusion, and therefore it is necessary, that order and decency should be preserved in the whole house, and that every one should know his place and cheerfully perform his duty. At fit seasons play and recreation is as necessary for children, as care, industry, sobriety and attention in more advanced life. The superintendence of the parent is only to see that propriety be respected in all these matters. When it is expedient to manifest your authority to your children and other domestics, let them know as far as you are capable, that you are influenced by reason, and from obedience to God. Nothing can better support your authority than a due observance of this rule. The more carefully you are governed by reason and the fear of God yourselves, the greater will be your influence over those entrusted to your inspection. Guard against that too general weakness of our nature, a bursting forth of intemperate passions, and indiscreet words before your children. Nothing has a greater tendency to depreciate our authority than this. Children begin to reason, sooner than we are often apt to imagine, and they being holding us transgressing reason by foolish passion, it not only teaches them to be passionate and irrational, but too often brings upon ourselves a reduction of our power. And it is a humiliating circumstance to a parent, when he must ask pardon of his child. This does not appear to be the feeble spirited Eli's crime; and he was not a man destitute of passions, for the last exertion of them has always been produced as the highest symptom of his religion, that when he heard of the capture of the Ark of God, his passions of a pious complexion arose so high, that he fainted, fell backward from his seat, and the fall ended his days.—Wherefore watch over your passions. They are like the waves of the sea, useful in the soul, but too

often become like boisterous winds, that overwhelm it in destruction. Wherefore a rational and moderate course in this business lies between a haughty rigour, a supercilious frown, and a domineering aspect on the one hand, and angry heats, fond indulgences, and easy weakness on the other. I readily grant it is difficult for our corrupt natures to maintain at all times that dignified equanimity of soul, which reason, common sense and the holy scriptures direct, but this is what we always ought to be aiming at, praying for, and making our polar star.

Secondly, would we wish for orderly and well-governed families, wisdom is of leading importance. Wisdom is of the utmost moment in all things to direct. Hence we should labour for prudence and skillfulness in this matter. The person who undertakes to be the head of a family, undertakes to govern the same. In order wisely to perform our duty herein we ought to acquaint ourselves with the different tempers and dispositions of those who are under our care, not to treat every one just in the same way, but as prudence and discretion may direct. Some are more intelligent, and some more dull, some more forward and impertinent, some backward and bashful; some of tender, and others of stubborn dispositions. Each one in various respects requires a different treatment. Some are best managed by love, and gentleness, while others have need of sharpness and severity. — We must also observe a due distinction between different faults, and proportion our rebukes and reprehensions to the same; and not act according to the custom of too many, be rigidly severe for a small offence, and scarcely take notice of one which is much greater. It is an affecting maxim, “That our minds, spirits and tempers, are not always at our right hand.” There is a family justice which ought to be maintained, as well as public justice in the common wealth. And when an equity of dispensation in censures is not kept up, family government suffers injury and is

endangered. Let us be careful that we show ourselves wise parents, and that love holds the dominion in all our exercises of government. Where our families see that their good is our habitual end, they will be the more readily induced to yield a ready obedience. If we would have others reverence propriety and good order, let us be careful to respect them ourselves. Is he fit to restrain others from passion, drunkenness, and unseemly conduct, who cannot restrain himself? Will not inferiors despise reproof for crimes, of which, they see the superiors notoriously guilty?

Thirdly, would you maintain a right and christian Government in your houses, religion is an essential requisite. Mens actions generally follow the prevailing bent of their dispositions. If we are governed by true piety ourselves, it will have a mighty influence upon the good order of those under our inspection. Let our own souls be in subjection to God and Jesus Christ, and show a more steady obedience to the divine precepts, than we can expect any should yield to ours. If we venture to disobey Jehovah why should others fear to disobey us? Are we more capable of punishing misconduct, or bountifully rewarding obedience than the most High? Take heed then that the honor and authority of God be supported in your families, and be more tender in your rebukes for faults against yourselves, than those which are against the Majesty of Heaven and Earth. This was the iniquity of Eli, that his children greatly dishonored God, and he restrained them not. Let us be earnest for the salvation of the immortal souls of our families, and be more careful to provide for them, an interest in heaven, than an inheritance upon earth. Let us not only pray with and exhort them, but also teach them to pray. Let us frequently be dropping things in their presence, which may have a tendency to awaken their attention to God, their souls and eternity.

I know, my dear brethren, by long experience, that it is easier to preach than practise. A man can with facility form an excellent essay in his study, from which in practical life his deviations are numerous. However this may be, it is useful to have a good copy before us. Tho' we may never be able perfectly to imitate the masters line, yet it may be of the highest improvement and advantage to the learner, often to be casting his eye upon it.

I shall now conclude this discourse with some motives to impress the observation of this subject upon every head of a household that we may be all induced to practise it as far as in our power.

If there were a proper government of families maintained, what blessings might we not expect would redound from it to society, to church, and state, to families themselves and the world? Nature itself should deeply engage us in the careful and diligent education and government of our households. Your children are as it were parts of yourselves, your understanding and feelings, dispose you to love and provide for them as yourselves. Can you then be negligent of their greatest concerns, their usefulness and comfort in this world, and their felicity in the next. Can you bear the thought of manifesting to your children mere animal affection? This the brutes of the field and the birds of the air exhibit to an higher degree in respect to their offspring, but as soon as they are able to shift for their own sustenance, the appearance is, they are remembered no more! Consider my brethren, it is not mere animals we have, to tame and govern, but to educate and train rational and immortal beings for the service of God, and the happiness of society. Nature teaches children some things without our assistance, but the God of Nature hath intrusted the most ef-

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sential things to our care. It is government, discipline, and education, that forms the man. If we only instruct them how to get a living for a few days or years in the world, and they are not taught the knowledge of themselves, of God and Jesus Christ, and the way to heaven, can they feel any sentiments of gratitude to you in eternity for their existence, yea, perhaps, they will rather curse the day of their birth forever. It is in the power of parents to do their families the greatest kindness or injury. Aid them to an holy acquaintance with God, and to an interest in the precious Saviour, and you do more for them than if you made them presidents of nations or kings of the earth. If you only instruct them for worldly and ungodly purposes, they are as likely to perish as if you had sold them to Satan. Many in ancient times sacrificed their children in the burning bras of Moloch's image, what do they better in modern times, who neglect the religious government, and rational and christian education of their children? The way to manage and bring up our offspring for God and happiness, and the way to bring them up for destruction are clearly represented unto us in the oracles of truth. When we indulge them in licentious courses, wink at their vices, teach them the first principles of gambling, and indulge them in infernal orgies, and bachanalian routs, what could we do more for their everlasting ruin, if we had studied their destruction? Can it be probable that such children will be found in heaven, more than that Hophni and Phineas, those two vile sons of Eli are there? Let us be exhorted to take warning and learn every one to govern his own house. If he be worse than an infidel who provides not food and raiment for his household, what must the monster be, who allows his children in all manner of wickedness? Nay, it would take the pencil of a Seraph, to draw the picture of such awful, inhuman, and barbarous parents. I entreat you, my dear fellow immortals, by the mercies of God, by the precious souls of your dear children, that you be not found such fathers as Eli, or such unnatural monsters as destroy their offspring.

Exert the authority in your families which God hath invested you with, restrain your children from vice, set before them examples of piety and virtue, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so that if they perish, their blood may not be found in your skirts. Let the counsel of Solomon be engraven upon every parental heart, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he becomes old, he will not depart therefrom."

S E R M O N VI.

Some Duties of Parents to their Little Children.

Eph. vi. 4. *And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

RELIGION is of such a nature, that it extends to every age and every character. Not only does it command the attention of the mature in age, but younger years are to be directed by it. And little ones, the sweet lambs of the church, before they can appear to us to think, or reason, are to be taken into its guardianship. O ! how precious is the church of Christ ! It spreads its wings over the whole body of the faithful, but in the softest and tenderest manner broods the young. A great trust is committed to parents ; every infant, thrown into their fond embraces by heaven, is ever attended with this pleasing commission, " Bring up this babe, and nourish it for "immortality ; you feel it in your arms a precious creature, "and it is given to you to render it useful in the world and "to form it for eternal felicity." The tender charge is solemn,

and the christian heart glows with affectionate gratitude, and says, " Lord, with pleasure I undertake the business, it shall be my delight, to do all in my power to answer the gift, and fulfil my trust."

Allow me here to make one remark arising from long experience and much observation. That a people accustomed to hear the doctrines of grace, to be taught the first principles and experimental views and exercises of internal and vital religion, all which are invisible to their fellow men, they will bear in this respect, the most close and searching preaching; but when the visible parts of religion and external duties are explained and inculcated, none more gratified and offended than these. Their hearts are among the first to pronounce it carnal and legal preaching. Multitudes in all our congregations, wish their ministers to dwell more upon the moral duties, and visible virtues of piety than they generally do. This has its sinister origin in two motives; the one is, that in this, they will be equal to their neighbours; and in the other, they will stand on apparent and visible ground in certain respects superior to many blazing and experimental professors. The subtilties, and tortuous windings of the human heart are exceeding hard to unfold; some are all for invisible exercises, and for experimental preaching, and others for morality, and the exterior duties of religion. Both in certain respects are right, and both wrong. What God has joined together ought not to be put asunder. The separation is dangerous and ruinous. The one cannot secure the glory of God and the happiness of the creature without the other. No internal experiences, be they what they may, can introduce to heaven, without the visible works of righteousness, where there is time for their manifestation; and no outward exhibitions of morality, however splendid, without holiness of heart, will ever bring the soul to the fruition of God.

I fear these remarks, however just and proper in themselves, are estraying me from my subject, one design of which is to show that the nature and evidences of true religion consist much in the faithful performance of relative duties. And ministers are not only to warn against personal and relative, but also against every iniquity which is a transgression of the law of Christ. Let ministers ever have the solemn charge given by God to Ezekiel upon their minds, "O! Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me; when I say unto the wicked, O! wicked man, thou shalt surely die: If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand; nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul." O! that God would impress these sentiments upon my heart, and that I might see them engraven upon my hands, that they may be ever before me, while I treat of the relative and moral duties of our holy religion.—One of these duties must engross your attention for the present. The words of our text evidently contain a comprehensive and compleat exhortation to parents, respecting the education of their offspring. The proper and wise education of children, in all the extension of usefulness, arises far beyond our conception. They are hereby formed to be blessings in this world, and often to be stars of glory in the next. The evil and unhappy consequences of omission or negligence in this business are beyond the powers of imagination to describe.

The divine counsel given, is addressed to parents in general, who are here designated by the term fathers. Although fathers are only expressed, yet undoubtedly mothers are herein included. The superior parent often involves the inferior.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit selected the word *fathers*, because it is probable they are most apt to deviate from, and neglect the counsel here administered. The matter of this exhortation wholly respects the education of children. "They are not to provoke their children to wrath." This cannot be understood as the practice of some would seem to expound it, that parents ought by no means to do those things which may displease their children, and rather than their children should be crossed or dissatisfied, they neglect their duty. When they do evil they must not be chided, and when guilty of mischief, they must not be corrected. The apostles meaning is evidently this, and it is the construction of common sense. We are not by passionate, unreasonable, morose, and humorfome commands, improperly on our part, to irritate their tempers or provoke them to wrath. We ought to watch against their ill humours as well as against our own.—"But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The word *nurture* signifies nourishment in its utmost extent, both with regard to their bodies and minds. Nature directs that we should feed and cloath their bodies, reason dictates that we should nourish and instruct their minds, and the holy scriptures command that we should furnish their immortal souls with divine knowledge and train them up in the fear of God. The words, "*Of the Lord*," ought to have a powerful influence upon christians in the extensive circle of the education of their offspring, both in respect to their minds and bodies, and in regard to their moral, civil and religious instruction. The word *admonition* intends to express the counsel, advice, and direction, which it behoves us to afford them, in all the relations which they do or may sustain in life, especially in regard to spiritual duties towards God and Jesus Christ with a view to their acquisition of eternal salvation. This is not merely on occasional business, but ought to be a habitual practice as far as in our power, consistent with other duties and avocations, that we give our chil-

dren all suitable instruction for time and eternity.—The word rendered *bring up*, signifies to foster or nourish them up, and intimates that rational and religious nourishment ought to be administered to their minds, as well as common provisions to their bodies. The latter shall not be much attended to, being a natural duty, and generally well observed and in some cases perhaps even to excess, but the former shall employ the few observations that will be made on the subject.

First, one of the primary duties of christian parents is openly to acknowledge Gods right unto their children, early dedicating them by faith to him in the holy ordinance of baptism, hoping and trusting in Christ, that he will bestow upon them the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Was the ordinance of circumcision profitable to the Jewish church in every way ? So also is baptism which was instituted in the room thereof. Hereby they are initiated into the visible church, brought into a covenant relation with God, are placed under the blessings granted to his people, and are by parents, under the watch of the church, to be educated for God. Children are now as capable of a covenant relation to God as when in ancient times they were circumcised. Neither the sacrament nor the subject of it has been abrogated to this day, only the form of it has been changed from a typical and bloody rite, to a moderate use of pure water. Children are surely as capable of this relation now, as they were when that covenant was made in the twenty ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, “Ye stand this day, all of you before the Lord your God, your little ones, your wives &c. that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath.” These little ones were entered into the covenant, and no reason can be advanced, why they are not still as capable of that blessing as they were then ; especially as Christ commanded little children to be brought to him and sharply rebuked those who forbade it. And in testimony of his approbation of the dedication of chil-

draw to him, "He took them into his arms, and blessed them, and declared, of such is the Kingdom of God." Are little ones capable subjects of the blessings of Heaven. Surely this was the opinion of our Lord. Do they pertain to the Kingdom of God? Whether by this phrase may be meant the Kingdom of the Church on earth, or the Kingdom of Heaven, it amounts to the same thing. I apprehend the declaration of our Lord, ought to be taken in the most extensive latitude as comprehending both. This lays a consolatory foundation for all believing parents, who have dedicated their infant seed to God, to enjoy a satisfying hope, that if they die in infancy, they are sanctified and translated to glory. It is probable, heaven is much more peopled with little ones, with the lambs of the flock, than we are ready to imagine.

Secondly, seeing children very early begin to manifest an evil temper, and the corruption of their nature, it is the part of parents by all possible means to restrain and guard against it. The habits of sin are of an encreasing nature, and are to be suppressed as far as possible. It is easiest to bend the tree while it is young. But if after parents have done in wisdom and prudence what was in their power, the children should turn out froward and evilly disposed, they may have much consolation and peace in their minds that they have performed their duty. Alas! how far from right is the conduct of many parents, who, before the little ones can well walk, will learn them to beat the floor that hurt them, and teach them to torment and mutilate flies and other insects, and a train of such improprieties, hereby nourishing in them, a spirit of revenge, malice, and cruelty, while they know not what they do.

As soon as children are capable of any instruction, or when they begin to take in the knowledge of common things, parents should begin to instil into their tender minds, a difference be-
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between right and wrong, some rudiments of moral and religious import. A heathen could once say, "A vessel will long retain a flavor of that liquor with which it is first seasoned." Hence it is of high importance that their infant understandings should be early tinged with wholesome and virtuous principles, which may have a happy influence upon them throughout the whole of their after lives. "Train up a child," says the wise man, "In the way he should go, and when he becomes old he will not depart therefrom." This not merely expresses a commandment to employ proper means to promote their temporal interest, but also to use every rational and scriptural method of instruction to advance their spiritual and eternal interest. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Thirdly, parents ought, neither to act nor speak before their children, things which would be of dangerous consequence for them to follow. Example has generally a greater influence upon persons than precept, and more especially upon the minds of youth. That is the age of imitation. And as they are naturally prone to evil, so any thing bad presented before them, catches like fire on superadded fuel. Wherefore parents ought to be pleasant and circumspect in all their walk and conversation before them, not giving an undue loose to their tongues, nor indulging themselves in any base or wicked frivolity in their presence. How awful is the conduct of such who can curse and swear and issue forth the spume of hell in torrents of obscenity before their children. Can they expect any thing else, but that they will learn and imitate their abominations? Beware of backbiting, reviling, and slandering where they are, or you will teach them to be talebearers, tailers and slanderers, and form them to be the plagues of society.

Fourthly, parents must take heed that they do not exercise

severity for trifles, and show themselves too much offended at childish inadvertencies, lest they should disgust and provoke their children to wrath, weaken their own influence and mar their authority over them. Rarely will they receive useful instruction from those for whom they have no proper regard. Wherefore as parents tender the weal of their children both in this world and in that which is to come, they ought to conciliate their affections, and ingratiate themselves into their favour and esteem, convince them of wrong, and induce them to that which is right, rather by rational and persuasive considerations, than by the furious or gloomy austerity of authority. However young, they must be ruled as creatures possessed of reason. If they perceive that your advice, counsels and exhortations flow from a just affection and esteem, for they become earlier fond of esteem than we are apt to conceive, then they will be more ready to give a listening ear, imbibe, and heartily yield obedience to your instructions. How unhappy, and how much to blame are those, who never manifest any government, only when it is accompanied with anger, corruption and ill-nature?

Fifthly, parents should guard against an allowance of their children in an excessive boldness and impudent familiarity with them; neither on the other hand, should they estrange themselves from them, nor keep them at too great or a fearful distance. Extremes in all things, are to be avoided as much as possible. Meekness, tenderness and kindness, ought ever to preside on their lips. All restraints, commands and rational indulgencies, should appear to proceed from love and for their good. This is a likely course to render themselves amiable and respectable in the eyes of their children, and so to educate them in the ways of righteousness and in an abhorrence of iniquity. This tends to render them upright and sincere in your presence, as well as faithful and diligent in your absence. Pa-

rents, who conduct with propriety towards their children, may safely show their authority when they commit faults worthy of correction. They will feel the conviction, that it is the fault which causes displeasure, and that the parents treatment of them is designed for their amendment, improvement and good.

Sixthly, parents ought to endeavour to bring up their offspring in obedience to themselves, to bow their wills by times, to reclaim their deviations from propriety, and implant in their little souls the seeds of every virtue. Parents should study to know the will of God, and be conscientiously persuaded, that they urge nothing upon them, but what is agreeable thereto, and warranted by the dictates of reason. Alas ! many children are allowed to long their own head, and to have their own will, that when it becomes absolutely necessary that authority should be exerted, it is an arduous task either to restrain or subdue them. Yea, at length, some wax so refractory and ungovernable, that they escape beyond the power of discipline, and had they have been duly managed in season, might have been formed to be useful members of society ; but an over and too long indulgence has been their ruin. Wherefore parents should early begin in tender affection, and in the wisest manner, to show them the excellencies of obedience, how pleasing to God, and their parents, and how comfortable and happy it will be to themselves, as also the great evil of stubbornness, wilfulness and disobedience.

Seventhly, parents should as much as possible separate their children from bad company. Evil communication corrupts good manners. Young persons insensibly slide into an imitation of those they make their companions. Hence it is of great consequence in the education of children that they should be preserved from hearing profanity, and have no opportunities

of beholding the external copies of vice. But as a desire of fellowship and society is consuetudinal to us from our cradles, it is incumbent upon parents, to have an eye upon the company of their children, and see that it be such, from which they learn not evil, but rather that they may imbibe from it the principles of decency and virtue, and which may be likely to recommend to them the pleasure, beauty and advantages of piety.

Eighthly, parents ought frequently to inculcate upon the minds of their children the examples of early religion recorded in the scriptures, such as the histories of young Samuel, Josiah, Obadiah, Timothy, and others. This would have an excellent effect in restraining from vice, rendering their conscience tender, and inducing them to seek after piety in their youth. Children should have their hearts deeply impressed with a great reverence for the holy scriptures; and when the doctrines, truths and duties of religion are spoken of, it ought always to be with solemnity, gravity and seriousness; so that even before children can understand holy things, they may have a reverence of them upon their minds.

Lastly, parents ought to pray with and for their children, to teach them to pray, and as soon as expedient cause them to attend public worship, to respect God's sanctuaries and sabbaths. They should hear their parents recommending frequently good people and persons eminent for piety and Godliness of their acquaintance. These recommendations they will easily receive. Before they can understand doctrines, they can learn in general what kind of persons are most happy or most miserable. If you possess them of good and honorable thoughts of such as fear God, they will be usually afterwards disposed to think respectfully of them. They will wish to hear pious ministers and to be such christians.

It afflicts me, my brethren, that time commands me abruptly to break off this important subject, and leave it with scarcely the outlines of it drawn. May the few observations which have been now made, sink deep into the hearts and influence the practice of all. We should hereby distinguishingly serve our country and our God, we should have orderly families and pious congregations. It would exceedingly tend to promote morality, and virtue, and practical religion. "Ye fathers" "provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in" "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

S E R M O N - V I I

The Duty of Children to Parents.

Col. iii. 20. *Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.*

AMONG all the branches which spring from religious root, none produces flowers more amiable and beautiful than docile and obedient children. The effects of religion wheresoever they appear, are always charming in the view of the pious mind, but in youth they shine with a peculiar lustre. The fruits most lovely to the sight frequently grow upon small trees ; so piety affords a most pleasing aspect, when it appears in tender years. How melancholy the thought to behold multitudes of amiable youth adorned with every agreeable qualification of mind and body, so that did Jesus look upon them as he did upon the young man in the gospel, he would love them, yet in them there is one thing lacking ? A well proportioned body and a beautiful set of features, what are they ? Like the flowers of the field they soon vanish away. A well accomplished mind, what is it without religion ? The former will quickly be too

~~loadstone for the light, and the prey of worms,~~ and the latter must be thrust down into eternal burnings, and be united with the accursed company of devils and damned spirits, where the smoke of their torment shall ascend forever and ever. In few congregations can ~~these~~ be observed a more lovely and beautiful class of youth than in this, but alas ! how many are destitute of the one thing needful ? O ! why, my precious children, will you act such a part against yourselves, and cast a gloomy cloud over all your excellencies, by neglecting to put on the attire of pure and undefiled religion, which would be the richest ornament of the whole ? As the head is the ornament of the body, so religion would be a crown more excellent than gold to all your other qualities, of which you are the subjects. O ! that many could be persuaded to give up their names to Christ, to join themselves unto the Lord, and bring forth the fruits of piety in their hearts and lives. Could you be prevailed upon from the principles of love to God and faith in Jesus to perform all the social duties incumbent upon you, especially the exalted duty of obedience to parents, for this will be truly well pleasing to God.

The duty enjoined in our text is one of the first perhaps, of which human nature is capable. "Children obey your parents "in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." Parents are among the earliest objects of a child's knowledge and attention ; he becomes soonest acquainted with them, looks to them with a fond affection, and seems to expect support and protection from them, leans upon and reposes confidence in them. Thus nature dictates the first lines of filial duty, even before a due sense of the connection is formed. When a child is somewhat grown, acquired a few ideas, and arrived at some measure of understanding, he must begin to be sensible of the obligations he is under to his parents. When he can consider their tender and disinterested affection, their incessant care and labour, in

nursing, educating, and providing for them, during that state in which he had neither discretion or strength to provide for himself, the feelings of his own heart will declare to him, that he owes to them many peculiar duties. The sacred oracles of God dwell much upon the dutifulness of children to parents, and greatly exhibit in strong colourings the angry displeasure of heaven against the refractory and disobedient. Peradventure no text more comprehensive of this relative obligation, than the one selected for the subject of this discourse. When the Holy Spirit expresses summarily the duties of children to their parents, the term obedience is generally employed. "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." The word *obedience* must be taken in the most extensive latitude, comprising every thing contained in the term dutifulness. "Children be *dutiful* to your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to God." They must in all things be dutiful; not merely in some things or such as they please, which is the unhappy case with too many froward children, but in every matter commanded by the parent, which is not plainly contrary to the will of God. When parents are so foolish or wicked, as to issue orders of this nature, then God is to be obeyed rather than man. No other filial disobedience is excusable from sin but this. But when the child sweetly and readily performs his duty in all things, it is well pleasing unto the Lord. Not only pleasing, but well pleasing unto him. It is a thing agreeable to the mind of heaven, and most acceptable to the Most High.

When God commands children to be dutiful to their parents, and they comply with the requisition, they not only obey their parents, but God; not only are they pleasing to their fathers according to the flesh, but well pleasing to the Father of their immortal spirits. Hence this dutifulness hath a peculiar promise annexed to it. "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it

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“may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

All that shall be attended to at present, will only be a few observations upon some of the branches of filial dutifulness. And O! that the children and youth of this flock may receive and understand the same, lay them up in their hearts and continually practise them in their lives.

The first branch I shall mention, is that children should unfeignedly love their parents. Next to the Supreme God, none should possess a superior share of their esteem and affection. Remember what love you owe them in reason and justice for all their love, care and tenderness to you. How great has been their anxiety and trouble in your nursing and education? How many have been the wakeful nights they have watched your sick pillow with tearful eyes and bleeding hearts, lest you should die, and not live? They take your happiness or misery to be in a great measure the happiness and misery of their own lives. Let not children therefore deprive their parents of comfort, by their misconduct—let them not render them miserable, by ruining themselves. Tho’ they should chide, restrain from, and even correct you for doing amiss, let not any of these things abate your affection to them. These are duties which God requires of them, and they are performed for your good, in order to form you for usefulness in the world, and to promote your happiness. It is an evidence of a froward child, that loves his parents the less, because he is rebuked for doing wrong, or restrained from having his own perverse will. Even though you should perceive many faults and infirmities in your parents, you must manifest your dutiful affection by bearing with, and covering these failings and weaknesses. Children who act this part are a blessing to their parents, and comfort and rejoice their hearts. Let children remark the awful judgements of heaven upon those who have

conducted themselves basely and wickedly. What was the dreadful fate of those unhappy children, who ran forth and ridiculed and mocked the aged prophet as he passed by, crying out upon him, "Go up, bald head, go up, bald head." Bears from the woods rushed forth and destroyed forty and two of them. An awful punishment for an awful crime.—Wicked ones who disregard and hate their parents, to what shameful and untimely deaths are they often brought? Did not Absalom perish by an unusual death for this sin? Let monsters of ungrateful children, who hate their parents, and wish them dead for the sake of their honors and property, tremble when they read his history, and the bleedings of his fathers heart. What was the conduct of the wicked sons of Jacob? What was the unnatural disposition they showed towards their brother and aged father? Their want of natural affection, and indulgence of the odious passion of hatred, had well nigh destroyed Joseph, and brought down the grey hairs of their unhappy father with sorrow to the grave. How should such ingrates of children stand aghast and shudder, when they hear such words as these issuing in a voice of thunder from the mouth of Jehovah, "Curst be he that setteth light by his father or mother, and all the people shall say, amen."

Secondly, the next particular branch of dutifulness is honor. Children must honor their parents in thought, word and behaviour. They must not even think dishonorably or contemptuously of them in their hearts. They must not speak rudely or irreverently to them, or respecting them. They must by no means behave themselves in an impudent or unbecoming manner before them. Yea, tho' your parents be never so poor in the world, feeble in their understandings, and even ungodly, notwithstanding you cannot honor them, as rich, and wise, and pious, yet you must still honor and respect them as parents, would you desire to be found well pleasing to the Lord. Remember, that the whole will of heaven for the direction of man

when comprised in ten commandments, this is one, and a very distinguishing one too, for it has a promise annexed. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land." "A son," says God, by the prophet, "Honoreth his father." The words seem to have a peculiar emphasis, as if he could be no son, who did it not. And surely those who refuse to give honor to their parents, are unworthy of the filial character. Tremendous was the curse which fell upon *Ham* for dishonoring his father, that a servant of servants should he be, and his children after him.—Good children will rise up and call their mother blessed. The good breeding, politeness, and dutifulness of Solomon to his mother, is recorded for our instruction and imitation. "Bathsheba went in unto king Solomon, and the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand." Here is an example for children to teach them how they should treat and honor their parents. Let this copy be constantly imitated by all. Then you will acquire the character of wise children, that make glad your parents. "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." The strongest images in nature are portrayed to view in the condemnation of children disrespectful to their parents. "The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Thirdly, the text in our extended contemplations is reduced to a particular place in the enumeration. Obedience is an universal term, and inclusive of every thing, yet at present, we will treat it in a more limited situation. "Obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." When we are introduced into this world, it is in a state of weakness beyond other animals, and absolutely unfit to nourish, provide for, or govern ourselves; hence God in the constitution of nature hath made provision for these circum-

stances of feeble man. From this situation originates in a great measure the propriety, reason and necessity of obedience to parents. In order to obey their commands and refrain from what they forbid, nothing more is requisite than a natural and predominant desire to please them. One would suppose this was the easiest thing in the world. To take pleasure to please, and to feel it grievous to give them offence, can any thing possibly be easier than this? The yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light. And of all the parts of the yoke surely none can be more soft and pleasant than for children cheerfully to obey their parents. To good children it is delight and happiness. To be deprived of this privilege they could have neither comfort nor pleasure. They feel this counsel the joy of their hearts. "Hearken to thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." An heathen philosopher could say, "To pay honor to parents and make them the returns of obedience, is only to discharge the oldest, best, and greatest of debts." This obedience is so interwoven in the constitution, that not to conduct accordingly, seems to be a contradiction to instinctive nature. Nothing strange then that an awful doom is pronounced upon disobedient children. They are always inrolled with the most heinous sinners. In the catalogue formed by St. Paul they are ranked with the most atrocious transgressors. The disobedient to parents, are classed with *murderers, haters of God, covenant breakers*, &c. This same apostle in another epistle makes up another list, like an inrolment of hell, but alas, it is drawn from life in this wretched world. Look into the black *return*. "Blasphemers, traitors, truce-breakers, and disobedient to parents" This one sin will crowd evil children amongst the worst orders in the infernal regions. Wherefore, my precious immortal youth, guard against disobedience as a most damnable crime, and tarry not on the sulphurous plains of Sodom. If you have ever been guilty of this dreadful offence, repent, and fly to the blood of purification or you perish forever. Im-

mediately bow your hearts to the order of heaven. "Fear every man his father, and every man his mother." Here it will be enquired, must children obey their parents when they are come to full maturity of age? The answer here is plain. God hath placed parents over you, and without an exempted case, enjoined your obedience; and are you wiser than Jehovah? Some will be ready to rise on tip-toe to ask, how long are children under the command and government of parents? The answer here cannot be reduced to perfect definition, more than the colours of the rainbow can be exactly discriminated. Let it be observed, they are never free from love, honor and reverence till death dissolves the relation, but there are various degrees of parental oversight, which prudence must adjust to the varying circumstances of children. Some are to teach them to go and speak; some to teach them to read, labour and good manners; some to teach them the fear of God, and the principles of religion; some to settle them in the world, and to put them into a state of making a livelihood for themselves. When things are thus far advanced, parental duty appears to be closing, their obligations of strict obedience ceasing, and they take the place of an independent reference to God. Only let children, who have risen into honor, wisdom, learning and power above their parents, recollect the conduct of the greatest mere man that ever appeared in our world. With all the favours of heaven and wonders he wrought, he did not feel himself exalted above the voice of reason, the counsel and advice of a father. "Moses hearkened to his father-in-law, and did all that he said."

Fourthly, another branch of filial dutifulness, is a willingness and pleasure to receive instruction from parents. Blessed are the parents disposed to give religious instruction to their offspring, and blessed are the children who are ready to receive it. These are matters of the highest command to parents, and of the last importance to children. Let every child hearken to the voice of heaven in the advice of Solomon, which is

a counsel to all children, 'My son hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother, for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thine head and chains about thy neck.' What an encouragement to parents, to feel their children willing to learn how they should acquire knowledge common, civil and divine. If they depart before them, how cheerfully should they with sweet resignation commit them to the arms of Jesus. If parents should die first, with what hopes may they leave them behind, in the comfortable expectation, that after they have served their generation according to the will of God they will meet with them in glory. But whether they live or die, or their parents live or die, how pleasing the thought, that all are and will be with God. Wherefore, my dearly beloved children and youth, the hope of the church and the hope of the world, allow me to entreat you by the love of your parents and by the mercies of God, that you listen to the instruction of your father, and give heed to the law of thy mother."

Fifthly, another part of dutifulness is, patiently to submit to the correction of your parents. This is one of the most reluctant and painful duties of children. But, my dear little ones, it is necessary for your comfort, usefulness and happiness. The directions of heaven are wisdom. God enjoins the measure, and often the recipient of the scourge is less afflicted than the administrator. O that it could be impressed upon your infant minds, that the parents must hate you who correct you not for your faults. This is nature, reason and scripture, and riper years will bless God for the severity. Can there be a child so lost in unnatural affection as to wish his parents should hate and abhor him. But the father who correcteth not his child is considered by infinite wisdom as a hater of him. Hearken to the heavenly adjudication. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him bytimes. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but

the rod of correction will drive it far from him. Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die; thou shalt beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from hell. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." O that children could be induced to consider, that correction appointed by God, however painful to themselves and parents, is for their highest use and benefit.

Sixthly, another branch of this dutifulness is, that children should only associate, and make intimates and companions of those, who are agreeable to their parents choice. Bad company to youth is the greatest evil in society. All the confessions of criminals brought to a shameful end, principally consist of three articles, disobedience to parents, wicked company, and sabbath breaking. Evil company is the destruction of youth. Other things slay their thousands, but this its ten thousands. Rust corrodes the most polished steel, so evil communication corrupts good manners. Let not children enter into the secrets of the wicked, and let not their honor be united with them. It is impossible to detail all the duties of the filial relation; let this close the collection. Imitate your parents in all that is good, avoid every thing in them wrong, pray for them, pray for yourselves, dedicate yourselves to God in Christ, renounce sin, and engage to walk in faith and holiness, then you will be useful in the world and happy forever.

The subject closes with the last advice of ministerial and the whole soul of parental counsel. "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ hath also loved you." Remember and imitate the character of the child Samuel, who grew up in favor with God and man.

S E R M O N V I I I .

Some Duties Incumbent upon Youth.

Ecclesi. xii. 1. 2. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.*

NO address in sacred writ is more directly pointed, or more solemnly made to the rising generation, than the words before us. It was the last counsel of an old man, and this, and a few following discourses, are the last perhaps, you will ever hear from your aged pastor. Allow me to take for my copy at present, the last address of one of the oldest and wisest preachers. This counsel is directed to those in the morning and bloom of life, whose active and volatile spirits bear them on to the gratification of every desire.

This address in our text, bursts forth in a very abrupt form, delivers a strong interference with the views and pleasures of

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young. In this sudden impulse, consists much of its strength, beauty, and vigor. It seems intended to storm the attention, and command the most thoughtless to take notice. Young people must surely feel the spirit and power of this address. It is pointed like a dagger to the sinful pleasures of the hearts of youth. It strikes death into their carnal delights, and raises their hearts, contrary to their native bent, from earth to heaven, sheds darkness on terrestrial things, and elevates their souls to God.

Solomon had described every worldly wish and carnal desire of his, as fully gratified. He had enjoyed the full round of riches, pleasures and honors, as far as this narrow life could afford indulgence. He was the person singled out and designated by God, for this wonderful scene. No man marked out for the full extension of earthly pleasures, but himself; none in this line ever preceded him, nor will there be such another instance to the end of time. Every thing that can be comprehended in the term pleasure, Solomon enjoyed in the utmost extent. Peace, health, riches, honors, and the utmost gratification of human desires were all his own. No carnal man can possibly wish for more than Solomon possessed. When he became old, and was glutted with enjoyment, what was his account of the whole? A sum which he might have cast up long before. Harken to the footing of his account. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Vanity and vexation, what can form a more bitter and detestable composition for life than this? This was Solomon's portion, when he drunk in pleasure in all its fulness, what then must be the misery of those who only sip at the rills, and never had a single draft of his delight. And all the pleasurable taking world may be assured they never will. A sermon could not develope the pleasures of *Solomon* in childhood, youth and riper age, and the miseries and torment of his last days. If I should live, my young friends, I would wish to lead you through this ex-

traordinary life of pleasure and sin, and of wisdom and folly of which there has been none like it, nor will there be another. Forgive me this excursion and deviation from the subject in view. You are ready to say, that all old men will pass the same reflections on life, and make a similar regret, that they have passed through the world under a kind of enchantment, which the approaches of death dissolve, and they awake to think of God and religion when their heart strings are breaking. I readily grant death is an awakening period, and I also affirm the whole life is little enough to prepare for it.—The young and gay will laugh at every thing serious, and will say, the religious language of the aged, is the result of chagrin, disappointment, or surfeited repetition of enjoyments. To such, I can only say, “Take the unhappy reins on your necks, range through the fields of pleasure, taste of every forbidden tree, enjoy yourselves, abandon religion, banish death, heaven, eternity, and hell from your thoughts, and forbid their intrusion to mar your pleasures; finish life in a thoughtless and jovial swing;” but, O youth, be assured of this, “God will bring you into judgment.” This thought is excluded in the hours of mirth and lawless pleasures; but hereafter it will bite like an adder and sting like a serpent. I wish this one idea could be impressed on the hearts of youth, “Remember that all your conduct in life, and every period of its pleasures God will bring into judgment in the presence of the whole universe.”

The great things enjoined upon youth in this subject is the plain duty of remembrance of God and several reasons to enforce their compliance with it.

The duty is to remember their Creator, and immediately to perform every matter and thing implied in this remembrance. The original word is *Creators*, strongly intimating a Trinity of persons in the Godhead to which their attention should be turned; they should remember the Father their maker, the Son

their redeemer, and the Holy Ghost their sanctifier which comprehends in it the whole of religion. The reasons being the duty of the text shall be the principal object of your attention, and no more shall be said about the duty itself, than merely to ascertain the nature of it in general. It most essentially involves in it the following particulars.

First, that you ever bear fully in your mind that there is a God, glorious in the persons of Godhead and in all his attributes. You must surely feel he is your supreme and rightful sovereign. You did not give yourselves existence by your own will or power. All the being and faculties you possess are from God. You must then be wholly God's. He has a more absolute property in you, and a more unlimited claim upon you and your services, than it is possible you should have upon any thing you call your own. Therefore he has an indisputable right to give you laws, and prescribe your duty towards himself, and towards all the creatures with which you stand connected.

Secondly, another thing involved in the remembrance of your Creator, is that you owe him duty and affection to the utmost of your power. This is a debt due to him, for what he is in himself, and from your relation to him. Is God your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier? Can any love be denied, or any duty suppressed which he requires? Reason, conscience, and all that is in man, especially the whole soul of youth must acknowledge, that we are wholly the Lord's. Every young person in my audience, is silently saying in his heart, "I am his, I am wholly his, created by his power and preserved by his goodness."

Thirdly, this reflection implies in it a feeling sense of your absolute dependence upon him for the life that now is and for that which is to come. The streams of this world wax into

rivers before youth, of which many drink but are never satisfied. Youth in this world wish to have happiness under their controul, but soon their show of independency on God will be over, and sipping at created cisterns must fail. They must feel, or they will feel comfort no more, "That from him springs fulness of joy." If, my precious youth, you plunge into the ocean of iniquity, you are lost, you are damned forever.

Fourthly, this remembrance implies a solemn enquiry how you stand with your creator, your Saviour and your God. Is it peace or war, friendship or enmity? My dear young friends, you know not the import of this enquiry. Have you repented of sin, fled to the blood of Jesus for deliverance—are you humbled for original and actual transgression, and are the wonders of divine mercy all the ground of your hope? Attend to the character of God, his holy law, the exceeding great evil of sin, and the only method of recovery through the atoning merits of Jesus Christ. The washing of the blood of the Redeemer is as necessary for the young as the old. By this blood you must be cleansed, and in the faith of it, you must hop for eternal life. Would to God, the scriptural declarations respecting these important matters might be effectually impressed on every young and tender mind. However few your years, these are the essential terms of eternal life, you must repent and believe the Gospel. "All men are commanded every where to repent, "the young as well as the old, the youth in all the flower of his bloom, as well as the man of grey hairs." There is no exception here, all must repent or perish. Our Lord's decision is, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." So likewise faith enters into the essence of salvation. Eternal life by the constitution of heaven, is infallibly chained to faith, and eternal damnation to unbelief and impenitence. The sum of all religion which our Lord delivered to his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel to every creature, is this, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," but

how tremendously awful is the reverse part of their commission ? Who can pronounce it without horror. It should strike terror into every soul, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Wherefore let the counsel in the text be powerfully felt by every youthful mind, as a matter of the first and highest importance. "Remember thy Creators in the days of thy youth." Remember the character of the Lord of universal nature ; he is not a man, he is not a weak and impotent creature, but the Creator of the ends of the earth, whose arm is full of power ; his look shakes the earth to its center ; his anger makes the pillars of heaven to tremble ; the hills melt and the mountains escape from before him. Wherefore my beloved children, "Acquaint yourselves with him and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto you."

I proceed to the second part of this discourse, to endeavour to enforce the duty on every young and tender mind. It is impossible in the range of a narrow discourse to pass the limits of our text. The field of reason and the extent of revelation upon this subject, the life of a Mathusalem could not exhibit.

First, the state of your birth is recommended to your consideration ; that you have come into the world, shapen in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, and your first entrance into existence is under the character of children of wrath. It is an awful thought for recollection, that you are by nature guilty and obnoxious in the sight of unstained purity. This is the fundamental reason of circumcision, baptism and the dedication of children to God. The declaration of heaven is on the one hand, "That by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. That the judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; all are under the curse," and the demands of justice rests upon the children who have never sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, as well as others. And on

the other hand, all must repent, from the youngest to the oldest, and turn unto God in the way appointed.

Secondly, the remembrance in the text, seems to imply a natural disposition of unmindfulness of God. Were we born with a right temper, it would be as natural to love God, obey his commands and avoid what he forbids, as to exhibit desire for food and drink. That our first appearances of action are not to love and serve God, are certain evidences, that our natural propensities are wrong, wherefore upon this supposition we are called upon to remember our Creator while we are young. And this remembrance implies every temper, exercise and duty which constitutes real piety and true religion. Wherefore, let children and youth who would wish for happiness and the favour of God comply with this divine counsel.

Thirdly, remember, while you continue in your native and wicked temper, God cannot be your friend, but enemy. "He is angry with the wicked every day. If they turn not, he will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Therefore you are liable, however young, while remaining impenitent and unbelieving to be turned into hell with all that forget God. While this is your character, nothing keeps you from this awful doom, but the wonderful patience and forbearance of God. He most surely has power enough and provocation enough to send you to perdition every moment you remain out of Christ. There is the greatest reason therefore that you should remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

You know not, my dear friends, but that you may die young. You have no more security for life, than the most aged person loitering under the burden of many years and infirmities. This is a truth the young can hardly be persuaded to feel or believe. Nay, the very strength of your constitu-

tion and heat of blood exposes you to many fatal diseases. As many die in youth as in other periods of life. God may take away your breath every day and every hour just at his pleasure. Now as this is the situation of every individual, what an argument of irresistible force is it to induce you to remember your Creator and your souls in the days of your youth.

If you are not disposed to attend to religion now, there can be no future period of life, in which, if left to yourselves, you will be more, or even so much inclined to this duty. If motives and arguments can have any influence, these are as strong and powerful now, as they can be at any time hereafter. The reasons drawn from the uncertainty of life—the commanding authority of God—the preciousness of the soul—the importance of salvation; and your own interest, are all as weighty and forcible now, as they ever will or can be. These can never increase. But it is an awful and alarming fact, that your indispotion to attend to religion increases daily through every period of life. Your years grow not faster than the hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and stupidity of conscience. This arises from various causes. From the native alienation of the soul from God; the longer it continues unrestrained, the stronger it becomes. It arises also from the force of sensual pleasures and from the nature of a worldly temper. The more such pleasures are indulged, the greater power they acquire. The longer our attachments to the world are indulged, the greater the difficulty to renounce them. This fatal temper likewise gains strength from the delusive and fascinating hopes of a more convenient season for engaging in religion. This presumption is always of a growing nature. The longer we put off the concerns of our souls, the motives for so doing accumulate, till death closes the scene and all is lost forever. Hence collecting all considerations into one view, youth will never have a more convenient opportunity or a better disposition for the remembrance of your Creator, if left to yourselves, than the present. “Now is the accepted time, now is the day, of

"salvation." You must enter upon salvation now, or it is probable you never will. Weigh the arguments placed before you; if these cannot influence you at present, it is certain their impressions will become weaker every day. Then think for a moment what is likely to be the consequence. That you must make your bed in everlasting sorrows. God only can turn the heart from youthful pleasures and sinful amusements and form it by his grace for his love and service, therefore be intreated to remember your creator in the days of your youth. The effectual grace of God in your repentance and conversion, should be improved by you as an irresistible argument to cause you to remember him.

This subject will close with a few observations on the motives in our text employed to excite young people to this great duty, the remembrance of God and their Saviour. Remember, "while the evil days come not nor the years draw nigh, when they shall say, I have no pleasure in them." By evil days is generally and rightly understood times of sickness, calamity, pains and death. Perform this duty, make your peace with your Maker, embrace the Redeemer, relinquish sin, and engage in the ways of piety in the prime of life. These things are to be done while you are young. They ought not to be postponed for a day. Evil days are fast hastening on, in which we will find no pleasure. God is long suffering and grants space for repentance. And it concerns all to attend to it immediately and prepare for their latter end. Old age will advance and these will be years of unpleasantness. Barzillai could not then relish any of the delights of sense. There you will be loaded with infirmities, palsies, pains and weaknesses of a thousand forms; your strength will become labour and sorrow. We shall have then parted with the most of our dear friends and relations, and the residue may have become wearied of us. This is a tormenting feeling. It is worse than the pangs of death. Wish not to be old, but wish to be good. Become

truly religious, "then if you live you will live to the Lord, and if you die you will die to the Lord, so that whether you live or die you will be the Lord's." Blessed are the youth who are the favorites of heaven and united to Jesus. Consider how gross the absurdity, and how base the ingratitude, to give our strength and the flower of our days to Satan, and to hope that God will accept the dregs and refuse of life. This will be offering the torn, the lame, and the sick for sacrifice, which will surely be rejected. How can we expect God will support and comfort us in age, when we served him not while we were young. Precious was the experience of the Psalmist when he could say, "O God thou hast taught me from my youth; now also when I am old and grey-headed, forsake me not."

An argument to enforce religion upon tender minds, is taken in strong figurative expressions from the luminaries of heaven and the clouds of the air. "While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain." All these bright luminaries become dim to the aged, through failure of sight and all the powers of nature. Their understandings, memories and all their faculties fail. The beauty and pleasure of all these things are passed away. Then the clouds return after the rain. No sooner is one cloud blown over than another succeeds; thus the aged are no sooner relieved from one disease and pain than they are seized with another. Their ailments are like a continual dropping in a rainy day. Let all these things be placed together to engage youth in an early attention to religion. The commandment of your bleeding Saviour is, "Seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof." And those that seek me early shall find me. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain."

Is it not a melancholy thought that any of you should perish ?

Is not the thought transporting that you should all enjoy the felicity and glories of heaven forever ?

O that it might be a portion of my bliss to behold you in the celestial world ! That you might see me there as you now do in this sacred desk, and that I might behold you in these happy regions, as I now behold you before me. Then blessed minister—happy children—and eternally glorious youth.

S E R M O N IX.

How Youth may become Holy and Happy.

Psa. cxix. 9. *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

THE holy scriptures are the source of all divine wisdom and saving knowledge to the children of men. They are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. They are of the most extensive spiritual use, containing all things necessary for to know and believe concerning God, ourselves, the way of salvation for sinners, and the graces, virtues and duties for acquiring the same. They are perfectly calculated to display the character of God, the holiness of the divine law, the evil and turpitude of sin, the recovery of sinners through the atonement and intercession of Christ, the way of faith and obedience, and to rectify and reform what is amiss in the soul. So that the man of God or the true Christian may be thoroughly furnished for the performance of every good work.

This excellent Psalm shining with peculiar lustre among all

the Psalms of David, principally consists in praises and encomiums on divine revelation. The Psalmist here in the most persuasive language recommends the great usefulness of the scriptures, from his own example and the distinguished blessings he had experienced in them. How often does he express his most ardent desires, for a more intimate acquaintance with these precious oracles, and to be more conformed to their instructions? “Deal with thy servant according to thy mercies, and teach me thy statutes. I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies. O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day.”

There is no less than ten words employed in this long Psalm expressive of the glories and advantages of divine revelation. And what is very remarkable, there is not a verse in which one of these terms is not used, a very few excepted, yet they are so placed and transposed, that the most accurate reader feels no tedious repetition, but every phrase appears with beauty and affords him the highest pleasure and delight.

It is styled God's *law*, because the scriptures are given by the supreme and sovereign legislator—his *way*, because they contain the order of his dispensations, and the course of man's obedience—his *commandments*, because issued by the most absolute authority—his *testimonies*, because attested or witnessed to the world by the most irrefragable evidence—his *precepts*, because they are the prescriptions of heaven to man—his *words*, because they are the declarations of his will—his *judgments*, because by them we shall be judged—his *righteousness*, because holy, just and good, and the standard of perfect justice—his *statutes*, because fixed, immutable and of perpetual obligation—his *truth*, because they are faithful sayings and founded on principles of eternal verity.

Now these oracles which are described in such a variety of

characters, exhibit complete rules of direction in every case. In all difficulties in which persons may be involved, here is instruction for deliverance, or how to bear them with patience, and improve them for their greatest good. In our text they give directions of the highest importance, to wit, how the rising generation may become holy and useful in the world, and be happy forever. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." My young friends, I hope, will grant their attention to a subject of such infinite magnitude. It is long since it was said by the wisest of men, that youth is folly and vanity. I will not enter into the common essay, that youth is worse in this age than formerly. Every one, even the most ignorant, is continually giving lectures on this topic. This is not by any means a general truth; there may be particular places where one generation may be worse than a preceding, so there may be places where a generation arises better than the one which went before it. But however this matter may be, there is in the words before us an important question asked, and a satisfactory answer given for the direction of the rising generation.

There are various things of high importance contained in the question, "How shall a young man cleanse his way?" By way, when used in this figurative sense, expressive of the moral temper and character, is generally meant the bias and inclination of the heart, and the course and prevailing tenor of the life. If the habitual turn of the heart be to that which is good and the external conversation such as becometh the gospel, then his way is right with God, or it is in its measure clean. But if the heart be commonly disposed to evil, and the conversation ungodly, this proves his way to be unclean, or corrupt and vicious.

To *cleanse*, in a moral or religious sense, signifies to reform and amend that which is amiss both in heart and conduct. To

ask, therefore, how a person shall cleanse his way, *folly* implies that his way is corrupt, morally defiled and wicked, and stands in absolute need of purification and sanctification.

This question imports,

First, that all are guilty and polluted even the very youngest. It is a melancholy truth, "That the imagination of man's heart from his youth is only evil continually; that he cannot be clean who is born of a woman; that all flesh have corrupted their way; that that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all, for that all hath sinned." Thus the infant just born, though it never has actually transgressed the law of God, or in apostolic language, sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet there is a destitution of the divine image and a want of conformity to the divine law, from whence proceeds all sin and corruption which stain and defile the future life. Wherefore this original depravity must be removed, these stains must be washed away, the way must be cleansed, and for these purposes the holy scriptures afford infallible instruction.

Secondly, this question imports that young persons are guilty of many actual iniquities, whereby they are awfully polluted in heart and life. These by Solomon are termed "folly and vanity," and by St. Paul, "youthful lusts." Persons when young are full of life and spirits; feel not the pains, cares and anxieties of advanced age. These impel them to the gratification of present desires, and they rush on with a volatile impetuosity, thoughtless and regardless of all the consequences following after. Their minds are blind to immortal concerns, and wholly occupied with the projects of present pleasure. This corruption of their way manifests itself in some such particulars as these. An aversion to read God's holy word

and pious books ; a neglect of secret prayer ; an avoidance of joining in family worship ; and an aversion from religious exercises in general. Feeling the sabbath a burden, and an attendance upon the house of God is a wearisome task. They are often prone to neglect, if not despise the pious counsels and admonitions of parents ; they attend to the indulgence of their own inclinations and pursue the evil imaginations of their hearts. Thus I might show in a great variety of things, the corrupt ways of youth, such as bad language, profane cursing and swearing ; lascivious conversation ; gambling ; associating with wicked company ; and an innumerable train of such evils, which demonstrate the way of youth wants cleansing.

Let us now attend to the answer, wherein youth are taught how this important matter may be accomplished ; how the young may become virtuous, useful and blessed. “ By taking heed to their way according to the word of God.” That the way of youth is exceedingly corrupt is abundantly evident from the previous observations ; therefore the enquiry how the same may be cleansed and purified, is of the highest moment. Would to God all who are young, were solicitous and anxiously concerned how they should get their hearts renewed, their lives reformed and their souls saved !—Those who would attend to this subject mult,

First, receive the scriptures as a system of revelation from heaven for the certain direction of every soul to eternal life. “ The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.” There can be no case or circumstance of a religious nature for which rules are not there given. Let the young, therefore, firmly believe the scriptures. Beware of every doubt and every misgiving thought upon this head. Examine the evidences of their divinity without scruple, and cleave to them as your life. They furnish you with infallible instruction, how you shall serve your generation, procure the salvation of your souls, and attain to the enjoyment of eternal felicity

Secondly, here they are taught how they may get their natures changed, cleansed and sanctified. "Those who seek me early, saith the Lord, shall find me." That is, those who seek God in the method appointed in the scriptures, will surely obtain their desires. Those who seek God, by repentance of sin, forsaking their iniquities, repairing to the blood of Jesus by faith, committing their souls into his hands, looking to his righteousness alone for justification, and to his grace for sanctification, giving up their hearts in love to God, and resolving to walk in all the commandments of the Lord. This is the sum of that seeking God contained in the bible. The young have really as much need of effectual grace, of conversion, faith, repentance, &c. as any other sinners. Hence the young man in the gospel who was possessed of so many natural and amiable accomplishments, that Jesus loved him, yet his way wanted cleansing; there was one thing lacking; his soul was not adorned with the beauties of holiness. Harken to the voice of Solomon to his pupil. "My son, if thou wilt hear my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." The scriptures teach you to pray to God, to worship him, to submit to his will, to honor your parents, to love your brothers and sisters, to love all mankind, and to do good unto all as you have opportunity, and fill all your stations and relations in life with faithfulness and propriety. These are a few of the counsels of the divine oracles to the children of men. They are as sufficient now as they were in the times of Timothy, "to make them wise unto salvation." Would youth be comfortable in life, useful and honorable in the world, have peace and hope in death, and finally be brought to those regions where rivers of blessedness eternally flow, "Let them take heed unto their way according to the word of God."

A brief address to those who are young will conclude this discourse. I have often addressed your fathers in the days of their youth, and this will probably be among my last directed to you in this particular form.

My dear children and amiable youth, all that shall be said at present will flow from the most sincere intention to promote your felicity in this world and in the next. Your bliss and misery, life and death, are placed before you, and this day you are solemnly called upon to make your election. Consider what is your state and practice. Consider you are in the hands of a God of infinite power to punish or to reward. Consider whether you have most need of God, or God of you. What will be your final destiny if you continue in sin, impenitent and unbelieving, neglecters of God, despisers of Jesus Christ and of your own immortal souls? You certainly know you must die, and pass to judgment, and these awful events may take place respecting you, while you are in all the bloom of life, and in an hour when you think not. You have attended the funerals of multitudes of persons younger than yourselves. Wherefore be exhorted in this your day to attend to the things of your peace. God is stretching out his compassionate arms unto you, the precious blood of the Saviour, which was shed for your salvation, is calling upon you; the Holy Ghost is striving with you; ministers, are calling upon you, praying for you and weeping over you. Your pious parents, in all the tender language of persuasion, and with bowels yearning for your souls, are pressing the things of religion upon you. Yea, all the holy angels, and the whole church in heaven and earth, solicitously urging you to come and drink of the waters of life freely. Now what do you say to all these mighty invitations? Will you hear or will you forbear? If you refuse to cleanse your way according to the word of God, remember the terrible denunciations of divine wrath against all such. "Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye set at nought

"all my counsel and would none of my reproof: I also will
 "laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh;
 "when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction
 "as a whirlwind, then shall they call upon me, but I will not
 "answer; they will seek me early but they shall not find me."
 To avoid these awful calamities, I beseech you by all that is
 sacred, by the happiness of heaven and the torments of the
 damned, that you would hearken to "Wisdom crying without,
 "uttering her voice in the streets; turn ye at my reproof;
 "behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make
 "known my words unto you. Hear and your souls shall
 "live." My dear youth, I leave you to God, and your own
 serious thoughts.

S E R M O N X.

*Sober mindedness warmly recommended to those
who are Young.*

Tit. ii. 6. *Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*

VARIOUS and extensive are the duties incumbent upon the ministers of the gospel. So numerous, important, and solemn, that the apostle after a review and consideration of them, exclaims, "Who is sufficient for these things?" They are to teach the whole counsel of God; every doctrine, duty and virtue contained in the scriptures. They are with propriety to address every rank, from the highest dignity of honor to the lowest grade of mankind. From those who sway sceptres and sit on thrones, down to the poor and those who sit on dunghills; all these various degrees are to be instructed by them. How much need have they of all kinds of learning and wisdom, common and uncommon, to enable them to adapt their instruction to an infinity of cases. St. Paul taught people of every class, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, ministers and people, servants and children. He instructed ministers how and to whom they should preach. He gave directions

and counsels to Timothy and Titus relative to things of the highest importance. He sometimes prescribes to them the subjects on which they should preach, and mentions the various classes of mankind to which they were to address themselves, and how their exhortations ought to be ordered. In this chapter Titus is counselled to preach the duties incumbent on every age and sex. He must teach aged men how they ought to conduct: "so that their hoary head being found in the way of righteousness might be a crown of glory to them." The aged women also he was to instruct, "that they may be in behaviour as becometh holiness. That the young women should be sober, discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, &c. Young men likewise, exhort to be sober minded." Thus ministers should be particular in their preaching. That by touching every ones case, they may affect the consciences of all. They must give to every one his portion in due season. Alas, how few are disposed to take their portion, and how ready are we to make application to others of that which we ought to take to ourselves?

The young persons to whom Titus is to address himself, he is to exhort. This word implies instruction, direction and persuasion. In order to exhort any person to the performance of his duty, he must be first taught the nature, use and advantages of it; in the next place he must be directed how to comply therewith and reduce the instruction to practice; then persuasion, commonly called exhortation, is necessary—in which motives and considerations are used, with the tenderest application to the passions, to influence and induce persons to yield a willing obedience. Here the benefits and blessings of compliance with duty, and the dangers of non-compliance are to be urged and pressed upon the conscience by every argument.

The exhortation is here directed to those who are young, and the duty to which they are to give their attention is to be *sober minded*. The whole duty incumbent upon youth is compre-

hended in this single phrase. And no doubt infinite wisdom selected this term, as the reverse of it is too incident to the young, to wit, levity, vanity, folly and inconsideration. And I hope, my dear young friends, you will suffer this exhortation to be pressed upon you with all earnestness, as it is the counsel of an inspired apostle, yea, of God your Maker himself. And according to your conformity to it or otherwise, you will be finally judged and so saved or lost to all eternity. The whole of this subject will be confined to these two things,

First, the explanation of sober mindedness.

Secondly, to lay before the younger part of my audience, some of the innumerable motives which should engage them to be sober minded.

None who are acquainted with the nature and conduct of youth, and the state of the world in general, can deem such a subject either unseasonable or impertinent.

First your attention is invited to the explanation of sober mindedness, to which the young are exhorted.

First it may be observed, that this phrase imports a sound mind, and thus it is rendered in another epistle. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind." A sound mind is opposed to one that is disordered and corrupted; and this is unhappily the case of every mind by nature. We are born unholy and unclean, vitiated and depraved. "We were shapen in sin and brought forth in iniquity. God made man upright but he hath sought out many inventions." By reason of our apostacy our minds are become the abodes of darkness, confusion and disorder. Those powers which were first formed for subjection have usurped the government in the soul; the inferior passions and sensitive appetites now rule over the superior faculties of

reason and understanding. Reason, which was formed to govern and direct in the human mind, is ejected from its throne; the understanding is overwhelmed in clouds of darkness; and the lower propensities and affections bear sway and triumph; hence all is anarchy and derangement in the soul. In order to become of a sound mind, these maladies must be healed, and these disorders must be rectified. And this is done by regeneration, repentance and faith; by a restoration of the lost image of God; of divine love and holiness. Hereby the mind becomes sound, and thus persons are formed to be sober minded.

Secondly, it implies in it consideration and thoughtfulness. The heart is naturally full of vain, foreign and impertinent thoughts. When, my young friends, will you command home your roving minds, and begin to think soberly and seriously as you ought to think? When will you turn your minds to matters of infinite moment?—to think with anxious solicitude about the concerns of your everlasting peace? “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.” Enter into your hearts and lives, and consider whether they are right with God according to the Gospel. Consider for what your capacities were created; for the service of your generation, for usefulness in the world, for the enjoyment of God and happiness forever. Consider whether it be not full time for the youngest of you to meditate upon the design of your creation, and reflect how you have lived and what you have been doing. Your passed years are gone as a tale that is told. Surely the season is come, that the youngest of you should awake from your slumbers of folly, and turn from your excursions in the fields of delusion, and begin to exercise your thoughts upon religion and the salvation of your souls. When the apostle issues forth this admonition to youth, that they should be sober minded, it is the same thing as to exhort them to be religious. And O that God would impress the counsels upon your hearts, in such a manner, that you would not allow yourselves peace, nor indulge your eyes in sleep, nor your eyelids in slumber,

till this most important matter be secured, that you are wholly reduced to the renunciation of youthful lusts, your souls dedicated to God, and by faith reposed in the bosom of your precious saviour. Remember, all youthful follies, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, and heaven *will not*, and earth and hell *cannot* pluck you out of his hands. Consider, death is approaching,—eternity opening,—and before the sun concludes the day, you may launch into that future and unknown world—you may pass the bourne from whence there is no return! “O that you were wise, that you understood *this*, that you would consider your latter end.” You know that multitudes have launched out of this state by unforeseen and unexpected deaths. Accidents, which no human powers can provide against, have instantly broken the thread of life, and in a moment opened the gates of eternity. My children, many deaths you have already escaped, and whether ever you will escape another is with a sovereign God, who gives not an account to any of his matters. Consider, God may not preserve you from another, and it is an absolute certainty you cannot preserve yourselves; wherefore, immediately receive the divine counsel and turn unto the Lord. “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?” There is no cause why you should perish, but what arises from yourselves. There is enough in your heavenly father’s house, and an abundance to spare. Instantly give yourselves up to the blessed Jesus, who poured out his soul unto death for you. He is the compassionate Saviour of youth; loved children; took them into his divine arms; laid his blessed hands upon them; and declared that of such is the kingdom of heaven. Those who deny children the blessed dedication to the arms of Jesus, I pass them over to their ignorance and their master; but Christ is merciful to little ones, whatever may be the ignorance, delusion, and perverseness of unhappy parents, destitute of natural affection. Are not children of the church God’s children?—were they not his, and devoted to him, in all the forms of visible institu-

tion in the visible church, from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, and of such has not Christ declared the kingdom of heaven to consist? God forbid that true and rational christians should prohibit their infant seed from the precious ordinance, initiating them into the church, and placing them under the blessings of the covenant of mercy. Mistaken, misinformed and deluded parents, despise the ordinance of baptism, some neglect it altogether, and some have contracted it into the narrow limits of adults. But can any make void the mercy and grace of God? Ignorant, weak and unnatural parents cannot. The covenant of grace rests upon a firmer foundation, than the feeble opinions of men. This I purpose to demonstrate with the leave of divine providence, in some future discourse, that those who deny baptism altogether, and those who deny it to infants, are grossly criminal before God, have departed from the truth, and must fall under the displeasure of heaven. It is an infinite mercy, that tho' they may deprive their children of covenant blessings in the visible church, and wickedly screen themselves from many gospel duties, yet I have always considered the former as more consistent than the latter. This is a deviation which I must relinquish, and refer to future attention.

Thirdly, another thing implied in sober mindedness is caution, circumspection, and prudence. How arduous the task to reduce youth to these virtues? The word sober minded, is sometimes rendered *discreet* as in the verse preceding our text. This I apprehend would be a leading step to true religion, and perhaps it is a constituent of its nature. Nothing can form us to wisdom and discretion equal to religion. This is one of the highest evidences which can be afforded of real piety. Thus says St. Paul, "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise redeeming the time." The resolution of the Psalmist was, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." To this Solomon often exhorts; "My son, be wise, therefore get wisdom, get understanding?" Those who are young and

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about entering upon the tumultuous ocean of this world, the best advice can be given you, is to take wisdom for your counsellor, and true religion for your monitor. These will be as a pillar of cloud to screen you by day, and as a pillar of light to direct your paths through this dark and dreary wilderness.

Fourthly, humility is another essential ingredient of a sober mind. Therefore St. Peter exhorts youth, "To be clothed with humility." Perhaps more young people are ruined by pride than by any other sin. Let not the beautiful glory in his beauty, nor the ingenious in his wit, "But if any man will glory, let him glory in the Lord." Our Saviour's direction is, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

Fifthly, purity and chastity are involved in and must not be neglected in the explanation of a sober mind. Remember our apostle declares, "Fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, youthful lusts." Abstain from every appearance of these things, and "Even from the garment spotted by the flesh." Hear the warning voice of Solomon, "Come not near her house, whose feet go down to death, and her steps take hold on hell, lest thou mourn at last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed."

Sixthly, sober mindedness implies steadiness and composure in opposition to an airy, fickle and giddy temper. "My heart is fixed, saith the Psalmist, trusting in the Lord." Establish your hearts therefore, and be not as Reuben, unstable as water, for such will never excel." Halt not between opinions, but come to a conclusion, to be for God or the enemy. Chuse you this day whom you will serve, the Saviour or Destroyer of your souls. I must not omit, to observe,

Seventhly, that gravity, sincerity, seriousness, and an orderly conduct are involved in a sober mind. He who is serious in

His manners, grave in his deportment, and upright and sincere in his dealings, is not only usually stiled a sober, but a good man. Think not, O youth, I would persuade you to assume a dark countenance, a down cast look, and a gloomy phiz. Of all people in the world, these are the most dangerous; if they raise the fullen brow to a smile, injury follows after. And remember religion is a sweet, pleasant and cheerful thing. It spreads pleasure over the face, and renders the conduct easy and accessible. In it is the command of heaven, "That we serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things." Pleasure enters into the essence of religion, yet there is a wide difference between a religious cheerfulness and a vain frothiness.

