

THEOLOGY,

IN A

SERIES OF SERMONS,

IN THE ORDER OF

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM.

BY

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TO THE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION,
ELIZABETH-TOWN,
THE FOLLOWING COURSE OF
SERMONS,
PREPARED AND DELIVERED, ESPECIALLY FOR THEIR INSTRU-
TION AND BENEFIT,
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,
AS AN EXPRESSION OF AFFECTION,
BY THEIR PASTOR,
THE AUTHOR.

Presented to the
Theological Seminary
By the Author

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SERMON I.

THE BEING OF A GOD.

PSALM XIV. 1. FIRST CLAUSE.

“ *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*”

THE doctrine which lies at the foundation of all religion, whether natural or revealed, is the *Being of a God*. This doctrine is, in our text, denied by the fool, as the Psalmist styles him.

A *fool* is one, who acts as if he did not possess reason. This appellation is appropriately given to the Atheist; for he contradicts the plainest dictates of reason, when he makes the assertion, “there is no God.” On this passage, one has justly observed, “none but a fool would have made such an assertion.”

Although there have been some in our world, so foolish and presumptuous, as to advance the sentiment, “there is no God;” and avow their belief in it; yet, it is questionable, whether there is, or ever has been, such a human being as a real Atheist in principle. Many doubtless have wished there was no God. And our text seems rather to express the desire, than the belief of the fool. The literal translation of our text from the original is, “the fool hath said in his heart, no God.” But whatever the wishes of depraved men may be, it is at least doubtful, whether any one has been able to attain to a belief, excluding all doubt, that there is no God.

A real Atheist in principle, if there be such a being, is blind, through the exceeding wickedness of his heart, to the plainest dictates of reason and common sense; an enemy to the happiness of mankind; and merits universal execration. And indeed, in some nations, the avowal of atheistical principles has been so execrated as to be punished with death.

Is there a God? or in other words, is there an eternal, self-existent, necessarily existing, active, and intel-

ligent Being, the cause of all things? To answer this inquiry is the object of the present discourse.

The affirmative answer to this question, so immediately, and irresistibly forces itself upon the mind, that we ought rather to admit it as a self-evident principle, than attempt to prove it. But the folly and madness of some in our world, who advance the sentiment, that "there is no God;" and who endeavour to persuade themselves and others of its truth, render this inquiry proper. It is not for a moment suspected, that there is present an Atheist in principle; and if there were, scarcely any hope would be entertained, of convincing him of his error. For he denies first principles, and the most evident dictates of reason and common sense; and therefore there could scarcely be any hope, that he would be convinced by arguments founded on these principles. But it may be instructing and comforting to those who acknowledge the being of a God, to know the arguments, by which this doctrine is supported, and to be enabled to silence cavillers, by giving a reason for their belief.

The mode of proof used by the Apostle Paul, Rom. i. 20. "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," is obvious to all; and must irresistibly carry conviction to the minds of all, who are not determined to resist the plainest dictates of reason and common sense. The same mode of reasoning will be pursued in this discourse, and the being of a God be argued from the works of creation.

The principle is assumed, that we ourselves exist, and that there are beings around us. This principle is so self-evident, that it cannot possibly be made clearer by any reasoning. And if any can be so foolishly sceptical, as to assert that we cannot be assured of our own existence, it would be equally foolish to attempt to argue with them. This then we take for granted as a first principle, and self evident truth, that we ourselves, and those things around us which impress our bodily senses do exist.

We observe next, that no being or thing, which now exists, could make itself, or come into being of itself; for this would be a gross contradiction and palpable ab-

surdity. Nothing can never produce something. This is a plain, self-evident truth. And therefore if anything create itself, it must be something, and exist before it is created; for creation is an act, and a non-entity cannot act. And at the same time to be created, it is necessary that it should not exist; for if it does already exist, it cannot afterwards begin to exist, or be created. Hence we see, that anything to create itself, must exist in order to create, and not exist in order to be created; that is, it must exist and not exist at the same time, which is a most gross and palpable contradiction and absurdity. Indeed these absurdities, that nothing can produce something, or that anything can have made itself, are so palpable, that I am authorized to say, no Atheist, either ancient or modern has dared to assert them.

Hence we observe again, that every thing which begins to be, must have a cause. This, Atheists themselves must allow, or run into the absurdity just mentioned, that something made itself. And indeed, they do allow it; but to avoid the necessity of supposing a first cause, or a God, they have asserted that there is an eternal succession of causes and effects; or that one thing produced another from eternity. But this will run us again into an absurdity; for each cause must depend for its existence on the one immediately preceding. But there is no end to infinity, and therefore we never can arrive at the first in the train; but without a first, it is evident, there cannot be a second, or any succeeding cause. Or if we suppose ourselves to arrive at a first cause, to which we are necessarily driven, to account for the existence of all the others in the series, we must either suppose a cause prior to this, on which it depends for its existence, which is absurd, to suppose a cause prior to the first cause; or else we must suppose that this first cause created itself, which involves the old absurdity of being, and not being at the same time; or else we must suppose that this first cause is eternal, and never began to be, and therefore God; which is the only possible way in which we can consistently account for the existence of all things.

Thus we are necessarily driven to the conclusion, that something always existed. For if there had been a time when nothing existed, it is certain not anything ever

could have existed; for nothing could never produce something. And therefore, as it is certain something now exists, it is equally certain something always has existed, and never began to be. We cannot possibly deny the latter, without denying the former. We cannot deny the existence of an eternal being, without involving a denial of our own existence, and the existence of all things else. And if any man is so foolish as to run into this absurdity, he is not to be reasoned with. Hence, the existence of an eternal being, the cause of all things else, is as certain, as that anything now exists. We cannot consistently account for the existence of anything in any other way; and every other supposition runs us into contradictions and absurdities.

This eternal Being must be *self-existent*; by which is meant, not that he derived his existence from himself, or that he created himself; for this would lead us into the absurdity of being and not being at the same time; but that he is uncaused, and independent on any other being for his existence. It is evident, the eternal First Cause must be such a being; because there is no other from whom he can derive his existence.

He must also *necessarily exist*. That is, existence is essential to his nature, and it is impossible that he should not have always existed, or that he should cease to exist; for as he could not come into existence by his own will, or the will of another, he must necessarily exist.

He must also be an *active* being; for without activity he could not be the cause of all things else. And to suppose the first Cause inactive, or incapable of activity, is to suppose him incapable of producing an effect. And therefore as without a first cause, not anything could ever have existed, so equally without an active first cause.

Further this Being must be *intelligent*; for we see intelligent creatures; and as well may we suppose nothing capable of producing something, which is absurd, as to suppose a being without intelligence capable of producing an intelligent creature.

From the preceding reasoning we see, that the existence of an eternal, uncaused, necessary existing, and active being, is necessary to the existence of any thing else, and that without the existence of such a being, not

anything could possibly now exist; and further that this Being must be intelligent, in order to produce intelligent creatures. Such a Being we call God; and therefore, there is a God, which was the point proposed to be proved.

To impress the foregoing reasoning more forcibly upon your minds, permit me briefly to repeat its outlines. Something now exists. The things which are, could not create themselves; and therefore every thing which begins to be must have a cause extrinsic to itself. An eternal succession of causes, without a first is absurd; and therefore we must look for the cause of all things in a first cause, without which nothing could now exist. As this first cause could not create himself, he must be eternal, self-existent, and necessarily existing; and as he must be the cause of all things else, and of mind as well as matter, he must be an active and intelligent being. Hence the existence of such a being, or of God, is as certain as that we or anything else now exist; and we cannot consistently deny the being of a God, without denying our own existence, and that of all things else.

Here perhaps the Atheist may object, since the existence of such a being is necessary to the existence of other things, why may not matter be such a being? and why may we not suppose, that the things which now exist took their present form, from a fortuitous concourse of atoms of matter? This indeed is the manner in which Atheists have accounted for the existence of things. They see the necessity of an eternal being, and therefore they give this eternity to matter; and suppose the present form of things to be owing to chance, or a fortuitous concourse of atoms of matter which had from eternity floated through the immensity of space.

To this objection we may answer; it is absurd to attribute such great perfections as eternity, and self-existence, to such a sluggish and inert being as matter, which we know is incapable of motion unless impressed upon it by a cause extrinsic to itself, or produced by fixed laws, which indicates a being superior to itself, who made it subject to these laws. Besides if matter be eternal and the cause of all things, it must be the cause of mind, and intelligent beings. But it is not possible,

that inert and unintelligent matter, should produce an immaterial, essentially active, thinking, and intelligent being, entirely different, and more noble in its nature and operations. For we might as well suppose, nothing capable of producing something, as that a being without activity and intelligence, should produce a being active and intelligent.

But the sentiment that matter is eternal, and the cause of all things, will appear still more absurd, if we attend to the manner in which Atheists, on this principle, account for the present form of things; viz. that this world, and the heavenly bodies, assumed their present appearance, and their orderly and harmonious situation, from atoms of matter, floating at random through the immensity of space, and coming together by chance. And that all the things upon this earth, even men, have originally sprung from it.

This contradicts the most obvious dictates of common sense, that such unity, order, harmony, and appearance of intelligence and design, should be the effect of chance. If a building constructed according to the rules of art, with commodious apartments, were found in a wilderness, or on an uninhabited Island, would even Atheists, though it were not known that ever man had been there, suppose that this building was owing to chance, or had assumed this form from floating atoms? would they not immediately conclude that some intelligent architect, though unknown to them, had, before, been in this place, and reared this edifice?

Here permit me to subjoin on this subject, the very appropriate, and conclusive reasoning of Cicero, a Heathen writer. "Who can be so mad that when he looks up towards the heavens, does not believe that there is a God? The beauty of the world, the order of the celestial bodies, the revolution of the sun, the moon, and stars, sufficiently indicate by the sight of them, that all these things are not by chance; and force us to confess that there is some excellent and eternal nature, worthy the admiration of mankind. If any one should go into a school, and view the order and discipline therein, he would immediately conclude, that there was some one who presided in this institution. In like manner let any one contemplate, the perpetual and certain motions,

the vicissitudes and order of the heavenly bodies, so many and so great, he must necessarily confess that all these things are governed by some intelligence. But since neither human mind nor power could effect these things, God alone can be the architect and ruler of so great a work."

In another place, the same author observes, "I cannot understand why, the same persons who suppose that this order could arise from chance, might not suppose, if the forms of the letters of the alphabet were cut in metal, and scattered about, that histories might be formed in this way, so as to be read. Because if the fortuitous concourse of atoms, could produce a world, why not a house, a temple, a book, &c. which are far less difficult." Thus justly speaks a Heathen on this subject.

These sentiments clearly expose the inconsistency, folly, and absurdity of supposing the eternity of matter, and that things assumed their present form from chance, or a fortuitous concourse of floating atoms. Hence we are driven to the necessity of admitting, an intelligent, eternal, uncaused first cause, to account for the existence of all things. And although we cannot comprehend how eternity, self-existence, and necessary existence, can belong to any being; yet our reason teaches us that without the existence of such a being, nothing could possibly ever have existed.

We have additional evidence of the being of a God in the universal consent of nations. This doctrine that a God of some kind or other exists, has, I believe, been received by all nations. Whether this is an innate idea, impressed upon our nature, by the author of our existence, or whether it immediately forces itself upon the mind from a view of the works of nature, or whether it was received by early revelation and handed down by tradition, is immaterial to our present purpose. Be this as it may; this universal consent of nations is an additional proof of the being of a God. It shows that there is one common source from which this impression arises; and this can be none other than God. "There is (said Cicero) no nation so savage, as not to acknowledge that there is a God, though they may be ignorant of what he is." "What nation is there (said Velleius,

another Heathen writer) or what race of men, that has not, without instruction, some notion of a God? But that, concerning which, all nature agrees, must necessarily be true." And Plutarch also a Heathen writer said, if you should travel through the earth you may find cities without walls, without letters, and sunk into the grossest ignorance; but you will find none where a God is not worshipped.

But I forbear. All nature cries aloud, there is a God. We cannot open our eyes, without beholding indubitable proofs of his being. We cannot rationally believe our own existence, without believing there is a God. And surely he must indeed be a fool, as our text asserts, deaf to the voice of reason and common sense, who makes the assertion, "there is no God;" the voice of universal nature contradicts him, and brands him with consummate folly.

In the conclusion of this discourse we may observe, this subject teaches us the exceeding depravity of human nature. We see, of what man is capable. He is capable of wishing that there was no God. In opposition to the voice of reason, of common sense, and of universal nature, he is capable of making the presumptuous, and extremely wicked assertion, "there is no God." And he perhaps is capable, blinded by his wishes induced by the very great wickedness of his heart, of working himself into a belief, that there is no God; although, as has already been observed, this is doubtful.

We have reason to be humbled under a view of the exceeding depravity of human nature, as exhibited in the Atheist. We possess the same nature. And if we have not been left to go as far in wickedness, as he has gone, we have reason to be thankful. And while we are humbled under a view of human depravity, and thankful that we have been kept from all the excesses of wickedness of which human nature is capable, let us ever abhor Atheistical principles, and while we pity and pray for those who avow them, let them be detested and avoided.

But while we thus feel and act towards speculative Atheists and their principles, let us guard against another kind of Atheism, which we have reason to fear is very prevalent. I mean that which is called practical,

or a forgetfulness of God, and living in the world as though there were no God. If there be a God, it is our duty to worship and glorify him. And if even the Heathen, who glorified him not as God, were left without excuse; much more shall we be inexcusable, seeing we have so much more light.

May we all not only believe that God is; but may we diligently seek him, and find by blessed experience that of all such, he is the Rewarder.—AMEN.

SERMON II.

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF GOD.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16. FIRST CLAUSE.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

WE have seen that the voice of universal nature, proclaims the being of a God, eternal, self-existent, active, intelligent, and the cause of all other beings. But while the light of nature teaches the existence of this being, it is not sufficient to give us, in our present state, just notions of his character, and of the worship and service which will be acceptable to him, and secure our own happiness. Humiliating facts in the different ages of the world, have taught, that the world by wisdom, or by the efforts of human reason, have not known God. By reason of the depravity of the heart, which has blinded the perception, and perverted the judgment, men, left to the light of nature, have not even known that of God, and of the worship and service due to him, which they might have known; but have universally formed wrong notions of him, and of the worship and service acceptable to him. The declaration of the Apostle on this subject, Rom. i. 21–23, is confirmed by the history of the world in all ages. “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they be-

came fools: and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four footed beasts and creeping things." Men, left to the light of nature alone, have universally formed wrong notions of God, and of the worship and service due to him; and with their belief has corresponded their practice. Nor has improvement in human science led to more correct views of God or duty, or made men more virtuous. History indubitably proves the reverse of this to be the fact.

Besides, facts prove, that men under the light of nature, had some notion of their accountability, and of a future state of retribution, according to the actions of the present life; and further reason taught them that they had done many things for which they deserved the anger of God; but reason never could discover to them, whether an offended God would be reconciled; or if he would, in what way this reconciliation could be effected.

From these considerations among others, we infer the importance and necessity of a special revelation from God, to guide men into truth, duty, and happiness.

Such a revelation is not impossible. For God is certainly able in a variety of ways, to reveal himself unto men.

As a revelation from God we receive the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. These we hold to be the word of God, and as our text asserts to be given by inspiration of him.

Inspiration literally signifies, *a breathing into*. The meaning of the word in our text is that God infused into the minds of those who wrote the Scriptures, what they penned, and so impressed their minds as fully to convince them that they were moved to speak and write what they did. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. This explanation of inspiration applies to the doctrines, precepts, promises, threatenings, and prophecies of the Scriptures. As it respects the historical parts, which narrate facts with which the writers were well acquainted, these were written at least so far under the influence of inspiration, that the penmen wrote by divine direction, and under such superintendence of the Holy Spirit, as kept them from all mistake.

The doctrine of the text is:

Doct. The Scriptures are the word of God.

In that excellent form of sound words, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which we as a church adopt as containing the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures, and the order of which will be followed in this course of sermons, we have this doctrine stated in the answer to the second question.

“*What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*”

The word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.”

In the former part of this answer is stated the doctrine of our text, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God.

To prove this doctrine will be the object of this and some following discourses.

The following arguments will be adduced and considered, viz. the majesty of the style, the harmony of the parts, the mysteries contained in this book, its antiquity and wonderful preservation, the character of the penmen, the wonderful establishment, success, and progress of the christian religion, the purity of the doctrines, and precepts, the scope of the Scriptures, their happy influence, their light and power to convince, convert, and comfort the soul, miracles, and prophecy.

1. The *majesty of the style*, in which the Scriptures, particularly some parts of them, were written, affords an argument in favour of their divine original. This, it is acknowledged is an argument of inferior importance; but it is worthy of mention. Throughout the Scriptures, an unparalleled simplicity of style is found; and in some parts, especially in the book of Job, in the Psalms, in Isaiah, and some of the other prophets, and in the Revelation, we find a majesty of style and sentiment, far surpassing anything contained in the writings of Homer or Virgil; authors justly celebrated, and admired in all ages for their sublimity.

The natural simplicity of the style of the Scriptures, and at the same time, its unequalled majesty, superior to that of any other writings, afford an argument that the authors were inspired with a spirit more than hu-

man; that their writings were the burst of inspiration; and that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2. *The harmony of all the parts* of the Scriptures, furnishes an argument in favour of their divinity. In human writings, we some times find the same man contradicting one part of his writings in another; and frequently we discover a want of harmony, in some points, between two writers on the same subject. But in the Scriptures, though written by different men, in different languages and countries, and at different times far distant from each other, there is a perfect harmony prevailing in all their parts, historical, doctrinal, practical, and prophetic. This harmony strongly indicates that every part of the Scriptures was dictated by the same unerring and divine Spirit.

I know that contradictions have been charged upon the Scriptures; but this charge cannot be supported. It is admitted there are some texts which taken by themselves, may appear at first view to contradict some others. But when these apparently contradictory texts, are taken in connexion with their context, and are impartially examined by it; and when the occasion on which they were spoken, and other circumstances connected with them are duly considered, the apparent contradiction vanishes, and their harmony is manifest. To mention two or three instances in illustration of these remarks. In one place Christ says, "me ye have not always," Mat. xxvi. 11. but in another place he says, "lo I am with you alway." Mat. xxviii. 20. These texts at first view appear to contradict each other; but they perfectly harmonize, when we consider what the Scriptures elsewhere teach, that there are two natures the divine and human united in the person of Christ. In the former text quoted, Christ spake of his human nature; and in the latter, of his divine nature. Again Paul tells us, "A man is not justified by the works of the law." Gal. ii. 16. But James tells us, "by works a man is justified." James ii. 24. These texts appear to contradict each other. But the contradiction disappears, when we examine their respective contexts, and see the different subjects on which the two Apostles were speaking. Paul was speaking of a justification in the sight of God,

which is not by works; and James was speaking of the justification of the reality of our religion before men, which is by works. In like manner all the apparent contradictions in Scripture may be removed, and all the parts be shown to harmonize with each other. And this perfect harmony is a proof that the whole was written under the inspiration of the same divine Spirit.

3. Another argument proving the Scriptures to be the word of God is *the mysteries* therein contained. In the Scriptures are contained several mysteries, far above the discovery of reason. Such are, the doctrine of the Trinity, or of three persons in the Godhead; the introduction and cause of sin and misery; the incarnation of the Son of God; the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ. Salvation for sinners through his obedience unto death; the renovation of the soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the dead. It is not possible that these sublime mysteries could be the invention of men; and much less of the illiterate men by whom, some parts of the Scriptures were written. The mysteries of the Scriptures, I know, have sometimes been made an objection, to their divine original. But these mysteries rather are a proof, that the book which contains them is a revelation from an incomprehensible God.

4. The *antiquity and wonderful preservation* of the Scriptures, form another argument to prove them a revelation from God. The writings of Moses are much the oldest now extant, or of which we have any knowledge. To him are ascribed the first five books of the Scriptures usually called the law. On account of the little connexion the Jews had with other nations, the antiquity of the books of Moses must be proved from the Jewish authority. It is evident these books were extant in the time of the kings; for they are frequently mentioned. And they are also mentioned by Joshua, at an earlier period, so that these books were extant in his time. The writings of Moses are far more ancient than any which have come down to us; and the whole of the Old Testament, has a claim to antiquity, which can be made by few other books. It is certain the whole of it was written, before the commencement of the christian era; for Jews as well as christians have it. And it is also

certain, that the completion of the Old Testament, could not have been later, than a little after the Babylonish captivity; for then the Hebrew, in which all, except a very small part, of the Scriptures of the Old Testament were written, ceased to be a living language.

But notwithstanding the antiquity of the Scriptures, many books of much later date have perished, while they have been preserved. Besides no book has been more exposed to destruction than the Scriptures. To the Jews was committed the keeping of the oracles of God. But the Jews experienced many revolutions and disasters. At times almost the whole nation fell into idolatry, and the few who adhered to the worship of the true God were persecuted. In these times we have every reason to believe the Scriptures were neglected and destroyed. And so scarce had copies of the Scriptures become, during the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon, that king Josiah until the eighteenth year of his reign, appears never to have seen a copy. After this the country of Judea was laid waste by the Chaldeans, Jerusalem and the temple therein were destroyed, and the survivors of the nation were carried captive to Babylon. But still the Scriptures were preserved. After the return of the Jews, they experienced many distresses under the Persian and Grecian monarchs. Antiochus Epiphanes particularly, greatly persecuted them. He took away the daily sacrifices, suspended the temple service for three years and a half, endeavoured entirely to extirpate the Jewish religion, made diligent search for all copies of the Scriptures, burned all he found, and threatened with death those who concealed them. Similar methods were afterwards, in the beginning of the fourth century of the christian era, used by the Roman Emperor Dioclesian, to effect the entire destruction of the Scriptures; but still they escaped. Afterwards almost all books and monuments of learning were destroyed by the Goths and Vandals, and other barbarous nations, who overran the greater part of the civilized world. And all these exposures of the Scriptures, and attempts to destroy them took place before the art of printing was invented, when all the copies were in manuscript, and when therefore they must have been comparatively very few. The books of antiquity which have

escaped the ravages of time are few. But the Scriptures notwithstanding the hatred of the wicked; and their active, powerful, and repeated attempts to destroy them, have escaped and been handed down to us.

This wonderful preservation can be consistently accounted for in no other way, than from the peculiar care of divine providence, which shows his approbation of this book, and that he is therefore its author.

5. Another argument in favour of the divinity of the Scriptures, may be drawn from the *character of the penmen*. An appearance of ostentation, or of a desire of applause, is not discoverable in their writings. They take no pains even when penning the most wonderful facts, or the most mysterious doctrines, to secure the belief of their readers; they deliver their message, without apology and leave their readers to believe or not as they please; but at their peril. They sufficiently show by their writings, that they were men of piety, candour, and integrity. Although they had the infirmities which are inseparable from human nature, and although some of them occasionally fell into great sins; yet, by the general tenor of their lives, they proved themselves to be eminently pious men. And their writings also prove them to have been, men of candour and integrity. They without reserve recorded the faults of others, even of kings and rulers. They recorded national vices, and reformed them, and denounced the judgments of heaven on account of them. They recorded the sins of their near friends and relatives; as, for instance, Moses recorded the sin of his brother Aaron in making the golden calf at Horeb. And they not only recorded the vices of others, but also their own sins and infirmities. Moses recorded an account of his own unbelief and disobedience at the rock in Kadesh; for which he was prohibited an entrance into the land of Canaan. David, in his Psalms alludes to his grievous fall in his conduct towards Uriah and Bathsheba. Solomon in the Ecclesiastes has informed the world that he was much addicted to sensual pleasure. Paul has left on record of himself, that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible; and that he had been a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious. Thus the writings of the penmen

of the Scriptures sufficiently prove them to have been, men of great candour and integrity.

If they were not divinely inspired, they must have had in view, either the honour or advantage of their nation, or of themselves. Their writings sufficiently prove, that their object was not the advancement of their nation, the Jews. For if this had been their object, they would have cast a veil over their vices, and have concealed their adversities. But they give a faithful account of these as well as of their virtues and prosperity. Moses records them to have been, an obstinate, stiff-necked, rebellious, unbelieving people, amidst the most astonishing miracles which God wrought in their favour; and that for their wickedness, the whole generation that came out of Egypt, came short of the promised land, and fell in the wilderness.

This instead of exalting the nation, remains on record, as a perpetual reproach. The historical books of the Old Testament, record many and great calamities, which fell upon them; and these are represented as judgments of God for their sins. The prophetic books represent them as greatly corrupted, and denounce the divine vengeance against them for their sins. The writers of the New Testament freely record the corruptions of their nation, and condemn them. They unequivocally charge them with the atrocious crime of the murder of the Son of God; and they threatened them with the most dreadful judgments. Thus it is evident that their object in writing the Scriptures could not have been the advancement of their nation.

Nor could their object have been their own temporal advantage. Some of them, as Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon were already at the head of the nation, and they could expect no more. And with respect to the first two it is worthy of remark, that, although in their power so to do, neither of them made provision for their children, to succeed after their death to the honour and authority which they possessed; or even to secure for them any peculiar privileges above the rest of the nation. Further the penmen of Scripture, took a strange method to advance their own interest if this had been their object. For the course they pursued was calculated to bring down upon them the odium of both Jews

and Heathen. And indeed many of them spake and wrote at the imminent hazard of their property and lives; and some of them sealed with their own blood the truths they penned. Hence we cannot give any satisfactory reason why they wrote as they did, unless it be that they were divinely inspired, and moved by the Holy Ghost.

6. That the Scriptures are the word of God, may be proved from the *wonderful establishment, success, and progress of the christian religion*. That there was such a person as Jesus Christ; who appeared in the land of Judea, about 1800 years since, professed himself to be a teacher come from God, and founded the christian religion, no one can consistently deny who gives any credit to historical testimony. For of the existence of such a person we have as certain proof, as of the existence of any man who lived before our times. No one can doubt that there was such a person as Mahomet who founded the Mahometan religion; nor that there were such men as Luther and Calvin from whom the denominations of christians called Lutherans and Calvinists took their names. Neither can any one reasonably doubt that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, from whom christians derive their name. The question is, not whether there was such a person; but whether he was, what he professed himself to be, a teacher sent from God; and whether the religion which he founded is of divine authority.

I will not here consider, the proofs in favour of the divine mission of Christ, which are furnished by the purity of his doctrines and precepts, by the miracles which he performed, by the fulfilment of ancient prophecy in him, and by the prophecies which he delivered. These shall be attended to in their proper place hereafter. I would here only show that the power of God is manifested, in the wonderful establishment, success and progress of the christian religion, and that he has hereby owned it as divine.

Jesus Christ, the founder of the christian religion, was a person, in the estimation of the world, of mean birth, in respect of worldly wealth, honour, and power. He lived in obscurity until he was thirty years old. When he appeared as a public teacher, he had but few disciples, and these generally of the lower class of the people. The twelve apostles whom he chose to be the witnesses of his

ministry, and the publishers of his doctrine, were fishermen, and publicans, without human learning, wealth, power or friends to give them influence. The doctrines, which he and his Apostles after him taught, were opposed to all the religions of the Gentile world, and also to the Jewish religion, as it was then generally corrupted. They were opposed also to the passions, the prejudices, the education, and the worldly interests of the men to whom they were addressed. Christ was hated and persecuted by the Jews, and was finally apprehended by them, and put to an ignominious death as a notorious malefactor. In his name, after his death, the Apostles went forth under all these disadvantages, to establish the christian religion. The most determined opposition was made against them, both by the Jews, and by the powerful Roman empire. They were threatened, fined, imprisoned, tortured in almost every way that malice could devise, and many of them were put to death. Is it probable, or possible, that the christian religion, under all these discouraging circumstances, will be established? We may answer in the words of Gamaliel, "if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it." Acts v. 38, 39. But what was the result? The christian religion surmounted every obstacle. It triumphed over the passions, the prejudices, the education, and the worldly interests of men. It triumphed over the arms, and the persecutions of the powerful Roman empire; and it triumphed over the empire itself, so that in less than three centuries from the death of its founder, christianity became the established religion of that very empire which had exerted all its power to crush it.