But having thus explained the nature of sobermindedness, I proceed,

Secondly, to lay before the younger part of my audience, a few of the innumerable motives, which should induce them to become soberminded. The topics, from which sobermindedness might be urged upon you, are many indeed. But I have so far enlarged on the former head, that brevity here is expedient. You will all, my dear youth, acknowledge, that you are sinners and guilty before God. You are all by nature children of disobedience and children of wrath, and the scriptures have concluded you all under sin. An awful sentence of death is passed upon you. Yet blessed be the most high, there is a way of mercy and grace revealed in the Gospel, whereby you may be recovered from the ruin of your fall, restored to the favour of God, and made everlastingly happy. You are therefore called upon to repent and believe the gospel. Harken to the voice of divine persuasion and tender compassion. Turn unto the Lord with all your heart, and become soberminded. In this way you will be comfortable in life, have hope in death, and be happy forever. You are here in this

life in a state of probation, and if you sincerely engage in religion, heaven will be your portion ; but if you continue in sin, impenitent and unconverted, after taking a few turns of levity on this mortal stage, then you must sink down into the regions of interminable despair. The longer you persevere in courses of folly and iniquity, the more difficult it will be to relinquish them. Be intreated now in this your day, solemnly to attend to the things of your peace. God is calling upon you—ministers are calling upon you—the Holy Ghost is now moving upon the hearts of many. Resist not his motions, lest God should swear in his wrath, my spirit shall no more strive with you, neither shall you enter into my rest. Recollect for a moment, what Christ Jesus has done to accomplish your salvation. Did he not descend from the glories of heaven—forsake the adoration of angelic hosts—come down into this wretched world—veil his divinity in humanity, and shroud all his infinite excellencies in the humiliating form of a servant ? Did he not continually go about doing good—teaching guilty man the way of life—taking little ones into his arms—laying his hands upon them—blessing them and declaring, that of such is the kingdom of God ? Remember his poverty, cruel mockings and excruciating sufferings. Contemplate him in the garden of Gethsemane, agonizing under the awful weight of your iniquities, the pressure of which was such, that caused his blood to forsake its usual channels and fall in clotted drops to the ground. Behold him betrayed by one of his disciples, in the basest and most deceitful treachery, with the tender and warmest signal of friendship. Follow him to the pretorium and to the high priests hall ; see him arraigned before Pilate's unequal bar ; barbarously accused, and unjustly and inhumanly condemned—view him stripped of his own raiment, dressed in the mock robes of royalty, instead of a sceptre, a reed is put into his hand, and instead of a golden, a thorny crown is fixed on his head, and here he is most contemptuously ridiculed in all his offices, he is smitten, tantalised, and when malice had exhaus-

ted all its stores, as the last and lowest exertion of meanness, he is spit upon. Behold him dragged from this horror of contempt, hurried out of the city, away to Golgotha, there nailed to the cross, the delicate and nervous parts of the body, the hands and feet pierced through by the rugged steel, suspended in this tremendous plight between heaven and earth, forsaken by his God, and all hell let loose upon him. He is here still scornfully mocked, his side pierced with a spear. While the sun is hiding his face from the scene, all nature in convulsion under the foot of the cross, he is praying for his murderers, expiring and shedding his blood for the atonement of their sins.

All this, and infinitely more than can be described, did the son of God, my dear young friends, undergo and suffer for you. Are you able now to withstand this mighty collection of motives, still proceed on in sin, in impenitence, and unbelief; despise like the barbarous Jews, the blood of salvation; trample it under foot, and make the desperate plunge into damnation? Stop, my children, halt, pause, consider for a moment. Heaven is closing, hell is opening before you; be entreated and besought by all the blood of God, shed on Calvary's hill, that you lay your ways to heart, cease from evil and immediately become sober minded. Others are bathing in this blood and drinking in the streams of life eternal, and why should not you? This is the last particular address, you will ever probably hear from my aged lips. And I shall close it all in the words of Abraham's servant to the house of Laban; "If you will deal kindly and truly with my master tell me, if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left." O! children, turn unto the Lord, and become sober-minded.

S E R M O N XI.

The Glory of God the Chief End of Man.

1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

THESE words contain a general resolution of all cases of conscience and difficulties that had arisen in the Corinthian Church respecting the eating of meats, which had been offered to idols. It was the common practice of the heathen; first to offer meat in their pagan worship on the alters of their gods, and afterwards sell it in the public markets. As this was an usual practice in the city of Corinth, it created no small perplexity among the christians. Wherefore the Apostle enters fully into this subject, and states the duty of every class of christians, the weak and the strong, those who thought they might eat these meats, and those who were of a different opinion. And here he sums up the whole matter in this general maxim or rule in our text. This was designed not merely for the direction of this church in a particular instance, but for the government of all christians throughout all generations in the general and habitual conduct of their lives. A principle

of supreme respect to the glory of God must reign in the heart, and preside over the whole tenor of their practice. The mere lawfulness of an action is not always to be considered, but the expediency of it likewise must be taken into view. There are some things which are duty without hesitation, but there are many things in which time, place, and a variety of circumstances must be attended to, in order to our determining, whether the performance of them be for the honor of God.

This rule is laid down by St. Paul as the standard of all our actions. The lowest and most common, as well as the highest and most important. There are no branches of conduct exempted from this authority. A neglect of or a disrespect to this rule, is as real rebellion against the principles of reason, as those of revelation.

This maxim plainly supposes, that the glory of God, ought to be so much the ground of human actions, that none can be morally good or virtuous, which originate not from this source. Where the heart is destitute of this principle and not governed by it, all must be wrong, vicious, and sinful. The chief end of man is to glorify God, and the infallable connection is the enjoyment of him forever.

The doctrine in our text is evidently this, that all our actions ought to be done to the glory of God.—This does not suppose we are always to have this object in view, or immediately contemplate it previous to the performance of *every* action. This would be an impossible supposition. We know not that angels or the spirits of just men made perfect, or that even the man Christ Jesus, called upon this principle to lead him in the performance of *every* action. It is enough for us sinful and very imperfect creatures to know, that the glory of God, ought to be our habitual and prevalent end, though not continually exercised and brought into view. If this be the habit of the soul, the frame of the heart, and maintain a prevalence in the con-

vation, it surely connects the soul with salvation, notwithstanding all the deviations, relaxations, departures, negligences, and the whole train of infirmities which are our constant attendants.

When it is here affirmed that whatsoever we do ought to have a respect to the glory of God, the meaning does not exclude a proper and rational regard to ourselves. We ought to love ourselves, for this is the constituted standard of love to our neighbor. We affirm without hesitation that persons ought to regard themselves, their own interest, and the happiness of their families and near and dear connections, only let reason and religion fix every thing in its proper place and order.

This apostolic maxim does not mean to exclude a just respect to the future recompence of reward. If we regard the glory of God and our own future existence, all these things are admitted to their proper situation, both by reason and revelation. The great features of beauty consist in light and shade, and exhibited in proper time and place. That persons own interest should influence them in matters natural, civil, moral and religious, cannot be denied by any person in the exercise of reason, who believes in divine revelation. The passions of hope and fear are continually brought before us to influence our actions, both in the natural and Christian system. The great question is, whether self interest, or the love of God, ought to hold the supreme influence in our conduct. Nature, even corrupted nature, admitting a glimpse of the light of reason over the darkness, points the latter to be the directorial seat. Were this order to be reversed, and the reins surrendered to self-interest, separate and independant, this would be giving the chariot of the sun, of all rectitude and propriety, to the silly, proud and ambitious boy Phaeton, and throwing the whole world into a blaze. If the leading respect, and the first principles of duty, are perverted from God, nothing but confu-

tion, disorder and unhappiness can follow. If any circumstances could alter this supreme right, it might be altogether abolished ; a right which may be impaired, may also be extinguished ; and this would reduce heaven to earth ; and in this situation all would be hell.

The blessed principle in our text places all things in their proper order, God as supreme, and all intelligent creatures in their respective stations, commanding and diffusing happiness to the utmost extension of creation. The actions of common, civil, and religious life, must all originate from this principle. These give life its value in a spiritual and moral view, and raise the meanest actions, even a cup of cold water, to an eternal reward. If any inferior principle leads our conduct, and habitually directs our actions, whether self-interest, self-love, or whatever else, our actions however splendid and showy before the world, there is no virtue and goodness in them before God. They are mere tinsel and appearance, and have no reality in them.

There are three things which form actions for the glory of God. First, they must be lawful ; secondly, expedient and proper in time and place ; thirdly, they must be impregnated with a supreme respect to the honor of God in their performance. If actions be unlawful no goodness of intention can make them virtuous ; if the motives be sinister, no perfection of external materiality, can give them value ; all must be tinged with an habitual and predominant respect to God, or be an abomination in the divine sight.

These things being observed in illustration of the principle in the text, I proceed to offer some things farther in confirmation and establishment of its truth.

First, this doctrine is confirmed by all those passages of

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scripture, which declare that christians ought not to live to themselves. Their own individual interest and personal advantage, ought not to be their chief end in life, and the ultimate view in their actions. An aphorism of the gospel is, "that believers should not live to themselves. None of us," saith St. Paul, liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; "for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." All know that to live to ourselves is to act under the influence of a principle to please and serve ourselves, or our own corrupt propensities and inclinations, to promote our own separate interest and happiness, aside from the honor of God. Whether our own individual happiness be present or future, in exclusion of a supreme respect to God, the issue will be the same. If we are not to live, and eat and drink for ourselves, it must be for the glory of God. No other idea can enter into the heart of man, of living to God, but living with a view to glorify him.

Secondly, the doctrine of the text is illustrated and established by all those scriptures which state it the duty of man to intend the glory of God as the highest end of all his actions. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified, thro' Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever." This shows us that the ultimate end of all our actions, ought to be the great Supreme.

Another thing of equal import is asserted with regard to Christians; "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Remark here, christians are not their own, but God's, his right and property, not merely by creation but by redemption and sanctification. The inference is, we

are not our own; no member or faculty is to be disposed of according to our carnal pleasure, but all we have and are, must be consecrated to God. They are his under every view, and ought to be devoted to his glory in all respects.

Thirdly, this doctrine is evinced from all those scriptures which show that God ought to be loved above all creatures. The true reason of love is the excellency and amiableness of any object; and it ought to be ever proportioned to the measure of worthiness. Agreeable to this idea, the scriptures teach us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves. We are to love God to the utmost of our capacity, because he is infinitely amiable; but this is not due to ourselves, nor to any other creature. To love ourselves more than God, is the source of all evil; but to love God supremely is the foundation of all virtue and goodness. In this consists not only religion but happiness. All real happiness is acquired in subserviency to the love, glory and majesty of God. It would be easy to shew in a demonstrative manner, how the denial of supreme love to God tends to the ruin of the divine character, and the subversion of his throne. For God to relinquish this requisition, would be to relinquish his honor and the glory of his name.

Fourthly, this doctrine is manifested from the example of Jesus Christ as Mediator. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. He glorified him upon earth. The conduct of all the glorified saints in heaven, the testimony of all true saints in this world, yea, the holy angels, cherubim and seraphim, unite in the affirmation of this doctrine. Thus speaks St. John, "Every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb forever and ever."

This doctrine is readily granted, but the inference from, and the improvement of it, is of the greatest importance.

First, it appears from this subject, that those actions in which the chief governing respect of the heart is only to ourselves, our own interest and exclusive happiness, can have no true virtue or real goodness in them. To suppose a subordinate respect to God, and a supreme respect to ourselves, is a subversion of the very nature and order of things. This can imply no love to God at all, no regard for his glory, but is an expression of the highest instance of pride and contempt. Therefore, where a respect to God in any actions is not the habitual and governing principle, there can be no moral goodness in them, and they can profit nothing. If God's glory must be the chief end of all our actions, and if the value of actions arise from respect hereto, then all those destitute of this respect contain no virtue. There can be no virtue in actions where the essence and life of virtue is absent. A supreme respect to God is the essential nature of virtue ; wherefore, all actions destitute of this, are not merely destitute of virtue, but they are wicked and sinful, being not such as God requires.

Secondly, it appears, there is no true goodness or holiness in the performances, prayers and duties of unconverted sinners. Whatever difference there may be between them in other circumstances, there is none in this. The performance of one is as really destitute of virtue as another. The reason is, there is no respect of heart to the glory of God. Tho' our prayers may be as pompous and showy as the Pharisees, all will be nothing without divine love. Therefore there can be nothing in a sinner's duties by which he can make himself better, or render himself more meet for the divine mercy. Hence you will always hear sinners crying, " O ! if I was not so wicked, I might hope for favor, but I am so heinous a transgressor, " grace can never be extended to me." And thus they are

continually worrying to make themselves better, and fit themselves for the reception of Christ. But be assured, O sinners, you will never be better by all your wailings, tears and cries, till you go to Jesus poor and miserable, wretched and naked as you are, until you become washed and cleansed by his blood. Wait not for delusive impossibilities : stand not in the vain expectation of making yourselves better by your fastings, prayers and mortifications, but instantly in all your corruptions lay hold on an offered saviour ; flee from Sodom to Zoar—tarry not on the sulphurous plain—escape to the mountain—look not behind you. Christ never says, make yourselves better and then come ; but his language uniformly is, “ Come unto me and I will give you rest. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Thirdly, we here learn that all acceptable duties in their very nature, involve in them true respect and a sincere love to God. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good. Our prayers, in our appearance, posture and words, suppose a respect to God. You would think it strange to see a person set about to pray, and worship the God of Israel, and at the same time declare he did not intend to show him any respect, or holy reverence. Such a declaration would even shock the depravity of man. Hence all prayers, public homage and religious performances, proceed upon the supposition of a respect and love to God. And where this is not their foundation they cannot meet with acceptance. “ Whatsoever therefore ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”

“ Fourthly, it appears from this doctrine, that as there is no virtue in the doings of the wicked and impenitent, there can be no promises of grace and salvation made to performances originating from an heart full of enmity and insincerity. The

very supposition of special grace, and saving favours, connected with such exercises, implies not only an absurdity, but something very unfavourable to the divine character. It seems to imply that God has no regard to sincerity and real goodness, more than to sinful and wicked desires; that he is as well satisfied with the show of piety as its reality; yea, that he stands as ready to reward the former with grace and salvation as the latter. Can it be credible to any person who has even tolerable speculative notions of the divine perfections, of the evil of sin or the desperate wickedness of the human heart? Would not such promises demolish the distinction between virtue and vice, between right and wrong? Can God approve of sin as well as holiness, and set as high a value upon inimical passions, as friendly affections. Hence let this gospel truth be held up strongly to the view of saints and sinners; the former have an experimental knowledge of it while the latter doubt. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy."

Fifthly, we are from this doctrine instructed in the best of all sciences, the nature of true religion. It consists in a genuine respect to the interest and glory of God. This is the soul and spirit of all piety. In the absence of this, all appearances of religion are like the deaf shell, fair outwardly but emptiness within. Without charity or divine love all is nothing. For God's sake, for the sake of our immortal souls, let us not deceive ourselves—the judge is at the door, and our destiny will be instantly decided. God will not be mocked, and imposition cannot enter into his presence, therefore wander no longer in the fascinating wilds of deception. He will never accept seeming virtue for real. He is a jealous God and his name is jealous, and he will suffer none to be preferred before him. If we prefer ourselves or any other creature, he will surely right himself upon us in due time; he will manifest that his glory shall not be given to another. Consider this, all ye that forget

God, lest he tear you to pieces and there be none to deliver.

Sixthly, persons may here learn in a general measure to estimate the degree of piety and religion there is in their habitual course of life. These are exactly as the degrees of respect they bear to the glory of God. The more regard there is in our conduct to the honor of the Most High, there is the more religion. If there be little love to God, there is little religion in the soul, however numerous, pompous and expensive the external exhibitions of it may be. By this rule of estimation, alas, how little religion is even in the best ; and in what multitudes, none at all ? They eat and drink, and live entirely for themselves, as if they were independantly their own, and none was Lord over them. Let us, therefore, my hearers, look into the leading views and motives of our lives. Some perhaps may obtain the greatest blessing which at present can be bestowed, to wit, a full conviction that we have no religion, that we are dead in trespasses and sins. And others, in whom there is some good thing towards the Lord, may be humbled for their declensions, and aroused from their slumbers, to a closer walk with God. How many have reason to lament the loss of their first love. " Wherefore let us remember from whence we have fallen, and do our first works, lest Jesus Christ should come quickly, and remove his candlestick out of his place." Sleep not as do others, but watch and be sober. See that you live not to yourselves, but to the Lord who hath redeemed you.

Those who know in their own consciences that you are destitute of all love and respect to the glory of God, surely it is high time for you to consider your ways. If you have been all your days enemies to God and neglecters of the Lord Jesus Christ, now after so long a time, " Hear the voice of the Lord, and repent lest you all likewise perish ; repent and believe the gospel ; repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." Consider if you give not glory to God, his jealousy and vengeance will smoke against you

another day ; but if you turn unto him with your whole hearts, your souls shall live. " Turn ye, turn ye, for why will " you die." Let our text be engraven on the palms of your hands, that it may be continually before you. " Whether, " therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the " glory of God."

S E R M O N X I I .

Self-examination a necessary preparative to the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 28. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat
of that bread and drink of that cup.*

WE shall not now attend merely to the words of our text, but with them take a brief view of the institution of the Lord's supper in general. From the seventeenth to the twenty-third verse of this chapter, the blessed Apostle had been sharply reproving these Corinthian christians for their irregularities, indecencies, and wicked conduct at the sacred table. Their abominable practice was such, as not only brought reproach upon christianity, and disgrace upon themselves, but subverted the very design of this divine institution. They waited not one for another, they sat not down together with an holy reverence, like Christ and his disciples, but they rushed to the place where the ordinance was to be celebrated, in a strange, disorderly manner. Surely they could have very little appearance of a religious assembly, when every one as

he came, took, eat and drank to excess. "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper; for in eating every one taketh before another his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken." God has left the awful miscarriages of this church upon record, not for our imitation, but for our warning and caution. This is the reason St. Paul administers such severe rebukes. "What have you not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Hence he declares to them, that for this cause, the judgments of Heaven had fallen upon them. "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Thus they came together, "not for the better, but for the worse." The ordinance as managed by them, was so far from being honored, or improved for their edification and spiritual benefit, that it was disgraced and they themselves suffered the greatest injury, and were exposed to the just condemnation of God. This shows us that duties not performed in a manner agreeable to the will of Heaven, are not considered as duties at all, neither can they meet with the divine approbation. The Apostle declares that these people, whatever they might profess did not eat the Lord's supper." Many a prayer has been said, when the persons did not pray; many a sacrament received, and yet not duly celebrated. God requires not merely a respect to the matter, but likewise to the manner of performing duty in order to his acceptance. A sincere heart and well informed mind will be attentive to, and very careful on this head.

The apostle after testifying against the dreadful misconduct of these Christians, refers them to the original institution of it by Christ. He acquaints them with the nature of the ordinance in all its parts. He states before them the author of it, the time when it was instituted, the prayers to accompany it,

the sacramental symbols and actions, the temper of the heart, the views of the mind, and every thing appertaining to the right and worthy celebration of the same. Next he proceeds to represent to them the sin and danger of an unbecoming and dishonorable participation of it. This he does in the preceding and subsequent verses to our text. In the one he says, "Whoever shall eat the bread of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And in the other, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself; not discerning the Lord's body." A very concise explication of these words is all we can attend to at present. The principal things contained herein are, what is meant by the terms *unworthily*, and *worthily*; what to be *guilty of the blood of the Lord*? what is that *damnation*, that unworthy partakers eat and drink to themselves?

First, in regard to the word *unworthily*. All are unworthy in a certain sense. All are unworthy of the favour and the grace of God; unworthy of the least of all his mercies. There is no merit in any sinner, sanctified or unsanctified. The original signifies an *unmeetness*, *unfitness*, *unsuitableness*, *unpreparedness*. To eat and drink unworthily is to attend upon the ordinance in an unprepared and unsuitable manner; in such a temper and under the influence of such habits and practices as are altogether unbecoming the nature, use and end of the institution. Both coming unfitly, and staying away, are heinous and condemning sins; but the Apostle seems to intimate that the former is the most base and aggravated.

The word *worthily* signifies an attendance upon this sacrament in a way of preparedness and meetness according to the gospel. Persons are *worthy* receivers in the sight of God, when they come prepared; having some proper measure of christian knowledge; suitable frames of mind, meet desires, and a due sense of their need of the soul purifying blood,

and the justifying righteousness of Christ. A christian may be a worthy receiver who approaches the sacred table with reverence, humility and devotion, under a feeling sense of his sinfulness and great unworthiness, tho' he has many scruples fears and doubts respecting his state. Assurance of grace however desirable is not necessary to a worthy and acceptable performance of this duty. Even a degree of backwardness, dullness and deadness in the service, if these things be involuntary and lamented, do not render us unworthy receivers. One design of the ordinance is to strengthen the weak, encourage the fearful, dissipate our glooms and doubts, and increase our hopes. Wherefore all who have been faithful in self-examination, humbling themselves for their sins, casting their souls upon a crucified Redeemer, and endeavoring after a due preparation of heart, although they still find much corruption and perplexity of spirit, yet they ought to come ; the weak in faith we must receive.

Secondly, we are to enquire what is intended by being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Unworthy partakers implicitly approve of the conduct of the Jews in crucifying the Saviour of the world. It is implicitly despising and rejecting his atonement, mediation and righteousness. It is like stabbing the master at his own feast. And unless deep repentance take place, damnation will be the consequence. Many who killed the prince of life, denied and delivered him up in the presence of Pilate, were brought to evangelical repentance by the preaching of Peter at the gate of the temple called Beautiful. If the sins of those who actually imbrued their hands in his blood were pardoned, then surely unworthy partakers, however gross and wicked their participation may be, tho' they should so far dishonor the ordinance as to drink common healths at the table, which has been done in modern times, yet even these wretches of profanity, upon their repentance, may obtain forgiveness. Unworthy partaking is far distant from the unpar-

donable sin against the Holy Ghost. If it were an unpardonable sin, woe to the most of professors. Who has not participated in an unprepared and unworthy manner? God is judge, and we are before him. But,

Thirdly, unworthy partakers are declared to eat and drink *damnation* to themselves. This is a tremendous sentence, yet some modern preachers in the complete intoxication of ignorant zeal, have declared to their hearers, "At this table ye eat and drink your salvation or damnation" Such ebullitions, however terrifying, from the pulpit or press, are perfectly absurd, for they are unfounded and untrue in every part. Persons may come to the sacrament and eat and drink there, and this will ensure not their salvation, and they may do the same without the entailment of damnation. The word, which is translated by the terrific term damnation, signifies nothing more than that disapprobation of heaven, judgment and condemnation, demerited by every sin. How our excellent translators were so unhappy in the selection of this phrase, in this place, which has distressed and given anguish to many a sincere heart, I pretend not to say; but the whole current of paraphrases, expositors, commentators, and critics have given a different construction of this word. It is a term often used in the New Testament, and never employed for any other purpose than to express the disapprobation of God against sin, and its connection with condemnation. All sin creates a connection with divine wrath, which can only be dissolved by repentance and faith; but the sin of unworthily partaking is not more unpardonable than any other. This must be repented of as well as all others, or we must surely perish. Every sin exposes to damnation as well as this, but it does not follow because we have been unworthy partakers, that we shall be unavoidably damned, as some have ignorantly imagined; for this sin admits of repentance as well as any other. Otherwise these Corinthian christians must have all been assuredly damned, which is

abundantly represented as contrary to fact. It is true, if we have been unworthy partakers without repentance we must perish; but all sinners unless they repent shall be miserable, wherefore there is no help in this case, either by staying away or coming improperly; all must suffer condemnation as out of Christ, therefore we are reduced or shut up to the faith and obedience of the Gospel, or to be ruined forever. The sin of these Corinthians did not consist in their coming to the sacrament, but in their coming in that indecent and abominable manner in which I think no other christians ever did. Hence the apostle commands them to "tarry one for another, that they come not together for condemnation." Wherefore let unworthy communicants be warned, and neglecters of the sacrament be alarmed, that you must all equally perish without repentance, reformation, and a devout and religious performance of every duty.

But it is more than time I should leave these transitory remarks, and lead your attention to the words of our text. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him come and eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

A few observations upon this subject are all that time will now allow.

First observe, the commandment here, "so let him come," cannot suppose upon examination whether he is meet for the ordinance or not he ought to approach the sacred board; for if upon reflection and consideration he finds himself to be ignorant, scandalous, impenitent and impure, and resolved so to continue, common sense teaches, he ought not to come. But upon examination to know his own heart and his meetness for the holy communion, he finds certain exercises, breathings, desires and dispositions, answerable to the design of the institution, he ought to come. If amidst all his fears, troubles and misgivings of heart, he feels himself sincerely wishing a deliverance from sin, longing to be made holy, willing to accept of Christ

as his Saviour, desirous to renounce himself and his own righteousness, and to rest upon the mere mercy of God as revealed in the Gospel, resolving to deny every carnal lust, to strive against every unruly passion, and to walk with God in duty; then he ought to draw near to the sacred board and partake of the symbols of his Lord's sufferings.

Secondly, the word *examine*, signifies to try or prove, and this is his own personal duty. It is not enough that he is examined by the minister or representatives of the church however they may approve of him or not; this is an injunction incumbent upon each individual. This is not a service to be performed once in a person's life, but it is ordained as a standing preparative to the sacrament. It is true there may be more or less time for this performance according to a variety of providential incidents, yet it ought ever to be remembered as a preparative duty. Let a man examine himself as to the disposition of his heart, the prevailing tenor of his life, his thoughts, words, and actions; his faith, love and repentance; mourn over and confess to God what is amiss, and solemnly purpose a better and more circumspect conduct in future, and "so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup." Let him pass through one duty to another that Christ may be obeyed and his own spiritual interest promoted.

Thirdly observe, self-examination is a common duty, somewhat like prayer, incumbent upon christians at all times. "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith, prove your own selves. Let us search and try our ways. I commune with mine own heart said Asaph, and my spirit made diligent search." But it is here constituted and made a special duty previous to our attendance upon the Lord's supper. Can any christian approach the table without previous prayer; so neither let him do it without self-examination, lest he be found disobedient to God, and it prove to him as a barren ordinance.

Fourthly observe, the most important part of this duty, to wit, the manner in which it should be performed. It is not a matter suddenly to be rushed into, without serious thought or consideration, nor hastily passed over as of little moment. Choose a proper place of retirement, and time for the purpose, and enter not upon it, as is the case with too many, with prepossessions and preconclusions in your favour. Engage in it with some proper understanding of the scriptures, and a determination they shall be the standard of the trial. Consider well the operations of your own minds, and how you have felt your hearts inclined to good or evil; whether you have yielded to temptations or resisted them. Let your souls be awakened and aroused to all attention in the investigation of yourselves, your tempers and lives. Be impartial and honest as far as possible in the search, Accompany all your reflections with solemn and fervent prayer. Strive with your reluctant hearts and compel them to the work. Keep them from wandering and trifling, and especially guard against deceit. "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life."

A fifth observation is, that we should attend to the things about which we should examine ourselves. These are elegantly summed up in our shorter catechism in the answer to this question, "What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper? It is required that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love and new obedience, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves." The compend is important and the arrangement beautiful. The first matter of this examination is of our knowledge. The apostle fully suggests to us that we must have a competency hereof to discern the Lord's body. Knowledge may be considered as of two kinds, doctrinal and experimental. By the former is meant an understanding of the truths of the gospel; by the latter an acquaintance with the power of

them on the heart and conscience. This knowledge would seem should proceed thus far at least ; that we should have some proper views of the perfections of God and his law ; of the evil of sin and our own miserable state by nature and practice, of the extent and efficacy of the remedial provision for the salvation of sinners through the fulness of the atonement of Jesus Christ ; and some just apprehensions of the nature, design, and use of this holy ordinance. The more persons have of this knowledge and experimental acquaintance with divine truth, they are likely to have the clearer discernment of the Lord's body, the intention of his sufferings and death, and the more comfort and joy in the holy communion.

Secondly, we are to enquire into our faith to feed upon him. We approach not the table of the Lord merely to eat a small morsel of bread or drink a little quantity of wine, but to shew forth his death, and to feed upon his body and blood, for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, and this only can be done by faith. Christ is often spoken of under the figure of bread, and it is necessary we should eat this bread of life, and faith is the means by which it must be done. Bread is necessary for the sustenance of our mortal bodies, so faith in Jesus Christ is of equal importance to the salvation of our immortal souls. Without faith it is impossible that any should be saved. Hence we should sincerely enquire whether we are possessed of this grace. Have we been convinced of our sin and misery, our inability to deliver ourselves ?—Have we fled to Jesus of Nazareth, and unfeignedly accepted him as the Lord our righteousness ?—Have we embraced him in all his offices, and do we wait upon and trust in him alone for eternal life ?

Thirdly, our repentance must be examined into. We must come to the Lord's table sorrowing and mourning over our sins, confessing our iniquities, with real purposes of heart to carry on a constant war against our corruptions.

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A fourth branch of examination respects our love ; love to God, love to the Saviour, and love to our neighbour. Do we love God supremely ? Is the blessed Redeemer precious to us as he is to them that believe ?—and are we cultivating love to our neighbour, or loving him as ourselves ?

Lastly, we should enquire into our new obedience ; whether our obedience arises from new views, new principles and new motives. Do we make choice of the law of God for the rule of our life ? Do we delight in it after the inward man ? Are we honestly endeavouring after conformity thereto ?—Thus we should examine ourselves as a duty preparative to our celebration of the supper of the Lord, lest coming unworthily we eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

But it is time that this subject should be brought to a conclusion. And this shall be done in a brief exhortation.

Let all be solemnly exhorted to the practice of this important duty of self-examination. Be not slothful and careless in a matter of such momentous consequence. Beware you attend not upon this ordinance through formality, or as custom leads the way. But engage in it in self-dedication, renewing your covenant with God, setting to it this seal, that God is true. Maintain a deep sense of your exceeding great sinfulness and unworthiness. Loath and abhor yourselves, and repent around the sacred board with a broken heart. Look on him whom you have pierced and crucified by your iniquities, and mourn in bitterness, with all that melting feeling, and sincerity, which afflicts the soul of him who mourns for a first born child.

Consider the sins you have been guilty of since the last time of communicating ; the passions which have burst forth ; the corruptions that have been indulged, and acknowledge them in deep contrition before God. Let us lay aside malice, envy, wrath and every base propensity and inclination, and wait on

our precious Saviour in faith and love, in the exercise of every grace, and with full purpose of soul to live in the practice of every virtue. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened, for Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

S E R M O N XIII.

Remembering Christ at his Table.

Luke xxii. 19. *This do in Remembrance of me.*

TO love, receive and trust in the precious Redeemer of the world, to commit our souls to his holy keeping, and rest solely on his atoning merits for eternal life, is the absolute duty of all the children of men, to whom the revelation of his name is made known. All who enjoy the light of the gospel, ought to have his character engraven upon their hearts in everlasting remembrance. And the happy individuals who have felt the power of his grace and tasted his loving kindness, is it possible they should ever forget him? Alas! they forget and neglect him often. But wonder, O Heaven! and be astonished, O Earth! he never either forgets or neglects you. However careless, O! christians, you may be at seasons with respect to the blessed Saviour, the Shepherd of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, ceases not for a moment his watch over you. "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel,—Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yea, they may forget, yet

“will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands ; thy walks are continually before me.” Hearken, O ! believers, to the declarations of him, who was crucified and shed his blood for you. “*You shall feed in the ways, and your pastures shall be in the high places. You shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat, nor the sun smite you : for he that hath mercy on you shall lead you ; even by the springs of water shall he guide you.*” Does the blessed Jesus, thus remember his dear people, and are they unmindful of him ? How should this awaken all their sensibilities, and banish their stupid inconsideration, and cause floods of tears to gush from their repenting eyes ? But for the support of poor, feeble and forgetful believers, hearken to this sweet declaration of your all-sufficient intercessor. “*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knoweth our frame : he remembereth that we are dust.*” His remembrances in his life and death, and when his saving blood was flowing from every vein, are too numerous for a present recital, the whole of which is compressed in the ordinance we are now about to celebrate. This was his last supper on earth, and an illustrious instance of his infinite and dying love for his church. This he left as a last public gift, and a distinguishing memorial of himself, by which in symbolical representations, he is to be exhibited in all that he did and suffered for apostate man, until the consumption of all things. Christ intended this institution for the support, encouragement and comfort of his Church, to quicken them in duty, to refresh them in their journey thro’ the wilderness to be a pillar of shade by day, of light by night, to be bread in the wilderness, and water from the rock. Hence the great commandment in this ordinance is, “*This do in remembrance of me.*” How sweet the precept ; how endearing the recollection of all his humiliation and sufferings, to accomplish the salvation of men and their restoration to the peace, favour and enjoyment of God. The enjoyment of God, how great the

idea ? a happiness, higher than heaven, broader than the earth, and more extensive than the sea. And this, O rememberer of Christ, and more than this, will be the portion of thy soul forever.

There is an awful residue in the converted soul of proneness to a forgetfulness of Jesus ; to alleviate and check this disease was one thing designed in this sacred institution. Our Lord, who knew all things, knew how apt the hearts of his people would be to forget him amidst the throng of their corruptions and the croud of sensible objects ; their pleasures and worldly business ; therefore he appointed and left this memorial of himself.— Men do not usually neglect the remembrances, the mortal rings and dying signatures of their departed relatives and friends. Christ has here left his church a token of his friendship and a dying memorial of all he did for the recovery of the spiritual life they had lost, and their restoration to the favour of God and forfeited felicity.

It would be impossible to enter into the nature, designs, uses, benefits and purposes of this holy ordinance in a single discourse ; therefore all that will claim your attention at present shall be only a few meditations on the duty enjoined, and the manner of performing it, agreeable to the commandment in our text, “ This do in remembrance of me.”

First, with regard to the obligations of the duty itself, these can be scrupled by none, who give any credit to the authority and power invested in our Lord. It was not intended as a temporary ordinance, such as washing of feet, and some other things performed by our Saviour, but never afterwards practised by his apostles ; but it was ordained to be of standing use in the Church throughout all generations. Hence it was a duty observed by the apostolic and all succeeding churches down to the present day. I grant there have been some in all ages and many in the present day, who have and do consider it as a

temporary institution which was adopted for the introduction of christianity, but not to be of perpetual order. To retail their various opinions, and their neglect of this ordinance, and their strange spiritual constructions concerning it might exhibit some reading, but surely could not promote your comfort or edification.

An attendance upon this sacrament is plainly binding upon all christians; it was commanded by our Lord, practised by the apostles and all primitive Churches, and in the faith and under the sense and assurance of these obligations we continue in all good conscience to celebrate the same. It is honoring Christ Jesus, his sufferings and death, and he assuredly gives his blessing to all those who faithfully wait upon him herein. It is glorifying God in the recollection of his only begotten son, whom he gave and made a sacrifice for the sins of men. To remember Jesus at the sacred table is complying with the will of heaven. And to obey is better than all burnt offerings. Did God remember us from eternity, did he in time set forth his dear Son to be a propitiation for sin, did he remember his promise to Abraham and the patriarchs, did Jesus bleed and die for us, and shall we not remember the author of our salvation with hearts overflowing with love, gratitude and praise? Did the blessed Redeemer remember us, when we lay in our own blood, and there was no eye to pity us, nor hand to help us, and can we ever cease from remembering him? Was he crucified for our transgressions; did he rise again for our justification; did he procure for us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, life, immortality and a heavenly inheritance. Did he institute this precious ordinance as a memorial of his whole mediatorial character, of all that he underwent from his leaving his Father's bosom, till his ascension to glory, and shall we be such ingrates as not to remember him in this pledge of his love? "If I forget thee, O Jesus, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." Surely to multiply reasons for

the enforcement of a duty, where the commandments are so repeated and plain, that they can neither be evaded or denied, could answer no important purpose. Wherefore I proceed,

Secondly, to consider the manner in which this duty ought to be performed. It is a matter of infinite moment that Christ be properly remembered at his table. This ordinance can hardly be celebrated by us without some consideration of the Saviour ; but to remember him in such a way as to be approved by him as worthy partakers, is not a matter of easy attainment.

Would we perform this duty in an acceptable manner, we are to engage in it with composure of mind,—with an holy reverence in our hearts,—with hungering and thirsting desires after greater measures of grace,—with exalted expectations,—in the exercise of faith,—love,—humility,—repentance, and purposes of future obedience.

First, we are to approach this holy table in remembrance of our dear Redeemer, with composure of mind. Our hearts often prove like a deceitful bow, and our thoughts wander into a thousand impertinences. Scarcely any thing more difficult than to watch and keep the heart. Yet this we are honestly to endeavour while we are employed in this solemn duty. We should be banishing all worldly, carnal, and trifling thoughts. When any of these vanities will intrude upon our devotions, we should repel them as Nehemiah did the messengers of his enemies who were sent to divert him from the work of the Lord. “ I am doing a great work, why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you ? ” Thus let us expel all vain and improper thoughts from our souls.

Secondly, we ought to remember to attend this ordinance with an holy reverence in our hearts. We should reverence God, reverence the blessed Jesus, and maintain a due respect

For the institution itself. We should bear upon our minds, that the king is present at his own entertainment, "Who is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of them that are about him." Let us come before him in the celebration of this sacrament, with "reverence and godly fear."

Thirdly, we should attend upon this duty with hungering and thirsting desires. "The desires of our souls must be towards the Lord and the remembrance of his name." To have communion with God, and to desire none upon earth besides him, is a sweet and comfortable state of mind. It brings heaven as it were into this world. And a special blessing is pronounced upon all such. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." Let our desires be enlarged to-day. Let us feel such exercises as possessed the Psalmist when he said, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee,—to see thy power and thy glory,—that my soul may be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." Blessed feelings, blessed spiritual breathings, and blessed experiences. O that ours may be of a similar nature, and that all the desires of our hearts may be gratified at this season.

Fourthly, let us approach this ordinance with elevated and exalted expectations. *That* faith in the beloved which enlarges the desires also raises hopes, and matures them like Abraham's to an holy confidence. You are not led to day to summer brooks, which disappoint the weary traveller, and as it is said in Job, "Consumed out of their place." But this ordinance directs you to living fountains, which issue forth unfailing streams to everlasting life.—Let each communicant say to his soul; Draw near to the table of love, thy Redeemer has instituted the feast, and he has promised for thee, "abundantly above

“What thou canst ask or think.” Remember, O christain, your Saviour gives liberally and upbraids not, he gives like a king, yea, like a God, all things richly to enjoy.

However you may bow your heads at his table, let your hearts ascend to heaven and all its glories, with full and assured expectation that all these will be yours and that forever. Remember the provision in this feast is Christ, his atonement, his righteousness, and all his benefits. What can you wish, expect and hope for that will not be granted? Remember all is yours, earth is yours, life and death are yours, things present and things to come are yours, heaven is yours, and to comprehend all possible blessings in one word, “God is yours.” Surely you are not fit for the table of the Lord, if your souls can expect or wish for more.

Lastly, would we attend this divine institution to our comfort and edification, and in a worthy and acceptable manner, it must be performed in the exercises of faith, love, humility, repentance, and in purposes of future obedience.

Faith is an essential grace of the christain life. We must thereby look unto Christ at all times, live upon him, deriving influence and communications from him, and depend upon him for spiritual strength for the right performance of every duty, and in a particular manner to look unto him that he would enable us to keep this feast, that his death may be shown forth, his glory, and our own peace and happiness promoted. When we receive the sacred elements, let our hearts rest on the strength of the Lord for assistance that we may present and consecrate ourselves to him, a living, holy and acceptable sacrifice. By faith let us live, by faith let us die, by faith let us observe the holy communion, until we shall enter into the perfect communion of the celestial regions.

The exercises of divine love are of the highest consequence in every matter of a religious nature. Without love no religion. Without love no worthy participation of the sacred supper. Without love no union to Christ—no favour of God—no peace of conscience—no well grounded hope of eternal glory. Did Christ love his church in such a manner, and to such a degree, as to shed his most precious blood, and expire on the cross, on Calvary's hill, and shall not a flame of supreme love be kindled in our souls to him?—Shall we behold him exhibited in this ordinance in all the agonies and sufferings of his dying love, his body broken and his blood poured forth, and shall not our souls, while we sit around his table, ascend on the wings of ardent affection to him?

Besides faith and love, we ought to draw near to this ordinance in humility, godly sorrow and evangelical repentance. The greater nearness to God, the more we are exalted in privileges, the more we will feel our unworthiness, and the deeper will be our abasement before him. Angels veil their faces in his presence; Abraham prostrated himself on the ground; and David sat down astonished when the Most High conferred honours upon him, and cried out, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" True repentance and a Godly sorrow becomes us at this sacred board. Here we should look on him-whom we have pierced by our sins, and mourn as he that mourns for an only begotten son, and bewail ourselves in bitterness, as he who is in bitterness for a first born child. Here, tears of repentance, love, gratitude and pleasure ought freely to flow.—And all our graces and exercises ought to be accompanied with purposes and firm resolutions of future and persevering obedience. Our resolutions ought to be such as to exclude all future revocation. He who puts his hand to the plough, must not look back. The Israelite who has passed the red sea must never long for the flesh pots of Egypt. Our ears must be nar-

led to the door posts of the temple of the Lord with full purposes of heart to be his servants forever. Let the glory of God be our chief end, his unerring word our rule, the blood of the lamb our support and consolation, the Holy Ghost our guide, counsellor and director, and this refreshing ordinance, the covenant of grace, and its promises, be unto us the bread of life and the water of life, till we shall be introduced to the felicities of the celestial state.

Various and important are the uses of instruction, reproof, comfort and direction which flow from this subject, of which I shall now only hint at a few.

First, we ought to lament the awful proneness of our hearts to neglect God and forget the blessed Saviour. This is matter of deep contrition, mourning and sorrow. O that our heads were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night over our failings, infirmities and forgetfulness.

Secondly, let our souls bless the Lord for the wonders of his patience, forbearance and long suffering. Tho' we are apt to be unmindful of him who agonised in the garden, he continually and unremittingly remembers us. Our remembrance often intermits, but his never slumbers, nor sleeps. Wherefore let our souls bless the Lord, and resolve no more to forget his benefits.

Thirdly, how acceptable to Christ is the approach of his dear people to his supper, in an holy, believing, humble and affectionate remembrance of him, in all his sufferings, humiliation and exaltation. He rejoices over them in an extacy of delight, saying, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have

"eaten, my honey comb with my honey ; I have drunk my
 "wine with my milk ; eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink
 " abundantly, O beloved."

A brief sentence of counsel shall relieve your attention at present.—Let us attend this solemn duty of our holy religion for the reasons and in the manner which has now been delineated. You will find herein, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost and an increase of grace. If you never remembered Christ in a proper manner before, let this be the day in which this blessed work will begin. It is never too late to begin in well doing. Gather in every wandering thought ; compose your souls into a spirit of devotion ; let a reverential awe of a present Saviour, in all his wounds, bleeding at every pore, possess your hearts ; hunger, thirst and long after great measures of holiness ; raise your hopes, elevate your expectations, and with faith, love, humility, repentance of sin and purposes of new obedience, take the holy symbols and remember God your Saviour. Remember him in his life, remember his agony in the garden, remember his cruel mockings in the High Priest's hall, his tremendous scourgings when the plowes plowed upon his back and made long and deep their furrows ; remember him on the cross, when suspended between heaven and earth, and forsaken by both ; his friends and disciples forsook him ; his God hid his face from him ; a darkness involved the world, such as never was before, nor since, and the final dissolution of nature will hardly create such another. The sun ceased to shine, the moon had no rays, all nature was convulsed ; earthquakes broke up the marble tombs ; the dead started into life ; the veil of the temple of God rended asunder, and in this awful crisis, in the last struggle of atonement for man, he cries, " My God, my God, why hast thou
 " forsaken me ?"

Now shall we not remember this blessed and dying Saviour ?

Let the precept in the text be indeliably inscribed on every heart, let it be written on the palm of every hand. "This do in remembrance of me."

S E R M O N XIV.

The Evil and Danger of Profane Swearing and Cursing.

James v. 12. *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest you fall into condemnation.*

COMMON profane swearing and cursing, are sins of a base and aggravated dye. However prevalent they may be, this renders them not the less heinous. It calls forth the stronger and more frequent testimony against them. Does the air of the infernal regions infect many parts of our guilty land? Where is the town or village which contains not less or more common cursers and swearers in it. Therefore the evil and danger of this vice ought to be often pointed out, and the threatenings of heaven against it repeatedly denounced. It is abundantly mentioned in the holy scriptures, and marked with the utmost abhorrence and disapprobation. It is universally condemned in the Old Testament and in the new, by the prophets and apostles, and our Lord gives a most solemn charge

to his disciples and all others against this sin. His commandment is, "Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; neither by earth, for it is his foot stool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black; but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

This ought to be perfectly sufficient to correct and regulate all the language of christians. If any addition could be wanted to enforce the counsel, there is the third precept of the decalogue which was early given; but we need not to revert back so far for a condemnation of this vice; common sense, and the propriety of language, and every form of delicacy, and decency, stamp reprobation upon it. Whether it arises from fashion, education, or any other source, to hear cursing and swearing dropping from a ladies lips, to be entertained with the interpolations of profane expletives and exclamations, and to see the devil bolting from their mouths, can there be a greater contrast of beauty and deformity in nature? Behold moral ugliness starting thro, blurring and marring every amiable feature. Can the pencils of the greatest limners produce a more odious picture than a lady that swears. The temptations to this vice are infinitely less than others which would blast her reputation forever.

Let all whether male or female, old or young, bond or free, who have indulged themselves in this abominable license of the tongue, be entreated to attend to the absurdity and irrationality of this sin, its contradiction of the injunctions of heaven, the great dishonor it is to God, disgrace to the christian religion, its tendency to promote the cause of infidelity, and the certain destruction, if the deepest repentance and the most thorough reformation intervene not, of the immortal soul, which worlds cannot ransom. I beg your attention to the words of inspiration delivered by the apostle of christian ma-

ality. "But, above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest you fall into condemnation."

The people to whom the apostle addressed himself were Jews and his brethren according to the flesh. Profane swearing was a sin to which that nation was addicted, and still is throughout all their dispersions, more than any nation or people upon earth. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not." It would be needless here to spend time to prove that neither this text, nor the prohibition of our Lord, forbids the bearing witness for decision of controversies which arise between man and man by a lawful oath. A lawful oath is an ordinance of God, an act of solemn and religious worship instituted for the most valuable purposes. It ought not to be used, but upon important occasions, and when duly called thereto by the power of civil authority. Some have unhappily imagined that this declaration of the apostle, together with that of our Saviour's, was intended to be an abolition of all oaths whatsoever. Let it be observed in answer hereto, that God himself has constantly employed oaths both in the former and latter testament, in various instances for the confirmation of the faith of his people in the truth of his declarations. It was always the practice of the saints throughout all generations, and St. Paul gives full testimony in its favour, when he says, "An oath for confirmation is to be the end of all strife." There is the same end to be answered, and the same calls for oaths now, that ever were, and therefore ought to be continued and held as a standing ordinance both in church and state. All that is prohibited by Jesus Christ and our apostle is the prostitution of this sacred ordinance, and the profane and common abuse of this holy institution.

It was a common and notorious practice among the Jews, to swear by heaven, by earth, by the temple, their head or any

other thing, but never by the name *Jehovah*, except on the most solemn occasions, and the most urgent calls. But alas ! in modern times of profanity, the tremendous and venerable name of God, seems no more regarded than inferior things, unless it be to reduce it to a more common and wicked use.

It is the impious custom of profane cursing and swearing which our apostle here condemns ; " Above all things swear not." That is, in a special and distinguishing manner beware of and guard against this iniquity. Above all other immoralities, keep yourselves from profane cursing and swearing. For this is a sin not only of a most heinous nature, but above all others it has the least temptation, provocation, or inducement. The apostle mentions some things usually employed in this profanity. They swore " by heaven and by earth." He charges them to beware of such unprofitable offences. All common use of the names, titles and attributes of God, by exclamation or otherwise ; all abuses of the sacred institution of an oath ; and all rash, ill and impious words are here expressly forbidden. But, " let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." Let the whole tenor of your conversation consist of simple affirmations or negations. This is abundantly sufficient to afford full credit to the words of christians, to honest and upright men. Every addition of abomination always depreciates credibility. And the more of this is subjoined, the person renders himself less liable to be believed. This purity of conversation must be maintained, " lest you fall into condemnation." That is, lest you fall into the condemnation of such who take God's name in vain. The declaration of the judge eternal is, " He will not hold him guiltless." The profane person must fall under the condemnatory sentence of a violated law. He will surely be punished with an awful and everlasting punishment, unless deep repentance and faith in the gospel prevent. Wherefore let all be seriously exhorted to watch against this sin, that they perish not forever.

The counsel here is, " above all things swear not," yet how

many are they who act in direct contradiction of this precept. They mind this, the last thing in the world. The commonness of the practice countenances them in the odious transgression. Perhaps one reason for the reiterated prohibitions of this sin in the divine oracles is, that it is in a peculiar manner offensive to the majesty of heaven, argues a most virulent contempt of the authority of God, and has no incitement to it of either profit, pleasure or honor. A proper oath is a devout and religious institution of God, whereto, when lawfully called, we give glory to his name as an omniscient and omnipresent Jehovah; but common and profane swearing is a malignant reflection upon this holy ordinance, it is trampling under foot an institution of heaven, and doing despite to him, whose honor an oath was intended to promote. It is a sacrilegious alienation of those forms of speech, which ought to be consecrated to the glory of God, and turning them to the most impious purposes. It is an imitation of Belshazur, that monster of iniquity, who commanded the holy vessels of the temple to be brought forth to grace his drunken feast. In them he suddenly drunk his last. So the impious ought to fear, lest they perish with profanity in their mouths. Some are so sunk in wickedness, that they cannot transact usual business, or relate a common story, without intermingling therewith multitudes of profane epithets. If you hint a dislike of such a number of language, or the dishonor done to God, how will they immediately, and perhaps with another evil word, declare that they did not know they swore. There are others who are only learners in the infernal tongue, and dare venture no farther than to lisp the language of hell. This may be stiled not swearing at large, but by contraction. This kind of minced profanations, to say the least of them, are idle words, for which an account must be given in the day of judgment. They must originate from a vain and thoughtless heart, and expose the users of them to condemnation. Let the profane tribe of cursers and swearers attend to the few following considerations.

First, consider the enmity such language expresses against the glorious and fearful name of the blessed God. It is making his truth, justice and omniscience, as far as is in the power of a wretched creature, to attend all the extravagances of an ungoverned passion and unbridled tongue. From whence can such wickedness proceed, but from carnality of mind which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Hence the Psalmist says, "Thine enemies take thy name in vain." As tho' none but the enemies of God could be guilty of such profanation. There is no lust in the depraved heart can be gratified by this transgression. Hence no reason can be given for profaning the name of Jehovah, but that sinners delight and take pleasure in sin for its own sake. It appears to be a mere invention of Satan to oppose the commandments of heaven. Perhaps, if there had not been a precept of God, saying, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," the evil one would not have thought worth his while to have introduced this vice into the world. But the destroyer of souls when there was nothing in the corruption of man to incline him to violate this commandment, being determined to oppose the whole law of God by every means that was possible, devised this method of common and profane cursing and swearing, and inspired their souls with the poisonous air. Therefore swearing is of all vices the most inexcusable; it is a transgression absolutely wilful without any cause, but pure hatred to God. The sinner cannot adduce in its favour any internal propensity, nor external temptation. Wherefore let such sinners consider and reflect upon the extreme folly which aggravates the malignity of this sin. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked." Shall he not visit for such things as these?—Will not his soul be avenged on such outrageous offenders?—Yea, when the day of recompence comes, all such will find, "That vengeance is the Lord's and he will repay it according to his word."

Secondly, consider what striking evidence profane language

is against you, that you have not the fear of God before your eyes. If you neither fear God nor regard man, why throw out a foolish signal of your abominable wickedness to all that pass by? Why should you declare your sin as Sodom, or publish it abroad that Satan is king in your hearts? You certainly dare not proclaim open war against heaven, raise the standard and wave the banners of the gloomy prince of darkness. Is it not enough that your hearts are unholy, without displaying to the world that you are both fearless and graceless. When Peter was accused of the dreadful crime of being a disciple of Christ, he immediately took the most effectual method to disprove the charge; he not only denied the fact, but presently he began to curse and swear that he knew not the man; this in a moment convinced and silenced his accusers, for wicked as they were, they knew that this was not the language of a follower of Jesus. Let none take occasion from hence to imitate this unhappy example, lest they intend hereby to signify that they disown Christ and all religion. Peter was soon brought to bitter repentance; if you transgress in like manner, you must soon repent in brokenness of heart, and bewail your offences in many tears, or be lost to all eternity. Allow me to beseech you, my brethren, in all the bowels of tender compassion, while there is a possibility of your becoming heirs of heaven, and of obtaining an inheritance among the saints of light, that you prove not yourselves the children of destruction by speaking the language of the regions of darkness. Common cursing is imprecating evil upon ourselves or others. This sin is an eminent instance of the degeneracy and depravity of human nature. All the arches of the infernal domes resound herewith. There is nothing but curses in a throng repetition prayed upon themselves and others, upon God and devils, angels and men, upon heaven and hell. Are there any so hardened as to imitate this speech before they descend into the burning pit? O how brutish and how unnatural is it to imprecate curses upon ourselves. It is a contradiction to the great principle of self preservation, and a violation and an af-

fault upon self-love. The very devils entreated our Saviour, of whose power they were not ignorant, not to torment them before the time, but profane cursers far outstrip these ; they seem to think that judgment lingers, and their damnation slumbers ; hence the only prayer uttered from their mouths is, that God would damn them, or the devil take them. Stop, my friends, and cease from your wicked prayers for a moment. Ye enterprisers in iniquity !—is an arrest issued from the devil, and the flames of hell, matters of indifference or pleasure that you should court them ? Are the torments of the damned, and the vengeance of Jehovah, only the bugbears of fancy, or the vapours of brain sickness, that they pass over you with the shadows of the night ? Be not deceived, the judgment of God is a reality, and future punishment is no fiction, and if you persist in your impious courses, you will feel too late what you would not believe in time. Is it not enough, that you are performing every day, what deserves the wrath and curse of God, without the solicitous breath of wishing for damnation before your time ? Once it was the heart cutting reflection of a criminal under the gallows, that he had accustomed himself to that imprecation, extremely common among mankind, “ Let me be hanged.” Now says he, “ The God of righteousness hath given me what I wickedly and thoughtlessly deserved.”

Thirdly, there are what may be styled profane ejaculations, which do not strictly fall into the language of cursing and swearing, yet are so nearly allied to them, that it is not proper they should be omitted in a discourse of this kind. Pious ejaculations are as useful as pious prayers, and frequently employed in the scriptures by the saints for the purposes of devotion. Yet even this holy practice is perverted into base profanation. This is an alienation and prostration to an abominable use, what appears to have been consecrated to religion. I feel hurt to humiliate the pulpit, to the uttering of such exclamations. This descension should not be made, but the hope of the correc-

tion of this vice demands it. One cries out, "O Lord," when no more is meant, only that he is a little accidentally hurt. Another says, "God knows," when his only intention is, his own ignorance; a third exclaims, "God bless me, God help me," when nothing more is designed than an expression of small surprise. I must not proceed in the retail of these unchristian interjections.—They are highly offensive to the Supreme God, prostrating his name to a bye-word, and hardening and destroying our own souls. The sacred name ought never to be pronounced but with previous thought and profound reverence. Such exclamations are insults upon the third commandment, a gross abuse of the ordinance of prayer. And all these and the incalculable variations of profanity, are an abomination to God and ruinous to the souls of men.

Some are ready to excuse themselves, that they never assume the offensive stile only when they are in a passion. Intemperate passion is wrong, every species of profanity is wrong; and certainly one sin can never make an atonement, and no man in his reason, can venture it as an apology, for another.

Others excuse themselves, that they would not be believed without supporting their assertions with an oath. This is a most precarious and dangerous support, for these improper annexations always lessen credibility with the rational, wise and judicious, and your language immediately suggests to them, that you doubt the truth of your own declarations, otherwise you would not drag in these unnatural and profane aids.

Some excuse themselves by saying, they are obliged to swear, to maintain their authority, and to strike the awe of obedience into those under their command. This is an apology always in the mouths of military and marine officers. Consider that these characters have commanded fleets and armies without an oath, and have maintained a better discipline and subordination, than those from whom torrents of blustering profanity have continually flowed.

.. This subject must close. Those persons who will not believe and be directed by Christ and his apostles, it would be the most presumptive arrogance in me, to suppose any thing I could say, would produce reformation. I warmly recommend my text to all for their serious consideration and amendment; if this proves ineffectual, my feeble endeavours cannot avail.

“ But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by
 “ heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, but
 “ let your yea, be yea, and your nay, nay ; lest you fall into
 “ condemnation.”

S E R M O N XV.

The Nature and Evil of Lying.

Eph. iv. 25. *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another.*

PERHAPS no virtue in the whole system of morality has had greater encomiums bestowed upon it, than the speaking of truth ; and none with stricter justice has been subjected to ignominy, disgrace and contempt, more than the opposite vice. For lying, however much it may be practised in the world, is reckoned a very base and dishonorable sin, even by the most of sinners themselves. Its odious and detestable evil seems to be impressed upon the minds of men even by the light of nature. The deluded Mahometans, whatever indulgence they grant to other vices, hold this in the utmost abhorrence. They often reproach the christians with it ; and if any thing wearing the complexion of falsehood be attributed to them, they very pertly reply, "Do you think me a christian?" What a sore reflection is this upon our holy

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religion?—But whatever may be the wicked, deceitful and abominable conduct of some, who bear the christian name, it is an absolute certainty that christianity every where reprobates this vice, and stamps it with marks of the utmost baseness and abhorrence. Many heathen nations have enacted laws, with the severest punishments against this instance of criminality. Many of their laws were formed to enjoin upon parents the importance of educating their children in speaking the truth. Truth comprehends in it a multitude of the cardinal virtues, such as justice, honesty, sincerity, integrity, goodness, love of the happiness of society, &c. So lying involves in it a train of the contrary vices, injustice, dishonesty, meanness, dishonor, hatred of mankind, and almost every thing injurious to communities, and all social intercourse.

Nothing strange then that the apostle under the influence of divine inspiration, should warn christians against the latter, and zealously exhort them to the practice of the former, as he does in the words of our text. “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man the truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.” The word neighbour here must be taken in the enlarged latitude explained by our Lord, extending to the whole family of mankind, every individual of every tribe, nation or language with whom we have any intercourse, communication or dealings. The words expressly contain in them three things, an injunction to speak the truth, a command to avoid falsehood, and a reason enforcing the propriety of thus conducting ourselves in all our conversation with our fellow men. To this method your attention is invited in the ensuing discourse. Wherefore we shall endeavour,

First, to enquire, what it is to speak the truth. "Speak every man the truth with his neighbour."

Secondly, what lying is-and the evil of it. "Put away lying."

Thirdly, give some reasons and directions against this sin of lying, and in favour of speaking the truth. "For we are members one of another."

First, we shall briefly enquire what it is to speak the truth; "Speak every man the truth with his neighbour."

Truth contains in its nature an intrinsic beauty, something excellent, amiable and praise worthy, independent of all laws and external rules, therefore ought to be admired, loved, and practised for its own sake. On the other hand, a lye comprehends in its very nature moral turpitude and baseness, and therefore ought to be avoided for its odiousness, and abhorred for its own vileness. But it is not my purpose to treat either of this virtue or vice in an abstract or metaphysical way. This would not, in my apprehension tend much to the edification of a common christian assembly. Neither would it be proper for me to follow the writers of moral systems upon this subject, and explain to you what they mean by logical and physical as distinguished from moral truth. Physical truth is nothing but expressing the reality of the existence of things as they stand in our conceptions, or in the view of our judgments. Logical truth is the agreement of our words with the reality of things, whatever may be the intention of mind. A person may speak that which is true, when he does not intend it. His declaration is verified in fact. His words and the reality of the thing perfectly correspond, yet thro' ignorance or wilfulness he had a purpose to deceive. But moral truth is that

which is recommended in our text and claims our consideration at this time.

Moral truth is the agreement of our words and minds. And when our expressions are adapted to inform those with whom we speak, with a real intention of communicating to them the knowledge of things as they are in our own minds, without any design to deceive, this is moral truth. The words, mind and intention of the heart, when they all correspond, the person can never be said to lye ; even, tho' in this, he may speak that which is not true. He may honestly commit a mistake, utter an error, and not be guilty of falsehood. It may be said such a person ought to have been better informed before he spoke ; this is readily granted, yet he delivers what he conceives and believes to be true, and has no design of deception, therefore he does not lye. Perhaps, it may be a sin in him not to have his understanding better enlightened, but while his words agree to his mind and judgment, however mistaken or erroneous he may be, he has not committed the sin of lying. There are many who are stiled heretics, who teach doctrines that are not true, yet they are never denominated liars. Thro' the imperfection of human nature, in our daily converse with men, we are often retailing matters which are unfounded, but we believe them to be true and have no intention of deceit, therefore all that can be said in those cases, we were misinformed or mistaken. Truth is a declaration of things as they really exist as far as we know and understand, with a sincere purpose of heart to give just information to those with whom we converse. We often speak of matters we do not perfectly understand, and it is duty to do so ; but when we communicate the knowledge we have, that is all that is required of us in the maintaining of truth. When we say, we think, believe, or judge a thing to be such, all we do in this case is delivering our own thoughts, opinions, or judgment, and whe-

ther the matter be true or false, while we have no intention of deceit, we cannot be said to lye.

Having thus attempted to describe the nature of truth, there are various inquiries arise upon the discussion of this subject.

It will be here inquired, are we bound to speak the truth to all who ask us ? To which it is answered, we are bound never to lye. But instead of being bound to speak the truth to all who ask us, in many cases, we are not under obligation to speak at all. And silence is often the best reproof for impertinent questions. And when it is deemed expedient to make some answer to querists, it may be couched in such language consistent with truth as will afford no certain information. David was guilty of no sin when he feigned himself mad before the enemies of his nation, but a wise stratagem which it was his duty to employ in those circumstances. Thus our Lord made use of a pretence on a certain occasion. "They drew nigh unto a village whither they went, and he made as tho' he would have gone farther." This concealment of our Saviour's purpose, in pretending to go farther than he designed, was not sinful, but a lawful pretence, to try the friendship, affection and hospitality of his disciples, and to awaken their importunity for his tarrying with them. So physicians may use various and innocent pretences with their patients to induce them to take medicine to heal their diseases. Thus weak-minded persons and children may be induced to do things for their good, which otherwise they would not, by a kind of charitable guile, which can never be termed sin.

It will be further asked, are we obliged at all times to tell the whole truth ?—At certain seasons, and when we are properly called thereto, this becomes an indispensable duty. But at times a concealment of the whole is fit and right.

Thus Samuel was sent on an important errand to Bethlehem; under pretence of offering sacrifice to anoint another king instead of Saul, and to save his life, and by the direction of God himself, he was to use a stratagem whereby Saul was deceived. When Samuel objected to the business, saying, "If Saul hear it he will kill me. The Lord said, take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do." Here was a compleat imposition upon the reigning sovereign by the direction of heaven, without sin.—So the midwives of Egypt deceived their civil rulers, and were recommended and rewarded by God for their conduct. They told part of the truth. All they said was, "The Hebrew women are not as Egyptian women, for they are lively and they are delivered ere the midwives come unto them." This was undoubtedly true. The one would delay sending as long as possible, and the other would delay coming. Thus the officers were deceived and imposed upon, and for the midwives to tell the whole truth in all its circumstances was not their duty.

It is time to proceed to the

Second head proposed, which was to show what lying is, and the evil thereof, "put away lying." Were I to give a definition of lying in order to distinguish it from error and mistake, I would say, it is speaking a known falsehood in order to deceive. It is not speaking that which is false, when we believe it to be true, which is an error or a mistake only; it is not every purpose to deceive, or every imposition, that is sinful and wicked, as has been manifested; but it is asserting a known and wilful falsehood, with a design to deceive and impose upon the person or persons who hear it. This comprehends not only the gross sorts of lying, but likewise all the more refined. And every species of lying, whether serious or

jocose, whether in jest or earnest, is condemned by reason, by the light of nature, and by the word of God. •

The evils of this heinous iniquity are great and many. It outrages that which is beautiful, dishonors God, violates both law and gospel, grossly injures society, a flagrant insult of our fellow men, and intails certain ruin upon the immortal soul. Here is a picture that nothing can exceed for deformity.

It outrages that which is beautiful. Truth contains in its nature intrinsic beauty and superlative excellency. What more amiable, beautiful and excellent than truth? God is styled truth, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, is the truth and the life, the Holy Ghost is the spirit of truth, the holy scriptures are truth, and the glory of all creation is truth. Now what can be a greater outrage than to attempt the destruction of all this beauty, worth and excellency? But this is the nature and tendency of every falsehood. How inconceivably dreadful then must be its evil? To blot out all the glory of created and uncreated existence is the evil genius of this iniquity.

It in a distinguishing manner dishonors God. It denies his omniscience, omnipresence, and almighty power, his holiness, his purity and his justice. Now a thing of such a nature, must be an infinite evil indeed. But this is the awful nature and evil of lying; hence it ought to be held in abhorrence by all the children of men. "Put away lying." It ought to be the sole property of the atheistical tribe, and none others ought to intermeddle with it. This shows us how highly it reflects dishonor upon the glorious Jehovah, his existence and all his perfections.

It is a violation both of the law and of the gospel. It is a transgression of the ninth commandment, and is abundantly

condemned throughout the Old Testament and the New. The former declares, "Ye shall not lye one to another. I hate and abhor a lying tongue saith the Lord. A righteous man hateth lying. Let lying lips be put to silence. He that speaketh lies shall not escape, he shall perish." The latter speaks in the same manner. "Lye not one to another seeing ye have put off the old man, put away lying." But there would be no end of retailing the texts relative to this matter. Thus you see, it is a violation both of law and gospel, therefore ought to be held in detestation.

It is a gross injury of society. The tendency of lying is to destroy all human conversation and commerce, and to introduce the most pernicious consequences into the affairs of mankind. Let truth be excluded, and men can neither buy nor sell, nor even live together. It is so great an evil to society, that it was punished with death among the ancient Romans. If any was convicted of this crime, he was to be cast from the Tarpian rock. It breaks the social bands, defeats the design of speech, destroys all confidence between man and man, and throws the world into turmoil, confusion and desolation.

Lying is a flagrant insult upon our fellow men, a declaration that they are not worthy of the truth; that dissimulation, deceit and falsehood are only proper treatment for them. Better man had been born dumb than employ his tongue for so horrid and base a purpose.

The completion of its evil is, it brings certain ruin upon the immortal soul. Unless deep repentance and a thorough reformation prevent, liars must perish forever. And who can be willing to dwell eternally in devouring flames, to be tossed from surge to surge on the billows of Jehovah's wrath, throughout endless and unwasting ages? Their habitation shall be, "That tophet, which God hath ordained of

“ old ; he hath made it deep and large ; the pile thereof is fire “ and much wood ; the breath of the Lord like a stream of “ brimstone doth kindle it. God shall destroy them that speak “ leasing. For the sin of their mouth, for cursing and lying “ which they speak, he will consume them in wrath. He “ that speaketh lies shall not escape, he shall perish. There “ shall in no wise enter into heaven, any thing that maketh a “ lye. Lyars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” Thus you behold complete, perfect and eternal destruction entailed upon all who are guilty of this sin.

How unspeakably great and aggravated is this iniquity ? It is an abomination to God and man. He who can count the drops of the ocean, or measure the depths of hell, let him describe the evil thereof.

I proceed,

Thirdly, to give some directions against this vice, and in favour of speaking the truth, “ For we are members one of “ another.” This is the reason here advanced by the apostle, why we should refrain from this sin and speak the truth. We are members designed for the service and benefit one of another, and truth is a debt which we reciprocally owe, and have a right to expect from each other. Of whatever body we account ourselves members, or to whatever society we belong, the argument against lying, and in favour of speaking truth is strong and cogent. If we are members of the church, to which these words evidently refer, we ought to love, esteem, and be serviceable to each other. But nothing more contradicts this purpose or defeats our usefulness and service than lying. What character more absurd than a lying christian ? He is a stain to his profession, a scandal to the church, and a disgrace to himself. A christian and a liar is as inconsistent as light and darkness. If we consider our-

selves members of civil society, the reason stands in full force against this sin. Where truth is not maintained, essential injury accrues to the community. Hereby we destroy our usefulness in the world, and expose ourselves to the contempt of men. A liar is a nuisance in the commonwealth ; and no character carries more odiousness, meanness and baseness than this.

Now, my hearers, let us avoid and abhor this vice, which is hateful in its nature and dreadful in its consequences.— Wherefore to put away lying let us be directed to beware of guilt. A sensibility of guilt will invent lies to screen its criminality. When persons do that which they are ashamed should be discovered, they will employ falsehood for its concealment. They, as it were, repair to the devil to entreat him to defend and cover his own works. If we would avoid being reduced to such miserable shifts, let us guard against deceitfulness, dissimulation, and every thing that wears the appearance of a lie.

Let us be directed, to possess our hearts with an holy fear and reverence of God. The fear of man is often an inducement to this sin. This makes children and servants lye to escape shame and punishment. Whenever it is detected, they should be punished with marks of distinction. We should consider that God is always present with us, his eye is upon us and to him we must give an account. We may deceive men, but we cannot impose upon the omniscient God. “ Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Let us remember, when we attempt to escape any danger by a lye, we always expose ourselves to that which is infinitely greater.

Let us be directed to subdue our pride and cultivate humility, would we avoid this offensive evil. Pride will tempt some to lye, to profess knowledge they never had, to have performed exploits they never did, in order to exhibit themselves in an exalted point of light. Let us beware of covetousness

would we guard against this sin. A covetous man esteems a lye an easy way to the acquisition of gain. The prophet's servant Gehazi, was it not covetousness that formed him to be such an adept in lying ? Pride and covetousness conspired together to induce Annanias and Sapphira to lye to the Holy Ghost, even to God. They hoped to obtain the fame of most charitable christians, while they chose to lye, rather than part with their property. The awful judgments of heaven fell suddenly upon them, to be a warning to all against pride, covetousness and falsehood.

Another important direction should be to trust in God at all times. Distrust in the Lord and lying, often accompany each other. Was it not this, which caused Jacob to lye in order to obtain the blessing ? Had he trusted in the divine promise, he would have obtained it without that base and sinful measure of practising deceit upon a blind and aged parent. His lying and dissimulation both in words and actions are beyond the powers of description.—Would we avoid this sin, let us maintain a tender conscience, a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Let us have our consciences made tender by the special grace of the gospel ; let us imbibe the temper of Christ Jesus ; ever live under the government of our holy religion ; cloath ourselves with truth as with a garment ; dwell in her chambers, delight in her walks and take pleasure in all her ways. Let us love the truth and continually adhere to it. Let our text be impressed upon our hearts, be written upon our memories, and never be forgotten or neglected by us. “ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another.”

S E R M O N XVI.

The Horrid Evil of a Backbiting Tongue.

Psalms xv. 3. *He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

AMONG the questions circulated in the world, certainly none can be proposed, which it is more our duty and interest to be capable to answer than this, to wit, who are the favourites of God, and shall dwell in heaven forever. The present friendship and eternal enjoyment of Jehovah is without controversy a matter of the greatest importance. The treasures of Croesus, and the extensive dominions of Alexander, when weighed in the scales of the sanctuary, in this comparison, selck must be their inscription. For what could it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? In this Psalm we have the characters and heirs of heaven drawn by the pencil of perfection. The delineation is performed by God himself. He is here introduced answering this dignified question, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" By tabernacle here is undoubtedly

ly meant the church in this world. The tabernacle was built for the worship of God in the wilderness, and continued the residence of the divine glory till the erection of the temple, therefore it here evidently intends the church militant. By holy hill is meant the holy hill of Zion, which was emblematical of the celestial state, or the church triumphant in heaven. Hence the question divested of its figures is this, "What is the character of the person, who is a true member of thy church on earth, and who is he that shall be admitted to dwell with thee in the regions of felicity forever?" To which the Most High, vouchsafes to give the following reply. First, "He that walketh uprightly." He who respects and loves and conscientiously endeavours to walk in all the commandments. Secondly, "And worketh righteousness." He employs himself in those acts of duty, faithfulness and justice which he ought to perform to God, himself, and his neighbour. Thirdly, "And speaketh the truth in his heart." He avoids lying lips, his words pronounce his intention, express his purpose and agree to his thoughts and judgment. Then our text is introduced as a further description of the good man. "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." He is not one who slanders his neighbour, or takes the advantage of his absence to vilify or depreciate his character; he wilfully injures him not in name, person or property; he does not easily take up tales of reproach, or propagate them to his neighbours hurt.

Whosoever fancies himself to be religious and his heart and life is not in a habitual measure conformed to this description, let him fear, tremble, repent and reform, lest he should not be fit to enter into the tabernacle of God on earth, and be excluded from the glorious privilege of becoming a citizen of the heavenly hill of Zion. That which commands our attention at present is the evil and danger of a backbiting tongue. This

is not an evil peculiarly incident to the openly ungodly ; but many who are strict in their morals, many professors of christianity, and some who make a high profession of an experimental acquaintance with religion, stand in exceeding need of instruction, correction and reproof upon this head. One branch of the character of him who is intitled to heaven is, that he backbiteth not with his tongue. Consider, this is only a part of the description of an holy person. Perhaps some may be free from this vice, yet allow themselves in others which must exclude them from the celestial blifs. But it is absolutely certain, all who prevailingly indulge themselves in this iniquity, whatever their profession may be, or however orderly, regular and circumspect in other respects, they will never enter into the holy hill of Zion. The adjudication and censure may seem severe, but it is not mine, but God's. Some will be ready here to exclaim, if this be true, who then can be saved ? The scriptures teach us that few are saved. The number of saints is comparatively small ; and charity must have a broad mantle, and cover a multitude of infirmities and sins, even to collect these few. We must hope favourably of many, who transgress in this matter, that it happens in the hurry of conversation, their inattention, and not from wilful and malignant design. Decent christians will not commonly curse or swear, yet it is hardly known or considered by them as an evil to backbite a neighbour. If a professor of religion, or even a man of common reputation was to steal his neighbour's goods, we would be surpris'd and shocked ; but we stand by and hear him destroy his neighbour's character and good name, and a feeling of disapprobation hardly arises in our hearts. The old adage is, a common vice is commonly overlooked. He who steals my money takes only trash, but he that robs me of my good name is an assassin and slabs me to the heart.

Wherefore to be explicit and plain upon this subject, for our instruction and reformation, I shall endeavour to lay before you

First, when we may lawfully speak of the faults of our neighbours in their absence without being guilty of the sin of backbiting.

Secondly, explain to you wherein backbiting consists.

Thirdly, attempt to exhibit to view the evil and danger of this sin. As to the

First, it will be a delineation of what is not backbiting. It may be a duty to speak of the faults of others in many instances behind their backs. To tell to his brother various evils in love and christian privacy in hopes of convincing him of his wrong ; there is nothing of evil in this, but a hope of convincing him of his error or mistake, and bringing him to friendship and reconciliation. If after private conference, and the difference is not adjusted, we take two or three friendly and christian neighbours to settle the difficulty, and the matter be related to them ; all this can never be termed backbiting. We may lay the faults of a neighbour before the church or the civil magistrate, and retail all we have to say behind his back, which we are afterwards to prove, and this can never be construed as slander or backbiting. When it is useful to the preservation of anothers property, when we see friends enticed into the company of knaves and villains, by whom they may be ruined, it is our duty to state to them the characters of those by whom they may be ensnared, and to warn them against the dangerous connection. When we know of a combination against others, or conspiracy against good government, to refrain from discovery of private or public injury, tho' behind the backs of the designers, would not only be wrong but a gross iniquity. It would be an offence against reason, against society, against God and man ; and he who charges himself with the concealment, becomes a culprit equal with the principal.

Moreover when by unreasonable self justification, wrong is

thrown upon the innocent, and the innocent is compelled to re-crimination, he stands acquitted and vindicated at the bar of reason and of God.

Further, when the notorious iniquity of any individual, hath erected such a beacon of warning, that his crimes cannot be hid, has forfeited all reputation, and his conduct transcends the rules of concealment, duty to our families and others is not to hide such a character. Duty in this case is to give warning to others to avoid the abominable example.

Moreover, when called to give a narrative of public facts, fallen under our own observation, such as rebellion, blasphemy, murder, perjury, cruelty, &c. and to give in the names of offending absentees, this is right and duty. Alas, how many blaze forth the failings of others without occasion, and intrude themselves into the office of backbiters, to their own detriment and the exceeding unhappiness of society.

Secondly, I am to explain wherein this evil of backbiting consists.

First, if persons spread abroad the faults of their neighbours, when they ought previously to have mentioned them to themselves ; and proceeded according to the rules of reason and the gospel, for reclaiming a brother. In violation of friendship, neighbourhood and christianity, how many, and that religionists too, will tell a fault real or supposed, to almost every body, and never mention it to the person himself? This is destroying a neighbour, wounding his fame, and backbiting with the keenest severity.

Secondly, when persons speak of the failing of others in their absence, with apparent pleasure and delight, conceal their good qualities and dwell upon and magnify their evil

ones. It is very common to profess sorrow for hearing of the misconduct of others, while pleasure is exhibited in retailing the unhappy story. Let the report be true or otherwise, the retail is generally gross backbiting. The reporting the evil has no tendency to amend, but to injure the character and spread the evil of his name. Were it not for the latent expectation of this kind, to render the person more contemptible and odious, they would be entirely silent.

Thirdly, when persons, to spend a vacant hour, and to entertain their company, fill up the time with impertinently conversing of the faults and infirmities of their neighbours. This is often done merely for the diversion and amusement of others, yet hereby they stain, if not stab, their neighbour's reputation. When such speeches flow from passion, envy, prejudice, faction, hatred, or to exalt themselves, it is certain, that is a backbiting tongue. And when the language expresses things devious from the truth, magnifying small failings as is frequently the case, concealing all that is worthy and good, and exhibiting only some deformities, this has also the sin of lying, slander and reproaching annexed to it. It has been generally remarked, those who are much addicted to backbiting, rarely avoid lying. But here perhaps it will be asked, may we not speak evil of that which is evil, and state every thing as it truly is? It is readily granted, that we are not, under a mistaken notion of charity, to speak a known falsehood, terming a man's vices, virtues; but we are to be very careful respecting the speaking evil of others. When we are about to discover the faults of our neighbours, we ought to consider, whether we are duly called hereto, whether we are entering upon a duty which we owe to God or society. If consideration was practised, it would put a stop to much of the backbiting that is in the world. But some will say, may we not tell such things which honest and religious persons report. This must not be done without sufficient evidence and

a sufficient call. However honest and religious a person may be, we must not imitate him in things that are evil or wrong. Suppose a good man should abuse another, which has often happened, could the injured person be willing that all should follow that good man's example, and abuse him likewise. Surely not. I proceed,

Thirdly, to attempt to exhibit to view the evil and danger of this sin. Is there need of saying any thing farther after showing what backbiting is. The odious character ever one will condemn. Yea, a backbiter himself, would probably be highly offended to have this vice imputed to him. Why will persons indulge themselves in the evil practice when they abhor the name? None would chuse to be reproached themselves, why then will they reproach others? Some have supposed that backbiting is a term borrowed from the detestable nature of poisonous serpents or ugly dogs which will slyly bite a man when his back is turned, but were his face towards them, they would flee from him. How awful is the evil, to find this vile and odious disposition in any of the children of men? And especially to perceive any tincture of it among those who profess to be followers of the Lamb of God. The very nature of the sin itself ought to raise the detestation of all against it. The supreme Jehovah himself hath forbidden it in the most express terms. It is enumerated amongst the grossest and most heinous transgressions. It is made the evidence of a reprobate mind, and the character of such whom God chiefly abhors. When St. Paul makes up a catalogue of the most abominable offenders, backbiters are ranked among murderers, haters of God, &c. On the other hand, the avoiding of this sin is constituted an evidence of one who is approved of the Most High, and shall dwell with him forever. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a

"reproach against his neighbour." The holy apostle, when he sharply rebukes the Corinthians for various offences among them, he recounts this as one. "I fear, says he, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not, lest there be debates, strifes, backbitings &c." Let all bitterness, clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind one to another and tender hearted."

It is a sin in a special manner gratifying to Satan ; it assimilates to him ; he is full of malice and backbiting, and speaking evil of a neighbour are works which are suited to his malignity. Shall christians and those who enjoy the light of the gospel, employ their tongues to perform the hellish drudgery of the destroyer of souls. Forbid it heaven, forbid it eternity.

Moreover, whosoever allow themselves in this sin, it argues a want of due tenderness and christian affection. Love speaketh no evil of its neighbour, neither doth it open his faults without a cause. It will rather cover infirmities, and will not propagate slander or carry about evil reports. It is likewise evil which tends to destroy the hearers, love, and thus to ruin their immortal souls. If the backbiter understood himself, he would acknowledge this to be his design, to banish love from the human breast, and to introduce in its room, hatred, malice and ill will, and all the infernal train of odious passions and feelings. When one person wishes another to become an object of hatred, he does not directly intreat a man to hate his neighbour ; but he makes such a representation of his character, as excites disgust and brings on a dislike of him. It tends much to the injury of the spiritual interests of him of whom the reproaches are uttered ; for, generally, he will by some means hear of them. Backbiting is usually accompanied with tale-bearing. Were it not for the latter the former could not do half the mischief it does. The one slanders and the other spreads the evil report.

The consequences of a backbiting tongue are frequently very dreadful. It rarely fails to be a peace breaker ; it stirs up envy and revenge ; sets neighbour against neighbour, and brother against brother. When a person is reproached he often is tempted to exert all the power of malicious invention to retort the injury. It has brought on duels, blood shed and murder. Many churches and societies have been totally ruined hereby. Many fightings, and desolating wars, hath it produced. It has destroyed kingdoms and scattered nations. And what is worst of all, it has sunk thousands and tens of thousands of souls to hell.

A few directions to caution us against this atrocious vice shall conclude this discourse.

First, let us maintain a life of brotherly love. Love your neighbour as yourself. He who observes this rule will never be guilty of this offence. No man will reproach or speak evil of himself. When we are tempted to this sin, let us put ourselves in the place of the person whom we would backbite, and ask ourselves, whether we would be well pleased, if another should talk in the same manner of us. This conduct would prove a sovereign antidote against this evil.

Secondly, let us watch narrowly whether interest or passion does not influence us to speak against our neighbour. Selfishness will prompt us to commit this sin, and dispose us to justify our iniquity. Let us guard against selfishness as a dangerous thing, and the source of innumerable mischiefs.

Thirdly, let us ever bear upon our minds an habitual sense of the malignant, and dangerous nature of this impiety. It had a great hand in putting to death the Lord of glory. He was called a deceiver, a devil, a blasphemer, a friend of publicans and sinners, therefore he was not fit to live ; away with him ; crucify him, crucify him. This had an high hand in the death of the apostles ; it stiled them, pestilent fellows, movers

of sedition, turners of the world upside down, &c. and thus contributed largely to their death. It has had a full part in the murder of all the martyrs in all ages. These things should engage christians to avoid this abomination.

Fourthly, frown upon and discountenance this sin in others, and it will be an excellent preservative against it in yourselves. "As the North wind, saith Solomon, driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." Better we never had tongues than employ them for such destructive purposes. "Whosoever privately slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off, saith the Lord." "If any man among you seemeth to be religious and bridled not his tongue, that man's religion is vain." Wherefore let us all be exhorted to avoid this evil of backbiting as we would wish to escape hell, and to have the gates of heaven opened unto us.

S E R M O N XVII.

The Excellencies and Evils of the Tongue.

James, iii. 6. *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; for is the tongue amongst the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.*

HERE is an awful description of an unruly and ungoverned tongue. St. James in this epistle sets himself to correct many evils which had taken place among the christians to whom he wrote, and for the instruction of the churches in all future ages. Some in these early days had imbibed the fatal error, that if they had but faith, they might indulge themselves in the most licentious practices. Therefore the apostle having corrected various vices in the preceding chapters, comes in this to reprove the sins of the tongue. He proposes the exceeding great difficulty of bridling this unruly member. Hence he declares, that he who offendeth not in word is a perfect man and able to bridle the whole body. As if he had said, the person who can govern this member, can easily govern all others. This truth he illustrates by two similitudes. By the small bits in a horse's mouth we turn his whole body and re-

der him obedient to our will ; so he that ruleth his tongue holds all his other members in subjection.—“ Behold also the ships, which, tho’ they be so great, and driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whither-soever the governor listeth.” As the helm governs the ship, altho’ tossed by tumultuous waves, so a well bridled tongue easily governs the whole body. These small things can perform great matters, so the tongue is capable of accomplishing mighty deeds, both good and bad.

Having spoken of the great power of this little member, he then proceeds to show the mischievous evils, it produces, when ungoverned. “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.” A small spark blows up a magazine or consumes a city. Thus this little member, the tongue, often throws a parish, a town, or a whole nation into flames.—Then the apostle introduces an hideous picture of the tongue in the words of our text. “ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity ; so is the tongue amongst the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.” The images here are bold and the coloring strong. A lecture upon such a disagreeable portrait can never be very pleasing to speaker or hearer ; yet it is necessary at times for our edification and reformation, to attend to subjects that are rather grating than acceptable.

First he tells us “ the tongue is a fire.” The issues resemble this furious element in many particulars. A small spark will kindle much fuel, so this little member can do much mischief. A raging fire is ungovernable, so is this. Fire bears away all before it with its destructive flames, so likewise this. Fire is very useful when confined to its proper place, so the tongue is a most important member, when held under proper regulations.

Secondly, it is "a world of iniquity." This may admit of two constructions. Either that it inflames an unhappy world filled with iniquity. Or the tongue itself is a world of sin. As the world is a collection of natural bodies, so the tongue is an aggregate of evils.

Thirdly, "so is the tongue among the members that it defileth the whole body." It infecteth the whole man with sin. It is often the cause of sins being committed by the other members. Tho' sin has its origin in the soul, yet it extends through the whole man, therefore the soul and body is morally polluted.

Again, "it setteth on fire the course of nature." By the course of nature is understood the tenor of a person's life. This is all impregnated and inflamed with iniquity. There is no state nor age free from the evils of the tongue. Some vices are abated by age, but these often reach through the whole time of a man's life.

Lastly, "It is set on fire of hell." This expression is full of horror. Must fire be brought from the infernal furnace to enkindle the tongue for the destruction of the souls and bodies of men? An unbridled tongue is set on fire of hell, and Satan blows up the flame. How should all then set a watch before the door of their lips? The more unruly this member, the greater ought to be our exertions for its government. The more mischief it is apt to create, the more it should be watched and restrained within proper limits. Before we proceed further to be particular in considering the evils of the tongue, we may take a brief view of its excellencies, the ends for which it was given, and the duties of it.

First, in regard to its excellency. I shall not speak of that which is natural, which we hold in common with the brutes, but of that which is moral. The tongue of man is his glory

How wonderful the work of God, that it should be able to articulate such an infinite number and variety of sounds. The more noble and excellent it is, the more it ought to be respected, and the greater is the evil in perverting it to base uses. The tongue is the index and discoverer of the mind. It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. If the mind is to be regarded, so also is the tongue. By words we read the character of a man's heart, whether it be virtuous and good, or vain and corrupt. Men's works are likewise exceedingly dependant upon their words. Wherefore, if their deeds are to be respected, so are their words. Actions of the most exalted nature, words are often the cause of them. Daily experience informs us of the power of speech; a speech has saved a nation, and a speech has destroyed one. If the persons with whom we converse are to be respected, our language must be regarded, for this is an eminent instrument either of good or hurt. God employs the tongues of his ministers and others, for the conversion and salvation of men; and the devil by his emissaries useth the same for their subversion and destruction. How many thousands every day are injured by the tongues of others, some deceived, some provoked to sinful passions, &c. And on the other hand, how many thousands are daily edified, instructed and comforted thereby? St. Paul could say, "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God." One once declared, that the tongue cuts deeper than a sword, this only pierces the body, while the other reaches to the soul.

Moreover, our tongues are the instruments of our Creator's praise. This exhibits its distinguishing excellency and glory. This was one great end for which speech was given us, to shew forth the wonders of the name of the Most High. A considerable part of the service, which God requires of men, is performed by the tongue. The use of the

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highest faculties and graces of the soul are manifested by it. By this our knowledge, wisdom, love, friendship, gratitude, &c. are expressed. The declaration of Christ pronounces the high importance of our words. "By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."—So excellent is the tongue, that life and death are said to be in its power. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," saith the royal preacher. The work of heaven which consists in praising him who setteth on the throne, and the Lamb forever and ever, holds up to view the transcendent excellency thereof. Hence, say the scriptures, "If a man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. And he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. He that keepeth his tongue and mouth, keepeth his soul from trouble." All these things, to which a multitude of others might be added, display the superior excellency of this member.

Secondly, our attention must be turned to the ends for which the tongue was given, and the duties of it. The grand end for which our Creator endowed us herewith, as well as all the other powers and faculties of body and mind, was for his own glory. And its duties are too numerous for a complete detail. A few hints upon this subject must suffice for the present. As it was conferred upon us for the honor of the Great Supreme, therefore the sum of all its duties is to glorify him; to magnify his name and speak forth the praise of his attributes and works. With this we are to sing the songs of Zion, and give thanks for all the mercies we receive—to pray to him for what we want for ourselves, for the church and others—to confess his name, make profession of our belief in him, in Christ Jesus, of our subjection to his grace in the gospel, and obedience to his will in all things. With this, we

are to covenant with and make vows unto him—to teach and edify those committed to our care—to do good one to another by instruction, counsel and exhortation—to confess our sins to God and our faults to each other as occasion may require—recommend that which is good in others—to speak well of all men, superiors, inferiors and equals, as far as there is just ground for the same—to bear witness to the truth when lawfully called thereto—to defend the cause of the just and innocent against false accusers. Lastly, to be instruments of common communication between man and man; expressing our mutual affections and respects; for transacting all wordly business, for learning sciences, arts, trades, &c. These are only a few extracts of the great ends and important duties of the tongue.

But it is proper we should attend to the main matters intended to be communicated to us in this text, to wit, the great sins and evils incident to the tongue. In some former lectures we have considered the iniquities of swearing, cursing, backbiting, reproaching, &c. these shall not be repeated. Among the heinous offences committed by this member, that of blasphemy is of deep malignity, which is speaking evil of God, debasing his names and titles, reproaching him as a deceitful being. As Rabshakeh in his speech to Hezekiah blasphemed the Lord. Perjury, or false witness bearing, is another aggravated transgression. It is near a kin to blasphemy and the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is a solemn appeal to God in favour of a falsehood, calling the God of truth to witness a lie. This must be exceedingly provoking to the omniscient Jehovah, injurious to all the laws of justice, and damning to the immortal soul. One observes, that it was never known that a person convicted of perjury was ever brought to repentance. Lying is an abomination of a most criminal nature. However common the practice scarcely any thing more injurious—it despises the commandments of God, contemns his menaces,

destroys the peace of neighbourhoods, and breaks up all the happiness of society. It is an enemy which erects a strong battery against the whole system of christianity, which declares, "Ye shall not lie one to another. The Lord hates a lying tongue, and lying lips are an abomination to him. Wherefore put away lying and speak every man truth with his neighbour."

There are other sins of the tongue, such as preaching false doctrine, pretending to inspiration, as some have foolishly done of late, without affording the least shadow of testimony in their favour, perverting prophecies, and bending them to their own imaginations, and in their own imagination extracting from the scriptures things not contained in them; deriding true religion and experimental piety, and uttering scoffs against persons professing godliness, and pouring derision upon the ministers of Christ, upon whom wrath will come to the utmost. Ostentatious boasting of knowledge; understanding or religion, who, like Jehu, issue their loud proclamations to come and see their zeal for the Lord. When children speak dishonorably of their parents, and inferiors of their superiors; this is an evil under the sun, when persons become so abandonedly wicked as to speak evil of dignities.

Another sin of the tongue is a forward, idle and babbling loquacity, light and vain discourse only adapted to awaken in the hearers unbecoming ideas. "Foolish talking or jesting," saith Paul, are things not convenient." All the filthy ribaldry flowing from obscene mouths, he censures as "corrupt communication." Slandering is a detestable vice, speaking falsely of others to render them odious, readily believing evil reports, and sedulous in reporting them — Rash judging and censuring others, upon a hasty foundation, is condemned by our Lord, when he say, "Judge not, that ye be not judged ;

“ for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and
 “ with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you
 “ again.”—Railing, reviling, and all the passionate speeches
 of provocation, which destroy brotherly love and create discord,
 foment contention and drive through society the tempest of
 every evil work, must not this be a fire kindled by hell?—
 Flattery is a sin the opposite of censure.—Vice, with all its
 assumptions, never dares to assume consistency. This would
 be to destroy itself. Whatever its pretensions, by its votaries,
 may be, its life and soul will forever consist in inconsistency.
 “ A flattering mouth, saith Solomon, worketh ruin.” And
 thus it doth in a thousand different forms. The tortuous
 windings of the tongue in this kind of evil, exceeds the intri-
 cacies of the Labyrinth. There is no thread or clue, by which
 the unhappy traveller can make his escape. And perhaps
 few evils, in which the ministers of the gospel are enveloped,
 and from which they receive injury to their own souls, and by
 the practice of which they commit injury upon the souls of
 others, equal to this. Ministers are flattered, this blinds their
 minds, and inflates their hearts to flatter others. Hence they
 are disposed, to flatter those under concern of soul, that they
 are converted; those under some trouble of mind, that they
 ought to be comforted; those under just fears, that they ought
 to give their apprehensions to the wind, and go on in their
 heavenly course rejoicing. The great evil here is, their weal-
 thy supporters flatter them with the excellency of their perfor-
 mances, and they return the adulation with a tenfold accumu-
 lation, that they and their children are on the high road to
 heaven. Their hearers intimate to them, the sermon ought
 to be printed and circulated round the world; the ministers
 heart replies your salvation is certain. This is a subject I have
 often wished to see judiciously and scripturally handled. I
 think it might be of great advantage to public orators upon
 every occasion, and of the most eminent utility to the weekly
 speakers, and the daily directors of souls.

I heard a minister above fifty-five years ago declare from the pulpit, "that the pavement of hell was of minister's skulls," and I have often prayed that mine might not be one of the pebbles. Pardon, my brethren, this excursion, which a whole discourse would be too contracted for illustration. Harken to a few declarations of scripture upon the evils of a flattering tongue. "He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. They that flatter with their tongues, destroy them, O Lord. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips. A flattering mouth worketh ruin. Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips. A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet."

I must not detain you to speak of tattling, talebearing, whispering, and an incalculable number of such evils. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire. A prating fool shall fall. A fool's voice is known by the multitude of words. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. A whisper separateth chief friends. All that hate me whisper together against me." I must pass over the use of the tongue in idolatry, praising of idols and praying to them; all cheating, deceiving, and overreaching in words, and all allurements to evil company, and the enticements to lasciviousness and to innumerable wicked practices, too tedious for the description of a world of iniquity. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue amongst the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." Let us turn away from the unhappy theme, and close the disagreeable subject with a reflection or two. The

First reflection is, that the sins and duties of the tongue are so great and many, that it ought with the utmost circumspection to be watched over—and the way to watch it is to guard

the heart. If the latter be neglected, the former will always stray into the wilderness of sin. Let the heart be kept in purity, and this alone can confine the tongue to duty and propriety. If pride, vanity, or wickedness bloat the one, the other will always be bubbling over its banks. A divine counsel is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." This is the fountain from which the streams of evil from the tongue flow. If the heart be on the world, the flowing torrents of the tongue will be on the things of the world. If the heart be proud, the mouth will speak proudly. If the heart be vain, malicious, slanderous, envious, &c. the tongue will be so also. Guard the heart, and this will be a faithful centinel for the tongue, that it can neither set on fire the course of nature, nor be set on fire of hell.

Secondly, we reflect, that the love of God and our neighbour, the love of purity and holiness, is the best possible security against the evils of this unruly member. This will tame, what otherwise the power of no man can regulate or subdue. Wherefore, to speak right, we must first think and understand, and we shall speak according to the oracles of reason, and according to the oracles of God. If this rule could be observed, few would be the words uttered to what they now are. When a man considers what he is to say, then will he speak understandingly. "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom, but the froward tongue shall be cut off. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness. A fool's lips enter into contention, and they are the snare of his soul. Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words, there is more hope of a fool than of him."

The closing advice is, after relinquishing the disagreeable

subject, let us resolve, my brethren, to govern this unruly little member which creates a world of mischief here, and heats a more dreadful furnace than Nebuchadnezzar's hereafter. Let us set a watch upon the door of our lips, guard our passions, hourly inspect the temper of our hearts, be much in prayer, and, in one word, let us be christians.

SERMON XVIII.

The Symptoms of the Day of Grace being past.

*Jer. viii. 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we
are not saved.*

THESE words are the most heart aching and despairing moan, that was ever uttered upon earth. They are a part of the lamentations of the weeping prophet, for the ruin and complete desolation brought upon them by the Babylonian sword. The dreadful horror of the case, with all its accompanying realities, had been represented in the preceding part of this chapter; and in the description is contained, the awful degeneracy, and the procuring cause, of the nation's ruin.

The divine vengeance had been long restrained by the superior power of mercy, yet mercy herself, by their persevering impenitency and increasing wickedness, was at last compelled from her station, and the floods of wrath burst forth in irresistible torrents, and laid the whole land in utter waste. In the eighteenth verse the afflicted prophet utters his doleful feelings in reference to this unhappy case. "When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me."

When I would awaken a glimmering expectation of the interposition of heaven in our favour, my soul sinks within me, refuses comfort, and nothing arises but gloomy and despairing ideas. Let my head be waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I may weep day and night for the spoiling of the daughter of my people. Behold I hear from far, even from the North country and from the sides of the earth, lamentation, weeping and bitter mourning, for my unhappy and miserable people, because of the oppression of those who dwell in the north country and sides of the earth. The horror of the case extracts from the soul of the prophet, broken accents of supplication for their safety and deliverance. "Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?" Hereby the prophet would humbly insinuate that the honour and reputation of their Lord and king would be deeply affected, if his people should be given up to the devouring jaws of his enemies. As if he had said, hast thou not covenanted to be Zion's Lord and Saviour, to know her in adversity, and to be a present help in time of trouble? Wilt thou now forget thy character and be unmindful of her in her greatest extremity? Canst thou now suffer thy name to be traduced among the nations?—Canst thou tarnish thy reputation, and give the heathen an opportunity to blaspheme? To which the Sovereign king in hasty indignation replies, there is no hope for them, the last drop of mercy is exhausted. "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?" Then the doleful lamentation bursts from the prophet, in the despairing language of our text; "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Hitherto he seemed to have entertained some glimmering hope, but now finding the decree is past, he is overwhelmed in all the anguish of gloomy despair. Heaven frowns, God is departed, and nothing but the blackness of darkness impends over their guilty heads. The Babylonians are upon us and we must endure their rage and suffer all their fury. Their cavalry have en-

tered our territory. "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole earth trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city and those that dwell therein?" Had we attended in time to the measures proper, made suitable preparation for defence, these evils might have been averted; but now our case is irremediable, our destruction inevitable.

Thus we have a view of the words in their primary reference, which was to a temporal and civil salvation. But by an easy accommodation of this text, it expresses with great force the unhappy and miserable state of a soul which has outlast its day of grace. The loss of spiritual as well as temporal salvation in respect to this wretched people was probably comprehended in this despairing lamentation. Their seasons and opportunities for securing eternal salvation in a great measure expired with the destruction of their country and the loss of their national privileges, both civil and ecclesiastical. God had hewed them by his prophets and slain them by the words of his mouth, yet they obstinately persevered in impenitency and wickedness. They were now removed beyond the sound of a prophet's voice, where there was no temple in which they could worship or priest to offer sacrifice. None to solicit their repentance or essay their reformation. Now the want of spiritual salvation, and the loss of the means of obtaining it, are vastly greater and more considerable, than the same in a temporal sense; hence we may justly suppose the prophet intended both in this awful and heart breaking lamentation. For what is the loss of the former in comparison of the latter? What is the destruction of a town, the sacking of a city, or the ruin of a nation, to the wrath and vengeance of an infinite God, which will be inflicted upon lost souls forever and ever. The intention of the words, tho' originally applied to a community, yet with great propriety they are applicable to persons living un-

der the gospel, enjoying the means of grace, and continually neglecting and misimproving the same. This is matter for the deepest lamentation, mourning and woe. To think of persons having been long favoured with a season of grace, and opportunities for securing the salvation of their souls, and all have been neglected, the case is truly deplorable ; death approaching, time expiring, and the greatest business of life still unperformed. We are not to pronounce any man's day of grace past, while they continue in this world, yet there is reason to fear, it may be the melancholy situation of many. Every man must look into his own heart and judge for himself.—Here we may enquire,

First, into those circumstances and symptoms which render it probable, that those on whom they are found, their day of grace is past.

Secondly, evince that this is a state both lamentable and dangerous.

Before I proceed further in this subject, I would beg leave to make two preliminary remarks. First, we would not pretend to undertake to define the limits and bounds of the day of grace in reference to any people, or any particular persons. This is beyond human adjustment, and is alone proper to omniscience. We have no standard of the divine dispensation, in instances of this nature.

Secondly, we premise, that there may be a great difference in respect to the termination of such a day. It may be over with a collective body of people, when it may not be past with every individual appertaining to such a body ; and it may be over with particular persons in a place, when it is not past with that people in general. We proceed now,

First, to enquire into the circumstances and symptoms which render it probable, that the day of grace is past with those on whom they are found.

First, if persons have lived for a long series of years under a faithful and powerful ministry, and yet have not made any spiritual improvement, or received any spiritual benefit therefrom. This case, however common, certainly wears a black and gloomy aspect, and must be apprehended at least to afford some ground to fear respecting the sad conclusion. These persons have long enjoyed a faithful ministry; their condition with all the consequences of it, has often and plainly been stated before them in their intrinsic dread and horror, and they have been warned to escape for their lives, and to flee to the hope set before them. This hope and the method of deliverance thro' the mediation and sacrifice of Christ, the son of God and the Saviour of the world, has been clearly, according to the scriptures, represented unto them. They have been entreated with all the variety and powers of language, to embrace the offers of mercy by faith, to relinquish their iniquities by repentance, to give up their hearts in love to God, and engage in the duties of religion sincerely. And notwithstanding all the pains which God has taken with them for a multitude of years, they have still remained inconsiderate, secure and unimpressed. What could God have done more for such, than that he hath done? We have an awful illustration of the judgment which awaits those persons in the epistle to the Hebrews. "For the earth which
 "drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth
 "forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth
 "blessing from God; but, that which beareth thorns and
 "briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to
 "be burned." We here behold the excellency of the word of the gospel. It is compared to rain which refreshes the earth and renders it fruitful. We see also the different effects of it

on different persons ; it is to some a favour of life unto life, while to others, it is a favour of death unto death. Some, after all the showers of the gospel, remain barren and unfruitful ; they are nigh unto cursing whose end is to be utterly consumed. “ He that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, “ shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.”

Secondly, when persons have passed thro’ special seasons of the out pouring of the Spirit of God ; when many have been awakened and converted, and souls have flocked to Jesus as doves to their windows, and they have continued still secure and unconcerned. Surely their case must have an unhappy appearance. These are the most likely seasons of getting saving good, and of engaging effectually in the service of God. Persons who have sat thro’ various such times, and still going on thoughtlessly in worldly pursuits or carnal pleasures, have great cause to be afraid and to tremble by reason of the danger of their condition.

Thirdly, when persons have been the subjects of powerful convictions, and have had the workings and strivings of God’s spirit, and after all have returned to their former deadness and security in sin. This certainly is a case as dreadful and threatening as any yet mentioned, and perhaps more so. This is stated in a tremendous light by our Lord. “ When the “ unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh thro’ “ dry places seeking rest and he findeth none. Then he saith, “ I will return into my house from whence I came out, and “ when he is come he findeth it empty, swept and garnished ; “ then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits “ more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell “ there ; and the last end of that man is worse than the first.” Harken to the threatening of Jehovah in such an instance. “ Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou “ shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have “ caused my fury to rest upon thee.”

Fourthly, if persons have formed a false judgment of their state, and have taken up a hope that they are religious, upon insufficient or delusive grounds; and have long buoyed themselves up with the vain confidence of their piety, while their habitual irregularities of life too strongly indicate the contrary. They proceed on in their unfounded hopes, partake of the most solemn and sealing ordinances, and they become more blind, confident, and void of all suspicion, until the fatal hour of death dissolves the charm. This was the case of the pharisees of old, and continues to be the condition of many hypocrites down to the present day. "These are they who are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness. They proclaim their own goodness, and are apt to thank God, they are not as other men are." These are among the number of those to whom God gave a space for repentance and they repented not. Behold the flowing tears of a weeping Saviour over a people who had outlived their day of grace; and hear the heart rending moan bursting from his compassionate lips. "O that thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. The harvest is over and the summer is past, and they are not saved."

"Fifthly, when a gospel ministry and gospel ordinances are removed from a people, this wears a dreadful and dangerous aspect. The means of grace and salvation are taken away, the strivings of God's spirit have ceased, and such a people are prepared for judgments. God is about to inflict upon such the punishment of irreclaimable Ephraim, and say, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them; for the wickedness of their doings, I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more. Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give?—give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." Or the fatal stupidity of impenitent Israel. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their

“ eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, “ and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.”

Now collect all these symptoms or appearances into one view, for they ought not to be separately fixed upon any character, but when the assemblage is applicable to any people or person, the danger is great lest they should perish forever. If they have been favoured with a faithful ministry ; various seasons of the out pouring of the divine spirit ; have been the subjects of strong convictions and powerful awakenings ; have become reformed, and have formed mighty resolutions ; and imbibed a hope upon insufficient grounds, and this false and delusive confidence grows stronger and stronger ; what can be said of such persons but that their day of grace is past, and that they are given over to strong delusion, to believe lies, that they may be damned. A few words upon the

Second head will abundantly suffice, that this is a state both lamentable and dangerous.—The deplorableness of this case will appear from the nature and preciousness of the soul ; the irrepaibleness of the loss of it ; and the dreadful aggravations attending the same. The soul is above all created things precious. Did not the Son of God lay down his life for its salvation ? The loss therefore must above all conception be tremendous. The person who can measure eternity, and grasp the flames of hell in his hand, let him make the calculation of the damage. The declaration of our Lord upon this subject has been so many thousand times reiterated, that daily repetition has blunted its edge, and turned it into all the weakness of dullness. Yet once more it asks your attention and serious consideration. It never made a more solemn appeal to your hearts, judgments and consciences. “ What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world,” in all the trinity of its powers, its honors, profits and pleasures, “ And lose his soul, or what can be given in exchange for the soul ? ”

The bargain has weakness inscribed on the bill of exchange, and its protest exhausts eternity to make reparation. The enemy of souls could not wish for a more bitter lamentation than that which our Lord poured forth over the city of Jerusalem, who had outsat their season of grace, and amused away their space of repentance. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth together her chickens under her wings, and ye would not; behold your house is left unto you desolate." Despair is your allotment, and destruction your eternal portion. Angels and good men, and all in heaven and earth must bewail in all the anguish of woe your irrevocable fate. You are lost, you are damned forever. Your cry must be couched in all the language of desperation, "The harvest is over, the summer is past, and we are not saved." Nothing but the plunge of eternal damnation is before you. Gloomy the apprehension, and inexpressibly more dreadful the twinging experience.

A word of examination and exhortation must finish this fearful discourse.

First, if we are not harder than the nether mill-stone, let us pause, consider, reflect, and examine. Is there any hope for us? Is our destiny sealed? The old adage is, while there is life, there is hope? Is it possible to change the divine decree, and avert almighty vengeance? If you will attend in this day of life and repent and turn, the arm of the Most High is infinitely extended in mercy, and who dare say, but you may yet obtain salvation? None will be so hardy as to point out the individual whose day of grace is past. Wherefore, as the means of salvation are continued to you, God is forbearing and exercising patience towards you, who knows but he is waiting to be gra-

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cious ? Hence examine yourselves, look into your own hearts, and see whether ye may not yet turn unto the Lord. Take to you words and say, " We have long sinned against thee, " deafened our ears to the calls of thy gospel, but now after so long a time, we will attend to our souls, hear and return." This address shall conclude in a brief advice to aged and middle aged sinners. With regard to the old, among which I hold a foremost rank. Our sun spreads its feeble beams, and is just plunging beneath the horizon. And we know it is said, " The sinner dying an hundred years old shall be accounted." Here it will be asked, whether a sinner who has outlived the power of sinning can be saved ? Surely he can upon the terms of the gospel. If he hath lived ninety and nine years in sin, even yet the door of mercy is open, if he will repent and embrace that Saviour, who hath declared, " All manner of sin and blasphemy he will forgive." Here is encouragement and ground of rejoicing for old sinners. Let us not even yet despair ; but in the closing period of life, let us glorify God by shewing forth the mighty power of his grace in our conversion, repentance, faith and salvation. The oldest sinner who repents shall be saved. Blessed declaration ! wherefore, let the sinner bending to the earth under a weight of years, turn unto the Lord, and receive the rich and free blessings of eternity. You will sing the highest notes of grace in the celestial regions. Some were called at the eleventh hour.

And with regard to sinners of middle age there is hope for you. There is grace enough in our Father's house and to spare. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. Are you sinners ? the merciful call is directed to you. " Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." " If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. I have no pleasure in the death of him that

"dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn and live. Rent
 "your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord
 "your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger
 "and of great kindness. Thus, saith the Lord of hosts, turn
 "ye unto me, and I will turn unto you." There were in
 Niniveh aged, middle aged and young sinners. "They turned
 "from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he
 "said he would do unto them, and he did it not." Let the
 prayer of all, of every age and of every rank, be, "Turn us,
 "O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

S E R M O N X I X .

God the Author of all Afflictions and Troubles.

Job, v. 6, 7. *Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust
neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born
unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

THE being and perfections of God lie at the foundation of all piety and religion. A due knowledge and sense hereof is the first and most immediate ground of all true exercises and holy affections. The glorious attributes of Jehovah are the primary objects, to which religion in all its branches has respect. Not only so, but the very essence of it consists, in sentiments, sensations and feelings of heart suitable and answerable to the beauty, glory and excellency of these perfections, and which, when properly apprehended and realized, are adapted to produce, and will certainly produce in all rational creatures, whose temper and taste is as it ought to be. In this correspondence therefore of the frame, temper and exercises of the soul to the real character or name of God, consists much of true religion. Hence some just and true knowl-

edge of the great Supreme must be the origin of every spiritual feeling and of all godly practice. Of consequence, if our notions and conceptions of his nature, truths and perfections are erroneous and false, and not agreeable to the accounts he has given of himself in his word, whatever degree of affections, and seemingly good exercises of heart, these notions and apprehensions may produce in us, there can be nothing in them of true religion. Because the objects by which these affections are excited, are delusive and false; they have no existence, but in our own blind and deceived minds, hence these exercises and affections have no correspondence to the real nature and perfections of God, in which consists the very essence of all sincere piety and christian godliness. For the sake of illustration, let us suppose a person to have conceived a notion of God as a being of a blind and undistinguishing propensity to compassion, mercy and indulgence; of such absolute facility of temper, as not to adhere to the rules of justice, or to regard the moral conduct of his creatures; now for a person from these apprehensions of God, to be pleased with him, love him, and feel transports of affection, there can be no religion in such exercises as these, for all is mere fancy and delusion. There is no such God, and the being he respects and admires is a mere idol of his imagination. On the other hand, let us suppose a person to have conceived an idea of God, as a rigorous, cruel and vindictive being, and disposed to punish his creatures, merely for the sake of punishment, now for this person to be filled with fear and dread of this supposed deity, and is very cautious in all his conduct, lest he should excite his resentment, there can be no religion in this fear, for the reasons already assigned.

From these observations, it cannot but appear, how necessary a revelation from God is, to teach us his true character, and to give us a just knowledge of his nature and perfections in order to the being and practice of religion. And how care-

fully should we attend to the accounts given us in this revelation respecting himself.

Some proper knowledge of God is necessary to form us to those frames, exercises and sentiments, which we ought to feel with regard to all his providential dispensations, especially such as give us a great deal of pain and affliction, and appear to be intended for this very purpose. Many such dispensations we are the subjects of in the course of our lives ; many that are exceedingly painful and greivous. Our text assures us that none of the evils which befall us come by chance, or are fortuitous events. However God may employ secondary causes in the affliction of mankind, yet it is his hand behind the scene that directs the whole. " Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground ; yet man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Neither soil nor climate produce afflictions without the agency of God. Nay, so insignificant an incident as a sparrow falling to the ground, cannot take place without the notice of our heavenly father. When it is here denied that afflictions and troubles are not mere accidental events, nor the effects of natural and common causes, there must be some efficient in these matters of great importance, and this can be none other but God. The denial of the attribution of this effect to any natural agency, certainly implies in the clearest manner, that God is the author of all affliction, calamity and trouble, which befall the children of men.

The implicated assertion in these words shall employ our attention at present, to wit, that when mankind are afflicted, pained and grieved, that it is the hand of God which doth these things. Or in other words. when mankind is in trouble, God is the author of all their afflictions.

To this head of afflictions are to be reduced all the natural

evils which men feel, or are the subjects of. All those natural things universally, which give us pain and distress, destroy our comfort, ease and happiness, and involve us in misery, anguish and wretchedness in all their infinite and indescribable forms. In this are included not only the more common and ordinary, but the more signal and extraordinary events which produce these effects in their higher and more painful degrees. The enumeration of these, even under general heads, exceeds the powers of calculation. Such as wars, famines, pestilences, conflagrations, inundations, bereavements, diseases, death, &c. In one sentence, all the plagues and natural evils of this life and of the world to come. He who can count the drops of the ocean, or the sands on the ebbing shore, let him undertake the enumeration. When we speak of the divine agency in the evils among rational beings throughout the universe, or the evils comprehended in time and eternity, all know that evils are of two kinds, natural and moral, and we must always carefully distinguish between them. Natural evil is that which consists in pain and suffering in all its infinite variety and extent ; moral evil is that which is contrary to duty, a want of conformity to the divine law, or a violation of moral obligation. God is not the author of moral evil, neither indeed can be. This is absolutely out of the power of his nature as it implicates impotency, weakness and inconsistency, which are ever far from God. He is infinitely abhorrent to every thing of this kind. He is not tempted with evil, neither doth he tempt any man. All positive agency or direct and immediate influence in the production of sin would be a renunciation of his existence, a denial of himself, and, O blasphemous expression, that he had commenced sinner ! Few of the authors of metaphysical divinity, from Dr. Twiss down to the present day, but what I have read ; I know they can twist words to speak things which they mean not, and which they would not wish any to understand in their usual acceptation. Divines and moralists, like other philosophers, become sometimes in-

toxicated with speculations, they issue assertions and then spend pages of explanation, and finally, after much labour, study and toil, as they can be understood, they return again within the lines of sobriety and common sense.

God has permitted sin for wise and most important purposes to enter into this world, and he overrules it for the glory of his name and the benefit of the general system. It is enough for us to believe, "That the wrath of man shall praise him" and that the remainder of wrath he will restrain."

Though we in the most perfect manner acquit God of being the author of sin or moral evil, yet reason and scripture every where declare him to be the cause or author of natural evil, of all pain, punishment and suffering from the lowest to the highest degree, both in this world and in the world of hell. He is the author hereof in divers respects.

First, as he is the founder of that establishment by which natural evil becomes inseparably connected to, or with moral. The former is the unchangeable effect of the latter. This connection is as indissoluble as cause and effect. Where one takes place, the other certainly follows. God has solemnly demonstrated that this connection is inviolable and indissoluble in any other way but by the gospel. He has displayed this truth with awful and uncontrollable evidence in the death and sufferings of his only begotten son, when he stood in the law, room and place of guilty sinners.

Secondly, he is the author of affliction or natural evil, as he by positive influence and direct agency, in consequence of the iniquities of men, brings on those events, changes and revolutions, which are productive of the greatest pain, misery and distress to mankind. This influence is employed in a thousand imperceptible modes, so concurrent with the visible course of

things, that his hand is neither observed nor considered. Hence the events are ascribed to the mere operation of natural causes, while God is the author of all these distresses and troubles. These ought always to be attended to by rational creatures, as a just correction of their sins, designed by heaven for their amendment and their good. Sometimes God exerts his agency in the production of events for the punishment of the wickedness of men, which are very extraordinary in their appearance, and flash terror on the most blind and stupid soul; he suspends the laws of the natural system, arrests the sun in his course, causes the staff in the hand to become a serpent, opens seas and rivers to make a passage of dry ground, causes waters to flow from the flinty rock, &c. At other times where the laws of nature are untouched, they are so overruled as that events arise which are preternatural, and pour down torrents of affliction on man. God acts herein in all instances, not only as the Lord of nature, but as the moral Governor of the universe. And he has invisibly produced and applied these events in such a connection with wickedness, as is a full demonstration of the scriptures being the inspiration of God. Any person well informed in the history of the bible, cannot avoid observations of this dreadful import.

That God is the author of all natural evil, in all its common and tremendous forms, let us a little attend to the evidences of this awful truth. None I hope can misunderstand my meaning on this subject, when all natural evil is ascribed to God as the author thereof, that it intends, all afflictions, pains, sufferings and calamities, which we can be the subjects of, in our personal, family, national capacities, characters or relations. It is that punishment which stands infallibly connected with sin by the divine constitution. Had not mankind sinned, they would never have known what natural evil meant. But as they are sinners God has determined to entail calamities upon this guilty and unhappy world. Wherefore all punish-

ment or natural evil is to be considered as proceeding from his hand both in time and eternity. That God is the author of all the punishment in the eternal world is plain. He formed that direful division in the future state, called hell. He inflicts all the awful torments which devils and damned spirits suffer there. The vials of his wrath are continually pouring into their guilty spirits and the smoke of his vengeance ascends forever and ever. This is the reward which the finally impenitent and the workers of iniquity receive from the hand of their Maker. The burnings of Tophit, that tremendous furnace, are kindled by the breath of Jehovah. No doubt the devils and wicked in hell are great tormentors one of another. God operates by instruments and means in all worlds. All this eternal evil is ordained as the punishment of iniquity and the reward of transgression.

Now if God be the author of the greatest possible natural evil, surely with the utmost propriety the less may be attributed to him. Hence it is apparent whatever may be the means or secondary causes employed, God is the real author of all their pains, afflictions and troubles of this mortal life. "Affliction ariseth not of the dust of the earth, nor doth sorrow come forth of the ground. There is not evil in the city and the Lord hath no hand in it." *Job* declares that natural evils proceed from God. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Therefore why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

The scriptures are full of authorities in confirmation of this matter. All the troubles and calamities of both saints and sinners, are always ascribed to the moral Governor of the universe. He was the author of all the plagues of *Egypt*; destroyed the first born of the land, and drowned *Pharaoh* and his hosts in the red sea. He was the author of all the calamities.

of the children of *Israel* in the wilderness ; slew them by thousands, and caused all these emigrants to perish in the desert, save *Caleb* and *Joshua*. He often afflicted them with wars, pestilence and famine ; scourged them by the nations round about, and distressed them by the *Canaanites* in the midst of them. He carried them into *Babylon*, ruined their city and country, and finally dispersed them among all nations as they are at this day. God was the author of the destruction of *Babylon*, *Edom*, *Moab*, &c. Yea, he has pulled down nations, and set up kingdoms from the beginning even to the present time. Thus all affliction, trouble and distress, whether it respects nations, communities, or individuals, comes from the hand of God. Nay, an arrow is not shot from a bow, but he directs it at pleasure, and sends it to the joints of the harness. It is as certain that God is the author of all punishment and affliction, both mediately and immediately, as that he is the Supreme Governor of the universe.

It cannot be said that *Nebuchadnezzar* destroyed *Israel*, and *Cyrus*, *Babylon*, any further than that they were instruments in the hand of God, and scourges to these nations for their iniquities and abominations. It cannot be said that Satan was the author of all the calamities which befel *Job*, for he could not do the least thing, however malicious he is, but by divine permission and direction. It is remarkable that *Job* never once blamed the *Sabeans*, *Chaldeans*, the devil, or the winds and the storms, but as a good and well informed man, who understood divine providence, acknowledged all that came upon him, was from God.

It will be objected, that when our Lord healed a woman, who had been bound eighteen years, he charges this affliction upon the devil as the author of it. "Ought not this woman who Satan bound these eighteen years be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" To which it is replied, that

scripture must be interpreted by scripture, and ever understood in consistency with itself. The *Jews* crucified our Saviour, a soldier run a spear into his side, &c. yet it was God that bruised him, his wrath wounded him, and his sword was drawn against the man that was his fellow. Although the *Jews* performed the most wicked deed, which was ever perpetrated under the sun, yet it was the justice and wrath of God which was due to the iniquities of man laid upon him, that was the sole cause of all the sufferings, which Christ underwent. He endured no more pain and calamity than God was pleased to lay upon him. So this unhappy woman, whatever affliction she may have endured, Satan was nothing more than the mean or instrument, under the permission and direction of God, of all her troubles and calamities.

Satan and sin, in the sacred oracles are frequently used as synonymous terms. Sin is the procuring cause of Gods coming forth in all the infinite variety of afflictions which fall upon the children of men, upon saints and sinners. Let it be here observed, when God deals out painful and afflictive dispensations, he always, to the whole view of the universe, proceeds upon the principles of justice and equity and never punishes as a Sovereign; "He doth not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men." This will be considered in a future lecture. In the deluge, in the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, there was nothing of arbitrariness or caprice in his conduct. Injustice cannot dwell with the Judge of all the earth. Justice and judgment are the guardians of his throne, and he never deviates from the perfection of righteousness.

A very brief improvement shall finish the subject.

First, we are here taught, that the consideration of afflictive events, of whatever kind or extent the same may be, as originating from the infinitely wise agency of God, are the only

foundation on which they can make any proper impressions upon us, or we can receive any support or consolation under them. This attention to troubles and calamities, and a due consideration of them in their source and in all their bearings, cannot fail of producing useful and good effects. But alas! the best means of improvement will be of no avail without the influences of the Holy Ghost to give them effect.

Secondly, the consideration of a just, holy and gracious God sending distresses upon us and pressing us under many troubles, is the highest possible encouragement and consolation to a believing heart. Let all who have experienced any deep afflictions, and whose views and exercises under them have been in any measure of a right kind, acknowledge that it was good for them to have been afflicted. A quiet, resigned and submissive feeling in troubles, blunt much of their force, and disarm them of their sting. Under these apprehensions and sensations the soul will often rejoice in tribulations. No circumstance to a pious mind in afflictions renders them so grievous and insupportable, as the want of a realising sense of the particular hand of God in them. This feeling and perception will be the first care and concern of such a person to obtain, and a leading measure to all proper exercises of heart in times of trouble.

Thirdly, we here learn, that it would be a dreadful thing, if this world in all its calamities, changes and revolutions, were not under the immediate government of God. A reflection of this kind would destroy the whole comfort of existence in it. Existence in this world, if the Governor of the universe had not the administration, would be a curse, and absolutely insupportable, amidst all its tinsel shows. No earthly affluence can compensate to a good man, the absence of the satisfaction of the divine government. On this supposition, it were better not be, than hold existence.

Lastly, let this subject exhort us, most firmly to believe in God, his perfections and constant superintending care over all things ; let us be patient under afflictions and troubles ; in all seasons of distress acknowledge his holy hand ; repent of our sins ; submit to the divine will ; and glorify him in adversity as well as prosperity. Remember, an eminent part of religion consists in submission to God. " Jesus, our perfect example, " said, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. " Thy will be done." All the followers of Christ, whatever may be their sufferings in this life, will surely be happy.

S E R M O N XX.

God's Pleasure is not the Affliction of his Creatures.

Sam. iii. 33. *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the
children of men.*

AFFLICTIONS considered abstractly and objectively, or in themselves, can never be pleasing to any good being for their own sake. Misery, in its own nature, is ever abhorrent to the heart of rectitude. Yet however reluctant the Divine Being may be to punish his creatures, it may, by their conduct, become, absolutely necessary for the honor of His name, the support of his government, the dignity of his laws, and the good of the general system. Hence we see punishments from heaven are inflicted upon sinners of every age and of every description in this world and the next. In the words before us, God makes a declaration for the vindication of his own character, and for an inducement to transgressors to take all blame upon themselves. God declares that the afflictions and griefs of his creatures, tho' imposed by his hand, are not agreeable to his heart. It is true he afflicts and puts to pain in all cases, but these are to him a strange work, a

work in which he has no pleasure. Hence he issues the proclamation in our text to all intelligences. It is an established maxim, an aphorism without exception. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." This is an assertion of perfect truth in all instances whatsoever. Our attention at present shall be confined to the confirmation and illustration of this soul comforting doctrine. Hence you will please to consider the ensuing remarks.

First, when it is here said that God doth not willingly afflict or grieve his creatures, it cannot be the meaning that he doth not act freely and voluntarily in the dispensation of punishments and afflictions, as if he were not in these cases a free agent who acted his own pleasure, or did as he chose to do; but was under the force of compulsion in acts of this kind. That God must be perfectly free in all his conduct is a conclusion which arises from the very idea of his nature. To suppose he could be the subject of force or compulsion, would amount to the same thing as to suppose there was no God. For if he be not superior to all controul and force, he is not. All divine acts, as they must forever exclude every idea of force, they are absolutely free, hence they are always the result of inward choice and preference. There are no grounds for any acts of rational beings but two, *force* and *choice*; therefore where the former is excluded the latter is established. The very nature of liberty as it belongs to moral agents, is to do as they chuse. And the very nature of a free action is, that it was the effect of choice and not of compulsion. The only thing incompatible is external force.

Hence all the acts of Jehovah are perfectly free and voluntary, his punitive acts and afflictive providences, as well as those of his mercy and grace. This is true from the lowest to the highest instances of them. The damnation of the wicked, of the finally impenitent and unbelieving, is as free and volun-

vary an act in God, as the glorification of true saints. The one is as much the result of choice as the other. Thus I presume this remark is sufficiently evident.

Secondly, it cannot be the intention of the assertion in our text, that whatsoever afflictions he sends upon mankind gives him any imaginable tincture of pain or uneasiness, or in any way disturbs the tranquility of the eternal mind. The thoughts, attempts, and permitted outrages of creatures, cannot make the least alteration or change there. The system is unchangeably established, all proceeds on in the order of perfection; and the composed rectitude of the divine mind, prohibits every weakness of alteration. Whatever mortals may think, he certainly enjoys himself in the full perfection of felicity, notwithstanding all the infinite variety of changes, weaknesses, infirmities, and iniquities, which pass before him, and which he permits, directs and governs. All that comes to pass throughout all worlds, is under his sovereign controul. He does according to his pleasure in heaven and in earth. His pleasure and happiness directs universal nature.

The happiness of God is the happiness of the universe, and it stands infinitely distant from improvement or retrenchment. The happiness of God is the source of the felicity of all beings. This is the fountain of blessedness to all virtuous and good beings, both angels and men. This is the spring of all satisfaction, pleasure and enjoyment throughout all worlds. A destruction of this would entail misery upon the whole system of intelligences. It would spread desolation, horror, and torment through all nature. Even an indifference to the divine happiness, is an indifference to his existence, and is such a reflection upon the whole of being, as strongly indicates the most abandoned wickedness.

The essential happiness and holiness of God is an exhibition

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of his character in righteous and holy actions, consequently he enjoys an infinite complacency and satisfaction in his *own* conduct in all instances. This therefore must be the case in the infliction of pain, misery and distress, as well as his dispensations of mercy, grace and goodness. Would it be extending the idea too far, to say, that God is as really happy in the damnation of sinners, as in the salvation of them that believe? —or that he has as real a complacency in his own conduct in the one case as in the other? In courts of human justice, the condemnation of a malefactor is as truly an act of benevolence, as conferring rewards where they are deserved. Selfish affections are prone to think otherwise, but there is no foundation for this in the nature of things.

When it is said God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, it appears to import the following things.

First, that the pains and miseries of his creatures are not in themselves, abstractly considered, objects agreeable to God, or to the feelings of any good being. He does not inflict punishments for their own sake, and distresses and troubles are not objects of his pleasure. The divine nature is infinitely abhorrent from every disposition of this kind. This is a disposition wholly proper to creatures of corruption, such as devils and wicked men. It is a branch of malignity of temper, and disinterested malevolence. The blessed God clears himself by an oath of every imputation of this kind. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death, or misery of the wicked, but rather that they should turn and live.” The life and happiness of his creatures are his delight, but their misery and torment his abhorrence. God has no more pleasure in natural than in moral evil; they are both alike disagreeable to his nature. Hence he afflicts not, nor inflicts punishment upon sinners for any pleasure arising therefrom.

Secondly, he does not dispense pains and troubles because he delights in rigour or severity. This particular expresses something different from the former. There is a disposition among fallen creatures often to carry demerited punishment too far ; not to what can be strictly ruled injustice, but farther than was absolutely necessary to answer the ends of punishment, both with respect to the delinquent, the law, and the community. A less measure would have perfectly served all the ends of justice and government, therefore every degree of rigour and severity, or the extremity of justice, is far from the Most High. Tho' there may be nothing in this case strictly unjust, yet it awakens the idea of an imperfect character. There is something in the exhibition not amiable or lovely. When God declares, he does not afflict willingly, it evidently means to deny, that he ever sends anguish and trouble upon his creatures in the least tinged with rigour and severity. God lays no more upon his creatures than is justly necessary to support his government, vindicate his character, and exhibit the evil and danger of sin to the universe. The glorious Jehovah is infinitely remote from severities and every thing of this kind in his nature, temper, character and government.

Thirdly, remark, that the inflictions of griefs, sorrows, pains and troubles, on the children of men, is not an arbitrary act in God, or the mere effect of sovereign will and pleasure. It is declared, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." But it is never said, "He will punish whom he will punish." Nothing can be more plainly expressed in words, than the contrary of this in our text. It is certain all exercises of mercy and grace towards sinners, originates from the sovereign pleasure and will of the great Supreme. To substitute any other principle in the stead of this, would be a subversion of the gospel, which is to give all glory to God in

the salvation of men. That no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.

But in the distribution of punishments to his creatures, the foundation, measure, and rule of his conduct, is entirely different. In this case God never acts arbitrarily, or from mere sovereign will and pleasure. The proceedings of his administration in this respect are altogether of another nature. Here the unchangeable principles and rules which result from his own essential rectitude, and the inviolable nature of his perfections, a copy of which he has served us with in the holy scriptures, and attested it in all cases of this nature, to be the invariable standard of his proceedings.

Observe that this establishment for the punishment of iniquity, is not an arbitrary measure, but arises from the nature, reason and relation of things, from the attributes of God, and the propriety of his administering the government of his extensive dominions. And every degree of punishment assigned to the transgressors of reason and the eternal laws of rectitude, is no arbitrary act. Punishment or affliction in all its nature and degrees, can never under an infinitely wise government, exceed the bounds of fitness and reason. No sinner in earth or hell can justly say his punishment is excessive, or arises in the least measure beyond his demerits. The very supposition of any excess in this business would be destroying the natural as well as the moral difference of things. It would be casting God from his throne of perfect justice and judgment, destroying the distinction between virtue and vice, sin and holiness, and involving the whole universe in tremendous ruin. The least deviation from perfect rule in the distribution of punishments, would be worse than the wreck of nature and the crush of worlds. But if the punishment of sin arises from the perfections of God, and every degree of it is founded on the holiness of his law, then it is demonstrably evident, that no

instance of affliction or punishment is or can be an arbitrary act on the part of God.