Surely nothing short of the power of God could under such circumstances, have so established, succeeded, and maintained christianity; and this exertion of divine power in its favour, argues that God approves of it, and that therefore it is, what it professes to be, of divine original.

It has been objected to this argument, that the Mahometan religion, arose from as small beginnings, and has become as extensive as the christian. But the objection is not valid; for the circumstances attending the propagation of the two religions were very different. The Mahometan religion was propagated by force of arms; the

christian without, and in opposition to arms. The Mahometan religion was gratifying to the passions and corruptions of human nature; it allowed of many impurities in this life, and promised a Paradise of sensual pleasure to its votaries in the next. The christian, on the contrary, made no compromise with the corrupt propensities of human nature; but forbade every sin, and inculcated holiness under the severest penalties. As Mahomet was at the head of an army, self-interest, doubtless, influenced many to join him. But the christian religion, unsupported and persecuted by the civil powers, could not be embraced, but at the imminent hazard of property and life. The two cases were entirely dissimilar. The one was established by the power of man; but in the establishment of the other, the power of God is clearly manifest, by which he has owned it to be divine.

And as God extended his power to establish the christian religion, so his power is manifested in its continuance and progress in the world, notwithstanding the subtle, powerful, persevering, and determined attempts, which its enemies on earth, aided by the powers of darkness, have made to destroy it. It has withstood, repeated and long continued shocks of bloody persecutions. It has passed through the more dangerous trial of courtly favour, the formal homage of the great, and of being surrounded with external splendour. It has had to contend with superstition, enthusiasm, and fanaticism assuming its name. It has often been exposed to prejudice and reproach by the defection of its professed friends; and it has been assailed by infidelity, prepared and strengthened for the combat by human science. But it has stood all these mighty efforts; and it still stands, and is gaining ground. Surely an Almighty arm supports it! Surely the Lord is on its side, or it must long since have been driven from the earth!

I conclude this discourse with recapitulating the arguments which have been considered as proving the Scriptures to be the word of God. These are, the majesty of their style, the harmony of their parts, the mysteries they contain, their antiquity and wonderful preservation, the character of the penmen, and the wonderful establishment, success, and progress of the christian religion. Most of these arguments, though conclusive, are of mi-

nor importance compared with those which still remain to be considered, and to which your attention will be called in some subsequent discourses.

SERMON III.

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF GOD.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16. FIRST CLAUSE.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

THE Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God. To prove this doctrine, the following arguments were used in the discourse delivered on the last Sabbath morning, viz. the majesty of the style of the Scriptures, the harmony of their parts, the mysteries they contain, their antiquity and wonderful preservation, the character of the penmen, and the establishment, success, and progress of the christian religion. Other proofs remain to be considered. In this discourse your attention is invited to the following, viz. the purity of the doctrines and precepts, the scope of the whole of the Scriptures, their happy influence, and their light and power to convince, convert, and comfort the soul.

1. The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God by the *purity of their doctrines and precepts*. These are all holy. The Scriptures teach us that God is holy, that he hates sin, and that he will punish it. Thus we read, “I the Lord your God am holy.” Lev. xix. 2. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” Is. vi. 3. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” Heb. i. 13. “Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” Ps. v. 4, 5. “God is angry with the wicked every day.” Ps. vii. 11. “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.” Is. xlvi. 22. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Ps. ix. 11. “Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an

horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Ps. xi. 6. These are a few specimens of the declarations, with which the Scriptures abound, proving that God is holy, that he hates sin, and that he will punish it. And they record many examples of punishments inflicted upon sinners in this life, for their sins, all of which show the holiness of God, and his utter abhorrence of sin and disposition to punish it. The Scriptures also teach us that Jesus Christ is a holy Saviour. He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1 Pet. ii. 22. He "is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. vii. 26. "He was manifested to take away our sins," and, "that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John iii. 5, 8. And he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 14. They teach us that the people of God are holy. They are "an holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Pet. ii. 9. They also teach us that the law of God is holy, giving no license for the least sin: but forbidding every sin, and requiring perfect holiness in heart and life, under the severest penalties. They teach us that the gospel is holy, requiring of all who are saved by it, to "depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. ii. 19. And "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Tit. ii. 12. They teach us that the worship which God requires of us is holy. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." John. iv. 24. And they teach us that heaven is a holy place, into which, "shall in no wise enter anything that defileth." Rev. xxi. 27.

We do not find such holy doctrines and precepts, in the best of human writings, except those which are drawn from the Scriptures. If we examine the systems of religion among the Heathen, we shall find their gods, represented as examples of moral impurity, instead of forbidding sin, and requiring holiness in mankind. And as were the supposed gods, so was the worship rendered to them. It is true, there are excellent moral precepts, in the writings of some of the Heathen moralists; but even the best of them allowed of some sins, which the Scriptures forbid.

Again, if we examine the Koran. esteemed the best

book among the Mahometans, we shall find it conniving at many impurities in this world, and promising to the good a Paradise of sensual pleasure in the next. And if we examine the writings of Deists, we shall in these find no such holy system as the Scriptures contain. They indeed admit the being of a God; but holiness is generally omitted in the list of his perfections. Their system of morality is very imperfect; and the moral precepts they inculcate, want the high sanctions with which the moral system of the Scriptures is enforced.

Such a book as the Scriptures, the like of which we nowhere find; which every where considers God as a perfectly holy being, which contains none other than holy doctrines and precepts, and which inculcates perfect holiness under the severest penalties, could have for its author, none other than a holy God. For if it had been the invention of man, it would have been more congenial with the natural inclination of his corrupt heart.

If the Scriptures were not given by inspiration of God, they could not have been written by good men; because good men would never have imposed them upon the world as the word of God; for by acting thus, they would have proved themselves to be deceivers, and therefore very wicked, instead of good men. And to attribute the invention of such holy doctrines and precepts to bad men is absurd; for it is contrary to their opinions, their disposition, and their practice. Hence we conclude that the men who wrote the Scriptures were holy men, and that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures themselves exhibit in every part of them, in the purity of their contents, that they are the word of a holy God.

2. The Scriptures prove themselves to be the word of God by the *scope of the whole of them, which is to give all glory to God*. The whole scope of the Scriptures is to advance the glory of the divine perfections, and to abase the creature. As exemplifying the general scope of the Scriptures, in ascribing all glory to God, take the following texts. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever." Rom. xi. 36. "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake will I do it; for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." Is. xlvi. 11. "I am the

Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." Is. xlii. 8. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. x. 31. In like manner the general scope of the Scriptures is to abase man. In his natural state according to this book, his "mind is enmity against God; not subject to the law of God." Rom. viii. 7. "He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. Their throat is an open sepulchre; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing, and bitterness." Rom. iii. 10, 14. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." Eccl. ix. 3. Such is the humiliating representation, which the Scriptures give of the natural state of man. And further they teach the christian, who has been brought out of this deplorable state, that he owes all he has and is, to the sovereign grace of God, and that to him is all the glory due. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast." Eph. ii. 8, 9. "No flesh should glory in his presence. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. i. 29, 31. Such is the general scope of the whole of the Scriptures.

This proves that they are a revelation from God. If the Bible had been merely a human production; and this too of wicked men, purposely deceiving the world, as it must have been, if it is a mere human production, for good men would not have practised such imposition; the glory of the creature would naturally have been aimed at more than that of the Creator. Man would not have been debased so low, and stripped of all goodness, and represented as prone to all evil; and all glorying would not have been denied him. This is contrary to human nature, as it appears in the exhibition we have of it, on the historick page, in the conduct of men in the world around us, and in the exercises of our own hearts before they were renewed by divine grace. Since then the scope of the whole of the Scriptures is to humble man, and advance

the divine glory, which is contrary to the whole bent of a wicked man's disposition; and since a good man would not have composed the Scriptures, and then imposed them upon the world as of divine authority, they cannot be a human production, but must be of divine original.

3. An argument in favour of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, may be drawn from their *happy influence in meliorating the state of society and of individuals*. It is a rational expectation, that a revelation from God should have a tendency to make men better and happier. This the religion taught in the Scriptures, as far as it has operated, with its own influence, has done, and still continues to do. Of this we may be convinced, by contrasting the state of society in nations, while they were Heathen, with what it was after the introduction of revealed religion among them. In nations where the Scriptures have not been known, idolatry has universally prevailed; and this has been attended with the most absurd, immoral, and cruel practices. Idolatry, with its attendant abominable rites, has been banished, where the Scriptures have been received. Further, contrast our state, with that of Heathen nations of the present day; in regard to civilization, knowledge, morality, humanity, benevolence, and temporal happiness; and if we are candid we must acknowledge that the comparison is greatly in our favour; and what has made the difference? Doubtless it is chiefly owing to the influence of revelation. They who deny the Scriptures to be the word of God, may extol the power of human reason, unassisted by revelation to guide men into truth and happiness; but the greater part of that very knowledge, which they boast as having acquired by the power of reason, they have derived from revelation, "Having grazed," as one expresses it, "in the pastures of revelation, they boast of having grown fat in the meadows of reason." We have no sufficient cause to suppose that without the Scriptures we should be in a better state than our Pagan forefathers; but on the contrary we have every reason to believe that with them, we should now be worshipping the sun and moon, bowing down to graven images, paying religious homage to the inferior and inanimate creation, sacrificing even our children to our gods, and living in all the other enormities of the Heathen world. Human reason. be it ever so much culti-

vated, is insufficient without the aid of revelation, to lead men to renounce idolatry, and make them virtuous. This is proved by the history of the most enlightened of the Pagan nations. For Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as they improved in human science, increased the number of their gods, became more and more absurd in their idolatry, and more immoral in their practice.

Facts unquestionably prove that the state of society has been greatly improved by the introduction of the Scriptures into a country, and the reception and belief of them by the people. And the happy influence of the religion of the Scriptures on the state of society is further evidenced, by a comparison of those places which enjoy the stated preaching of the word, and are attentive to it, with those places in a christian land, where they are destitute of the stated ministrations of the word and love to have it so. The difference must be apparent, to even a superficial observer. It is equally evident that the Scriptures have been and are a source of happiness to individuals. Their influence has often prevented men, from doing that injury to one another, which otherwise they would have done. They have often prevented persons from injuring themselves, by keeping them from those courses which lead to mischief and ruin in this world. They have raised the female sex to that rank in society, and those enjoyments, which they ought to have; but which have been uniformly denied them, where the Scriptures were not known. They have regulated and refined the social feelings, and thus increased social happiness. They have promoted, industry, frugality, economy, temperance, and the like virtues, and thus have prevented temporal misery, and increased the temporal happiness of individuals. And they have by their spiritual supports and consolations, greatly lessened the weight of trials, and afforded unspeakable happiness to the soul. But of this we shall speak more in the illustration of the next argument. Thus the Scriptures have unquestionably meliorated the state of society and of individuals.

It is true the religion taught in the Scriptures, has been the occasion of much misery to mankind from contentions, and wars, and persecutions. But these are not to be ascribed to the Scriptures as their cause; for they inculcate directly the contrary spirit and conduct. It is not the

religion of the Scriptures, but the want of this religion, that is the cause of contentions, wars, and persecutions. The Scriptures inculcate universal benevolence; love to all men, even to enemies. The religion which they teach, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy." Jam. iii. 17. They enjoin, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another." Eph. iv. 31, 32. They who reject the divine authority of the Scriptures, ought not to charge upon them the contentions and persecutions, which may have prevailed among different sects towards each other; or the wars which may have originated from quarrels and disputes about religion. If they have read the Scriptures, they must know, that they do most unequivocally forbid such a spirit and such conduct. The cause of these things is found, not in revealed religion; but in the want of it, and in the corruption of human nature. That which is calculated to produce the best effects, may be and has been perverted by wicked men to answer the worst of purposes. This has been the case with the Scriptures; but this is no argument against them.

It is asserted without fear of contradiction; if the Scriptures influenced the hearts and lives of all mankind; if all obeyed the precepts of the Bible, the sword would be beat into the plough-share, and the spear into the pruning hook, and wars would cease to the ends of the earth. Our lives would no more be in danger from the midnight assassin; our property from the robber, the incendiary, or the dishonest dealer; nor our character from the envenomed tongue of detraction and slander; our ears would no more be assailed with the language of the pit, proceeding from profane lips; nor would men any more drown reason, distress families, ruin character and estate, and shorten life, by the intoxicating draught. On the contrary, righteousness and peace and happiness, would every where prevail in our world. Any one acquainted with the Scriptures must be convinced that this representation is not exaggerated. And can a book which breathes so much benevolence, and which is productive of such blessed effects, be an imposture? It bears the image of him who is love, and by its happy influence is proved to be what it professes to be, a revelation from him.

4. That the Scriptures are the word of God is proved from *their light and power to convince, convert, and comfort the soul*. It is certain the Scriptures have often been made the means of convincing persons of sin, and converting them from an evil course of life to the practice of virtue. Many have known by experience, that they are indeed "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12. Many have felt them to be "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Consider the history of this and that man, in the circle of your acquaintances. Is he not visibly and greatly changed from what he once was? not long since, he lived as though, there was no God, to whom he was accountable. He was unconcerned about his eternal welfare. He wholly minded earthly things. He gave free scope to the gratification of his selfish and corrupt passions. He disregarded the counsels of his friends. He neglected prayer. He took the name of God in vain. He disregarded his Sabbaths. He delighted in wickedness. View him now; and must it not be acknowledged even by the enemies of religion, that a great and important change has taken place. He now fears God. He grieves over his past life. His great concern is the salvation of his soul. His chief delight is in the service and enjoyment of God. The worship of God is maintained in his family and in his closet. He fears to injure his fellow men. He is just in his dealings. He is tender of the good name of others. He is charitable to the poor. His lips avoid deceit and speak the meaning of his heart. He is temperate in all things. He forgives his enemies. His heart is expanded with benevolence towards all men. He is the affectionate partner, the tender parent, the dutiful child, the friend in need, the good citizen, and the universal philanthropist. Ask him, whence this change? and he will tell you it was effected by the truths of the Scriptures as the means. This is not an imaginary picture; but it is one, the original of which we frequently see.

And as the Scriptures are powerfully instrumental to the conviction, and conversion of sinners, so also to the

comforting and establishing of believers. Many by precious experience know this. By the Scriptures they have been established in the faith, and have continued steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. From the Scriptures they have derived comfort, which they would not exchange, for all that the world can afford. The religion of the Scriptures has sweetened the bitter potions of life. It has enlightened a dungeon, and it has imparted contentment to every situation. Visit the cottages of the pious poor, and there you may see the smile of contentment, under circumstances the most abject; there you may hear the expression of gratitude to God for their coarse and scanty fare. Search into the cause of such a frame of mind, and you will find it in the religion of the Scriptures, which they have chosen as their heritage. Listen to the expressions which break from the lips of that pious person who has just been bereaved of an affectionate partner, or of a beloved and perhaps an only child. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job. i. 21. Visit the sick bed of the christian, and witness his composure, patience and resignation. Ask him whence these arise, and he will tell you from the instructions and promises of the Scriptures. Go to the dying bed of the christian, and you will frequently hear from his lips such language as the following. "Though I walk through 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." Ps. xxiii. 4. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. "O death, where is thy sting." 1 Cor. xv. 55. Thus have some christians been enabled to meet death. The principles of infidelity give no such triumph or support. It is true, infidels have sometimes died with composure; but their composure has generally arisen from insensibility. Of triumphs they cannot boast, and generally even composure has failed them; their consciences have been awakened, their fears have been excited, and their principles have failed them in this honest hour of trial. Many have in that hour renounced their infidelity, and expressed their deep regret at their former principles and conduct; but no real christian has ever in that hour, renounced his

principles for some other, or regretted that he was a christian. And the religion of the Scriptures, has enabled persons to meet death with composure, and triumph not only in its ordinary course; but in its most terrific forms. The martyrs through its influence have rejected every offer which was not consistent with a good conscience, and have preferred torture and death, rather than life and worldly honours, at the expense of the answer of a good conscience; and have been composed, and even triumphed on the rack and the scaffold, and at the stake, to the amazement and confusion of their cruel persecutors.

And is it possible, that such a religion, which brings forth such fruit, and affords such consolations, can be the invention of impostors? No! the power of the Scriptures in discovering the sinner to himself, and in transforming the soul into the image of God, and in giving support and comfort in the most trying seasons, proves that they have a higher origin, even from above, and that they were given by inspiration of God.

From the arguments which have been used in this discourse, we may in the conclusion make a few remarks.

From the holiness of the Scriptures, and their general scope to give all glory to God, we may evidently infer a reason, why so few relish them, and why they are condemned by some as an imposture. They stain the pride of the human heart, and they restrain and condemn the wicked, and therefore the wicked dislike and condemn them. This my brethren is the real foundation of infidelity. Its cause is to be found in the heart, rather than in the head. The Scriptures depict the wicked in their true character, they charge them with their sins, reprove them for them, threaten them with severe punishment, and allow them no indulgence in iniquity, they disturb their consciences and mar their pleasure in sin; and they aim at humbling the pride of the heart, and at dethroning self, and bringing the whole man into obedience to the law of God. These things the natural man dislikes. Hence many condemn the Scriptures as an imposture, that they may be rid of their restraints, and quiet their consciences.

Another observation suggested by this discourse is, that they who deny the divine authority of the Scriptures.

and wish them destroyed, are great enemies to human happiness. We have seen that the Scriptures promote the happiness of society and of individuals, and effect very great changes for the better. Must not they therefore be enemies to human happiness, who would take away the Scriptures, or lessen their influence upon men? Who would remove this barrier from the corrupt passions of men, and let them loose upon society; and who would take away from the afflicted and the dying this source of support and consolation, and substitute nothing in its room? Surely such aim a blow at the peace and happiness of men. But, thanks to God! they cannot succeed. They rage and imagine and take counsel in vain. For they oppose a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, and unchanging faithfulness; who has thus far defeated them, and who unquestionably will continue to do it; and who if they continue their opposition will break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel; while his word will abide forever.

SERMON IV.

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF GOD.

JOHN iii. 1, 2.

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

Jesus was now at Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. Here, “many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” John ii. 23. Among these was Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Convinced by what he had seen, that Jesus was a teacher come from God, and desiring to be instructed by him; but afraid openly to avow his convictions, lest he should incur the displeasure

of the Jews, he came to him by night. When he had come, respectfully addressing him, he acknowledged his own conviction and that of many others who agreed with him. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." This acknowledgment he founded on a principle, which seems to have been at that time generally believed; viz: that the power of God alone can work a miracle; "for no man can do these miracles, that thou doest, except God be with him."

This text teaches us that miracles can be wrought only by the power of God; that the working of real miracles in support of doctrines is sufficient to establish their truth; and that therefore, if the Scriptures are thus supported, they are the word of God. The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove from *miracles* that the Scriptures are the word of God.

In doing this the plan will be to show

- I. The nature of miracles.
- II. Their possibility.
- III. That they can be wrought only by the power of God.
- IV. That the miracles recorded in the Scriptures were really wrought.

I. What is a miracle? A miracle, signifies an effect contrary to the established course of things, or a deviation from the laws of nature. The world is evidently governed by general laws. And when effects are produced according to the natural course of things; or when we do not know, but there may be a natural connexion between the cause and effect, however new or strange such effects may be, we have no right to call them miraculous. As for instance, should we see a blind man restored to sight by an ointment, of which we had never before heard, or of the qualities of which we were entirely ignorant; this might be wonderful to us; but we would have no right to pronounce the cure miraculous, or a deviation from the laws of nature; because, for ought known to us, the restoration of the sight might be the natural effect of the ointment upon the eyes. But should we see one restored to sight, by the word of another, we would with confidence pronounce the cure miraculous; because we know the human voice, has, naturally, no power to produce such an effect. In like manner, we know, it is a natural property of fire to burn and consume. Therefore should a per-

son be cast into the fire, and be, for a considerable time surrounded with the flames, without receiving any injury, we would consider the event miraculous, because it would be a deviation from the known laws of nature.

We proceed to inquire,

II. Whether miracles be possible? Miracles, doubtless are within the sphere of divine power; for most assuredly, he who established and upholds the laws of nature, can, if he please, suspend their operation, and act contrary to them. The question then is, whether, as God hath established general laws for the government of the world, a deviation from these laws may not be inconsistent with his infinite wisdom? To this question we may answer that the wisdom of God will always be in agreement with that infinite benevolence which is essential to his nature. If therefore the good of his creatures can, on certain occasions, be better promoted, by deviating from the established laws of nature, than by adhering to them, it will be consistent with infinite wisdom to deviate, and work miracles. Man is unquestionably the principal creature in this world, and as far as we can judge, the only creature in it endowed with reason, or that has a knowledge of the Creator; and therefore such of the laws of nature as extend not their influence beyond this earth, were ordained, chiefly, if not solely, for the good of man, in subserviency to the divine glory. Hence, when a greater good to mankind, can be effected by deviating from the established laws of nature with respect to them, it is an act of benevolence, and therefore consistent with the wisdom of God to do it.

Hence, we may make this inference, that the object to be obtained by the working of a miracle ought not to be trivial; as it would be derogatory to infinite wisdom, to suspend or interrupt that order of things which he has established, unless the end to be answered be important.

From the preceding remarks the conclusion is drawn, that miracles or a deviation from the established laws of nature, are possible, and admissible, provided the end be worthy of infinite wisdom. Such an end is the reception among men of a revelation from God, to guide men into truth, duty and happiness. For if the being of man was an end worthy of God, most certainly his well-being. But a divine revelation was necessary to his well-being.

For owing to human depravity the light of nature is insufficient to guide men into truth, duty, and happiness. But on the contrary, as long continued experiment sufficiently proved, man left to the light of nature sunk deeper and deeper into error, immorality, and misery. A revelation from God was therefore necessary for the good of mankind; and if this could not be received among men without the attestation of miracles, the working of miracles to attest such a revelation was well worthy of infinite wisdom.

Supposing then God designed to give a revelation to mankind, and that certain men were inspired by him, to be the instruments to deliver this revelation to their contemporaries, and to hand it down to posterity; if these men were to deliver truths as they were taught by God; their assertion that they had a commission from God so to speak, though supported by the purity and general scope of the truths they delivered, and their own unblemished lives, would not be sufficient to carry full conviction to the minds of those to whom they delivered their message, that they were inspired of God. Because every man from his own experience, would be sensible that such intimate communion with God, was contrary to the established course of things; and therefore, unless the teachers could give some other proof, their message would probably be rejected.

In this state of things, the only probable, and I might add the only possible way which we can conceive of, in which full conviction of the divine mission of the teachers, and of the truth and divine authority of their message could be carried to the mind, would be by miracles. Prophecy might convince future generations; but as prophecy is generally long fulfilling, it could not secure present assent. But miracles would be sufficient to effect the desired end. For if the doctrines contained nothing immoral or contrary to known truth, nothing could hinder, in a mind disposed to receive truth, assent to the teacher's assertion as credible, except its implying such an intimate communion with God, as was contrary to every one's experience, and the established constitution of things.

If then the teacher asserting a divine inspiration was to give a sensible evidence of his divine mission, by call-

ing a dead person to life, or by doing some other thing out of the ordinary course of nature, in which it was evident, no natural connexion existed, between the means used and the effect produced, the teacher would prove his assertion that God was with him. For, as we shall presently see, the power of God alone can work a miracle. And if it was obvious, a supernatural power was communicated to a person, there would be no difficulty in admitting him to be divinely inspired to communicate supernatural knowledge.

From what has been said the conclusion is now drawn, that since a revelation from God is possible; and since it is necessary to lead us into truth, duty, and happiness; and since miracles, in confirmation of such a revelation were necessary to gain a full assent to it; therefore, miracles, or effects contrary to the established laws of nature, in confirmation of divine revelation are admissible as consistent with the divine wisdom, which established the laws of nature, in this world for the good of man. We proceed

III. To show that miracles can be wrought only by the power of God. This is proved from this consideration, that the laws of nature were established by God himself for the wisest and best of purposes; and to suppose that these laws can be controuled, and effects be produced contrary to them, without the agency or permission of God, is to suppose a power able to act in opposition to his will, and superior to his controul, which supposition is derogatory to the divine power, wisdom and goodness, and therefore cannot be admitted.

Agreeably to this position, that the working of real miracles is solely the prerogative of God, they, who in Scripture, are said to have wrought miracles, ascribe them not to their own power, but to that of God. Thus, Moses performed his miracles in the name of God. In one instance, it is true, he seemed to assume the power to himself, in saying, "ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock." Num. xx. 10. But for this assumption of the prerogative of God, he was punished, by being refused admission into the land of Canaan.

Joseph when asked to interpret Pharaoh's dream, answered, "it is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Gen. xli. 16. Daniel also, ascribed his

interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to God. So also the miracles which the Apostles are said to have wrought, are ascribed to the power of God. Thus it is said, "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." Acts xix. 11. And of the other Apostles, it is said, "God bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles." Heb. ii. 4.

In further confirmation of this truth, that miracles can be wrought only by the power of God, the history of the Scriptures teach us that this was the common sense of mankind, and that the working of miracles was deemed a sufficient proof, and the highest kind of evidence, of the divine mission of a person, and of the truth of the message he delivered. Thus Pharaoh demanded of Moses, when he told him the Lord had sent him, "show a miracle for you." Ex. vii. 9. Elijah when opposing the prophets of Baal, appealed to miracles to decide whether he or they were right in the religion, which they respectively taught; "the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, it is well spoken." 1 Kings xviii. 24. So also when Jesus appeared, and announced himself to be a teacher come from God, they asked him, "what sign shewest thou unto us?" John ii. 18. And Nicodemus, seeing the miracles which he wrought, said in our text, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." And on a certain occasion, the rulers said, "this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him." John xi. 47, 48. And it is recorded of the Samaritans, when Philip preached to them that they "with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." Acts viii. 6. Thus it appears to have been a common sentiment that none but God can work a miracle; and that miracles wrought in favour of a divine mission, and the truth of doctrines, are a sufficient evidence to warrant a belief in them.

It is true the magicians of Egypt are said with their enchantments to have imitated the miracles of Moses and Aaron. But it is doubtful whether they wrought miracles. Some suppose that they produced the effects they did, by legerdemain or sleight of hand. But supposing

they wrought real miracles, which is the more probable opinion, this does not militate against the position that miracles can be wrought only by the power of God; for God permitted the effect to be produced which they attempted at the command of Pharaoh, contrary to their own expectations, to carry on his designs of judicially hardening Pharaoh's heart.

It is true also that the Jewish rulers, while they allowed that miracles were wrought by Christ, to avoid the conclusion that he was a teacher come from God, ascribed them to the agency of the devil. But this they did in opposition to the general consent of mankind; and instigated by malice, evidently in opposition also, to their own convictions. And Christ's reply to them, "if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand," Mat. xii. 26. unanswerably exposed the absurdity of the sentiment. For if Satan had a power of working miracles, which however cannot be allowed, unless he is permitted of God; yet admitting this, it is absurd to suppose that he would exercise this power, to confirm holy doctrines, which undoubtedly are calculated to make men better and happier; for this would be contrary to his malignant nature and subversive of his kingdom. If therefore the doctrines be of a holy nature, the miracles wrought in support of them must be ascribed to God. And they sufficiently prove, that the person working them is inspired of God; for God will not give his seal to confirm an imposture. But all the doctrines of Scripture are evidently of a holy nature. It follows therefore, if the miracles which are related in Scripture were really wrought, the Scriptures are what they profess to be, the word of God.