Fourthly, we remark, that God never afflicts or punishes his creatures without an adequate and sufficient cause ; nay, not without the greatest necessity, founded in the nature of things, and in his own unchangeable existence. This conclusion is perfectly accurate with regard to both worlds, to the future as well as the present state. We see the miseries and distresses of this world are exceedingly great, but the evils of the other world to which impenitent sinners go, according to divine revelation, are infinitely greater. There is a demerit in the nature of sin, and in the temper and conduct of sinners, which renders it indispensably necessary in the judgment of infinite wisdom, which cannot be suspected of weakness or partiality, to inflict punishments with all due proportion. In this world all punishment, however dreadful, is ever from the compassion and forbearance of God, directed in the lowest proportion to creatures in a state of probation for their correction and amendment ; and in the future state, no punishment will in one iota exceed the laws of equity and reason. Perfect righteousness holds the reins of government in all worlds. And this is an invariable maxim in all the divine dispensations: “ He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”

We have in time past experienced innumerable evils and distresses in this life, and our lives are continually chequered with them, therefore we ought seriously to consider that all this is not accidental—it is from God. These calamities are not to please himself or displease us. There is something in us in respect to the law and perfections of the Most High, which renders it absolutely necessary we should be treated in this manner. It is an immutable principle, that the God

of all the earth always does that which is right. The treatment therefore from a most righteous being, argues something extremely wrong, and infinitely offensive and provoking in us, that can lay the ground for such a necessity, compelling as it were a character of such extreme amiableness and unspotted purity, to the infliction of evils abhorrent to his nature. God is love—punishment is his strange work—we are sinners, and the miseries of this life, and the pains of hell, demonstrate, that sin is exceeding sinful.

Too numerous are the inferences, and too extensive the application this subject naturally requires, therefore what remains must be crowded into a few intimations, which may serve for the enlargement of private meditation.

First, we infer that the evil and demerit of sin is inconceivably great. It is generally thought little of by mankind. Its intrinsic turpitude is neither obvious to a darkened understanding, nor affecting to a stupid heart. The ill effects of it on earthly comfort they often feel, and attribute them to a thousand variant sources; but the nature and consequence of it, sin itself removes from their view. Hence they proceed on in inconsiderate indulgences, as their dispositions and fashions of the place where they live, direct the way, until they plunge deep into endless pain. No preaching, no warnings of providential dispensations, can instruct their minds or change their views; yet it is an absolute certainty that sin will not pass without an adequate punishment. In the eternal estimation of wisdom, infinite misery is only deemed a rational punishment for iniquity, and this is actually entailed on millions in torment and will be perpetuated forever and ever.

We who are now in a state of repentance, and in the only world where mercy and grace are exercised, let us immediately fly for refuge to the atonement made for transgression. Christ

took upon him the punishment and iniquities of us all, that all who repent and believe might be redeemed from the curse due to sin. From the exceeding great evil of sin and the unchangeable constitution of the divine law to punish it, made it necessary that the captain of our salvation should become perfect through sufferings.

Hence it is of the highest importance, that we should perceive and feel some degree of the odiousness of sin, from which all genuine humiliation, contrition and repentance originate. In proportion to the sense we have of the vileness and turpitude of iniquity will be the meltings, sorrow and brokenness of heart for the same. If this sensible feeling of the evil of sin be wanting, we remain destitute of every meetness for the friendship of God, according to the gospel. If this be present, it breaks the proudest and most unrelenting heart into the tenderness of contrition, and inspires it with the love of God and Christ Jesus.

Secondly, from hence we infer that the eternal punishment of finally impenitent sinners is absolutely certain. The text and whole doctrine irrefragably confirm this inference. The punishment of sinners is not an arbitrary act, but arises from the holiness of the divine nature, the perfection of the law, the intrinsic demerit of sin, and the nature and reason of things. If the infliction of misery was an arbitrary or capricious act, there might be hope of an escape, for caprice is always a changing and unsteady principle, and there is no such thing with God.

This should awaken all to flee from the wrath to come. Let all who are at ease in Zion consider the horror of their situation, while impenitent and unbelieving. You must assuredly perish without a saving closure with Jesus of Nazareth. How inconceivable and indescribable the nature of sin, which renders it necessary, that the God of compassion and love should

hate and punish us forever. He has no pleasure in this unhappy business, objectively considered ; he cannot afflict willingly, but it arises from the holy propriety and beauty of vindicating the lustre of his character, magnifying the excellency of his law, and rendering it honorable in the view of all intelligences.

Thirdly, it appears from this subject that God is transcendently amiable, not only in himself, but in all the branches of his administration. " He is righteous in all his ways and holy " in all his works." He is as equally lovely in the pain and affliction of transgressors, as in the dispensations of his mercy and goodness. His present conduct toward the disorderly inhabitants of this world, in all the calamities retailed upon them, is no diminution of his loveliness in itself, nor in the view of saints or holy beings. Sinners, it is true, form a different opinion, as their whole minds and conduct are perverse, and they declare that their distresses are arguments of rigour and severity ; this boils up the enmity of their hearts, and they cannot think with patience of a God of punitive justice. But could they see their own hearts, they would rise as much against the sweet and amiable parts of the divine character as any other, for the whole of God, his laws and government, are the objects of their hatred. Not so with holy beings ; all that is in God is lovely in their eyes, his judgments, wrath and vengeance, as well as his compassion, mercy and love. All heaven above and saints below unite, saying, " Righteous art thou, O " Lord, and upright are thy judgments. The Lord is good " and he doth good continually."

Fourthly, we infer, there can be no ground for murmuring and repining against God. All these heart burnings, heart risings, and hard thoughts, are perfectly unreasonable and unjust. However common they were with Israel of old, and still are with us, and however prevalent in all ages, they are

entirely unfounded. There is no cause for them either in the nature or perfections of God, but all these base exercises arise from the blindness, wickedness, and perversion of our own souls. We have none to blame but ourselves. Hence the heart of man is desperately wicked. If we could once be reduced to acquit and vindicate God and take all blame upon ourselves, this would shed around us gleams of hope.

Wherefore from the forbearance, patience and unwillingness of God to afflict or grieve the children of men, let us from these strong arguments be induced to humble ourselves, repent and turn from all our iniquities. Let us be exhorted to fly into the arms of a bleeding Saviour. Let us not tarry a moment in the tents of sin, lest the everlasting doors should be shut.

E2

S E R M O N XXI.

The Preciousness of the Soul.

Psalms, xlix. 8. *For the Redemption of their Soul is Precious,
and it ceaseth forever.*

OUR existence is not confined to this state, neither our happiness or misery. We are all capable of, and formed for an eternal duration. And this interminable duration will be filled up with perfect felicity or perfect misery. When death shall have performed his office and put a period to our present existence, we will have a full experience of this most solemn truth. Whatever may be our condition at this concluded moment of the present existence, that will be our condition throughout eternity. All change and deliverance after this event, has impossibility sealed upon it. This is ordained in the eternal nature of things, and in the immutable decrees of heaven. "As the tree falls so it must lie. There is no work, labour, wisdom, or device in the grave whereunto we are hastening." A short time, and we shall all know, and saints and sinners will prove, the *truth* of the account of the eternal world. We must quickly pass into, and feel in our souls the

joys of Paradise, or torments of the infernal regions. One or the other of these conditions await each of us, we draw near, we hasten towards them as fast as moments fly. The last moment will soon be here, and when it comes, we must pass into eternity prepared or unprepared. No circumstances can procure us a moments stay. We may plead the dreadfulneſs of our condition, and cry for a ſuſpention of the ſtroke of death, We may groan with the moſt dolorous importunity, for the mercy of another day or hour ; but in vain. We muſt paſs to be ſwallowed up immediately and forever in the felicities of Seraphs or ſorrows of the damned.

In what a ſolemn point of view does this doctrine ſet the eternal world ? How precious and invaluable does it render our preſent time, as the only ſeaſon of preparation for it ? What high conviction does it afford of the wiſdom, importance and neceſſity of ſeeking the ſalvation of our immortal ſouls ? And how clearly does it ſhow the extreme folly and madneſs of heſitating, or being unwilling to ſubmit to any labour or ſelf denial, that may be requiſite to obtain the redemption of them from everlaſting miſery ?

This is the doctrine on which the diſcourſe of the Pſalmiſt in our text is founded. He is ſhowing the vanity of all worldly things as a ground of confidence and truſt in the day of death. Wealth or riches cannot ſupport a man at that tremendous period. They cannot purchaſe or effect the continuance of his life. They can give him no relief, nor afford him deliverance. “ They that truſt in their wealth, or boaſt themſelves in the multitude of their riches, none of them by any means can redeem his brother, nor give to God a ranſom for him, that he ſhould ſtill live forever, and not ſee corruption.” The ſpecial reaſon is aſſigned in our text, why riches cannot purchaſe life or redeem from death. “ For the redemption of the ſoul is precious, and it ceaſeth forever.”

That is, it is an article of too great value to be purchased by riches. All the wealth in the world is not an adequate price for this privilege. The whole sum, that all the sons of fortune can collect, cannot procure for them one moment beyond the time assigned them. Like other poorer mortals they do but stand their glass; they cannot stop the running sands. And when their glass is out, the redemption of their soul ceaseth forever.

The addition of this clause, "It ceaseth forever," has occasioned some variation among commentators respecting the sense of it. Some suppose that "The redemption of the soul" in our text, refers to the redemption made by Christ Jesus, and it being once performed and never repeated, it ceased forever. And it is an established truth, that the redemption of the soul from death and hell, is so precious and important, it could be obtained by no less a price than the death of the Son of God. And there is now no other method for a person to secure the salvation of his soul than by becoming interested in the redemption of Christ according to the constitution of the gospel. Hence it is said, "There is no other name given under heaven, by which any can be saved, but the name Christ Jesus."

But the words as they stand in their connection seem more directly and evidently to refer to the absolute insufficiency of all riches and wealth as forever incapable of making so high a purchase as the redemption or salvation of the soul. The original word which is translated *ceaseth*, never signifies to cease from a thing by way of rest and quiet, but either because it is impossible to be performed, or to cease from a thing by way of contempt and rejection. In the former sense it is thus used, "Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, until he left numbering;" or as the Hebrew is, until he ceased from numbering it; and the reason is given because it was impossible, "For it was without number." It is likewise used to express

contempt and rejection, as in the prophet Isaiah, "He was rejected of men." The word *rejected* is the same as in our text.

These observations seem to settle the precise meaning of our text, that it is impossible, that wealth can redeem a soul from death, and it contemns and rejects all riches as entirely insufficient for this purpose. Hence this is the idea, to which your attention is invited in the present lecture.

That the salvation of the soul is incomparably more precious than all the riches and treasures of this world.

When any one considers what is here asserted by the Psalmist, and afterwards advanced by our Lord, that the acquisition of the whole world could not profit a man who lost his soul, the truth of the doctrine must remain undeniable. For the sake therefore of proving this proposition, it were entirely needless to add any thing further. But the design of the gospel ministry is not merely to establish the doctrines of divine revelation, but one principal end is to represent and illustrate those doctrines, so that they may be most likely to strike the careless with conviction of their reality and importance, and rouse them out of their natural inattention, and regardlessness of the matters of religion.

In this view I would lay before you the following considerations, tending to illustrate this truth, that the soul is incomparably more precious than all the riches and treasures of this world.

First, the soul is capable of and designed for an eternal existence. The body must soon return to its original dust. The time is short, and this world with all its riches and treasures, in regard to us, will be no more. A few years will close our

eyes on all below the sun. As we brought nothing with us into the world, we can carry nothing out of it. "Wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person, and leave their wealth to others." But when the body dies, and the world and its honors and pleasures are no more, the soul is as capable of existence as ever. It is not subject to corruption and decay like material things. It is a spirit and immaterial, having no corruptible principles in its constitution. There is no tendency in its nature to extinction or death; neither can this be effected by its own will, nor by the will of any other creature. None but God who gave the soul existence, can extinguish it. His power is only adequate to this effect, and we are sure, he never will exert his power for any such purpose. As God made the soul capable of an eternal existence, so we are assured by himself, he designed it should endure forever. There will be no end of its duration. The sun and moon and stars must cease, the world with all its works must be burnt up, but the soul will exist immortal and forever. When millions of millions of ages are run out, the soul's capacity of existence will be the same. When as many millions more will be finished, it will be still as distant from any end of its duration, as remote from any tendency to non-existence, as the first moment it began.

The sacred pages abound with confirmation of this truth, that God made and designed the soul of man for an everlasting duration. When the body returns to dust, the soul returns to God who gave it. Not to have an end put to its existence, but to be fixed in an unalterable state of happiness or misery forever, according to its character as being righteous or wicked. For on these two characters depends the eternal destiny of every soul of man. There is no third character among the human race. As a person is of one or other of these when he dies, so will his eternal state be, unspeakably happy or miserable.

The rich man we are told died. Is this an end of his existence? No—immediately he lift up his eyes being in torment. While his body was taken care of suitably to his rank in life, while perhaps with the utmost funeral pomp and solemnity they convey it to the vault of his ancestors, his soul is suffering the pains of eternal death. While hireling orators it may be are pouring forth upon him the finest eulogiums, celebrating him for every social and divine virtue, and in their wanton charity enrolling him among the blessed above, he is wailing under the execution of divine justice in the infernal regions, where a drop of water cannot be administered to allay the anguish of his burning tongue.

In like manner when Lazarus dies, we find his soul still in existence after the death of his body. It was conveyed by angels to Abraham's bosom. But there would be no end of citing authorities to prove the future existence of the soul, or retailing the evidence of its being formed by God for an eternal duration. Let it be observed, that the whole system of revealed religion supposes the endless existence of the souls of men, as one of its essential grounds. Did not the soul live forever, there would have been no necessity for divine revelation, for law or gospel, for the incarnation and death of Christ, for ministers, sabbaths, or ordinances; but the soul will interminably exist, therefore this laid an important foundation for the whole of that religion taught us in the oracle of God.

Now if these things be weighed in our serious thoughts, what comparison is there between the riches and treasures of the world, and the soul, in point of value, preciousness and importance? Does not even reason reject the idea, of any equality or competition between them? Is not the difference as great as between a point and eternity, as between finite and infinite? And yet is there need of labour and pains to convince men of the superior preciousness of their souls? Must there be line upon

hence, precept upon precept, argument upon argument, and persuasion upon persuasion for this purpose? And yet after all thousands and tens of thousands remain unconvinced to their dying day, manifesting by the whole of their conduct, that they esteem the treasures of this world beyond their souls. Do they by some superior sagacity discern a mistake in the calculation, and so are confident that riches are of the highest value—hence act the part they do? Nay, this is far from the case; for the more closely men attend to the position, with brighter evidence it appears. And nothing hinders men from receiving the conviction of their souls being infinitely more valuable than the things of time, but the blindness of their minds and conception of their hearts. The gloomy god of this world hath so perverted their judgments and darkened their understandings, that they do not receive the evidence of the plainest truth in religion.

Secondly, the soul is capable of inconceivable felicity or suffering throughout the whole of its eternal duration. That our souls are capable of happiness and misery, or pain and pleasure, we are assured from experience. All capacity of this kind which we find in ourselves, originates from and depends upon our souls. To the body, nor to any other system of mere matter, does such a capacity belong. Our bodies indeed, in this present state of union, are subject to innumerable pains and pleasures, but it is evident, this arises entirely from their connection with our souls, and depends upon it. For let this union be dissolved, and our bodies are immediately as insusceptible of these impressions, as any other masses of matter whatever.

In the same way of experience we are likewise sure, that our souls are capable of happiness and misery to a very high degree. There are none who have lived many years in this world, but must have had abundant evidence of this truth, either by experience in themselves, or by observation of others.

Every age and almost every year, produces instances of the exceeding greatness of misery and pain the soul is capable of. The distress of heart in some arises to that degree, that they not only wish they had never been born, but even curse the day of their birth. Nay, so exquisite is their anguish, that they are brought to be utterly weary of life, and their misery becomes so intense, that they put an end to themselves. They perform that awful act, which is the utmost exertion of their will and power, to extinguish forever that existence, which they can no longer endure.

On the other hand, the felicity of some have become so great that their frail bodies have been incapable of sustaining the ecstasy. It is wrought up so high that the body sinks and faints. The joy and rapture of the soul causes it to burst its way through the clay tabernacle, and rejoice unincumbered with the drossy mass.

What these instances are produced for, is to show the greatness of the pain and pleasure, or happiness and misery, of which our souls are capable. But this is not the state any of these matters arrive at their highest degree of perfection. This is not the case with respect to sin or holiness, so neither with respect to happiness or misery. The present is a state of great imperfection in regard to all the concerns of our souls. The sin and holiness, and the happiness and misery of the present, are as nothing compared with that future state into which we are passing. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of the felicity of believers in heaven, "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Some christians have felt as much of the joys of the Holy Ghost as their present condition of mortality could bear, yet all this is as nothing in comparison of the felicity they will experience in the celestial world.

Thus likewise the scriptures speak of the miseries of the wicked in a future state. "Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?" That is, there remains a punishment, misery and anguish to the wicked, unknown and unexperienced in this life. The torments of the damned have not entered into the heart of man to feel or conceive. And yet men have felt such misery that they could endure life no longer, and their existence has become quite insupportable.

These reflections serve to convince us that our capacity of happiness and misery is vastly large; that the degrees of pain and pleasure our souls are capable of are exceedingly great. For if in the present state of imperfection and weakness our felicity and wretchedness may rise to such a height, how inconceivably great must they be in that world where all things will be in a state of perfection.

It is impossible for us either to ascertain or conceive the extensiveness of the measure of pain or pleasure which souls experience in the future state. Thus much is evident, that the soul's capacity of happiness or misery is beyond the power of numbers to calculate, and the force of words to express.

These things must set the worth and value of the soul very high to one who seriously realises them. They exalt its salvation far above all the riches and treasures of the world. But what is the effect produced upon the minds of the most of mankind, when the amazing extent of the capacity of their souls is exhibited before them? When men hear what vast degrees of happiness and misery of which their souls are capable, does it move them?—does it awaken their serious attention and consideration?—does it cause them to set a high value upon their salvation? Or are they filled with a deep solicitude how to escape the one and obtain the other? No: quite the reverse of all this. Notwithstanding it is laid before them by the

strongest evidence and clearest demonstration, that the salvation of their souls is incomparably more precious than all the treasures and riches of the world, yet they are incomparably more engaged to acquire the latter than secure the former. They plunge into the world with all their heart and strength, as tho' it were to last forever and could alone make them happy. How careless, unconcerned, and thoughtless is man with regard to his future state? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." With regard to the present life mankind in general are very foresighted, anxious and careful. They are greatly solicitous in making provision for times of sickness, and to have a support for the season of old age. But with respect to their souls and how it will fare with them in a future state of existence, there is little or no attention or concern. The most precious interest is neglected, while that which is of inferior worth has immense pains and care bestowed upon it. The workings of unbelief are either so great that they do not realise the immortality of their souls, or if they grant that they are immortal, it is in so cold and indifferent a manner, that it makes no impression upon them. If at times they have any remonstrances of conscience or misgivings of heart, about the state of their souls, they ordinarily suppress such reflections by promising to consider these things hereafter, and commanding their minds to a more close attention to the world. "This their way is their folly, and yet their posterity approve their sayings," and their practice. But whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and reject the counsel of God against themselves, the fact remains perfectly certain, that the soul and its salvation is incomparably more precious and valuable than all the things of time.

Many are the considerations which might be produced to illustrate and administer conviction of this, but I must not enter farther into them at present—And shall close the subject with one short reflection. It is this :

If men are not convinced of the superior worth of the salvation of their souls, it is not for want of light and evidence, but because they will not receive it. "Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." There is no man, who will allow himself to consider the nature of his soul, and its relation to eternity, and the nature of wealth and riches, supposing he could gain all the vast possessions of the world, but must be satisfied, that the salvation of his soul is incomparably more precious than the other acquisition. And if persons who live under the gospel are not convinced of this truth, there is no possible reason can be given for it, but that they do not chuse conviction. They hate the light and evidence which would discover this truth, and so they will not come to the light. They will not fairly consider and weigh the matter in their own mind, lest it should reprove their deeds, and show them the horrid nature of their own conduct, and thus oblige them to alter it, or live under the insufferable lashes of conscience and terrors of divine wrath. If after we have had sufficient light and evidence to convince us that our souls are more precious than the things of the world, and yet labour and toil more for the fading profits and pleasures of the latter, than for the eternal salvation of the former, our mouths must be forever stoppt. We know what would be the consequence of this conduct from the unerring oracles of God, that if persons would chuse, seek and pursue the riches of the world beyond the glory of God and the enjoyment of him, they have nothing to expect but everlasting ruin. Thus men who act this part are wilfully their own destroyers. Their final destruction is entirely of themselves. They act contrary not only to the commands of heaven, but they violate the dictates and conclusions of their own reason. For they cannot but admit, in case they consider and allow they have immortal souls, that they are infinitely more precious than the things of the world, and therefore the salvation of them ought to be set higher than any

temporal acquisition, and fought and pursued exceedingly beyond it. They know and their judgments declare, where their conduct must lead and land them forever, even in unutterable misery, anguish and horror, "Where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

Let us now be seriously exhorted to attend to the concerns of our souls above every other acquisition. Let us remember how much it cost Christ Jesus to procure the redemption of them. Consider his bloody sweat in the garden, and how he groaned and died on the cross in order that pardon and salvation might be purchased for your souls. Wherefore, if we now neglect our souls, not only must we suffer the torment of our loss, but all the increased wrath of Jehovah for despising the blood of his son. O let us therefore humble ourselves before God, because of our worldly mindedness and carnality. Let us repent of our sins and turn unto God by faith in Jesus Christ. Remember how our blessed Saviour esteemed the riches of this world, how indifferent he was to them, and let us imitate his example. Let it appear that we are christians in reality, by living above the world and laying up our treasures in heaven. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." "Look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal."

S E R M O N XXII.

The Duty of Declining Christians.

Rev. ii. 4, 5. *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

THESE words are part of a letter written at the express instance of the Son of God by the Apostle John, to the minister and church of *Ephesus*. The ministers of these seven churches are stiled angels; because as angels are the messengers of heaven, so ministers are messengers of God to mankind, to preach and explain to them the divine messages contained in the gospel. It happened in this church as in most of human societies, that tho' there was some good, yet there was a mixture of evil therein. In some respects they deserved praise, yet in others they were worthy of blame. What was good and commendable in them, is taken kind and particular notice of, and they receive high approbation for the same. Attend to the endearing praises given them by their Lord. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy

“patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil ;
 “and thou hast tried them which say, they are apostles and
 “are not, and hast found them liars ; and hast borne, and
 “hast patience, and for my name sake, hast laboured, and
 “hast not fainted.” Could more be said in recommendation
 of any church or people ? How many amiable qualities, vir-
 tues and graces, are here eminently and distinctly praised ?
 Such as works of righteousness, assiduity in duty, patience un-
 der afflictions and sufferings, perseverance in religion, aiming
 at the glory of God as their chief end, labouring for the honor
 of Christ’s name and the advancement of his kingdom, pecu-
 liar zeal for truth in doctrine, purity in worship and morals,
 strictness in government and discipline, rejecting apostolic im-
 posters, ignorant and wicked ministers, &c. Yet after all
 these grand encomiums upon their excellencies, our Lord,
 whose eyes are as a flame of fire, beholds something amiss in
 them, and in the wonders of his goodness and love, he does
 not omit to reprove with faithfulness. And this he does in
 the most beautiful, gentle, and subduing language in our text,
 “Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou
 “hast forsaken thy first love.” This is the evil laid to their
 charge, and the only thing amiss in them ; they had forsaken
 their first love ; the warm and tender affections they felt and
 exercised in the season of their first espousals to Christ, had
 suffered abatement and languor. They had not lost their love
 or religious affections entirely, but those which they once had,
 alas ! had become cold and subsided ; they possessed not that
 life and ardor which were formerly experienced, but were like
 a flame in the socket, approaching to extinction. After this
 our Lord subjoins a close and pungent exhortation. “Re-
 “member therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent,
 “and do thy first works.” To this exhortation is added a
 most solemn and alarming threatening, “Or else I will come
 “unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his
 “place, except thou repent.” Such a friendly and faithful

Admonition, and such an awful warning, ought to do good like a medicine; faithful are the wounds of a friend, tho' they may be very painful and afflictive.

We shall consider these words at present with relation to spiritual decays in general, and as applicable to particular persons, as well as churches.—Let us here enquire,

First, what these words which contain the reproof may be supposed to import.

Secondly, what is the duty of those who may find themselves immediately concerned herein.—In regard to the

First, you may observe, the reproof does not contain any charge of gross immorality, as in the case of the wicked, the profane and profligate part of mankind. With respect to these, our Lord has not only *some things* but *many things* against them. His charge against them is infinitely more heavy and dreadful, such as wilful ignorance, security, obstinacy in sin, contempt of religion, rejection of his gospel, trampling under foot his blood, doing despite to the spirit of grace, impenitency, unbelief, and a thousand various and aggravated wickednesses for all which they will hereafter be called to an impartial and fearful account. But the persons referred to in the text, are real christians, truly pious and good, as appears evidently from the context.

This charge implies more than common frailties and imperfections, to which the host of saints are always subject in this very imperfect state of holiness. There is no man liveth and sinneth not. This text is designed to teach us more, than that no man is free from infirmities. This reproof to the church of Ephesus, introduced with so much solemnity, must surely imply more than the common frailties to which the most

eminent christians are incident. There are some weaker saints, whose spirits are tender and perhaps not well instructed, who are too apt to apply scriptural and providential rebukes to themselves in all their gloominess and terror. They become sensible of many evils by meditation on their own hearts and clearer discoveries of God and his perfections, from hence they conceive awful apprehensions of their demerits, and pronounce bitter things against themselves, especially, if they be of a melancholy habit and a pensive turn of mind. Such infirmities and weaknesses we find often attending the most pious and devout, and tho' these are arguments for constant humility and watchfulness, yet they cannot be considered in the light of wilful sins, nor ought the tender and feeling christian with keen severity condemn himself as hereby breaking covenant with God. For tho' Christ is always in the midst of his churches, and his all penetrating eye beholds the inmost thoughts of every soul, yet he is far from aggravating and resenting the unwilling and lamented failings of his upright servants. It is not agreeable to the infinite benignity and compassion of his nature, to make the worst of their imperfections, especially where he observes also in his people a due sensibility of their failings and perceives penitential exercises of heart.

But these words are to be considered a charge against christians as decaying and declining in religion. As if our Lord had said, "O thou professor, and member of the christian church, thou renewed and converted soul, I know thy works, faith, patience and zeal; I charge thee not with hypocrisy, nor insincerity in religion, that thou hast no love to me nor true grace in thy heart; but I charge thee with being a defective and declining christian, thy love is not so fervent, thy faith so firm, thy walk so steady, thy conversation so savoury as it might and ought to be. Wert thou more attentive to, and better acquainted with thine own heart, thou wouldst dis-

cern many deficiencies and sad blots and blemishes there. Once thou couldst allow me thy whole heart, and all thine affections flowed towards me ; but, alas ! how art thou back-sliden, how is thy fine gold become dim, how hast thou forsaken thy first love ?”

Whose heart now has not some misgivings, lest the reproof may be directed to him ? Who among us can lay his hand upon his breast, and plead, not guilty ? Who has no reason for jealousy over himself, and can venture to say, the flame of his affections are not abated ? Is there that high esteem of the incomparable worth and excellency of Christ, that humble and devout gratitude for his dying love, that meek submission to his will, that active zeal in his service, that charity to the needy, that warm benevolence to mankind, that prayerfulness and holy walking, which were wont to be in us, and which we once possessed and discovered ? O that we could all make the appeal to our precious Saviour, which the Apostle did, when he was asked this question, “ Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?”—And reply with him, “ Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that we love thee.” Happy church, and blessed individuals, who can make this answer ? Or have not many of us reason to confess, that a dull and sluggish temper have taken hold of us, by reason of which we are less fervent in spirit, less warm in our affections, less devotional in the frames of our mind ? Remember, O christians, time is fast hastening away, eternity is just ready to open upon us, and what progress have we made towards heaven ? While the bridegroom tarries, are there not too many of us slumbering and sleeping ? May not Christ with propriety address us as he did his people of old in the prophecy of Jeremiah. “ Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of his increase, but now they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, they are gone far from

"~~me~~."—Well christians, if such be the case of any of you, hearken to the affectionate rebuke and admonition of your Redeemer addressed to you, to warn you of the languishing state of your graces, and to arouse you to return to your first love. Wherefore I proceed,

Secondly, to explain the duty of those who may apprehend the reproof applicable to them. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

First, be thoroughly sensible of thy condition. We cannot be too deeply concerned about our everlasting peace and welfare. Let us consider how matters stand between God and our souls. We are ready to enquire after, be careful of, and consult the health of our bodies; why should we not be as anxious about the health and vigour of our immortal spirits? Whether they prosper or languish?—Whether their graces encrease or decline?—Whether our faith, love, holy affections, and hope flourish, or whether they wither, fade and decay?—Whether we make advances in religion, or go backward?—Whether we grow in regard to, and steadfastness in duty, or whether we become more indifferent to, and negligent of the divine service. Let us awake up and search and try ourselves. If upon scrutiny, we find ourselves departing from our first love; is it because God is less good, Jesus less amiable, religion less excellent, heaven less desirable, and less a relish for divine ordinances? If this be our unhappy case, nothing strange that doubts and fears should arise, that there should be secret damps, fearful misgivings, and sad suspicions of heart. Examine yourselves, try yourselves, know ye not your own selves, how the love of Jesus is in you?

Secondly, be deeply affected with the unhappiness of your present circumstances. We should not only endeavour to

know our condition, but we should lay it to heart, lament and bewail it, and repent in dust and ashes. Let us remember from whence we have fallen. How warm our affections once, how tranquil our souls, serene our hopes, and substantial our joys, when God first pacified our troubled consciences and revealed his pardoning love to our hearts. How did we feel in a world of pleasure, as tho' heaven had come to earth? Sentiments of gratitude then glowed in our breasts, and we felt as tho' we would be no longer faithless but believing. With a sacred ardour and humble dependence upon divine grace, we set forward in our journey towards the heavenly Canaan. But doleful consideration, where are we now? How has our love and zeal, our hopes and comforts languished? What drowsiness and stupefaction beset us? How many fellow christians are outstripping us in every grace and virtue, in every good word and work? What spiritual pleasures do they enjoy, what celestial delights do they taste? Let our souls blush and be confounded, when we contemplate others far attended towards paradise, and we perhaps still groveling on the earth, or it may be, going the down ward way. Can we charge God with unkindness, or our blessed Immanuel with negligence? Where is the wisdom, truth, honor or grace in our hearts when we unreservedly dedicated ourselves to the Lord and solemnly vowed to be forever his? Has he been a barren wilderness to us or a land of drought?—Has he dealt with us untenderly, unfaithfully or deceitfully?—No. We know that his love is perfect and unchangeable. If he hath forsaken us, it is because we first departed from him. What will be our wretched condition if he should treat us as we do him; if he should resent our coldness and neglects as they deserve? Tremble at the thought, O christian! and shake off thy supineness.

Thirdly, repent and do thy first works. Consider the path on which thou didst take thy departure from God, and return back in the same way in which thou wentest astray. A

traveller who hath lost his road and finds himself wandering, pauses, stands still, and recollects where he is sure he was right, and returns by the same track, however mortifying, tedious and irksome, and perseveres till he finds himself right again, and then with more vigilance and industry, he pursues the well known way, that he may recover the time he hath lost. Thus let the wandering christian go and do likewise. " Thus "saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for "the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and "ye shall find rest to your souls." Every wrong step leads farther from God and happiness, encreases guilt and danger, and the return more difficult, the heart becomes more estranged and alienated, the sense and relish of divine things more languid. Let wanderers and backsliders be speedy therefore in their return to God. Whoever defers things necessary to be done, never performs them so easy as at first. If we delay in this important business, and should be visited with sickness or the symptoms of death, what anguish must seize the soul, what terrible and dismaying fears, what stings and reproaches of conscience must the creature feel, who in this condition apprehends himself just ready to appear before the bar of God. Let a dying prospect arouse us from our lethargies, slumbers, and flee from the awful danger. If we would wish to die in peace and in sweet serenity of soul, and have the consolations of the divine presence in that solemn hour, let us instantly remember from whence we have fallen and repent and do our first works.

Fourthly, make a new and solemn dedication of yourselves to God. When you have suitably considered and inquired into your departures from a precious Christ, when your hearts become affected with your evil conduct, are touched with the unhappiness of your condition, begin to relent, soften and break, then take with you words and return unto the Lord,

and say with the Psalmist ; “ Against thee, thee only have we sinned ; pardon our iniquities for they are great,”—Or cry with the repenting and broken hearted publican, “ God be merciful to us sinners.” Let the language of every christian who hath forsaken his first love be, “ O Lord my God, I blush to call thee mine, or by my name, which expresses thy relation or right to me, or my obedience and love, for I have unreasonably and wickedly departed from thee, and in strict justice thou mightest take no farther notice of me, but discard me forever, as hell deserving, ungrateful wretch ; from my heart, I humbly acknowledge and own that utter destruction is my rightful portion ; yet, O Lord God, thou keepest covenant, and art full of compassion, who repentest thee of the evil, and passest by the transgression of the remnant of thy people, accept, thro’ the atoning merits of thy dear Son, the devout purpose of my heart, and this renewed surrender I make of myself to thee. I resolve now, in thy grace, to cleave to thee forever, and never more to wander or depart from thee, take not thy spirit from me, but restore, O God of my salvation, thy forfeited countenance and favour ; deliver my soul from guilt and the other effects of my wanderings, then shall my tongue sing aloud of thy righteousness.”

Fifthly, be watchful and vigilant when thou art restored to thy first love and do thy first works, and by fervent and assiduous prayer deprecate a relapse into that evil condition. “ Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.” Let your past deviation teach you circumspection, and your past follies wisdom. Endeavour to avoid the like departures for the future. “ Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.” Consider how you were first beguiled ; recollect how it advanced till it arrived at the dreadful issue in our text. Learn no more to trust in yourself, or rely upon your own strength, but confide in divine grace, and lean continually

upon your beloved. Maintain a deep and tender impression of your constant dependence upon God. Keep up a constant tenderness of heart, and thus you will be preserved in peace and comfort, and in the love of your precious Saviour.

Lastly, all this counsel, exhortation, and admonition, is enforced by a strong argument of threatening and terror, if it should be neglected or contemned. "I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place." If the love of Christ be uncultivated, and the spirit of his grace be slighted, he will descend in tremendous judgments upon backsliding churches and declining christians. The threatening comprehends in it every spiritual evil. He will unchurch them, take from them and their posterity the means of grace, remove his gospel, his ministers and his ordinances, his spirit shall no more strive with them, their house will be left unto them desolate. And what will the churches, or the angels of the churches do when these fatal calamities shall come upon them? What has been the gloomy state of that once flourishing city and church of Ephesus, to which St. Paul wrote an instructive and comforting epistle, and the rest of the other glorious churches in the extensive province and proconsulate of Asia? They are gone, and hardly a vestige of them has appeared for many centuries. That fine country is wholly lost, overwhelmed and buried in the thick gloom of Mahometan superstition and delusion. Let all churches and individual christians be all attention to their unhappy example, to the warning voice of Christ, and the solemn monitions of heaven. This is a great and flourishing church of ours, it has been founded more than an hundred and thirty-five years, yet for our sad decays God may remove our candlestick from hence; wherefore let us always keep alive our first love; let us be living penitential lives, and working the works of righteousness.

S E R M O N XXIII.

Jesus Christ the good Shepherd.

John, x. 11. *I am the good Shepherd.*

JESUS CHRIST is represented in the sacred oracles as sustaining the greatest variety of characters. There is no office or relation which implies any advantage to the object of it, but Christ is described as sustaining and discharging every branch of duty belonging to it. He is styled a prophet, ordained a priest forever, and is exalted as a king. The Saviour is his appropriate and exclusive character. An husband, an head, a brother and a friend are familiar titles of Immanuel. In our text and many other passages he is held forth to view under the vigilant, careful and tender image of a Shepherd.

Here is a striking accumulation of offices, wherein ambition has no influence, neither can envy find a ground of imputation. He did not assume these offices, nor does he execute them for his own benefit. It was inconceivable condescension in him to suffer the most exalted of them ; and he executes them for

the advantage, the sole advantage of those who are in themselves, and in their own opinion among the vilest and most unworthy creatures. Who is a God like unto our God?—He is exalted above all blessings and praise—he humbles himself to behold things done in heaven, and yet he stoops to perform the part of the most condescending friend—to every act and every service of the most endearing and compassionate name. Be astonished, O ye heavenly hosts, at this ! Ye inhabitants of the earth, stand amazed and wonder ! Bless the Lord, all ye his saints ; bless the Lord O my soul. The flock, his sheep, are the objects of all these offices, of every tender and affectionate part he performs, in all the variety of relations he bears. For them he left his fathers bosom, the adoration of angels, and all the celestial glories ; for them he assumed human nature—suffered poverty and reproach—laid down his life for them, and endured the excruciating pains of the cross.

Christ is every where spoken of as a shepherd. In the Old Testament he was abundantly prophesied of under this title, and in the New he is the great shepherd, the shepherd and bishop of souls ; and here in our text, he calls himself the good shepherd. “ I am the good shepherd.” And in evidence of his worthiness of this character and in proof of his goodness, he gave his invaluable life for the sheep. All that your attention can be invited to in a contracted discourse will only be,

First, to consider what this character, when ascribed to Christ, implies in it with respect to his flock.

Secondly, what are the important acts denoted by it, which he performs towards his sheep. In regard to the

First, many things are involved and comprehended herein. It implies that Christ's flock are the object of his peculiar care

and attention. The office or character of a shepherd evidently comprehends this in it. These are some of his essential duties. A shepherd without care or concern for the flock, is an absurdity. Such an one our Lord declares, is not the shepherd, but an hireling, a thief and a robber, that careth not for the sheep, and when the wolf cometh, he fleeth. But the true shepherd hath a genuine concern for the interest and welfare of the flock. This is the design of his character, and the object of his highest attention.

When Christ is stiled a shepherd, it denotes that the interest of the flock lies near his heart. Its welfare is the object of his incessant attention. There are no moments in which he feels indifferent to its safety, or in which his agency is not employed for its happiness.

Jesus Christ has the heart and temper of a shepherd, the most careful and tender feelings towards his sheep. All this proceeds from the kindest affection. Love is the source of every branch and instance of it. No other principle can influence him in the part which he performs. "He is the shepherd of Israel who never slumbers nor sleeps." He can derive no advantages herefrom, no accession to his glory, nor addition to his bliss. The benefits and advantages in this case are all in favour of the sheep. He loves them with the most ardent affection, so that he gave up his life for them.

The love of Christ to his people is two-fold, commonly called a love of benevolence and a love of complacency. They are the objects of the one or the other according to the different conditions in which they are, in a state of nature or in a state of grace. His love in the latter sense is exercised only towards believers, to those who are his actual members by a true and living faith : hence they are described as those who hear his voice and follow him. They respect, love and ad-

make him as their shepherd, and they will not follow another. None can be the objects of this kind of love, only those, who have some amiable qualities and principles in them, or something in a spiritual sense lovely belonging to them. Now none of the sons of men have any thing of this kind in them, until they are converted and have put on Christ and his righteousness by faith; for it is grace and holiness which is the reason of their loveliness. Hereby they become subjects of what is amiable, and thus objects of divine complacency.

But a love of benevolence is extended to all. Hence says our Lord in the context, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also will I bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." These also in the proper time shall be brought unto me, believe on my name, and be taught of the father. Therefore he prays not only for those who have believed already, but for all such who should come unto him in future. "Neither," says he, pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." Now while they are his people in this general sense, remaining in stupidity, security, impenitency and unbelief, they can only be objects of his love of benevolence. And this love induced him to lay down his life for all, even for those who were enemies. "While we were yet enemies Christ died for us."

Again, the care of Jesus Christ, the great and good shepherd, extends to all his sheep without exception; his love is without partiality. His regard to them is not regulated by the figure they make in the eyes of the world. His affection is built on a very different ground. Nay, it appears from the holy scriptures, that the consideration which gives things value in the sight of men, often renders them contemptible in the sight of God. This seems to be the amount of a general observation of our Lord. "What is highly esteemed among

"man is an abomination in the sight of God:" **Jesus Christ** seeth not as men see. They look on outward appearances and professions, but he looketh at the heart. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision with him availeth any thing, but the new creature, faith, and keeping the commandments of God. All who are of this spirit and character, are the objects of Christ's affection and care, because these are of the father, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. Every such person pertains to Christ and is a part of his pastoral charge, however hated by the world, or loathsome in their own eyes.

Some true saints who belong to the sheep-fold of Christ, are full of doubts, hesitations, and misgivings of soul. Divers circumstances and reflections conspire to make them draw the gloomy conclusion, that they appertain not to Jesus, nor are they subjects of his special care as the shepherd of Israel. They are sometimes in such a situation from fears within and troubles without, that astonishment lays hold upon them, and the painful suspicions gather strength from every view they take of their heart and life, that they are not christians, that they have no interest in his distinguishing love. If I had, says the soul, how comes it to pass that things are thus with me? Deep calleth unto deep; inward darkness joined with outward afflictions. They are often bemoaning themselves with such bitter lamentations as these; alas! for this day is great, it is the time of sore and complicated troubles. They are frequently adopting the mournful language of Job, "Behold, *we* go forward but he is not there, and backward, but *we* cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but *we* cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the right hand, that *we* cannot see him." "O that we knew where we could find him, that we might come even to his seat." Thus many a time their distress is eminent, and their anguish poignant. When their melancholy circumstances would seem to call for some token of his favour, some

smile of his loving kindness, he maketh clouds his covering and darkness his pavilion. This is a state of infelicity beyond description. The sheep beset with dangers, assaulted with temptations, and surrounded with distresses, the shepherd absent, and none to help or comfort. Suspicions and fears respecting Christ's affection are painful and afflictive to the saint beyond measure. The spouse perhaps alludes to this case when she pours forth this most earnest petition and fervent request, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thy arm, for love is stronger than death and jealousy more cruel than the grave."

But amidst all this discouragement, darkness, diffidence and dread, the good shepherd is at hand, and whispers to them "Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven. His care is extended to his sheep, and his agency exerted for their support. He interposes and disperses every cloud, in such a way as shall display to them the good pleasure of his goodness.

If a tender shepherd shuts up a particular sheep for a season, and secludes it from the privileges of the flock, yet in this case it is always an act of care, to preserve it from some evil, or to heal it of some disease.

The care which Christ exercises toward his people is peculiar; it is different from that common providence which he exerciseth toward the world in general. The acts and instances of it are peculiar, and the fruits and effects of it are so also. They are the subjects of his common providence as well as others, but they are moreover the subjects of those special acts of gracious tenderness and affectionate care, which he performs as the shepherd of his sheep.

This leads,

Secondly, to consider what those important acts denote, which he performs toward his sheep. And they may be reduced to these three, feeding, leading, and protecting them.

First, Jesus Christ, as the good shepherd of his flock, feeds them. It is one of the chief and principal branches of a shepherd's office, to feed the flock committed to him. In this respect Christ acts the part of a liberal and beneficent shepherd. It is true he does not now feed it in person. His person is in heaven, which must contain him till the restoration of all things. He appears not in person to any on earth, neither are any admitted here to behold his personal glory, any other-wise than by faith in the representations of it given in his word. It is herein and hereby his people, as in a glass, behold his glory. In the future world they shall behold it in his person, as, in believing, they now do in the sacred scriptures.

The way in which Christ feeds his sheep here, is by providing pastures and food convenient for them. These pastures are his word and ordinances. They are adapted and designed to answer this purpose; they are intended as the means for the support and nourishment of the new creature, until it shall arrive at the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

The end of pasture is not answered unless it strengthens and promotes the growth of the creature, so the intention of the word and ordinances will not be accomplished, unless they comfort, edify, and strengthen christians; and if they produce not this nourishing effect, it forms a strong presumption that they are not Christ's sheep. The word and ordinances are not in themselves thus nutritious, or the mere use of them would be sufficient; but as we find this effect doth not follow of course, we must therefore consider them in another point of view. It is not in them, nor in those who administer them, as

Some have fondly and delusively imagined ; but the blessing of God accompanying them which renders them efficacious. They are only the means and not the nourishment itself. It is the gracious influences of the holy spirit in and by the means which are strictly and truly the nourishment. The powerful application of these are of a spiritually strengthening nature, and they go from strength to strength. Thus the spirit takes the things of Christ, and by the sacred institutions shews them to the believer ; hence he grows by the sincere milk of the word, and in this way he is said to grow in grace.

Jesus Christ feeds his sheep, by giving his spirit to dwell in them. By his agency he opens their understandings to perceive the glorious things of religion. By his agency the word and ordinances become effectual means of the conviction, conversion, sanctification and salvation of sinners. Hence our Lord prays, " Sanctify them by thy truth, for thy word is truth." From this arises the difference which christians experience at different seasons, respecting the same truths and ordinances. At one time their hearts are filled with holy affections, and burn within them, as the hearts of the disciples did when they conversed with our Lord on the road to Emaus, while they pray, read or hear the word, or attend upon a sacrament. At other times, under the same means, and employed in the same duties, all is coldness, darkness and stupidity. The reason of this difference is, that the spirit is present by his agency at one season and not at another. Sometimes divine institutions feed their souls as with marrow and fatness, and refresh them as with the richest wines ; at others they are weak and feeble, destitute of power and authority. The various frames of christians frequently arise from the presence or absence of the spirit, when they are attending the means of grace.

Secondly, the good shepherd leads, guides and directs his sheep. This is a great and distinguishing blessing. Tho' his government is over all, yet he performs no such acts in respect

to the rest of our guilty race. Thus speaks the Psalmist from his own experience, "He leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Thus he leads his people by his word, his spirit and his ordinances. He guideth Joseph as a flock. This is his conduct not only toward his church in general, but towards every believer in particular. The still waters by which they are led afford them pleasant prospects, many comfortable views of divine things, many a cooling and refreshing draught when they are thirsty or weary. The consolations of religion which flow from those living springs of water, are gladness, joy, and pleasure to their souls. Those who are led in the paths of righteousness, that is, in the way of duty, enjoy sweet peace, tranquility and hope.

Thirdly, protection is another thing which Christ as a shepherd renders his sheep. It is an essential part of the office of a shepherd, to protect the flock. Its need of a shepherd arises from its weakness, exposedness, and danger. As beasts of prey are ever seeking the destruction of sheep, so there are numerous enemies continually lying in wait to devour the flock of Christ. As sheep are the most impotent and defenceless tribe of animals, so when our Lord sustains the character of a shepherd, it must imply his defence and protection of his people. The eyes of Jesus observe from afar every difficulty and every danger which threatens them in all the variety of conditions and circumstances in which they may be. Satan, their grand enemy, is watchful of every opportunity, and skilful to improve it to their injury. He employs various ways with unsuspected art to tempt their feet astray, and betray them into his snare; and were it not for the protecting interposition of the good shepherd, total ruin would be the allotment of every saint. He guards them against the devil, the world, and the flesh, that tho' they may suffer from them, they shall not be destroyed. He is their protector against the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the

plague that smiteth at noon day. If the earth be removed out of her place, if it reel to and fro like a drunken man, and become an uninhabitable wreck, their almighty shepherd has another mansion prepared for their reception, he has another even an eternal kingdom for them which cannot be moved.

A brief reflection or two must close the subject.

First, how kind and condescending does Jesus Christ appear while he exhibits himself to us in the gentle and tender image of a shepherd? Are we not overcome with wonder and astonishment, that he should descend to act this humble, tho' most friendly part. Let us call to mind his native dignity, his uncreated glory, that he is and ever will be God over all, and can we avoid adopting the extatic emotion of the apostle, when he cries out, behold, what manner of love is this! O how meek and lowly does the Saviour appear! how amiable in his humiliation as well as majestic in his intercessory character, at the right hand of his father! Who does not feel with pleasure the power and force of such inimitable friendship, gentleness, goodness and condescension?

Secondly, how happy and blessed are all they who have Jesus Christ for their shepherd? They are not to be appalled tho' the earth be removed and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, tho' the waters thereof roar and be troubled. The Lord of hosts is with them and puts underneath them his everlasting arms. Jesus is their shield and refuge, and a present help in every time of trouble. "Fear not little flock it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Altho' the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee

“ is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy.” Who would not be a real christian, one of Christ’s sheep, in preference to the highest happiness this world can raise its favorites to ? Consider the preferableness of the poorest and meanest believer, to the greatest, highest and most dignified sinner.

Thirdly, how awful and melancholy is the situation of those who have no interest in the care, protection and love of this good shepherd ? Are there not many who have the greatest reason to be assured that this is their true state ? Pray, my dear hearers, consider the danger and terribleness of your situation. You run the risk every moment of sinking into the horrible pit of eternal destruction. Your life is a vapour, and you live by the mere forbearance and sufferance of that God, who is angry with you every day. Consider what you will do if death should arrest you while you are in this condition. The thought is painful and dreadful, and it had been good for you you had never been born.

Wherefore, awake, arise, flee to the arms of the good shepherd ; escape for your lives to the city of refuge, to the hope set before you in the gospel, ere it be forever too late. Remember the Lord will shake this earth to pieces, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. “ Wherefore give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

S E R M O N XXIV.

Some Marks of Christ's Flock.

Isaiah, xl. 11. *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

THE descriptions of Jehovah contained in this chapter, are inimitably grand and majestic. They have never been equalled by any pencil, and it is impossible they should be exceeded. How inimitable is the following painting?—With what bold strokes, with what energy and life, with what force of expression, does it exhibit and display the exceeding greatness and incomparable majesty of the Most High. “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?—Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Labanon is not sufficient to burn, and the beasts thereof

“sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are
 “as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing
 “and vanity.” If this language does not describe divinity,
 self-existent and independent ; inconceivable omnipotence,
 and ineffable glory, it is absolutely impossible, it should be
 painted in any language whatever.

This chapter is, in the New Testament, immediately and directly applied to Jesus Christ. In the third verse we have these expressions. “The voice of him that crieth in the
 “wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight
 “in the desert an highway for our God ;” even that God
 whose picture has been drawn in glowing colours and with
 a daring pencil. Now this is applied to John the Baptist as
 the forerunner of Christ in all the Evangelists. For that he
 was Christ’s forerunner is allowed ; therefore the ‘God so il-
 lustriously delineated in the language already quoted, is none
 other than the Lord Jesus ; of consequence Jesus Christ is
 true, essential and uncreated God. So expresses an application,
 of what is here spoken, to Christ, one would be ready to think
 fully sufficient to determine the controversy respecting his pro-
 per Godhead, with all those who believed in divine revela-
 tion ; and divine authority alone can decide in a matter of
 this nature.

The chapter opens with the most joyful tidings, that there
 is peace on earth and good will towards the children of men.
 “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord of hosts.”
 And the prophet has orders to proclaim this consolation in the
 most public manner. “O thou, that bringest good tidings to
 “Zion, get ye up into the high mountain,” a place from
 whence thou mayest be extensively heard. “O thou that
 “bringest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with
 “strength, lift it up, be not afraid ; say unto the cities of Ju-
 “dah, behold your God. For the Lord God will come with

“a strong hand, and his arm will rule for him.” This God will come and become flesh and dwell among us ; he will come and take on him the form of a servant ; he will assume humanity and his arm will rule for him ; he travelleth in the greatness of his strength through the work of redemption ; his reward is with him and his work before him. His divinity supports him under the sufferings of his humanity ; the former gives infinite virtue and efficacy to the latter. His reward shall be glorious, “ For seeing the travel of his soul he shall be satisfied. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God ”

This same person who is drawn in all the majesty of the Sovereign Jehovah is exhibited to our view in the text in one of the most harmless, gentle and inviting characters. “ He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Remarkable it is that the blessed Jesus is represented in the scriptures to his people under every figure and image that expresses friendship, kindness, condescension, care, tenderness and love. What a group of them is before us ; tho’ his arm is strong and he is the mighty God, he condescends in all the carefulness of friendship to provide for his people. Yea, the public, the weak and the young are the objects of his peculiar attention. The infants, the children of his church, seem above all others to attract his most affectionate care. He gathers them in his tender arms and carries them in his warm and compassionate bosom.

Many doctrines of high and useful importance arise from this subject, but the only one we can consider at present is, the nature and character of Christ’s flock upon earth.

That Christ Jesus has a church, a flock in the world, will be

readily granted by all the believers of divine revelation. This flock consists of believing parents and their seed, who are often stiled sheep and lambs. He has had such a number in every age since the fall, and will have such a number throughout all future generations. They are his flock in an eminent manner, and distinguished from the world, ever since Cain departed from it, and went out from the presence of the Lord. Till this unhappy period, which seemed like a second apostacy, Adam and Eve, and their children, belonged to the church. And the short history we have of the flock of Christ before the flood, tho' a long term of more than sixteen hundred years, evidently holds forth, that the children of the antideluvian saints pertained to the same. Why are the children of Seth, Enos, Enoch, Methuselah &c. so particularly mentioned, but that the sons and daughters born unto them appertained to the church? After the deluge, when Ham and his son were guilty of an outrageous wickedness, fell under the curse of their father and their God, another apostacy from religion took place, and they and their posterity were lost; yet the church still continued in the other sons of Noah and their children, till the calling of Abraham, to whom was revealed a new and more clear dispensation of the covenant of grace. And did Abraham revive and set up the church anew, and were not his infant offspring also admitted into it? So throughout the whole Mosaic economy and Jewish dispensation, children pertained to the church, and were ever respected as lambs of the flock. So our Lord himself, after whose death the church was to be extended to the gentile nations, commanded little children to be brought unto him and declared of such is the kingdom of God. The apostles also taught that the children of the saints are holy, and to be distinguished from the unclean posterity of the ~~heathen~~ tribes, and that the promises made to believers extended likewise to their children.

Some have arisen of late, who practically declare, that Christ's flock has no lambs in it, and that children pertain not to the church ; accordingly they take little care of the instruction of their own, and expend little pains for their salvation, but are zealous above measure in beguiling away the sheep of other flocks, troubling and perverting the church of Christ. They compass sea and land to make proselytes. Beware of such lest they delude you to your own ruin and to the ruin of your children. One of their leading marks is, "They creep into houses, and lead captive silly women." And the most of the proselytes which they glean, are of this complexion. Let them alone, for to their master they stand or fall. Let it ever be our business to provide wholesome food for the flock, and after the example of the good shepherd extend the tenderest care and most affectionate regard to the lambs thereof, affording strong meat to those who are full grown and with milk nourishing the bodies. The exclusion of lambs from the flock, contains in it something unnatural and cruel ; it exposes them to calamity and death ; so the exclusion of children from the church is not only unscriptural, but it is unreasonable and inhuman. It is placing them in the situation of heathen, few of whom are ever converted. Observation assures us that it is a rare thing for any out of the visible church to be brought to a saving closure with Christ. It is the practice of some barbarous nations, to expose or destroy many of their children, that they may not be encumbrances on, or burthensome to their families ; so people who exclude their children from the visible church, however it may be done through ignorance in some, and wickedness in others, eminently exposes them, like other heathen, to everlasting destruction. Would it not be deemed barbarous and cruel to see parents exclude their little children from their families, and afford them neither food nor raiment ; it is equally so with a church, which ought to be the family of Christ to thrust out their children. Will good parents nurse their little ones with care and tenderness, watch over, protect

and guard them, so the flock ought to take care of its lambs, and the church of its children. Were churches careful, faithful and christian on this head, widely different would the children and youth be from what they are. It is owing to the negligence of parents and churches, that there are so many wicked and graceless in the land.

At present the state, condition, standing privileges and blessings of the lambs shall be omitted, and we will attend to the character, nature and marks of the sheep of Christ's flock. Peter was commanded by our Lord to feed both his sheep and his lambs. And this ought to be the conduct of every true minister of the gospel. I have already delivered a series of discourses to the children and youth, the lambs of this department of the flock. We shall now consider the nature and character of the sheep.

First, they are all of one kind or sort, of one species and quality. However distinguished by nation, tribe, family or language; however distant in time from each other, or separated by place, they are all partakers of the same nature, of the same kind, and have the same general marks; they are sheep. This is the term by which the chief shepherd has been pleased to designate and distinguish them from all others. No animal but itself possesses the nature of a sheep. All others are specifically different from it. In like manner Christ's sheep are all of one kind, and each individual has the same nature. One may be weak and another strong, one poor and infirm, and other alert and lively, one ragged and torn, another fat and well clothed, one is diseased and sickly, and another in full vigor and health, yet however different in appearance and circumstances, they are all sheep and of the same kind; they are not essentially or specifically different from each other.

Secondly, sheep will not lie down in filthy waters, nor wallow

in miry puddles, like some animals of a different species or kind. It avoids from its nature every thing of this sort, and every approach to all degrees thereof. A peculiar instinct of nature causes it to shun all such places. Remove every restraint which threatened danger may form, and from a natural antipathy to such things, it is shy of and flees from them. If it accidentally falls into the mire, it quickly arises and springs from it, as if it had received some foul disgrace, or a great and lasting injury. It chuses places clean and dry from a native propensity to them.

This is the conduct of Christ's sheep, of every true saint. The tendency of their nature which they received from the spirit of grace, is to purity and holiness. The breathings of their hearts are to be holy as God is holy. And their daily prayer is, "O God create in us a clean heart, and make us of pure hands." They avoid sin and moral defilement, not only from the dangers to which it exposes them, but likewise from its disagreeableness to their new nature. If at any time they fall into iniquity, they continue not therein, but arise again by repentance and repair anew to the blood of Jesus for cleansing and purification. Sheep have many difficulties to struggle with, so christians have numerous trials in this world. Within often are faintings, and without are fears. And if Jesus the great and good shepherd did not interpose, rescue, deliver and support, who could be saved? But precious is his grace, and compassionate his heart, when his poor sheep are ready to be devoured by every prowling beast, and overwhelmed in every slough, his own almighty arms form a defence around them, and bring salvation.

Thirdly, sheep have a natural taste and sagacity to discern their proper food. They can distinguish the wholesome and nourishing, from the poisonous and mortal plant. How-

ever artfully it may be mingled with their provender, they will discern and carefully avoid it. Some naturalists have observed, that they possess this sagacity in a superior degree, so that they will pick out that which is proper and nourishing, while they leave that which is noxious and unwholesome.

Thus the sheep of Christ have a taste and discernment of a moral and spiritual kind, of the same use and efficacy. They can discover what doctrine is wholesome and true, and what not ; what is agreeable to their new nature, and what is otherwise. However false doctrine may be coloured and disguised, and they may be imposed upon by it for a time, yet afterwards they find it is not fit food for them, their souls cannot live and thrive upon it ; it is not the sincere milk of the word, and they cannot grow thereby. Nothing can be proper food for a spiritual nature, only that which is spiritual and suitable to a spiritual taste. This spiritual discernment does not strictly depend upon laboured reasonings, great powers of mind or extensive speculative knowledge ; but persons of the feeblest understandings, and whose knowledge is very limited and contracted, in some good measure possess this holy qualification. For the inspiration of the Almighty giveth this understanding. They have an unction from the holy one, whereby they know all things. It is in regard to this spiritual discernment the apostle declares, " He that is spiritual judgeth all things." To this also he has respect, when he speaks of christians having their senses exercised to discern good and evil. It is allowed there is a taste in painting, poetry, architecture, and other branches of art ; why should there not also be a taste in religion ? Is there not a beauty in holiness, and in holy objects, as well as in other things ? And can this beauty be discerned without an holy taste ? Doth not the mouth taste readily its meat ? So doth the new creature taste the truths of the gospel, and feels the power of pure and undefiled religion. Taste and see that the Lord is gracious.

Fourthly, it is observed of sheep that they know their shepherd, and can distinguish him from a stranger; they know his voice and will not follow another. They flee from strangers, because their voice is strange unto them. This our Lord assigns as a discriminating note or mark of his sheep, whereby they are known unto others, and manifest unto themselves. "His sheep hear his voice, they know it and they follow him." They have ears to hear, understandings to know, and hearts to follow him whithersoever he leadeth.

These marks are true in general of all Christ's sheep in every age. The meanest in the flock perceive his voice and can distinguish it from that of a stranger. They understand his truths, feed upon his word and rejoice therein; his gospel is precious to them, of more value in their esteem than mountains of gold. To adopt the language of the spouse. "His lips are like lillies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His mouth is most sweet." That is, his voice, his words, and truths, are all thus delightful to them. The sheep of Christ not only hear, but they follow him. They follow the sound of his voice without hesitation. However it may thwart their own blind and corrupt hearts, they receive it with meekness. They follow his example, imitate all the imitable parts of his character, and endeavor to walk even as he walked.

Time will not admit of my pursuing this subject, or retailing the marks of Christ's sheep any farther; and shall therefore conclude with a few words of application.

First, how great and wonderful is the grace and love of Christ, that he has found and collected a flock for himself from among the degenerate sons of men? O what inscrutable condescension and goodness is here? What marvelous mercy and grace, that any of the race of fallen Adam should stand in

the near relation to him of his sheep and of his lambs ? That he should assume to them the tender, gentle and endearing character of their shepherd ? This is a branch of the unsearchable riches of his love. It ought to be reflected back with affectionate wonder and adoring admiration. With propriety may we employ the rapturous language of the loving and beloved disciple, " Behold what manner of love is this," that the Saviour hath bestowed upon us, that any such as we should be selected for his sheep, that he should lay down his life for us. Truly he is the good shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep. " O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out ? " " O that we may be able to comprehend with all faints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Should not the love of Christ have a sensible and constraining influence upon our hearts ? Should we not live wholly to him ? Ought we not to imbibe the spirit of St. Paul, who in raptures said, " For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." What can be more ungrateful, untender and unkind than to offend him, than not to love him with the most ardent affection ? How dear ought every thing to be to us which appertains to him ? How should we take pleasure in his word, his truths, his worship, his sabbaths, ordinances and people ? Every thing which wears his image or seal, should be to us instead of a thousand arguments to induce us to esteem, respect and cleave to him.

Secondly, this subject calls for solemn searchings of heart. In the light of it, we ought to try and examine ourselves. Do we belong to his flock, or are we all of the number of his sheep ? How blessed and happy should we be, if this were the case ? What a glorious assembly, what a precious church ? But alas ! however extensive our charity, there can be no just

ground for so enlivening a hope. It is a melancholy truth, they are not all Israel, who are of Israel. Some, perhaps, not a few, who have no lot or interest in this matter. Let us therefore to-day, make a serious enquiry into this business. What will it avail us to comfort ourselves that we are of Christ's flock and comfort with it, if, when the great dividing day commences, we shall be separated from it, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and hear the awful sentence pronounced upon us, "Depart from me ye cursed." Wherefore let us, in the presence of a heart searching and rein trying God, look into our hearts and into our lives. Have we the nature of the sheep of Christ?—Are we of an holy nature?—Do we chuse holiness for its own intrinsic beauties and excellencies?—Have we the taste and sagacity of his sheep, to discern between good and evil?—To discover spiritual food, from that which is noxious and corrupted?—Do we find pastures in his word and ordinances, which are sweet to our souls as the honey, and the honeycomb to the taste?—Do we know Christ's voice, understand, and distinguish it from the voice of strangers?—Can we discriminate the pure doctrines of grace, from false colourings or corrupt mixtures, which are poisonous to sheep, and destructive to the fold?—Do we follow the good shepherd, wheresoever he leads?—Is his example prevailing before us?—Are we frequently recalling it to remembrance?—Is the imitation of it the joy and rejoicing of our hearts?

Those who can understandingly and with a good conscience answer these queries in the affirmative, have reason for consolation and hope. "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say unto you rejoice." "Fear not, little flock, ye are the charge of him, who shall feed his flock like a shepherd, gather the lambs with his arms, carry them in his bosom, and gently

“lead those that are with young.” I must not enlarge ;
may the Lord give you understanding in all things, and make
you all the sheep of his fold, that you may sing eternal halle-
lujahs to him in the celestial mansions, to whom be honor and
glory forever, and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXV.

The pleasantness of Religion.

Prov. iii. 17. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

IF we look into the sacred oracles of God, and take a survey of the religion exhibited therein, we will find it represented to us under various forms ; sometimes as pleasing to heaven, therefore we should be religious ; sometimes as of the greatest advantage and benefit to ourselves. At one time it is described as the only method of escaping misery, at another as the only way to eternal felicity. The Holy spirit hath stated it before us in every point of view, in order to gain our attention, captivate our hearts, and engage us in the practice thereof. And as the omniscient Jehovah well knew that nothing made a deeper impression on the human mind than pleasure, hence in our text it is stated before us in this form also, to see what effect it will produce, when it is represented in a way which is universally courted by mankind. “ Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” These words are a part

of the encomium which Solomon, in the context, is pouring forth upon the excellencies, advantages and blessings, of wisdom. "Happy is the man that getteth wisdom, that findeth understanding ; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies ; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor." It is well known that Solomon generally employs the term wisdom to express the same thing with what is usually intended by the word religion, and wickedness he commonly styles folly. Religious men are designated wise, and the wicked fools. Surely there can be no wisdom so truly excellent as religion ; and there can be no folly greater than iniquity and despising our souls. It is predicated of wisdom or religion, that her ways are pleasantness. They are not merely pleasant or pleasurable, but they are pleasantness, in an abstract and absolute manner. As if pleasantness was to be found in these ways, and not in any other. This is declared of her ways, that is, her duties,, exercises and employments. These things are pleasure in themselves, and they issue in eternal felicity. The ways which lead to heaven are pleasant, and nothing but unmixed pleasure enters and dwells in that blessed abode. Delightful walks thro' shady groves, fruitful gardens or flowery parterres, scarcely any thing captivates or charms the human mind more than these. Travelling in them affords delight, and they frequently lead to places of the highest entertainment, where every sense is regaled, every passion soothed and every appetite gratified. But what are the highest wrought, and most refined pleasures of sense, in comparison of mental pleasures and spiritual delights. The royal preacher inscribes upon the former vanity and vexation of spirit, while the latter is preferable to all the gold of phir, and the riches of Potofi. It is further subjoined, "That all her paths are peace?" Ways may be pleasant and delightful, yet not guarded by peace. Assassins and robbers may lurk in the arbores to annoy the unwary

traveller. But the highways of holiness and all the paths of piety afford not only the most refined and exalted pleasure in themselves, but they are secured by vigilant and invincible guards, and surrounded with most perfect safety. They that walk in them have God for their sun, Christ for their shield, and hosts of angels for their defence. There is not merely peace in store for saints when they shall arrive at their journey's end, but they enjoy peace by the way. "Great is their peace who love God's law." That is, great is the peace of all who are truly godly. View religion in all its parts and in all its bearings, in every virtue, grace and duty, in all its exercises, comforts and joys, and you will perceive the picture of it here drawn by the wisest of men, perfectly accurate, just and beautiful, "That all her ways are pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

To attempt the proof of this assertion would be impertinent, as it issues from the mouth of inspiration. But we shall endeavour, by divine aid, to illustrate this important truth for our instruction and improvement, by directing the attention,

First, to the nature of divine wisdom or true religion.

Secondly, to the high advantages and benefits it affords its friends.

Thirdly, to the pleasures arising from the experiences of those who have entered into her ways, and travel in her peaceful paths.

First, let us attend to the nature of divine wisdom or true religion. Pleasure charms the hearts of men, and whatsoever affords pleasure attracts desire. But who can describe the peace and pleasure of religion? It mocks all the powers of

rhetoric and baffles the orator's art. It would be vain to attempt a description of the sweetness of honey, to one who had never tasted it. Give him but a taste thereof and it will do more towards affording him a true idea of its sweetness, than all the definitions and learned lectures in the world. Thus it is with vital and experimental piety. Were it possible for me to convey to your hearts a taste of the grace of the gospel, it would do more to raise in you a feeling sense of its pleasantness, than all other things besides. Preachers may speak, but it is God who must give the hearing ear; they may make representations, but he alone can open the eyes to see; and they at times may arouse the animal passions; but it is his prerogative to change the heart and sanctify the affections. Therefore, while we delineate the nature of religion, let your fervent aspirations ascend, that you may experience its power on your own souls. Religion in its strict meaning signifies binding together that which was loosed. And as sin had unloosed the soul from God, so religion forms again the holy connection between them. Knowledge is an essential link of this chain. Knowledge charms the mind and fills it with pleasure and delight. "Truly the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun." "But no light is pleasurable like the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Hence it is declared to be life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," Is eternal life, peace, pleasure and felicity?—So also is knowledge, and this knowledge enters into the essence of true godliness. When persons commence a religious course, they begin to behold a great and glorious light, and blessed are the eyes which are opened to see. "Apply thy heart to my knowledge, saith Solomon, for it is a pleasant thing that thou keep it within thee." As honey is sweet to the taste, so is the knowledge of experimental religion to the soul. There is no pleasure in any science, like that of learning Christ and the things which belong to our eternal peace.

Spiritually to know the perfections of the divine nature, the special riches of unfathomable grace, the mystery of our redemption and reconciliation to God by Jesus Christ, and his mediatorial offices ; such knowledge is a feast to the soul, it is meat indeed and drink indeed. We find a certain delight in an acquaintance, friendship and intimacy of the great and good in this world, but what is this in comparison of an acquaintance, friendship and intimacy with the Supreme Jehovah ? David in all his exaltation would leave his throne three times a day to go and converse with his God, his heavenly friend.

Religion also consists in committing ourselves to God and reposing upon the bosom of his love. Giving up our hearts in supreme duty and love to him ; taking him for our portion and our all. This is pleasure of the most refined and exalted nature. Thus we hear the Psalmist addressing his spirit in favour of comfort and felicity in the fruition of God, " Return unto thy rest, O my soul." As if there were no rest, peace or pleasantness but in him. Let us therefore have that joy, which the world can neither give nor take away, by placing our souls in the encircling arms of Jesus, and sweetly resting upon his bosom.

Approaching to God as a father, in that new and living way opened in the gospel by Jesus Christ the Mediator, this contains in it the purest delight and the highest consolation ; and this is an important constituent of pure and undefiled religion. And when we have made our approach to dwell there is the essence of every thing pleasurable. " Blessed are they " that dwell in his courts, they shall be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple." We read of the Eunuch, that when he was brought to believe in Christ, he went on his way rejoicing. Thus by believing in him and approaching to God by him we may rejoice also. What safety, satisfaction and happiness is it, to lodge all the great concerns

of our souls for eternity, in the hands of him, who is infinitely able and faithful to keep that which is committed to him against the great day of his appearance. The blessed soul of St. Paul is elevated on the wings of rapturous joy at this thought. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Who is he that condemneth, it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again?" How does he pronounce his own happy experience in all the triumph of pleasure? "I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." It is impossible for a creature to live in greater pleasure, "Than to live by the faith of the Son of God." It is in faith and love, "We are filled with joy and peace unspeakable and full of glory." Wherefore all who wish for pleasure and delight, let them enter into the paths of piety and walk in the ways of religion, "Whose ways are pleasantness and all her paths peace."

Religion is the enjoyment of God in all the creature comforts which we possess. The saint in all his possessions, "Tastes and sees, that in them the Lord is good." What a sweet, noble and refined relish does religion give to all the common blessings of life, our health and ease, our rest and sleep, our food and raiment, our habitations, friends and relatives; We have peace in our dwellings, success in our callings, and happiness in all things. Is it not pleasant to taste covenant love in all our mercies?—To see the bountiful hand of heavenly beneficence spreading our table, and filling our cup with plenty? This puts gladness in our hearts beyond the joys of harvest. Thus let us rejoice, not only when the earth yields her increase, but when God, even our God gives the blessing therewith.

Religion consists much in casting all our cares and burdens upon the Lord, with a sweet and transporting hope that he

careth for us. Nothing affords a more sensible pleasure, than to be relieved from some pressing weight, under which we are ready to sink. The exercises of true religion renders a person quiet in the variety of conditions in which he may be. It teaches him in whatever state he is therewith to be content. Religious contentment sheds joy and pleasure through the soul.

Prayer is an important branch of real piety. And all who are employed in making known their requests to God by prayer and supplication, have the precious promise, "That the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep their hearts and minds."

Holy rejoicing is also a branch of religion. The commandment is ever more to rejoice. Hence the gospel is styled, "Glad tidings of great joy to all people." It is the will of God, that his Israel should rejoice in every thing which he bestoweth upon them. Now all those exercises are not only pleasing, but pleasantness itself.

Praise likewise is a delightful thing, and this enters deeply into the constitution of pure religion. "Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good, sing praises unto his name for its pleasant."

Time would fail me to mention faith, love, humility, meekness, mercifulness, &c. all which are essential constituents of religion, and the exercise of those graces and the practice of those virtues form the soul to the highest pleasure and delight; and in this passing review of piety, we cannot refrain from joining in the divine declaration, "that all her ways are pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

I proceed,

Secondly, to consider the high advantages and benefits it affords its friends. Profit and pleasure seem to be the great pursuits of men ; and if we would have them united in the most eminent perfection, let us engage in the ways of religion. The pleasures of the world, and the gratifications of sense, always mock their votaries and leave a sting behind. Not so with the votaries of piety. Their expectations are never disappointed. Its pursuits are delightful ; so are all its effects and consequences. Instead of pains of body, remorse of conscience, and twinging perplexity, the fruits of sin, they have inward peace, strong consolation, joyful hopes, and a satisfactory assurance of the rewards of eternal felicity. If the friends of religion have troubles in the world, yet in Jesus they have peace, and all the riches of heaven full in their view as their everlasting inheritance. The profits of their business are not like the perishing profits of time, they are infinite in value, and their durability is as the heavens. They are supported by sure and certain promises here, and the future recompence of reward cannot fail. " God will never leave them nor forsake them, " and all things shall work together for their good." They have all things in enjoyment, and eternal felicity by an indefeasible reversion. All things are theirs. Thus saith the apostle, " Whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours. And ye are Christ's " and Christ is God." Religion is truly profitable for this world and for that which is to come. Who can describe the riches of the city, which is to be their everlasting dwelling. The walls of it are jasper, its gates pearl, and its streets of pure gold. Methinks could a miser have a view of its glory and wealth, could he be induced to realize and believe in the profits and advantages of religion, he would immediately forsake all and commence a follower of Jesus. He that can number the stars, or count the falling leaves in autumn, let him calculate the riches of the saints. Could substantial profit and unmixed pleasure operate upon the hearts of men, surely they would all

Instantly engage in the ways of piety and godliness, which have the divine promise of the wealth and advantages of both worlds. But the doctrine of our text is still further confirmed by the experience of all. Which leads me,

Thirdly, to consider the pleasures of religion as appears from the experience of those who have entered into her ways and travelled in her peaceful paths. Here we may without hesitation appeal to all who live godly in Christ Jesus. From their own feelings, exercises and experience, they all concur in this testimony, "That all her ways are pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Their pleasures and their joys at times are such that they cannot express. All her precepts, her counsels, exhortations and promises, the views which she affords, the prospects she opens, shed pleasure thro' the soul, unspeakable and full of glory. Go to the dying bed of the true christian, enquire of him what he thinks of religion? And that is commonly considered as an honest hour. He will immediately inform you it is infinitely preferable to all the riches and treasures of this world. He groans forth in his last struggles, in all the agonies of dissolution, "I shall soon be disincumbered of this flesh and be with Jesus. O the joys, the comforts, the hopes that I feel! With pleasure I leave the earth! Heaven opens to my view." In their passage through this life, how often are they saying, "It is good for us to draw near to God." They are frequently in divine worship and in special ordinances experiencing and declaring it is good for us to be here, this is none other than the gate of heaven, let us ever dwell in this place. They will be often adopting the language of the spouse and saying, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste. Stay me with figs, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love." They are sometimes using the words of an ancient saint, "Let their money perish with them, that esteem all the wealth and pleasures of this world, worth one hours communion with

God in Jesus Christ." Consider all the fancied pleasures of sin are only for a season, and that season is short. Solomon drunk deep of them all, and what were they? "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities," and all accompanied with and terminated in vexation of spirit. Enquire of the worldling, the drunkard, the debauchee, the whole tribe of swearers and gamblers, what profit and happiness they have had in these courses? and their answer will be, none, and worse than none. Repair to their dying bed, and there behold their anguish, and excruciating distress, all regret, remorse, fears and terrors within, and nothing but torment in prospect. Let us turn away from the miserable objects, and contemplate the departing christian, who in raptures of pleasure is crying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Here it may be asked, if there be so great pleasures in religion, how comes it, that professors often appear so gloomy and unhappy? The reply to this is easy and plain. It arises from their sins and corruptions. Now is it rational to ascribe to religion, what ought to be attributed to iniquity? If each has its due, sin will be found to be misery in its nature, and all its consequences, but religion perfectly the reverse, pleasure is its nature, and compleat happiness its end.

A word of exhortation shall close this lecture.

Let us all now be prevailed upon to become seriously religious. Her ways are pleasure, peace, comfort and bliss, whereas the ways of sin are sorrow, wretchedness and death. Most men would rather be allured and persuaded to their duty, than be affrighted and terrified to it. Much might be said to alarm you with horror, and frighten you from courses of transgression and folly, but would you not rather be led than driven, courted, than compelled? A word of threatening has scarcely passed my lips to-day. Wherefore, now be persuaded with your whole hearts to engage in piety. God is

inviting you, Christ is tenderly calling upon you, the holy Spirit like a dove is moving upon your hearts, and sweetly persuading you to turn unto the Lord. The good angels are hovering around you waiting to carry the glad news of your repentance to heaven, that all that blissful world might be filled with joy. Hearken to the compassionate and endearing voice of your bleeding Saviour, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him and he with me. I counsel thee to buy of me gold, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see." What more compassionate persuasions can be poured into the ears of sinners? O sinners, turn and live, turn and be happy forever.

And those of you, my hearers, who have entered into the pleasant ways and peaceful paths of religion, continue therein; turn not aside to the right hand or to the left. Proceed on from faith to faith, from duty to duty, from one holy exercise to another, and you will soon appear before God in Zion; you will soon be at home, in your fathers house, to be forever with the Lord.

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S E R M O N XXVI.

The ways of Religion are Pleasant.

Prov. iii. 17. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

LET us once more take a view of this pleasing theme. Pleasure is not easy to be parted from, so it is not easy to relinquish this delightful branch of divine truth. We have already contemplated the pleasantness of religion in its nature, and some of its exercises. We will now endeavour to attend to it in another point of light, and illustrate its excellency and beauty from the terms employed in the text, as a pleasant way and a delightful path.

We find by inspection of the sacred oracles, that the practice of religion is often compared to a way, and they that walk therein are denominated travellers. They are frequently represented as persons from home, as sojourners, pilgrims and strangers, yet as those who are on a journey homewards. The religious life is a journey indeed, and heaven is its end, and thitherward all the pious bend their course. So that

were you to ask a christian in a proper frame, whither he travelled, his reply would be, that he was bound to the celestial world. Now all persons on a journey, especially if their journey be long, they have anxious sensations respecting two things, whether they are in the right road, and whether the way be pleasant and good. This affords encouragement and gives springs and alacrity to travellers. When they find they are right and their way inviting and delightful, they hasten on with speed, and proceed in their journey with pleasure. Were any one minded to engage in a religious life, or to enter upon a journey to the new Jerusalem, and enquire what sort was the way that tended thither, they have perfect instruction on this head, in the description of it in the words before us. "That all the ways are pleasantness and all the paths peace." This is the character of every way and every road, that leads to heaven. As religion is here explicitly compared to a way, so under this image it shall be illustrated at present.

First, a way is generally pleasant which leads through flowery lawns, or lies by beautiful streams of water. These take from the wearisome feelings of the traveller, and render his journey pleasing and delightful. But thus as the holy *David* informs us from his own experience, lies the way of religion. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; leadeth me by the still waters." Here religion led him into green pastures, whose verdure and flowers were pleasing and grateful to the view ; and by the still waters, not such as dashed down mighty precipices, or foamed through ragged rocks, but whose gentle flow and soft murmurs were delightful music to the enraptured ear. And the whole furniture of the way was such as afforded the highest pleasure. He was not hurried through those delightful objects, but had full time to contemplate them, and imbibe the sweetness of all the pleasurable scenes. He rested in those pastures and by those living waters, as Israel of old, when they encamped at *Elim*, where were twelve wells

of water and many palm trees. Gospel ordinances, to which christians much attend in their journeying through this world to their heavenly home, are charming and agreeable, like flourishing pastures and refreshing waters. Sabbaths, sacraments, public and private worship, praying to, and praising God, hearing his word preached, and holy meditations, are their delight ; these are their pleasant things. There is a river of comfort in gospel institutions, " The streams whereof make " glad the cities of our God." It is probable a glimpse of these delightful scenes caused the spouse to pour forth this fervent petition, " Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, " where thou feedest, when thou makest thy flock to rest at " noon." Now they who walk not in the way of the Lord, are upbraided as being guilty of the extremity of folly, in that they depart from and despise a most pleasant and delightful road. Will a man, who is a traveller, act so weak and unwise a part, as to forsake the walks which lead through desirable fields, and lie by refreshing rivers, to force his way through craggy rocks, and over rough and sulphureous mountains where all beneath is fire ? Thus are men enemies to themselves, and the foolishness of man preverteth his way. Let us ever walk in the paths of piety, and journey in the ways which lie by the river of God.

Secondly, a way becomes pleasant when there is from it beautiful prospects, and frequently grand landscapes open to the view. The traveller pauses and is filled with sweet admiration, and looks around him with extatic pleasure. The prospects reflect light and glory upon the road, and he proceeds on his way rejoicing. It heightens their pleasure exceedingly, when they consider all they behold is their own ; all in view and more, not only all things present, but all things to come are theirs. The whole creation is not merely at peace with them, but for their use and at their service. They look around

them with pleasure, and forward with joy. How does it give pleasure to a journey to have a prospect of its end ; to see the way we are in leads directly thither, and that in a little while we shall be at home, in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The prospect of perfection and glory sheds flowers on all his paths, and thus he is delighted with the way, yet the view before him delights him infinitely more ; hence he reaches forward, leaving the things that are behind, and pressing towards the everlasting rest.

Thirdly, necessary and comfortable accommodations afford pleasure on a journey. They who walk in the ways of religion have every thing expedient and proper for their support and comfort. The promise is, " They shall want no good thing." In all times and places they have access to the stores of grace, where there is an infinite sufficiency treasured up for their supply. Whenever they call they are furnished ; they have only to ask and they shall receive. Their supplies are in continual readiness, and ever proportioned and adapted to their wants. " For as their day is so shall their strength be."

Fourthly, agreeable company is pleasant on a journey. This deceives the time and banishes the tediousness of the way. This is an eminent consolation to those who walk in the peaceful paths of piety and virtue. It is an afflicting truth that they are only few who travel in this road, yet it is a pleasing reflection that they are the wisest and best, and more excellent than their neighbours. They are not on their journey troubled with the impertinence of foolish companions. Christians have trials enough of this sort from the world, but the companions of the saints are all holy, wise and good. Let us therefore cordially say, " We will go with them, for we have heard " the Lord is with them." The communion of saints contributes much to the pleasure of their way. They quicken one another as fellow travellers and companions in the kingdom and patience of Christ. In ancient times it was a pleasure to

them who went up to Jerusalem to worship, that their numbers encreased by the way, and thus they went from strength to strength till every one of them appeared before God in Zion. Mutual conversation exceedingly heightens the pleasure of travellers. And it is the will of God that his people should encourage one another by these means in their heavenly course. "They that fear the Lord will often speak one to another."

Fifthly, to have health, strength and ability to perform our journey, is a desirable thing. The sick, the weak and the lame, the most pleasing walks must be painful and disagreeable to them. This makes the way of religion pleasant, that they are filled with spiritual strength. And they travel not in their own but in the greatness of his strength, "who is mighty to save." Thus they run and are not weary, they walk and are not faint. By the strengthening and encouraging influences of the holy Spirit their hearts are comforted, supported and enlarged, so they not only go but run in the way of the divine commandments. "When I am weak, says St. Paul, then am I strong." Christians are weak in themselves, but they have every sufficient strength in the Lord; so that they faint not neither are they weary.

Sixthly, a way is pleasant where there is a good guard and a skilful guide, in whose understanding and fidelity we may place the surest confidence. This is the safety and satisfaction of all true believers, that they are directed by the counsel, and guided by the Spirit of the Lord. The infallible promise is, "He shall lead them into all truth," hence they are said to walk after, and to be led by the spirit. As the pillar of fire and the cloud was a guide to the Israelitish nation, and led them thro' the desert, so the same God is a guide to christian travellers thro' the wilderness of this world, and a guard to them also; therefore, "they are kept by the power of God thro' faith unto salvation." The angels of heaven, those mi-

nistering spirits whose employment it is to minister to the heirs of glory, are a constant, vigilant and invincible guard unto them. They bear them in their arms where they go, pitch their tents where they rest, they are their front and their rear ward, and securely line all their way. How cheerfully and safely may christians proceed in their heavenly journey, when they have full assurance that they are always protected and surrounded by such guards. Yea, tho' they walk in the shadow of death, they need fear no ill.

Seventhly, how comfortable is it to have sufficient light in all our ways? Nothing more disagreeable than journeying in the dark, in the blackness of a cloudy night. Our Saviour declares, "He that walketh in darkness knows not whither he goeth." Now they that walk in the ways of true piety, are children of the light and of the day. Once, they were darkness, but now are they light in the Lord. The light has arisen upon them, which is not only for their pleasure, but to direct their steps in the paths of peace.

Eighthly, the end of their way is pleasantness and delight itself. However good the accommodations, great the security, and safe the defence of our course, if the end be bad, all must be unhappiness. This is the forlorn condition of all the workers of iniquity. The way in which they go, tho' wide and broad, it directly leads to destruction. And can they have pleasure in a journey, while they know the end thereof is death, and the steps thereof take hold on hell. Not so the way of the righteous, it leads to a most happy issue, even to perfect blessedness and to eternal life. It ends in the presence of God, "where is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where run rivers of pleasure forevermore."

Now, my brethren, here is brought into review before you a few of the ways of religion, and surely every one must readily

conceive, that they are pleasant and peaceful. Do not all immediately apprehend that a thing so amiable in its nature, so advantageous, rich and promising in its consequences, is calculated to induce every one to wish to acquire it for himself? The prayer and wish of each should be, "O that I was a traveller in such pleasant ways and delightful paths, that will issue in such happy regions, in such an eternally glorious end." Consider seriously with yourselves, are these things so? Is true religion attended with those comforts pleasures and joys, which you have heard? Why then will you not enter upon this heavenly journey, and engage to travel in these delightful walks? Surely you cannot but love profit and pleasure, riches and honor. Here are durable riches, and crowns of glory which fade not away. "Wisdom is more precious than rubies, "and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honor. Truly, all her ways are pleasantness "and all her paths are peace."

Perhaps some stand ready to say, it is my business and calling to recommend religion, and therefore I will endeavor to exhibit it in the best light it can possibly bear. This is my employment indeed, and I glory in it, and rejoice to magnify mine office. And let him that glorieth ever glory in the Lord. But you will grant me the liberty, to assure you, religion is not like the mean and damaged wares of the merchant, which are often extolled above their intrinsic value; if you ever come to purchase this pearl, and behold its preciousness, you will cry out with the queen of *Sheba* who had come from afar to see the wisdom of *Solomon*, "that half its excellency had not been told you." But lest you should be jealous the preacher's design is to impose upon you, and to praise to you things above their worth, you cannot possibly entertain any such apprehensions in respect to the blessed God. If you scruple and hesitate to believe man, you must surely believe the Lord of heaven and

earth, who is truth itself and cannot lie. "The Lord of
 "hofs makes unto all people, a feast of fat things, a feast of
 "wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on
 "the lees well refined?" Are feasts, marriage entertain-
 ments, luxuriant vineyards, fruitful fields, and delightful gar-
 dens pleasurable things? All these images and a thousand more
 are employed by Jehovah himself to represent to our view the
 beauties and charms of sincere piety, in order to captivate our
 hearts and engage us to fall in love therewith.

But it will still be objected, if religion be so pleasant, peaceful,
 joyous and delightful, how does it happen that we continually
 see so many of its votaries morose, sad and melancholy, always
 mourning, always complaining? It is truly afflicting to behold
 so many of the friends of this comfortable service, gloomy and
 distressed. But have you not seen some persons at the richest
 feasts and highest entertainments silent and distressed, and dark
 melancholy resting on their brow? Were these forbidding
 and gloomy appearances ever attributed to the feast and cheer-
 ful company? Surely not. It was some inward pain, some in-
 visible affection, which none knew but the subjects of them,
 that caused this gloomy sadness in scenes of pleasure. So here
 the sadness, distresses and complaints of christians, cannot with
 justice be attributed to religion, but to some other cause. The
 source of all these miserable appearances is sin and corruption,
 and because they have so little of the exercises of grace in their
 hearts. Religion makes none of its friends to mourn or com-
 plain; these are the genuine effects of sin. Therefore it is both
 unreasonable and wicked to ascribe to the former, what are al-
 ways the fruits of, and justly appertain to the latter. O that
 religion might never suffer in the house of its friends! Let
 none ever join with Satan in perversely and wrongfully attri-
 buting to religion, what belongs to sin.

But some will be ready here to ask, is not repentance a part

of religion, and is not this an unpleasurable and mortifying work ? This is granted to be true in the opinion of those who have never experienced the grace of repentance. But enquire of the aged saint, over whose cheeks streams of tears have flowed for his sins, whether his feelings at those seasons were painful or pleasant ? He will immediately answer, that his tears were sweet and comfortable. Sin in itself gave him bitterness of heart, but mourning for it, was his pleasure and satisfaction. Many a saint has experienced more peace, comfort and spiritual joy in weeping for his sins, than ever an impenitent sinner did in all the round and noise of jovial mirth. Yea, some christians have had so much pleasure and happiness in true repentance, that they could not well see how such a blessing should be excluded heaven. Hence Solomon declares, "Sorrow is better than laughter, and the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning." Surely in the blessing of our Lord must be comprehended substantial pleasure and true felicity. Thus he pronounces, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "For those who sorrow after a godly sort, the Lord hath appointed, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." All the saints testify that repentance is a sweet and pleasant exercise, and those who are ignorant of it, and never experienced any of its consolations, must, to say the least, be very incompetent and improper judges.

But it is high time to close this subject with some improvement.

First, this theme calls for praise and gratitude to the most High, who hath opened ways of pleasure and paths of peace to the land of perfect felicity. The religion in the gospel, instituted for the happiness of the children of men, is pleasure, peace and delight in itself as well as all glorious in its end. How hard, cruel and inhuman are many of the false religions in the

world. Some oblige their votaries to turn anchorites, and banish themselves from the society of men ; others are forced into cells and cloysters, to spend their solitary days in tormenting penances, to lash themselves with bloody cords, to suffer all the pains of hunger by emaciating fastings, to go on distant and dreary pilgrimages, to wear hats of iron, and stand on pillars of fainting and death. Others must offer in sacrifice their tender children to appease the anger of their monstrous deities, &c. Thus the greatest bulk of mankind are overwhelmed in barbarous superstitions, and their religion is cruelty, anguish and horror.—But how humane, rational, sweet and benevolent is the religion of christianity ? All the ways of our religion are pleasure and all her paths are peace. Let us therefore rejoice in it, and embrace it with our whole hearts ; imbibe all its graces and practise all its virtues. Let us continually offer the sacrifices of joy, and sing praises unto the Lord. Let sentiments of gratitude and love ever dwell in our hearts, and songs of blessing and praise upon our tongues.

Secondly, allow me to shut up this discourse in a short address to the younger part of my audience. I turn to you, my amiable young friends, who consider yourselves in the age of pleasure. You here see that religion is not that frightful and gloomy thing, which you have often falsely pictured to yourselves in your own deluded fancies. There is nothing forbidding, distant or disagreeable in it. Here alone can you find true pleasure and durable delight. You think, you are in the period of life, wherein you may be allowed to take your fill of pleasure, before the calamitous appendages of old age come on. And, O that you could be persuaded, to seek it where alone it can be found. Would you rejoice in your youth, and have your hearts cheer you in the days of your youth, enter upon the ways of religion. Relinquish folly, iniquity and youthful lusts, and chuse God for your God, Christ for your Saviour, and the Holy Ghost for your Sanctifier ;

chuse religion for your course of life, her counsels to direct you
 and her graces to comfort you ; then will you have the highest
 pleasures in life, the most consoling supports in death, and con-
 summate felicity throughout the unwasting ages of eternity.
 Wherefore shake off the shackles of sin, falsely called pleasure,
 and say unto laughter, thou art mad, and to carnal mirth,
 thou art foolishness, and make the wise choice of *Mose*; with
 whom God conversed face to face, as a man with his friend,
 “ Who chose to suffer affliction with the people of God,
 “ rather than dwell in the courts of sin for a season.” Be en-
 treated to come and take Christ’s yoke upon you and you will
 surely find it easy. Lay it up in your minds, that the plea-
 sures of religion are infinitely preferable to the pleasures of
 sense. “ Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call up-
 “ on him while he is near.” Let this great truth be inscribed
 on the palms of your hands, that it may be always before you,
 and let it never slip from your memories, “ That all religion’s
 “ ways are pleasantness, and all her paths, peace.”

S E R M O N XXVII.

Faith struggling with difficulties.

Matt. xxv. from the 21st to the 28th verse, inclusive. *Then Jesus went thence and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me. But he answered and said, it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs. And she said, truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

WE have often read, my brethren, or often heard, of the mighty deeds and great exploits performed by distinguished

heroes, and renowned worthies, whose fame has been spread through the historic page ; but there are no achievements so glorious, and shi ne with such brilliant lustre, as those which have been done by the virtue, power and grace of faith. An Alexander, a Cesar, a Hannibal, performed no such stupendous deeds or obtained such remarkable victories, as have been accomplished by the strength and wisdom of this wonderful grace. The oracles of truth produce abundant instances of its wonder working power. “ Many thro’ faith have subdued “ kingdoms, stopped the mouths of liars, quenched the violence of fire, were made strong, and waxed valiant in fight, “ and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Were ever any exploits like these performed by any or all the noblest heroes of antiquity ? Here in the passage before us we have an astonishing deed, a most notable victory obtained by one of the weaker sex, thro’ the might and all vanquishing power of her faith. A poor feeble woman dares to enter the lists with the Son of God, who could speak worlds into existence, and comes off with the plaudits of victory. The history we have of this remarkable incident is briefly this :

Jesus Christ, the Saviour of an apostate world, being resolved to be as extensively useful from the time he entered upon his public ministry, as possible, takes a tour into some more remote corners of the country, into a distant part of the land of Judea, which lay bordering upon Tyre and Sidon. While he was itinerating and doing good, a certain woman of Canaan, of the gentiles, came to him with a most importunate address, that he would administer healing to her daughter, who was grievously vexed with a devil. She must surely have had some true information of his character, that he was the Messiah, the promised Saviour of men, the Son of God, and from the evidence she had, she had committed her soul to him, and believed on him before she saw him with her bodily eyes. And from the account she had heard of his miracles, she possessed a full

confidence, that he was able to heal her daughter. This faith induced her to go forth to meet him, as the fame of his being in that part of the country had reached her ears. She was one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, a descendant of that accursed nation, which had been devoted to destruction by that sentence pronounced more than two thousand years before, "Curst be Canaan." When a whole nation is cast off from God, it never implies in it, that every individual of that people must perish eternally. This woman and many other instances in scripture, are evidences hereof.

Now faith caused this person to arise and go to Jesus, being fully persuaded that he was all sufficient, and infinitely able to do all that for her, which her heart desired. When she came near unto him, she presented her petition in the most decent, warm, pertinent and believing manner. "She cried unto him saying, have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David." The very form of the address, shows both her knowledge of Christ's character as the promised Redeemer of his people, and her faith in him as the only Saviour. It may raise wonder in some, that this poor woman did not make her complaint to the disciples, that they might have introduced her to their Lord, but it is manifest she had too much faith and knowledge for this. A proper understanding of the truth, and a real faith, will have no angels or saints for intercessors, but will apply directly to the Son of David, to the Lord of all power and grace. And she pleads no merit or worthiness, but her sole desire is mercy; to mercy she looks, and on mercy she rests all her hopes. As if she had said, "O thou Son of David, Israel's King, upon sufficient information and testimony, I fully believe that thou art Jesus, the sent of God to be the Saviour of lost men, I therefore appear in thy presence as a needy supplicant who have nothing to recommend me to thy favour but my misery, sin and wretchedness, I ask no

blessing due, or meritorious reward, but what I humbly and devoutly beg, is an act of thy mere beneficence, pure mercy and free grace."—One would have thought the merciful and compassionate Saviour, would instantly have granted her hearty and earnest desire. But lo, his conduct on this tender and affecting occasion, how widely different from any thing it ever was before ? For the trial of her faith, and to exhibit her as an example to all future believers, he assumes an air of distance and reserve ; he proceeds on his way, without seeming to hear her, or even deigning to give her a look from his countenance, " He answered her not a word." Discouraging consideration indeed ! How must her tender heart be wounded ? What must be her painful feelings ? She sought, she prayed, she cried, but alas ! she sought, and prayed, and cried in vain. " He answered her not a word." Might not this poor Canaanitish woman have rationally paused, and thought with herself ; " Surely this cannot be the Son of God, so famed for his tenderness and clemency ; has he heard others and turns a deaf ear to me ? I have addressed him in as humble and decent a manner, as any I ever heard of ? Is he thus reserved, silent and partial ? I will go no more after him ; I will follow him no farther." Would not some such reflections upon the treatment she received be extremely natural ? But however natural they might be to a corrupt mind, they are far from being natural to a renewed soul to divine faith, that is in pursuit of favour from the Lord. But though Christ answered her not, and in silence went on his way, this seems to encrease her faith, to cause her to send forth more fervent prayers and tender cries, inasmuch that the disciples were moved and affected with her case, and voluntarily became intercessors on her behalf.

Believers will feel for believers in affliction and perplexity, and they will plead and intercede for them. Thus " His disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away

“for she crieth after us” Her cries pierced their tender hearts; they sympathized with her in her distresses, and they entreated him to grant her request and send her away, that they might not be harrassed with her painful importunities. At the melting request of his disciples, he stops, though he would not speak to the woman; he speaks, he replies to them, in her hearing. Is it an answer of encouragement, hope or comfort? Nay, quite the reverse. It is big with horror and repulse. These heart cutting words proceed from his lips. “I am not sent, says he, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This strikes dumb the disciples, and must penetrate like daggers to her heart. Behold, how she stands mute, overwhelmed in tears, and ready to sink into the earth. Her case was deplorable indeed; and these words might, methinks, have thrown her into eternal despair. With what plausibility and justice might she have argued against her election, as many do, who have no such reasons? How might she have poured out her despairing soul in such wailings as these? “Alas! Jesus is only sent to shew mercy and be a Saviour to the people, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; it is true I am lost, a lost creature indeed, and now must be lost to all eternity; I am not of the happy and chosen family of Israel, but of the reprobate, the cursed race of the gentiles; there is no encouragement, no hope, no mercy, no salvation for me; I and my dear child must be rapped in the flames of damnation; I have sought his merciful favour with an humble and broken heart, with sighs, and cries, and tears; I am not a chosen vessel, I pertain not to the election of grace, but must have my doom in the regions of horror and everlasting misery.” Are not such despairing thoughts natural? Where is the believer that could ever again look to Jesus, after such a repulse. But this does not dispirit the faith of this woman, it engages her to more zeal, it fires all the powers of her soul; instead of relinquishing her purpose by these discouragements, she re-

news her address with more humility, earnestness and fervency. Behold the woman approaching his presence, bowing before him, paying him homage and profound adoration, bathed in tears, and collecting her whole soul into one pathetic petition.

“Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” What Christ had said, put to silence the disciples, but she continues her prayer, and applies with greater importunity ; she determines that if she perish, she will perish at the feet of Jesus, pleading for mercy, with her last breath praying for help. Alas ! what now is the consequence ?—a further and severer repulse. He turns to her, and would reason her out of her prayers and importunities, points out the unfitness of her request, with the twinging addition of a rebuke and reproach. “But he answered and said, it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” As though he had said, “Woman, your desire is unreasonable and unjust ; I came to be a minister of the circumcision and my favours are to be bread to the children of Israel, but you are a dog of the Gentiles, it would be highly improper to take the bread of children, and bestow it on such vile creatures as you ; you are out of the covenant, out of the pale of the church, and to be passed over with neglect and contempt.” Here was an answer clouded with discouragement ; its apparent amount was an absolute refusal. And not only denied, but also reproached with the degrading epithet of a dog. What heart could bear, what spirit could brook such treatment and insult as this ? Not to be attended to, nor observed ; to be told he had no business with her nation ; that it was unfit to give her any of the children’s bread ; and then to subjoin reproaches upon her character as too base and ignoble, fit only to be ranked with the basest of the animal tribes. Would not any person possessed of a soul rise, resent and retort the injury ? “What ?—Can this be the Son of David ?

Can this be the Saviour of the world, reputed for kindness, mercy, compassion, goodness and love? No: he is not the Christ, but some vile impostor; I have been deluded, I will go no more after him; I will seek to him, I will pray to him no more." But, how widely different is the humble, believing heart, that loves the Lord Jesus. In meekness, patience and humility, it readily takes all in good part as just and right. She feels deserving of such an answer, or of no notice. In righteousness Christ might pass her by, a wretched dog and worse. Yet her faith will not part from its object. She owns all to be reasonable, just and true; all the austere usage which she receives, is perfectly right. Yet her faith is such, that though he slay her, she will trust in him. Nothing can separate or break the band of faith; neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor repulses, nor denials, nor reproaches. Faith, a true and living faith will carry the soul through all opposition. The more difficulties, discouragements and trials the believing christian meets with, the more earnest and fervent in prayer will he be. He will wrestle with God himself, and will not cease the struggle until he prevail. He will argue and dispute the matter even with Christ. And faith will furnish him with power, dexterity and skill, in the argument; he will overcome.

Thus this Canaanitish believer proceeds to answer the Lord's objections against her. She begins with an acknowledgement, all he said was true; "And she said, truth Lord;" what thou sayest is perfectly right; I am as vile and unworthy as a dog, I am worse than brutish, I deserve no favour, I merit no mercy from thy hand. Yet, allow me in deep humility to say, when the children eat their bread there are crumbs falling from the table, which are not denied to the dogs that lie under it." Behold, the importunity, the wisdom, strength and beauty of her faith. She acknowledges that she was as a dog, and all she begged was only the favours, privileges and advantages of

that animal. "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." As if she had said, "O Lord Jesus, allow me to receive the crumbs which the children carelessly let fall; there is enough and to spare; let me partake of the scraps; in the greatness of thy bounty, in the rich profusion of thy beneficence and grace, spare me this one mercy, grant me only this one blessing, the life of my child, the salvation of my soul. This is but a crumb falling from the wonders of thy love." Was there ever faith like this? Was there ever patience, humility, perseverance and duty like this woman's?

The compassionate Redeemer appears now no longer able to contain himself; he seems as tho' he was vanquished and overcome; he relinquishes the contest, and yields the victory. Behold, O christians, the strength, power, and conquering importunity of faith! See the frowns scattered from the Saviour's brow, the lowering clouds dissipated from his face; lo, the God of love, grace and mercy appears; his countenance gathers its wonted smiles. With what pleasure and delight does he look upon this happy woman, tho' full of pain, anxiety and fear, and floods of tears gushing from her eyes, and perhaps, still looking for a more tremendous sentence than any she had yet heard; he addresses her in the soul enrapturing language of praise and commendation. And could words more tender, friendly and compassionate flow from a Saviour's lips? "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Her extatic joy now exceeds her sorrow. Heretofore in all her difficulties and troubles, she retained the power of speech; whether she fainted in raptures we are not informed, but language failed her, she speaks no more. No words are left her; her heart was too full to express her gratitude. Thus joy sometimes is more overcoming than sorrow. Tho' she was of the heathen nations of Canaan, yet she approved herself

our daughter of Israel, who like a prince had power with God and prevailed. Hitherto Christ had shrouded his face, and treated her with a degree of roughness, but now he gathens her with everlasting kindness; he takes her in the arms of his love, smiles upon her, and manifests himself her beloved and her friend. Few can read the history of Joseph's discovering himself to his brethren, without shedding tears at these words, "I am Joseph, thy brother, come near unto me." What are our feelings when Christ acts this precious part to the believer, saying, "I am Jesus thy saviour, thy beloved, thy friend; put all thy confidence in me; place all thy hopes for time and eternity upon me." Especially when he adopts the language he did to his spouse: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee. Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me, from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon." Take a Pisgah view of the promised land, of heaven and all the rich and shining glories thereof, and all this is yours by a divine covenant of unchangeable love.

A few reflections must conclude these pleasing meditations.

First, let this doctrine encourage, support and comfort believers, who labour under many troubles, trials and perplexities. In all your difficulties go to Jesus. If he relieves you not, depart not from him. If he answers you not, cease not your prayers and cries. If he seems to withdraw from you, follow after him with greater zeal and importunity. This was the ruin of Saul; when God withdrew from him and answered him not, he betook himself to a witch and to Satan. When Christ replies to you as being unworthy, as being great sinners, as being exceedingly brutish in his sight, own it, and say, truth Lord; yet plead for the crumbs that fall from the table of his grace, which he grants to creatures as base and unworthy as you.

Secondly, let these things awaken guilty sinners to flee to the Lord Jesus. If you have not a daughter grievously vexed with a devil, you have worse. Your souls are possessed by him, you are in his snares, and he is leading you on to eternal destruction. You are all polluted and unclean, in a lost and miserable condition. Up, escape for your lives to the mountains of safety, or you must perish with Sodom in everlasting flames.

Thirdly, let those who have desires to draw near to Christ, to hold communion with him and obtain blessings from him, set the example of this woman of great faith before them. Address him with decency, propriety and fortitude, saying, have mercy on us, O thou son of David. Cry after him, fall down before him, worship him, pour out your whole souls in this solemn and all comprehensive petition, "Lord, help us." Remember the man sick of the palsy; when he could get access to Christ no other way, he was let down thro' the roof of the house. Let no obstruction impede our way to the Saviour. Surmount every difficulty; cast yourselves at his feet; lay hold upon him; let him not go until you obtain a blessing to your souls, until you obtain the blessing of eternal life.

Fourthly, a few words to those who entertain the prospect of sitting down to the supper of our Lord, shall close the subject. Consider your wants, and look to Jesus for the supply of them. Do you want the healing of a blind mind, or a hard heart? Do you want covering to your naked souls? Christ is a physician all sufficient for these purposes. Take no denial from him; fill your mouths with arguments. Take refuge in his tender bosom; resign yourselves to him. Receive him into your hearts, and rejoice in him. Is he not sweetly whispering to some while I am speaking, "Rise up

"my love, my fair one and come away. For lo, the winter
 "is past, the rain is over and gone." O that he may say to
 many souls at his feast, "O man, O woman, great is thy
 faith."

S E R M O N XXVIII.

The advantages, and some of the properties of faith.

*Matt. xv. 28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman,
great is thy faith.*

WE have already considered the history of this remarkably believing woman of Canaan. She was a person of pre-eminent piety. It may with propriety be here said, as in another instance of one out of the visible church, to wit, Cornelius a Roman centurian of Cesaria, "Of a truth, God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Although our Lord fixed upon and principally praised and recommended the faith of this excellent woman, yet there were other graces which shone with a conspicuous lustre in her whole conduct upon this occasion. In this affair she exhibited a group of the most shining virtues of the gospel; such as profound wisdom, deep humility, genuine meekness, patience, perseverance in prayer, fortitude, &c. How did her wisdom appear in the whole of her behaviour, in her management of this

affair ; the choice of her words and decency of her address ? What a beautiful humility attended her in all her deportment and acknowledgment of her unworthiness ? Did not sweet meekness manifest itself, without any perturbation of spirit or ruffle of temper ? What patience did she exercise in her sore, heavy and unlooked for trials ? Not a hard thought of Jesus, notwithstanding the austerity of his treatment, arose in her heart ; not a murmuring word passed from her lips. How steady was her perseverance in prayer ? Her words were few, but they were well ordered. Her petitions were admirably pathetic ; they were enforced with the strongest arguments. Neither frowns, nor denials, nor repulses, nor reproaches, could cause her to cease from her purpose. Her perseverance under the most discouraging circumstances was of an extraordinary nature.—How astonishing was her fortitude ? She feared not ; her heart was fixed trusting in the Lord. No difficulties but what she would encounter, and would brave every danger. She was in all respects an admirable person, a superior saint, and a distinguished believer. Every grace and every virtue, seemed to possess her soul. She was truly full of God. Yet among all these excellencies, Christ chiefly sounds his praise and recommendation upon her grace of faith. Other virtues were the productions and effects of this. Therefore we conclude, of all the graces of the spirit, faith gives the most honor to Christ, and he confers the highest honors upon it.

O how happy should we be, my brethren, were we all in the state of this Canaanitish woman ! To have faith, such eminent faith as to be well pleasing to, and receive the approbation of our Lord. Nothing affords greater pleasure to the Saviour of the world, than the faith of his people ; it renders them precious to him, even as the apple of his eye. He rejoices over them, and is ready to say, “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse ; thou hast ravished my heart

“with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse.”

Various are the reasons which induce Christ to be charmed and pleased with the faith of his people. Though they may consider themselves all blackness and deformity, and viler than the basest of animals, yet in the view of Jesus, they are comely, beautiful and lovely. They may say with the spouse, they are black and not fit to be looked upon; with Job they may cry out, behold we are vile; with the Psalmist, they are more brutish than men, are as beasts before God; with Paul, that they are the chief of sinners; or with this Canaanitish woman, they are as dogs in his sight. Notwithstanding the low estimation in which they hold themselves, yet in the eyes of Christ, they are all amiable, they are pleasantness to him? they cost him dear and he sets his heart upon them. He exclaims, “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves eyes within thy locks; thou art beautiful as Tirzah, and comely as Jerusalem. The king’s daughter is all glorious within; her cloathing is of wrought gold, and he greatly desires her beauty.”—Christ is thus pleased with the graces of believers, especially with the grace of faith; because this is his high work, on which he seems to place a greater emphasis than any other. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” The persons to whom this reply was made, had enquired what they should do to work the works of God; hence they are here informed by our Lord what the work of God is, it is believing on Jesus, whom God hath sent into the world to be the Saviour thereof. It is also expressly declared, “This is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” There are many commandments, but this is comprehensive of all, therefore St. Paul, when he would give a summary of the whole gospel, styles it “The law of faith.” This is one reason why Christ

declares himself highly pleased with the faith of his people, because it is the great precept of the gospel, the sum of all that he requires.

Another reason is, because no other grace or virtue so highly honors, magnifies and glorifies Christ as this. Faith empties us of ourselves, and gives all the honor and glory of our salvation to him ; it makes us vile and unworthy in our own eyes, and exalts him to be all in all. He is precious to the believer, and itself is called precious faith. Thus faith and Christ are reciprocally precious to each other. Jesus is ready to say, O precious faith ; and the believer to reply, O precious Saviour ? Faith adheres to him through every obstruction, opposition, discouragement and difficulty, and Christ praises it saying, O man, or O woman, great is thy faith. Faith says none but Christ ; and he replies, none but faith. " Only believe and thou shalt be saved ; only believe and thou hast eternal life." How should this engage all who have any regard to their immortal souls, to believe with their whole hearts, to stir up their faith, to abound in the lively exercises of this grace ; herein you will be pleasing to Christ and acceptable in his sight. All believers must, surely, fervently desire to please their Lord. The thought of pleasing Jesus affords the spouse ineffable delight, " while the king setteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." The presence of Christ, and the exercises of faith gave her sweet contentment, inward triumph, and great delight. Would any wish to afford pleasure to the precious Redeemer, let them learn the art of believing, and live in the lively exercises of this grace. David danced before the ark with all his might, so let your faith be vigorous and active. Thus you will give pleasure, and become acceptable to Jesus, who so loved you that he shed his most precious blood for you. Herod was highly delighted with Herodias's daughter, " Inasmuch that he sware unto her, to give her what she should ask, even to

"the half of his kingdom." He makes a ~~mean~~ ^{mean} ~~reference~~ ^{reference} of the half of his pitiful kingdom. But whatsoever you shall ask O believer, Christ, in faithfulness to himself, in faithfulness to his word, his promise and his oath, will confer upon you, not the half, but the whole of his kingdom ; and his kingdom is a glorious and an everlasting kingdom. He is often sweetly addressing the believer, as king Ahasuerus did his queen, on the day that he waited upon her at the banquet of wine ; " What is thy petition queen Esther, and it shall be granted thee ; and what is thy request and it shall be performed, even to the half of my kingdom ?" This encourages the trembling believer to table her address in the language of the queen ; " If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and the salvation of my soul at my request, for I am sold by sin, to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish."

The feeble christian is here ready to cry out, O that I had that faith which is well pleasing to Christ ; and also asks, how shall I act faith so vigorously, that my Lord and my Saviour may be delighted, and that I may obtain his approbation ? In order that your faith may become acceptable to Christ, it must possess the following properties ; it must be exerted in a way of humiliation—acceptance—triumph—resignation—homage—and appropriation.

First, let your faith exert itself in a way of humiliation, or self emptiness and self abasement. This was the manner of the Centurion's faith. " Lord I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof." This filled Christ with admiration and pleasure, and drew from him this high recommendation : " He marvelled and said to them that followed, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." This was the way in which the faith of this woman of Canaan became so acceptable to the Saviour. Her faith reduced her

fellow, humiliated her in such a manner, that she owned she possessed all the unworthiness of a dog, one of the basest of animals. Thus faith, in proper exercise, will humble the soul and cause it to appear nothing, and worse than nothing. We will not only cease from self admiration, but abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. Faith shews Christ in all his beauty, splendor and glory, and the soul beholding the excellencies of the Saviour, sees nothing in itself but turpitude and unworthiness. While in unbelief we are full of ourselves, and shine in our own esteem; but when by faith we behold the transcendent beauties and glories of Immanuel, then we see ourselves in some measure as we are, poor, and wretched, and naked, and language fails in the description of our unworthiness. Thus rotten wood shines in the dark with admired colours, but when day returns it appears as it is, nothing but rottenness and unusefulness. Thus when the sun of righteousness arises to the eye of faith, the soul is emptied of itself, of its pride, vanity and selfishness. These are the expressions of faith: "Lord, I am undone, but in thee is my help found. I sink, I perish, I am lost, Lord save me. My righteousness is filthy rags, my beauty deformity, my pedigree is baseness, my riches poverty, my strength weakness, my power infirmity: Lord, there are riches, righteousness, beauty, strength and power with thee, every thing adapted to my situation; therefore I come unto thee poor and blind, and deformed, miserable, wretched and naked." The believing soul rejects itself, hates and abhors its sins, and waits and hopes, loves and trusts in Christ alone.

Secondly, it operates in a way of acceptance, and thus it honors God and is approved of Jesus. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Faith accepts of the Lord Jesus Christ in all his mediatorial offices, as freely proposed in the gospel; willing to deny himself, to suffer with him, and

to follow him that he may dwell with him forever. The ~~fool~~ takes up the resolution of cleaving to Jesus, as Ruth to Naomi : " Whither thou goest, I will go ; where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God." In this manner he receives Christ in his person, pardons, promises, and graces ; in his humiliation and exaltation. Accept a perfect, a whole and compleat Saviour, and you receive eternal life.

Thirdly, the person who would believe, to the consolation of his heart, must exult in Christ Jesus, and triumph in his Saviour. There is a sweet joy, and holy pleasure attending a true and lively faith. How does St. Paul in exulting raptures say ? " Thanks be to God, that giveth us cause always to triumph in Christ." Can there be a greater cause of rejoicing than to have such a friend and husband as the prince of life. All who believe are married unto Jesus, that was raised from the dead, that they may bring forth fruits unto eternal life ; and he is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother. The christian then may triumph in joy with the spouse and say, " This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Fourthly, the faith of that person who peculiarly pleases Christ, resigns itself unreservedly to him. Thus between Christ and the believer, there is a mutual delivery of themselves to each other. As faith receives Christ, so it surrenders all to him. He gives up soul and body, and all that he hath, keeping back no part of the price. He feels and considers himself no longer his own, but the Lord's who bought him. And Christ makes himself wholly over to the believer. All that he hath he gives unto him, his person, his benefits, his merits, righteousness, and all his infinite possessions. Thus he gives liberally, and confers upon his people every possible good. How rich, how dignified, how glorious are the saints

They have indeed, all things richly to enjoy. Hence with propriety, they may be congratulated as by the prophet Zachariah ; " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, " O daughters of Jerusalem, behold, thy king cometh unto thee, he is just and having salvation."

Fifthly, another property of faith is, to display itself in the most profound homage and adoration. All cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and they exalt him to the throne of his glory and excellency. " The four and twenty elders fall " down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him " that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the " throne, saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, " and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and " for thy pleasure they are and were created. Every creature " which is in heaven and in earth, heard I, saying, blessing " and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth " upon the throne, and unto the lamb forever and ever. " Thus at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." All in heaven and in earth, prostrate themselves in the deepest adoration before him. The wise men, who came from the east, worshipped the infant Jesus in the manger ; all his disciples worship him. It is the duty of the whole earth to call on his name. It is difficult to conceive how they can be christians, who refuse to honor the Son as they honor the Father. True faith always pays the most exalted worship to him. He is therefore ever pleased and delighted therewith.

Lastly, that faith, which is acceptable unto Christ, and acquires the praise in our text, " O great is thy faith," must vigorously act in a way of appropriation. Faith is not merely to operate in the form of assiance, trust, reliance, leaning and committing itself to him ; but in a direct and reflex manner-combined, it is to act in the way of assurance. Thus when the clouds were dissipated from the mind of an unbe-

believing Thomas, and his faith aroused into proper exercise, he appropriates Christ to himself ; he not only confesses, it is the Lord, but cries out, " My Lord, and my God." A lively faith, under the exercise of spiritual reflections, claims Jesus as its own property, assuring the believer that he is in a state of grace, that Christ is his, and all his benefits are his. These reflex acts from whence appropriation strictly takes its origin, never have any true existence but by and with direct acts of believing. Where there are no direct acts of faith, there can be no gracious assurance, or scriptural and comfortable satisfaction in the soul. The former may and often does exist without the latter, but the latter never without the former. As well might we speak of assurance without exercises of faith, as of believing without evidence. But assurance is the duty of christians to acquire as well as faith. Without the latter he cannot be saved, so without the former he cannot be comfortable. Hence it is the duty of all believers—it is the only way to peace and consolation of soul, to be appropriating Christ as their own, often thinking and often speaking of him as theirs. They should often be reflecting upon his beauties and glories, riches and grace ; making an appropriating application thereof to themselves ; " This is *my* beloved, this is *my* friend ; this is my Saviour and my God." This would cause the soul to cleave closely to Christ, to walk in the light of his countenance, and would fill it with consolation, joy and peace in believing. Thus he would go on his heavenly course rejoicing, and receive the approbation of his Lord, saying to, and praising him, " Great is thy faith."

An inference or two, and a single admonition. shall finish this discourse.

First, we infer from this doctrine, that faith is of an holy nature. There are kinds of faith, which have no holiness in them, but not so with that faith which unites to Christ and

connects the soul with salvation. As holiness is its nature, so its exercises and operations have a sanctifying virtue and quality in them. It renders the creature in some measure holy in heart and life. If without holiness no man can see the Lord, so without this faith, which eminently dwelt in this woman, no one can be holy. Where this faith lives and reigns, it purifies the heart from ungodliness, and worldly lusts ; it sanctifies the conversation, and elevates the soul from terrene things to God. It possesses a transforming power, sprinkles the conscience from dead works, assimilates the soul to holy angels, transforms it into the likeness of God, and fits it for the habitations of the blessed.

Secondly, we infer that faith is the ground of all communion with God and Jesus Christ. Without this grace, no fellowship with the Father or with the Son ; no converse with heaven, no spiritual mindedness, nor holy living. Where faith is, it causes believers " To cry with their voice, even unto God with their voice, and he hears their cry, and boweth his heavens and cometh down." And St. Paul speaking of himself and other believers, says, " Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord " Jesus Christ." Let us all be exhorted firmly to believe, and to look well to the nature, properties and fruits of our faith. Is it cleansing in its nature, sanctifying in its operations, and purifying in its effects ? Does it cleanse from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, purify the heart, work by love and overcome the world ?

A word of admonition shall close the subject.

Let us all be admonished to believe, and to see that our faith be strong, lively and vigorous. Let us beware of a dead faith, which is alone, and unaccompanied with godly living, and the fruits of righteousness. Let our faith be such as will

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be pleasing to Christ, and insure his praise and divine recommendation. Remember that faith is a principle of righteousness ; let it admonish us then to become rich in good works. Let us beware of a mistaken, selfish, delusive and fruitless faith, and be careful to obtain, possess and cultivate that faith, which is the gift of God, which all the saints enjoy, and those now around the throne of God once exercised upon earth, who by this grace, "Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses in heaven and in earth

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

S E R M O N XXIX.

The way of salvation easy.

1 John, i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

THAT there is some misunderstanding between God and us, is no more to be disputed than the operation of our own minds; if the state and temper thereof can be determined from the inward thoughts and outward actions. If when sentiments and conduct have an immediate relation to any particular being, and it is possible to determine the state and temper of the mind with regard to that being, then it is certain that the temper of our minds, with respect to God, is such as undeniably speaks the want of friendship and regard. Let us examine the sense of our souls in regard to God; let us consider it from the beginning, from the very first exercises of thought and reflection; do not we find upon a free recollection of ourselves in this particular, that from the earliest apprehensions we had of the divine being, we possessed a negligence of spirit towards him, a negligence too, not arising from incapacity and tender

ness of age, the mind not yet being capable of love, delight, joy and complacency ; it has not arisen from hence, ~~because~~ with regard to other objects we have felt from early life the quickest touches of these several passions. This is not imputable to the weakness of our youthful understanding, as incapable of comprehending so much of a spiritual and invisible being, as in reason is necessary to beget esteem and affection ; an indifference of this kind must be quite innocent, a natural, not a moral imperfection. In this case the indifference would wear off as the person increased in knowledge and understanding. Were it a natural imperfection it would decrease as the person arrived at ripeness and perfection of parts and powers. As they grew more acquainted with God by means of his works ; received more ideas of him, which were distinct and determinate, especially when instructed in their obligations to God and relation to him ; how he is infinitely glorious in himself, the author of their existence, their preserver and benefactor, and the fountain of all their blessings. Now, is this the fact ? No—alas ! perfectly the reverse. This negligence of God is so far from decreasing as our understandings and knowledge of him increase, that it grows into feeling, disaffection and sensible ill-will. It grows with our growth, strengthens with our strength. If we examine the sense of our hearts in the advanced stages of life, while destitute of renewing grace, we do not so much as wish to meditate upon him : God is not in all our thoughts. As we pass from one stage to another, ripen from childhood to youth, and from thence to mature years, we become more negligent of heaven, of religion, Jesus Christ, and the salvation of our souls. Our understandings are not improved to know the only living and true God, and his only begotten Son, and the exercises and duties of piety, but prostituted to the subserviency and service of divers lusts and pleasures. Instead of employing our powers to qualify us to promote the glory of God and the public good of mankind, we only use them for our own accomplishment to

make a figure in the world, to enjoy our pleasure, and to obtain riches and honor, altogether inattentive to, and regardless how it will fare with us in a future state. And when men have become old and grey-headed in sin, and disgusted at, and surfeited with the world, do their hearts and affections turn to God, and a preparation for eternity? Quite otherwise. The older sinners grow they become more earthly, carnal, stupid and secure. Many who were thoughtful, and paid some attention to religious concerns in their youth, have entirely dropt all these matters in advanced age. The inclination to serve God, and engage heartily in the interests of religion, are vanished and gone. Or if at times certain occurrences in providence force some reflections upon them respecting their souls and futurity; they are compelled to think of God and are troubled; there is an uneasiness awakened at the remembrance of his name. They feel no comfort or happiness, till they get back to their former inconsideration and carelessness. Cannot some remember, when it was painful to think of God, his perfections, his law and his gospel; his government and dominion over them; to think of their sins and their exposedness to divine wrath? Any subjects were more entertaining to them than these. To have their meditations run upon amusements, diversions and business, and the things of the world were greatly preferable and more pleasant. In the midst of the hurry and delights of sense, how has a single thought of God, that his eye is upon us, and we must give an account, in a moment dashed the cup of our pleasures with gall and wormwood? We could have no satisfaction or self enjoyment while the disagreeable idea continued. Were we not, and are not some of us in this assembly, still sensible of a certain jealousy and suspicion of God, that he is a master and an austere being, destitute of those excellencies he is represented to possess for conferring happiness on his creatures? Is it not absolutely certain that some never more perfectly enjoy themselves, than when the thoughts of God are most distant from their minds? That

their most agreeable moments, are such which are free from all interruption from any consideration of God and religion. How happy do numbers feel in having no serious thoughts at all ; no disagreeable checks arising from apprehensions of the divine existence, inspection, or his hatred of sin and iniquity ? These facts sufficiently prove a breach of friendship between God and his creatures ; and the daily experience of them abundantly prove that this breach has never been made up, that the unhappy difference still exists.

And are not some of you, my hearers, fully assured that the above account is a true description of your case ?—and now I would ask you in the name of God, is it your purpose to support the difference, maintain the dispute, and stand by the consequences ? I hope not. What, contend with the Almighty ! Is your arm stronger than his ? Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, but woe unto him that striveth with his maker. “ If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the “ swellings of Jordan ? ” Can a weak and defenceless sinner contend with the God of the armies of Israel ? He can crush you to pieces, can muster a myriad of angels against you, and the proudest sinner is not an equal combatant for the meanest attendant at his court. Or, what is a thought of greater honor, he can in a moment sacrifice you to the malice and cruelty of devils. It is easier for him to turn you and all the wicked of the earth into hell, with all the nations that forget him, than for you to lift your hand.

Is it not reasonable then that such persons should be anxiously concerned to have the breach healed and the difference accommodated ? Are any ready to make the enquiry how this may be done ? Is God willing to be reconciled to his guilty creatures, enter into friendship, be at peace, and admit them to his favor and to happiness ? Yes. This is the message which he hath sent and proclaimed unto us in the gospel. “ That

he is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their iniquities unto them. And the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin." You are not to conceive this to be a general indemnity procured by the Saviour, without any thing wrought in you or done by you; that you are now secure of peace and pardon, and need not concern yourselves any farther. Remember, notwithstanding all that God has declared and Christ has done, all sinners are not pardoned; some perish in their sins and suffer the pains of hell forever. For tho' the death of Jesus be an infinitely sufficient ransom for all, yet it doth not operate like a charm, nor do the effects of it descend upon us by a natural necessity, as the rays of light from the sun; but something is required of us as rational creatures, as believers, in order to the forgiveness of our iniquities, nameiy, that we confess them. This is the message of heaven sent unto us in the text. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The sense hereof is plain and obvious; there is no necessity of any accurate investigation or laboured attention, to determine its meaning. And as nothing is designed from it, but what is of the most familiar and practical nature, therefore the few following observations upon this subject shall suffice for the present.

First, that the confession of our sins is absolutely required from us in order to forgiveness and salvation. This is so often declared, and plainly insisted upon, the sacred oracles, that none who have read them can be at any loss to be assured that this is the settled constitution of God, which he inviolably observes, and to which he will immutably adhere. He has affirmed to us in the most positive terms, "that he who confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy, but he that covereth them shall not prosper." That is, without confession there is no encouragement to expect the pardon of them either from reason or revelation. Reason and revelation unite to support

this order of things, and the propriety of this administration. Confession must be previous to remission. It would be unfit in the nature of things, it should be otherwise. To suppose the wisest of beings should pardon the greatest of offences without any acknowledgment from the offender of his crime, it would wear the complexion of connivance rather than pardon. Such an administration would be of ill-tendency, encourage transgression, and bring such government into contempt. Surely such connivance, weakness, and want of wisdom, cannot be attributed to the Supreme Governor of the universe, who always acts agreeably to the eternal fitness of things. Especially as hereby the freedom and sovereignty of his grace, would be totally eclipsed.

Secondly, it cannot be imagined that the confession required is in any sort a mere dull, cold, and formal acknowledgment; a general, senseless and unfeeling profession that we are sinners. A genuine confession proceeds from sincere sentiments of heart. It is not an acknowledgment of the lips without a correspondent sense of sin in the soul. It must be a confession, not for mere form's sake, but such as will ensure the purpose for which it was intended. For this end it must be personal and particular, universal and perpetual. A general and superficial acknowledgment will not answer; but it must be distinct and flow from a particular sense a person has of his own wiliness, of the number, aggravation and demerit of his iniquities. David makes a genuine confession of sin, when he says, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and in thy sight have I done evil." It must be universal, that is of all sin without partiality or exception. It must not be such a prayer and such a confession as the Syrian nobleman made, when he acknowledged and was ready to relinquish all sin except one, for which he desired pardon while he might be allowed the indulgence of it. In this "thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master

"goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there ; and he
 "cleaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rim-
 "mon ; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon,
 "the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." How many
 are willing to confess like Naaman, with the exemption of a
 few sins, which they deem necessary for their livelihood, their
 interest or their honor ? A confession which entitles to pardon
 from God, must not only be universal, but also perpetual ; as
 we are daily encompassed with sins and infirmities, we should
 daily confess them, and daily apply to that blood which cleanseth
 from all iniquity.

Thirdly, when God is said to be faithful and just to forgive
 us our sins upon the confession of them, this obligation is not
 to be understood as if it were founded in the confession ; as
 though confession itself obliged God to forgive. This would
 be saying, a mere confession is obligatory upon God to requite
 it with remission ; that he has no right to deny one who de-
 serves it so well ; that he will be faithful and just to the me-
 rits and virtue of such a confession, and recompense it suitably
 to the worth and value of such an acknowledgment. This
 would not only sap the foundation of the gospel, demolish the
 covenant of grace, but contradict the nature of things. He
 must have an unconscionable opinion of the high value and
 merit of his confession, who would dare to bring forward such
 a claim. This would be a daring insult in a criminal, to offer
 to any human government. Would it be unjust in a civil
 magistrate to punish a murderer because he plead guilty, and
 confessed the fact ?—Surely not. The state of things is the
 same in either case. From hence it appears there is no con-
 nection between confession and remission, only what the grace
 and good pleasure of God has formed and established. Where-
 fore the faith and justice of God here mentioned, must be under-

stood in relation to his own promise and declaration, that repenting sinners shall find mercy. Our confession can have no manner of causal or meritorious influence upon our remission. Neither faith nor repentance can in the least degree merit pardon and salvation ; these are granted to the believing penitent, solely in consequence of the atonement of Christ. It is true they are inseparable from eternal life. Pardon cannot come into existence without them, yet where they exist, it certainly follows. These graces are the gift of God, and implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness of sin, with all other spiritual blessings, flows freely from God, and yet they are bestowed on the sinner for the merits of Christ alone. Christ has purchased all that is prerequisite, or contained in the term salvation, and has given an adequate valuation therefor, yet from the covenant of grace and the promise, God has pledged himself to grant remission of sins upon confession of them. Thus from the constitution of saving sinners in the gospel, however infinitely unworthy the sinner is in himself, and all he can possibly do, yet if he confesses his faults, as God is faithful to his promises, just to Jesus Christ and to all his perfections, he surely obtains forgiveness. If it were not abhorrent to make the supposition, God would be neither faithful nor just in refusing pardon to the transgressor who confessed his offences, yet forgiveness to the sinner in respect to himself, and to his confession, is the freest and most sovereign grace.

Fourthly, this confession in the text, arises from a broken and penitential heart. It is not a piece of mere lip service. It is an act of the whole man, and not of the mouth only. True confession flows from a feeling sensibility of soul. Therefore it disburdens the heart, relieves the oppressed conscience, and eases the troubled mind. In forced, insincere and unavailing confessions, there is always misery, but not so with that which is proper and genuine. In a gracious confession there is pleasure, comfort and happiness. The believer hardly ever

feels more happy, than lying in deep contrition at the feet of his Lord, mourning over his sins, and pouring out his whole heart in an unreserved confession of them. This is the confession which God approves, and forgiveness stands infallibly connected with it. It springs from the depth and sincerity of evangelical repentance, is ever accompanied with a departure from sin, and a reformation of life, and has the justice and faithfulness of God engaged for his pardon. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

A few practical uses will close the theme.

First, how doth loving kindness and grace of God our Saviour, shine forth in the dispensation of the gospel? Expiation for sin is provided by the blood of Jesus; reconciliation for an apostate world, is procured by the cross. Nothing now is required of criminal offenders, only to accept of salvation as an unmerited favour and an instance of wonderful and special grace. What superabundant riches of mercy appear in this mode of procedure with fallen man? Angels entertain themselves with the admirable contemplations. How reasonable is it that it should captivate and charm the souls of sinners? The work of redemption is finished, and before it comes to us, published to the world as complete, and all are invited to come and receive it. "All things are ready," the feast is prepared, placed on the table, and nothing wanting but guests to come and partake of the infinite profusion of the divine beneficence. And all are invited of every nation and complexion, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, to come to the marriage entertainment, to come and receive interminable felicity.