IV. To prove that the miracles recorded in Scripture were really wrought, was proposed as the last division of our discourse, to which we now proceed. It is, I believe, generally admitted even by infidels, that if the miracles recorded in the Scriptures were really wrought, they were sufficient to convince those who saw them, that the persons by whom they were wrought, were sent of God, and that what they taught was true; and that if they could see the same miracles now wrought in support of the same doctrines, they would readily assent to their truth. But the objection is that human testimony is

not sufficient to convince us that miracles were really wrought. This indeed is the principal, and the only plausible objection that can be made to miracles as a proof of the divine authority of the Scriptures. This objection therefore requires particular consideration.

It has been shown that God is able to work miracles; and that for the sake of a greater good, it is consistent with his wisdom, and an act of benevolence, thus to deviate from the established laws of nature. It has also been shown, that a revelation from God to men was necessary to lead them into truth, duty, and happiness; and that such a revelation needed to be attested by miracles to be received by those to whom it might at first be delivered. Hence it is evident, miracles are possible, and they involve no inconsistency. Why then may we not admit historical testimony in support of the miracles of Scripture, as well as of any thing else which has taken place before our time? We know nothing of past events but from historical testimony. And most certainly the Scripture historians have claims to our belief of the facts which they have recorded, equal to any other. Their characters for candour, integrity, and morality, were at least as unimpeachable as those of any other historians. And their mode of narration has nothing in it suspicious; for they relate things, however wonderful, without apology, and leave the reader to judge for himself.

It has been asked why miracles are not still performed? It is answered they are unnecessary. In addition to all the evidences which have been considered in two former discourses, we have the testimony of credible men, delivered under strongly corroborating circumstances of its truth, that miracles were wrought; and we have also the evidence of numerous prophecies, which have been fulfilling in all ages since they were delivered. And they who with these evidences, do not believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, would not believe, should one rise from the dead, and bear his testimony. Besides if miracles were wrought in every age, they would become so common as to be considered mere natural events; and thus lose their force; and the end intended to be answered by them would be defeated.

But further if we allow, that it is difficult to believe that the miracles of which we have an account in Scrip-

ture were wrought; we must either believe this or stranger things. If we deny that the miracles related were really performed, we must believe, one of two things; either that the men, on whose testimony, we have received an account of these miracles, were themselves deceived, or that they were intentional deceivers. They could not have been deceived; for they relate things of which they say, they were personally the witnesses. The Apostles certainly knew whether Christ raised Lazarus after he had been dead four days. They could not have been deceived about the resurrection of Christ himself, after he had been put to death by the Jews. For they had been long and intimately acquainted with him, and knew his person perfectly. And they tell us that after his resurrection, they saw him a number of different times for the space of forty days, conversed and ate with him, handled him, and after receiving from him a blessing, saw him ascend towards heaven until a cloud received him out of their sight. They could not have been deceived in what they relate about the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost; for they most certainly knew, whether they received a power to speak many languages, which they had never learned. If they were deceived, no confidence can be placed in the senses; not even when the testimony of the senses of many others, agrees with that of our own. It must therefore be admitted that the witnesses who related the Scripture miracles were not themselves deceived.

It remains then to show that they had no design to deceive others, and that if they had attempted such a thing they could not have succeeded. If the Apostles intended to relate falsehoods and deceive others, they must have had some object to answer by such deception. But supposing their testimony was false, what could have been their object? Not reputation, or honour, or emolument; for the miracles of which they give an account, they declare were performed openly, before many witnesses, and before enemies. And therefore they must have foreseen, if their narration was false, the falsehood would be readily discovered, and exposed, and their objects defeated. Besides the religion in support of which these miracles were said to have been wrought, was opposed to the corrupt passions of human nature; and also to the religion of the empire, and would make no compromise with it, but de-

manded its extirpation. And therefore they must have expected disgrace, and persecution, and the loss of every temporal blessing which men esteem dear, instead of reputation, and honour, and wealth. And this was the result. They were considered "as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things." 1 Cor. iv. 13. They were persecuted, and suffered the loss of every thing of a worldly nature; and most of them lost their lives for their testimony. Besides, if what they related was false, what reason can be given, why when they were scourged, imprisoned, tortured, and threatened with death, unless they renounced their testimony, not one of them retracted; but all willingly preferred the most cruel tortures and death to the renunciation of their testimony. The Apostles certainly were not fools. Their writings screen them from this imputation. But we must suppose them to have been fools and madmen, if they could relate known falsehoods, and persevere in them at the expense of reputation, ease, property, life, and also their eternal happiness, for no other purpose, than the pleasure of telling and persevering in a known falsehood.

But further, if they who testified to the miracles of Scripture had an intention to deceive, and to palm falsehoods upon the world, it is impossible that they should have obtained belief, and not have been discovered to be deceivers. According to their testimony, the miracles were done openly. The miracles of Moses were performed before the whole Jewish nation. If, in the record he has made of them, he did not tell the truth, the whole Jewish nation, could have exposed his falsehood. But some perhaps may say, they were privy to the falsehoods, and wished them to gain credit, to give the greater dignity to their nation. But unfortunately for the objector, the conduct of the Jewish nation as related by Moses, was such under these miracles, that it remains on record a lasting stigma on their national character. And therefore if the record of Moses, concerning these miracles was false, they not only had it in their power to expose them, and prevent their gaining any credit; but it was their interest so to do. And as to the miracles said to have been performed by Christ and his Apostles, the witnesses declare they were done openly, in the most public places, and the most public manner. The raising

of Lazarus from the dead, they testify to have been done before many of the Jews, and many who were enemies of Christ. When they testified that Christ fed five thousand persons, with five loaves and two fishes, an appeal for the truth of their testimony was made to the whole five thousand. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the resurrection of Christ, he asserted that he was seen of more than five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom he told them were then alive, living witnesses of the truth of his assertion. And in the account which is given of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, enduing the Apostles with the gift of tongues, it is recorded there were present to witness this event, "men out of every nation." Acts ii. 5. And that when the multitude were drawn together by the report of what had taken place, "every man heard them speak in his own language," vers. 6. Now we know that both Jews and Heathen were violently opposed to the christian religion, and used their utmost efforts to suppress it. If therefore the writers of the New Testament related falsehoods, they had it in their power by thousands of witnesses to whom these writers appealed, to detect these falsehoods, and to brand their authors with infamy as notorious liars. And if they could, they doubtless would have done it.

Considering all these things, the rejection of the miracles of Scripture does not relieve us from the difficulty of believing strange things; for in disbelieving these miracles we are compelled to believe, what is far more strange and improbable. Hence on the principle of the objector himself, as well as for other reasons mentioned, we are constrained to believe that the miracles recorded in Scripture were really wrought. It follows that as a miracle can be wrought only by the power of God, and he would not communicate his power to confirm an imposture, the Scriptures, which were confirmed by numerous miracles, are the word of God.

SERMON V.

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF GOD.

2 PETER i. 19. FIRST CLAUSE.

“ We have also a more sure word of prophecy.”

IN the context, the Apostle had exhorted christians diligently to attend to the things of religion. The exhortations on this subject, he enforced by telling them, “we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In proof of this assertion he offered several reasons. The Apostles testified to what they had seen concerning Christ; for they “were eye-witnesses of his majesty.” God the Father had also testified in their hearing that he was the Son of God, and that the religion which he taught was true; “for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” And in addition to these evidences for the confirmation of their faith in the truth of the religion, which the Apostles had taught them, and to excite them to obedience to its precepts, they were referred in our text to prophecy, which was a surer evidence; “we have also a more sure word of prophecy.”

Prophecies have been, ever since they were fulfilled, and are in the present day, one of the strongest proofs of the divine inspiration of the persons who delivered them, and that the Scriptures in which they are contained are the word of God. Miracles were calculated to gain immediate assent. Prophecies were addressed to future generations, and are standing miracles of knowledge.

The meaning of prophecy is, a prediction of future events. With certainty to foretel future events must be the prerogative of the omniscient God alone. No man can by the exercise of the powers of his own mind alone, look

forward through many years and ages, and infallibly predict what is to come. This can be done, only by him who knows all things, who sees the end from the beginning, and who has all events under his controul and direction. This all must readily admit. It therefore follows, if persons have been enabled to look forward into futurity for many years, and ages, and foretel things to come, when there was nothing, in natural causes then in operation, which could give a clue, by which to pronounce with certainty on these events, they must be inspired with a supernatural knowledge. A considerable portion of the Scriptures is professedly prophetic. If these prophecies have been fulfilled, it will follow, that as none but God can foretel future events, they who delivered these prophecies were divinely inspired; and the Scriptures in which they are contained are the word of God.

The object in this and a subsequent discourse is, to prove from *prophecy*, that the Scriptures are the word of God.

The prophecies contained in the Scriptures are so numerous, that many discourses would be necessary, even briefly to mention them, and show that they have been fulfilled; only a few therefore of the most important can be attended to.

The following will be considered; viz. The prophecy respecting the Ishmaelites; the prophecies relating to Egypt; those concerning the destruction of Babylon; Daniel's prophecies of the four monarchies; the prophecies respecting the Messiah; the prophecies of Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem; the prophecies about the rise and fall of antichrist; and those respecting the Jews in the latter days. The first four of these will be considered in this discourse.

With respect to most of these prophecies, we learn their accomplishment, not only from the history of past ages; but we see them still fulfilling in our own day. And therefore, against most of these prophecies, the unreasonable objection which has been made against prophecies in general; viz. that they were written after the events which they pretend to predict had taken place, can have no weight.

1. The first prophecy from which I would argue that the Scriptures are the word of God, is one delivered in

the early ages of the world, concerning Ishmael and his descendants. Before he was born, the Lord, we are told, spake to his mother concerning him. "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Gen. xvi. 12. This prophecy related not only to Ishmael personally; but also to his descendants. This appears from other parts, of what the Lord said to his mother and to Abraham respecting him. It is evident from the Scripture history that the Ishmaelites settled the country which is now called Arabia; and the Arabians consider themselves as descended from Abraham by his son Ishmael.

Has this prediction, made almost four thousand years since, concerning the descendants of Ishmael, been fulfilled? History abundantly proves that it has been fulfilled and fulfilling in all ages since it was delivered. And the present state of that people still answers to these ancient predictions respecting them. Their general character, always has been, and still is, that of a wandering, and wild people. Their hands always have been and still are against every man, and every man's hand against them. From time immemorial their character has been, that of robbers by land and pirates by sea. And notwithstanding all the provocations they have given to other nations, they have still continued an independent people, dwelling, according to the prophecy, in the presence of all their brethren. The greatest conquerors in the world, have in their turn attempted to subdue this people; but they all failed. Cyrus, the conqueror of the Babylonian empire, failed in his attempts upon the Arabians. Alexander the Great, who overturned the Persian empire, and conquered almost the known world, never conquered this people. The Romans who extended their conquests still further than Alexander had done, at different times, sent against the Arabians, some of their greatest commanders, but they could obtain no permanent advantage. Still they maintained their liberty and independence. And they still maintain them until this day. The prediction respecting the descendants of Ishmael, has therefore, in all ages, since it was delivered, been a standing evidence, that the Scriptures in which it is contained, are a revelation from God.

2. There are, some remarkable prophecies concerning Egypt, which are a standing evidence that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel both foretold the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And Ezekiel prophesied concerning their state after this conquest, as follows; "They shall be a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations." Ezek. xxix. 14, 15. "And there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt." Ezek. xxx. 13. Have these prophecies been fulfilled? Two Heathen historians, Megasthenes and Berossus, and one Jewish historian, Josephus, inform us that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt. And if we examine history from that time down to the present, we shall find, that there has not reigned in Egypt, since shortly after its conquest by Nebuchadnezzar, a prince of their own nation. After the Babylonian, they were subjected to the Persian monarchy. During the reign of the Persian kings, they made some efforts to regain their independence, and at different times, for a few years, they partially succeeded. But after this they were completely subjugated, and have ever since been in subjection to foreign princes and foreign powers. After the Persians, they were governed by Alexander the Great, and the Ptolemies his successors, who were Grecians. From these they passed under the Roman yoke. Their next masters were the Saracens. Then the Mamalucs. And then the Turks, to whom they are now in subjection. And that they have long been among the most abject, servile, and base nations of the earth, their history abundantly establishes. And it is well known that this is their character at the present day. So exactly has this prophecy been fulfilled. And although delivered upwards of two thousand years since, it is still fulfilling. And the state of the Egyptians has been, for many ages, and is at this day a standing evidence, that the Scriptures are the word of God.

3. The next prophecies to which I would direct your attention, are, those which relate to the taking and destruction of Babylon. The prophet Isaiah lived and prophesied near two hundred years before the taking of

Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Babylon was then in great glory, insomuch that it was called "the glory of kingdoms." Is. xiii. 19. And "the golden city." Is. xiv. 4. Isaiah prophesied that this city should be taken, and foretold the very name of the king who should take it, upwards of one hundred years before he was born. He calls him Cyrus. Is. xlv. 1. Historians all agree, that Babylon was taken by Cyrus the Persian. Jeremiah prophesied about one hundred years before the taking of Babylon. Both he and Isaiah pointed out the manner in which this city should be taken. To human reason it must have appeared impregnable. Its walls were 350 feet high, and 87 feet thick. To attempt to beat down these walls, would have been madness in an enemy. And it was almost equally impossible that the city could be taken by scaling the walls. Through the midst of the city ran the river Euphrates, the banks of which were fortified with walls of the same height and thickness as those around the city. Where the streets crossed the river, there were massy gates of brass which opened to the river. These gates were all carefully shut at night.

Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied, that this city notwithstanding its great strength, should be taken, and they particularly predicted the manner. Isaiah prophesied "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden. I will open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut." Is. xlv. 1. And Jeremiah prophesied. "A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up." Jer. l. 38. "In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the Lord." Jer. li. 39. "And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts." Jer. li. 57. According to these prophecies, Babylon was to be taken by Cyrus, in a time of feasting and drunkenness, and by its waters being dried up, and its gates left open.

Let us now attend to the accounts of the taking of Babylon, which we find in profane historians. Cyrus the Persian besieged the city. At this time there was a strong force within, and provisions sufficient for twenty years;

besides there was vacant ground within the walls, sufficient to produce provisions for several more years. The inhabitants therefore felt perfectly secure, and from the walls they scoffed at Cyrus and his army. Cyrus at first attempted to raise works to scale the walls; but after having spent some time in this attempt, he relinquished it as impracticable. He then purposed to beseige the city, until he should starve its inhabitants into a surrender. And after having spent some time in the prosecution of this plan, he fell upon an expedient, which succeeded. Understanding that a great festival was to be kept on a certain day by the Babylonians, and that it was usual at this festival, to spend the night in revelling and intemperance, he resolved to attempt to get into the city and take it on this night.

To get into the city, he sent a party of men to break down a dam at the entrance of a canal, which led into an artificial lake, which the Babylonians had made, to drain the river, so as to prevent the overflowing of its banks at certain seasons. This being done early in the evening; by midnight the channel was so far drained, that Cyrus with his army, marched under the walls in the channel. Then was fulfilled the prophecy, "a drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up." After Cyrus had thus entered the city, if the gates which led from the river had been shut, his design must have been frustrated. But we are informed that that night the king of Babylon and the principal men of his court, had been engaged in feasting and drinking, until they were intoxicated and the city was filled with disorder. In the disorder which prevailed, some of the gates which led from the river into the city were neglected and left open. By this means, Cyrus gained admission into the city, surprized and slew the king, and most of his court, and took the city. Then were exactly fulfilled the prophecies. "I will open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut." And, "I will make them drunken, and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep." Such were the prophecies of Scripture concerning the taking of Babylon by Cyrus; and so completely were they fulfilled as we learn from Heathen historians.

These same prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah went further, and predicted, not only that Babylon should be ta-

ken; but that it should also become desolate. In the prophecies of Isaiah we read; "and Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there: neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there; and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the Islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces." Is. xiii. 19-22. "I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts." Is. xiv. 23. In the prophecies of Jeremiah, we find similar predictions. Such are the following: "It shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate. The wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the Islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." Jer. l. 13, 39. "Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing without an inhabitant. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby." Jer. li. 37, 42, 43. Such were the prophecies concerning Babylon, in the midst of its glory; and when it was perhaps the greatest, most populous, and most opulent city in the world. Have these predictions been fulfilled?

We learn from history, that after the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, it by degrees declined and fell into ruins, until in the fourth century of the christian era, it was used as a park in which wild beasts were kept. A part of the adjacent country was overflowed by the water of the river, which had been diverted from its usual course, and thus according to the prophecy became a possession for the bittern, and pools of water. Another part became dry and barren, so that it was not tilled.

Writers and travellers, later than the fourth century inform us, that the place where the city of Babylon was supposed to have stood, was so infested with poisonous

creatures, that it could not be passed through. And we are told by still later travellers, that even the place where Babylon once stood cannot be exactly ascertained. Thus completely have been fulfilled the predictions of Scripture respecting this once famous and proud city, the mistress of the world and the glory of kingdoms. It has been for many ages, and is at this day, a standing evidence of the accomplishment of prophecy, and that the Scriptures are the word of God.

4. We next mention the prophecies of Daniel respecting the four successive monarchies, as affording clear evidence that the Scriptures are the word of God. From the second chapter of the book of Daniel, we learn that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had a dream, which had gone from him when he awoke, and which greatly troubled him. The wise men of Babylon were summoned before the king to make known to him the dream, and its interpretation. This they could not do, in consequence of which, a decree was issued to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel hearing of the king's perplexity, and of this decree, asked and obtained admission to the royal presence; and related to Nebuchadnezzar his dream, and told him what was the interpretation. In doing this he distinctly avowed that the secret had been revealed to him by the God of heaven.

The dream was, "Thou O king sawest, and behold a great image. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Dan. ii. 31-35. This was the dream.

The interpretation, which Daniel gave was to this effect. The gold in the image represented the Babylonian monarchy, then in its glory. After this, he informed Nebuchadnezzar, there should arise another kingdom, represented by the silver in the image, which would be inferior to the Babylonian. Then a third kingdom of brass, which should bear rule over all the earth. And after this a fourth kingdom which should be as strong as iron. And that in the days of the kings of the fourth

kingdom, the God of heaven should set up a kingdom, which should never be destroyed. This was the prophetic interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

According to this prophecy, there were to be four successive monarchies, which were to bear almost universal rule; and that in the time of the fourth of these monarchies, the God of heaven was to set up a kingdom. The same was the import of the vision which Daniel had of four beasts coming up successively from the sea, which vision and its interpretation are recorded in the 7th chapter of the book which bears his name. Have these prophecies been fulfilled? Let history answer the question.

The Babylonian monarchy was then existing. The Medo-Persian monarchy succeeded, by which the Babylonian was overthrown. This second kingdom according to the prophecy was to be inferior to the first. From history we learn, that it was inferior, both in extent of dominion, and greatness of military deeds. The kingdom of the Medes and Persians was overthrown by Alexander the Great, who established the Grecian monarchy, represented in the image by brass, most probably in allusion to the brazen armour which the Grecians wore. This monarchy, according to the prophecy, was to bear rule over all the earth. Alexander's conquests according to history, extended over almost all the then known world. And according to the vision of the beasts, this kingdom was to have four heads. All acquainted with history know that the Grecian empire after the death of Alexander, was divided into four parts among his four captains. According to the prophecy a fourth power was to arise, represented by the iron in the image, which was to be more mighty than any of the preceding. This was fulfilled in the Roman empire, which overturned the Grecian, and which was more extensive and powerful, than either of the three preceding. In the days of the kings of the fourth kingdom, the God of heaven, according to the prophecy, was to set up a kingdom, which was never to be destroyed. In the days of the Roman emperors, a kingdom was set up by Jesus Christ, which he called the kingdom of heaven. I mean the christian church. This like the stone cut out of the mountain was small in its beginning, and as the stone was cut out without hands, so this kingdom had not the arm of human power to es-

tablish it. This kingdom according to the prophecy was never to be destroyed. And the gospel kingdom has stood the most powerful and determined attempts to destroy it, and it yet stands.

Thus exactly have these prophecies of Daniel been fulfilled. And indeed there is such an agreement between the prophecies of Daniel, and the history of the times to which they relate, that infidels to avoid the conclusion thence drawn in favour of the inspiration of the Scriptures, have been driven to take refuge in this subterfuge, that his prophecies were written after the events which they profess to predict had taken place. This was the plea of Porphyry, who lived and wrote against christianity in the third century of the christian era.

Several reasons might be offered to show the invalidity of this objection. I would mention however only one; Porphyry himself admits that the book of Daniel was written as early as in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, about 200 years before Christ; and it is certain that many of Daniel's prophecies relate to times after this period, and have been fulfilled since. Therefore according to the admission of Porphyry himself, Daniel was a prophet. And the exact accomplishment of the prophecies which he delivered, proves that the Scriptures in which they are contained are the word of God.

The consideration of the remaining prophecies, which were mentioned in the beginning of this sermon, will be attended to in another discourse.

SERMON VI.

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF GOD.

2 PETER i. 19. FIRST CLAUSE.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy.”

THE following prophecies as proving the Scriptures to be the word of God, were considered in the last discourse, viz. the prophecy respecting the Ishmaelites;

those concerning Egypt; and the taking and destruction of Babylon; and Daniel's prophecies of the four successive monarchies. According to the plan laid down in that discourse, we now proceed to the consideration of four other prophecies, viz. those respecting the Messiah; the destruction of Jerusalem; the rise and fall of Antichrist; and the state of the Jews in the latter days.

1. The prophecies in the Old Testament, concerning the Messiah to come, prove the Scriptures to be the word of God. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are received by Jews as well as christians. It is therefore certain that the prophecies respecting the Messiah, contained in these Scriptures, could not possibly have been written after the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, whom christians hold to be the promised Messiah. For the Jews have always been the bitter opposers of Jesus and his cause, and have most obstinately, and perseveringly refused to acknowledge him, as the Messiah that was to come according to the prophecies of their Scriptures. If therefore, christians had wished to have introduced into the Scriptures of the Old Testament as prophecies, some things respecting the Messiah, which were accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth, and had made the attempt, it is not possible they could have succeeded. The Jews would never have received into their Scriptures, these pretended prophecies; but on the contrary would have eagerly, and successfully exposed them to the world as spurious. The prophecies, therefore, of the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah, were certainly delivered, before the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth. And if these prophecies have been accomplished in him, it will follow, that they who delivered them were inspired of God; and that the Scriptures, in which they are contained are a revelation from God.

Let us then attend to some of the prophecies respecting the Messiah, found in the Old Testament, and see whether they have been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

Isaiah prophesied; "behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Is. vii. 14. Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. The prophet Micah foretold, that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem of Judah. Mic. v. 2. At this place was Jesus born. Jacob predicted, "the sceptre shall not depart from Ju-

dah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Gen. xlix. 10. By Shiloh the Jews understood the Messiah to be meant. The sceptre, we know, departed from the Jews, and a lawgiver ceased from among them, just about the time that Jesus was born. Daniel prophesied that the Messiah should come and be cut off, in seventy weeks from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. Dan. ix. 24-27. Jesus appeared and suffered death at the end of seventy weeks of years, that is four hundred and ninety years, from the decree given by the Persian monarch to Ezra, to restore and build Jerusalem, Isaiah (xl. 3.) and Malichi (iii. 1.), both prophesied that the Messiah should have a forerunner, to prepare his way. This Jesus had in John the Baptist, who is called, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Mat. iii. 3. Isaiah prophesied (chap. 53.) that the Messiah should be neglected, despised, rejected, and put to death. All this was literally fulfilled in Jesus. The Psalmist foretold that he should be betrayed by his own familiar friend, in whom he trusted, and who did eat of his bread. Ps. xli. 9. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of his Apostles.

The Psalmist further prophesied, that the persecutors of the Messiah would give him gall for his meat, and in his thirst vinegar to drink. Ps. lxix. 21. The crucifiers of Jesus gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah should be numbered with the transgressors, and have his grave with the rich. Is. liii. 9. 12. Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor. David foretold that they should part his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture. This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. So exactly have the predictions of the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah, been accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, since it is the prerogative of the omniscient God alone to foretel future events, we must conclude that the prophets were inspired of God; and that the Scriptures, which are thus confirmed are a revelation from God.

2. The Scriptures are proved to be the word of God from the prophecies of Christ respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. These prophecies are recorded in the 24th

chapter of Matthew, the 13th of Mark, and the 19th and 21st of Luke. In general Christ foretold to the Jews, "behold your house is left unto you desolate." The signs that this desolation was near, were to be, that nation should rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; that famines and pestilences and earthquakes should be in divers places; that false Christs and false prophets should appear; that there should be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and that Jerusalem should be encompassed with armies. With respect to the time of the seige, Christ calls it "the days of vengeance," and foretold that there should be great distress upon the land and wrath upon the people. And the result, we have contained in the prophecy in these words. "And they shall fall, by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, and laid even with the ground, and there shall not be left in it one stone upon another."

Were these predictions fulfilled? Every one acquainted with the history of Josephus knows they were. Josephus was a Jew, and was a principal actor in the wars between the Jews and Romans, and wrote a particular account of these wars. Let us compare each particular of the prophecy just cited, with the histories of Josephus, and other historians who notice these wars, and the events of that time.

As signs of the approaching ruin of the Jews, Christ foretold, that nation should rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and that there should be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. From the history of Josephus, we collect that there were, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, great commotions, wars, and bloodshed, among different nations and provinces. From the same history we learn, that there was a famine in the reign of Claudius Cesar, and a great pestilence in Babylon, about the year 40. Tacitus, a Roman historian and a Pagan, makes mention of a great mortality in the city Rome, and other parts of the Roman empire in the year 65, which was just before the Jewish war commenced. As to earthquakes predicted by Christ, Tacitus and other historians speak of several in different parts of the Roman empire, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. Another sign foretold by our Lord was,

that false Christs and false prophets should appear. The history of Josephus proves that this prediction was accomplished.

Christ also foretold that there should be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. Both Josephus and Tacitus inform us, there were many wonderful signs. In the history of Josephus we read, that a blazing comet in the form of a sword hung over the city Jerusalem, for the space of a whole year; and also that on a certain day, before sun-set, there were seen in the air chariots, and troops in armour, carried upon the clouds and surrounding cities. Tacitus, who lived about the same time has these words; "prodigies happened, which a nation exposed to superstition, and averse to religion, had power to expiate, neither by victims, nor by prayers. Armies were seen to run together through the sky, and the temple to shine with the fire of the clouds. The gates of the temple were suddenly thrown open, and a voice more than human was heard, that the gods were departing." Thus we have the united testimony of two approved historians, the one a Jew and the other a Heathen, that the prodigies, which, according to the prediction of Christ, were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, did really appear.

Again our Lord foretold that Jerusalem should be encompassed with armies, and calls the days of the seige, "the days of vengeance" and of "great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people." According to Josephus, Jerusalem was beseiged and harassed by the Romans from without. At the same time, a civil war prevailed within, which destroyed perhaps, nearly as many of the inhabitants, as the arms of the Romans. They were also afflicted with famine to such a degree, that they even ate human flesh. In various ways above eleven hundred thousand of the Jews lost their lives. These were truly the days of vengeance, distress and wrath. Christ further predicted that the Jews should fall by the edge of the sword, the remnant be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem be trodden down of the Gentiles, and laid even with the ground, and that there should not be left one stone of the temple upon another. Every part of this prophecy has been literally fulfilled, and with respect to some part of it, we see the accomplishment in

our own day. Titus, with the Roman army took the city, and we are informed that the soldiers slew of the inhabitants until the blood ran in the streets, and the soldiers were weary of slaughter. The city and temple were set on fire and burned down. After this Titus ordered that they should be demolished, which order was executed, and so completely says Josephus, that the place appeared as if it never had been inhabited. And we are informed in history that afterwards the very ground on which the temple stood was ploughed up, most probably in quest of treasure. So completely was the prediction of Christ fulfilled that not one stone should be left on another. And that the prediction, that the remnant of the Jews should be led away captive into all nations, has been fulfilled, we have not only the testimony of the writers of that day; but we know that that people are at this day dispersed throughout the nations of the earth.

3. That the Scriptures are the word of God is further proved from the prophecies concerning the rise and fall of Antichrist. A large portion of the Revelation given to John, in the Isle of Patmos, respects this power. It is there represented as a beast, with seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads were explained to John, to signify, seven mountains, which should be the seat of this power, and the ten horns, ten kings, which should give their power and strength to the Beast. Upon his heads was to be the name of blasphemy; and the number of his name was to be six hundred, three score and six. This power was to speak great things and blasphemy; and to make war upon the saints and overcome them, and be drunken with their blood. The kings of the earth were to give their power and strength to the Beast. The world was to wonder after the Beast, and no man was to be permitted to buy or to sell, save he that had the mark or the name of the Beast. This power was to continue, for a time, times, and half a time, or forty and two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days.

These prophecies have been fulfilled, and still are fulfilling in the Papal power. The bishop of Rome gradually rose in the church, until in the year 606, he was declared universal bishop or head of the church; and in the year 756, he became a powerful, temporal prince. The anti-christian power was to have its seat on seven moun-

tains. The city Rome was built on seven hills. The Beast was to have ten horns signifying ten kings, devoted to his interest. The western empire was divided by the northern nations, which subdued it, into ten kingdoms, which were devoted to the interests of the Pope. Upon his heads was to be the name of blasphemy; and he was to speak great things and blasphemy. The Pope has assumed divine titles, holiness and infallibility, has claimed to be Christ's vice-gerent upon earth, and on his mitre has had inscribed the blasphemous name of "*Vicarius Filii Dei*," that is, "the Vicar of the Son of God." The number of the name of the Beast was to be six hundred sixty and six. The numerical letters in the Latin inscription just mentioned, added together, make exactly this number. So do also the numerical letters in the Greek word *Lateinos* or the Latin man, and the Hebrew word *Romiith* or the Roman man; both of which names are properly applied to the Pope. The anti-christian power, according to the prophecy, was to make war with the saints, and overcome them, and be drunken with their blood. This has been done by the Papal power. It has persecuted the saints, and put millions of them to death. The kings of the earth were to give their power and strength to the Beast; and the world was to wonder after the Beast. At a certain period, almost all the princes of Christendom were subject to the dominion of the Pope, and acknowledged his supremacy; and he at his pleasure, excommunicated kings, absolved subjects from their allegiance, and laid whole kingdoms under interdict from the word and sacraments. No man was to be permitted to buy or sell, save he that had the mark or name of the Beast. To show how exactly this prophecy has been fulfilled in the Papal power, permit me to quote the words of a bull issued by Pope Martin 5th against the Waldenses, and Albigenses. "We will and command by our authority apostolical, that professors of the catholic faith, as emperors, kings, dukes, princes &c. expel from their dominions, all, and all manner of heretics; that they suffer none such in their shires or circuits to keep either house or family, either yet to use any handicraft, occupation or other trades, or to solace themselves in any way, or frequent the company of christian men."

The antichristian power was to continue, a time times and a half, or forty and two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days. Each of these expresses the same period of time. This period has generally been interpreted to signify, twelve hundred and sixty real years. And this interpretation is warranted by other parts of Scripture. In the year 606, the Bishop of Rome was declared universal Bishop and head of the church. If we are to date the commencement of the reign of the Beast, at that time, he has been reigning a little more than twelve hundred years, and his reign must be nearly expired. The power of the Pope, we know, is greatly diminished. It has been for a long time declining. And the events which have for some time been taking place with respect to that power, warrant the hope, that before long, we shall have an additional evidence of the completion of prophecy, and of the divine authority of the Scriptures; when it may be said, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." Rev. xviii. 2. "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Rev. xix. 1, 2, 6.

4. The last prophecies, I shall consider to prove that the Scriptures are the word of God, are those which respect the Jews in the latter days. The one delivered by Christ, has already been considered. Your attention will be confined to those delivered by Moses, about fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ; and which are recorded in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy. This chapter was delivered to the Jews, before they had entered the land of Canaan. It contains a great many prophetic threatenings against them, in case of disobedience to the divine commandments. We shall attend only to those which relate to the latter days.

"Because (said Moses) thou servedst not the Lord thy God; the Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons, and of thy daughters in the siege. The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance. And ye shall be pluck-

ed from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there, a trembling heart, and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life."

A noted Deistical objection to prophecies is that they were written, after the events had taken place. This objection cannot possibly gain any credit, with respect to the prophecies, concerning the Jews in the latter days: for we see the accomplishment of these prophecies in our own days. Of the great antiquity of the writings of Moses, we have the most unquestionable evidences. According to the Scripture chronology he must have written 3,300 years since. But the prophecy which has been quoted, although delivered so long since, has been fulfilling for near 1800 years; and is, at this day, still fulfilling before our eyes. And so exactly has this prophecy of Moses been fulfilled, that had he been in the city of Jerusalem when it was beseiged and taken by the Romans; had he continued with the Jews, in all their dispersions since, down to the present time; and was he now living upon earth to be an eye-witness of their present state; and were he to attempt to write a history of this people during all this time in as small a compass as his prophecy is contained, he could scarcely have more accurately described their state.

But let us more particularly examine the prophecy and its accomplishment. "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth." This was true of the Romans, and especially of that army which was sent against the Jews. For Vespasian, who first commanded in this war, was with his army, previous to their marching against the Jews, in Britain; which might well be called the end of the earth, as no countries were known beyond it, in that direction. "And they shall beseige thee in all thy gates. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons, and of thy daughters in the seige." According to Josephus this part of the prophecy was literally fulfilled. The prophec-

ey proceeds. "And ye shall be plucked off from the land, whither thou goest to possess it; and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth, even unto the other." This part of the prophecy has also been exactly fulfilled. The land has, for a long time been possessed and inhabited by strangers, and the Jews have been for near 1800 years, and are at this day, dispersed, into all countries of the world as far as our knowledge extends. And what is very remarkable, and a standing miracle, notwithstanding all their dispersions, and their great temptations to lose their national character, they still remain a distinct people. Where is the nation in the world, that under such circumstances have continued a distinct people? The other nations which have been conquered and dispersed abroad, have soon lost their national character, and been incorporated with the nations among whom they dwelt. But the Jews still remain a distinct people, a standing evidence of the truth of prophecy, and of the divine authority of the Scriptures. And one object of divine Providence in dispersing them over the earth appears to be to confound infidels in every part of the world; and to be, in the day of judgment, swift witnesses against those, who can, under such evidence, continue to disbelieve the truth of the Scriptures. But the prophecy went still further, and described the state of the Jews in their dispersions. "Among these nations, thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there, a trembling heart, and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt have none assurance of thy life." Every one acquainted with the history of the Jews since their dispersion, must know that this prophecy has exactly described their condition. Their history is one of scorn, oppression, confiscation of property, and banishment from country to country. And although their afflictions have been greater at some times, and in some nations than others; yet in every period, and every land, they have been despised; and with perhaps the exception of this country since we became an independent people, oppressed.

How wonderfully have the predictions of Moses been fulfilled! and how could he, at the distance of more than three thousand years, have so exactly foretold the pre-

sent state of this people unless he was inspired of God? Such evidence must carry conviction of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, to the minds of all, except those, who are determined to persist in infidelity, let the evidence be what it may. And such are referred for conviction to the evidence which will be exhibited, in the judgment day.

I have now, my brethren, in several discourses, gone through the arguments, by which I proposed to establish the divine authority of the Scriptures. From what has been said in these discourses, the conclusion is now with confidence drawn, that the Scriptures are the word of God, given by inspiration of him. A practical improvement of the whole of this subject, will be made in another discourse.

SERMON VII.

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF GOD.

JOHN xvii. 17. LAST CLAUSE.

“Thy word is truth.”

THE divine inspiration of the Scriptures, has been the subject of discourse for five Sabbath mornings. The argumentative part of this subject is now finished. It only remains to make a practical improvement. The better to prepare the way for this, it will be proper to give a brief summary of the arguments which have been used in the preceding discourses on this subject.

In the first of these discourses, the position that the Scriptures are the word of God, was argued,

1. From the majesty of the style of some parts of the Scriptures, superior to what is found in any other writings.

2. From the harmony of all the parts, though written by different men, in different countries and languages, and at different times, which shows that they were all dictated by the same unerring and divine Spirit.

3. From the mysteries contained in the Scriptures, far above the invention or discovery of human reason, which shows that they have come from an incomprehensible God.

4. From their antiquity and wonderful preservation. Under this head it was shown, that some parts of the Scriptures, are the most ancient writings of which we have any knowledge; that no books have been more exposed to destruction; that frequent attempts were made entirely to destroy them; and that many books of much later date have been lost. From this wonderful preservation of so ancient a book, the conclusion was drawn, that they had been the peculiar care of divine providence, and that therefore he approved of them and was their author.

5. From the character of the penmen, whose writings sufficiently show that they were men of piety, candour, and integrity; and who could not have had in view, any selfish end. And

6. From the wonderful establishment, success, and progress of the christian religion, notwithstanding the many, and to human power, insuperable obstacles opposing, which shows that the Lord was on its side, and that therefore it is of divine original.

In the second discourse the following arguments were used viz.

1. The purity of the doctrines and precepts, allowing not the least indulgence in sin, and inculcating holiness under the severest penalties; which shows that the Scriptures could not have been the production of bad men; for it is contrary to their character and nature; nor could they have been the production of good men, unless they were divinely inspired; for if they had not come from God, good men would not have palmed them upon the world as divine.

2. The scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, and to abase the creature before him. This would not have been the case, if they had been the composition of wicked men, as they must have been, if they are not a revelation from God.

3. Their happy influence in meliorating the state of society and of individuals; which proves that they are a revelation from him who is love. And

4. Their light and power, to convince, convert, and comfort the soul.

In the third discourse, the evidence furnished by miracles was considered. In doing this miracles were explained to be a deviation from the established laws of nature; and it was shown that they can be wrought by the power of God and are admissible in support of a divine revelation as consistent with the divine wisdom and goodness; that they can be wrought only by the power of God; and that the miracles recorded in Scripture were really wrought. Hence the conclusion was drawn, that the Scriptures, which God has thus attested must be a revelation from himself.

In the fourth and fifth sermons, the divine inspiration of the Scriptures was argued from prophecy. In the fourth sermon the following prophecies were adduced and their accomplishment shown; viz.

1. The prophecy concerning Ishmael and his descendants delivered before his birth, which has been ever since and is at this day fulfilling in the Arabians, his descendants.

2. Some prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel concerning Egypt, which, it was shown from history, had been fulfilled, and were still fulfilling in the present day.

3. Some prophecies delivered by Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning the taking of Babylon, and its complete and perpetual desolation. The exact completion of this prophecy was shown from history; and it was further shown that the present state of Babylon is in exact agreement with the prophecy.

4. The prophecies of Daniel respecting the four successive monarchies, and the setting up of a kingdom by the God of heaven under the fourth monarchy, which prophecies, it was shown from history, had been exactly fulfilled, and were in part still fulfilling.

In the fifth discourse the following prophecies were considered; viz.

1. The prophecies of the Old Testament, respecting a Messiah to come, which prophecies are acknowledged by the Jews as well as christians to make a part of the Scriptures. The exact accomplishment of these prophecies in Jesus of Nazareth was shown.

2. The prophecies of Christ respecting the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem, and the subsequent state of the Jews, the exact accomplishment of which we learn from the histories of Josephus a Jew, and Tacitus a Heathen.

3. The prophecies concerning the rise, conduct, and fall of a corrupt, blasphemous and persecuting power in the church, which have been fulfilled and are at this day fulfilling in the Papal power. And

4. The prophecies of Moses respecting the dispersion and state of the Jews in the latter days, which we learn from history have been fulfilling for 1800 years past, and which we know are still fulfilling before our eyes in the present day.

The foregoing is a brief summary of the arguments which have been used on this important subject. And from these arguments the conclusion is confidently drawn that the Scriptures are the word of God. This conclusion is expressed in our text, "thy word is truth." This proposition I shall now consider as established, and proceed to make a practical improvement of the whole subject.

In doing this three classes of persons will be addressed, viz. Professed infidels, practical unbelievers, and the real children of God.

1. Professed infidels, or they who either secretly or openly are Deists in principle. Whether any such are present, or not, I know not; but if there are any, I must discharge my duty to you, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.

You have probably heard the arguments which have been advanced in preceding discourses to prove the Scriptures to be the word of God. In what way will you resist these arguments, and do away their force? will a mock, a scoff, or sneer, the most usual and powerful weapons, which infidels use against revealed religion, will these answer? Although these, often have a great effect, they do not prove a thing untrue. And surely the subject of the divine authority of the Scriptures merits to be treated with more seriousness and dignity. The things which the Scriptures assert, if true, are of vast, and unspeakable importance; and their truth, as we have seen, is supported by many and weighty arguments. In our attempts therefore to prove them true or false, we ought never to employ the pen of ridicule, or make them a

theme for the exercise of wit. They demand the most serious attention and impartial examination. Why do you refuse to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God? Is it from an impartial examination of the subject, and a careful consideration of the several arguments, which are adduced in support of their truth? many infidels have never read the Scriptures; and many have read them very superficially, or with a captious spirit, seeking for something, by which to find fault, and to strengthen themselves in infidelity. Has not this been the case with you? And is it not because you dislike the holy precepts of the Scriptures, and because you cannot endure their threatenings against persons of your character, that you do not believe them to be true? Whether has unprejudiced reason, or inclination decided this point? If your infidelity has not arisen from ignorance of the subject, inquire whether it has not arisen from hatred of the Scriptures. You found they were opposed to you, and therefore you were opposed to them. You wished they might not be true. You hated their holy precepts. Their dreadful threatenings disturbed your pleasure in sin. And as the inclination has great influence in biassing the judgment, your judgment at length was brought to agree with your wishes. You readily received and acquiesced in every shadow of argument, which might aid in persuading yourselves that the Scriptures were not true. Was it not in some such way, that you imbibed the principles of infidelity? and have you not much reason to suspect the correctness of principles, which are formed in such a way?

But leaving the cause, consider the folly of infidelity. If you have read the Scriptures, you know they contain most awful threatenings against the wicked, and expressly declare, "he that believeth not, is condemned already." John iii. 18. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thes. i. 7-9. With

similar declarations, the Scriptures abound. If these declarations should prove true, what is to become of you? and are you sure, they are not true? Can you prove their falsity, so as to leave no cause for doubt? If you cannot, you act a most unwise and dangerous part. If you would act according to the dictates of human prudence, right reason, and self-interest, you should be able, satisfactorily, to disprove every argument which can be brought in favour of the Scriptures, before you reject them. You ought not to be contented with doubts about their truth. You ought not to rest satisfied with the hope or the belief, that they may possibly, or probably not be true. Nothing less than certainty should satisfy you. For remember the interest at stake is eternal happiness. If the Scriptures should prove true, and you should die in your present principles and practice, inconceivable and everlasting misery would be your portion.

The proverb of the wise man, "he that walketh uprightly walketh surely," Prov. x. 9. is very applicable to the present subject. The man who believes the Scriptures and lives according to them, is certainly the safest and in the happiest condition. For it is certain he loses nothing in point of happiness in this life; but on the contrary gains much. He avoids many miseries into which transgression of the precepts of Scripture lead. He has peace with his own conscience, and hope of a glorious immortality beyond the grave; and facts prove that his principles afford him support and consolation, which nothing else can give, in the hour of affliction and dissolution. If it should be found at last that the Scriptures are not a revelation from God, still the christian has lost nothing; his state hereafter will not be worse than that of the infidel. If death is an eternal sleep, it will be so to the christian as well as the infidel; if there is a future state and all will be happy there, this all will embrace the christian as well as the infidel; and if only the virtuous will be happy, the virtuous christian will certainly be as safe as the virtuous infidel. Besides the christian as we have already seen has not lost; but has gained much in this life. So that if the infidel is right, still it is well with the christian, and he has chosen the best course.

But if the christian is right, what then becomes of the infidel? He inevitably sinks to hell, where the worm dieth

not, and the fire is not quenched, and where is the blackness of darkness, and no rest day or night forever.

Thus, admitting the possibility and probability of the falsity of the Scriptures, still it would be wise, by living a christian life to be prepared to find them true, should they prove so in the end. How unwise then does the infidel act to reject the Scriptures, when their truth is supported by so many, and such weighty and conclusive arguments as we have seen they are?

Let those who disbelieve the Scriptures to be the word of God, therefore, be wise, betimes, before it be forever too late. Be prepared to find the Scriptures true. Repent of your sins, while your repentance may be salutary, lest you have in vain, through eternity, to mourn over your folly, and say, while you weep and wail, and gnash your teeth, "how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof." Prov. v. 12. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, lest with the devils, you soon have to believe and tremble, when you shall see him "revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. And when you shall hear him pronounce upon you the awful sentence, "depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Mat. xxv. 41. And when the smoke of your torment shall begin to ascend up forever and ever. May the Spirit of grace, to which you have done despite, carry conviction to your hearts, and sprinkle you with that blood of atonement which you have trampled under foot, that your sins may be pardoned, and that you may be brought to adore, and rejoice in that grace, which you have heretofore despised.

2. I proceed to make an application of this subject to practical unbelievers, or those who while in words they allow the truth of the Scriptures, yet in works deny it, or live as though they were not true. We have probably among us many of this description of unbelievers. Whether the professed infidel be the most wicked character in the sight of God, or not, he is certainly the most consistent character. His faith and practice correspond with each other, which is not the case with the practical unbeliever. By practical unbelievers, all those, of every description are meant, who, while they profess to believe the Scriptures to be true and a revelation from God, have

not as yet, truly embraced the religion which they teach and inculcate. Permit me with all plainness to address such.*

You profess to believe yourselves to be constantly under the all-seeing eye of God, who will bring every work into judgment, and punish the workers of iniquity; and yet you live as though God never saw you, or as though he would not keep his word and punish you, or as though he had not power to execute his threatenings.

You profess to believe there is a future state of eternal happiness, and of eternal misery; and that in a few years at most, and for ought you know, in a few days, you must leave this world, stand at the bar of God, and receive your irreversible sentence which will fix you forever in heaven or hell; and yet you are entirely absorbed in the things of this world, and neglect to make preparation for eternity.

The Scriptures which you profess to believe, teach us that there is a heaven of unutterable bliss, and yet you prove by your actions that you prefer the momentary pleasures of sin, to all this bliss. Surely such conduct is inconsistent!

You believe the Scriptures. You therefore believe that there is a hell of torment, in which God will eternally confine and punish the wicked; and that there, their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night forever. How inconsistent is it to believe such things, and yet sustain the very characters, which the same Scriptures teach shall have their portion in this place of torment!

You profess to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God. In these Scriptures we read, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel-

* The substance of the following address to practical unbelievers was written by the author of this sermon, and published under the signature M. in the Assembly's Mag. Vol. 2. P. 110.

lings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. v. 19-21. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Ex. xx. 7. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name." Jer. x. 25. "If ye forgive not men their trespases, neither will your Father forgive your trespases." Mat. vi. 15. You profess to believe the Scriptures to be true. If therefore any of these characters belongs to you, out of your own mouths, ye are judged. According to your own professed belief, you fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, revellers, drunkards, revilers, or extortioners; you who live in hatred, variance, or strife; you who envy your neighbour's prosperity; you cannot inherit the kingdom of God. You who refuse to forgive those who have injured you, God will not forgive you. You profane swearers, God will not hold you guiltless. You liars, you shall have your part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. You prayerless heads of families, God will pour out his fury upon you. These consequences inevitably follow on your own principles.

Again, these Scriptures which you profess to believe to be the word of God declare, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 3, 5. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luk. xiii. 3. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. iii. 28. And "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. If then you are destitute of these characters of a Scriptural christian, what according to your own professed belief, must be your situation? you must yet be under the wrath of God, and continuing to sustain the character which you now do, you must perish forever; as surely, as swearers and drunkards, and the other wicked characters just enumerated. According to your own professed belief, you who are unregenerate, have no title to the kingdom of God. You, who are impenitent, are in

danger of perishing. On you who are strangers to a gospel faith in Christ, the wrath of God abideth, and you are yet under condemnation. And you who are destitute of holiness, if you should continue in this state, cannot see the Lord.

How inconsistent the conduct of practical unbelievers! And according to their own professed belief, how dangerous must be their situation! To what shall such be exhorted? To become infidels in profession as well as practice? contradict reason? oppose conscience? labour to persuade themselves that there is no hereafter? and that death is an eternal sleep? Ah! it is in this manner, that practical unbelievers, too often, seek to escape from the uneasiness produced by a life at war with their principles. But if you have any regard for the interests of your immortal souls, take the opposite course. Instead of striving to accommodate your belief to your practice, conform your practice to your belief. Forsake your evil ways, and your unrighteous thoughts, and turn unto the Lord and bring your hearts and lives to accord with the precepts of the Scriptures which you profess to believe and receive as the word of God.

3. It remains to make an application of this subject to the real people of God, who not only believe the Scriptures to be the word of God; but have received the truth, in the love of it.

You see, my christian brethren, from the arguments which have been advanced, in support of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, on what a firm foundation your hopes rest. And you have another kind of evidence which others have not. You feel that there is a blessed reality in the religion of the Scriptures. You have the witness of their truth within. The Spirit of God has borne witness, by and with the Scriptures in your hearts, convincing you that they are really the very word of God. What abundant consolation does this truth that the Scriptures are the word of God, afford to you? You have not followed cunningly devised fables. You are not pursuing an airy phantom, while you walk by faith, and look not at the things which are seen and temporal; but at the things which are unseen and eternal.

The Scriptures being true, since you have believed on the Son of God, you have everlasting life, and shall not

come into condemnation. God is your God, and Father in Christ Jesus. For the sake of Christ in whom you have believed, your sins are all forgiven, and you are accepted, acknowledged and loved, as the children of God, and he will give you all needed grace, and withhold no good thing from you. Jesus Christ, the eternal, and co-equal Son of God, is your Saviour, your prophet, priest and king, your Lord and master, your friend, your brother, and your husband. Nothing shall be able to separate you from the love of God in him, or pluck you out of his hands. You are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. All things shall work together for your good. All things are yours, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come. There remaineth a rest for you, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, is reserved in heaven for you. A kingdom, a crown, and a throne await you; and you shall dwell in the presence of the Lord, and enjoy him forever. All this, and far more than can be expressed or conceived, the Scriptures secure to you.

Let the Scriptures therefore be exceedingly precious to you. Search them daily. Meditate in them day and night. Let them dwell in you richly. Stand fast in faith of the truths which they contain. Be careful more and more to conform your lives to their precepts. By your conduct, give no occasion to the enemies of revealed religion to speak or think reproachfully of the Scriptures. But "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Mat. v. 16.

And finally, fear not the attempts of infidels against the Scriptures. God will take care of his own word. The enemies of revealed religion, have already tried their utmost; and they always have failed and always will fail; for they oppose almighty power, and unchanging truth which are engaged for the support of the cause of revelation. The enemies of revealed religion should rather be the objects of your compassion, and your prayers, than of your fears; for if they persevere in their opposition they will destroy themselves, while the word of God will live and abide forever.

SERMON VIII.

THE NATURAL PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

PSALM cxlvii. 5. FIRST CLAUSE.

“*Great is our Lord.*”

HAVING proved the Scriptures to be the word of God, the doctrine next in course is, *the divine perfections*. This doctrine we have contained in our Shorter Catechism, in the answer to the question,

“*What is God?*”

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

The attributes or perfections of God have been divided into *communicable*, and *incommunicable*. By the *communicable* are meant those, of which there is, at least, some faint shadow in the creature, although there is an infinite disproportion between them as they exist in God, and as they are found in the creature. Such are wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. By the *incommunicable* perfections are meant those, of which there is not the least shadow in the creature, but which rather represent God as opposed to the creature. Such are infinity, immutability, independence and the like.

Modern divines give another division of the divine perfections; viz. *natural and moral*. This division is adopted in the ensuing discourses on this subject.

By the *natural* perfections of God, are meant those, which, abstractedly considered, are not necessarily connected with goodness of disposition, as spirituality, infinity, eternity, immutability, wisdom and power. For although these perfections, as they exist in God, who is an infinitely perfect being, are necessarily connected with goodness of disposition, yet a being might possess these attributes, and still be very wicked.

The *moral* attributes of God are those which are necessarily connected with goodness of disposition, as holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Writers on the subject of the divine perfections, sometimes arrange them under the two general classes of *greatness* and *goodness*; comprehending the natural perfections under the head of *greatness*, and the moral under that of *goodness*. Considering this arrangement as correct, our text will lead us to speak, in the ensuing discourse, of the *natural perfections* of God.

The natural perfections enumerated in the answer quoted from our Catechism are, spirituality, infinity, eternity, immutability, wisdom, and power. The object in the ensuing discourse will be, to define these perfections, and prove that they belong to God, and then to make a practical improvement of the subject.

1. God is a *spirit*. By the spirituality of God is meant that he is an immaterial substance, without body or bodily parts, as said our Saviour to his disciples, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Luk. xxiv. 39. This it is true, is rather saying what spirituality is not, than what it is; but it is as good a definition as we, in our present state, can give. The divine spirituality is expressly asserted in the two following texts, "God is a Spirit." John iv. 24. "The Lord is that Spirit." 2 Cor. iii. 17. It is true, God is spoken of in Scripture, as though he had bodily members. Thus it is said, "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro." 2 Chron. xvi. 9. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16. But these and all similar texts are to be understood figuratively and not literally. In them the Lord speaks after the manner of men, in condescension to our weakness, to assist our feeble conceptions.

2. God is *infinite*. He is infinite in his being, and in all his perfections. By the infinity of God is meant that he is without bounds or limits. That this attribute belongs to God, may be proved from his being before all things, and self-existent, and independent. There was nothing before him to bound him. He is dependent on no other being for his existence; and he gives being to all others. He must therefore be unlimited or infinite. And in the latter part of the verse which contains our text, we read, "his understanding is infinite."

Under the head of infinity, may be comprehended, the

divine *immensity* and *omnipresence* which are the infinity of God with respect to space. The difference between immensity and omnipresence appears to be this. *Immensity* is that attribute by which God fills universal space, or is where any thing else *can be*; his *omnipresence* is that attribute by which he is, where any thing else *is*, or present to each particular thing.

These perfections of immensity and omnipresence, even the Heathen attributed to the Supreme Being. "All things are full of Jove," said one. And another said, "God passes through all lands, and tracts of sea, and the high heaven." The Scriptures frequently ascribe these attributes to God. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord." Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." Prov. xv. 3. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Ps. cxxxix. 7-10.

3. God is *eternal*; that is, without beginning, or end, or successive duration. He never began to be; he will never cease to be; and days and years and ages are not applicable to him as they are to created beings. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." 2 Pet. iii. 8. He exists in one eternal *now*; with him there is no past or future, but all is present.

The eternity of God is necessarily connected with his existence. As every thing which begins to be must have a cause, and as there was no being before him from whom he could derive his existence, he never could have begun to be, and therefore must have been from eternity. And as he existed from eternity, existence must be essential to his nature, and therefore he can never cease to be; but must exist to eternity.