Secondly, what can be more free and easy than the terms of the gospel? Jesus came and laid down his life for sinners; only receive him and salvation is yours. Believe and thou shalt be saved. An ample redemption is made, only consent

to it and all is safe. Christ saves all who are willing to be saved, and he never saves any against their wills. The whole requisition of you is the easiest thing in the world ; only confess your sins and pardon is yours. What divine generosity, what wonders of love displayed to the lost children of men ! That God should stoop from the throne of his glory to call to sinners, saying unto them, only ask forgiveness, acknowledge that you have treated heaven unkindly, that you have causelessly offended the Supreme Majesty, and all offences will be forgiven, and peace established between heaven and earth again. If such news could be proclaimed in the infernal regions, would not the devils clank their chains for joy ? By grace are we saved, by marvelous and surprising grace. How strange is it, and it will employ the admiration of eternity, that the most high and potent Lord, who can do all his pleasure, create worlds and dash them to pieces by the word of his mouth, can ease himself of all his adversaries in a moment, should lay himself under obligation to forgive us our sins on the mere confession of them. What lower terms of salvation could sinners require ?—Only ask and you shall receive, only call on the name of the Lord, and ye shall be saved. Has not heaven condescended to the lowest measures possible ? All the art of man could contrive nothing so low and easy for so great a blessing. Was salvation left to terms of men's own devising, could they propose any thing lower, than to have remission upon the confession of sin ? O therefore let all admire and receive the wonderful grace of the gospel.

Thirdly, this doctrine exhibits the wisdom and glory of the gospel dispensation with transcendent beauty and ravishing loveliness. The misery, guilt and wretchedness of man within, the overflowing mercies of God without, his own absolute indigence and Christ's all-sufficiency, should irresistably influence him to confess his sins, and accept of pardon and a free salvation. With what a penetrating sensibility of soul, and with

what warm and exalted affections of heart, ought the one to be done and the other received ? A feeling sense of sin, of our own vileness and unworthiness, lies at the foundation of every saving confession ; so an heart full of love and gratitude is the least return which ought to be made for pardon and forgiveness. The riches and plenitude of grace is only seen by a proper apprehension of the odiousness, deformity and turpitude of sin. Suppose an impenitent sinner pardoned and forgiven without any sense of his sins, it would be such a contradiction to reason and common sense, that he, himself, would deem it an absurdity ; and the impropriety of it would so forcibly strike his mind, that he would reject the offer with disdain. Was pardon offered to the inhabitants of hell, it would be despised. It is remarkable of the rich man in the flames of torment, though he asked for water to cool his tongue, yet he neither confessed his sins, nor requested forgiveness. Hell will never be induced to confess its sins, therefore pardon will never enter there.

Now let us all be exhorted before it be forever too late, to come to a full and free confession of our iniquities. We have no time to lose. If we confess not now, we will not hereafter. This is the only space allowed us for repentance and confession ; for there is no wisdom, device, repentance or confession, or pardon in the grave, to which we are fast hastening. " Now is the accepted time, now *only* is the day of salvation." Confess not as some who continue in sin ; they confess their sins and instantly return to them. This is not confession, but hypocrisy and mockery. Such a confession is adding insult to injury. Let our confession be attended with a departure from all iniquity. Let our text ever fill us with love, praise and gratitude. " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

S E R M O N X X X .

The favour and patronage of God, the support of man in afflictions.

*Psalms xli. 1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present
help in trouble.*

RELIGION is the only true resource of man in all his distresses. How great are the alterations heavy afflictions will often produce for a time, even upon the most heaven-daring sinners? The haughty Ahab, who had sold himself to work wickedness, in the day of trouble behold him humbling himself, renting his clothes, fasting and mortifying. How will distresses change the most hardened wretches into cringing hypocrites? But what can be expected from a religion founded solely in, and caused by the troubles of this life? Let the cause be removed, and the effect ceases. How many on beds of sickness and pain, will pray, repent and weep, and seem to be very religious; but let the rod be removed, and they are no better than ever. Thus natural evil, however dreadful, cannot of itself effect the cure of moral evil; it may be, and often is, employed by God for this purpose; but then it is

accompanied with the special operation of his grace, and by this the cure becomes effectual and lasting.

Real religion is a constant reason for calmness, composure, and serenity of mind under the greatest afflictions. Thus a truly religious man possesses a measure of self enjoyment in the most deplorable circumstances that can happen. The highest and most complicated distresses cannot rob him of inward tranquillity. He has always a ready and sure resource in God, who cannot fail him. A religion wrought in the heart by the spirit of grace, founded upon and directed by the revelation of God, will never be totally destitute of some reviving hope and confidence in heaven. This leads the good man, amidst the storms of the world, to commit himself unto and rest unmoved in God.

There is a secret virtue and power in religion that bears the mind above distresses, succours it in trials, and consoles it in sorrows. Very different from that is the religion created by a panic dread of damnation, produced by the pains of sickness, or supported by the hourly expectation of dying; relief from dread, and deliverance from painful apprehensions, will cause such a religion to vanish like the morning cloud and the early dew. But pure and undefiled religion leads to an abiding trust in God, to follow the path of duty, and to maintain an unshaken serenity under the forest trials and most gloomy aspects of divine providence. This is the blessing of the good man, and the fruit of vital christianity. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." As tho' the Psalmist had said, When the righteous are pursued by an enemy, God is a refuge of safety to which they may flee; when oppressed with troubles God is their strength, on whose almighty arm they may stay themselves; when in grievous distresses and afflictions, he is a sure,

certain, and all-sufficient aid ; he is never far from his people, but in the most perplexing difficulties not only a help, but in all adverse circumstances, *a very present help* ; a help accommodated to every case, and ready in every exigence.

In discoursing on these words we shall,

First, make a few observations on the common troubles and unavoidable evils of this life, from which good men are not exempted.

Secondly, show that the favour and patronage of God is their great support, refuge, strength and help, under all calamities and evils of every kind.

As to the first, Were there no sin to merit evil, nor any Being concerned to inflict it, yet no wise man could promise himself much from the things of this world, all which are empty, uncertain, transitory, and mixed with bitter afflictions. Man when full and at ease, standing on high ground, on heaps of honors, on piles of offices and dignities, is only a proud, vain and unthinking thing ; man in his best state is altogether vanity. What then is he when overwhelmed with disgraces, mortifications and disappointments, and surrounded with every species of evil, calamity and distress. Without religion, better not to be. Thus when Solomon had considered all the oppressions and sore evils done under the sun, he exclaimed, " I " praised the dead which are already dead, more than the " living which are yet alive ; yea, better is he than both they, " which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work " that is done under the sun." What signifies a little glittering and momentary show in this world, when all is anxiety and foreboding fears within, lowering clouds of divine judgments impending over the head, involved in painful difficulties round about, and nothing in prospect but anguish and horror unat-

verable? Of what real utility is it, to use prophetic language
 "For a land to be full of silver and gold, and no end of their
 "treasures, for a land also full of horses, neither any end of
 "their chariots; when it is full of idols," and no end to their
 wickedness, and they are exposed to the infuriated wrath of
 an incensed Jehovah? Calamities and distresses are some-
 times employed by God, for the awakening and conversion of
 sinners, but they are absolutely necessary and expedient in the
 wisdom of providence for the disciplining of saints, training
 them up in virtue and holiness for the felicities above, even
 the eternal rest.

It is an afflicting truth, that good men are too much glued
 to the world, too fond of present interests and present enjoy-
 ments, and are far from having fully learned that rule of the
 gospel, "Be not conformed to this world." Therefore their
 Heavenly Father, finds himself obliged on various occasions to
 embitter their outward comforts, to remove the props they
 are apt to lean upon, to involve them in perplexities, that
 they may be more weaned from the world, be brought
 to walk more closely with God, and breathe more ar-
 dently for the state of the blessed. Hence it is that the peo-
 ple of God are often embroiled in great tribulations, and fre-
 quently judgments begin at the house of God, therefore he
 "turns his hand upon them, and purely purges away their
 "dross, and takes away all their tin." If this be the allot-
 ment of the righteous, what must be the fate of those who
 obey not the gospel? "If the righteous scarcely be saved,"
 and make their escape through awful perils, and as it were
 through the fire, "Where shall the sinner and ungodly
 "appear?"

Having dropped these few observations, I pass on to the

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Second thing proposed, which was to shew that the favour and patronage of God is their great support, refuge, strength and help under all calamities and evils of every kind.

The attempt to prove that good men can have none other, would be superfluous and nugatory. They can have no confidence in earthly treasures, for riches make to themselves wings and flee away, and more frequently involve in calamities than prove a defence against them. Can they trust in their might and in their power? Their strength is weakness. And how often does human greatness, when it becomes exorbitant, fall by its own weight? Can they confide in worldly wisdom? Alas! a thousand unexpected accidents, and unobserved latent circumstances cross, confound and frustrate this, and render the achievers of this world, not only unfortunate, but often miserable and contemptible too. “Let not therefore the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.”

To promote the frame of spirit and illustrate the present subject, please to consider the following things:—He who is interested in the favour of God, is freed from the worst of evils—that God is able and willing to support his servants—he is ready to prevent the evils which may threaten them, and deliver them out of those in which they are—and that he certainly does in all respects, that which is best for them.

First, he who has an interest in the favour of God and under the gracious patronage of heaven, is surely freed from the worst of evils. He has an almighty protection to whom he may on all occasions and at all times repair, therefore can never be without resource. A God ready to hear, a friend, a guardian and a father. He can present his case to God

with more freedom, satisfaction and expectation, than a weeping child relates its complaints to its earthly parent. Tho' mountains be cast into the sea ; tho' the hills be removed out of their place ; tho' assailed with the greatest temptations, and surrounded with the severest calamities, yet he has a God in covenant, in whom he confides his life, his soul, his all. This is a consoling reflection, infinitely preferable to the possession of the whole world, with all its riches and honors. A source of more substantial felicity than all the princes and monarchs of the earth can afford.

To be without the friendship of God ; to be abandoned by his holy spirit ; to be given up to a reprobate sense, and at last to be cast into hell, these are evils which make men compleatly and eternally miserable. But to the comfort and support of every pious soul, God is a very present help in times of trouble, and none of these evils can possibly befall him. As to man, what Zeba and Zalmuna said of the timid Jether, " As is the man, so is his strength," is applicable to the sons of men, their strength, weakness, and their furious wrath, is impotency. They are armed like angry wasps with buzz and bitterness, not like God with the fatal thunderbolts of irresistible ruin. What can feeble man in all the rage of malice do ? His tongue can wound our reputation, his arm our body ; he can plunder our property, rob us of our fortune, deprive us of liberty or life ; but what is the amount of all this ? while he cannot dissolve our connection with heaven, mar our hopes, blast our peace of conscience, nor wound our immortal souls ? Amidst all the turmoils, confusions and desolating wars ; amidst earthquakes, conflagrations, inundations and storms, the good man is safe in a place of refuge, even in his God. No ravaging hand can seize upon his heavenly treasure, no violence can wrest the crown of life from his head ; therefore let us ever bear upon our minds the counsel of our Lord. " Fear not them which can kill the body, but are not able to kill the

“soul ; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both
“soul and body in hell.”

Secondly, God will assuredly protect, support and eternally reward all who put their confidence in him. Various are the ways in which God administers aid, protection, patronage and support to his people ; partly by his gracious promises, secretly strengthening their faith, hope and all their graces, mingling a due proportion of good with all their evils, fortifying them by his spirit, according to the dangers, difficulties and conflicts. What the force, virtue and strength of all these put together are, may be estimated from the joys, consolations, victories and triumphs of good men in all ages. They have rejoiced in all sorts of tribulations, they have triumphed over the insults and persecutions of enemies, and the ingratitude and perfidy of friends. How supporting have been their consolations in poverty, reproaches, imprisonments, sicknesses, and even in death itself ? They have maintained their ground, preserved their integrity, sustained their innocence, and appeared amidst all the combinations of calamities, eminently great and illustrious. A good cause and a good conscience, the patronage of God and the aids of grace, are proof against all afflictions ; the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith are an all-sufficient protection against the darts of earth and hell.

All this is not intended to suppose that the trials of the true christian are without trouble, his wounds without smart, or his heart untouched with pain, only that he is not broken, dejected and hopeless like the ungodly sinner ; that he is never wholly destitute of inward support, nor entirely casts away all hope in God. This is the description the Psalmist gives us of his own faith and the state of his soul under complicated trials.
“ Mine enemies would daily swallow me up ; but what time I
“ am afraid, I will trust in thee, O thou Most High. Innu-
“ merable evils have compassed me about ; mine iniquities have

"taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they
 "are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart
 "faileth me. Be pleased O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord
 "make haste to help me. In God I have put my trust, I will
 "not fear what flesh can do unto me. Put thou my tears in
 "thy bottle; are they not in thy book?"

It must not be concealed, that sometimes such is the strength
 of faith, the transports of love, the confidence of hope, the
 luxuriancy of joy in God and in Jesus Christ, that the pleasures
 of a good man amidst all his sufferings and afflictions, do infi-
 nitely outweigh and exceed all his pains and sorrows. It is to
 be acknowledged and lamented that these are rare cases; the
 reason of the rareness of such instances and examples is, be-
 cause in those days there is little of living and growing christi-
 anity. But though the truly pious may not feel that spring of
 present comforts in their afflictions of this life, that they would
 desire, yet God affords them the sweet prospect of a full recom-
 pence of all their sufferings in the felicities and glories of para-
 dise. Hear our Saviour pronouncing them happy whom the
 world calls miserable. "Blessed are the poor for theirs is the
 kingdom of God; blessed are they that mourn for they shall
 "be comforted."

Thirdly, God is ready to prevent the evils which may threat-
 en them, and deliver them out of those in which they are.
 To doubt of this would be an approach toward Atheism. His
 omnipotence and omniscience are no more to be questioned
 than his existence. He doth whatsoever he pleaseth in the hea-
 vens above, and on the earth beneath. Hence it follows that
 all the power and wisdom scattered throughout creation, if
 combined and united, would bear no proportion to that which
 is originally and essentially in God. All created perfection is
 only as it were a drop of his inexhaustible store. All creatures
 depend upon him and are subject to his will. When therefore

he commands the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera, and the river of Kison to sweep them away, it is instantly done. Fire, hail and vapour, storms and tempests, famine and plagues, disease and death, obey his voice. The methods in which God usually governs the church and the world, is by fixed and stated laws; yet sometimes he humbles the proud and rescues the righteous in ways so extraordinary and uncommon, that immediately it is acknowledged, this is the finger of God. By these measures evils are often prevented, and deliverance wrought for his people. Trace Joseph from the envy and malice of his brethren, to the friendship and honors of the Egyptian court; from the pit in the wilderness, to the exalted place by Pharaoh on the throne; contemplate the infant Moses drawn from the waters, and become the great captain of Israel; David raised from a shepherd's boy, delivered from the paw of the lion, the paw of the bear, and from the terrible hand of the Philistine, and exalted to wield the sceptre of a mighty nation; but there would be no end of retailing instances of God's averting evil, and often turning it into good to his people. The consideration of these things caused the Psalmist to cry out in an extatic triumph, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid; the Lord is my strength whom shall I fear?"

How lively is the idea here afforded us of the happiness of the good man?—his mind enjoys a calm in the storms of calamity, his soul possesses tranquility amidst a thousand surrounding dangers. "Happy is the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Others may be crafty and fortunate, but the good man alone is wise and great. He wears the image and is something like unto his God, whose character is light, yet he makes darkness his pavilion, and clouds are round about him; and in the midst of thunders, hurricanes and earthquakes, he is serene, calm and undisturbed. "Let all those who put their trust in God rejoice, let

“ them ever shout for joy, because he defendeth them.” They were in a sure refuge under the shadow of his wings. This subject may be further illustrated by adding,

Fourthly, That God certainly does that in all respects which is best for his people. How consoling is this sentiment, how encouraging and supporting the thought ! The dispensation of Providence toward them, will ever be seasonable and good, beneficial and wise. If afflictions be expedient, these shall be their portion ; if prosperity be best they shall enjoy it. The infallible promise is, “ All things shall work together for their good.” That is, all the varying aspects of providence, the frowns as well as the smiles of heaven, will all combine together to be always advancing their best and highest interest. It looks at times as if many of the distributions of this world, its riches and poverty, its honors and disgraces, were the mere sport of unmeaning chance ; but we are assured, that all things are ordered and directed by the most wise and perfect government, from the greatest events down to the minutest incidents, from the revolutions of kingdoms and deluging worlds, to the falling to the ground of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of the head. From hence every sincere christian may with pleasure justly make this reflection : that however he may be dealt with, it is for the best. Whatever circumstances of distress he may be in, whatever common blessings are denied him, he may possess the full assurance that all things are co-operating for his advantage upon the whole ; that a good and merciful God, an infinitely wise and tender Father, knows all the situations in which he is, and that they are the best possible. This important and comfortable doctrine was far from the view of the ancient patriarch, when in anguish of soul he cried out, “ All these things are against me ;” while at that very moment all things were working for the benefit, the life, the honor and happiness of himself and his family. There could be nothing better for Jacob than what was then performing. How

great and comfortable is this doctrine to the real believer, how distinguishing and choice the blessing to a poor creature who has only a short prospect of things to come, and but little insight into the present, to know that whatsoever happens to him is calculated for his good, tho' he may not be able to perceive it now, yet hereafter he will clearly discern in what respects it contributed to his felicity. How will it ravish and transport the saints into high and unceasing admiration and praises of God, when the various impenetrable mysteries of his providence shall be opened, to behold the unsuspected goodness and astonishing care of heaven towards them? When numberless instances, notwithstanding their unkind construction of them, were not only adapted to their good, but absolutely necessary to preserve them from ruin. Thus you see, how "God "is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in "trouble."

Many and obvious are the uses that might be made of this subject, but the only improvement of it at present shall be a persuasion to you, my brethren, to become sincerely religious, and to make a cordial choice of God as the proper portion of your souls, as the sure protector against all material evil in this world, and the certain way to life and glory.

None will venture now to deny, that the patronage of God is the only support against evils, and that he is the only true resource in distress. Do you not find an insufficiency in the enjoyments of the world to make you happy? even in prosperity you are unhappy still; therefore he who has no other springs of bliss but what this unsatisfactory earth can furnish, is miserable; he is a wretch with all his stores. Without God there can be no felicity, let present enjoyments be what they may.

If health, and honor, and prosperity will not afford felicity,

What must be the case in agonizing distress, in the destitution of peace and all the comforts of life? Must not the misery of him be terrible, who is overwhelmed in calamities, and has no resource, no God to whom he can apply?—is sick, and dying, and stripped of every thing, and no redress in heaven nor in the earth. His conscience lashing him with twinging remorse, his mind anticipating his future doom, and no refuge, no help, no God to which he can repair. Here is a state that is deplorable indeed. On the other hand how blessed the condition of the real christian who has chosen God for his refuge and Jesus for his friend, and is ready to sacrifice all interfering advantages hereto! Let happen what will, whatever calamities occur, whatever distresses befall him, he can make application to his God and his Saviour with inexpressible freedom, with sweet hope and indescribable confidence. Tho' his flesh and his heart fail, God doth not fail him; even in the most afflicting circumstances, he is the strength of his soul and a very present help in trouble. In poverty, bereavements and sickness, he has a God near at hand, and in death a kind Redeemer to receive his departing spirit.

Are not the advantages then, on the side of true religion, incomparably great? Are not these considerations sufficient reasons, to move, excite, and persuade us to embrace religion, and choose God for our portion? Is happiness alone comprehended in the divine favour, and shall we be unsolicitous to obtain it? Tell not our folly in Gath, publish not our madness in the streets of Askelon.

Allow me to congratulate the friends of God upon their happy lot. O christians, live answerable to your high privileges, your present comforts, and future expectations. Live above the frowns of the world, and in times of trouble keep near to your God and firmly adhere to your Saviour. He

will never leave you nor forsake you. If cast with Joseph into the horrible pit, with Daniel into the lions' den, or with the three children into the fiery furnace, fear not ; the God you have made your portion will deliver you. Be comforted, O believer, and say, " Tho' I walk thro' the valley of the shadow " of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod " and thy staff they comfort me. Tho' my flesh and my " heart fail, God is the strength of my heart and my portion " forever. God is our refuge and strength, a very pre- " sent help in trouble." Happy saints, happy people, whose God is the Lord ! Who will not be persuaded from these things to engage in religion ? Let sinners be prevailed upon after so long a time, to attend to the things of your peace. This world with all its pleasures, riches and honors, will soon escape from your most eager grasp. And what will you do when your eyeballs shall roll in death ? Without God for your refuge and strength, you must perish, eternally perish.

S E R M O N XXXI.

*The covenant of grace ratified and confirmed
by the blood of Christ.*

Luke xiii. 20. *This cup is the new testament in my blood, which
is shed for you.*

GOD has dealt with the children of men from the beginning of the world in a way of covenant. No sooner was man created, than God entered into covenant with him. This first covenant, which is commonly stiled the covenant of works, man soon transgressed, and became absolutely and forever incapable of recovering the favour of God, happiness and life by the same. After man had committed this awful outrage upon reason, and all the laws of fitness and propriety, contrary to all appearances in respect to what had taken place in regard to the transgressing angels, and to the astonishing admiration of all worlds, God was pleased to display the fulness of his perfections in instituting a new and infinitely different covenant, even a covenant of grace and mercy for the recovery and sal-

vation of ruined man. These are the only two covenants which God ever made with man, in which the eternal life of the creature was concerned. These two covenants had always external and visible tokens, signs and seals annexed to them. The former had the tree of life, and the tree of good and evil affixed to it, and the latter, its tokens and signs were various and multiplied until the coming of Christ. From Adam to Noah, the outward signs were sacrifices and offerings; from Noah to Abraham, the same were continued; in Abraham's day an additional seal was established, in the time of Moses the passover and many other signs, tokens and ordinances were instituted, all which continued until the death of Christ, when they were completely abolished by the cross, and in the room of these bloody, burthensome, and expensive rites, our Lord, just before he completed the great work of redemption, ordained two simple seals or ordinances, to wit, baptism and his supper, which are to be duly observed in the church till the consummation of all things.

The words of our text were delivered by our Lord as a part of the institution of his sacred supper. In the institution he particularly files the bread his body, and the cup the New-Testament in his blood. Both these phrases are figurative, and by no means to be understood in a literal sense. For in this sense, Christ must have broken and eaten his own identical body, and poured out and drank his own identical blood, while setting at the table of his disciples, than which nothing can be more absurd.

The word which is here translated testament, properly signifies a covenant, and thus it is frequently rendered in the apostolic epistles. It means, as here used, the covenant of grace; that covenant which God established in the room of the first, or covenant of works, that had been violated, and so became absolutely insufficient to answer its original design.

It is that covenant which God has instituted and revealed in consideration of our fallen and unhappy circumstances, whereby it is again rendered possible for guilty sinners to be restored to the favour, friendship and enjoyment of their Maker. This covenant of grace and salvation, you may observe, is founded in and ratified by the blood of Christ. "The New-Testament, in my blood." It may also be observed, that the words of the sacrament of the Lord's supper bear a peculiar respect to the new covenant, and that under the special consideration of its being established in the blood of Jesus. We are to understand the expression, *this blood*, as referring both to the covenant of grace, and the blood in which it is laid.

From this explication of the text, I shall endeavour,

First, to explain to you what the covenant of grace and mercy is.

Secondly, how it is founded in the blood of Christ.

Thirdly, consider what respect or relation the Lord's supper bears to this covenant, as having its origin in and confirmation by this blood.

First, I am to explain what the covenant of grace is.

Let it be observed here, that the term covenant, when it has respect to God as a party, must be understood very different in a variety of important circumstances, from what it is when applied to men. In the latter application, it supposes an equality, mutual dependence, and reciprocal advantages to the parties concerned. But when God is said to make a covenant with his creatures, we cannot possibly entertain any such ideas respecting him. He must not be reduced to an equality with his creatures, rendered any way dependent upon

them, nor can he derive any benefit from them. Every thing in God, his whole nature and perfections, forbid the thought.

In covenants among men, they bind themselves to the performance of certain conditions, to which generally, neither party were under obligations antecedent to their entering into covenant; hence they were not obliged to enter into it; both parties were equally free and might refuse to covenant without being chargeable with any criminality or just blame for such a refusal. But it is altogether different in the other case. It is true, it holds good in regard to God. He was under no obligations to enter into covenant with his sinful creatures; nor was he obliged to confer any blessings upon them after their apostacy, until in free and wonderful grace he laid himself under obligation by his own covenant and promise. But with regard to creatures with whom this covenant is made, it does not hold. If God propose to enter into covenant with his creature, the creature cannot be free to refuse. Such a proposal as coming from its creator and proprietor, must have the force of a command; if he propose such a duty to be performed as the condition of the covenant, it binds equally as a precept; and a non-compliance is nothing less than wilful disobedience and avowed rebellion. This is fully evident from the independent nature of God, and from the relation subsisting between him and his creatures. We ought in all our representations of covenant between God and his creatures, to be careful we do not introduce any ideas inconsistent with the infinite dignity and absolute independence of Jehovah. There is perhaps no doctrine of religion in which we are more liable to err than this.

The covenant of grace is between God and man, thro' Christ the Mediator of it, and thus it may be described.—It is God's constitution and establishment to save all sinners who repent

and believe in Christ, or cordially comply with the method of recovery founded in and effected thro' his mediation and freely offered to the acceptance of all in the gospel. As it stands in the scriptures, it is only a proposal of salvation on God's part to a sinful world, and God obligates himself to secure the salvation of all such as comply with the proposal. It becomes more properly and strictly a covenant, when actually consented to by sinners, that is, when in truth and sincerity they embrace the gospel and believe in Jesus. It may be observed, that salvation as offered in the gospel, is to be taken in the most extensive sense, not as deliverance only from the guilt and dominion of sin, from misery, hell and ruin, but giving a sure title to heaven and all the felicities thereof, with all those tempers and dispositions of soul, with all that sanctification and holiness of heart, necessary to form it to a capacity for the perfect fruition of the same. Such a covenant or constitution as this, may be proved from the scriptures, and the experience of all who believe.

The sacred oracles are the proper fountain of authority in this case. When we have the word and promise of the great Supreme who is truth itself and cannot deceive, the vilest and most guilty may with confidence venture his soul upon the declaration, and lay hold on the covenant. All those passages of scripture, wherein God appoints Jesus Christ, as the important person in whom he is reconciling a guilty world unto himself, establish this matter. Hear what the Most High sayeth by the prophet Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord God, he that created the heavens and stretched them out, I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the gentiles; to open the blind eyes to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." And again in the same prophecy Christ himself is introduced, saying, "The spirit of

"the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me, to
 "preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind
 "up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,
 "and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to
 "proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord ; and the day of
 "vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn, to ap-
 "point unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them
 "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of
 "praise for the spirit of heaviness." "What can be inferred
 from all these declarations but that God has established a cove-
 nant to save lost men thro the blood of his Son ? That he is
 well pleased with penitent returning sinners for his righteous-
 ness sake.

The existence of this covenant of mercy may be argued from
 the invitations that are given to come to Christ, and the full
 assurances of salvation to all who comply with the same. The
 most guilty are invited to lay hold on the covenant. "Incline
 "your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live ;
 "and I will make an everlasting covenant with you even the
 "sure mercies of David." That is, I will confer upon you all
 the blessings purchased by David's son. And Christ himself
 most tenderly invites, to come unto him and he will give them
 rest.

The reality of this covenant may be evinced from all those
 great and precious promises made to them who believe in
 Christ, "They have everlasting life, they shall be saved, there
 "is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, none
 "shall be able to pluck them out of his divine hands, &c." but to retail all the evidences of this truth, would be to trans-
 scribe a considerable part of the bible.

This covenant is likewise established from the experience of
 all true believers. There are none who have ever given up

themselves to be saved by Christ in the way of faith and holiness, but have actually obtained salvation. The first fruits and earacfts of the eternal inheritance, have been granted to them in this world. Those dispositions and tempers, have been implanted in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, that qualify them for the enjoyment of heaven, and are the pledge and assurance to all in whom they are, that God will bestow it upon them. Those holy breathings and fervent desires after conformity to him, can never be satisfied but in the full fruition of him. These propensities and habits are secret evidences to any soul, that God intends its salvation, yea, they are a part of it, and wherever he gives a part, he will confer the whole. Where he begins a good work, he will carry it on to perfection. His gifts and calling are without repentance. An appeal here, might be made for the confirmation of this doctrine to all real christians. Have you not on the committing of your souls to Christ found this verified? Was not the load of guilt, under which you before laboured, in some degree removed. Some measure of peace and serenity introduced into your troubled minds?—Some hope raised towards God, a filial subjection to him, a desire to love him and be like him, to serve him in spirit and in truth here, and to enjoy, and dwell with him hereafter? And what is this but the proposed and promised salvation begun? And what inference can be more justly drawn from it, than that it is the constitution and covenant of God fully and finally to save all guilty sinners who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.—I proceed to show,

Secondly, in what respects the new covenant is founded in the blood of Christ. It is especially so in two things, as by his undertaking it was procured, and by his death ratified and confirmed.

First, the covenant of grace was founded in the blood o

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Christ, as his undertaking was the procuring cause of it. It is a constitution to save sinners through his mediation and atonement. In this covenant, the mediatorial undertaking of Christ appears plainly to have been settled and agreed upon in the eternal counsels of the Father and the Son. In consideration of Christ's engagement to be the mediator and surety of sinners, and in their name and place to satisfy the demands of the law, the claims of justice, exhibit the evil of sin and magnify the rectitude of the divine government, that this covenant of grace and mercy was settled and established. Had there been no mediator, there had been no such covenant. Had not Christ Jesus voluntarily engaged to be the surety and Redeemer of our fallen race, God would have been forever irreconcilable and never would have made one overture of salvation to guilty sinners. But through him this wonderful and transporting blessing hath come upon us. He hath brought life and immortality to light. In this view we are always to consider every proposal of grace and offer of salvation, every invitation and warning, every promise and exhortation, as the effect of his undertaking and death, and the consequence of an establishment of a covenant of grace in his blood. Which also serve to discover the awful aggravations attending a rejection of the offers of salvation. And all these considerations should engage us to receive and embrace the same.

Secondly, it was founded in the blood of Jesus, as by his death it was ratified and confirmed. The death of Christ was not only the original ground of this covenant, it was not merely designed to open a way for God's making a new covenant with man, but to confirm and establish it, to render it valid and effectual. Jesus Christ was not only by his blood to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and reconciliation for iniquity, but to ratify the covenant with many. Hence it is called the everlasting covenant, because this blood was ordained from eternity, and the effects of it will be everlasting life.

As the new covenant was a testament, it was necessary, to give it force, that the testator should die. Thus the Apostle argues; "Where there is a testament there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. It can be of no force while the testator liveth. It is after a man's death his will can have any operation or effect; his death ratifies and renders it of force. Thus the new testament or covenant of grace is strongly ratified by the death of the Son of God. He came and died to bear witness to the truth of it, and the shedding of his blood afforded the most convincing proof of its validity and reality, and without which it could have been of no force. It can be no objection against this sentiment, that the covenant was published and of as much value for the salvation of men before Christ died as it is since. To which it is easily answered. Our Redeemer was a person of so much credit and dignity, that his engagement was looked upon by God as a sure foundation to act upon, as sure as if the performance had been already made. Ever since the fall he had been considered in the divine dealings with men, as tho' he had actually paid the ransom; hence he is spoken of as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The

Third thing we proposed to consider in this subject was, what respect the Lord's supper bears to the new testament as founded in the blood of Christ.

It is from these words we are to learn the true nature of the Lord's supper. And the authentic explication of this matter arises from the real respect it bears to the new covenant. This respect appears to be two fold, as a certain evidence of the real existence of the covenant of grace, and a sensible notification and public declaration, that this covenant is founded in the death of Christ and ratified by his blood.

First, the Lord's supper is to be considered with regard to

the new covenant as a certain evidence of its truth and reality. It is a sensible assurance to all, that whosoever commits his soul to Jesus, to be saved by the constitution of the gospel, he shall surely obtain everlasting life. It is a confirmation to us, that all who believe shall be redeemed from all the consequences of sin. In this sense it is with propriety stiled a seal. It seals the truth of the covenant of grace, and ensures salvation to all such as believe. It seals the benefits and blessings of the covenant to all who comply with it. And the creature in this ordinance seals the covenant by faith, in the full purpose of fulfilling all duties required therein, and in sweet satisfaction that all its promises will be accomplished.

Secondly, the eucharist is a sensible notification and public declaration, that this covenant is founded in the death of Christ and ratified by his blood. When we see the wine in the cup poured forth it is a full assurance to us that the covenant of grace is laid in the blood of the Redeemer, and it is only by it we can obtain the forgiveness of sins, be cleansed from all our moral pollutions, made partakers of all the blessings purchased thereby, and it is only thro' his mediation they are conferred upon us.

A few reflections by way of improvement shall close this discourse.

First, of what importance is the death and undertaking of Christ unto us. Great and numerous are the blessings flowing herefrom, which eternity alone can fully unfold. In the blood of the covenant God is to be seen with smiles and mercy in his face, from whom we had nothing to expect but wrath and fiery indignation. Whence do these invaluable blessings come to us who are less than the least of all mercies? Only through the undertaking of Immanuel: by his death, light and life are arisen, and the day spring from on high hath visited us. It

is only owing to his voluntary undertaking to be a mediator for sinners, that the covenant of grace was established, and the proposition was made to save and recover lost men by his blood. This is the foundation of every overture of grace and salvation to a ruined world. Were it not for the mediation of Christ, there never would have been one tender of mercy made to a fallen race; we should have never heard the joyful sound of peace and reconciliation with God. We should not have had one address made to us in favour of our souls, nor one exhortation to flee from the wrath to come. Our salvation would have been impossible, and eternal despair our heavy doom. But glory to God in the highest, Jesus hath died, and by dying destroyed him who had the power of death; he hath appeared to open a way into the holiest of all through his blood. He has finished transgression; and by the sacrifice of himself rendered God propitious to his guilty creatures. How much reason have we to consider him as sustaining a character of the greatest importance and consequence, and with what a glow of love and gratitude should we ascribe to him, who hath loved us, praise and glory and dominion forever and ever.

Secondly, how great the encouragement and security the most guilty have to return to God through Christ. Here are the best tidings with which their ears could have been blessed; news of salvation by a Saviour's blood, and that God hath settled it into a constitution and covenant, that whatsoever sinner commits his soul to Christ, shall eventually and infallibly be saved. "The Spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him that is a thirst come," and the streaming blood of Jesus cries, come. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Thirdly, how strong may be the consolation of all such, who have laid hold on this covenant. Such have all the perfections of God pledged and engaged for their salvation; he

will support and bear them up through all the difficulties with which they may be surrounded. Tho' hell and earth should conspire against them, they have an almighty shield for their defence, an infinite Saviour for their security. He hath promised, that when they go through the fire, it shall not hurt them, and through the waters they shall not overflow them. In six troubles he will be with them, and in seven he will not forsake them. God hath confirmed his promise by an oath, and ratified it in the blood of his Son, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay on the hope set before them.

Lastly, let all communicants approach this table to day, in brokenness of heart for your sins, in a firm faith in the blood of the covenant, and a fervent love to your precious Saviour. Behold the promises and the wonders of divine grace. Here is enough to heal all your maladies. Give yourselves to the Lord Jesus without reservation, and seal the gift in this holy ordinance. Remember there is a superabundance in the covenant of grace to supply all your wants and satisfy all your desires. Take the cup of salvation and sing praises to the Lord. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

S E R M O N XXXII.

The nature of fainting in afflictions, and cautions against it.

Heb. xii. 5. *Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

THE most proper light in which we can consider the present world, is that of a state of trial and discipline in respect to a future one. This is an idea that ought constantly to be retained in our minds. There are few reflections in our present situation, better calculated to direct our conduct, or regulate our pursuits and views in life. If our minds are not habitually awake to this sense of our condition, it is probable our present conduct will be a series of capital and fatal errors.

As this is a state of trial, and intended as such, the whole administration of providence is adjusted to this view and design; adjusted with such wisdom and exactness as to give it the proper perfection of such a state. So universally is it adapted in all its branches and periods to this design, that not only some more signal and eminent events are to be considered in this view, but every occurrence and incident of our

lives is formed to answer this purpose. The intention of them is to discipline, instruct, and try us ; to prove what is in our hearts, to show us to ourselves, and exhibit the divine character and government in a just and proper light. All this is done with an express regard to the solemnities of a future state, and the unchangeable decisions of a judgment to come ; with the express design of being a mean of curing the viciousness of our natures, or prove that we are incurable vessels fitted to destruction.

When we consider our state in this view, and ourselves under an administration of this sort, the present life must certainly appear to be a state of existence of the highest importance and every condition, circumstance and event in it, extremely interesting. Living is a delicate and momentous business ; with regard to which the utmost attention, the utmost wisdom and vigilance are necessary to act with propriety and success in reference to our future condition. To conduct in all situations in such a manner, as not to defeat the salutary end of our present existence, and render ourselves unequal for eternal life. If these considerations lay with due weight on our minds, what different creatures should we be ? How holy, how circumspect in all our conversation ? But alas ! how far are the most from looking on the present state in this solemn manner ? How far from governing themselves in all their conduct and pursuits by these most important views ? How inconsiderately, how much at random do they act, as if life was of no consequence, but was really a state in which they might act as they pleased, without any hazard to their eternal interest ? But my brethren, God forbid that we should act this foolish and unhappy part. Let those conduct themselves in such a form, and pursue carnal and present pleasures, who have made a covenant with death, and are at an agreement with hell. But let us choose a wiser conduct, and seriously consider the nature of our present life, and its relation to one that is eternal.

The above state of discipline and trial is in a great measure and in an eminent degree, administered by afflictive dispensations in a thousand variant forms. Such dispensations therefore merit a special attention, and the nature and design of them ought to be continually realized and kept in view. This ought to be done in respect to the sufferings and afflictions of others. They are documents to us of a very striking nature, tho' we are not the immediate subjects of them. But when we ourselves are the subjects of afflictions, the call to this duty is then loud and solemn. Our reflections on their nature, tendency and end, ought to be very thorough and serious. "In a day of adversity, says the wise man, consider." Our situation in this case calls our attention and solicitude, that these dispensations should have their proper effect, that by them and the blessing of God upon them, we may be formed and adapted to the divine will and pleasure. We ought to imbibe such impressions by them, to exercise such sensations and feelings, as they are designed to produce, so that they may be suitably improved for the glory of God and our own advancement in the christian life. We ought especially to guard and watch with the utmost care against every temper, feeling, and disposition of heart in afflictions, or any effects of them, as tend to defeat or pervert their salutary purpose, and render them not only unavailing and useless, but even pernicious and fatal.

In afflictions there are two extremes which have this tendency, and too often produce most dangerous effects, both of which are mentioned in this verse. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." This latter will be more than sufficient for a single discourse.

Fainting under rebukes, is a common evil with the afflicted and ought to be considered, well understood and duly guarded against. The caution is not to faint when we are rebuked of

the Lord.—The word rebuke in the sacred oracles is used to express various ideas. It is used to express reproof. “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” For restraint, when God is prayed to, to restrain Satan, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.” For to silence persons, or order them to hold their peace. “When the whole multitude began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, the Pharisees said to Christ, Master, rebuke thy disciples.” For convictions of sin and bringing persons to repentance, hence it was prophesied of Jesus, “That he should rebuke many people.”—For healing diseases; our Lord stands over Simon’s wife’s mother, “And rebuked the fever;” and it is frequently employed to express chastisement and affliction, as in the words of our text, comprehending in it every species of trouble, pain, distress, disease and calamity.

The word *faint* is used likewise to express different things. That failure of the functions of animal life, which brings on the appearance of death—when “Esau returned from the field he was faint.” For timidity and fear, “All the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.” For ceasing from a business, “Faint not in well doing.” For doubts and fears, and misgivings of mind, “Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not.” For desponding apprehensions, and dejecting thoughts respecting the favour of God, and our own gracious state. In these two latter senses, we are cautioned against fainting in our text. “Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.”

In considering this divine exhortation, you will please to attend to the following observations.

First, that the exhortation in the text is addressed to true christians. To such who are in friendship with God, and

whom he peculiarly loves ; whom he receives and treats as children ; and whose troubles, calamities and afflictions, whatever they may think of them, are of the nature and intention, of parental chastisements. These are afflictions peculiar to true believers. None but such have a right to consider their distresses in the light of fatherly corrections. With regard to persons who have no interest in Christ founded on a saving union to him, their troubles and calamities of every kind are branches of the curse of the law, and first fruits of that wrath and fiery indignation, which will be inflicted upon them forever if they die out of Christ. But as the apostle considers the afflictions of these christian Hebrews in a manner peculiar to true saints as evidence of their adoption and sonship, hence he can be understood to speak to none but such. This application of the words is necessary, from their whole connection ; and the description which shall be given of this fainting in the sequel, will only be just and true in regard to real christians.

Secondly, the fainting here spoken of cannot be understood of any bodily or mere animal affection, but of that kind which respects the state of the soul, and is wholly of a spiritual nature. It regards the views, feelings, exercises and experiences of the heart towards God, the gospel of Christ, and towards itself, its own state and condition. The nervous spirits and animal vigour may sink and fail under the weight of some grievous afflictions, when the strength of the mind remains comfortable and firm. Or at least it is not affected in any considerable degree with that unhappy frame against which we are here exhorted. The fainting here referred to is not of a bodily kind.

Thirdly, when we are exhorted not to faint under the divine rebukes, it is not intended to warn us against a sensibility of heart or a feeling of our afflictions, considered either as natural evils, or as instances of the discipline of heaven. Insensibility of afflictions in the former view, is stupidity and brut-

tishness ; in the latter, it is gross profanity and irreligion. Such insensibility is a most complicated vice, and an argument of extreme depravity of heart. When therefore we are exhorted not to faint under rebukes, the meaning is not, that we should not feel the affliction, and be affected with it, be perfectly easy and think little about it, or that we should not be grieved, and pained, and distressed with the same ; it is designed to point out God's displeasure at sin, and to indicate to us, that there is something in our hearts and conduct amiss, and offensive in his sight. In proportion to the degree of our calamities, we ought to be affected with and mourn under them, and be in bitterness as an ingenious child under the frowns and rod of a kind and indulgent parent. A suitable measure of this sort of feeling and affection is not that fainting prohibited in our text, neither has it a tendency to produce this evil effect. But

Fourthly, It forbids a despondency and dejection of soul under trying and afflictive dispensations from God. "No chafening, saith our context, for the present seemeth to be "joyous, but grievous," even to the saints themselves. The natural production of afflictions is grief, distress and pain. Sin gives poignancy to rebukes, and causes them to pierce the heart in the most sensible manner. "The sting of death is "sin ;" so the sting of all afflictions is sin, as the true original source of them, and as the effect of God's holy displeasure and hatred of it, and an evidence of his inflexible resolution to punish it. Viewing afflictions therefore in their procuring cause, no comfort can flow therefrom, nothing but regret, sorrow and repentance. Thus contemplating them in their source, we ought to mourn and our hearts be broken for our transgressions. A different and a more special consideration both of troubles and of God as the author of them, is necessary to enable us to possess our souls in patience, and rejoice in tri-

bulations. The foundation of a blessed consideration of trials, and sweet support and consolation in them is laid in the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the doctrines of the glorious gospel. When God enables his people to view him in the glass of the gospel, and in the face of Jesus Christ and applies these views to their hearts, the unfailling effects are peace, sweetness, comfort and joy. From hence arise to true christians the greatest consolations and supports under the pressure of afflictions and in seasons of the severest trials. And thus troubles have been rich blessings to many.

But alas, there are too many instances of true christians fainting under rebukes, also of the same persons enduring them at one season and failing at another. In the gloominess, despondency and dejection of their souls, they have sunk under their trials and not sustained them with decency, composure, firmness, and humble confidence in God, to which christianity is designed to raise its subjects, and to which every true christian ought to aspire, that he may adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour. This sinking and despair of heart which is mentioned as an instance of this evil fainting, is that state of mind in which the christian abandons his comfort, refuses hope, loses confidence in God, and trust in the promises through Jesus Christ. He does not in reality renounce God and deny the Saviour, this no real christian will ever be permitted to do, but his heart is filled with dreadful misgivings and fearful forebodings that God will renounce, and have nothing to do with such a sinner as he is; and cast him from his hand into eternal burnings, as a man shakes a viper from his hand into the fire. In this apprehension of things his soul is cast down, he dares not to look up, and refuses to be comforted; God appears to him in the afflictions of his providence as clothed with terrors; darkness is his pavilion and thick clouds are round about him. Hence the soul beholdeth him not; he thinks of him and is troubled. His dealings with him wear a dark and threatening as-

pest : his heart faints within him. He gives way to that unhappy frame of spirit which is here forbidden.—But let us enter a little more particularly into this gloomy condition, and observe,

Fifthly, this fainting under afflictions arises sometimes from ignorance, sometimes from wrong views respecting the nature of afflictions, their tendency and design, and from wrong views of God as the author of them, and often from wrong conclusions which are drawn from these mistaken apprehensions of things. Sometimes the trials with which God visits his own people are exceedingly grievous in their nature, and attended with circumstances that give them an exquisite keenness and edge. They come home to their hearts in the most sensible manner. From the greatness of them, their complicated nature, their accompanying dreadful peculiarities, they penetrate the soul, and wound the spirit. They see abundant cause and demerit enough in themselves and in their own conduct for much worse treatment from God, yet they cannot easily reconcile it with his special love to them. Their hearts misgive them and they become diffident as to their interest in that favour which God bears to his own. The impression takes hold on their mind that there is something singular in their calamities, therefore they cannot help fearing that all is wrong, they cannot resist the dark surmise, that God considers them not as friends but as enemies. When afflictions bring persons into such a state, they become despondent, they sink, they faint. “The spirit of a man will bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” When God’s favour and friendship, become questionable from the nature of his dispensations towards them, a chief ground of their support is removed, and more or less they faint.

The apostle appears to have a particular reference to this cause of fainting under rebukes in the ensuing verses, and he

enforces his caution by this comforting consideration. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastenings, God deal-eth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" Fainting implies in it a distrust of God and fearful apprehensions that we are not in a state of grace; the apostle obviates this conclusion, and shows that it does not follow from being under great and grievous afflictions. Instead of this being just, christians ought to draw a different inference, that divine rebukes are rather an evidence of his love and fatherly care. He argues that chastisements are so far from being an argument that we are not his children, that we are related to him as such, and ought to expect them. Those he loves he chastens, therefore we ought not to faint under trials, but rather view this conduct on the part of heaven as a mark of his friendship and distinguishing affection. We have much greater reason to doubt, fear and faint, if we fare sumptuously every day, and continually float before gentle gales on the tide of prosperity. Hence let not christians faint in times of trouble, but rather improve them for their encouragement and comfort, for the quickening their graces, to induce them to draw nearer to God and more firmly to trust in their Saviour. They should ever remember. "That those who are without chastisements are bastards and not sons." Hence then when we are afflicted, instead of fainting, we should receive it joyfully, and improve it to strengthen our hopes, and encrease our consolations.

But here some tender conscience, some pious creature may be ready to say, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning, I am surrounded with calamities on every side and all darkness within, never was sorrow like unto my sorrow, oppressed beyond measure and God has forsaken me; he is testifying his wrath for my sins, and there is no hope, nor help, nor deliverance for me." But, O fainting christian, recollect the afflictions of

Job. No mere man ever suffered so much ; and what gave a twinging edge to all his pains, God hid his face from him. Hence he pours forth that plaintive heart-affecting wish, " O " that it were with me as in days past ! " Let all such imitate the example of the Psalmist in their distresses, and say with him, " Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?—why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul " is cast down within me : I will cry unto God my rock, why " hast thou forsaken me ?—why go I mourning because of " oppression ? "

But it is time I should close this mournful theme with a reflection or two.

First, this doctrine will afford no argument for any to conclude, merely because they meet with many troubles, losses, and disappointments, that therefore they are the children of God. As well might a man conclude himself to be a true christian, when reproached by the world, because a woe is denounced against those of whom every one speaks well. A person may be evilly spoken of, and outrageously reviled and slandered, without a spice of religion in his heart ; so persons may be the subjects of the most tormenting afflictions, and be made to gnash their teeth with anguish and excruciating pain, without any real piety in their souls. Therefore to suppose ourselves the favorites of heaven merely from the extremity of our afflictions, is both stupid and absurd. No, my brethren, afflictions no less than the gospel may be a savour of death unto death. They may be the operations of an incensed judge, and not the corrections of a merciful father. It is the fruits produced by them, which must determine whether they are of the one kind or the other. Hence we cannot decide upon our state Godward by all the good or evil which is before us ; by all the prosperity we enjoy, or adversity we suffer. Therefore let none take comfort merely from troubles, that they are the friends of

God. There are many other things essentially necessary to form a religious character besides tribulations. What those things are, neither time nor my present plan admit now of an enquiry.

Secondly, we are here taught that sanctified afflictions are to be numbered by the saints among their great blessings. Hence says the Psalmist, "It was good for me to have been afflicted." He knew by experience they had been useful to him, and profitable to his spiritual interests. And the apostle affirms, that "They yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are tried thereby." Thus troubles properly considered and improved, exhibit the goodness, mercy and loving kindness of God to his people. Yes, says the poor dejected christian, "If I could know that my afflictions were sanctified to me, then could I rejoice in them and praise and bless God for them, but how shall I know this to be the case?" It is much easier to describe sanctified affliction, than to experience it, or for fainting souls to derive consolation therefrom. For the present take this account hereof. Afflictions are sanctified or prove a blessing, when they awaken us to a greater attention to God, to Jesus Christ, to divine things, to holy meditations, self examination; when they dispose us to the exercises of mourning for sin, renewed acts of faith, self dedication, humility, patience, submission; when they show us the emptiness and unsatisfactory nature of the world, wean us from it, raise our hearts to things above, and cause us to long and breathe more after the celestial rest. Such things as these are sure evidences of sanctified troubles; hence the christian in affliction should call to mind the former years of the right hand of the Lord, to remember God from the land of Jordon and of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar. Thus true grace may be improved and cultivated by chastisements and instead of fainting, christians ought to gain strength and grow hereby.

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They are employed by God for the curing of our spiritual melodies, our pride, worldly mindedness, carnality &c. hence believers instead of saying, or thinking, the Lord hath written bitter things against them, should rejoice and be thankful for the severest dispensations of providence, that form them to more meekness and gentleness, more humility and self denial, duty and addictedness to God, in one word, to more meetness for his service and for glory.

Let these considerations comfort mourners in Zion. May the Lord hear them in the day of trouble. Always remember, O christian, not to faint when thou art rebuked of God.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

How Death is the Wages of Sin.

Rom. vi. 23. *For the wages of sin is Death.*

WITHOUT the formality of an introduction to these words, we shall endeavour by divine assistance to consider,

First, what is intended by the term death.

Secondly, what the apostle means when he represents it the wages of sin.

First, we are to consider the use and intention of the term death.—How should our prayers ascend to heaven, that our contemplations may be suitably directed upon this solemn subject, so that we may all become prepared for this awful event.

Nothing is more common in the sacred oracles, than to set forth a state of calamity and misery, by the word death. When the effects and consequences of sin are spoken of, they are almost always signified by this term. Thus when God

told Adam what would be the effects of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, he says, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The event shows us, the loss of his then happy situation was one thing intended in the threatening; for banishment from Paradise immediately ensued. The event also shows, that he not only lost his happiness, but that he instantly became miserable; he felt himself full of consternation and distress, covered with shame; he knew not what to do or where to fly; all horror within and terror without; afraid of God, he endeavoured to conceal himself. Thus when the apostle in the New-Testament, mentions the consequences of sin, he usually employs the term death: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. By one man's offence death reigned; to be carnally minded is death; and in our text the wages of sin is death." All will readily allow that a state of misery and wretchedness is signified by this term.

Death in the scriptures is used to express three things, hence it is commonly distinguished into three kinds, natural, spiritual, and eternal death. Natural death strictly considered, is the dissolution of the soul and body; so that the body returns to dust from whence it sprung, and the soul to God, as its more immediate author and final judge.

For understanding spiritual death the following remarks must be observed.

When man was originally created by God, he was formed with two kinds of principles, essentially distinct the one from the other, which principles are styled, natural and moral, or holy. Natural principles are such as belong to the very constitution of the soul, form its essence and cannot be separated from it. They cannot be extinguished but by the extinction of the soul itself, such as understanding, will, and affections. To

these were superadded another kind of principles, which may be called moral or holy. These do not belong to the soul so as to be a necessary result of its existence ; these are separable from it without the destruction of its being. The sum of these principles is a supreme love to God, and a benevolent temper towards the whole family of mankind, a disposition to prefer God above all, and to promote the felicity of his fellow creatures. These do not essentially pertain to the nature of man, but man may, and does exist when they are become extinct. They seem as if they depended upon the immediate communications of God, and the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost. By these holy principles, an intercourse and communion is maintained between the creature and the Creator. Where the spirit of God dwells, there is communion with God, there is holiness and a supreme affection to him. All his natural principles, his will, passions and appetites, are subordinated to the will and pleasure of God ; and in these things consists man's spiritual life. While these retain their power and dominion, harmony, peace, order and happiness will prevail in the soul.

In these principles chiefly consists the image of God, knowledge, righteousness and holiness with which man was at first created. And in the loss of these consists spiritual death. As soon as unhappy man had committed the prohibited deed, and disobeyed, God forsook him, the spirit relinquished his habitation, and all these holy principles became extinct, and all the glory and excellency of man departed from him. Hence no principles remained in the soul, save those which were natural, the others were utterly lost. Hence he became wholly depraved ; nothing in his heart but sin and corruption, and nothing in his life but vice and disorder. Thus man is lost and is spiritually dead. He is now dead in trespasses and sins.

This view of matters teaches precisely wherein consists the corruption of human nature ; informs us of the source of all the immorality, wretchedness, ruin and unhappiness with which our guilty world is filled. This is the fountain from whence flow all the wars, sicknesses, pains, confusions, desolation and destruction, all the outrages, robberies and murders, which abound in all lands. This is now the character of miserable man by nature, and of all revolted beings. In this way we can account for all the envy, malice, hatred, and injuries of unnumbered forms which prevail among mankind, and the wickedness, rebellion and opposition every where manifested against God. There is no occasion to suppose bad principles infused into the soul, to solve all the appearances of iniquity, folly, error, delusion, superstition and madness, every where beheld. The absence of good principles, the withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the heart, will perfectly account for every species and degree of disorder and wickedness in earth and hell. Spiritual death therefore consists in the loss of the image of God, and of those holy principles and dispositions in which man was originally created. But as God designed from all eternity to display his Godhead and perfections in the salvation of many of the human race, there are wonderful manifestations of restraining grace abounding to all the children of men, to Jews and Gentiles, Pagans and Christians ; none are exempted from this influence ; and this is the cause of the little regularity, order, government, morality, friendship, sociability, peace and comfort there is in the world. This restraining grace is of high importance while God is carrying on the salvation of his people. If God were to withhold all restraints of his grace, this earth would become a perfect hell ; the world would be full of the same confusion, outrage and horror which reign there. Besides God bestows innumerable blessings on mankind, even on the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, which by means of his restraining, or what is often called common grace, the lives of the most reprobate are rendered in a mea-

sure comfortable. Were it not for this, none could enjoy themselves or any of the blessings of life. They would roam through the earth like vagabonds and feinds, utterly destitute of every grain of comfort, and full of misery and wretchedness.

As to eternal death it is only the continuance and completion of spiritual death. It is not any thing different in kind, but the end and consummation of it. The leading difference is this, there is no restraining or common grace in hell. There the natural principles and habits of sin are suffered to operate to the utmost without limitation. A terrible and an awakened sense of the wrath of God is impressed on the soul. A perfect and absolute despair of any change in their condition attends them. Unspeakable anguish arising from reflections on their neglect of former seasons and opportunities of escaping that place of torment, gnaw like vultures upon their heart strings. And what unknown springs of misery, that hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive or imagine, remain behind, nothing but natural death can reveal.—Now when it is said death is the wages of sin, the term must be taken in its utmost extent ; and in this latitude it is clearly held forth to us in the holy scriptures.

I hasten,

Secondly, to consider what the apostle means when he represents death the wages of sin.

There is an obvious allusion in this phrase to the reward which is due by contract to a person for a certain work or business performed by him. This sum or compensation is stiled wages, between which and the business performed there is reckoned some proportion ; so that the wages are deemed an equivalent for the labour, time, and skill of the performer. Hence this sum is his right according the rules of equity and

commutative justice, as well as contract between the parties, and agreeable to the laws and customs of the country in which they live. When it is here said, that death is the wages of sin, it evidently implies such things as the following :

First, that there is a connection between sin and death ; so that the latter is the consequence of the former, as wages are of the work done. Where the one is the other surely will exist. If there be sin, there will certainly be death ; it is its unfailing offspring and production. " Sin, when it hath conceived, it bringeth forth death." Where sin is we may be infallibly assured according to the established course of things, that death will certainly exist. And wherever we see death or any of its harbingers, we are perfectly sure there is sin. There is no connection between death and any thing in the universe but sin. Exclude sin, and death ceases to be. In whatever world there is no sin, death never appears.

Secondly, there is a fixed establishment or constitution, which makes death the issue of sin. When the apostle says, death is the wages of sin, there is an evident respect to some prior constitution or covenant, by which this comes to pass. Where there is no law there is no transgression ; so where there is no established constitution between sin and death, the one could not properly be affirmed to be the wages of the other. Such a constitution there is, and it is of divine origin. It is that which God made with our first parent, Adam, in his state of primitive innocence and rectitude. The contract or covenant was expressed in short, clear, and definite terms—"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Happy for man had he given credit to this plain declaration ; but, alas, the soothing flatteries of the deceiver prevailed against the clear denunciation of the God of truth. Surely God did not act arbitrarily or capriciously in forming this constitution, and fixing the connexion of things, but agreeably to the most

perfect wisdom and goodness. Hence the connection between sin and death is a law of nature. An unclouded sun does not more certainly diffuse light, than sin produces death.

Thirdly, besides death being the natural and never failing consequence of sin, it is also a proper punishment thereof. Some indeed have considered natural death as a mere misfortune, containing nothing of punishment in it. Yea, some have gone so far as to affirm it a blessing, and not a curse; rather a favour to man than a token of displeasure on the part of heaven. But will any so far contradict common feeling and common sense, as to say that excruciating pains, raging fevers, and the severest calamities, are proofs and evidences of God's good will and favour to man? surely not. But these are only harbingers and attendants of death, therefore inconsiderable evils in comparison of death itself. The fact is, the one can be described and told of in bitter complaints; many arise from sickness and pain to relate their anguish, but none comes from the dead to inform us of the agonies of dying. This is a bourne from whence none returns.

Fourthly, this phrase implies, that death in its utmost extent is only the just and righteous demerit of sin. Its proper punishment, reward and compensation, is death. The sinner has earned it he has laboured for it, and sometimes his work has been very hard; he merits it, and his wages he will infallibly receive; there can be no bankruptcy in the case to defraud or disappoint him. The sinner shall surely die. God will deprive him of his breath, and unless he finds by special grace an intervening Mediator, he shall suffer the pains of the second death, and be abandoned to the torments of damnation forever. This is what every sinner deserves, and a just God will certainly give him his deserts. If God had unalterably decreed, that this should be the portion of every sinner, he would have been righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his retributions.

There could be nothing hard or cruel in it on God's part; no sinner could have any just ground of complaint. He sinned he laboured in sinning, and receives only his wages, only what righteousness and justice requires he should have. Therefore, the infliction of eternal death upon the wicked and impenitent, who neglect or despise the remedy provided for them in the gospel, will be so far from being a blemish in the divine character, that it will appear in the eyes of the saints and holy angels a branch of transcendent excellency, and they will praise and bless him for all his judgment.—An unhumbled sinner cannot bear such a representation of things; tho' they love and practise sin, yet they think it cruel and unjust in God to give them their wages; they cannot brook the thought that God should cast them off forever. But they must be brought to a different apprehension and sense of things, if ever they become the subjects of his pardoning grace thro' Jesus Christ. They will feel and acknowledge their deserts without a murmuring or discontented word, and confess with the psalmist, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The gospel method of salvation gives ground to say, that unless a sinner is brought to some such sense of things, as to acknowledge the justice of God, and that every sin deserves his wrath and curse, and relinquish his murmuring thoughts and lay down the weapons of his rebellion, and to place God on the throne of his righteousness and glory, and to accept of his free mercy as offered thro' the Mediator, he cannot be saved. Unless a sinner comes to some proper views of the rectitude of the divine government, and sees that death in its utmost extension is the just wages of sin, he cannot behold the glory of the mercy and grace of the gospel, nor consequently be led to admire in humble raptures and gratitude the rich displays of divine goodness in the salvation of sinners. He who can dispute that it would be unreasonable and unjust in God to punish him for his sins must entertain an ill opinion of God's

justice in his treatment of Jesus Christ, when he took upon him the iniquities of us all, and was punished in such an awful manner for the sins of the world. He must hesitate at the wisdom and goodness, the love and grace of God, in the death of his dear and only begotten Son. For where is either the love, wisdom, grace, justice or goodness, in the infinite sufferings of Christ in order to save sinners from eternal death, if they do not merit it. Where was the righteousness of God in punishing the representative and surety, in all that awful tragedy acted at Golgotha or on Calvary's hill, if the principal had not deserved it. Let God be just tho' every man should be a liar. And let every one of us always bear upon our minds, that the wages of sin is death.

A few uses by way of improvement shall finish this lecture.

First, If death be the wages of sin, then it follows clearer than any demonstration, that all are sinners without exception, old and young, the infant of days and the man of grey hairs. The reason of the inference is, that death reigns over all. Now death does not take place in any world, nor in any instance, only where sin is. It is the reward, wages and punishment of sin. It cannot be inflicted on any where sin is not. If therefore God be righteous in all his ways, and there be no darkness nor injustice with him, then from the evident fact that all die, the conclusion is undeniable that all are sinners.

Secondly, If the wages of sin be death in its whole extent, then God may as righteously inflict eternal death as natural. If God may not justly punish sinners with eternal death, he cannot with natural. If the former be cruel and unjust, so is the latter. He who doubts of, or disbelieves the one, to be consistent, he must doubt of and disbelieve the other. The reason of both acts is precisely the same. Eternal no less than

temporal death, is the just wages of sin. This inference ~~is~~ made with a peculiar view to remove the reproaches which are cast upon the doctrine of original sin. The enemies of this truth represent its votaries as damning all infants dying in infancy. But nothing can be more unfounded, censorious, and unjust. We say that infants as well as others are liable to the pains of hell forever, and they can be saved in no other way, and on no other plan, than thro' the covenant of grace by the atonement and righteousness of Christ. We are not afraid to assert that the maintainers of the contrary doctrine, render the case of all infants absolutely hopeless, by excluding them from the benefits of Christ's redemption. He came to save the lost, the sinful and guilty, and if infants fall not under this character, the compassionate Jesus, who took them in his arms and blessed them, is not their saviour. They must tax our Lord with great weakness and folly in blessing them, when they needed it not, neither could it be beneficial to them. We are assured from the scriptures, that all who are saved, are saved by Jesus Christ, and such who are not saved by him, must eternally perish. Who now exhibit the greatest charity for children, the believers of the doctrine of original sin, or the rejecters of it?

Thirdly, we here learn, how awful a thing it is to be a sinner. The wages of sin is death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. It is tremendous beyond expression, beyond conception. No person can have a just idea or an adequate sense of it, on this side of everlasting burnings. Many have had such tormenting apprehensions of their state, as have drunk up their spirits and consumed their strength; have roared thro' the unutterable anguish and disquietude of their minds, on account of their sins. The grant of the world, with all its boasted friends of wealth and bliss, could not yield the slightest relief. How wounding have been the groans and cries of many under a piercing sense of their guilt? So awful a thing did it appear to

them to be a sinner, so penetrating an evil was sin. Such persons do not overrate the malignancy of sin. If any indulge such a thought, they will find themselves mistaken here or hereafter. Behold the distress and misery of our innocent Lord who was only imputatively guilty ; had no stings of conscience, suffering merely for the iniquities of others ; “ My soul, says “ he is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” His agony was such as dissolved the crasis of his blood, pressed it thro’ every pore, and caused his sweat to be as great drops of blood falling to the ground. It may be said, he bore the guilt of millions. True, but he was more able to sustain the guilt of the whole fallen race, than a man to bear the full sense of the evil of a single transgression. If God were to open the eyes of a person of the firmest nerves to see what it is to be a sinner, to impress on his conscience a suitable sense thereof, it would prove too much for him, and perhaps dissolve his frame, unless supported by divine aid in an extraordinary manner. And yet what a light thing is it with many ; it hardly enters into their thoughts ; they eat, and drink, and sleep, pursue their business or amusements, without the least irksome reflection upon their condition, tho’ daily committing the abominable thing which God’s heart hates, his law condemns, and his justice will certainly revenge. Pray, my brethren, is not this the case with numbers of you, that you are yet in your sins, no interest in the favour of God, no union to Christ ? Your state is dreadful indeed, and your stupidity and insensibility renders it still more dangerous. Were God to open your eyes to see your condition as it is, all the angels in heaven could not give you peace were they to unite their utmost efforts. He only who wounds can heal. O sinners, remember that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there. Remember, that Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And this day he is calling upon you by showing you that the wages of sin is death : Wherefore be warned, be entreated, be persuaded to break off your sins by repentance, and turn unto the Lord with your whole heart, flee

into the open arms of a bleeding Saviour who is wooing you by every moving and tender consideration ; who is pressing you by all the felicities of heaven, and all the terrors of eternal death. I leave you to God with this frequent request, that you would consider your ways.

Allow me to close the subject in a sentence or two to those who hope thro' the riches of free grace : You have experienced a deliverance from the power and guilt of your sins. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." O live to the honor of that Saviour who has purchased you with his most precious blood. How unspeakable a blessing is the gift of Jesus Christ unto the world. Remember, O believer, he is your life, he is your deliverer from death in all its forms. Praise him, let all the people praise him.