The eternity of God is also clearly proved by many passages of Scripture; such as the following. "The King eternal, immortal." 1 Tim. i. 17. "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Ps. xc. 2. "Thou art from

everlasting." Ps. xciii. 2. "Thou shalt endure, and thy years shall have no end." Ps. cii. 26, 27.

4. God is *unchangeable*. By this is meant, that he is always the very same. This perfection is also frequently ascribed to God in his word; as in the following texts. "Thou art the same." Ps. cii. 27. "I am the Lord, I change not." Mal. iii. 6. "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Jam. i. 17.

5. God is infinitely *wise*. The wisdom of God is that perfection, by which he knows all things, and by which he so lays his plans for the government of the universe, and so orders all events, as best to effect the best ends. Wisdom includes knowledge; but it goes further. There can be no wisdom without knowledge; but there may be much knowledge, where there is very little wisdom. It is the union of knowledge, and of judging rightly, as to the best course of conduct to effect an end, which constitutes wisdom.

That God perfectly knoweth all things is frequently taught in Scripture, as in the following passages. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 13. "O Lord thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord thou knowest it altogether. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." Ps. cxxxix. 1-4, 12. "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." Job. xxvi. 6. "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. "God knoweth all things." 1 John iii. 20.

The infinite wisdom of God is proved from several considerations. It is manifested in the order and harmony of the works of creation, and the subserviency of one thing to another. It is exhibited in the works of providence. It is eminently shown in the work of redemption, in which all the divine perfections harmonize in the salvation of the sinner. And the Scriptures expressly as-

cribe this perfection to God, as in the following texts. "His understanding is infinite." Ps. cxlvii. 5. "The manifold wisdom of God." Eph. iii. 10. "He is wise in heart." Job ix. 4. "He is mighty in wisdom." Job xxxvi. 5. "God only wise." Rom. xvi. 27. "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." Rom. xi. 33.

C. God is *almighty* in power. The power of God is that perfection by which he can do all things possible to be done, or whatever does not involve a contradiction. That this perfection belongs to God is proved by his creating all things out of nothing, and by his preserving and upholding all things; and the Scriptures frequently ascribe this perfection to him, as in the following passages. "Great is our Lord, and of great power." Ps. cxlvii. 5. "I am the Almighty God." Gen. xvii. 1. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Rev. xix. 6. "Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Jer. xxxii. 17. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand." Dan. iv. 35.

Having thus defined and proved, the natural perfections of God, it remains to show what practical improvement we ought to make of these perfections. We may well exclaim, in the words of our text, "great is our Lord" and in the language of other parts of the Scriptures. "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Deut. xxxii. 3. "Thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee." 2 Sam. vii. 22. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he is also to be feared above all gods." 1 Chron. xvi. 25.

How should the greatness of God affect us? It should especially fill us with fear. "Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you." Job xiii. 11. The moral perfections of God exhibit him to us, as an object of love, and every holy soul must on this account love him. But arrayed in his natural attributes, he appears the majestic and terrible God, an object of fear rather than love. And if he had only natural, without moral attributes, he would be an object of fear to the ex-

elusion of love. But God being *good* as well as *great*, his greatness should fill us with a holy and filial fear connected with love.

Having made these remarks on the greatness of God generally, let us attend to the instruction, furnished by each particular attribute which has been considered.

1. God is a Spirit. This teaches us that we ought to render him a spiritual service. "The true worshippers (said our Saviour) shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 23, 24. And the Lord by the mouth of his prophet Isaiah, denounced judgments against those who draw near him with their mouth, and with their lips do honour him, but have removed their heart far from him. Is. xxix. 13. A spiritual worship, or having the soul engaged, is necessary to an acceptable service. If God be a Spirit, bodily exercise in our worship, without our souls, will profit nothing. In our worship and service of God therefore, let us always remember that he is a Spirit, and worship and serve him in spirit and truth.

Another instruction which the spirituality of God affords us is, that we should form to ourselves, no image or representation of him, not even in thought. The second commandment forbids, that in our worship of God, we make unto ourselves the likeness of anything. And to enforce this prohibition, the Lord told the Israelites, "ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." Deut. iv. 15.

2. God is infinite, immense, and eternal. With what high and reverent thoughts of him, should these attributes fill our minds? If we stretch our powers to the utmost bounds to which we can reach, and attempt to scan and comprehend this Being, we are lost. If we compare ourselves with him, we sink into insignificance, and are as nothing. Let a sense of these perfections of God, and a view of ourselves in comparison, humble the native pride of our corrupt hearts. Shall we who are the beings of yesterday, exalt ourselves before the eternal God? Shall we who are finite, and confined to a narrow corner of this point in universal space, "atoms of this atom world," pretend to comprehend the deep things of an infinite

God, cavil with his works, and reject what he has been pleased to reveal in his word, because we cannot comprehend them? Let us rather be filled with a sense of the infinite distance there is between us and God, and take our places in the dust before him, ever remembering that he has said, "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted." Is. ii. 11.

Again these perfections of God teach us his all-sufficiency. He must therefore be a portion sufficient to satisfy the utmost desires of all finite beings. Let us therefore choose him as our portion.

3. God is omnipresent and omniscient. A sense of these perfections ought to fill us with a fear of sin, and lead us to holiness of heart and life. Is God every where present? Does he see, and know all things? even our very thoughts, desires and motives? Then we ought not so much to fear the scrutiny of human eyes in our actions as the eye of God. Men can only kill the body; but God can cast both body and soul into hell. If therefore, when we are tempted to sin, we have ever reason to fear human observation, we have much greater reason to fear the eye of God. These perfections teach us that secrecy ought never to prove a motive to sin; for there is one with whom we have to do, who seeth in secret, and who will "bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Eccl. xii. 14. He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. "The darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to him." Ps. cxxxix. 12. The omnipresence and omniscience of God should fill the secret workers of iniquity with alarm. Though they have escaped human observation, yet one has seen them, before whose bar they must soon stand in judgment. Let hypocrites tremble. You exhibit a fair outside, like a painted sepulchre, while within you are full of dead men's bones, deceit and wickedness. What an affront to the majesty of heaven is your pretended religion! you virtually deny to God, the perfections of omnipresence and omniscience. Remember that "the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath," Job xxxvi. 13. and that "the hypocrite's hope shall perish?" Job viii. 13. Remember that there is a day coming, when the secrets of your

hearts shall be manifested before the assembled universe. For he has declared in his word, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." Mat. x. 26. And "whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house tops." Luk. xii. 3.

But while these perfections of God are calculated to alarm the hypocrite, they administer consolation to the upright soul, under the aspersions of a censorious world. What though the world impeach your motives, and asperse your character, yet if you are innocent, you may appeal to the omniscient God. And although you may not be able to satisfy a censorious world; yet if your own consciences, and your God approve, a day is coming when your innocence and sincerity shall be manifested before the assembled universe.

And further the omnipresence and omniscience of God, teach his children for their comfort, that he knows the desires of their hearts, even though they cannot express them; that he is acquainted with all their difficulties and necessities; and that he is always present with them in every place, and every circumstance.

4. God is unchangeable. A consideration of this perfection is calculated to alarm the wicked, while it may afford much consolation to the real christian. Is God unchangeable in his nature? He is so also in all his declarations, promises, and threatenings. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?" Num. xxiii. 19. He has declared in his word, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luk. xiii. 3. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. "There is no peace to the wicked." Is. lvii. 21. "The wicked shall be turned into hell." Ps. ix. 17. The immutability of God ought therefore to alarm the wicked of every description. For since God is unchangeable, if they continue to sustain their present character, they must inevitably perish forever. What then must the wicked do to escape these threatenings? God will not change, they must change, or must perish forever.

On the other hand, God is unchangeable in his promises as well as his threatenings. This affords strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel. God hath said in his word, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Is. lv. 7. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." John iii. 36. "Him that cometh to me, [Christ] I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John x. 27, 28. The immutability of God secures to his people, that these and all the other exceedingly great and precious promises contained in his word shall be fulfilled. Surely this perfection presents an abundant source of consolation to the real children of God.

5. God is infinitely wise. This ought to silence the cavils of the wicked, who are sometimes ready to say, if they had the ordering of the affairs of the universe, they would direct them otherwise; and who are ready to find fault with the dispensations of divine providence. This perfection ought also to lead us to put our trust in God and commit our ways to him. And it ought to comfort the people of God under afflictions. For although the dispensations of divine providence may be dark; yet he knows what is best for his people. His plans are all wise; he sees the end from the beginning; and he can bring good out of evil. The people of God under afflictions are too apt to say as Jacob did, "all these things are against me." Gen. xlii. 36. But they ought to trust in the divine wisdom, which in the case of Jacob was manifested in the end; and which numerous saints in the different ages of the church have in the end seen manifested, in the same afflictive events, which they at first considered against them.

6. Lastly, God is almighty. This perfection should fill all, with an awe and fear of him. It ought to alarm the rebellious sinner. Could God by speaking the word, bring worlds into existence? Did he speak and they appeared? Did he command and they stood fast? Does he

still uphold creation by his power? Does he according to his will, and can none stay his hand? What will become of his enemies, when he shall enter into judgment with them? He will “dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Ps. ii. 10. Think of his almighty power. “Consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Ps. l. 22. Flee from the wrath that is to come, while you are yet prisoners of hope. Flee to the Lord Jesus Christ, and take sanctuary in him, before the day of the fierce wrath of almighty God come upon you.

And let the almighty power of God be a source of consolation to his real people. This almighty God is on your side. Why need you fear then what your enemies can do unto you? He is stronger than them all combined, and he is able to restrain or subdue them, or overrule their opposition for your good. And he will bring you off, in the end, conquerors over them all, and bring you to everlasting rest.—AMEN.

SERMON IX.

THE MORAL PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

PSALM lxxxvi. 5. FIRST CLAUSE.

“*Thou Lord art good.*”

THE perfections of God, as was observed in the last discourse, are sometimes classed under the two general heads of *greatness* and *goodness*. Under the head of greatness are comprehended his natural, and under the head of goodness, his moral perfections. The natural perfections of God have already been considered, the *moral* perfections claim our attention in this discourse.

The plan of discourse will be,

I. To define the several moral perfections of God and prove that they belong to him.

II. To show that these attributes consist with goodness, and are essential to it. And

III. To make a practical improvement of the subject.

I. I am to define the several moral perfections of God, and prove that they belong to him.

The moral perfections of God are holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

1. *Holiness*. This perfection of God signifies his infinite love to his law, and therefore his infinite removal from all moral impurity, or his infinite opposition to sin which is a transgression of his law. That this perfection belongs to God is proved, from the abhorrence of sin which he has manifested, by the evils which he has sent upon our world for its punishment; from the prohibition in his word of every sin, under pain of his wrath; from the atonement which he required for sin to open a way for its forgiveness; and from many express declarations in his word. Such are the following, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Hab. i. 13. "I the Lord your God, am holy." Lev. xix. 2. "The holy one of Israel." Is. i. 4. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." Is. vi. 3. "There is none holy as the Lord." 1 Sam. ii. 2. "Thou only art holy." Rev. xv. 4.

2. God is *just*. This may be defined to be his determination to maintain his law, or to render to every one that which is right. That God is just is proved by the obedience and sufferings of Christ to maintain and magnify his law, and render it consistent with his justice to pardon and save the sinner; and also by many texts of Scripture. Such are the following. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right." Gen. xviii. 25. "All his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Deut. xxxii. 4. "O Lord righteousness belongeth unto thee." Dan. ix. 7. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways." Ps. cxlv. 17. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Ps. xvii. 2. "The Lord is upright, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Ps. xcii. 15. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Rom. ii. 6. "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Rev. xv. 3.

3. God is *good*. Goodness as has been observed, taken in a more general sense, embraces all the moral perfections of God. But it is also to be taken in a more limited sense, as a particular attribute, and may be defined to be,

the disposition of God to impart to his creatures, those things which they need to make them happy. Of the goodness of God, we have abundant evidence, in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. In the Scriptures, this perfection is so frequently mentioned, that it is unnecessary to quote particular passages. The goodness of God includes his mercy, grace, and patience.

The *mercy* of God is his goodness to the miserable. Misery is the object of mercy. Hence, we may remark, every instance of goodness towards us who are miserable sinners, is mercy. The perfection of mercy is eminently manifested, in the plan of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Scriptures frequently ascribe this attribute to God. He is, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful; keeping mercy for thousands." Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. "He delighteth in mercy." Mic. vii. 18. He is "plenteous in mercy." Ps. lxxxvi. 5. He has a "multitude of tender mercies." Ps. li. 1. "And his tender mercies are over all his works. Ps. cxlv. 9.

The *grace* of God is his goodness to the undeserving, or to creatures void of merit, such as we are. This perfection also is proved from the plan of redemption, through Jesus Christ, and from many passages of Scripture. Such are the following. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." Ex. xxxiv. 6. "I will hear; for I am gracious." Ex. xxii. 27. "Thou, O Lord, art a God, full of compassion and gracious" Ps. lxxxvi. 15. "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion. Ps. cxi. 4.

The *patience*, or forbearance, or long suffering of God, is his goodness to those who abuse it. That vengeance was not executed upon the human race immediately after the fall; that sentence against the evil works which are daily practised, and beheld by the eye of omniscience, is not speedily executed; and that we are permitted to live and enjoy comforts, all prove the patience of God. And so also do the following texts of Scripture among others. "The God of *patience* grant you to be like minded one toward another." Rom. xv. 5. "The riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering." Rom. ii. 4. "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward." 2 Pet. iii. 9.

4. God is *true*. By this perfection is meant, that he is perfectly free from all deceit and falsehood, sincere in all his promises and threatenings, and faithful in the perfor-

mance of them. The truth of God is proved from the following passages of Scripture among others. "The Lord abundant in truth." Ex. xxxiv. 6. "A God of truth." Deut. xxxii. 4. "All the paths of the Lord are truth." Ps. xxv. 10. He "keepeth truth forever." Ps. cxlvi. 6. "All whose works are truth." Dan. iv. 37. "Thy law is the truth." Ps. cxix. 142. "Thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Num. xxiii. 19. "God that cannot lie." Tit. i. 2.

Having thus defined and proved the moral perfections of God, we proceed as was proposed,

II. To show that these perfections consist with goodness and are essential to it. Most of sinners will generally allow that God is good. But many form very wrong notions of goodness. They attribute to God a goodness which is incompatible with holiness, justice, and truth; and from his goodness infer a license to go on in sin. Such are in a great error. God is the ruler of the universe; and his goodness must have for its object not only this or that particular individual, but his creatures generally. The general good must unquestionably be the greatest possible object of the divine goodness; and from the infinite perfection of God, we must conclude, that whenever the happiness of individuals comes in competition with the general good, the former will be sacrificed to the latter: and that his goodness will be no further manifested towards individuals than as it consists with the general good. We would not call a man placed in authority a good ruler, if he were to sacrifice the public good to avoid the punishment of individual offenders. If then it can be shown that all the moral perfections of God are essential to the general good, it will follow that the Lord is good, in being holy, just, and true; and that he would not be good without these perfections.

The Scriptures teach us that all the moral attributes of God are consistent with his goodness and make a part of it. The Lord promised Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Ex. xxxiii. 19. And what was his goodness which he proclaimed? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and

abundant in goodness and truth, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. In this text, *truth* and *not clearing the guilty*, or hating and punishing sin, are made a part of the divine goodness, as well as mercy, grace, and patience. Further we read "God is love." 1 John iv. 8. His very nature is love, and therefore all his perfections, and consequently his holiness, justice and truth must be lovely or good. How is each of these perfections reconcilable with goodness?

1. God is holy. He has an infinite love to his law, and consequently an infinite hatred of sin. This perfection is consistent with goodness, and essential to it. For it is a truth obvious to every reflecting mind, that the natural consequence of sin is misery. We daily see proofs of this. For instance, what are the effects of the sin of intemperance? It impairs the constitution, wastes estate, lessens character, injures the peace of families, and shortens life. So also the sins of malice, envy, and revenge, often hurry men into actions, which precipitate themselves and others into misery. And to what cause are we to trace the wars which have distressed our world, but to sin? to the pride, ambition, avarice, and revenge of men? We see many evidences continually before our eyes that sin leads to misery. And the Scriptures teach us that all the misery in the universe, arises from sin as its cause. Therefore a good being who loves and desires the happiness of the universe must hate sin which has a tendency to impair and destroy this happiness. Hence it appears that the holiness of God, which is his infinite hatred of sin or of that which makes his creatures miserable, is essential to his goodness, and that God would not be good, if he were not holy.

2. God is just. With respect to that branch of the justice of God, which consists in rewarding those who do well, it will readily be allowed that this is essential to goodness. The difficulty with sinners is, to reconcile what is called the punitive justice of God with his goodness. By the punitive justice of God is meant, his punishing the transgressors of his law. In human governments, a ruler without punitive justice would not be esteemed a good ruler. In all governments, the punishment of offenders has been considered necessary to the well being of society. And will we deny to be good, in

the Ruler of the universe, that attribute which we consider essentially necessary to a good human ruler? What opinion would we form of a human ruler, who would connive at the public disturbers of the peace of society? Who would suffer robbers, incendiaries and assassins to range at large, and plunder, burn, and murder with impunity, and thus impair and destroy the happiness of the peaceable citizens? Such a ruler, although he might be applauded by offenders, certainly would not be considered a good ruler, by his well disposed subjects. The case is similar with respect to the Supreme Being. His goodness to his creatures in general requires that he should punish offenders. And if, out of compassion to individual sinners, he were to connive at sin, which, as we have seen leads to misery, and were to permit it to go unpunished, disorder and misery, evidently would ensue; and for the sake of a few individuals who richly deserved punishment, the whole universe might suffer. These remarks show the consistency of the punitive justice of God with his goodness; and not only so, but that it is essential to goodness, and that God would not be good without it.

The punitive justice of God may be divided into reclaiming and vindictive. The former is exercised with a view to reclaim the offender, as well as for an example to others to deter them from transgression. The latter is taking vengeance on the criminal for his crimes without any view to his reformation. In the former of these, the goodness of God appears from the salutary tendency of punishment to reclaim offenders from courses which necessarily lead to misery, and to prevent transgression in others, that they may avoid unhappiness. In the latter, or his vindictive justice, such as is exercised upon devils, and upon wicked men, in eternal misery, his goodness appears, in placing them in a situation in which they cannot injure others, and in making them an example to deter others from sin, which leads to misery. Such obstinate offenders as will not be reclaimed, are fit only to be confined, where they cannot injure others, but may be of some use in affording to others a warning against sin. And we know not how many worlds, and millions of rational beings may be witnesses of the punishment of sinners, and by their example be deterred from sin, and

from misery its consequent. And for ought we know, the number of those who may become the objects of the vindictive justice of God may bear no greater proportion to the number of holy and happy beings, throughout the wide extent of God's dominions, than the number of criminals, capitally punished, in a well regulated government, does to the number of peaceable and orderly citizens. Hence it appears that even the vindictive justice of God is consistent with his goodness, and is exercised with a view to the good of his rational creatures in general.

3. God is true. Therefore he will fulfil his threatenings as well as his promises, and punish sin. That this perfection is also consistent with goodness and essential to it, is proved on the same principle, as that on which holiness and justice are reconciled with goodness; viz. that the natural consequence of sin is misery, and that therefore every thing which has a tendency to discourage and prevent sin, conduces to the general good. But the faithfulness of God to his threatenings, in punishing transgressors has a tendency to restrain from sin.

III. It remains to make a practical improvement of the moral perfections of God. Let us attend to each particularly.

1. God is holy. This teaches us that we should be holy. This is the improvement which God himself directs us to make of this perfection in him. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." 1 Pet. i. 16. We ought to abhor sin and shun it, and be holy or conformed to the law of God in heart, in conversation, and in conduct, because God is holy. To be like unto God, is our duty, our glory, and our happiness. It is our duty; because God has commanded it, and because he is infinitely excellent, and therefore should be imitated by us as far as possible. It is our glory; for it must be the highest honour of creatures to be like unto infinite excellence and perfection. And it is also our interest; for God hath established an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness. For he has declared, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. In heaven God is all in all. He is the source, whence all the happiness of heaven flows; and all the employments and enjoyments of heaven, are like himself perfectly holy. If therefore we expect to dwell with God and

be happy in his presence, it becomes us to be holy; for he is holy. And it is contrary to reason as well as the word of God, that we should enjoy a holy God, and a holy heaven, without holiness. As well might a sick person enjoy a feast which he loathes, as that an unholy soul should enjoy the holy happiness of heaven, or be happy in the presence of an infinitely holy God. How vain, therefore are the expectations of those, who now have no relish for holy exercises and enjoyments, and yet are looking for the happiness of heaven! They will assuredly be disappointed.

2. God is just. This attribute, while it conspires with others to render God transcendently excellent in the sight of all holy creatures and attracts their love, ought to make the sinner tremble. Will the Lord maintain his law? Is he inflexibly just? and is he determined to punish sin? What then is to become of us who are sinners? We can have no just hope but in his mercy. Nor can we have the least ground to hope that he will exercise his mercy at the expense of his justice. His justice must be satisfied, or in vain will the sinner hope in his mercy. The gospel reveals to us a way in which he can be just, and yet show mercy to the sinner. He gave his own Son, who assumed human nature, rendered obedience to the law, and laid down his life an offering for sin, and thus satisfied divine justice. But notwithstanding Christ has made satisfaction to divine justice for sin, none are interested in this satisfaction, but those who cordially receive him by faith as he is offered in the gospel. While therefore the true believer in Christ, hopes in the mercy of a just God; let all out of Christ be alarmed under a sense of the divine justice. Let all such, consider the sufferings of the Redeemer, and learn what they are to expect from the divine justice, unless through faith in the Saviour, they become interested in the satisfaction which he made to divine justice for sin. If God spared not his own Son, when he stood in the place of sinners, but caused the sword of justice to awake against him, and smite him, and bring him down to death; what may sinners themselves expect, when God shall enter into judgment with them for their own sins? "Agree therefore, O sinner, with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the

judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." Mat. v. 25, 26.

3. God is good. What improvement ought we to make of this perfection? "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Rom. ii. 4. "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good." Ps. cxxxvi. 1. Repentance for sin, and thankfulness to God, and a manifestation of gratitude by living to his glory in the world, are duties taught us by the divine goodness. Depraved indeed must that heart be which can continue unthankful under such goodness as God bestows upon us. What then must we say of ourselves? The best have reason to be deeply humbled; for they have not been duly thankful. But alas! how many are there in our world, who not only have no adequate sense of the divine goodness, nor due gratitude for it, but who are entirely insensible of it, and even despise the riches of his goodness? while God is continually loading them with his benefits, their carnal minds are enmity against him. And so dreadfully depraved are mankind that frequently the more God blesses them, the more unthankful they are. As he increases them, so they sin against him. Surely we have reason to be deeply humbled under a sense of human depravity, and to be ashamed of our ingratitude. Let the goodness of God lead us to repentance, and fill us with gratitude, and influence us to live more to his glory. Further, we have seen that God is not only good; but also merciful and gracious, good to miserable and undeserving sinners. He has at an infinite expense, even by the sacrifice of his own Son, opened the way for extending his mercy and grace to us. As possessing these perfections, God should be viewed by us as transcendently lovely. These perfections with still greater force than simple goodness press upon us the duties of repentance, and gratitude, and devotedness to God. And they ought to be contemplated also with joy, by sinners. Here is encouragement to sinners disposed to return unto the Lord. The Lord is a God of mercy and grace. And he is ready to be merciful and gracious to all who seek him aright. Come then perishing sinners, and cast yourselves upon his mercy through faith in his Son. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall

be white as snow: though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Is. i. 18.

But let not the mercy and grace of God, afford any encouragement to impenitent sinners to continue in sin, but rather alarm them. The mercy and grace of God will aggravate the guilt and punishment of the impenitent. For "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19. Consider my hearers, the aggravated doom, which awaits you, if you should perish from under the offers of mercy through a crucified Saviour; and flee from the wrath that is to come, and embrace through faith in Christ the salvation which God in mercy offers to you. And what you do, do quickly. For the day of mercy and grace will soon be ended. And it may terminate very soon. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. vi. 2. Therefore, "to day, if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Heb. iv. 7.

Again, God is patient. He is good to the abusers of his mercy. How depraved must human nature be, which can continue in rebellion against such a God! Because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of many are the more fully set in them to do evil. Because God is patient, therefore they increase in their provocations. Surely we have reason to be deeply humbled, when we consider the long suffering of God, and at the same time reflect upon the use which many make of it. Let us not thus act; or if we have thus acted, let us cease from such conduct. Let the goodness of God's forbearance lead us to repentance. Let us improve the season of his long suffering, to secure his favour. And let those who continue to abuse his patience, remember that although God may bear long, he will not bear always. He has declared, "my Spirit shall not always strive with man." Gen. vi. 3. And despising the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, sinners treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Rom. ii. 4, 5.

4. Lastly. God is true. This perfection offers much consolation to real christians. God has made to such ma-

ny precious promises. He is sincere in all these promises, and will be faithful in the performance of them. Let christians therefore trust the promises of God, and let these promises comfort, and support them under the trials of life. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away." Mat. xxiv. 35.

And while the truth of God is calculated to support and comfort his people, it ought to fill the impenitent sinner with fear. For if God is true, his threatenings against the sinner will be executed; and there can be no hope for the unregenerate, the unbelieving, the impenitent, and the disobedient, while they continue such. God must either deny his truth, or such must be forever miserable, unless they become regenerate, believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and obey the gospel. And it is easy to decide which of these will take place. God will maintain his truth; and therefore sinners, you must be born again, repent, believe, and become obedient, or perish forever.

SERMON X.

THE TRINITY.

I JOHN v. 7.

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."

SOME of the doctrines contained in the Scriptures, are highly mysterious. They cannot be fully comprehended by human reason. This, some have made an objection against the Scriptures; but, without just reason. For mysteries must be allowed in the natural world. We are a mystery to ourselves. The union of the soul and body, and the manner in which they mutually act upon each other, we cannot explain, or comprehend. And the smallest insect and vegetable present mysteries, which baffle human reason. And if we must allow mysteries in natural things, why not in religion? To be consistent in re-

jecting the doctrines of religion, because some of them are mysterious, we ought to disbelieve every thing in nature, which we cannot comprehend and explain.

But further, the mysteries of the Scriptures, so far from militating against the truth of their doctrines, are rather a presumptive evidence in its favour. If God is infinite, he must be incomprehensible by finite beings. The Scriptures in containing mysteries therefore, bear in this respect a resemblance to their mysterious and incomprehensible author. And if in anything we may reasonably expect mysteries, it must be in those doctrines which relate to the manner of the existence of an infinite and incomprehensible God.

Among the mysteries contained in the Scriptures, the doctrine of the *Trinity*, taught in our text, holds a chief place. The word *Trinity* is not found in the Scriptures, but was adopted by the ancient fathers to express the scriptural doctrine of three persons in the Godhead.

The *Trinity* is a doctrine not discoverable by reason. It is a doctrine purely of Revelation. And it is a doctrine, which though revealed, we have no where so explained as to render it comprehensible by our finite understandings. And to attempt to explain it as some have done, is only darkening counsel with words without knowledge.

But though, the doctrine of the *Trinity* is not comprehensible by our reason, it is not, as some have said, contrary to reason. We do not say, there are three Gods, and yet but one God. This would be an evident contradiction. But we say, there are three persons in one essence. God is three in person, and one in essence. This doctrine does not contradict our reason; for it does not come within its sphere. There is a great difference between a thing being contrary to reason, and being above it. But they are often confounded. What is above our reason cannot be measured by it; and our reason is entirely incompetent to decide whether it is contrary to it or not. Of this nature is the doctrine of the *Trinity*. For it cannot be expected that finite creatures should comprehend the manner, in which an infinite and incomprehensible God exists; and therefore, it is folly to say that this doctrine is contrary to reason, when reason is entirely incompetent to scan it; and therefore, to determine whether it is contrary to it or not.

Our text teaches us both the *Unity* of God, and a *Trinity* of persons in the Godhead.

The former of these doctrines we have contained in our Catechism, in the answer to the 5th question.

“Are there more Gods than one?”

There is but one only, the living and true God.”

And the latter in the answer to the 6th question.

“How many persons are there in the Godhead?”

There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”

The object of the ensuing discourse is, to prove these two doctrines:

I. There is but one God. This doctrine may be argued, from the harmony and unity observable in the works of creation, which indicate that there is but one first cause or God. And it is abundantly proved from the express declarations of Scripture; as in the following texts. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Ex. xx. 3. “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord:” Deut. vi. 4. “The Lord he is God; there is none else beside him.” Deut. iv. 35. “Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God; Is. xlv. 6. “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.” Is. xlv. 5, 6. “There is none other God but one.” 1 Cor. viii. 4.

We proceed:

II. To prove that there are three persons in this one divine essence or Godhead. As hath been already remarked, the Trinity is a doctrine purely of Revelation, and therefore its proofs must be drawn from the Scriptures.

It is true, in almost all nations of antiquity, with whose religious sentiments we are acquainted, as the Chinese, the Persians, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians and the Grecians, we find some vestiges and hints of the doctrine of the Trinity. And the further we go back, and the nearer we approach, to the first dispersion of mankind, and the original of the nations, the clearer do these vestiges appear. These facts prove, not that the light of nature taught this doctrine; but that it was an ancient re-

velation from heaven made to the world before mankind were scattered abroad from each other, and by tradition handed down to posterity.

In the Old Testament, we find many proofs of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and some evidences that this plurality is a Trinity. In the very first verse of the Bible, we are taught, that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In the original Hebrew, the word translated God, is in the plural number, Elohim, or Gods. And literally translated the verse would read, "In the beginning the Gods created the heaven and the earth." And we are told by those, who have taken the pains to examine, that in thirty different places in the book of Genesis alone, the plural Elohim or Gods, is used instead of the singular, Eloah, or God; and that in the five books of Moses, there are one hundred places where we find this expression in the original Eloheha, the literal translation of which is, "the Lord thy Gods." And in many other passages, throughout the Old Testament, the name given to the Supreme being is, in the original, in the plural number, as in the following. "Remember now thy Creator [original, Creators] in the days of thy youth." Eccl. xii. 1. "Where is God my maker" [original, makers.] Job xxxv. 10. "Thy maker [original, makers] is thy husband." Is. liv. 5. And it is remarkable, that the word Elohim, Gods, is throughout the Old Testament, uniformly joined, with a verb or noun in the singular number. For instance Joshua said "ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God." Josh. xxiv. 19. Literally translated from the original the passage would read, "ye cannot serve Jehovah; for he is the holy Gods." So also we frequently find the phrase, which literally translated would be, "the Lord or Jehovah, thy Gods." How can we account for this peculiar mode of expression, unless we suppose, that the plural noun Elohim, Gods, is intended to signify a plurality of divine persons; and that the singular noun Jehovah, and the verb in the singular number, are intended to teach that there is but one divine essence; and that these Gods or divine persons, are but one Lord, or Jehovah? In what other way, can we understand them, than as teaching a plurality of persons, and unity of essence?

The doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Godhead was also taught, in the early ages of the world by such expressions as the following, contained in the book of Genesis. "And God said let *us* make man in *our* image after *our* likeness." Gen. i. 26. Here is evidently a plurality of persons signified, by the words *us* and *our*. But in the next verse we read, "so God created man in *his* own image." Here the pronoun *his* is in the singular number, teaching us that this plurality of persons taught in the preceding verse by the words *us* and *our* is but one essence. Gen. iii. 22. we read, "the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of *us*." And Gen. xi. 7. "And the Lord said, go to, let *us* go down." From these and similar expressions, the Jews must have had some knowledge of the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Godhead.

Further, the Old Testament not only teaches a plurality of persons in the Godhead; but from it we may also collect that this plurality is a Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is contained in the following passage in Isaiah. "He said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted." Here is one person. The passage proceeds, "and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them." Here is another person. "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit." Is. lxiii. 8, 9, 10. Here is a third person. In this passage, there are evidently three distinct persons, viz. the Lord, the Angel of his presence, and his Holy Spirit. The same doctrine is taught in the following passages, also in Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." Is. xi. 2. "Behold my Servant whom I uphold. I have put my Spirit upon him." Is. xlii. 1. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me." Is. lxi. 1. In each of these texts there are three distinct persons, the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord, and He on whom the Spirit rested. It was also, most probably in reference to the Trinity, that the Seraphim, which Isaiah in vision saw, thrice pronounced the word holy. "And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." Is. vi. 3. The doctrine of the Trinity appears also to be taught in the threefold benediction, which at the command of the Lord, the high priest of Israel pronounced upon the congregation. "The

Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Num. vi. 24, 25, 26. There are many other passages in the Old Testament, in which the three persons are mentioned, though not all together.

Further that the doctrine of the Trinity was known to the Jews appears from expressions in Jewish authors. And also from this circumstance; our Saviour and his Apostles, as we shall presently see, taught this doctrine; but they do not seem to speak of it as new, or before unknown to the Jews; for they delivered it without any apology, explanation, or preamble.

We proceed to consider the proofs of a Trinity found in the New Testament. Here the doctrine is much more fully and clearly revealed than in the old.

This doctrine is plainly taught in our text. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Here it is expressly asserted, that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three, not merely do agree in one, but are one; One and the same Being or Essence. Although three in person, distinguished by peculiar and incommunicable personal properties; yet they are one in essence.

The doctrine of the Trinity is so clearly, and explicitly taught in this text, that Antitrinitarians have endeavoured to invalidate its genuineness, and to reject it from the sacred volume as an interpolation of some of the Trinitarian fathers. It may therefore be proper here to offer some considerations in defence of its genuineness. It is allowed by the defenders of the genuineness of the text, that there are some ancient manuscript copies of the New Testament, in which it is not found. But at the same time, there are others, of at least equal, if not greater antiquity, and authority in which it is found. And it is much more probable, that this text was erased in some copies, by Antitrinitarians, about the time of the Arian controversy, than that it was interpolated by Trinitarians. For this text operated forcibly against the Arian or Antitrinitarian scheme; but the doctrine of the Trinity was sufficiently supported without it, from many other passages, some of which have already been quoted, and others will

be adduced presently. So that the supporters of this doctrine, if they had been sufficiently destitute of principle to take such liberties with the Scriptures, could have been under no sufficient temptation, to induce them to make such an addition.

Further the connexion in which the text stands argues its genuineness, and the passage will not connect as well if the text is expunged, as if it is retained. And further, another consideration in favour of the genuineness of the text is the use of the term "*Word*," to signify the second person or Son, which is a name as applied to Christ, peculiar to the author of this Epistle. From these considerations the genuineness of the text is maintained. And being genuine, it plainly proves that there are three distinct divine persons, and that these three are one essence, or but one God. And if the text were not genuine, (which however can by no means be admitted) still the doctrine of the Trinity would be abundantly established from other passages of Scripture, some of which have already been quoted, and to others of which your attention will now be directed.

In 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6. we read, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God." And in Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. "There is, one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all." In each of these texts, there are three distinct persons mentioned.

Our Saviour told his disciples, "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." John xv. 26. Here again are three distinct persons mentioned, and particular actions ascribed to each, viz. the Father from whom the Holy Spirit proceedeth; the Son speaking, who was to send the Spirit, and of whom the Spirit was to testify; and the Holy Spirit, called the Comforter, and Spirit of truth, proceeding from the Father, to be sent by the Son, and to testify of him.

Again we have a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, in the account which we have of the baptism of our Saviour. "And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were

opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mat. iii. 16. 17. Here again are evidently three distinct persons. Jesus coming up out of Jordan; the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him; and the Father speaking from heaven and declaring Jesus to be his beloved Son. So conclusive an argument in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, did the primitive fathers consider this passage, that it was a common expression with them, "go to Jordan, and you may see the Trinity."

The same doctrine is clearly taught in the commission, which Christ after his resurrection gave to his Apostles. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Mat. xxviii. 19. Baptism is an act of religious worship. But the Scriptures teach us that God only is to be worshipped. Since therefore this act of religious worship is rendered equally to the Son and the Holy Ghost as to the Father, it follows that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father. The ordinance of baptism is a standing evidence in the church of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead; and a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity amounts to a renunciation of christian baptism. On this subject, one well observes; "Sure I am, did I disbelieve this doctrine, I never would baptize more, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Again, the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught, in the apostolical benediction at the close of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." This benediction is a prayer. Prayer is an act of religious worship, and is to be made to God only. In this passage three distinct persons are mentioned, and religious homage is rendered to the Son and the Holy Ghost equally with the Father.

In the texts which have been adduced in this discourse, the three persons are mentioned together in the same passage; and in such a way as to prove that they are not mere names, or attributes, or offices of the same person; but that they are distinct persons. In some of the passa-

ges quoted, religious worship, which the Scriptures teach us, belongs to God only, is rendered equally to each of them, which proves their equality. And numerous texts teach us that there is but one God, and therefore these three persons are, as our text teaches us, one, one essence, one God.

There are numerous other texts, some of which prove the divinity of the Son, and some the divinity of the Holy Ghost, all of which further prove the doctrine of the Trinity. For if it can be proved that the Son and the Holy Ghost, who we have seen are distinct persons, are divine persons equal with the Father, it will follow that there are three persons in the Godhead. But the particular proofs in favour of the divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, will be attended to in subsequent discourses.

In the conclusion of this discourse, I would remark that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental doctrine of revealed religion, and is very intimately connected with the gospel plan of salvation. In this plan each person has his peculiar work. And is to be personally looked unto and trusted for the performance of the work which belongs to him. And each person being divine, is infinitely competent to perform his personal work in our redemption. Let us therefore rejoice in this doctrine; and though we cannot comprehend it, let us, with the humility of children, receive and believe it on the authority of God. And let us worship and serve the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For he that acknowledges, worships and serves any other than the three in one God, does not acknowledge, worship and serve the God of the Bible, or the one only living and true God; but a creature of his own imagination, which has no real existence.

SERMON XI.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 16. MID-CLAUSE.

“*God was manifest in the flesh.*”

THE subject of discourse on the last Sabbath morning was the doctrine of the Trinity; or that there are three distinct and equal persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in the Godhead, or one divine essence. The proofs adduced in that discourse were chiefly those texts of Scripture in which the three persons are mentioned in the same passage. A few of these texts prove the equality of these three persons; but most of them only prove their distinct personality. It remains on this subject more particularly to attend to the special proofs, in favour of the proper divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The object of this discourse is to prove *the divinity of Christ*; or that the Son is “God equal with the Father. This is the doctrine of our text. God was manifest in the flesh.” Christ is unquestionably the person meant, and hence the doctrine is inferred from the text that Christ, or the Son, is God.

Before entering on the discussion of this subject, it may be proper to remark that the apostle prefaces the text, with declaring, “without controversy, great is the *mystery* of godliness.” The incarnation of the Son is one of the fundamental principles of godliness, and that he who became incarnate or was manifest in the flesh, is God, is another. And these fundamental principles of true godliness, are great mysteries, which the utmost stretch of human reason cannot explain or comprehend. The equality of the Son with the Father is acknowledged to be a great mystery; but the controversy on this subject is with those who profess to believe the Scriptures, and to argue from them, and therefore if it can be shown, that the divinity of the Son is the doctrine of the Scriptures, consistency will require that they should yield their assent

to the doctrine. The grand difficulty to the admission of the truth on this subject is the pride of human reason. And if they who doubt and cavil on this point, would enter upon the Scriptural investigation of it; sensible that God is infinite and incomprehensible, and that human reason is not infinite but finite, one grand obstacle in the way of the reception of truth would be removed.

The Scriptural proofs of the divinity of the Son, are excellently classified and arranged in our Larger Catechism in answer to the 11th question.

“How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father?”

The Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works and worship as are proper to God only.”

In the ensuing discourse this arrangement of proofs will be followed.

I. The same *names* are given to the Son, as to the Father.

The name *Jehovah* is the incommunicable name of God, which cannot with any propriety be given to any creature. For it signifies, *I am*, or *to be*, or *existence*. Essential or self-existence cannot belong to any creature however dignified. And agreeably to this, the Lord claims this name Jehovah as peculiarly his own, and not to be given to any creature; as in Is. xlii. 8. “I am the LORD, (or Jehovah) that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another.” Also in Ps. lxxxiii. 18. “That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most High over all the earth.” Hence it is evident, both from the import of the word, and the declarations of Scripture, that this name Jehovah can be given to no one but a divine person. If therefore it is in Scripture given to the Son, it will necessarily follow that the Son is a divine person, God equal with the Father. But the Son is in Scripture frequently called Jehovah, or I am the self-existent being. Wherever in our English translation of the Old Testament, we find the name LORD, in capital letters, the word is Jehovah in the original Hebrew.

The name Jehovah is given to Christ, or the Son in the following passages of Scripture. Is. xl. 3. “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the

way of the LORD [or Jehovah] make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Compare this text with Mat. iii. 3. and it will be found, that the LORD or Jehovah, spoken of in the passage just quoted, was he before whom John the Baptist came to prepare his way, that is Christ. "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord." Is. vi. 1, 9, 10. We read, "I saw the LORD, [or Jehovah] sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. And he said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 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." This passage is in John xii. 37-41. quoted and applied to Christ, as follows. "Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. Because that Esaias said, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him." He then whose glory, Isaiah tells us in his 6th chapter, he saw, and whom he there called LORD or Jehovah, was according to John, Christ Jesus. Again in Num. xxi. 5, 6, 7. we read, "and the people spake against God. And the LORD [or Jehovah] sent fiery serpents among the people. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, we have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD," or Jehovah. The LORD or Jehovah here spoken of, the Apostle in 1 Cor. x. 9. teaches us was Christ. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." Again in Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. we read, "Behold the days come saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby he shall be called, the LORD [or Jehovah] our Righteousness." It is evident from the whole passage, that the Messiah, who was to come, is here meant.

There are other texts in which the incommunicable name Jehovah is given to the Son; but it is unnecessary to quote any more.

The name *God*, is also frequently given to Christ, as in the following texts. "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us." Mat. i. 23. "Thomas answered and said unto him my Lord and my God." John xx. 28. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name shall be called, the mighty God." Is. ix. 6. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John i. 1. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. "Christ who is over all, God blessed forever." Rom. ix. 5. "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Heb. i. 8. "His Son Jesus Christ, This is the true God and eternal life." 1 John v. 20. And in our text, "God was manifest in the flesh."

From the preceding texts we learn that the names of the Supreme Being, and even the incommunicable name Jehovah, signifying essential or self-existence, are frequently given to the Son; and hence we conclude that he is a divine person, God equal with the Father.

II. The Scriptures teach us that divine *attributes* belong to Christ, and hence again is argued his divinity and equality with the Father.

If it can be shown that the Son is eternal, unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, it will follow, that he is really and truly God; for these perfections can belong to no one but a divine person. But the Scriptures ascribe all these perfections to Christ.

1. He is from *everlasting*. This is proved by the following texts. Mic. v. 2. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." That this was spoken of Christ is evident from Mat. ii. 6. where this prophecy is quoted and applied to him. Prov. viii. 23. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The Speaker in this passage is called Wisdom, by whom is generally supposed to be meant the Son of God. Rev. i. 8, 17, 18. Christ says of himself "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning, and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come. I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead;

and behold, I am alive for ever more." From these texts it is evident, that the Son is co-eternal with the Father.

2. Christ is *unchangeable*. This is proved by the following texts. Heb. i. 8, 12. "Unto the Son he saith, thou art the same." And Heb. xiii. 8. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever."

3. Christ is *omnipresent*. In proof of this are the following texts. Mat. xviii. 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." John iii. 13. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Mat. xxviii. 20. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." From these texts we learn that Christ is present in every christian assembly, which may be convened at the same time throughout the world; that he is at the same time in heaven and upon earth; and also that he is present with each of his ministering servants, wherever they may be throughout the world; and these things could not be, unless he were omnipresent.

4. Christ is *omniscient*. This is proved by the following texts. Rev. ii. 23. "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." John ii. 24, 25. "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." John xxi. 17. "Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." From these texts we learn that Christ searcheth the reins and hearts. He knoweth all men; he knoweth what is in man; and he knoweth all things. Therefore he must be omniscient.

5. Christ is *Almighty*. Is. ix. 6. He is called "the mighty God." And Rev. i. 8. "the Almighty." From the texts quoted under this head, it abundantly appears, that the perfections of eternity, unchangeableness, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, which evidently belong to none but God, are in Scripture attributed to Christ. The conclusion necessarily follows, that Christ is really and truly God, equal with the Father.

III. The Scriptures attribute to Christ divine *works*. Hence, also, his divinity is argued. To *create*, or produce something out of nothing must be a work of almighty and divine power. But this work is in Scripture ascribed

to Christ, as in the following texts. John i. 1, 3, 10. "In the beginning was the Word; all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. He was in the world and the world was made by him." Col. i. 16. "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him." And Heb. i. 8, 10. "Unto the Son he saith: Thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

Preserving or upholding the works of creation is equally a divine work with creating all things. This is also ascribed to Christ, as in Heb. i. 3. "Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." And in Col. i. 17. "By him all things consist."

Raising the dead must also be a work of divine power. This also is ascribed to Christ. In John v. 21, 28, 29, we read: "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." And his own resurrection as well as that of others is ascribed to his power. This we learn from John ii. 19, 21. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; but he spake of the temple of his body." And also from John x. 17, 18. "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Judging the world is the prerogative of God alone. For none but the omniscient God can be qualified for this work, by knowing the secrets of all men. This work will be performed by Christ, as appears from the following texts, John v. 22: "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Mat. xxv. 31, 32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations." Rom. xiv. 10. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

Unto him also belong the *rewarding of the righteous* and the *punishment of the wicked*, which equally with judging the world must be divine works. That Christ

will perform these works, is proved by several texts; but particularly by Mat. xxv. 34, 41. "Then shall the King (before called the Son of man) 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. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Another work which is the prerogative of God alone is the *forgiveness of sins*. This prerogative Christ exercised when he was upon earth; and that none but a divine person can forgive sins, is so evident a position, that it was admitted even by his enemies. They said "why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only." Mark ii. 7.

Thus we see, the Scriptures teach us, that the works of creating and upholding all things, raising the dead, judging the world, rewarding the righteous, punishing the wicked, and forgiving sins are ascribed to Christ. All of which prove him to be a divine person, God equal with the Father.

4. *Worship* is in Scripture rendered to Christ, which further proves his divinity. The Scriptures teach us that God only is to be worshipped. For the Lord in his word expresses the utmost abhorrence of idolatry, or of worshipping anything besides or instead of himself. And our Saviour when he was tempted by Satan, to fall down and worship him, replied, "it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Mat. iv. 10. If then, God only is to be worshipped, if it can be proved, that the Scriptures sanction and command the worship of Christ, the conclusion will unavoidably follow, that Christ is a divine person. Let us then examine the Scriptures on this subject. John v. 23. we read, "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." From this passage we learn that the same honour is due to the Son as to the Father. Surely then he is to be honoured with religious worship; and if so he must be God equal with the Father. In the form of baptism recorded, Mat. xxviii. 19. the Son is directed to be worshipped. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father.

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is certainly an act of religious worship. It is a dedication of the subject, to him, in whose name, he is baptized; and engaging obedience to him. But we are equally baptized in the name of the Son as of the Father, and therefore, in this ordinance equally worship the Son. Again in the benediction, at the end of the 2d. Epistle to the Corinthians Christ is worshipped. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." This benediction is a prayer: it is desiring and asking blessings for those, on whom it is pronounced, from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is therefore an act of religious worship, and this worship is given to the Son equally with the Father. Paul in his introduction to the Epistle to the Romans, prayed for them, "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Chrst." Rom. i. 7. In this passage the same blessings were asked from Jesus Christ, as from God the Father. The like form of introduction we find in every one of the Epistles of Paul, except the epistle to the Hebrews.

Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. we find creation worshipping Christ with the Father. "I beheld (said John) and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And 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 honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." Rev. vii. 9, 10. We again find Christ worshipped by the heavenly host. "I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And Heb. i. 6. We find a positive command given to all the angels to worship the Son. "When he bringeth in the

first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him."

Further the Scriptures give us several examples, of religious worship being rendered to Christ, both while he was upon earth, and after his ascension to heaven. We read of his disciples worshipping him, both before and after his resurrection. Also of a leper, a ruler, a Canaanitish woman, and others worshipping him while he was upon earth. But we have no intimation that he forbade their worship or disapproved of it, which he certainly would have done, if it had been improper, as the angel did, when John fell down to worship before his feet. Rev. xxii. 9. "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant, worship God." Further after Christ's ascension, Stephen prayed unto him, "saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Acts vii. 59.

From the texts quoted, it is abundantly evident that Christ is a proper object of religious worship, and that this worship was commanded by the Father, and was frequently paid to him, and received by him. And hence since God only is to be worshipped and served, the conclusion is inevitable, that Christ is really and truly God equal with the Father.

From a review of the whole evidence which has been adduced on this subject; since the Scriptures ascribe to Christ, the names, attributes, works and worship, which are proper to God only, the conclusion is confidently drawn, that he is a divine person, really and truly God equal with the Father; and since there is but one God, of one substance or essence with the Father.

To this doctrine, it has been objected, that it is mysterious and incomprehensible. This is readily admitted. God is infinite, and human reason is finite and very limited in its powers; and therefore the nature of God must be to us mysterious and incomprehensible; and sound reason will lead us to yield implicit faith to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, on the ground of the evidences that the Scriptures which contain this doctrine are a revelation from God, rather than to reject it, because mysterious and incomprehensible. I repeat an idea before mentioned. It is foolish to say this doctrine is contrary to reason; because our reason is entirely incompetent

to scan it, and therefore to decide whether it is contrary to it or not.

It has been objected again, that the Scriptures in several places speak of Christ as inferior to the Father. For instance in the following texts: "The Son can do nothing of himself; but what he seeth the Father do." John v. 19. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son but the Father." Mark xiii. 32. "My Father is greater than I." John xiv. 28. These and similar texts rightly understood, do not at all militate against the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father. For there are two natures in Christ, the divine and human, and what is peculiar to each nature is frequently attributed to the whole person. In the texts just quoted the human nature of Christ is meant; and as man it is readily admitted, he is inferior to the Father.

A short improvement will now close this subject.

The divinity of Christ is a subject of great importance. It is not a matter of small moment whether we believe this doctrine or not. It is a doctrine which we meet with almost every where in the Bible. It is a fundamental doctrine of the christian religion. There are many doctrines of the Scriptures, which are important, but which nevertheless are not fundamental. A person may lose spiritual comforts, and be retarded in his growth in grace by erroneous views with respect to them, but still be in a state of salvation. But on the subject of the divinity of Christ an error is fundamental. A denial of this doctrine involves perdition. For if Christ be God, as we have seen he is, what sin can be greater than to refuse to pay him divine honours? It is expressly commanded "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And it is expressly declared, "he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, which hath sent him." John v. 23. They who refuse divine and equal honours to the Son as to the Father, honour not the Father. All their pretended worship and service of him are unacceptable. They are yet in their sins, and the wrath of God abideth upon them. The denial of the divinity of Christ, brethren, is a damning error. It would rob the Son of God of the honours, which all creation are required to render to him; it would lessen the depravity of man, the

demerit of sin, the love of God in the work of redemption, and the value of the atonement; and it would take away an almighty Saviour from the awakened burdened conscience, and from the weak and tempted christian. All these are the legitimate and necessary consequences of a denial of the divinity of Christ. It changes the nature of the whole system of revealed religion. It is infidelity baptized, or under a christian name, and they who embrace it, and persevere in it, will have their portion at last with avowed unbelievers, who shall not see life; but on whom the wrath of God abideth. Let us my hearers guard against the insinuation of this poison which will assuredly destroy the immortal soul. The insinuation of this error is one of the grand devices of Satan in the present day to destroy immortal souls. Baffled in his attempts upon the cause of truth, by the undisguised attacks of avowed infidelity, he is now aiming, and in many places too successfully, to accomplish the same object, under the less suspected, but equally, if not more dangerous form of what is called Unitarianism. May none of you my hearers be caught and destroyed in his subtil snares.

Let us cleave to the truth that Christ the Son of God is a divine person, co-equal and co-essential with the Father. Let all hence learn, the infinite love of God in the gift of his Son to be a Saviour, the evil nature of sin which rendered such a sacrifice necessary to its forgiveness, and the infinite value and sufficiency of the atonement which has been made for sin. Let the burdened conscience, be relieved, and the soul groaning under a sense of the infinite demerit of his sins be encouraged; for Jesus is an almighty Saviour and is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God the Father by him. And let the weak and tempted christian also be encouraged; for he is able to keep him unto the day of final redemption. And let us all rejoice in uniting with the church triumphant in ascribing divine, and equal, and undivided honours to him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb.—AMEN.

SERMON XII.

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS V. 4. LAST CLAUSE.

“Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

IN the infancy of christianity, many who united themselves to the christian church, voluntarily sold their possessions, and put the money into a common stock. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, having professed the christian faith, dedicated a possession to God, and sold it for the use of the church. But while they professed to make a large donation to the church, and to pay the whole price of the land into the common treasury, their avarice influenced them secretly to keep back a part. Their sin in this business was very offensive to God; and he thought proper to make a public example of them, that others might be afraid to imitate their wickedness. Peter had revealed to him their hypocrisy, and he charged them separately with it. Upon which, each of them immediately fell down dead. The charge against Ananias we have in the verse which contains our text together with the preceding verse. “And Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? while it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

Ananias was charged with lying unto God; but he who in our text is called God, is in the preceding verse called the Holy Ghost. Hence is inferred the following doctrine, viz.

That the Holy Ghost is a divine person, God equal with the Father.

To establish this doctrine is the object of the ensuing discourse.

On this subject there have been two leading errors;

one that the Holy Ghost is not a distinct person; but only a name, or attribute, or virtue of the Father; the other, that although he is a real person distinct from the Father and the Son, he is only a creature, and not a divine person. The distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, has already been proved in the discourse on the doctrine of the Trinity. The object of this discourse, therefore, will be to refute the latter error, or to prove that the Holy Ghost is a divine person, God equal with the Father.

This doctrine is proved by the same arguments, which were used in establishing the divinity of the Son, viz. Such names, attributes, works, and worship as are proper to God only, are in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

1. The Scriptures give to the Holy Ghost the *names* of the Supreme Being.

The incommunicable name Jehovah, signifying essential existence, and which therefore cannot be given to any creature, however dignified, and which the Supreme Being expressly claims as his alone, is given to the Holy Ghost; of this we have an instance in Is. vi. 3, 9, 10. "I heard the voice of the LORD (or Jehovah) saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me. And he said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 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." This passage is quoted by Paul, Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27. as spoken by the Holy Ghost. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, &c." From this passage in Acts we learn that the LORD or Jehovah, who spake to Isaiah, in the passage quoted, was the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is also called *God*. Of this we have an instance in our text taken in connexion with the preceding verse. "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost. Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The Holy Ghost is here called God; and although the name God is sometimes given to creatures, as

to magistrates. Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6. Yet in this place the name is evidently intended, to designate a person as opposed to the creature. For the sense evidently is that the crime of Ananias was greatly aggravated, because he had not lied unto men or creatures, but unto the omniscient and heart searching God. The Holy Ghost is also called God several times in the following passage: 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." In this passage the Holy Ghost is meant. This appears from the clause, "the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." And also, from a text: 1 Cor. vi. 19. "What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" Again, the Holy Ghost is called God. 2 Tim. iii. 16. "All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God." That the Holy Ghost is here meant appears from 2 Pet. i. 21. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

From the preceding passages we see, that the divine names LORD or Jehovah, and God are in Scripture given to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the Father and the Son. Hence the conclusion is drawn that he is a divine person, God equal with the Father and the Son.