S E R M O N XXXIV.

Eternal life the freest gift imaginable.

Rom. vi. 23. *But the gift of God is eternal life thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.*

EVERY one observes at first blush, the opposition between the parts of this verse. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life thro' Jesus Christ our Lord." If a close attention be applied, it will easily be perceived, that this opposition is of a peculiar sort. Not what impaired and corrupted reason would suggest, nor what its votaries can well digest. The way of expressing things here is not agreeable to the notions of natural men, or a blinded understanding with respect to religion. It is perfectly agreeable to the nature of things, and the ideas of religion which christianity exhibits. With respect to acceptance with God and eternal life, the ideas which it gives us, form a strong opposition to every thing conceived by carnal reason. Hence is that strange counsel of the apostle to those who reject christianity, because its instructions in regard to acceptance with God, are so contrary to

those taught by darkened reason. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." This is the most wonderful precept that can be conceived by an unenlightened mind. Therefore it is in the mouth of every infidel, that the gospel teaches, "To be wise you must become a fool." However ridiculed and despised by the world this advice may be, there is not a more certain truth in all the bible. He who would become religious, must renounce his fleshly wisdom, his own pride, vain conceit and wickedness, which every where is justly stiled foolishness, in order to imbibe that wisdom which comes from above, or the religion of the gospel. Upon this principle it is said, "The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." It is the necessity of this sacrifice, and the difficulty for men of the world to make it, that it is declared, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." But let us not depart from our text.

Had any one who understood christianity differently from the apostle been writing upon this subject, how widely different would the antithesis or the contrast be? The verse would run thus, "The wages of sin is death, but the wages of virtue and righteousness is eternal life." It is hard for the pride of man to receive salvation as a free gift; they would much rather obtain it by their own imaginary virtue or supposed good works. Hence the world clamours against salvation by free and sovereign grace. They load it with reproaches as tending to licentiousness, and excluding personal religion and righteousness. They vainly fancy there can be no other spring of obedience to God only self-love; so that in their opinion, if you weaken this principle by assuring the soul of salvation by the obedience of another, you destroy the foundations of all virtue and goodness. And this lies at the bottom of the heart of every secure sinner, if God will not allow a suitable consideration for his services, he will not perform any. And another

thing may be here observed, that the sinner claims a right to make both sides of the contract ; he must have salvation for his service, and he estimates his service so highly valuable, that a little of it will answer. Thus it is very remarkable, that they who expect heaven for their works, commonly perform the least.

Some will pay such a deference to christianity, as to profess to receive the reward of eternal life through Jesus Christ. They think his mediation is necessary, that by it their obedience now becomes so excellent and worthy, as gives them a title to everlasting felicity. Their meaning seems to be, that by the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God, a way is opened to obtain salvation by their own serious endeavours, reformation and good lives. And these will grant that eternal life is something more than they strictly deserve, yet it would be hard and very unjust in God to exclude them from heaven, or cast them off at the last day. But I hope, my brethren, you have not in this manner learned the doctrines of Christ. You observe, that the apostolic assertion is, that eternal life is solely the gift of God, wholly and independently of free grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—It is evident the passage before us leads to three enquiries.

First, what is meant by eternal life.

Secondly, how it is the gift of God.

Thirdly, how it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.—As to the

First, eternal life is the counterpart of eternal death: They stand in direct opposition to each other. As we have already explained death as used in the sacred oracles, and have found

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that eternal death intends a state of perfect misery, so we shall find that eternal life is descriptive of a state of perfect felicity. This state consists of two great branches.

The first is a freedom from every thing that can create uneasiness, or give disturbance, either from within or from without. Some may be ready to imagine, that this condition is abundantly sufficient to place mankind in a state of complete happiness. It is true, that the removal of every thing, which produces uneasiness is a great deal. But freedom from pain, misery, distress and wretchedness, is far from being an adequate foundation for felicity. The reason is that all mankind are empty and insufficient creatures in their own nature. They have no inherent, independent fund of bliss and enjoyment ; hence they cannot be satisfied from themselves. God is the only self-sufficient being, his happiness is independent and self-originate. He depends on none, either for his existence or felicity. The springs or funds hereof are inherent in his nature. They are infinite and inexhaustible. But the being and happiness of all creatures is very different herefrom. They are dependent and derived. They have neither spring nor fountain hereof in themselves ; but every thing they have and are, is communicated from another. That Being, whose goodness and excellency is from himself, his happiness is from himself also. He who is independent in so essential a respect as his goodness and virtue, must surely be independent in regard to his happiness.

A mere freedom therefore from pain, misery, uneasiness and distress, external and internal, is no ground of positive felicity. This is the notion many entertain of the happiness of heaven. All their sollicitude about salvation in their most serious moments, is only how they may escape hell. Could absolute assurance be given to the most, that they should not go to misery, that they should not be tormented in unquenchable fire forever, their hearts would be at perfect rest ; they have

no other conception of salvation, only to escape everlasting burnings. Whereas this is the least part of that salvation the gospel proposes to us, and confers upon all them who believe. It is the least branch of that happiness which is the desire, pursuit and hope, of real christians. The hope and desire of the true christian, is not merely the avoidance of misery, but the attainment of bliss; not only a deliverance from natural evil, but the possession of spiritual good. It is readily granted, that to avoid hell, is a proper concern of every one; but if it be the chief concern with us, we cannot be the subjects of the faith of God's elect. Faith directs the soul to the vision and enjoyment of the glory of God and Jesus Christ, as the highest object of its habitual pursuits. The soul receives this direction from a sense or taste of the excellency and sweetness of this vision and enjoyment. We never desire to enjoy that for which we have no relish or taste.

Another condition of that state in which eternal life consists, is the acquisition of a full and unfailing good. And this can be none other than God himself, God in Christ. The fruition of God is the felicity of the saints. The vision of Christ's glory, personal and mediatorial, is the perfection of the christian's heaven. That apprehension of heaven, which is most dear and refreshing to his soul, consists in beholding the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and in a perfect correspondence of his heart and affections to every discovery of this glory. In the greatest nearness to and most intimate communion with him, and entire devotedness to him, consists the blessedness of a true saint. If this be the source of the happiness of heaven—if the vision and presence of God be its principal enjoyment, alas! how few will be saved?—How very few are there to whom communion with God is the chief blessing of their lives?

I proceed to enquire,

Secondly, what is implied in this assertion, eternal life is the gift of God.

First, it plainly implies that eternal life is not conferred on mankind as the reward or recompence of any acts or performances of their own. The notion of its being a reward or recompence, is so utterly excluded by this declaration, that little need be said to illustrate it. In this case there would be no opposition between the parts of the apostle's discourse; eternal life would be as much the wages of men's righteousness, as eternal death of their unrighteousness. Whereas it is manifest, that it is the apostles intention to show, that things are directly otherwise. If eternal life be a reward or compensation for any duties, works or services, surely it cannot be styled the gift of God. The scriptures never speak in this manner; they do not call that a gift which is a recompence of some virtuous performances or works of our own. If we acquire any thing by our obedience to the gospel, it is in consequence of the establishment of the covenant of grace, and not for the value of the obedience in itself considered.

Secondly, it implies that eternal life is not conferred upon any sinners, as a consideration for their works of righteousness. That God bestows eternal life on sinners without any respect to their merits or worthiness, is not a doctrine easily admitted by a blind world. Many are ready to say of this, as the Jews said of another doctrine of christianity, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" Many are averse to the method of salvation by free grace, or receiving it as a free gift of God; they cannot bear it, neither do they derive any enjoyment or pleasure from such a doctrine. This is the evil temper of many secure sinners. Some seem to think that the salvation of the gospel will afford them happiness in heaven, when they feel it neither gives them pleasure nor enjoyment upon earth. They dream of salvation with all imaginable coldness and in-

difference here, while delusively they hope, that hereafter it will raise them to heavenly transports. If salvation by grace through Jesus Christ has no effect to warm and animate our souls in love and gratitude to God; to afford us pleasure and delight now, it will produce no such effect hereafter. It is a true observation, that grace is glory begun, that the first fruits of heaven grow in the present state.

Thirdly, it implies, that God bestows eternal life of his own mere motion and grace. When it is affirmed to be the gift of God, less than this cannot be intended. The very idea of a gift is, that it is of pure grace and pleasure. If the person on whom the benefit is conferred, has acquired any right to the matter given—if he can demand it on any personal footing whatever—if the withholding it would be unjust, hard, or improper treatment of him, then it ceaseth to be a gift, it is a debt. That can never be justly considered a gift to any, which he can claim as his proper due; which on account of any thing performed by him, he has a right to demand or expect. Wherever there is a personal pretension to a benefit, the bestowment of it cannot be of grace, and what is not of grace cannot be a gift.

But what above all things manifests that eternal life is the gift of God, bestowed upon all the subjects of it, is of perfectly free grace—is, that Jesus Christ is the gift of God. "He gave his only begotten Son," he sent him into the world to be the Saviour of sinners, of his own mere grace and good pleasure. There can be no hesitation on this point. For men certainly could do nothing to procure a grant that was made before their existence. Now if God of his own mere motion and grace gave his Son to sinners, the bestowment of eternal life must be of his mere grace and pleasure also. The reason of this consequence lies here; that eternal life was wholly purchased by Christ for sinners. If not wholly purchased by him

then the remainder must be purchased by sinners themselves ; and thus it is not the gift of God, but a matter at least in part of their own procurement. But this is not only a flat contradiction of our text, but it runs in an opposite direction to the whole current of sacred writ. Nothing can be more certain than that God gave Jesus Christ to sinners of his own mere motion and grace, for this very purpose to purchase eternal life for them, and he actually purchased it ; then eternal life to them must be the sovereign gift of God.

Here it will be said that eternal life is conferred upon persons of peculiar qualifications, they are penitents, believers, lovers of God and holy persons. But are not these qualifications tempers and dispositions, parts of that life and blessedness which are to be perfected at death ? They are not something of a different kind, but of the same essence and the very beginnings of it. They are what is styled spiritual life. And spiritual and eternal life are of the same nature, only differing in degrees ; the latter is the perfection and consummation of the former. These qualifications, love, faith, holiness &c. which are necessary to all who shall inherit eternal life, are as much the gift of God, bestowed of his own mere motion and grace, as heaven, everlasting blessedness, or any branch of gospel salvation whatever.

The third enquiry is, how eternal life is the gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus Christ did and suffered every thing necessary in order that sinners might be partakers of it. His mediation is the foundation and procuring cause of this blessedness. Had it not been for this, eternal life would have never been given to any of the fallen race of man. He purchased it for them.—But it is given through Christ in the following respects.

First, Jesus Christ by his humiliation and atonement redeemed sinners from eternal death. All were liable to this from the nature of the penalty affixed to the law violated by man. He redeemed them from the curse being made a curse for them. He suffered the punishment they had incurred. He drunk the cup of trembling, which divine justice would have put into their hands, and obliged them to have wrung out the bitter dregs thereof. He knew what an awful thing it was to bear the wrath of God for sin. His soul was so exceedingly affected herewith, that he earnestly prayed to his Father that if it were possible this cup might pass from him. O! what ineffable love and grace are here, that the son of God should suffer for the sins of men?

Secondly, Jesus Christ fulfilled the conditions of eternal life; those conditions which create a title to it according to the divine constitution. He fulfilled them in the most complete and perfect manner. There is not one left unfulfilled. Were there but one left for us to fulfil, we might despair forever. Thus he is made of God unto sinners, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. He is all in all to them.

Thirdly, "It is through Jesus Christ our Lord," because God gives eternal life only for his sake. He has respect in this vouchsafement to nothing only what Jesus Christ hath done. Thus speak the scriptures, "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. He hath made us accepted in the beloved." Yea, they are every where so full and explicit on this head, that there would be no end of retailing the authorities in support of it.

A brief improvement will conclude this discourse.

The first inference from this doctrine is, that there is ground of hope for the most guilty and forlorn sinner, that he may be the subject of eternal life. This hope is not founded upon any thing in himself, or any works or virtues of his own to recommend him to the divine favour. It does not arise from his being of a better temper and disposition than others, for all these qualifications are excluded by the declaration of its being the gift of God. It is a free and unmerited gift ; a gift of mere grace ; a gift through Christ and for his sake. This is sufficient to preserve the chief of sinners from despair ; the sinner who is most deeply penetrated with a sense of his aggravated sinfulness and guilt, and this is the only doctrine which can support or bring comfort to his soul. As to those who are at ease in Zion, any thing can afford them satisfaction. They can rest the issue of eternity upon a fanciful mercy in God of which they have no understanding ; they can support their hope upon the foundation of their honest dealings, their good purposes, their unblameable lives and their fair professions. But where the law comes home to their consciences and they feel themselves slain thereby, see with what a God they have to do, what an awful thing sin is, and what rotten rags their best righteousness are to appease the wrath of Jehovah, and feel that they can do nothing towards their salvation, they will find all their present hopes delusion, and will be like the giving up of the ghost ; and no doctrine will be able to keep them from absolute despair but this, that salvation is the mere gift of God through Jesus Christ. Sinners do, and will try a thousand schemes to save themselves, but all will prove as an Egyptian reed, save this. O sinners, look to the free gift of God through Christ Jesus for eternal life. This is also the only support of a believers hope ; this is his encouragement, consolation, and ground of his rejoicing. It is the faith and feeling of this doctrine, that influences him to gird up the loins of his mind, to run and not be weary, to walk and

not faint. Make eternal life to depend upon himself, or any of his own works, and you destroy all his hopes, his heart would faint, his joys would be no more. This doctrine is his delight ; salvation by free grace sheds gladness into his soul ; that it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ, fills his heart with joy, and this will be his rapturous enjoyment throughout eternity. Rejoice, O christian, that your salvation is wholly of grace.

Secondly, what cause of gratitude is here ? How should our souls ascend to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in strains of the highest praise for the wonderful plan of saving lost men revealed in the gospel. This will be the theme of celestial song throughout the unwasting ages of eternity. Let us ever bless the Lord for the astonishing scheme of salvation by free grace, that eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. “ Let *christians* sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, “ and declare his works with rejoicing. Blessed be the God “ and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his “ abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by “ the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ; to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. “ Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion.”

Let all the people of God be exhorted to live upon this grace ; hold it fast and let it not go. Let your rejoicing in a free salvation appear by your godly living. Let your holy conversation put to silence gainfayers. “ Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding “ in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your “ labour is not in vain in the Lord. Work out your own “ salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh “ in you, both to will and to do.”

Let sinners be exhorted to flee to the grace of the gospel.

Renounce all dependence upon yourselves and your own righteousness, and humbly trust in the free mercy of God through Jesus Christ for the gift of eternal life. This is the precious and safe ground on which you may hope for everlasting bliss.

S E R M O N XXXV.

Death Wearing a Sting.

1 Cor. xv. 56. *The sting of death is sin.*

THE thought of death, leaving our relatives, friends children, our dearest and bosom intimates, above all those adored and ornamented temples commonly called our bodies, produces the most sensible shock, and the sharpest touches of undescribed distress. Death is the greatest event known among the children of men, whether it be considered in respect to individuals, or a collection of multitudes falling at once. Behold nations overturned and destroyed by a single war; Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed in a morning; the whole earth, except Noah and his little family, drowned in an hour; but all these horrid assemblages of events, consisted only of the death of individuals. These awful catastrophes were no more than death to each person. The death of an individual carries something dreadful and solemn in it, especially if it be sudden or untimely; how incomprehensibly terrible the idea, when millions become its victims at once. Let death then be re-

garded as a subject of the most important consideration by all the children of men.

It is no persons duty to make himself miserable by poring to distraction upon what he cannot prevent. No wise man could wish to feel the unavoidable poignancy of a certain calamity before it actually arrives ; or the anxious pains of mind equal to the evils feared. But, when serious thoughtfulness, a due anticipation, and a proper conduct will contribute to turn a foreseen calamitous event to our advantage, reason declares we ought to consider, though the consideration should hurt our feelings and disturb our present ease. If we cannot wholly avert the evil, but only meliorate some of its most aggravating circumstances, this would be a sufficient motive to attention in other cases of inferior consequence, how much more in a business of infinite moment ?

Reason and nature dictate that a common fate ought to be a common concern. And death, without any tedious deductions from premises, or a long process of reasoning, informs us immediately what ought to be fully ascertained. Death cuts short all laborious investigations, and fixes duty instantly by a natural anticipation. When in anguish and pain the mind directly applies itself to inventions for relief, and eagerly catches at every measure suggested for this intent. This disposition which in itself is both natural and innocent, yet by a wrong direction often plunges into the worst of consequences. Through ignorance, impatience, blindness and superstition of mind, the never failing concomitants of distress, what wild unhappy and ridiculous methods are frequently taken for relief ? Counsels are heard, and measures adopted without attention to their suitableness to the nature and causes of the trouble, and consequent aptness to redress it. The origin of sorrows must be understood, in order properly to apply the balm of consolation. And it is likewise wise, to learn how far the best

application is capable of healing the malady, and how far not.

Let us at present contemplate the evil, anguish and distress of death, which, viewed in all its circumstances, is the most grievous event in this world. It is here in our text represented under the painful image of wearing a sting. "The sting of death is sin." Death is awful in itself, and sin causes it to sting like a serpent and bite like an adder.

None can here suppose that death, simply considered, the mere dissolution of the soul and body, without any farther apprehensions, is the thing most awful ; it is not this, but sin, which is here affirmed to be the poisonous and mortal thing. It is sin itself ; sin infuses the incurable malady ; arms death with his twinging pain, and anoints him the king of terrors.

Our text is a general aphorism, offering two things to our consideration ; one as a matter of fact and experience, the other as the true reason and account of it. Death is exhibited in its nature and consequences, as the most afflictive event to the sons of men ; and therefore the source and sum of all misery and distress. The melancholy effects which death produces, however dreadful, are all resolved into sin as their procuring cause, and only to be rationally accounted for in this way.

Let us at present consider death as here represented wearing a sting.

No resemblance could be better fitted to express the sensation of death to a soul under a realising apprehension and contemplation of it. How feelingly does it paint the touches of anguish, while the person reflects upon the gloomy scene, meditates on his past folly, or anticipates his future doom. The apprehensions of the near approaches of death possess his mind ; fears at once surround him ; seriousness makes a sudden and

forcible entry into his soul, and a thousand dangers drink his spirits.

There is indeed a solemn dread attending death, considered simply in itself, as a dislodgment from these earthly tabernacles, a breaking our nearest and tenderest connections, forsaking a known for an unknown world, and launching into a new and untried state of existence. The saints themselves often fear to die, when they wish they had shot the gulf and were already dead. Those who know that their Redeemer liveth and have the transporting assurance, that when their flesh and their heart fail, God will be the strength of their heart and their portion forever; yet oftentimes the approaches of the king of terrors fill their minds with dread, and the gaping grave causes their souls to start back upon themselves.

Those who are exercised unto Godliness, and their hopes not so comforting and supporting, death causes them at seasons to tremble and makes them horribly afraid.—Others who are harrassed with doubts and fears, respecting whom sweet charity that hopeth all things, and interprets them in their favour, are frequently tormented upon a sick and dying bed.—Some again, thro' strong misgivings of heart, are all their life time subject to bondage thro' fear of death; yet the tenderness of their walk, and favoriness of their conversation, influence others to hope better of them than they do of themselves. It is not always the christians who possess the greatest confidence of their own good estate, and profess the highest assurance and hope, that stand foremost in the opinion, or enjoy the largest share of charity among their brethren.

Waving these matters found in the constant experience of the faithful, if we consider death in the most simple and abstract manner, a part from those circumstances which eminently constitute its sting, we shall find the effects such as fully authorize

the emphatical expression of the apostle here before us. Apprehensions of it are admitted with reluctance and even with horror by the generality of mankind. Many by sickness confined to their chambers, and death apparently making rapid advances towards them, yet this uncomfortable subject must not be mentioned to them for the world. The physician, who has charity and magnanimity enough to intimate to his patient his case is dangerous, his disease baffles the power of medicine, and it is necessary for him to prepare for his great change, runs the risk of being discarded by the family and employed no more. If the minister is sent for, after he enters the house, before he can reach the apartment of the sick, how many whispers and cautions must he receive, not to mention the dreadful words death, judgment or eternity, for the person is feeble and weak, and to speak of these things may be hurtful to him. Thus many never seem to think of death when they are in health, and their friends will not suffer them to hear of it when they are sick. But if any unforeseen accident, or some imprudent visitant suggests the cruel idea of dying, and the importance of preparation therefor, the thought shocks them beyond conception, it embitters all their hopes and they cannot recover comfort, till their minds are diverted from the serious theme, and the impression so far lost and overborne, that it appears as an imaginary and uncertain event. Many who are ready to acknowledge they must die, yet place it so far into future time, that they can say to their soul, "Soul take thine ease and pleasure thou hast life and enjoyments secured for many years."

The horror of death appears also in this, that it disposes the mind to a kind of involuntary devotion and sanctity. Any occasion that awakens serious thoughts of eternity, immediately produces this effect. The heavy and the gay, the dull and the cheerful are alike in this matter. They betake themselves to devotion as the common resource. Let an object of morta-

They be presented, let an intimate or companion be suddenly snatched away, how are they struck, and how surprising is the alteration? Especially if an epidemic reigns, and there be any apprehensions of the disease attacking themselves; it is not easy to describe the damp it gives to their spirits; it sinks into their hearts, and anxiety and foreboding fears destroy the tranquility of their minds. It oftentimes extends its influence to the features, throwing an air of pensiveness into their countenance, robbing both the heart of its gaiety and the face of its sprightliness, and covering them with a heavy and forbidding gloom. Uneasy impressions displace their thoughts of mirth and pleasure, at least for a while, and they become morose and serious. What does all this argue, but that the sting of death is very painful, and from its bitter effects none of the children of men can pretend to an exemption. Let some infectious disease spread its baneful contagion, how many faces gather paleness and the resolution of the heroes of impiety fail them. Their hands cannot perform their enterprise, and their hearts lose their relish for their wonted delights. The daughters of music appear to be brought low; the tabret and the dance cease; the cards and the dice must not be brought into view; their seats in the theatre and places of public amusement and pleasure are empty.—What, O sinners, is the reason of this sudden change? what is the cause of this reformation? does desire fail? from whence these qualms of religion? Did you not formerly declare, that these things were madness, that seriousness was hypocrisy and grimace, and that pleasure was the life and element of man. The unhappy wretch from the horror of his conscience replies, “I always thought there was something in religion, but I never before considered death as wearing a sting. I feel distressed. Death making such ravages around me has changed my sentiments; but when the present mortality is over, I hope I shall recover my spirits again.”

The fears of death also, while the paroxysm continues, often drive persons into a thousand superstitions. They will now pray more than others ; go to church, that formerly unfrequented place, more than others ; go to every religious society they hear of ; but when the sweeping pestilence is past, and their fears subside, they generally emerge from their glooms, resume their former character, and frequently return to their wonted courses.

This subject has been viewed in a general way, let us now attend to it more particularly, and investigate wherein the sting of death consists, and describe those things which are supposed to constitute it. All things act at a distance with a feeble influence in comparison of what they do when they are nigh. We can easily remove death to a vast distance indeed, yea inconsideration will perform this of itself beyond all conception. But let the mind be alarmed with the apprehension of its near approach, it sheds abroad consternation and horror like the approximation of a comet to the path of the earth's orbit. It is not perhaps the near approach of death simply in itself, but the incalculable circumstances in its train, which produce this strange effect. These things unobserved before create appearances to the mind, to which it had not previously paid attention.

Do anguish and pain constitute the sting of death? how many have declared they would suffer greater degrees of pain to be delivered from torments of mind? The mind therefore is unquestionably the seat of this distress. If we attentively consider what we ourselves have experienced, or what others have more expressly declared, we shall find the ground of the trouble in some or all of the following things : a dread of the divine displeasure ; an uncertainty with regard to their condition in a future state ; and a fearful looking for, of wrath and fiery indignation.

Thus the circumstances and consequences of death raise certain apprehensions in the mind which form its sting. There are none of us who have lived any considerable time in the world but by sickness or some accident have had death brought near to us; and perhaps we have been filled with no small fear or terror. What was it made us afraid? Was it the natural pain we should suffer in the article of dissolution? Was it the mere horror of dying? Was it a dread of annihilation or falling into non existence? None of these things afflicted us.— But after death there was a judgment, and after judgment a tremendous eternity. These created misgivings of heart and tormenting anticipations of a dismal futurity. A secret dread lay smothered in our breast, that our good things were past, and that we must now receive evil things from the hand of an offended God, and drink the dregs of the cup of his fury, and sustain all the fierceness of his wrath forever. What anguish and pain can be compared to this? What can create a more envenomed sting? To see a fellow creature or a friend drawing near to the agonies of dissolution, and professing great uncertainty, or no hope, and his past life ascertain to all around him the propriety of his profession, what inconceivable anguish must it cause in view of his dreadful doom?

What is the reason, that many who are bold and intrepid in life, who seem to fear neither God nor man, can outrage the laws of civil society, and the rules of decorum with a kind of matchless and impious heroism, grow timorous, weak and superstitious when they come to die? Persons who hated and avoided all religion and religious worship while in health, when dying they must have prayers made for them in abundance both public and private. What is the cause of this mighty change and remarkable reformation? It is plain however they despised God, devotion, and holy exercises in life, that they would now wish for the friendship of heaven and be found in devotional frames in death. I grant there are a few who have not apostatized, or fallen into these religious

grasms in a dying hour, but have hastily leaped the precipice, plunged into death, and have saved their surviving companions the mortifying blush, that they did not die with less impious bravery than they lived. But those stupid and hardy sons of iniquity and infidelity, who die as indavoutly as they lived, are as rare as blazing comets among the innumerable stars,

But what is the true origin of all that distress attending the dissolution of this mortal frame? Our apostle solves the problem by assuring us "That the sting of death is sin." Sin is the universal cause of all these afflicting appearances, of all we feel and fear, of all pains of body and distress of mind. Now if all the agonies of body and horror of soul which usually attend this event arise from sin, we then see the propriety of the assertion in our text. Allow the scriptures a divine authority, and all disputation on this head must be silenced forever. They account for death and all its awful concomitants in the most certain and rational way. That we should be punished with the severest pains of body and agonies of mind by an infinitely good, just, merciful and holy God, who doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, must be points mysterious, and facts absolutely unaccountable, without the supposition of sin in us as laying the foundation of such treatment. Let the whole tribe of infidels come forward with their mighty and boasted reason, and account for these facts in any other way, and divine revelation shall be discarded. But if the scriptures and these alone give us a plain and easy solution of all these things, of all these appearances and effects; then let us acquiesce in their divinity, and apply the measures of recovery and salvation which they prescribe. Sin is the true and real cause of all. Sin is the sting of every pain and death itself. Sin, unforgiven, binds over to the penalty of that law, of which it is a violation. A person's reflections on his past life, that his degenerated appetites and passions are unmortified, that all his crimes stand charged against him in the book of God, and

that he has never fled to Christ Jesus for refuge, must in the hour of death fill his soul with those tormenting feelings and amazingly keen twinges, which are in our text denominated the sting of death.

Allow me to close this subject in a brief address to inconsiderate, careless and secure sinners, to those who are devoted to the world, the gratification of their present desires, and are overwhelmed in carnal pleasures. Death will soon come and you must appear in judgment. What mean you then, O sinners, to sleep and trifle in your present condition? Know ye not that ye must die? Is not death at the door in respect to many? What signifies a few months or years? They will be quickly past and irrecoverably gone. The honest hour of dying you cannot evade. To the bar of an incensed God you must come. You know your sins are unpardoned, and that you have not made your peace with heaven by faith in Jesus Christ, and peradventure your souls anticipate your future destiny.

You are ready to say, "God forbid we do not feel any inward horror, or sting of sin; our consciences do not trouble us, and we hope in divine mercy." Remember your consciences may be stupified with the cares, amusements and pleasures of the world, and your hopes of mercy may be ill founded and fallacious. You may be crying to yourselves peace, peace, when sudden destruction is ready to burst upon you. Many a time, the more easy and inapprehensive sinners have appeared, the more dangerous and alarming was their case. Consider what may serve to keep you quiet now, may not be able to keep you so when you come to die. Your present freedom from distress may be occasioned by your hurry of business, your expectations of more leisure, and a thousand impertinent frivolities. The comforts and concerns of life form themselves into a kind of supreme portion and felicity, and often absorb all serious consideration. But circumstances will change

at death, and the hurry of the world and its pleasures will not be able to divert you from reflecting on the state of your souls. Remember, God is holy and just as well as merciful, and your present palliations and excuses for sin, which render it easy for your inconsiderate hearts to retreat to divine mercy, may then be displaced by impressions of divine wrath, by a consciousness of unpardoned guilt and fearful forebodings of angry indignation. Those hopes of mercy which many profess, and a dead faith, are fatal things; they keep you from thinking; they lull your consciences to sleep, and will at last pierce you through with many darts. How infinitely unhappy is such a condition!

Awake, O sinners, before death approaches; before it be too late. Lay your ways seriously to heart. Begin to enquire in good earnest, "What shall we do to be saved?" Confess your sins, humble yourselves for your transgressions; turn unto the Lord and his ways with your whole hearts. The arms of divine mercy are infinitely extended for the reception of the chief of sinners, who are willing to return to God by faith in Christ Jesus. Be persuaded in this your day to consider the things which pertain to your eternal peace.

Are there any thoughtful, awakened, or concerned souls in this assembly, let them attend to the sweet and endearing voice of the compassionate Redeemer. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

If unpardoned sin be the sting of death, let true penitents and real believers magnify divine grace, live by faith on Christ Jesus, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." See that you keep your consciences undefiled; keep consciences void of offence towards God and towards man.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

The last enemy destroyed.

1 Cor. xv. 26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

MELANCHOLY death must again be the subject of our meditations. This gloomy theme should not be dwelt upon so long, but it is absolutely necessary we should soon enter the lists and hold a conflict with it, hence it is an instance of the highest wisdom to be in readiness for the combat. If there be an enemy who will surely attack us, whom we can neither appease nor avoid, it would be the extremity of folly to neglect preparation for the engagement. And would it not manifest a sound judgment and a good understanding, seeing his assault is not to be escaped, to enquire whether there be any method by which he may be overcome? I must now speak of that which will soon close my mouth in the profoundest silence, and you must hear of that which will shortly stop your ears. And we shall neither speak nor hear any more till the last trumpet shall sound, and the bright morning of the resurrection open.--

Was the dread pomp of a funeral presented before us, the silent procession, the sad train of mourners, the bereaved friends taking a final last look, groaning out a farewell, eyes and hearts intent upon the gasping grave, the hollow murmurs of the falling clouds sending forth a doleful sound, a discourse on death might then have a double force, and make the impressions deep. Altho' this painful appearance is not at present passing in review, yet it is an object so frequent, that we must, methinks, always bear upon our minds the image. As by an immutable statute of heaven, it is appointed unto all men once to die, therefore a proper consideration of death can scarcely at any time be needless or impertinent. Are there any here who can object and say, that reflections upon our mortality are vain, for men are naturally too sensible hereof and too much dread the name? If this were just, there would be no need of such a pious aspiration handed down to us in the divine oracles: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Notwithstanding death is certain, and preparation for it of the greatest importance, yet, alas! how few, how very few lay it seriously to heart; how few are engaged to have its power destroyed before it slay them? While it is the king of terrors to the world, many remain ignorant of its chief injury, thinking it hath done its utmost when the connection between the soul and body is dissolved, considering not that the everlasting separation of both from the fountain of blessedness is still infinitely greater. For what is temporal when compared with eternal death? To think of the separation of those near and dear companions, the soul and body, of the debasement and horrors of the grave, the bed all stench and putrefaction, the coverlit crawling worms—is sad and melancholy. They are very unwelcome and dismal thoughts to the minds of sinners, but what follows after is inconceivably more dismal, and inexpressibly more terrible.

But is there no escape from this destroying enemy? Must all become his prey? And shall he still triumph and pass un-

vanquished? Our text affords here an answer of sweet joy and the strongest consolation, that this universal destroyer shall be destroyed.—“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” ‘Tho’ he is an enemy, and the last enemy, yet his conquest and destruction is certain. This is a precious hope and a transporting consideration, that tho’ he hath and will reign long, yet he will not reign always. This our glorious Saviour and all conquering king hath done, and will infallibly accomplish. Thus the captain of our salvation hath declared, “O death, I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction.” His arm is almighty, and he goes forth conquering and to conquer. And the last enemy he will vanquish and subdue is death. But in leading your attention particularly thro’ this subject, we shall endeavor to show,

First, how death is an enemy.

Secondly, establish this truth, that this enemy shall be destroyed.

First, let us consider this chief of all enemies. It is usual for the sacred volume to employ sensible images to communicate to our minds spiritual ideas. Hence our ruin by sin, and recovery by the redemption of Christ, are often exhibited to us in warlike or military terms. Thus Satan is said to lead us captive; Christ is stiled the captain of our salvation; sin is spoken of as bondage, chains, imprisonment; religion, as liberty, freedom, deliverance, victory, &c. Therefore all obstructions and impediments which interrupt our passage to everlasting blessedness and felicity, are denominated enemies. Death is represented as the last of these enemies, because he is the last with which we have to engage in this world, and it is the last which will be destroyed. For he never will be completely and perfectly conquered until the resurrection, when he must surrender up all those he hath confined in his cold prison for

thousands of ages. He himself must then die and cease forever, for after this event there will be no more death. But in this world he reigns and triumphs, and will hold his dominion as long as it endures. Death is an enemy to the whole human nature ; an enemy to every individual of the race of man ; an enemy to the body ; an enemy to the soul ; an enemy to the sinner ; and an enemy to the saint.

First, he is an enemy to the body. This curious machine, which was fearfully and wonderfully made, he renders it as though it had never been. He removes the pins of this grand tabernacle, and reduces it to its primitive dust. This glorious frame, which had been long in rearing, and on which the pains and labour of years had been expended to bring to maturity and perfection, is in an instant tumbled into ruin. So that in which we much delighted, and from which we entertained the highest expectations, immediately is made so disagreeable to us, that our friends wish it buried out of their sight.

What care, attention and toil doth it take to rear such a creature as man ? and when finished in our fond apprehensions and fitted for service and usefulness, then does death quickly blast our hopes, and destroy in a moment the labour of a number of years. Truly it may be said, " All flesh is as grass, and " all the glory of man as the flower of grass, the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away." How superior and noble a creature doth death destroy ? To day the body is beautiful, all the parts performing their several functions ; the heart moving, the lungs playing, the blood circulating, the spirits fine, but to-morrow death comes, touches some muscle or nerve, disconcerts some wheel, casts an invisible particle of infection into the inspired air, and all stands still. We breathe, we speak, we think, we act no more. Our pulse ceases to beat, and our eyes to behold the light. Our ears will hear the voice of melody no more ; our strength is gone ; our natural warmth is turned into an earthly cold, and our comeliness into ghastly deformity. This mighty change doth death perform. The

prince cannot resist him by his majesty, nor the strong by his might. Commanders must here obey, and conquerors are here conquered. The rich cannot bribe him, the learned orator with all the profusion of his eloquence cannot persuade him to pass him by, nor can the skilful physician save himself from the mortal stroke. All have sinned, all must die. "Dust we are and to dust we must return."

Secondly, Death is also an enemy to the soul. The body and soul in their original formation were designed to dwell perpetually together. Therefore these intimates have the strongest inclination and attachment to each other. The separation cannot be made but by the unnatural violence of a cruel enemy. Yea, the soul of the saint clings to the body. They, who possess the fullest assurance of a translation to glory, feel great desires that the body should be taken along. The apostle himself "Did not desire to be unclothed, but rather to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." That is, be translated at once into the celestial state without the horrid pains of a dissolution. A separation was terrible even to the human soul of Christ himself, hence he earnestly prayed that this cup might pass from him. Therefore we have perfect assurance that death, as death, must be unwelcome as it is unfriendly to every creature. It is a natural evil in itself, abhorred by soul and body. There is no principle in human nature, on which there can be grafted a reconciliation. The highest degree to which grace can raise the saint in this life is only a submission to the divine will, and to say, "Not my will but thine be done." Death is still hated as an enemy, though there is a sweet acquiescence in the will of heaven. The saint most willing to die, wills not death; and all his willingness to die is merely as the reconciliation of a sick man to the hateful prescriptions of the physician that he may obtain health.

Thirdly, to the guilty, unpardoned, and unrenewed sinner

death is an enemy indeed. He is to him the king of all imaginable terrors, terrible in itself, and more terrible in its consequences ; it is here a mere passage from tolerable to intolerable misery. Could the unhappy soul be sure that there is no vengeance to seize it after death, that there is no more sorrow or anguish to be felt only the expiring agony, that he hath nothing to suffer but the loss of existence, this would seem an evil that might be endured. But it is the living death, says one, the dying life, the endless woe, to which death leads the guilty soul, which makes it unspeakably terrible. The utter darkness, the unquenchable fire, the living and gnawing worm, the eternal flames of Jehovah's wrath, these are the horrors, these are the sting of death to the ungodly. Thus to impenitent sinners he is an enemy clothed with inconceivable terrors.

Fourthly, he is an enemy to the saints themselves. Of those who are truly sanctified the apostle is here principally speaking, and of the advantages which they receive by Christ, among these, this is one, that the enemy death shall be destroyed, which fully assures us that death is an enemy to them as well as others. By accident it is rendered friendly to them, thro' the conquest Christ has obtained over it, yet in its own nature, and in many respects, it is an enemy still. It is a monster full of horror, if we consider the ghastly paleness, the stiff cold, the forbidding visage, distorted eyes and convulsed limbs of the dying ; and afterwards if we think of the corruption of the grave, the putrefaction of the flesh, all things visible are expressions of enmity in the extreme. It is an enemy as it removes them from the conversation and intimacy of their agreeable friends, as it imprisons one part of them in the earth, and as it prevents their complete blessedness and felicity, which they will not enjoy till after the resurrection. Thus it is death is an enemy to the whole nature and race of man. But, glory to God, this enemy shall be destroyed ; death itself

shall die. Altho' it is the last enemy, yet it shall surely be conquered. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

This brings me to the

Second thing proposed, which was to establish this truth, that this enemy shall be destroyed. As we have seen the inimical visage of death, let us contemplate the conquest of it by the all powerful love of the Redeemer. We have considered what sin hath done, let us contemplate what grace will do. As we have noticed the strength of the enemy, we will now observe the irresistible power and victory of the Saviour, the glorious conqueror of death. The beginning of the victory is in this world, but the perfection of it will be in the resurrection, when death shall live and reign no more. The first mortal wound which the king of terrors received was by the death of Christ on the cross. Hereby it is rendered a tolerable evil to true believers, in the hopes of everlasting life. Its strength was hereby weakened and its sting was taken away. "The sting of death is sin, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus." It never was the intention of Christ to deliver us from the stroke of death, only from its dominion and power, and finally to recover us from its fetters by a glorious resurrection. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." As he merited life for all who believe, so he actually conquered death by his own resurrection from the tomb. On this important day, he led captivity captive, and triumphed gloriously. It was then demonstrated to heaven, earth, and hell, that death was vanquished. By his arising from the dead he hath conquered the powers of darkness, so shall we rise thro' him and die no more. "For because he liveth, if we believe in him, we shall live also."

The next fatal stroke which this universal tyrant receives, is when we are sanctified by the influences of the Holy Ghost, and justified by divine grace. When faith is implanted in the soul, it then looks beyond the grave and beholds eternal life. And altho' death may injure him, it can never destroy him. The believing soul foresees the day, "when death shall be swallowed up of victory." So he may in the present time lift up his voice and sing that triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory. For this cause we faint not, tho' our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day, for our light affliction, tho' it extends to the grave, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

But the last stroke that death will receive, and when the conquest shall be perfected, will be at the resurrection, and this is the victory referred to in our text, wherein it is affirmed the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Many a mortal wound it received heretofore, but now it is completely vanquished. Death will be then given to death. The body lieth under death, and under the penal effects of sin till the resurrection, and it is in a sort penal to the soul too, it is an alloy to its perfect felicity, whilst in a state of separation from the body, even tho' it is in perfect glory with Jesus Christ, because it is deprived of the perfection or full completion of glory, which it shall receive after the resurrection, when the whole man, soul and body, will be introduced to and confirmed in all the blessedness of eternal life. The Mediator's work will then be finished and accomplished. All things shall be completely restored. "Then there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things are passed away." No terrible enemy between us and our God, to prevent the emanations of his love, or seclude us from his presence. O! what a birth-day will it be, when the grave shall bring forth so many millions of sons for glory? How joyful will the meeting

of the soul and body be, who had been separated so long? Then sin and transgression will be finished and can do no more, "And death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire." Then Christ shall have accomplished all, and will have no more to perform as our Redeemer; he will have placed all in glory who were given to him before the foundation of the world. Then shall he deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all.

The subject shall close with a few deductions.

First, from death's being so great an enemy in so many respects we are taught the exceeding malignity of sin. Sin hath entered into the world, and death its never failing companion attends it, and thus death hath passed upon all men, inasmuch as all have sinned. It is sin which gives death all his power and dominion. Without sin death could neither exist nor reign. Hence we should use all possible means to destroy it, which has been so instrumental in our destruction. Let sin be the enemy we shall chiefly oppose. By a proper opposition to him, we shall conquer death itself and disarm it of its sting; let us fight neither against small nor great, but against this implacable foe. He is a foe, he is a murderer indeed, who would destroy both soul and body without any cause. Let us therefore carry on unceasing war against sin as our most deadly, unreasonable, and most dangerous enemy. Let us get it slain, by sanctifying grace derived from Christ Jesus, before it shall slay us. Sin must be slain or it will surely destroy us forever. It is sin which hath made such universal havoc among mankind, which hath slain all the nations of the earth age after age, and hath made our world an *Aceldama*, a field of blood. It is he who hath hurried death upon our near relatives, upon our intimate friends and dear companions, and who will quickly destroy us, at least our bodies, also. Wherefore let us no longer, let us never be at peace with such an enemy, but let us

maintain an obstinate and continual war with every iniquity, trusting in Christ the captain of our salvation, under whose banner we shall come off conquerors and more than conquerors. When we weep and mourn over the corpse of a departed friend, shall we not think with abhorrence of the cause of the pale ruin and wounding separation? Let us hate and abhor sin, which has entailed such evil upon the world, is infinitely displeasing to God, and cost his eternal son so dear.

Secondly, we learn from this doctrine, from the victory obtained over this enemy, the great love and power of Jesus Christ, who condescended to enter the lists with this mighty combatant, and after an engagement beyond the comprehension of men, came off triumphant; "Who thro' death destroyed him who had the power of death." Herein was the love of Christ manifested, that when we were taken captive by Satan, and were dead in trespasses and sins, Jesus the Saviour undertook for us and ransomed us from death and the grave. What returns shall we make for these wonders of love? Ought we not to return to him our whole hearts and lives? Herein is safety, security and consolation that the second death, even death eternal, can never injure us. When the shafts of natural death are continually flying thick around us, ought we not solemnly to consider how we may be able to encounter the king of terrors? If we take Christ for our leader and captain, we shall surely prevail. For this purpose, let us furnish and gird ourselves for the war. "Put on the whole armour of God, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darknesses of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast plate of righteousness, and

"your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ;
 "above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able
 "to quench the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet
 "of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the
 "word of God. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord
 "and in the power of his might." Now if we put on this christian
 armour and bravely use the same, the victory will surely
 be our own. Let us secure the one thing needful, for we daily
 see that neither young nor old, learned nor unlearned, but
 must enter the field of battle. Wherefore, "watch ye, stand
 "fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Let us learn
 to live every day as if it were our last. When we enjoy one
 day, we have no certainty of another. We know no more
 that we shall behold another rising sun, than if we were now
 upon a dying bed, our physicians had given us over, and our
 friends standing weeping around us at our expiring and ago-
 nising groans. Let us all be admonished to prepare for sick-
 ness and our dissolution. Let us be employed in the exercises
 of self examination, repentance of and humiliation for sin,
 confessing the same, renewing covenant with God, mortifying
 corruption, living by faith, denying ourselves and meditating
 on heaven. Let the counsel of our Lord ever abide upon our
 minds, "Be ye also ready."

S E R M O N XXXVII.

The doctrine of the Resurrection stated and proved.

Daniel xii. 2. *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

THE doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, altho' in some respects it is both marvelous and mysterious, yet it is of the utmost certainty, and necessarily composes an article of the christian's creed. In these days of scepticism, it is denied by many, who tho' they do not entirely renounce the name of christian in profession, strangely allegorise away this as well as some other distinguishing truths of divine revelation. This will always be the case with mankind when they exalt their own wisdom and understanding above the plain declarations of heaven. They will continually be the subjects of error and delusion. When persons depart from the simple and obvious meaning of language, the plain relation of facts and things delivered in the oracles of truth, and begin to spiritualise and allegorise every matter that is spoken, they never fail of falling

into the grossest inconsistencies and contradictions, and often the final issue is the most blasphemous infidelity. The vain man, who wishes to be esteemed wise, frequently attempts to mar this glorious doctrine in our text, yet it is a doctrine which will still be believed by all who adhere to the plain and literal intention of their bibles. It is a doctrine, notwithstanding there may be some difficulties attending it, yet blessed be God it contains neither absurdity nor impossibility. Some who are ready to fear if there should be a resurrection, they may be of the unhappy number that shall arise to everlasting shame and contempt, would therefore invent objections against the truth, rather than entertain the tormenting thought. But whether they believe it or not, it is equally the same, the word of God remains true and steadfast, and what the Lord hath affirmed shall infallibly come to pass. This is a doctrine delivered both in the old Testament and the new, by the prophets and apostles and by Christ himself, by whom the dead shall be raised up, therefore those who will not believe it, when it enters so deeply into the whole christian system, it is not probable they would believe tho' one came from the dead. This doctrine tho' terrible to the wicked, yet it administers great joy and consolation to the people of God. In the verse preceding our text the prophet Daniel is evidently predicting the approach of the gospel state. When Michael the great prince, that is Jesus Christ, shall stand up for the people of God, then will be a time of great trouble to the wicked, to Satan and all the implacable enemies of his kingdom, but it will be a season of joy and gladness of heart to those whose names are written in the book of life; for deliverance and salvation shall come unto them. Then at the consummation of all things will be fulfilled this declaration, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." They who are fond of opposing the doctrine of the resurrection, and boldly urge that the old Testament is silent upon this head, are greatly perplexed with the argument

contained in this passage. They vainly pretend these words must be taken not in a literal but in a metaphorical and figurative sense. They say, it signifies no more than the deliverance of the church from the grievous persecutions of Antiochus the king of Syria, and sleeping in the dust of the earth, was the Jews hiding themselves in holes and caves, in order to avoid the fury of that cruel tyrant. But it is abundantly evident Daniel had concluded his prophesy respecting the persecution of Antiochus in the former chapter with these words, "He shall come to his end and none shall help him." Sleeping in the dust is a very unnatural figure to exhibit flying into caves and deserts; and a deliverance from this persecution would be very awkwardly expressed by being raised to everlasting contempt; and could the happiness of such a deliverance be termed everlasting life, when at best it could only be a temporal salvation. But these words plainly and most certainly teach, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and numerous are the other authorities in the scriptures for the establishment of this doctrine. The only difficulty in the text is the word many. "Many of them that sleep in the dust." This would seem at first view to imply an exception of some that should not awake or be raised. But the original word which is here rendered many, is very frequently and more properly translated multitude, and being thus rendered here expresses the most perfect universality. "The multitude of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," that is all the dead without the exception of a single instance. This text is alluded to and explained by our Saviour when he says, "All that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Hence the many or multitude of them that shall awake expresses all, or the most complete universality. By sleeping in the dust of the earth is meant the dead, whether buried in graves, laid in tombs, burnt to ashes, drowned in the sea,

devoured by wild beasts, or eaten by cannabals. *Wherever* their remains are or however disposed of, they shall all be gathered up at the last day. All their dust shall be collected and reanimated ; and every soul be united to his former body, both good and bad. The former will be raised to everlasting life, or consummate felicity in the celestial world, and the latter to misery, shame and everlasting contempt and torment. This is the manifest meaning of this text.

In the first place we shall endeavour to establish the doctrine which it contains, or prove that there will be a resurrection of the dead.

Secondly, consider something of the manner in which the dead shall be raised.

First, we are to endeavour further to establish the doctrine contained in the text that there shall be a resurrection of the dead. "The many or multitude of them that sleep in the dust *"of the earth shall awake."* It may be here observed this is a doctrine of pure revelation, which the light of nature could never discover, but when revealed, reason is pleased with it. When known, it clearly contains nothing irrational or inconsistent. Reason cannot suggest any thing against it, for God is infinite in power, wisdom and truth, therefore the resurrection of the dead may be infallibly established from the perfections of Jehovah. While God is almighty none can dispute but that he is able to raise the dead. He who could create worlds by the word of his mouth, and make man at first of the dust of the ground, and continues unchangeably the same, surely he must be able to raise him from the dust again.

We have it fully ascertained that God hath raised many from the dead ; such as the son of the widow of Sarepta,—the Shunamite's son,—The man cast into the sepulchre of Elisha,—

Jairu's daughter, the widow's son in Nain, Lazarus, Dorcas, &c.—The wisdom and knowledge of the most high also confirms this doctrine. As with him all things are possible, so to him all things are known. He knows every particle of human dust and where it lies. Altho' these particles, which were once constituent parts of the body, have gone thro' ten thousand changes; although perhaps they may have grown up into grass, this grass eaten by the beasts of the field, and these again by men, a million of times over, yet he whose omniscience at once beholds every atom in the universe, that ever was or will be, in all its various positions and situations, it is infinitely easy with him to separate dust from dust, and replace every particle where it originally belonged.

The great and speculative objection offered against this doctrine is, there are whole nations of cannibals who feast and nourish themselves on human flesh, and the particles of one body become nutrition and go to the constituting of another, or the particles of buried bodies grow up into herbs and are eaten, so that by one means and another, the self same particles may have gone to the formation and support of a thousand men. Now seeing this is the case, how can these thousand persons be raised at one and the same time, since they never had but the particles of one body among them all? To this I would answer, first as Christ did to the Sadducees of old, who denied this doctrine, and proposed a case respecting a woman who had seven husbands successively, and partly enquired whose wife she should be in the resurrection. "Ye do err says he, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God." Fully intimating that if they understood the scriptures or the power and wisdom of God, they could raise no such objection.

Again, let this objection be answered by St. Paul, for some had attempted to throw difficulties in his way on this head, "Some will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what

“ body do they come? To this he replies, thou fool, that which
 “ thou sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which
 “ thou sowest, thou sowest not that shall be, but bare grain, is
 “ may chance of wheat or some other grain, but God giveth
 “ it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own
 “ body.” Now in this argument the apostle plainly allows
 that it is by no means necessary to the resurrection of the same
 person, that every particle of which he was composed thro’
 life, and which constituted him at death, must be raised and
 collected into one heap to form the same man. No it is highly
 probable a part of that which was once the human body will
 be perfectly sufficient to constitute it the same. As the apostle
 instances of wheat being sown, it grows up into stalk, blade,
 ear, chaff and grain, all this large body, altho’ it is not the
 same with the bare grain that was sown, yet it arises from the
 same seed, and every seed has its own body; so also is the re-
 surrection of the dead. There will be a great difference be-
 tween the bodies raised, and those which were laid in the dust.
 Yet every individual body will have so much of what it was
 formerly composed as is necessary to constitute it identically
 the same.

Further it may be justly observed in answer to this objection,
 no man remains composed of the same numerical particles
 without addition or diminution, for any one hour of his life.
 The man who lies down to sleep, in the evening, when he
 awakes has lost many thousands of particles during the night,
 which are gone off by sweat, perspiration, &c. yet he is the
 same person he was in the morning, tho’ not composed of all
 the same individual particles. A gross man that is seized with
 sickness and reduced to a skeleton or to a state of great lean-
 ness, he is still the same person he formerly was, altho’ perhaps
 half his weight is wasted away; and when he recovers health
 and his former bulk, he is still the same, altho’ few particles
 compose his body which did before. Thus by the constant

changes all bodies undergo, Methuselah must have been composed of very different particles when he was a youth and when he was nine hundred and sixty-nine years old ; yet he was the same identical person when old that he was when young. Thus it will be in the resurrection, that many particles constituting the body at death whether added or not, sufficient will be raised by infinite wisdom and power to constitute the person perfectly the same, he will be conscious to himself that he is the same, and be fully recognised by all who formerly knew him. All that is necessary for us to be assured of is, that every particular body has certain appropriate and essential particles, that whenever united and animated, completely constitute the same person ; and the essential particles of one body never become the essential particles of another body, therefore the same person can at no time pass away into different persons. Thus as God is omniscient and knows where all these essential particles are, whether they have been burnt to ashes or sunk in the bottom of the ocean, and as he is infinitely able to collect these particles, if scattered into and mingled with all the particles of the earth, and of them renew the same man ; from hence it follows, that the resurrection is clearly demonstrated from the power and wisdom of God.

The last argument is drawn from the truth of God. If he is a being that cannot lie, and his word plainly reveals this doctrine, then it must surely be established beyond all contradiction. It was a truth believed by all the ancient saints. We find Hannah, that woman of eminent piety declaring it in her song ; " The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and he bringeth up." Thus she gave her testimony, that God maketh alive and raiseth the dead from their graves.—The faith of Job is fully in favour of this truth, when he affirms, " I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and tho' after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,

"whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold and
 "not another. If a man die he shall live again. Man lieth
 "down and riseth not, until the heavens shall be no more? they
 "shall not awake, nor be raised out of sleep." Thus Job
 firmly believed in the doctrine of a resurrection. The Psalmist
 testified the same thing when he said; "Thou wilt not leave
 "my soul in hell, that is in the state of the dead, neither
 "wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." The pro-
 phet Isaiah, when speaking of the Messiah, says, "That he
 "will swallow up death in victory." So speaks Hoseah, "I
 "will ransom them from the power of the grave." The
 apostle informs us of the faith of Abraham on this head, when
 offering his son Isaac, "He accounted that God was able
 "to raise him up even from the dead." Our Saviour proves,
 the doctrine of the resurrection from Moses. "Now that the
 "dead are raised, says he, even Moses shewed at the bush, when
 "he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
 "and the God of Jacob, for he is not a God of the dead but
 "of the living." The scribes approved of this argument, and
 the Sadducees were put to silence; the one replied, "Master
 "thou hast well said; and the other after that durst not ask
 "him any question." The prophet Ezekiel beautifully illus-
 trates this truth in his relation of his vision of the valley of dry
 bones, their reviving, bone uniting itself with its bone, their
 receiving flesh and breath and life. "The apostles taught the
 "people and preached thro' Christ the resurrection of the
 "dead." Paul said, "I have hope toward God, that there shall
 "be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.
 "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God
 "should raise the dead." It is often positively affirmed,
 "God quickeneth the dead, God raiseth the dead," &c. Yea
 the authorities in support of this doctrine are so pointed and
 numerous, that time would fail in the recitation. It was
 taught by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and his apostles,
 so that the whole scriptures are full of proofs for this purpose.
 But it is more than time to direct your attention to the

Second thing proposed, which was to consider something of the manner in which the dead shall be raised, "Some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

With respect to the bodies of the saints which shall be raised to everlasting life, the scriptures every where make the most glorious representations of their excellency, of their beauty and their splendor. The great resurrection day will be ushered in with amazing grandeur and magnificence. Christ shall descend in all the pomp of the celestial world, mighty hosts of angels, of cherubs and seraphs shall attend him, the trumpet of God shall fill heaven, earth and hell with its sound, and they that sleep in the dust shall hear his voice and come forth. The godly shall be raised out of their graves by the spirit of Christ. "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you." The wicked also shall be raised by the omnipotent arm, by the same power which had enclosed their souls in hell, and imprisoned their bodies in the earth; these must come forth all clothed in deformity and horror to receive their irreversible doom.

In regard to the qualities with which the bodies of the saints shall be raised, the apostles inform us, they shall be incorruptable, glorious, powerful and spiritual. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in corruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

First the body is sown in corruption but it is raised in incorruption. The saints are buried in the ground a mass of corruption and putrefaction like others, but in the splendored morning of the resurrection, they will arise incorruptible. They

will then have no more corruptible materials in their nature, no more subject to pain, sickness nor death. They shall forever flourish in immortal youth, vigour and beauty. They shall then be presented to God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. They will not be raised as they died, some decrepid and deformed, some maimed and mutilated, some mortified and covered with ulcers, some wasted by consumptions and some bloated to an enormous size by hydropical disorders, but they will arise every one in all the perfection of beauty, an exact symmetry of features and a just proportion of all their parts. In one word, they will be raised in all imaginable excellency.

Secondly, the body is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory. The body while here is often covered with a loathsome and forbidding deformity, and it is hurried into the grave a heap of stench and rottenness, but in the resurrection it shall appear a glorious body. They shall arise, in majesty, dignity, beauty and splendor. They shall then shine as the stars of heaven and as the sun in the firmament.

Thirdly, it is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power. It crawls thro' this world feeble, weary and faint ; it falls into the dust absolute weakness. It cannot defend itself against worms and putrefaction. But when it arises, it will be powerful and strong ; it will be all life, vigor and activity. There will be no more weakness, weariness or fatigue. There will be perfect strength and ability to sustain without the least uneasiness the eternal weight of glory, that shall be placed upon them. They will be then powerful indeed, perfectly able with a happy agility to execute all the purposes and desires of the soul.

Fourthly, it is sown a natural body, but it is raised a spiritual body. It descends to the grave an animal body, which had subsisted by food and drink, by sleep and air ; but in the

resurrection it shall appear of a much more refined contexture ; it will be endued with such spiritual qualities as to stand in no need of such animal refreshments ; there will then be no more need of food or drink or raiment. The body will then subsist after a spiritual manner, for they shall be as the angels. But who can describe the glory, the beauty, power, incorruptibility spirituality and seraphic nature of the raised and glorified bodies ? Blessed and happy are they who shall obtain a part in the first resurrection.

But the manner in which the bodies of the wicked shall be raised in that day will be perfectly the reverse of all this. They will be destitute of all glory, beauty and comeliness. They will ascend from their graves in all the horrors of deformity, with ghastly visages, distorted countenances, writhing members, convulsed breasts, and all their looks terrible. Let us turn from the odious picture, and detestable sight. They come forth the abhorring of all flesh ; vessels of ugliness and dishonor, to comprehend all in one dreadful phrase, their resurrection will be the resurrection of damnation :

This lecture shall conclude with a few reflections.

First this doctrine should raise the souls of true christians into raptures of consolation. How transporting the thought tho' you die, yet shall ye live ; you shall greatly live in the regions of immortal bliss ? How ineffably glorious will the meeting of the soul and body be ; your victory over sin, over death, over Satan and all your enemies will then be complete. Tho' your bodies here may be decipred, dismembered and deformed, yet hereafter they shall appear in all the perfection of beauty. Tho' now wrecked with pain, faint with sickness, covered with loathsome sores, yet then you shall be strong powerful, alert and active. Tho' now despised and held in contempt by the world, yet then you shall be honored, cloth-

ed in white robes, crowns of glory on your heads, and sceptres of dominion in your hands.—What obligations, O what delightful obligations are believers under to render love, praise and thanksgiving to God and to Jesus Christ? That such life, glory and felicity are procured for you, that death is vanquished, sin destroyed, the grave conquered, and all heaven is yours. What, O christians, ought your lives to be in this world? what faith, what gratitude, zeal and holy living?

Secondly, this solemn doctrine speaks nothing but terror to the workers of iniquity. You will be dragged from your graves with shame and contempt. Your cries will be to the rocks and the mountains to fall on you and hide you from the awful scene. Your faces will gather blackness, and what pencil can paint the reluctant horrors, and the agonising struggles exerted both by soul and body against their reunion? How do they avoid and fly back from each other, yet by almighty force they are compelled into the abhorred conjunction? The soul and body hate to meet, and hatred will reign between them forever. And to close the scene, they pass away into misery which will never intermit or come to an end.

My dear brethren, let us all consider the solemnities of the great day before it comes; let the wicked repent and believe the gospel, and let saints rejoice in the riches of glory set before them.

S E R M O N XXXVIII.

A general and future Judgment proved.

2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

PRECIOUS was the experience, peace and comfort, which the apostle and many of the primitive christians enjoyed. They were favored with the sweet assurance of hope; they had heaven in their eye, and all their course tended thither. "We know if that our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." For this and all other graces he gives glory to God, and ascribes every blessing to his operation. "He who hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the spirit." These views, expectations and consolations, had a quickening influence upon them in the exercises, duties, and all the parts of religion. The more christian assurance any person hath, the more he is engaged in the service of God, and seeking the happiness of his fellow men. Some are ready to think, if they had assurance of grace, they would trouble themselves no more

about religion. 'This is a certain evidence that they are both destitute of grace and of a proper understanding of the gospel. For the more godliness any person practises, and the more religion any one hath, the more ardent are his desires after greater acquisitions. Hence says our apostle, "We labour that we may be accepted of the Lord." And the reason why they are so persevering and abundant in their labours is given in our text. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." These words express the certainty and the universality of a future and general judgment, as well as the designation of the person who shall execute this high office.

Wherefore in attending to this solemn and important subject, we shall endeavor to prove,

First, that there will be a future and general judgment.

Secondly, show the person who will be honored with the exalted character of being Judge—and,

Thirdly, consider the persons, who shall be judged.

First, we are to prove the solemn doctrine that there will be a future and general judgment. This is a truth as certain as that there is a providence, or that God has created and governs the world. Every intelligent creature, who is a subject of moral government, affords an argument in support of this doctrine. For if we were created by God, and he hath given us laws for the regulation of our conduct, is it not reasonable we should be accountable, in respect to our obedience or violation of the same. And is it not proper that God should mark all our behaviour, and see whether we have obeyed or rebelled against him? This is manifest from the interest the glory of his own attributes has herein, and the promises and threatenings

annexed to his laws. God is omniscient and intimately acquainted with all our actions, there is not a hair of our heads which is not numbered, and it would be inconsistent with his infinite justice, not to reward obedience and righteousness, and punish sin and iniquity. Therefore there will be a time in which he will display his glory in judging the world, and rewarding every man according to his works. "For God shall bring every work into judgment."

There are indeed many displays of God's judicial hand in the present dispensations of his providence; hence he is said "To be known by the judgments he executeth." The visible tokens of his distinguishing regard to his saints in this world, as well as the public and dreadful displays of his vengeance towards his enemies, proclaim his glory as judge of all. What slaughter of men and revolutions of the kingdoms of the earth does he make by war? He scatters nations and buildeth them up again. How have his judgments buried whole cities in ruins by horrid shocks of the earth? How many nations whose faces have waxed pale with distressing famine? What noxious and pestilential diseases are often sent abroad for the punishment of transgression? But all these dreadful calamities, were they rightly viewed, considered and improved, might become dispensations of mercy rather than judgment. For they are solemn warnings to us and seasonable admonitions, that we should prepare for the great and decisive day. But inasmuch as sin demerits a much greater punishment than any inflicted here, and since the divine dealings with the children of men in respect to outward and visible things cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, while we behold the righteous oppressed and the wicked enjoying more than heart can wish, these things plainly indicate that there is a season to come in which all these matters will be perfectly adjusted. Then in the language of the Psalmist, "A man shall say verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

This doctrine is not only revealed in scripture, but we find strong evidences of its being believed among the heathen nations. Where the immortality of the soul is received, which is the case in most of the pagan tribes, there we find also accountability and a judgment after this life; we find pleasures and happiness for the supposed virtuous and good, and a variety of miseries and punishments for the supposed wicked. Whether this is a doctrine taught by the feeble light of nature, or whether it is the corrupted remains among them of a divine revelation, handed down from the first ages of the world, is not easy to determine. However this may be, they surely have some dark conceptions of it. Hence we read abundantly in the heathen authors of Eacus, Minon and Radamanthus, who pass judgment on every one after death. What strange punishments do they inform us of the wicked's suffering in hell; Sisyphus is condemned to roll a stone up a steep hill, which constantly returns upon him; Prometheus is bound to a rock, on whose ever-growing liver a vulture continually preys, and the furies are appointed tormentors for all kinds of wickedness. On the other hand, in what lively colours do they paint their Elysian fields, their imaginary heaven, and set forth the peaceful tranquillity, rapturous enjoyments and pleasures of those who had received the approbation of their judges for well doing; and a thousand fables of this kind, all which serve to show they had some notion of future retributions or of a judgment in another state of existence.

Moreover this doctrine appears to be impressed upon the consciences of men, and they cannot extinguish their dreadful apprehensions thereof. That secret remorse which sinners feel in their own breasts, which make them very restless and uneasy, especially, when they conceive themselves drawing near to the confines of another world. The distress and anguish of mind which they exhibit, because they have postponed the concerns of eternity to so late an hour, all which are undeniable argu-

ments of a future judgment. What was it made Felix the heathen governor tremble, when Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. And when the same apostle disputed with the learned Athenians, tho' they mocked and treated what he had to say about the resurrection with ridicule, yet none of them objected to this doctrine, "That God would judge the world in righteousness."