2. *Divine attributes* are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

He is *eternal*, as we learn from Heb. ix. 14. "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself."

He is also *omnipresent*. This is proved from Ps. cxxxix. 7. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" And also from those texts which teach us that the Spirit dwelleth in believers. He certainly could not dwell in all believers throughout the world, if he were not omnipresent.

Again, *omniscience* is an attribute of the Holy Ghost. This we learn from 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." The same is proved by his revealing future things to the prophets. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. Thus we see that the divine attributes of eternity, omnipresence, and omniscience, are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Hence again the

conclusion is drawn that he is really a divine person, God equal with the Father and the Son.

3. *Works* which are proper to God only are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Creation is a divine work; but this is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the other persons of the Trinity. As in the two following passages. Job xxvi. 13. "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." Job xxxiii. 4. "The Spirit of God hath made me."

The *calling* and *commissioning* of *ministers* to preach the gospel, belong to God alone. For we are told, Heb. v. 4. "No man taketh this honour unto himself; but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But this work is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Acts xiii. 2, 4. "The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia." And Acts xx. 28. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."

Again, *the resurrection of the body of Christ*, which unquestionably was a work of divine power, is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the other persons of the Trinity, as we learn from 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

Another work which proves the divinity of the Holy Ghost is *regeneration*. This work is in Scripture called a creation, a resurrection from the dead, and a passing from death unto life. If therefore these be divine works as we have seen they are, so also is regeneration. And we may add, it requires if possible, a greater exertion of power to create anew and quicken a soul dead in trespasses and sins, than to make it at first, or to raise a dead body from the grave. For in the literal creation and resurrection, there is no opposition; but in regeneration there is an opposition to overcome, even the corruptions of the depraved heart. And further that regeneration is a work of almighty power, we learn from Eph. i. 19, 20. "and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Now, this almighty work of regeneration, the Scriptures teach us, is the work of the Holy

Ghost. John iii. 5. "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And Tit. iii. 5. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Again to *work miracles* is the prerogative of God. For this is acting contrary to the laws of nature, established by God himself; and the Scriptures frequently teach that this is the prerogative of God. But working miracles is in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost. He formed the human nature of Christ, which was a miraculous work. Luk. i. 35. And our Saviour said, "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God." Mat. xii. 28. And in the Epistles we read, "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." Rom. xv. 19. "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Heb. ii. 4.

Thus we see that the divine works of creation, calling and commissioning of ministers to preach the gospel, the resurrection of Christ, regeneration, and working miracles, are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Hence again the conclusion is drawn, that he is a divine person, God equal with the Father and the Son.

4. The Scriptures sanction the *worship* of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is an act of religious worship. It is a solemn dedication of ourselves, or of our children unto him, in whose name the rite is performed; and obligations are hereby imposed to love, worship and serve him. But we are equally baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, as of the Father and the Son. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Mat. xxviii. 19.

The Holy Ghost is also worshipped in the apostolical benediction at the end of the 2nd. Epistle to the Corinthians. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." This benediction is a prayer, which is an act of worship. And blessings are here desired and asked from the Holy Ghost, equally as from the Father and the Son.

The Holy Ghost is again worshipped, in the salutation of John to the seven churches of Asia. Rev. i. 4, 5. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and

which was, and which is to come; and from the Seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness." By the Seven Spirits here, we are doubtless to understand the Holy Ghost, so called from the perfection and diversity of his gifts and operations; and perhaps also in allusion to the seven churches of Asia. In this passage the same blessings are invoked from the Holy Ghost as from the Father and the Son.

Further christians are called the temples of the Holy Ghost. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you." 1 Cor. vi. 19. A temple supposes, that he is worshipped in it, to whom it is erected and dedicated. Since then our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, he should be worshipped there, and we should present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto him. This argument is excellently stated by Augustine as follows. "If we were ordered to build a temple to the Holy Spirit of wood and stone, it would be a clear argument of his divinity; because this homage is due to God alone. How much stronger proof therefore of his divinity is this, that we are ordered, not to make him a temple; but to render ourselves as such?"

Again, we are taught that sins committed against the Holy Ghost are more heinous, and involve a greater degree of guilt than those committed against the other persons of the Trinity. Christ said unto the Jews, Mat. xii. 31, 32. "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Since then sins committed against the Holy Ghost, are more heinous than those committed against the Father or the Son, must we not hence draw the conclusion, that we are at least equally to honour and worship him?

From what has been said, it is evident the Scriptures sanction religious worship to the Holy Ghost. But God only is to be worshipped. "For it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Mat. iv. 10. Hence again the conclusion is drawn, that the Holy Ghost is a divine person, God equal with the Father and the Son.

Thus it has been proved, that the names, attributes, works, and worship, which are proper to God only, are in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost; from all which the conclusion is confidently drawn that the Holy Ghost is a divine person, God equal with the Father and the Son.

From this subject we learn, that it is our duty to render divine honours to the Holy Ghost, equally as to the Father and the Son. Let us therefore be careful to do it. The Holy Spirit, we have reason to believe is not sufficiently noticed and honoured as a distinct and divine person in the Godhead, even by those who are orthodox on the subject of the Trinity; and hereby our worship is rendered less acceptable. If we have been in a fault in this respect, let it be corrected.

In the economy of man's redemption the Holy Spirit performs many important offices. To him personally belongs the whole work of the application of redemption to the soul. It belongs to him to convince, renew and sanctify the soul; to witness with the spirits of believers that they are the children of God; to help their infirmities, and make intercession for them in prayer; to comfort them, and to seal them unto the day of redemption. It is a precious consideration that he on whom we are dependent for the performance of all these important works, is a divine person; and therefore abundantly able to perform them for us. Let us therefore rejoice in this truth that the Holy Ghost is a divine person.

Again, this subject solemnly cautions us to be careful how we act towards the Holy Ghost in his operations with us. Is he a divine person? and are sins against him so peculiarly heinous, as we have seen? we ought to be exceedingly careful to cherish his influences, and obey his dictates; lest resisted, vexed, or quenched, he be provoked to withdraw, and leave us to perish in our sins, giving us up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and final impenitency; lest he turn to be our enemy and fight against us, as was the case with the Israelites of old, when they rebelled and vexed the Holy Spirit.

And does he dwell in believers to sanctify them, bear

witness with their spirits, seal them to the day of redemption, assist them in duty and comfort their souls? Are they the temples of the Holy Ghost? And are they honoured with such a divine guest? What a motive should this be to follow after holiness, to mortify sin, and carefully guard against every thing which may grieve the Holy Spirit; lest he in a measure suspend his influences, withhold his consolations, and leave them without any present sense of his assistance or his comforts? Let christians ever keep in mind the declarations of divine truth. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.

From this and the two preceding discourses on the subject of the Trinity, let us learn to love, worship, and serve the one only living and true God, in the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is the God of the Bible, and he that worships any other does not worship the true God. Let us approach the Father, through the Son, and by the help of the Spirit. Let us receive God the Father as our Father, God the Son as our Redeemer, and God the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier and Comforter; and let us ever render to the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the faith, love, service, worship, honour, and glory due to his name.

And may the love of God the Father, the grace of God the Son, and the communion of God the Holy Ghost, ever be vouchsafed unto each one of us. And now to the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons, but one God, be rendered equal homage, and be ascribed equal glory, by all on earth, and all in heaven, now and ever.—
AMEN.

SERMON XIII.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

EPHESIANS i. 4, 5.

“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; Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

WE have in several discourses attended to the subject of the Trinity. Following the order of our Catechism the doctrine, which next claims our attention is, the *decrees of God*.

This doctrine is in our Catechism, in answer to the 7th question, stated as follows:

“What are the decrees of God?”

The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

The decrees of God may be divided into *general* and *special*.

His *general decrees* relate to all things. They are his fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, so that nothing takes place, but as he has determined from eternity, it should take place, either by his positive agency or his permission. In the general decrees of God, are included his determination to make all worlds, and the creatures which should inhabit them; what events should in the different periods of time take place in these worlds and with respect to these creatures; that he would effectually dispose, or permit his creatures to act thus and thus; that they should continue so long in this and that state of existence; and that such should be their final state. The general decrees of God are meant in the 11th verse of the chapter which contains our text, “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

The *special* decrees of God are included in his gene-

ral decrees, and signify those which relate to angels and men, and particularly to the election or non-election of the latter.

To this part of the divine decrees, or to the doctrine of *election*, is your attention invited in the ensuing discourse.

This, I am well aware, is a difficult doctrine, hard to be understood, disbelieved by many, against which many entertain very obstinate prejudices, and which many who profess to believe its truth, suppose should not be preached. Permit me therefore, before I proceed to the illustration and proof of this doctrine to make a few observations on these remarks.

Admitting that this is a difficult doctrine, it is not therefore to be concealed or rejected, provided it be revealed in the word of God. It is not more difficult than several other doctrines of Scripture, which are clearly revealed to us as objects of faith, and which are important to be believed, and have a very important practical influence. It is by no means as mysterious, as the doctrines of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, and of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. But these are important and fundamental doctrines of revelation, and are not to be rejected, or concealed, because mysterious. Neither is the doctrine of election, if it be a doctrine of revelation. One great reason, why this doctrine is so little understood, most probably is, that it is so seldom preached, and so little considered. But that it ought to be preached, may be shown from several considerations. God has thought proper to reveal it in his word; and ministers are to declare his whole counsel. It was preached by Christ and his Apostles; and especially by the apostle Paul. Besides it is a doctrine, which has a very important practical influence. It is so connected with several other very important doctrines of the Bible, that they must consistently stand or fall together; such are the doctrines of total depravity, grace in conversion, and the final perseverance of the saints. And it is calculated, to exalt the divine glory, and humble the pride of the creature; to maintain the grace of God in the salvation of sinners; and to confirm, strengthen, purify, support and comfort true believers.

For all these reasons, it is highly important this doctrine should be preached.

The prejudices against this doctrine, in the minds of many, I know, are very strong, insomuch that some cannot bear even to hear the words, election, predestination, and such like, mentioned. But whatever may be the meaning of the words, it is certain they are very frequently used in the Scriptures. We certainly find them not less than between forty and fifty times in the New Testament alone. Why then should any start at the words? and immediately close their minds against all that is said, as soon as they hear the words mentioned? The doctrine of *election* in some form or other is unquestionably the doctrine of the Bible. Since then it has pleased God to reveal this doctrine, let us examine it without prejudice, and endeavour to come at the truth on this subject, resolved when discovered to embrace the truth, however contrary it may be to human pride, or carnal reasonings, or our preconceived opinions.

But brethren I hope there is but little occasion for these remarks among a people, who professedly embrace a Confession of Faith and Catechisms, in which this doctrine is explicitly and repeatedly taught.

I shall therefore without further remarks proceed to the subject proposed.

The doctrine is excellently stated in the works of that bright ornament of the American Church, with whose ministry your fore-fathers were blessed, the Rev. Jonathan Dickinson.

His statement of the doctrine is as follows; viz.

“By the decree of election, I understand God’s eternal purpose, according to the good pleasure of his will, to give grace and glory to a certain number of the children of men.”

In illustrating and establishing this doctrine thus stated, I observe,

I. That God hath elected some men *to everlasting life*. This is abundantly evident from the Scriptures. They frequently speak of a choice, appointment, election, predestination, purposing and ordaining, all of which signify the same thing.

That there is such a thing as an election of some men to salvation, we learn from the following texts among

others. Mat. xx. 16. "Many be called, but few chosen." Mat. xxiv. 22, 24. "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. If it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." Luk. xviii. 7. "Shall not God avenge his own elect." John xv. 16, 19. "I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. I have chosen you out of the world." Acts xiii. 48. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Rom. viii. 28, 29, 30, 33. "To them who are the called, according to his purpose. Whom he did fore-know he also did predestinate. Whom he did predestinate them he also called. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Rom. ix. 11. "That the purpose of God according to election might stand." Rom. xi. 5, 7. "There is a remnant according to the election of grace. The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." 1 Thes. i. 4. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." 2 Thes. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." 1 Pet. i. 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." And in our text, "according as he hath chosen us in him. Having predestinated us." And in the 11th verse of the same chapter. "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." These are some of the texts in which the doctrine is taught that there is an election of some men.

This election so frequently taught in the Scriptures, some endeavour to explain as applicable not to individuals, but to nations and churches, chosen to the enjoyment of external privileges. It is true, there are instances of such an election, especially in the Old Testament. Thus of the nation of Israel, it is said, Deut. vii. 6. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself." And Deut. xiv. 2. "The Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."

But, that the election, not of nations or of collective bodies to external privileges, but of individuals to eternal life is frequently taught in the Scriptures, and perhaps in all the texts which have been quoted, as well as many others, appears from the plain import of most of these texts. Let us attend to a few of them. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Here is an

ordaining not to external privileges, but to eternal life, which certainly cannot be said of nations or collective bodies. Besides this was spoken of those in a certain place, who under the preaching of Paul embraced the gospel, while others rejected it. Again in Rom. viii. chap. all the predestinated are said to be called, justified, and glorified, which certainly cannot be said of nations, or collective bodies. And all the elected are said to be delivered from condemnation. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" But it cannot be said with any propriety that nations or churches are delivered from condemnation. In our text the election taught is to holiness, blamelessness, and the adoption of children. And in our context, they who in our text are said to be chosen, are described as faithful in Christ Jesus. "Accepted in the Beloved," and having obtained "redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins." These things certainly cannot be said of nations or churches, but only of the true people of God. The same is the case with those passages, where the elect are said to be "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And are called "elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." I mention but one other text on this point. It is Rom. xi. 7. "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." In this text an individual election is as clearly taught as language can express. Israel was an elect nation; but here was an elect number in that nation, who obtained the blessings of salvation, while the nation at large were blinded.

Having established this point that God hath elected some men unto everlasting life, I observe

II. That this election was made *from eternity*. This we are taught in our text, "according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." The same is also taught in the two following passages. 2 Tim. i. 9. "According to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Eph. iii. 11. "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

III. I observe that this election is *to grace* as well as to glory, the means and the end are inseparably connec-

ted in the divine decree. God has from eternity determined to bring certain persons to glory; but he has not determined to save them in impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience. He has determined to fit for heaven, all that he has determined to bring to that holy place. So that the effectual calling, faith, sanctification, and every grace of the real people of God, were as much fore-ordained from eternity as their final glorification. This is clearly evident from the Scriptures, as will appear from an attention to our text and other passages. Our text teaches us, "he hath chosen us, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." Hence we learn that the elect are chosen to holiness, to a blameless life, and to the adoption of children as well as to glory. Acts xiii. 48. We read, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Whence we learn that believing and eternal life, are inseparably connected in the divine decree. Again, Rom. viii. 29. "whom he did fore-know he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son." 2 Thes. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." And 1 Pet. i. 2. "elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." From these texts we learn, that the elect are as much chosen to conformity to the image of Christ, sanctification of the Spirit, belief of the truth, obedience, and the application of the blood of sprinkling of Jesus Christ, as they are to eternal life. And while we hold that the elect will certainly be all brought to glory, we at the same time hold that they will as certainly be fitted for it, by the application of the blood of Christ, faith in him, sanctification of the Spirit, and holy obedience. The means and end are inseparably joined together in the decree of election.

I proceed

IV. To consider the *foundation* of election; or why God elects some, and passes by others. On this point, there are two leading opinions; one that the decree of election was founded on a previous knowledge of the actions of men; or that God foreseeing who would repent, believe, and persevere unto the end in new obedience,

determined to save such; the other that the decree of election was not founded on good works foreseen; but that these good works are in consequence of the decree; or in other words, that the decree of election is absolute and unconditional, and that the cause of it is to be found only in the good pleasure of the divine will.

The latter is the doctrine of our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. And I believe the doctrine of the Scriptures. This is the grand point of dispute. Is election absolute or conditional? Probably most of the intelligent, who differ from us in sentiment on the doctrine of election, will admit all that has as yet been said in this discourse, until they come to the point now under consideration. They will probably allow that the Scriptures teach an election, not merely of nations or churches to external privileges; but of individuals to eternal life; that this election was from eternity; and that the elect will be brought to glory, only through effectual calling, faith, and holy obedience. But they will say that this election was conditional; or that God foreseeing who would improve the means of grace, repent, believe, obey the gospel, and persevere in faith and holiness unto the end, determined to give them eternal life. In opposition to this view of the subject, we maintain that election is absolute and unconditional; and that we must seek for its cause, not in anything foreseen in the creature; but solely in the good pleasure of the divine will.

This may be proved by several arguments. And

1. It is proved by the express testimony of the Scriptures. The good pleasure of his will is given in our text as the cause of God's electing love. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." The same is taught in the 9th and 11th verses. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself. Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The same is taught by our Saviour. Mat. xi. 25, 26. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." This passage resolves the

dispensing of the divine favours entirely into the sovereignty of God. The same truth is further confirmed from Rom. ix. 11-16. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

From the above passages we conclude, that election is not founded on anything good foreseen in the creature; but on the mere good pleasure of the will of God. He chose this one and passed by that one, not because he foresaw in the former anything naturally better than in the latter; but because it was the good pleasure of his will.

2. That election was not conditional but absolute, is further proved by this consideration, the Scriptures teach that faith, repentance, and holy obedience are parts of the decree and consequents of election to eternal life, and therefore they could not be foreseen as foundations or causes of election. That the graces which are requisite to fit a person for eternal life, are as much a part of the decree as eternal life itself, has already been shown. Permit me to repeat a few of the texts which were quoted to establish this point. It is plainly taught in our text. "He hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." So also Rom. viii. 29. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." And 2 Thes. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." From these texts we learn that conformity to the image of Christ, faith, sanctification, and holy obedience, were not foreseen prior to election, and thus made the causes of it; but that they are parts of the decree, and in consequence of election to eternal life. Hence again we conclude that election was not conditional but absolute.

3. The same may be argued from the consideration, that salvation in its application to the soul, from the com-

mencement of this application in regeneration, until its final consummation in glory is altogether of grace.

If election was founded on good works foreseen, then man is not totally depraved; but he has by nature, principles within him, which render him morally capable of producing something that is really acceptable and therefore holy in the sight of God. He is capable, without divine aid, of exercising faith, repentance and holy obedience; or at least he is not indebted for these entirely to divine grace. And his perseverance in faith and holiness unto final salvation depends upon himself, and therefore he may, or may not persevere. Hence it appears, that the natural consequence of conditional election is, a denial of the doctrines of total depravity, conversion entirely by grace, and the saints perseverance. And indeed, most, if not all the advocates of conditional election do deny these doctrines. But these are the doctrines of the Bible; and if so, election is not conditional but absolute. If man is, in his natural state, totally depraved, he must be morally unable of himself to produce anything holy and acceptable in the sight of God, and therefore if he does become holy, it must be entirely the work of divine grace, and consequently good works foreseen could not have been the ground of election. This is not the place to enter fully into the proofs of the total depravity of man in his natural state. I would only remark on this subject, the Scriptures teach us that we are, in our natural state "without strength." Rom. v. 6. "Dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. That "the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. viii. 7, 8. That "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jer. xvii. 9. And that "every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart [is] only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. These texts clearly teach the total depravity of man, and therefore that his salvation in its application must be entirely of grace, and consequently that no good works could be foreseen as the ground of election.

Further the Scriptures explicitly and directly teach that the whole work of religion in the soul is to be ascribed entirely to the grace of God. Regeneration is entirely the work of God; "And you hath he quickened, who

were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. Faith is the gift of God. Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." For their good works believers are indebted entirely to the grace of God. "Eph. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Perseverance in faith and holiness, unto final salvation, is by the power of God. Phil. i. 6. "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." In short, salvation, in its application to the soul, is all of grace from beginning to end. Unless the Lord begin the work, it will never be begun; and if he take his hand from it, it will fail. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. And "without me (said Christ) ye can do nothing." John xv. 5.

Such is the testimony of Scripture; and with this agrees the testimony of experience. Christians feel that it is owing entirely to the grace of God, that they are what they are; that if they had been left to themselves, they would still have been "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." And that even since they have been made partakers of the grace of God, if the Lord had not continually kept them, they would long since have fallen away. And they doubtless will adopt the language of Scripture and say; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Ps. cxv. 1. And, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Rev. i. 5, 6.

Now if salvation in its application be all of grace, as we have seen, both Scripture and experience teach, election could not be founded on good works foreseen. For, as has been shown, all men are totally depraved, and there is nothing really good, in the sight of God, in any

man, independent of divine grace; and regeneration, faith, holiness, and perseverance, are all the gift of God. No one ever has any of these, unless given by God. And therefore, evidently, they could not have been foreseen, prior to God's determination to give them, and consequently they could not have been the foundation of election; but must have been a part of the decree. The conclusion is therefore again made, that election was not founded on a foreknowledge of good works; but was absolute and unconditional, and must be resolved into the good pleasure of the divine will.

4. The same is further proved, from what we see take place among men. We sometimes see among children of the same family, of similar natural dispositions, educated in the same way, and favoured with the same means, one become a subject of divine grace, and another continue in a state of nature, and as far as we can judge, live and die without a reasonable hope of future happiness. We frequently see the same among persons of similar characters, in the same congregation, and under the same means. Nay, we sometimes see the most unpromising characters become the subjects of divine grace, while persons, who have had far better opportunities, and who have been far more moral and regular in their lives, are left. These are undeniable facts. And we cannot consistently account for these things on any other principle than the sovereignty of God, and that he dispenses his favours as he pleases. Hence again we conclude that election is not conditional, but absolute.

From what has been said I would now briefly state what I believe to be the truth, respecting the doctrine of election.

God acting according to the good pleasure of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace, did in Christ, from eternity, choose, from among the mass of mankind, beheld universally in ruins, and justly deserving his eternal wrath, some men to grace and glory. He determined to glorify them; but first to make them meet for it. In consequence of this decree he hath in time by the obedience unto death, of his Son incarnate, opened a way for their salvation, and effectually calls them by his Spirit, justifies and sanctifies them, preserves them in the way of holiness, and will finally, having fitted them for it here, glorify them in heaven.

This I believe to be the doctrine of the Scriptures; and by this standard let it be tried; if it will not stand this test, reject it; but if it will you are bound to receive it.

This was the doctrine held by most, if not all of those few witnesses for the truth, who shone as lights, in those dark ages of Popish superstition and persecution, which preceded the Reformation. This was the doctrine held by the Paulicians, and afterwards by the Waldenses, who were witnesses for the truth, for many centuries in the dark ages, and thousands of whom sealed their testimony with their blood. It was the doctrine of the Reformers; men of distinguished erudition, and of exemplary piety, who counted not their lives dear in comparison with the advancement of the cause of Christ, and to whom under God we owe our deliverance from Popish superstition and tyranny; the doctrine not only of Calvin and Knox; but also of Luther and Melancthon, and Bucer and Cranmer and others.

This is unequivocally the doctrine of our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, drawn up and adopted by the learned and pious assembly of Divines which convened at Westminster, A. D. 1643. This is also most unequivocally the doctrine of the Reformed Dutch Church, expressed in the articles, drawn up by the famous Synod of Dort, which was composed of divines from almost every Protestant country of Europe, and which met A. D. 1618. And though it has been denied, it is also, if we are to understand language according to its plain and obvious meaning, the doctrine of the church of England, as may be seen by referring to the 17th of the 39 articles of that church.

There are several objections to the doctrine which we have endeavoured to establish, some of the most important of which I shall briefly notice, and endeavour to answer.

1. It is objected that the doctrine of election as stated in the preceding discourse, makes God a respecter of persons, contrary to the repeated declarations of Scripture. This objection is founded on a mistake respecting the meaning of the phrase, "respecter of persons." As will appear from a candid examination of the context in those places where the phrase is used, it simply signifies

that God will not respect the outward condition or circumstances of men. He will not bestow his favours upon this one because he is a Jew, and neglect that one because he is a Gentile. He will not bestow his favours upon the rich and honourable, because they are such, and pass by the poor because they are poor.

2. Another objection is, this doctrine leads to licentiousness. If my final state, says the objector, has been eternally decreed, I cannot alter it, and therefore I may live as I please. To this objection, it may be answered, according to the decree of election as it has been explained in this discourse, faith, repentance, holy obedience, and perseverance in good works are essentially necessary to eternal life. Therefore the genuine tendency of this doctrine instead of leading to licentiousness is to cut off the licentious from all hope of eternal life while they continue such; to lead them to repentance; and to excite christians to be careful to persevere in faith and holiness. Besides if we look through the history of the church in its several ages, we will find that the doctrine of absolute decrees has had the best practical tendency.

3. It is again objected, if this doctrine be true, it is vain to use the means of grace, and strive to believe and repent; for if our final state is already fixed in the divine decree, nothing that we can do will alter it.

To this it may be answered; Supposing we deny the decree of election, we must admit the divine foreknowledge. We dare not deny that God from all eternity perfectly knew who would be saved, and who would not. And what is gained in regard to this objection by denying absolute election? Certainly nothing; for unless God can mistake in his knowledge, his foreknowledge, as infallibly fixes the event as an absolute decree; and nothing which we can do can change the event which God foreknew. Besides the same objection may as reasonably be brought against all exertion in temporal as well as in spiritual things. The bounds of man's life, and his temporal prosperity are as much determined by God as his eternal state. Or if they are not absolutely decreed they are certainly foreknown, and what is certainly foreknown will infallibly come to pass. Why then does not the objector refuse to plough, or sow, or do anything else to obtain a crop, because what is to be will be? why

does he not refuse to eat and drink, and do anything for the support of life, because the bounds of his life are fixed, beyond which he cannot pass? The objection is as good in the one case as the other. And the objector's practice in temporal things, shows that the objection has no weight with him, in things in which he feels himself interested. The fact is that while God has determined to save some, he has determined to save them in the use of means.

And here permit me to remark, that it is an erroneous sentiment entertained by some, that election keeps away from Christ and salvation those who are not elected. It keeps no one away. It is true, God does not change the hearts of such, and work in them faith and those other graces which are connected with salvation. They are left to their choice, the same as if there was no election. Election therefore makes their state no worse. But while election destroys no one, I will assert, it is our foundation of hope that any will be saved. If God had not determined to save some, and therefore effectually to call them, work in them faith, with every other saving grace, and cause them to persevere in holiness, not one of the fallen race of Adam would be saved. If total depravity and salvation by grace be true, this also is true. For if left to themselves, none would ever truly believe, repent, and obey the gospel. That God has determined to save some, and fit them for heaven, therefore lays a foundation for us to hope, that we may be saved. For we are so depraved by nature, that unless God work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure we never shall be saved.

This subject would now admit of a copious and important practical improvement; but the unusual length of the discourse requires that I should further detain you with only a few observations.