With regard to the time when, and the length of its continuance, or the place where this judgment shall be, infinite wisdom has seen fit to conceal these things from us, and it could not promote your edification to retail the numerous and wild conjectures upon these matters, for it is surely best not to pretend to be wise above what is written. It is enough for us to have full evidence that this is a doctrine clearly revealed in the divine oracles. Of the texts on which it is founded I can now only select a few. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment. God is judge; the judge of the whole earth. He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness. God will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." But there would be no end in producing the authorities for the establishment of this truth that there will surely be a future and a general judgment. What claims our attention in the

Second place is to show, who the person is that will be honored with the exalted character of being judge. This is a matter of pure revelation. Reason and the light of nature discover something concerning a judgment, but it is the holy scriptures alone which show us the person who is dignified with the high office of being judge. It is often declared that God shall judge the world. There are three persons in the god-head, and each has his respective part assigned him in the economy of man's salvation. And as the second person of the Trinity sustains among other important offices that of a king, and as a branch hereof it is devolved upon him to judge the universe, or to be president in that great day of general judgment. Therefore the person appointed in the eternal counsels to this great office is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. And it is also subjoined, that he hath given him authority to execute judgment because he is the son of man." It is part of the work incumbent on him, in accomplishing the redemption of men, which will not be brought to perfection till the day of judgment closes. Thus when he speaks concerning his coming in a cloud with power and glory, and bids his people to lift up their heads for their redemption draweth nigh, it evidently appears that he is to draw up the grand decision against which no bill of exceptions can be taken. It is reasonable his cause should have a second and public hearing before men, angels and devils; before his friends and enemies, to the comfort of the former, and the eternal confusion of the latter. They before whose bar he once stood and received scoffs, insults and contempt, shall now in their turn stand before his fair and impartial tribunal, where the process shall be reduced to specialty, and no false witnesses be suborned; but their own conscience shall approve of the testimony, be struck dumb, and not a word of apology or excuse be offered against the charge. His coming with clouds in the view of the universe, will cause them who pierced him, and all the kindreds of the

earth, who set themselves against him, to wail and lament because of him. It is proper, fit, reasonable and equitable, that he should judge the world for the open vindication of his people that had been unjustly condemned and persecuted by it, that they should be defended and openly acquitted in the most perfect and glorious manner. That the man Christ Jesus, who had been rejected and despised of men, who was worthy of the highest esteem and most universal love, who had been excluded heaven and earth, as if room for him in neither, should be restored to his place, again raised to the throne of his dignity, is infinitely fit and proper. This is the expression of wisdom itself; this God man will descend, and return to earth again infinitely different from his former appearance; he will appear robed in glory and majesty, attended with an innumerable train of angelic hosts, with the sound of the heavenly trumpet, and all nations shall stand before him and shake with horror, or be filled with joy, at his deciding sentence. This grand sentence concludes the scene of the most wonderful works of God, to wit, the pre-eminent work of redemption. Christ Jesus is the glorious personage, who will in perfect righteousness fix the eternal destiny of men and angels. Hence we read, "The Lord Jesus-Christ, shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing." St. Paul asserts once and again, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." But that he will be judge in this great affizes, none deny who profess to believe the scriptures—Therefore I pass on to the

Third head of this discourse, which was to consider the objects of this mighty judgment, or the persons who shall be judged. Whether the holy angels, which fell not, are included in these objects, is matter of tedious and curious dispute. Some have contended this will be the case, as they are rational creatures, subjects of moral government, therefore they must be accountable for their behaviour. They are abundantly employed by God in almost every business of providence and

grace, they are especially sent forth as ministering spirits, to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation; hence it is deemed reasonable that they should appear in judgment at the last day, that their faithfulness in the discharge of their duty may be conspicuous in the presence of the universe, receive the open approbation of their services, and be with propriety introduced to those higher degrees of glory and happiness, which shall be awarded unto them. But others again suppose them not included among the objects of this judgment; because they are represented as the attendants of Christ's court in this wonderful scene, as persons never standing before his tribunal in order to be tried, and as long before this confirmed in felicity, beholding the face of God continually in heaven, and consequently not to be dealt with as those who are to undergo a scrutiny or trial in order to have a judicial sentence passed upon them of approbation or reprobation. But as this is wholly a matter of curious speculation only, we pass on to the fallen angels, those rebellious spirits, who shall be brought as criminals before the bar of Christ, where their primary insurrection and apostacy, with all the guilt they have contracted since they were ejected heaven, will be laid to their charge and supported against them; all that they have done against God and man since the seduction of our first parents, with all these methods of revenge and subtilty, whereby they have opposed the kingdom of Christ, and have virulently attempted the ruin of his people, shall be tabled against them, as also the bold outrage committed on his own person, in daring to desire him to fall down and worship them, and in bearing a high hand in his crucifixion. Thus the devils who were cast down to hell, and are now reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment, fear and tremble at the forethoughts of that tremendous day, when their anguish will become more intense, and their punishment wrought up to the highest degree of torment. Therefore it is said with a peculiar emphasis, "That the devil shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" "and be tormented day and night, forever and ever." But

that which is especially insisted upon in the scriptures, and wherein we are more intimately concerned, is what relates to men, who shall all be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ, all ranks, orders and conditions, small and great, rich and poor, quick and dead, that is, those who shall be found alive at the advent of Christ, and all the dead from the beginning of time. The assertion is in the most general terms, hence no flesh can escape the cognizance of that awful day. For the graves shall be opened, and the sea will yield up her dead, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them. Yea, they shall be gathered from the four winds of the earth; those who have lived under the law and under the gospel, together with those who have had nothing to direct them but the light of nature. All who have ever been or will be, will constitute this assembly; an immense assembly indeed, when the innumerable generations which have existed, and those which will exist, shall be collected together. The earth will not be sufficient to contain the multitudes, therefore it is probable the judgment will be held in the air or the great expanse. The images by which the proceedings of this grand season are represented, are taken from human courts of judicature. Accordingly the day is appointed in which causes are to be tried, the judge appears with his ensigns of authority, the persons to be judged are brought before him, the law is known and the books are opened, and every charge will be supported by sufficient testimony, and each person hereupon acquitted or condemned. Thus it is announced, "When
 " the son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon
 " the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all
 " nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a
 " shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats;" the righteous shall be divided from the wicked, and the proper witnesses will be produced, both against transgressors, and in favour of those who have wrought righteousness. The former will be testified against by their fellow men, to whom their conduct was known, both good and bad; by the holy angels who have

been constantly employed in this world ; by their own consciences ; and the omniscience of God. Thus the witnesses in this court will be more than two or three. And the omniscience of God will be the completion of all testimony. Therefore he declares, " I will come near to you in judgment, I " will be a swift witness against the forcerers, and against the " adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those " that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the " fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right " and fear not me, saith the lord of hosts." Hence the trial will be fair, the witnesses neither ignorant nor partial, and the adjudication perfectly just and good.

Different degrees of happiness and misery will be awarded to all, exactly as their characters shall be found to be. As to the godly all will be perfectly happy, yet some will possess more felicity than others according as their virtues and trials and works have been ; some shall have ten portions of happiness, and others only five. Capacities will differ in the future state as well as the present. There are different grades of angels, and the greater possess more felicity than the less. So it is probable it will be with the saints in heaven, each one will be completely happy, and this happiness will be in proportion to his capacity. This will likewise be the case with the miserable ; all will be tormented and perfectly wretched, yet some will be unspeakably more so than others. There are various grades among the devils, and each one suffers according to his capacity. Thus it will be more tolerable for some of the wicked in hell than others. Hence we read of the men of Niniveh, the queen of the South, of the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrhah, as liable to a less degree of punishment than those who have enjoyed greater advantages and sinned against greater light and knowledge. Therefore it will be more tolerable in the future state for the heathen than for the christian world, who shall have misimproved their privileges.

A few hints are all that can be given in a contracted discourse upon so sublime, grand and extensive a subject; but we shall take different views of it in some future lectures, and conclude at present with a very brief improvement.

First, this doctrine of a future judgment administers reproof to the profane and unbelieving, who mock and scoff at the coming of the Lord, who say, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Was this doctrine suitably impressed upon the minds of men, that one day or other they must be called to an account for all their conduct in the presence of the assembled universe, would they not be more watchful and circumspect in their behaviour and conversation? More diligent in enquiring how they should approve themselves to God? How necessary is it that we should repent of all our sins, obtain an interest by faith in the meritorious righteousness of the Saviour, that we should be justified and sanctified, seeing we must all stand in judgment? It also reproves all those who abuse the divine patience, because his coming is delayed, not considering that he will, "Come in a day, when they looked not for him, and shall cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Should we not often be placing ourselves in the presence of the heart searching, and rein trying God, and reflecting how we shall appear in judgment? This would have a mighty tendency to awaken our minds and command our souls to make preparation for the great event. For he will come and he will not tarry.

Secondly, seeing Christ Jesus is the glorious personage who shall judge the world, and will appear with innumerable attendants of holy angels, how should this fill us with high and exalted thoughts of him, and low and abasing thoughts of ourselves? Since the angelic tribes account it their happiness and

highest honor to wait upon him as his ministering spirits, how should it awaken in us an holy ambition, that we might approve ourselves to him as his servants in all things, and to reckon it our greatest honour and chief blessing to be employed as such by him. Seeing he, with whom there is no shadow of partiality, shall sustain the office of being judge, this ought effectually to silence all murmuring thoughts against the unequal distributions of providence in this world.

We ought not impatiently to complain of poverty, sickness, bereavements or other calamitous circumstances, since the God of all the earth is doing and will always do that which is perfectly right. Can a child of God desire more than that he should do righteously. All these adverse dispensations will be perfectly adjusted, and when properly improved, they will encrease our felicity throughout eternity. Why should christians be anxiously distressed about friends, children, health, riches, honors and toys, seeing they are not to expect their heaven upon earth?—Let us cultivate the graces of faith, patience, submission and humility, in full assurance that all will be best in the great day of the Lord.

Thirdly, since the persons who shall be judged are angels and men, since we, my brethren, will form a part of this grand assembly, should not this excite and command us to universal holiness both of heart and life. The sentiment that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, should cause us to break off our sins by righteousness, and our transgressions by shewing mercy to the poor; should influence us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and become the faithful followers of Jesus; should engage us to deny all worldly lusts and affections, and become christians in reality. Let us, my dear friends, be christians and all shall be well, for time, for judgment, and eternit.

S E R M O N XXXIX.

*The difference of appearance before God here
and hereafter.*

Matt. 25. 33. *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but
the goats on his left.*

WE are all, my brethren, made for eternity. There are very solemn scenes before us. It is hard to bring ourselves suitably to observe these things. How difficult to persuade our souls, that all the invisible realities of a future state, of which we read in the gospel, will be present. But so it must be. O my soul, a little while and thou shalt stand before thy judge, thy case shall be stated by the rules of perfection, and thy doom irreversibly fixed. How deep, how awful is the thought? O what a difference will a few years make in our circumstances. Perhaps a few days or hours will bring it to pass. Instead of appearing before God in his sanctuary and in his ordinances, we shall appear before his judgment seat to be tried for our souls and eternity. How does the reflection affect our spirits! Shall we be brought into judgment to be tried! Our hearts faint within us at the prospect. We cannot stand the inferior trial of our rea-

son and conscience. Our hearts condemn us, and God is greater than our hearts. He is perfectly acquainted with all our follies, infirmities and sins. We are apt to have a light idea of our guilt, a small and uncertain sensibility of our transgressions; we think ourselves but little sinners, because we take in and realise but a small portion of sin at a time. We cannot recollect the whole compass of our iniquities at once. When we are afflicted with the sense of any particular offence, our other crimes are in a back ground, dropped from our view, and lost in a general confusion. But what surprise will it awaken to have the whole account collected and laid before us; and that in so awful a place as at the bar of God; and that upon so solemn a trial, as for our eternal destiny. It would now be possible to have these matters settled. Now Jesus Christ is exalted as a prince and a saviour to grant repentance and the remission of sins.

In a little while he will change this friendly and compassionate character, and assume all the grave solemnities of a judge. — Our appearance before his seat, is a striking consideration, and belongs equally to all men.

How great the distinction that day will display among us! An infinitely more conspicuous one than the gospel or the church now makes. Some among mankind are begotten by the gospel to a lively hope and to faith unfeigned. Their souls are formed to undisssembled piety, a proper sense of God and their duty to him; while others remain unsanctified and unholy, without God, without love, without faith or hope. They continue strangers to the christian temper, and all the amiable and precious graces of the spirit. To some the gospel is the power of God to salvation, it proves a savour of life unto life; while others never feel its influence in any saving manner, and therefore to them it is a savour of death unto death. Great is the difference which here takes place among persons in their appearance before Christ in his holy ordinances; but much greater will be the difference which will be made between them, when

they shall appear before him in judgment. It is true, it is a difference which originates from the difference that takes place in this world. It is now evident to God; but then it will be evident to the universe. Then they shall stand as clearly distinguished one from another as sheep from goats. These animals are of distinct kinds or species; so man will then be perfectly distinguished from man, as sheep are distinguished from goats. This subject is well adapted to awaken the sinner and encourage the saint. Therefore I shall take occasion from these words to set before you,

First, the difference between your present appearance before Christ; and the future appearance at the judgment.

Secondly, show the great difference this future appearance will make between the believer and the unbeliever.

First, I am to consider the difference between the appearances which are here made before God and Christ, and that future appearance that we are in a short time to make. I beg leave to apply this branch of the discourse to those who are unconverted and in a state of sin. We have reason to believe there are some such among us. O that God would teach us to say something that may be useful and acceptable. Lord, the residue of the spirit is with thee, let the power of thy word be felt. Let a convincing arrow reach the heart of the sinner that he may no longer go on in his trespasses until iniquity shall be his ruin. O let the careless sinner who now stands before God in his sanctuary be advised to consider, he must ere long stand before him in a very different manner and for very different purposes. Let the formal christian and the lukewarm professor be aroused; let him seriously consider with himself the difference between his present and future appearance before Christ, while it shall be represented in the following particulars.

First, sinners appear now before Christ as a tender Saviour, and compassionate redeemer, but then they will stand before him as an awful, inexorable and inflexible judge. The present appearance is in a season of grace and mercy, but then it will be a time of trial, judgment and condemnation. Now when they come before Christ in the places where he records his name, they hear the sweet and inviting language of grace; and the voice of Jesus calling to them to come and accept of the pardon of their sins and they shall find rest to their souls. How precious, soft and persuasive are the gracious words proceeding out of his lips. "Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters and drink. "Come unto me all ye distressed, poor, weary, faint and heavy laden souls and I will give you rest. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that heareth my voice, I will sup with him and he with me; and whosoever will, how ever great, numerous and aggravated his sins may be, the fountain of grace is opened, let him come, make room for his approach, that he may take of the waters of life, and drink of the wells of salvation freely, without money and without price." You are now, O sinners, standing within the pale and under the banners of mercy. But alas, when you will appear before Christ in judgment, there will be no more calls of mercy or overtures of grace. Then you must hear the heart rending sound, "Your day of grace is past and the door of mercy is shut forever." Christ is now by his word and Spirit knocking at the door of your hearts, but hereafter you will knock at his door, crying, "Lord, Lord open unto us." As the former was vain, so also will be the latter. No thing will be heard from within, but "depart from me ye workers of iniquity." Who can paint the anguish and confusion this declaration must throw the delaying, lost, and unhappy sinner into? Now he stands before God in the church, and hears all the promises, persuasions and threatenings of the gospel with a perfectly cold indifference; they pass by him as the idle wind; but hereafter his cry will be, "A world for one of those hours." His

sentence will be pronounced, with his name affixed, "thou art the rebellious, thoughtless, disobedient and impenitent sinner, and thou must die forever. Thou hast not obeyed the gospel, thou hast not accepted the offers of mercy, thou hast not believed in Christ, and thou must eternally perish." The sinner now stands before Christ in a season of hope, he may now obtain pardon and grace; but then he will stand under the sentence of death, under the dark and dolorous feelings of everlasting despair. The sinner now appears before the blessed Saviour sitting upon a throne of love, entreating his reconciliation and friendship, and pouring forth the melting words of compassion, "I delight not in the death of a sinner, turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? I hold forth life and pardon in my hand for your acceptance; your acceptance would be my highest pleasure and your own everlasting felicity." Pity is now in his heart, and tears of love in his eyes. O sinners, it is now with you a day of salvation. O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your future appearance before Christ! The time is fast advancing, and perhaps at the very door with some, that this season of love will be over and gone, and your lamentation hereafter will be, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." You now enjoy all the advantages and blessings of the gospel. Christ is now weeping over you, and pouring out his compassionate heart in tears, uttering these tender expressions, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" O let it not be added, "that you would not." Let it not be said "That he came unto his own and his own received him not." But in the future judgment, you will behold this lovely and precious Saviour, clothed in terror, with frowns on his brow and anger in his heart, issuing the irreversible sentence of your final destiny, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." All his love will be turned into wrath, and your present ease and security into damnation. Every soul in

this great day found in his sins, falls under the eternal curse without repeal. Who among us can think of enduring the awful scene? Who can bear the sight of an angry judge, who is infinite in power, terrible in majesty, and who hath divested himself of all compassion? Who can think of the Son of God, clothed with vengeance, putting on fury as a garment, to revenge the contempt of his milder character? The great day of the Lord is coming and who shall be able to stand? Christ hath come, O sinners, to request your hearts, your friendship and your love; but when he shall come again no such requests shall be made. You will never hear another soothing invitation. When he shall turn to the left hand, nothing but terror, clouds and darkness, and a horrible tempest, and nothing in his voice but the dreadful sound—"Depart." But,

Secondly, sinners appear now before Christ with cold hearts and careless and irreverent spirits. His tender addresses and moving exhortations are neither heard with seriousness, nor attended to with solemnity. But at his appearance on the shining judgment seat, his presence will strike awe, and it will be impossible to be light, careless, and inattentive. While they now hear the proposals of the gospel laid before them by his ambassadors, beseeching them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, they may perhaps notice how the ambassador acts his part, whether he is of brilliant elocution, can perform as a grand orator, or in Eastern style, can play well on an instrument; when they have decided upon this business, they retire with a self-approbation, and an inward felicity. But in their appearance at the last judgment, things will be infinitely different; the consideration of the speaker will be perfectly dropped. When they hear orders issued for the solemn apparatus, and behold all matters disposing themselves to give the highest grandeur to the scene to hasten their depending fate, how will their souls be all tremblingly alive to the final sentence? In what a descriptive manner does St. John represent this momentous event?

It is as if we saw it with our eyes. "Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Then the sinner will hear the voice of the Son of God, and every word will pierce him thro' with a thousand terrors, and ten thousand torments will wreck his soul. But on the other hand, every preparation, every display, and every word, will be pleasure, comfort, transport, and extatic joy to the believer. Then will he rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I have often thought that this appearance will be peculiarly affecting to the ministers of the gospel, both faithful and unfaithful. Those who have been faithful, and yet have not succeeded as to a great part of their flock—Lord ! how must it affect them to see many of their dear charge, whom once with yearning bowels they besought to secure their salvation, whom they had persuaded with tears by those very terrors which they now behold and feel, but they would not, and they see them departing in the general outcry of lost and condemned souls. They behold them taking leave of Jesus, of their friends, of their ministers and happiness, and go with devils into everlasting punishment. As to such who must reflect upon their unfaithfulness, as the cause of their own and their hearers eternal destruction, who can tell the torments eternally occasioned hereby ! Think of this, O my soul, and take the awful hint, to animate thee in thy work, to cry aloud and spare not, whatever may be the consequence on earth.

But I proceed,

Secondly, to show the great difference this future appearance will make between the believer and unbeliever.

First, the believer will be treated and distinguished with the highest instances of care and attention. Jesus will take a pe-

cular and tender notice of him in this frightful season. When this day shall commence, the unbeliever must endure in himself all the terrors of the forming scene and judgment—will feel himself left amidst the crush of nature and the wreck of worlds. What tormenting fear, surprise and anxiety, will the very circumstances of the season occasion? We are told, there will be distress of nature and perplexity; that the sun and moon will be darkened and all the powers of heaven shaken; the archangel's trumpet shall sound to the extremities of the earth; the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and all its works shall be burnt up. How dreadful will it be for the unbelieving sinner at this time! How will it shock his inmost soul to descry from afar the awful appearances and signs of the times! To see the azure veil of heaven rending and rolling aside to make way for the descent of the glorious and lofty judge,—to behold companies of mighty angels pour forth to line and guard the way,—to perceive the firmament of heaven in a general blaze,—the forked lightnings flash and the thunders roar,—and descending flames circulating round the earth and involving all in common and promiscuous ruin.—To behold the universe thrown into the utmost hurry and confusion; all its connections broken and its motions disconcerted; hear earthquakes, various noise, deep disturbance; and all darkness and desolation. How indescribable must it be to feel the agonies of dissolving nature; when all the disorderly elements free from their present laws and bearings shall rush tumultuous into warring conflict. How will the impenitent and unbelieving stand aghast! how will his heart sink and die within him! even now perhaps a sudden tempest of wind, rain and thunder, can throw his soul into confusion, and smite it through with pain and terror. But, alas, there will then be another sort of scene. The noise and horror of such a time is no more to be compared with that of the judgment day, than the shaking of a leaf with the report of the loudest thunder. What distress and consterna-

tion will rack his soul, when he finds himself deserted in these circumstances and no where to escape; while he sees the true believer, one perhaps he formerly knew and despised as a weak and ignorant hypocrite, kindly attended with a heavenly guard, and safely conducted out of the general uproar. Jesus will send his angels to gather his saints, and to place them as the most glorious assembly ever beheld on his right hand.—Who can develop the comfort of having a kind angel near to support the timorous spirit and strengthen it by his presence, and sustain it by his mighty arm.—But,

Secondly, the believer will receive a sentence of acceptance and approbation, will be crowned with the honours of the gospel, and all the promises of grace will be fulfilled to him; while the unbeliever will have the final sentence of condemnation passed upon him, and be punished with all the calamities and curses of a broken law and despised grace and mercy; all the threatenings of the sacred volume will be executed upon him. How great the difference which will then take place between the believer and the unbeliever. Your eyes, my brethren, shall behold it. You and I will be present at this grand solemnity.—And is there not awful danger it may be a time of sorrow with some of us. I tremble for myself; I fear for you. When this day shall open and come to pass, then we shall all know that this is the truth of God, and that though now you may refuse to hear, and be too callous to feel, then you shall both hear and feel forever; though your hearts will not soften and relent, yet then you shall be broken upon a thousand wheels. What a different sensibility will then be awakened in every soul, when the last sentence shall be pronounced? How infinitely variant will your future from your present feelings be? How will the sinner, who can now trifle with God, his soul, and all the solemnities of eternity, then ardently wish for one of those opportunities of mercy and seasons of grace, which he now enjoys and slight? Hear him pouring forth the lamentable and despairing

moan, "O that I had one Lord's day more in the divine service, one of those afternoons when I heard as tho' I heard not, behaved as tho' God saw me not, and the matter was no concern of my soul. How would I now improve the hour, how carefully would I hear, how fervently would I pray, and implore the pardon of heaven and seek divine mercy and grace. But, alas, it is now too late; once I had good things, but now I must suffer evil things forever. I remember I was often admonished and told, this would be the case, but then I was careless, stupid and secure; but now I care, I feel, and am tormented. O that all my senses were locked up in everlasting insensibility; O that my being might be taken away; O that I was at once tormented out of existence, overborne and destroyed by a sudden crush of God's almighty arm."

But allow me to comfort the poor, feeble and affrighted believer. Be not alarmed and distressed, O christian, this shall never be your case. The Saviour is your judge, and God is your friend. You now go mourning, jealous of the divine favour, and often filled with misgivings of heart lest your sins are not pardoned. You weep, and floods of tears flow from your eyes in secret places, on this account. But let saints lift up their heads and look forward to the all important day, when every thing shall terminate in their favour, and they shall have all their desires, and be ever with the Lord. Your sorrows will then cease, your fears will vanish away, your distress pass off like an afflicting dream of the night, your tears will be dried up, and you shall find yourselves in the perfection of happiness.

A word of exhortation will finish the present discourse :

Let sinners tremble, and saints rejoice at the approaching prospect. To the former it will be the completion of your misery, and to the latter the consummation of your bliss. The difference between saints and sinners in this world is apparently

very inconsiderable, but in the great day it will be as manifest as between heaven and hell. Let not the terrors of the awful season affright the sincere penitent and the true christian. Be not afraid with any astonishment, only let it be recommended to you to watch and be sober. Continually be putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with perfect heat. Little children, abide in Christ, that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming.— Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come, and worship him that made heaven and earth and the fountains of waters." But what shall I say unto you, O sinners. "Behold the day of the Lord that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts. Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth, for he is like a refiner's fire and fuller's soap." Let us all, my hearers, prepare for the solemn day. Let the awful scene recommend to us a speedy retreat from the storms of divine vengeance under Immanuel's wings. Let us ever be influenced by this sentiment, "that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

S E R M O N XL.

*Every one in the general Judgment rewarded
according to his works.*

Rev. 20. xii. *And the dead shall be judged out of those things
which were written in the books, according to their works.*

A FUTURE and general judgment after the resurrection has already been proved, as also the exceeding great difference in the views and feelings of mankind now and hereafter, and the wonderful distinction which will at that time appear between saints and sinners. We shall now attend to the subject in a different way, or rather consider another branch of it. The apostle John, after he had been led by the spirit of God to give a prophetic history of all the important affairs, which relate to the church militant, the destruction of the antichristian powers, the binding Satan a thousand years, the latter day glory, his being loosed again, his deceiving the nations and the great wickedness and persecution which shall again prevail on the earth, by Gog and Magog, and then when there will be no religion, and scarcely faith to be found on the earth, opens

the general judgment suddenly and unexpectedly. He informs us, that he saw in his vision of futurity, a great white throne even the magnificent throne of judgment, the whiteness of which holds forth its spotless purity, and the perfectly righteous and impartial judge who sat thereon, even the Lord Jesus Christ, before whose resplendent glory, the earth and the heavens fled away, the elements dissolved and melted at his appearance, and the present frame of things so entirely vanished, that there was found no place for them. And then he beheld the assembled universe of angels and men, and the solemn process of the final judgment was instituted. Hence he says, "I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life." Here he beheld all, both righteous and wicked, both high and low, young and old, all who have existed from the beginning to the end of time, collected in one immense assembly, which no man can number. And the books likewise were opened. By books is undoubtedly intended, the record of all the conduct of intelligent creatures, and the rules by which they are to be tried and judged. These two things are absolutely necessary to be produced in judgment, the facts, and the rule according to which these facts are to be tried.

The books are here mentioned in the plural number, which evidently teaches us that there will be more than one. There will be the book of divine omniscience—the book of conscience,—and the book containing the rules of judgment.

The book of divine omniscience containing a perfect record of all the thoughts, words and actions of every intelligent creature that ever has existed. The book of conscience, which is in the breast of every one, will perfectly answer to the entry. It will bear irresistible testimony, that all the things recorded therein are accurate, just and true. Men in this life forget the greatest portion of their conduct, yet in that grand day

when all things shall be brought into review before them, then their memories will be awfully refreshed, their recollection will be rendered dreadfully perfect, and their consciences will testify that the whole record is right, that there is not an iota added to or diminished from their thoughts, words or actions.— Then the next book will be opened, which contains the rules of judgment. All means, opportunities and advantages from the works of creation, the light of nature displayed therefrom, the revelation from heaven both verbal and written, whereby they might have known and served God, will be the laws by which they shall be judged. The works and light of nature are a standing rule to all, and in addition hereto, there has been an abundance of oral and written revelation given to the world. Those who lived from Adam to the flood, will be judged by the works of nature and the oral revelation which was granted to mankind during this period. And you will please to observe, their revelation was very sufficient for all the purposes of religion required. From the death of Adam, to whom the sum of all revelation was given, the promise of a Saviour, and no doubt was propagated through his posterity, to the birth of Noah, the father of the new world after the flood, was little more than one hundred years. So that portion of the world was furnished with a full revelation, which will be the rule of judgment in their case. Those who lived from the flood to Moses, had not only the antediluvian revelation, but all that which was given to Noah, therefore this division of the world will be judged by the light afforded it. From Moses to Christ there was not only the former light in the world, but there was all the additional revelation given to mankind by Moses and the prophets, and this reduced to writing, so not liable to be corrupted like oral tradition or verbal revelation. This will be the rule of judgment for this great period of the world. From Christ to the end of time, the light of the gospel will be added as the rule of trial of all those who have enjoyed the same. And all who may be stiled heathens

or pagans, and never have been favoured with any kind of revelation, they shall be judged by the law of nature. To this St. Paul has an evident reference when he says, "As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law :." Thus, these will be the rules by which all will be tried. Besides these, we are told there will be another book produced which is the book of life ; in this all the names of the redeemed are enrolled. Then we are informed the books being thus opened, "That the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." We are not to understand what we literally mean by books, but only that all things shall be as plain and evident, as tho' they were recorded in folios and ledgers.

And when the whole process shall have been passed through, whether it will last a thousand years or one day, both of which are alike to God, and equally unknown to us, the judge will pronounce the final sentence of acquittal and condemnation according as every one's works shall appear. Thus says Christ "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be." How often is this idea repeated in the accounts of the last judgment, that every man shall be rewarded according to his works. In this manner speaks the apostle Paul, "God will render to every man according to his works ; to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life ; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." It is abundantly taught throughout the sacred oracles, that all who will be finally saved, their salvation will be owing to pure, free and unmerited grace, through the righteousness and atonement of Jesus Christ the Redeemer ; and that the wicked shall be condemned for their works of iniquity. Yet it is universally asserted that in the last judgment

the justified shall be tried and rewarded according to their deeds as well as the condemned. Here it is affirmed in our text, that the good as well as bad shall be judged according to their works. Since this is the case, that mankind shall finally be tried by their works, and those who are saved will be saved by absolute grace, it is of some importance that we should attend to and understand this matter.

The observation is evidently this; that in the final judgment, mankind will be exactly tried according to the evidence of their works, whether good or bad, and they will receive future rewards precisely according to the nature and proportion of these works.

Perhaps the tender hearted christian may be here ready to say, "If this be the case, I am undone, for of my best works I shall be ashamed in the presence of the universe, and all my hope and dependence for heaven has been upon sovereign grace and free mercy as revealed in the gospel. Farewel eternal life." But, O christian, allow me to bespeak calmness and patience for a moment, until you shall hear the scriptural account of this matter.

But on the other hand, the self confident and presumptuous sinner, it may be is saying, "This doctrine perfectly pleases my heart, for though I have been wicked, I have done many good things, which I know must out balance my evil conduct when weighed in equal scales, and I always was of the opinion that I should be judged and rewarded according to the nature and proportion of my works, therefore I am fully assured all will be well with me at last." But let me also entreat you, not to draw the mistaken conclusions of comfort too hastily, till the matter is weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and the cause be decided by divine truth.

The doctrine of the text, however it may be wrongly improved or misapplied by saints or sinners, as is often the case; yet there is scarcely a truth more frequently repeated or more strongly inculcated than this. "Far be it from God, saith Job, that he should do wickedness, for the work of a man he will render unto him, and cause every man to find accord to his work." Thus speaks the Psalmist, "The Lord rendereth to every man according to his work." Isaiah declares, "Say ye to the righteous it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings; and wo unto the wicked it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Jeremiah records this truth, "I the Lord search the heart and try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." St. Paul affirms, "God will render to every man according to his works, and whatsoever good things any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." St. Peter gives his testimony, "That God without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work." Christ himself, who is the chief of witnesses, testifies the same thing, "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Here is a cloud of the inspired writers all uniting in the same assertion.

Here two important questions arise.

First, what is the design and use of a general judgment?—
And,

Secondly, What is the benefit and advantage of works in this final and solemn day?—In answer to the

First, let it be observed, that this great trial or general judgment is not for God's information, that he might hereby

come to the knowledge of men's characters. Human courts or trials are to investigate what men have been guilty of, what their conduct and characters are, that they may be acquitted and rewarded, or condemned and punished according to law and evidence. God knows every man's character and conduct as well before this general judgment as afterwards, therefore it is not that he should receive any information concerning them either good or bad. Neither is it the intention of this public judgment, to change the sentence which was passed on every one at his death. For every soul which departs from this world is in a private manner judged, and immediately sent to one or the other great receivers of departed spirits, agreeable to their characters as righteous or wicked, to wit, heaven or hell. And this public judgment will not alter the sentence which was then pronounced upon them.

But the design of this great and general judgment is to display and illustrate to the universe, the perfect righteousness and justice of God; and the fair and equal judgment, which has been passed upon every individual. Every wicked being in earth and hell thinks God to blame; they imagine that he does wrong, in some way or other, either in permitting sin to enter into the world, suffering it to continue in it, or he acts wrong in shewing mercy to some and not to others, in granting gospel light and privileges to some, while others are overwhelmed in the thick glooms of pagan darkness. For these and a thousand other reasons, they dislike God and his government and feel him to blame. But in the general judgment it will conspicuously appear to angels and devils, saints and sinners, that he is righteous in all his ways and perfectly just and holy in his being, perfections and government, and in all the administrations of his providence and in all his works. In that day the divine character will be cleared of all the false aspersions cast upon it, and the whole universe of beings will acknowledge, that each one was dealt with and treated in the most fair,

equal, candor and righteous manner. Therefore this judgment is styled, "The day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Every one will have an open and public trial, before all his conduct and works will be laid to the rule, and the final adjudication will be accordingly. To him that hath done well, his sentence will be eternal life; but to him that hath obeyed unrighteousness, his sentence shall be indignation and wrath. The fairness and justice of the judicial proceedings will be unexceptionably evident to every one's conscience and judgment. So that the mouths of the wicked shall pronounce themselves guilty; and the righteous shall cry, "Holy and true, O Lord, art thou when thou judgest."

Also the final decision will be perfectly manifest to each individual. Though God needs no information respecting any one's real character, yet there must be evidence given to a person self, and to all others, in order to prove in an explicit manner, his character to be such as it really is. Wherefore works in this public judgment will be produced as the grand proof of any one's character, whether it be good or bad. And this leads to the

Second question arising upon this subject, to wit: What is the benefit and advantage of works in this final and solemn judgment? I must take it for granted, that we all understand what is meant by the term works. They are the productions, fruits and manifestations of the heart. They are every thing by which the heart is made known. God sees the heart intuitively without works, but this is not the case with either angels, devils or men. None can immediately behold the heart of another. Man cannot discern the heart of man, nor angel, of angel. This intuition is the prerogative of God, and is perhaps one of his incommunicable attributes. Wherefore to know the heart, the real character must be known, and this is

only discoverable by works. Man will be distinguished from man, and angel from angel, only by these means.

First, the real state of men will be tried by their works, whether it be a state of sin or holiness.—Then,

Secondly, their works will be proper manifestations of the progress they have made in their states.

First, works in the final judgment will be exhibited as the sole evidence to prove what state a person is in, whether it be that of the righteous or the wicked. As the righteous will be judged first, so their good works will be produced in testimony of the sincerity of their love, faith, repentance, striving against sin, holiness and godly living. Then will the sentence of the judge be, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me, I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me.” On the other hand the evil works of the wicked will be exhibited as the undeniable proof of the badness of their hearts and state. These will prove them workers of iniquity, impenitent, unbelieving, disobedient to the gospel, and transgressors against the light of nature. And their sentence will be, “Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not.” Thus all will be judged according to their works, and the characters of all whether good or bad will be manifested.

Secondly, another use and design of works in the last judg-

ment is, they will serve to prove the advancements which persons have made in their general states. As some are vastly more wicked than others, so some are more righteous and holy than others. Some have had great and distinguished talents, enjoyed higher degrees of light and knowledge, and more eminent advantages, and by their waste and misimprovement and abuse hereof, have exceedingly aggravated their sins, and therefore will be adjudged to a greater degree of suffering.—Hence this public judgment will be more tolerable to some than others. “The servant who knew his master’s will and “did it not shall be beaten with many stripes.” So likewise it will be with the righteous; some have pre-eminently suffered for religion, and made abundantly greater advances in virtue, piety and holiness than others, these will be promoted to superior degrees of happiness in glory. Therefore we read, that in the heavenly kingdom are many mansions, that the twelve apostles shall sit on twelve thrones, and to be exalted on Christ’s right hand and on his left shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared of the Father. Now all these things will be determined in the exact proportion of men’s works. Thus we see the grand design of the general judgment, the purpose and use of works in that day, and all these things illustrate the doctrine in our text, that every one will be judged according to his works.

This subject shall be closed with a few reflections.

First, we are here taught the great importance and absolute necessity of good works. This is an essential article of the gospel, and must be preached by all the ministers of truth. Our Lord says, “Let your light so shine before men, that “others beholding your good works, may glorify your Father “which is in heaven.” And St. Paul enjoins, “Walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work.” This he gives in charge to Titus, “That they who have believed in

“ God, might be careful to maintain good works, for these things are good and profitable unto men. Every good tree will bring forth good fruits.” And where there are not good fruits, or good works, it is an infallible evidence that the tree is not good. And thus it will appear in the future judgment when every one will be tried, acquitted or condemned, according to his works.

Secondly, we learn there will be different degrees of punishment in hell. And no doubt, of all the miserable there, gospel-despising sinners will receive the fullest measure of torment. Christ declares, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Betsaida, and that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for the city of Capernaum. Wherefore let sinners under the light of the gospel particularly consider, that above all others while you continue impenitent, you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. O that you would speedily awake from your fatal security and attend to the things of your peace. “ Awake, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God, if so be he may have mercy upon you, that you perish not.”

Thirdly, we are here taught that there will be different degrees or measures of happiness among the blessed. “ They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. As there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars, so also is the resurrection of the dead.” Numerous passages of scripture teach us that there will be different degrees of glory among the happy according to their various capacities. As one star differs from another star in glory, so also will it be with the blessed.

Lastly, let this doctrine be improved by all who are christi-

and to move them with an holy ambition to aspire after the highest degrees of this glory ; and the way to obtain this honor is to be rich in good works, and to be exercising the highest degrees of love, faith, humility, and every grace.

Let us all be exhorted to bear upon our minds continually, that there is a judgment to come. Let us remember that the judge is at the door, that the Lord Jesus will come quickly, and that he will render to every one as his works shall be. Let us not be found in the state, ways, or practises, of which we shall then be ashamed.

S E R M O N XLI.

The eternal torments of the damned proved.

Mat. 25, xli. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*

THE eternity of the torments of hell, however plainly taught in the oracles of God, is, notwithstanding, denied by some and doubted of by many. There appears to be a growing disbelief of this article of our faith in these days of licentious principles and degenerate manners. It is a doctrine of great utility and high importance, and therefore to be contended for with earnestness, and not to be yielded to the enemies of truth as a matter of indifference or a thing of no moment. "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," is an apostolic injunction. That this is an article to be held with firmness and steadfastness appears from its being so frequently inculcated in the word of God, from the use which is there made of it, to alarm sinners to attend to the concerns of their souls, and from its being the strongest natural motive to engage men to seek their salvation and to restrain them from open courses of vice. The doctrine of everlasting punishment

carries the business of natural motives to the highest possible degree of force.

It is true the effect produced by it upon mankind is far, very far from being answerable to the high nature of the argument. But, if this be the case under this mighty argument, what would be the consequence, if it were weaker? If the strongest possible motive that can be produced to excite men to seek their salvation proves ineffectual, surely were the motive weaker, the effect would be less in proportion. If a motive inconceivably strong and powerful in its own nature, which is now the case, has so little influence, it is plain an inferior motive, which would be the state of matters if the punishment of the wicked were only for a limited time, would have a very inconsiderable effect, if any at all. Were the sentiment to become common, it would remove in a great part the restraint upon men's consciences, and they would be more abandoned to the world and their lusts than they now are. Were this opinion given up, which never can be relinquished by the plain believers of the bible, the strongest considerations whereby the souls of men can be touched, must be surrendered also. I appeal to fact; only look into the places and societies, which hold the universal principle, is there not, I do not say of religion, but a manifest failure of common virtue and common morals? The censure I grant is heavy, but it rests with them to exhibit the contrary.

All know and feel that fear is a powerful principle in the human constitution, and those who renounce the eternity of hell's torments, reject the highest motive by which that principle can be moved or operated upon. These are some of the reasons which show the generally received doctrine to be important, and that it is necessary at proper times to advance the evidences whereon it depends. We shall endeavour to lay before you a

few of the arguments from reason and revelation whereby it is supported.

As this discourse is intended to be of a practical nature, and aims at interesting the heart of every hearer, as well as administering light to the understanding and conviction to the judgment, I shall not go into the obtruse and more strict method of reasoning, which might be expedient upon a proper occasion, but confine myself to such easy and obvious observations as may render the doctrine plain to the unprejudiced and feeblest understanding. I know it is a fruitless attempt to combat a weak mind under strong prepossessions.

First, that the punishment of souls in hell will be everlasting or eternal is evident from this, that from the nature of sin and their own nature, they deserve everlasting punishment. If they merit such a punishment, justice requires it should be inflicted. If sinners ought to be punished according to their desert, the rules of law and justice oblige it to be done. We are assured from the word of God, that he will do in all cases that which is just and perfectly right, therefore if finally impenitent sinners deserve eternal punishment, it will be inflicted upon them. All that remains to render this argument unanswerable is to show that sinners do justly deserve an eternal punishment. This appears from the nature of sin continuing to be unrepented of, that it is an exceedingly ill deserving thing. Every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God, or else it deserves no punishment at all, and it would be wrong to inflict any punishment upon a sinner either in this world or in the next. To suppose or suggest that sin deserves no punishment at all, is to surmise that sin is no fault, nor blame worthy. But this would be an express contradiction, and saying, that sin is not sin. For the very notion and nature of sin is, that it is an evil, faulty thing, and worthy of blame. To say it is blame worthy is the same as to say it is worthy of punishment. If it deserves no punishment, it is not an evil. The very nature of a morally

evil action is that it merits punishment. If it be allowed there is any punishment inflicted on men either here or hereafter, it is either just or unjust; the latter would be to impute unrighteousness to God, therefore the former is established.

The reason why sin deserves any punishment is because of its evil or faultiness, hence it deserves punishment in that degree in which it is evil or faulty. To say, that the reason of its desert of punishment is the evil and faultiness of it, and yet to deny it deserves it in that degree in which it is evil or faulty, would be a palpable contradiction. As the faultiness of sin is the reason of its desert of punishment; hence it must merit it exactly according to the degree of its faultiness. Therefore an act which has one degree of blameableness in it, must have one degree of punishment; that which has two degrees must for the same reason merit two degrees of punishment, and thus it will proceed to infinity, and if there be any evil which contains an infinite degree of faultiness, then such evil deserves a proportionable punishment or none at all. Because if a crime of a high degree of faultiness do not deserve a high degree of punishment, then surely a crime with only one or a small degree of faultiness can deserve no punishment at all, or next to none. Which amounts to the same as to say it is no crime, or the faultiness of an action is not the reason of its desert of punishment. The consequence of this is, there would be no such thing as sin, law, justice, or evil in the universe. And thus we are got to the end of all government and religion, virtue and vice, right and wrong at once.

Moreover the degree of the evil of an action will always be in proportion to the worthiness and excellency of the object against which it is committed; but as God is an object of infinite excellency and worthiness, hence every sin as committed against him is an exceeding great evil, therefore in strict justice deserves the highest possible punishment. Sin considered exclu-

ely as committed against mankind, or a mere transgression of the laws of human society, is always finite in its nature, and can never arise higher however heinous the crime may be, and therefore it never does, nor can receive more than a finite punishment. The punishment of man for offences committed against man are always of this nature. But as it is against God and the degree of its faultiness is according to the infinite dignity of the divine nature, hence the punishment must be the greatest possible, it must be in the highest degree and of the most unlimited duration.

The sin or faultiness of an action arises from and consists in the violation of some obligation the person is under. If a person be under no obligation he can commit no fault; for where there is no law there is no transgression. Now if sin consists in and arises from the violation of an obligation, and if the obligation violated be infinite, then the act itself contains in its very nature an inconceivable degree of evil or faultiness; but God is a being to whom all rational creatures are under the highest possible obligation, therefore every sin against him is an evil beyond created conception, and hence it must receive the greatest measure of punishment, and the justice of God requires that the same should be inflicted. Therefore the torments of hell will surely be eternal. For God will deal with every one strictly according to his works; and finite creatures can in no other way be the subjects of the greatest possible punishment, or a punishment adequate to their demerit, but by suffering to the utmost extent of their capacities throughout the whole of their interminable existence.

Secondly, it is evident the future sufferings of the wicked will be everlasting or eternal from the nature of that state into which they pass at death. It is a state of the most perfect misery. It is designed of God for this very purpose, therefore all who were sentenced to that place must necessarily be miserable. Many have gone from our world to these

abodes of woe, and many are still going thither from year to year. And they are as full of misery as their souls can hold, and as long as they continue in that state they must be miserable from the very nature of it. If there be no other state to which they can pass, if this be the final and last condition of the wicked and there remains no further change or removal during their existence, and they must spend their existence here, and their existence will be eternal, then it is plain their punishment or misery must be eternal also.

It is evident from the scriptures that there are but two apartments in the eternal world, which are the receptacles of souls that go from this, to wit, heaven and hell. The latter is represented as the final state of those who die impenitent, unpardoned and in their sins. There is not the least hint of any other state, nor any reason or necessity to suppose another, these two answering to the two characters among mankind, the righteous and the wicked, therefore a third state would be wholly superfluous. And however this is believed in popish countries, it is altogether unfounded both in reason and revelation. Now as this is the case, that the state into which the wicked pass at death is their final condition, and there is no future change to take place, therefore their misery will be eternal.

Thirdly, it is certain that the torments of the wicked will be everlasting from their temper and character. Their tempers and dispositions are such that they can never be brought into a reconciliation to God, but by almighty power and divine grace creating in them a new heart. And it is absolutely certain God will never exert his gracious power to any such purpose; there is not the least intimation of any such thing in his word, but there are abundant declarations of a contrary nature. He has utterly abandoned them to their enmity, malice, and all the corruptions of their hearts. Their enmity and wickedness is the reason of their condemnation at first, and as long as the same temper and disposition continues, so long it is

perfectly proper they should be held under punishment. For the reason that makes any conduct on the part of God, or any sufferings on the part of sinners just and righteous at any time, will render them so at all times while the reason continues on which they are grounded. If therefore the damnation of the wicked was right, when they were first turned into hell, it must remain equally so to all eternity; because the reason and ground of it will always be the same, even perfect, increasing and invincible enmity to God and all goodness. Natural evil will never cure moral evil; nothing can effect this but the gracious operations of the Spirit of God. Hence if it was right to condemn them to hell, it will be equally right they should be kept there forever. The damned who have been there from the beginning, have not grown better, but worse; therefore there can be no possible motive for their release. They continually employ themselves in new acts, exertions, and exercises of hatred, malice and enmity to all that is good, hereby their guilt will be continually encreasing, and their desert of punishment in quality and weight as their moments do in number. Thus, according to all rules of justice and propriety, the torments of hell instead of abating, must increase, and never come to an end.

Fourthly, the sufferings of the damned can by no means make any atonement for sin. Two things are essentially necessary in making an atonement; that all the sufferings be borne which the penalty of the law threatens and requires; and that they be borne from principles of perfect obedience to the law, and from love and duty to the lawgiver. If either of these conditions be wanting, the sufferings can contain nothing of the nature of atonement. He may suffer myriads of ages, and these myriads multiplied into themselves myriads of times, the case will still be the same, there will not be the least atoning efficacy in his sufferings. The certainty of these requisites in the atonement for sin, is capable of the strictest demonstration. To

suffer the penalty which the law requires in order to satisfy its demands is self-evident, and the necessity of these sufferings being performed from love and obedience, seems equally clear and striking. An atonement must imply something in it acceptable to the lawgiver, and all acceptableness to God arises from obedience, and none will pretend there is either love or obedience in the sufferings of hell; therefore their punishment, however long endured, can make no atonement for sin. All the sufferings in that world are from invincible constraint and necessity. They are bound down under them by the almighty power of God against their wills. They would break out of hell, destroy God, usurp his throne, and murder all his faithful subjects were it in their power. But all the devils and damned in the infernal regions, in the most violent exertions of their rage and malice, are as nothing in the hands of the Most High; they have such an awful sense and assurance hereof as fills them with distraction and despair. All these things serve to demonstrate there can be no period to their sufferings, but that they must be everlasting. This doctrine might be strongly argued from the consideration of the ends of divine government in the infliction of punishments,—and from the nature and infinitely valuable sufferings of Christ for the redemption of men,—and from the qualities, virtues and principles contained in his atonement for sin; but these arguments are too extensive and so lemn to treat in a short and desultory way, in which the nature of a contracted pulpit discourse obliges me to consider things.

Wherefore I proceed to the

Last argument I propose at present to offer in support of our doctrine. And it is a consideration not only conclusive and decisive in itself, but it gives additional weight and ratifying force to all the preceding. It is this :

The holy scriptures do abundantly, repeatedly and in express

terms, declare and affirm, that the punishment of the wicked in hell will be eternal. The first passage I would produce is from the prophecy of Isaiah—"And they, that is the saved of the Lord, shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." No words can be more express than these in asserting the perfect, compleat and everlasting destruction of transgressors; nor any declaration of this doctrine be plainer in prophetic language. It is the genius of the prophetic stile to express spiritual and eternal things in bold figures, and by sensible and material images. Daniel affords another authority in point:—"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to ever-lasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Here the assertion is explicit, that the shame and contempt of some who shall be raised at the last day, will be everlasting or eternal. The next authority is in Malachi:—"Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." The declaration here is descriptive and strong. It exhibits the greatness of God's just indignation against the proud and all that do wickedly. God will bring total and absolute destruction upon them. They shall be burnt up root and branch. Their ruin shall be perfect and compleat as of that which is wholly consumed. Now contemplate the nature of this ruin, root and branch, and the subjects of it, who are designed for an eternal duration, and it affords an undeniable proof of the doctrine, that the miseries of the damned will be unmixed and everlasting.

The new Testament abounds with authorities to the same purpose. How particular is our Lord's affirmation in this matter. Three times he repeatedly declares, "The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." He files their tor-

ment unquenchable fire, and describes their anguish by weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. And the final sentence he pronounces on the wicked is, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." To which may be added the solemn reflection he makes in our text, "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Can any words more expressly hold forth the endless duration of the miseries of the finally impenitent.

Various are the objections brought forward against this doctrine, such as that God is too good and merciful a being to punish his creatures with eternal misery. Such persons may be asked, is not God too good and merciful to punish his creatures at all? Is it not cruel to afflict them with pain, misery and death? This we see constantly before our eyes; and there is certainly no cruelty in the one case more than in the other. Cruelty cannot be attributed to God. All the punishment which he inflicts both in this world and the next is perfectly just. Justice and cruelty never dwell together. Therefore there can be no injustice with God in the everlasting sufferings of the wicked.—But it is also objected that the word everlasting is used to express a limited duration, as also the words forever and ever, &c. This is true, but in all those places, it is obvious to the feeblest mind, that the nature of the subjects spoken of evidently show, that they are temporary, changeable, and their continuance limited. But is this the case in any one instance when they are used to express matters of an unlimited duration? Surely not. Is this the case, when they are employed to express the duration of God, his perfections, government, dominion, heaven and the happiness thereof? If not, why should they be limited when applied to the duration of hell and its torments? If they express a limited duration in the latter instances so likewise in the former? If hell be temporary so also is heaven and the divine existence itself, for the very same terms are used to express the one as the other. And they are often

contrasted and the one set over against the other, to teach us the equal duration of both. This verse containing our text is an instance of this contrast as well as many others. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Here the word everlasting and eternal is precisely the same in the original; and its evident intention is to instruct us in the equal duration of both. If the one be eternal so also is the other. These things show us that the eternity of hell is as absolutely certain as the eternity of heaven. Wherefore let all beware how they believe and depend upon the dangerous principle, that the sufferings of the future state will come to an end.

But to the authorities already mentioned, it might be easy to adduce a multitude of others; as, "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever," &c. Let what has been said suffice for the present. If these things will not convince the serious and attentive mind, there is reason to fear their conviction will come too late.—

The subject shall be finished in a few reflections.

First, we are here taught to magnify the love and grace of God displayed by Jesus Christ in contriving, and executing a plan of salvation, whereby guilty sinners may thro' faith in the blood of the lamb, escape from all this endless woe. This doctrine sets the mercy of God and the compassion of the Saviour in a most conspicuous light. Oh, let us praise the Lord for the offers of eternal life in the gospel. Let the love of God the Father and the Son constrain us to relinquish the old apostacy, to forsake our sins, and turn unto him with our whole heart, so that we may live and not eternally perish.

Secondly, we here learn the preciousness and ineffable value of the immortal soul. It is capable of and designed for an eternal existence. The body must soon drop into the dust, and all the beauties and glories of the world will be no more. But then the soul enters into an everlasting and unchangeable state of happiness or misery. If penitent and united to Christ, it enters into that grand apartment in eternity, called heaven. Here is the throne of God and the lamb. This whole region is perfect light, love, grace and glory, and the soul entering into it, its capacity will be completely filled with the most consummate felicity. Blessed and happy are all they who have entered into the state of glory, for heaven will never come to an end. This works up the pleasure to extacy that it will be everlasting.—But on the other hand; if the soul be unconverted, impenitent and unrighteous at death, as soon as it is dislodged from the body, it plunges into that gloomy and tormenting division of eternity, where it is instantly filled in every part and faculty with all the fulness of the wrath of Jehovah. Here they will blaspheme God, and rend and tear one another, and foam and gnash their teeth, and bound thro' the burning surges for ever and ever. Whose heart does not tremble at the thought? Let the horrors of the scene be wrought up by the strongest imagination, they fall infinitely short of what every unholy person is liable to every moment. You stand, O sinners, on slippery places, and all beneath is hell. Let these things sound an alarm to the heart of every unconverted sinner, and awake him out of his deep security before it be forever too late. O sinners, awake to repentance and flee from the wrath that is to come; lay hold on the hope which is now offered in the gospel; that you may escape this direful misery, and be introduced into the joys of Paradise. And that this may be the glorious habitation of us all throughout the unending ages of eternity, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be all glory, honor, dominion and praise, forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

S E R M O N XLII.

The nature and felicity of the Celestial State.

Matt. xxv. 34. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

AFTER the resurrection, in the close of the general judgment when the grand process shall have been finished, then the final sentence will be pronounced upon all in perfect equity and righteousness, according as their characters shall be found to be. The proceedings of this great day are here in this chapter displayed before us. The glorious appearance of the judge, the splendor of his advent, and the magnificence of his attendants, are described in all the glowing beauties and strength of language. When you read, you seem as if you saw Jesus seated on the throne of his glory and all nations assembled in his presence. You behold him separating this promiscuous throng one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. This separation will be as exact as it will be just. The most in-

considerable saint will not be lost in the crowd of sinners, nor the most plausible sinner concealed in the throng of saints. Every one will be brought forward, and have a particular, open and fair trial, so that all will be perfectly convinced, on which hand he must be placed. Thus speaks the prophet Ezekiel, "As for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God, behold I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats." A perfect scrutiny will be made, so that it will be accurately determined, who are sheep and who are goats. The separation being completed, the two grand divisions of the universe will be situated, the one on the right, and the other on the left of the glorious judge. In this tremendous situation, he will first address himself to those fixed in the most honorable place. "Then shall the king say unto them, 'on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'", Thus when the process is finished, and the transporting sentence pronounced, all the heavenly arches will ring with joy, in the passing of the righteous to everlasting life. Christ Jesus, when he came in the flesh, made a mean appearance in the eyes of a carnal world, was a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness, was as a root out of dry ground without form or comeliness, rejected and despised of men; but now on the seat of judgment, he appears in all the shining splendor of a king, arrayed in all the regalia and effulgence of the celestial state, beaming forth in all the radiancy of him, who was clothed with the sun and had the moon under his feet. Earthly kings appearing in the robes of their dignity, shed a splendor around them on the gaping multitudes, but when Jesus the king of kings appears, the transcendent brilliancy of his glory will infinitely more outshine earthly royalty, than royalty excels the rags and mien of the most abject slave. In all the grandeur of heavenly majesty the sentence will be uttered to the joy of all those who have made their peace with God. Their good works will be produced as the evidences of their appro-

bation. Thus the judge enforces the rectitude of his decision. "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me, I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me." And as a further evidence of their righteousness and that they had imbibed the spirit of the gospel, "Then shall the righteous answer, Lord when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison and came unto thee?" The king will then reply to these righteous and humble dictates of their hearts, "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The sentence contains in it the complete blessedness and perfect felicity of all saints. Their happiness in all respects will be adequate to their holiness in this life, and their extensive and growing capacities in the next. They will then pass from glory to glory throughout eternity.

It may be observed, this important sentence contains two principal things.

First, the acknowledging of the saints to be blessed of the Lord. "Come ye blessed of my Father."

Secondly, the happiness of that glorious state into which they are admitted. "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world."—In this sentence is contained

First, the acknowledgment of the saints to be the blessed of the Lord. "Come ye blessed of my Father."

Christ pronounces them blessed and this declaration proves

them to be so. They are the blessed of the Father; tho' cursed and reproached by the world, yet they are blessed of God. The Holy Ghost glorifies the Son, and the Son glorifies the Father, and the Father blesses and glorifies the redeemed and sanctified, and thus the eternal Trinity are all intimately concerned in the accomplishment of the everlasting blessedness of the heirs of felicity. When Christ calls them to come, this is no other than an hearty welcome to the glories prepared for them. He formerly in this world called upon them by his word and by his spirit to come unto him, that they might be partakers of grace and life; then the call was to self denial, to mortification, to take up their cross and to follow him. The call in the estimation of the world was to shame, contempt, suffering and foolishness; but now it is to glory, immortality, and the full fruition of God and perfect felicity forever. They who formerly obeyed his call and followed him bearing the cross, will now enjoy his beatific presence, wearing a crown. Harken to the extatic pleasure of the address. "Come ye blessed of my Father, ye
 "beloved of my soul, for whom I have travailed and been in
 "pain, for whom I have endured toil, anxiety, sufferings and
 "oppression to the sweating of great drops of blood; for
 "whom I have trod the wine-press of divine wrath, and gone
 "through death and hell; come ye into my tenderest embraces, ye who are highly favored of the Lord and whom the
 "majesty of heaven delighteth to honor." O with what raptures of joy will this address fill the hearts of the righteous!—How will it cause them to sing the glorious riches of free grace, the wonders of redeeming love, the praises of God and the lamb? The saints in this pilgrimage and imperfect state may with humble boldness approach to the throne of grace; but when they shall come boldly to the throne of glory. This word, "Come ye blessed of my father," holds out the golden sceptre, with a full assurance that the desires of their hearts shall be satisfied, and the whole of a heavenly kingdom shall be conferred upon them. The king addresses them from the

throne of his glory, and hereby admits them to be kings and priests in mansions of glory forever. All power in heaven and earth is given unto the Son, and he introduces all the righteous into the heavenly Canaan, for none obtain entrance there but by his approbation ; therefore they are such in whom the divine perfections were designed to be glorified from all eternity.— They are the saved according to the eternal purpose, blessed in the father's design, called in time, sanctified by the spirit, and now they receive all that perfection of blessedness, which they heretofore only had in promise and earnest at their first sanctification. Thus they are actually and completely blessed of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—Proceed to the

Second consideration, to wit, the happiness of that glorious state into which they are admitted. “ Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

In regard to the nature of the happiness of heaven, we can know but little in this dark world, after our most careful attention, painful study and diligent researches. The most favoured and the most advanced saints upon earth, see but darkly as through a glass. “ We know, says St. Paul, but in part, and we prophesy in part ; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which was in part shall be done away.— “ When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to understand, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” The glory and felicity prepared for the blessed, we shall have, a very imperfect idea of, while in this embodied state. After we have contemplated all the descriptions of it in our bibles together with all the additions which fanciful imagination can suggest, we may still be assured, that they fall infinitely short of a perfect picture. But as the sacred oracles give us many

descriptions of the celestial glory to quicken and comfort saints and to allure and persuade sinners, for the encouragement and consolation of those who hope to enjoy this inheritance, we shall briefly exhibit a few of them. A leading line in the business is the transcendent felicity expressed in our text, "Inherit it the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." To inherit a kingdom is the fullness of the ambition of the human mind. This is what the proud, the enterprising and the brave wade through seas of blood to obtain; for this hecatombs of mortals have been sacrificed; for this all the exertions of human invention, good and bad, have been practised. A kingdom is reckoned the most valuable acquisition by mortals on earth. In their view it comprehends all honor, wealth and happiness. They, who possess a kingdom, wear the glories of a crown, sway the sceptre of dignity, possess the ensigns of royalty, enjoy the pleasures of a court, and command the treasures of their dominions. This is a feeble resemblance of the kingdom of heaven. The saints who are here pilgrims, strangers, prisoners, accounted the outcasts and outpourings of the earth, shall then, to the astonishment of all worlds, inherit a kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar divested of birds feathers, and his fingers of eagles claws, with adjusted hair, combed head, and dressed in royal robes, affords only a faint resemblance of an abject, hell-deserving wretch who is raised to the glory of heaven. "God raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes even with the princes of his people. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, to him will be given power over the nations." The kingdom which christians will enjoy is a prepared kingdom, prepared at infinite expense of labour, pains and blood. That happiness must surely be indescribably great which is the production of divine counsels. The preparation for the reception of the saints mocks all the powers of description. Love originated the plan, wisdom and

power executed the greatness of the sacrifice. God has purchased the kingdom by his blood, and is pleased to prepare a place; "I go, says he to his disciples, to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The kingdom is preparing for them, and in this world they are preparing for the kingdom. The preparing the kingdom speaks forth the perfect happiness of all those who shall enter into it. Their interest in it is hereby held forth to view, and it is adapted to the nature of the sanctified; it is prepared for them by name, for they are personally and particularly chosen to salvation. It is a kingdom of early original, for it was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. This is a phrase expressing the same idea as everlasting or eternity. This happiness was designed for the saints, and they for it before time began. Thus speaks St. Paul, "Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Thus it is a kingdom prepared from eternity, which the saints shall enjoy; hence they shall be invested with royal authority, royal dignity and honor. For when they enter this kingdom, they shall ascend thrones, have sceptres put into their hands and crowns of gold, not like the changing diadems of this world, but crowns placed upon their heads that never change or fade away. They will be dressed in royal robes more rich and refulgent than ermin and glittering gold. They will be arrayed in immaculate robes, which can never be soiled or stained, in white robes, robes made white by the blood of the Lamb. When thus adorned, their palace will be the royal city even the new Jerusalem. The building of the wall of which is of Jasper, the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, its gates are pearl and its streets of pure gold, as it were transparent glass. It is so widely different from every thing

royal on earth, and from every terrestrial city, that there is no need of the sun or moon there, for the glory of God doth lighten it and the lamb is the light thereof. In this glorious kingdom every thing is in a state of perfection, peace, holiness, knowledge, righteousness, happiness and joy. No errors, ignorance, collision of sentiments, party spirit or private interest, will be there. God and Christ will be there perfectly known, and the saints will be forever lost in admiration of the unrivalled beauties of Godhead, and the emanations of divine love. They will wander with heavenly pleasure, and raptures of delight thro' all the perfections and attributes of God. They themselves will there be perfect in the beauties of holiness, free from sin and every moral impurity; from every evil bias, wicked thought and perverse inclination. Nothing that is unclean or defileth enters there. They will no more be troubled with the risings of pride or corrupt passions; here will be a perfect conformity to the perfect image of God. Universal benevolence, unremitting harmony, and perfect love to God, angels and one another will reign throughout the whole kingdom. All peace and joy of which holy beings are capable, will in complete fulness be possessed there. The tabernacle of God is with men, he shall dwell with them, they shall be his people and he will be their God and portion forever. "All tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." There will be no sighing, complaining, nor mortification, shame nor regret, in these happy regions. Every thing tending to enlarge and encrease their felicity they shall enjoy. In this blessed world the saints shall have sweet fellowship and rapturous communion with God and Jesus Christ. They shall have free-intercourse with the angels, and enjoy the uninterrupted friendship and blisful society one of another. There they shall hold happy converse with Gabriel, Michael, with seraphim and cherubim, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

with Moses, Elias, Paul and John, with their former Christian acquaintance, and with all the saints, who as a cloud had gone before them. All this blessedness and felicity shall be eternal; it shall be growing and encreasing forever and ever. These are but a few remarks upon the various representations which the holy scriptures afford us. And these no doubt fall infinitely short of the reality.

This discourse shall be concluded with a few reflections.

First, how should we be here led to admire the condescension, love and goodness of God in ever entertaining the merciful thought of advancing any of the apostate race of Adam to such honor and glory! How should we magnify and praise the exceeding greatness of his compassion in giving his only begotten Son to procure this felicity! How should we love and adore the Son who trod the wine press of his Father's wrath, and yielded up his life on the accursed tree, that we might be introduced into such glory? That we who are clods of earth should be made to shine as the stars in the firmament? That we who are dust and ashes might become as angels of light? Yea, that we who are sinners and heirs of hell might be formed into saints and constituted heirs of God? Who can comprehend the length and breadth, the depth and height of the love of Christ, which passeth all understanding? Can we bear of all this glory of the blessed, and yet cleave to earth? Can we indulge a carnal temper, and be of a groveling worldly spirit, under the view of such celestial blessedness?

Secondly, seeing there is such a glorious kingdom set before us, we ought solemnly to enquire whether we have any title thereto. There will not be a promiscuous admission of all into this happy world. In the great day of the Lord a separation will be made between the goats and the sheep. None will be admitted there but the righteous, true believers, and sin-

cere penitents. We must repent of our sins, accept of the gospel by faith, and be working the works of righteousness, or we will never stand in glory on the right hand of our judge. Wherefore let us examine ourselves to day whether we have any scriptural ground to hope that we shall be heirs of this kingdom. Have we ever been effectually convinced of the evil of sin? Have we ever seen and felt the plague of our own hearts, have we been reduced by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit to renounce all dependence upon ourselves, and to lay hold on Christ Jesus by faith, the hope of glory? Have our souls taken up their everlasting rest in him, and is he above all things precious to us? Have we the laws of the kingdom written upon our hearts? Are we holy in heart and life? Is heaven our treasure, and are our hearts placed there? Have we preavailingly a single eye to the glory of God? In a word, are we honestly and sincerely endeavoring to be holy in all manner of conversation.

Those who from these few remarks entertain a blessed hope that you will be heirs of this kingdom, be ye exhorted to walk answerable to your profession and expectations. See that you be purifying yourselves as Christ is pure. Look constantly at the prize set before you. Let it command your diligence, zeal, activity, and every exertion. So run that you may obtain. O take heed, lest any should seem to come short of this glory.

Those of you, my unhappy hearers, who know you have no lot nor interest in this matter, who have neither faith nor repentance, neither sanctification nor justification, be exhorted to consider your miserable and dangerous situation. What, O what if you were to die in your present condition? The prospect of horror before you is too gloomy to mention. O sinners how long will you love the pleasures of sin, which last only for a season, and despise the pleasures of heaven which will

- But forever? how long will you waste your precious time in vanity and giddy amusements, when you know not the moment death will arrest you and bear you to the bar of God? Awake, O sinner, and consider what you are doing, and to what misery you are hastening. Pause, ponder, consider, turn and flee for your life to the city of refuge. Flee into the arms of Jesus that you may be placed on his right hand in the great day of his appearance, and may be addressed with the transporting sentence, "Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

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