Careless sinners cannot justly derive from this subject any consolation, or anything to support them in their carelessness. We have seen that all who are elected, are chosen through regeneration, faith, and holiness. Being destitute of these things, you have no Scriptural ground to conclude that you are elected. Nor will you ever have while you continue in this state. Let this thought alarm

you, and lead you to seek after those things, without which you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Anxious and inquiring souls may derive encouragement from this subject. Though all our sinful race deserve to perish, God has determined to save some; and therefore there is hope that you may be saved. Besides your case is now a hopeful one, because God has awakened you, and is powerfully striving with you, and is now dealing with you as he deals with his elect, when he is bringing them to a saving knowledge of divine things. And therefore you have far more reason to hope that he has designs of mercy towards you, than you had when you were in a state of carelessness. Feel your dependence on God, and look to him to work in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Let not God's secret counsels trouble you. Follow his revealed word. Secure your conversion; and be on Scriptural grounds satisfied of this, and then you may be assured of your election. For all who are truly converted are certainly of the elect number.

Finally this subject should fill christians with adoring wonder; and should excite them to ardent love, unceasing praise, and unremitted obedience to God, for his distinguishing and everlasting love towards them. And it offers to them amidst the trials and temptations with which they are visited, unspeakable support, and encouragement. For, having evidence of their effectual calling, they have equal evidence of their election unto eternal life; and therefore they may have strong hope, that the unchangeable God, in pursuance of his eternal plan, will perfect the good work which he has begun; and will keep them by his mighty power through faith unto final salvation.—AMEN.

SERMON XIV.

CREATION.

GENESIS i. 1.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

THE decrees of God have been considered. The execution of his decrees next claims our attention.

“How doth God execute his decrees?”

God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.”

He first created all things, according to the plan which he had laid in his eternal decrees; and then upholds and governs, according to the same plan, the things which he made.

In the execution of the divine decrees, the subject of *creation*, first claims our attention.

The origin of all things has been accounted for in various ways. Atheists have asserted the eternity of matter, and that things took their present form by chance, or from a fortuitous concourse of atoms of matter, floating at random, through the immensity of space. Others have held the eternity of matter, in a chaotic mass; and that the Supreme Being gave to it, its present form. The absurdity of these opinions was shown in the discourse on the being of a God. Rejecting therefore the eternity of matter, all things, except God, must have had a beginning; and must have derived their existence from him; which also was proved in the same discourse. Therefore, in our text, we have the only rational account of the origin of all things. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

By the *beginning*, in this text, we are to understand the commencement of time. Time properly signifies the duration of created beings. Before creation, time did not exist; for before this God alone existed; and to him, time, or successive duration cannot properly be applied.

Some Pagan nations have pretended to carry back their history many thousand years before the Mosaic account of the creation; but their accounts are evidently fabulous. On the Scripture chronology alone, can we place any reliance in this matter. Following this, we are carried back from the present time, through a period of five thousand, eight hundred and twenty-nine years, to the beginning of time and the creation of all things.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” What are we to understand here by the *heaven* and the *earth*? or in other words does this account of creation relate to the universe in general, or only to our system? The plain import of the Scriptures, appears to favour the opinion that this account relates to the universe. To this it has been objected that it is inconsistent to suppose that God an active and intelligent being, was from eternity inactive, until the creation of our world. But this objection is unfounded. The Supreme Being was active in the contemplation of his own glorious perfections. Besides, creation must have had a beginning; for an eternal creation is absurd. If then we carry back the beginning of universal creation, millions of ages before the creation of our world, and there fix the time when God first began to create, there would still be an eternity before this; and the objection would still be of equal force. And if it be well founded, we must evidently admit an eternal creation, which is a plain contradiction. The objection is therefore unfounded. But still it may be that worlds were created long before ours; and that the Mosaic account of creation, relates only to the earth on which we live, and the visible heavens around us.

The doctrine of creation is stated in our Catechism in answer to the ninth question as follows:

“*What is the work of creation?*”

The work of creation is God’s making all things of nothing by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.”

In this statement of the doctrine we have the following particulars, to the consideration of which your attention is invited in the ensuing discourse; viz. By whom, of what, by what, in what time, and in what condition, were all things made?

I. *By whom* were all things made? all things were

made by God. There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And when it is said God created all things, each person of the Godhead is meant. This may be inferred from our text in the original. "In the beginning, Elohim [plural] the Gods created, &c." The plural Elohim is also used throughout this chapter. It may also be inferred from the 26th verse of this chapter. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And in different parts of Scripture, we find the work of creation, expressly ascribed to the Son and to the Holy Ghost as well as to the Father, as in the following texts. John i. 1, 3, 10. "In the beginning was the word, all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. The world was made by him." Col. i. 16. "By him [that is the Son] were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him." Job xxvi. 13. "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." And Job xxxiii. 4. "The Spirit of God hath made me." From these texts it is evident that creation was the undivided work of the three persons in the Godhead. "In the beginning, God [the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] created the heaven and the earth."

II. *Of what* did God make all things? He made all things of nothing. For if God alone existed from eternity, there were no materials from which he could make anything, until he brought them into existence. Besides, to *create* properly signifies to make something out of nothing, or to cause that to exist, which before had no existence. Further, that all things were made of nothing seems to be intimated in the following passage: Heb xi. 3. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

III. *By what*, or *how*, were all things made? God made all things, by the word of his power; as we read, Ps. xxxiii. 6, 9. "By the word of the Lord, were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." With infinite ease God made all things. He simply spake the word, and every thing rose into be-

ing at the command of his almighty word. "God said let there be light, and there was light." "And God said let there be a firmament; let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place; let the dry land appear; let the earth bring forth; let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, &c." Gen. i. And the effects immediately followed.

IV. *In what time* did God make all things? The chapter which contains our text informs us, he made all things in the space of six days. Doubtless God could, with equal ease, have created every thing in a moment. But he pleased to take this time. No doubt he had wise reasons for it, though they may be unknown to us. One reason may have been, that the perfections, which are manifested by his works of creation, might the more distinctly appear to his rational creatures and be contemplated by them. And another reason probably was, that he might set us an example, to work six days, and rest on the seventh. Accordingly we find the fourth commandment enforced with this reason.

The particular work of each day we have in the chapter which contains our text.

On the *first* day, "God created the heaven and the earth; that is, according to the literal rendering of the original "the substance of the heavens, and the substance of the earth." He brought into being the substance, of which he afterwards formed the works of creation. This substance was in an indigested mass, "without form and void," called by the Greeks *Chaos*; and was afterwards, reduced to form and order. On this day was also, probably, made that heaven which is the habitation of angels, and the kingdom prepared for the saints from the foundation of the world. This may probably be included in the heaven mentioned in our text. It is generally supposed, the angels were also created on this first day. If all things were created in these six days, they must have been created on the first day; for they were present when the foundations of the earth were laid, and united in praising God, on occasion of that event. For we read Job xxxviii. 4, 6, 7. "where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? who laid the corner-stone thereof? when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" On this day also, we

are informed, light was created, and divided from the darkness; and the light was called day, and the darkness night. It is difficult to determine what this light was, which was created on the first day. Various conjectures have been advanced. The probable opinion is that this light was the luminous particles of matter, which on the fourth day were collected together compactly, and formed the bodies of the Sun and fixed stars; and that these luminous particles were so arranged, we know not how, as to divide time into day and night.

The works of the *second* day were, the firmament, which was called heaven, and the dividing the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above the firmament. By the firmament we are probably to understand, not only the atmosphere around our earth; but also the vast ethereal space, extending from the surface of the earth to the utmost extremity of the visible heavens. And by the dividing of the waters we are to understand, the separating of those mingled with the earth from those in the clouds. The latter are said to be above the firmament; not as though they were above the whole expanse, but the lower part of it, or that part contiguous to the earth.

On the *third* day, the waters hitherto mingled with the land were separated from it, and collected into seas; and the dry land appeared. The earth thus fitted for production, on this day also, at the command of God, brought forth the different kinds of grass, herbs and trees.

On the *fourth* day, God made the sun, moon, and stars, to give light upon the earth, and to divide the day from the night.

On the *fifth* day, the Lord made all kinds of animals, which move in the water, and fowls that fly in the air.

On the *sixth* day, God made out of the earth, all kinds of beasts and creeping things; and on the same day he made man, the last of his works. Man was made, male and female. The body of the man was formed out of the dust of the earth; and the body of the woman was formed out of a rib of the man, taken from him in a deep sleep. These bodies the Lord endued, with living, reasonable and immortal souls. And he made our first parents in his image, after his likeness; and gave them dominion over the other creatures of the earth.

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended the work which he had made.” Gen. ii. 1, 2. In these six days God created all things in our world, after their kind; and established those laws of nature, by which the several kinds of things are still continued, and the particular individuals of each kind are brought into being. “And he [God] rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Gen. ii. 2, 3. By God’s resting on the seventh day is meant, not that he refreshed himself on account of weariness; but that he ceased from creating anything more. This day was sanctified or set apart to a holy use. That is, it was appointed to be a Sabbath, or a day of rest from worldly labour, to be employed in acts of devotion.

V. In what *condition* were all things made? all things were made very good. Thus at the close of the account of creation we read, “and God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” Gen. i. 31. There was no imperfection, or evil in the world.

The *end* for which God created all things was his own glory. The proof of this we have in the following texts. Prov. xvi. 4. “The Lord hath made all things for himself.” Is. xliii. 7. “Every one that is called by my name: I have created him for my glory.” Rom. xi. 36. “Of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever.”

Having taken this general and cursory view of the works of creation, let us attend to some instruction which may be derived from these works.

1. We may infer from this subject that God is the Proprietor of all things. This must be the case if he is the Creator of all. He has therefore a right to do with us, and all his creatures, as seemeth to him good. He has a right to command us, and it is our duty to render obedience to all his commandments; and if we disobey, he has a right to punish us. Every thing we possess also belongs to the Lord, and should be used by us for his glory. Let us therefore ever feel and acknowledge God’s propriety in us, and his right of authority over us. Let us ever be sensible of our obligations to render obedience

to all his commandments. Let us devote ourselves and all that we are and have to him. And let us be convinced of the evil of sin, which is rebellion against our Creator; and repent of our sins and watch against transgression.

2. From the works of creation, we learn the power of God, and that it is therefore our duty to be humble, and to fear and adore him. The Apostle tells us, Rom. i. 20. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made even his eternal power." Contemplate the works of creation. Look through the earth as far as your personal knowledge extends. Attend to the authentic testimony of others; and consider the numerous and extended regions of our globe beyond your personal knowledge; and the innumerable inhabitants of the various species of creatures upon the earth. Consider the vast oceans and seas upon our globe, all furnished with innumerable living creatures. All these are the works of God. Raise your eyes, and look at the arched heavens, adorned with the sun, and moon, and spangled with numerous stars, placed at inconceivable distances from us, and from each other. Extend your views still further, and with the eye of a christian philosopher, contemplate rational probabilities. Consider the globe we inhabit as comparatively but an atom in the universe. View the fixed stars, and consider these as probably suns, each the centre of surrounding and revolving worlds, to us invisible. Consider further the many luminous bodies in the heavens, not discernible with the naked eye; but which may be discovered by the help of telescopes. Consider the probability that all these worlds are inhabited by beings of various orders. Stretch your minds still further, and in imagination rove through the immensity of space, and behold worlds upon worlds, rising to your view. All these innumerable and vast worlds, and all things in them, were created by the power of God. And he not only made them all; but he did it with infinite ease. "He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast." Psal. xxxiii. 9. If we are filled with astonishment at these effects of power, as we may justly be; how great must ne be, who with infinite ease created them all! and how should we be affected by a contemplation of the divine power, as manifested in the works of creation?

We ought to be filled with humility, fear and adoration. In view of the works of creation, where is the greatness of man? He is an atom of this atom world. Let a contemplation of the divine power in the works of creation, humble us before the great Creator; and lead us to feel as David did, when he said, Ps. viii. 3, 4. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

A contemplation of the divine power in the works of creation should also fill us with fear. We ought to be afraid of offending this Almighty God, and therefore should be afraid of sin. And let those who now disregard God, and live in disobedience to his commands, think what will be their situation, when he shall enter into judgment with them; and when they shall fall into the hands of that God as an incensed Judge, who could with a word create all worlds and things. Surely all hope of escape must be vain! and surely his wrath will be unspeakably dreadful! Let the wicked therefore, break off their sins by righteousness; and by taking refuge in Christ, secure the friendship of the Almighty God.

Again the power of God manifested in the works of creation, should lead us to adoration, as it did the pious Psalmist, when he said, Ps. xcv. 5, 6. "The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." One speaking of the power of God manifested in the works of creation, observes, "He who feels no propensity to worship and adore, is dead to all sense of grandeur and majesty, and has extinguished one of the most natural feelings of the human heart." "An undevout astronomer (said another) is mad." We may add, he who has eyes to see, and reason to reflect, if, when he looks around him on the works of creation, he does not feel a disposition to adore, is also mad. The faculties of his soul, must, in a moral sense, be sadly disordered.

3. From the works of creation we also learn the infinite wisdom of God, and the consequent duties of adoration, submission, and trust. Observe the regularity and order of the heavenly bodies. They are so disposed and

made subject to such laws, as to move in perfect harmony, not interfering with each other in their course; and stately and invariably to bring about to us the useful and agreeable variety of day and night, and of the different seasons of the year. Look at the structure of the human body; every part is so formed and placed, as to perform its proper functions. We are, as said the Psalmist, Ps. cxxxix. 14. "fearfully and wonderfully made." Look at the human countenance. What an almost infinite variety in the unity of the species. Scarcely two countenances can be found, in all respects exactly alike. And how unspeakably important this variety to prevent confusion in society! The same wisdom is manifested in the works of creation generally. Not a creature that moves, not a vegetable that grows, which does not, when minutely examined, show forth the infinite wisdom of their Creator. All this almost infinite variety of particulars, so exceedingly complicated, must have been present at one view, to the mind of the divine Being. Surely, we have reason to exclaim with the Psalmist, Ps. civ. 24. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." Ps. cxxxix. 6. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." A view of the wisdom of God in his works, ought to fill us with adoring admiration. If the view of some complicated works of human art causes us highly to admire the wisdom of the contriver; how much more should we be filled with admiration, even to adoration, of the great Creator of the Universe, in whose works infinitely greater wisdom is manifested?

And whilst we admire and adore, let us also learn from the wisdom of God, to submit to him and trust in him, in the government of the world. Some who allow the infinite wisdom which appears in the works of creation, are apt to find fault with the wisdom of Providence, But the same admirable wisdom which created the world, also governs it. The course of Providence is slow and progressive, and we can form but a very imperfect judgment of the wisdom manifested therein, until we see the work finished. Let us therefore learn to exercise submission to the dealings of God and trust in his government.

4. We also learn from the works of creation, the goodness of God, and the consequent duties of gratitude and

love. His goodness to man particularly, appears in these works. He first made the earth, and then replenished it with things conducive to his comfort, before he made him and placed him upon it. He stored the earth with beasts and fowl and vegetables and other things, and the sea with fishes for the use and comfort of man. He created and placed the sun in the firmament to give him light and heat to warm and fructify the earth. He so arranged the laws of nature, as to bring about in regular and successive order, day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. He made man with powers and faculties, calculated to promote his happiness. But it would be endless, to enumerate all the evidences of the divine goodness, which are exhibited in the works of creation. This goodness lays us under unspeakable obligations to exercise gratitude and love towards him; and not to exercise these affections, evinces a heart sadly disordered by sin,

Thus we see, that from the works of creation we may learn the power, wisdom, and goodness of God; and that a knowledge of these should produce in us, humility, fear, adoration, submission, gratitude, and love.

Hence we may remark, that the Heathen who do not enjoy the revealed word of God, are as the Apostle asserts, Rom. i. 20. "without excuse," if they do not worship, serve, and love God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are," by them, "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." And if the Heathen who neglect to worship, love, and serve God, are without excuse; much more inexcusable are they of a similar character among us, who have spread open before them not only the book of nature, but also of revelation. Let us ever maintain a deep sense of our superior privileges, and our greater accountability; and so improve our privileges, that we may be able at last to render up our account with joy.—AMEN.

SERMON XV.

THE PRIMITIVE STATE OF MAN.

GENESIS i. 26, 27.

“And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

IN these words, we have an account of the creation of man, and of the state in which he was made. The doctrine of creation in general has been treated. *The creation of man* in particular is the doctrine next in course.

This doctrine is stated in our Catechism as follows, in answer to the 10th question.

“How did God create man? God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.”

Man was created on the sixth day, and was the last of the works of creation. He is creation in miniature, a compend of the whole, uniting in one, the material and immaterial parts thereof, or matter and spirit.

It is worthy of notice, that there is a marked difference, between the manner of the creation of man, and that of the other works of God. In all his other works of which we have an account, he simply spake, and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast; but in the account which we have of the creation of man, we find the style changed. The language is not, as it was with respect to other things, *let man be*; but “let us make man.” This form of expression appears to intimate, that there were counsel and deliberation in the formation of man. This must have been among the persons of the Trinity, each of whom was engaged in the work of man’s creation. But whether this was the case or not, this mode of

expression, different from what was used with respect to other parts of creation, teaches the excellence of human nature, as it came from the forming hands of the Creator.

Man consists of matter and spirit. The species was made at first male and female. The body of the man or male, was formed of the dust of the ground; and the body of the female or woman, was formed from the rib of the man, taken from his side, by the Lord, in a deep sleep. Into the bodies thus formed, souls were infused; as we read, Gen. ii. 7. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Our first parents were created in the image, or after the likeness of God; as we read in our text; "and God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." The same doctrine is also taught in the following passages of Scripture. Gen. v. 1. "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Gen. ix. 6. "In the image of God made he man."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to show *wherein this image or likeness of God, after which man was made, consisted.*

Some have supposed that the dignified frame, the elevated appearance, and the exalted deportment of man's body, bear some resemblance to his glorious Creator. The body of man in its nature, can bear no resemblance to the Creator, who is a Spirit; but in its curious workmanship, wonderful formation, and majestic appearance above that of other creatures of the earth, man may perhaps be said to bear some resemblance to the majesty and glory of his Creator. But it is not at all probable, that this resemblance, if it can be so called makes any part of the image of God, spoken of in our text.

It has been also supposed by some, that the image of God in which man was created consisted in part, in the nature of the soul. The human soul is a spiritual and immortal substance. It is a spiritual substance, which can subsist by itself, independent of matter. This is taught by all those texts of Scripture which teach that the soul survives the death of the body, and lives and acts in a separate state. Herein the soul resembles the divine na-

ture which is spiritual. The soul is also immortal, as appears both from reason and the word of God. In this respect also does man resemble his Creator. And not only in the soul was this likeness of immortality found in our first parents before the fall; but in the whole man, body and soul. For it is evident from the Scriptures, if our first parents had not sinned, they would not have died; but their bodies would have been immortal as well as their souls. For before the fall death was threatened in case of sin; and after the fall sentence of death was pronounced on account of sin. Besides we read, Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." And Rom. v. 12. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

But though some make the foregoing resemblances, a part of the image of God in which man was originally created, yet it is very doubtful, whether there was any reference to them in our text. The things in which this image principally, if not exclusively consisted, we have stated in the answer in our Catechism, already quoted. From this answer we learn that it consisted in *knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.*

That the image of God in which man was made consisted in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, we are not informed in the account which we have of his creation; but we infer it from other passages of Scripture. Man had the same image of God given to him in creation, which is restored in regeneration or the new creation. For regeneration is frequently called *renewing*, which signifies restoring to a former state. But it is evident that the image, in which man is renewed by grace, consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as we learn from Col. iii. 10. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." And from Eph. iv. 24. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God [that is the likeness of God] is created in righteousness and true holiness." From these texts the conclusion is drawn that the image of God in which man was created, consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

1. This image consisted in *knowledge*. By this knowledge we are to understand, not merely that which may

be called natural, or such as wicked beings may and do have; but also a spiritual or holy knowledge, such as is peculiar to holy beings. Most probably, the natural knowledge of man in his state of innocency was extensive. Considerable sagacity and penetration were requisite, to give, with facility, names to the various species of the inferior creation; and especially, as these names were probably expressive of the natures of the animals, to which they were given. His natural knowledge must also have been considerable, to qualify him for that universal dominion over the earth with which he was invested.

But he had in addition to this natural knowledge, a spiritual knowledge, such as belongs only to holy beings; an *approving* knowledge of the divine perfections and law, and of his duty. Of this knowledge, fallen man, in his natural state is entirely ignorant. This is the knowledge in which the mind is again renewed, when God shines into the heart, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. And this is the knowledge which our Saviour denominated "life eternal." John xvii. 3. This spiritual knowledge, Adam had in his state of innocency. His mind was continually directed to the contemplation of the divine perfections. Through the revelations, with which he was favoured, he heard of these perfections, and in the works of creation and providence he beheld them manifested; and while he heard and beheld, his heart approved with a perfect approbation. He knew the law of God. To know this, he had no need to have recourse to tables of stone; for it was engraven on the tables of his heart; and he approved it as holy, just, and good; and he felt and acknowledged his obligations to be obedient.

2. The image of God in which man was made, consisted in *righteousness*. "God made man upright." Eccl. vii. 29. The primitive righteousness of man refers to the rectitude of his will. He had a disposition always to choose the good and refuse the evil, and to do that which was right, without the least inclination to unrighteousness; and he had power fully to act according to his choice. In his primitive state of rectitude, his will was perfectly conformed to the divine will. No perversity, obstinacy, or inclination to evil had place in his will. It was his de-

lightful choice to render to every one his righteous due. He chose to render unto God, supreme love, and universal and perfect obedience. He would have chosen to render unto his neighbour, if he had had any, his equitable right. As the human family at this time consisted of but two persons, the duties which they owed to man terminated on each other; and they chose to render unto each other, that which was right, according to the relation in which they stood to each other. Towards the inferior creation also, man in his primitive state chose to do that which was perfectly right; and to exercise that dominion with which he was vested, with moderation. And with respect to the things of this world, he chose to seek, possess, and use them, not as an ultimate portion, but as means, by which to be led to God, and to glorify him.

3. The image of God in which man was created consisted in *holiness*. His affections were pure, and were entirely placed upon their proper objects. He hated the least disobedience to God, if the thought of disobedience ever entered his pure mind. He loved God supremely, perfectly, and continually. He loved other beings, in proportion as he was acquainted with them, and saw that they manifested the divine image. He perfectly loved the law of God. He had no unworthy or hard thoughts of his Creator; no enmity against him or his law; no discontentment with the lot assigned him; no murmurings or repinings against Providence; no unbelief in regard to the revelations with which he was favoured; no jarring contentions among his passions; no warfare, between reason or conscience and appetite. He kept his body in its proper subjection to the soul, and rendered it an instrument of righteousness unto God. Such was man when he came from the forming hands of his Creator. He was created in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

4. He was invested with *dominion* over the inferior creation upon our earth. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Whether this dominion made any part of the image of God, in which man was created, is not clear. Some suppose that it did, inasmuch as this dominion was a shadow

of the authority and power of the Creator over the universe. Others confine this image to knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and suppose that dominion made no part of it; but that man was vested with dominion, in consequence of his bearing the image of God, which fitted him to govern this world. This however is a matter of but little importance. It is certain that man had given to him at his creation, dominion over all the inferior creatures of the earth. He was constituted lord of this world, and had a right to use and dispose of the inferior creatures for his comfort, but not to abuse them. No animal dared to rise up against him, or in any way to molest him; but all submitted to his authority. Such, was man, when he came from the forming hands of his Creator. He was made after the image of God, in knowledge righteousness and holiness, and was invested with dominion over the inferior creation.

And being thus created, he was perfectly happy. Holiness and happiness are inseparably connected. And man in his primitive state was perfectly holy without the least inclination to sin, and therefore he was also perfectly happy without any alloy of misery. Emphatically might be said of man what was said of all the works of creation, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." Gen. i. 31. "He was admitted to intimate intercourse with his Creator and continually enjoyed unspeakably delightful communion with him. No cold or dull frames, no clouds or darkness occasioned by sin, no hidings of God's face, occurred, to interrupt this communion. The light of God's countenance continually shone upon him; and the sense of his favour was uninterrupted. The earth spontaneously produced its fruits in abundance for his supply. The inferior creation were all obedient and administered to his comfort. All the works of God around him conspired to render him happy. No curse of "thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," had as yet passed upon the ground. Man had not yet been doomed to eat bread in sorrow and the sweat of his face. Famine, pestilence and sword were unknown to him. No domestic feuds disturbed his bliss. To disease he was entirely a stranger. No burning fevers, wasting consumptions, or raging epidemics, afflicted and consumed his body. No remorse of conscience disturbed

his mind. No ambitious rival contended with him for dominion. No beasts of prey rose up against him and threatened his destruction. In short, none of those innumerable evils, which now exist in our world and afflict mankind, had any place on the earth, while our first parents kept their integrity. They were free from all misery, and enjoyed perfect felicity. They were placed in the garden of Eden, probably the most delightful spot on the face of the earth. This garden was planted by the hand of God himself; and in it grew "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." And it was watered with a delightful stream. Happy pair! and happy race! if they had kept their integrity. But though man was made upright, and was thus perfectly holy and happy in his primitive state, he was made a fallible creature or subject to fall.

From this subject of the primitive state of man, we may now infer the excellence of human nature as it came from the hands of the Creator; and the goodness of God towards man in making him such a noble creature, and fitting him for such perfect happiness, and bestowing upon him such exalted felicity as he enjoyed in his primitive state. This ought to excite our gratitude to the great Creator.

We may again infer from this subject, that the propensity to wickedness which we now see among mankind, and which causes so much suffering in our world, cannot be charged upon the Creator, as though he had made us thus. "God made man upright." When he came from his forming hand, there was not the least propensity to sin in his nature. Neither was there any evil in the world when the Creator had finished it. The sin and misery in the world, therefore cannot be charged upon creation.

Again this subject is calculated to humble us. Contrast the state of man now with what it primitively was. How melancholy and humiliating the contrast! He is now defiled with sin. He is altogether as an unclean thing. Whereas once he was altogether very good, there is now no good thing in him until it is implanted by the grace of God. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores." Is. i. 5, 6. His immortality unless the

grace of God prevents, will be a curse to him. The image of God which was originally impressed upon his soul, and which was his glory, is now defaced and destroyed, and instead of it he bears the image of Satan. His mind is blinded, so that he "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them." 1 Cor. ii. 14. His will has become disordered so that he chooses the evil and refuses the good. His affections are all wrong. He loves that which is evil, and hates that which is good. His "carnal mind is enmity against God. Not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. The members of his body, instead of being "instruments of righteousness unto God," as they once were, are the willing "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Although he still retains some of that dominion over the inferior creation, which was originally given him, yet many of the creatures are his deadly foes. And instead of that perfect happiness which he originally enjoyed, he is now exposed and subjected to innumerable miseries. In sorrow and the sweat of his face he has to eat his bread. His body is subjected to pain and disease, and his character to slander. He is exposed to losses, crosses and disappointments in his pursuits, possessions and friends. His mind is liable to be tortured with remorse. He is in a world, where, with the very air he breathes for the support of life, he often inhales mortal pestilence; where war spreads distress, desolation and death far and wide; and where death, in various forms, reigns with irresistible sway, and sooner or later, cuts down all without distinction, and lays them in the dust, whence they were taken.

How humiliating and distressing the contrast! And what has laid waste this once fair garden of Eden? And what has deluged our world, in which every thing was once very good, with such a flood of evils? What has ruined this once noble creature man, originally made in the image of his Creator? Sin has done all this. And shall we not hate sin, which has produced this sad change! But I forbear to pursue these reflections in this place.

I would further only remark, although man has lost the image of his God, and his earthly Paradise; there is away opened in which this lost image may be restored to

his soul, and in which he may be admitted into a more excellent Paradise, even in heaven. This way is revealed in the gospel. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for us. Let us therefore return unto God through him, in the way pointed out in the gospel, and we shall finally be raised to a felicity exceeding that of our first parents in their primitive state of holiness and happiness.—AMEN.

SERMON XVI.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

2 TIMOTHY i. 10. LAST CLAUSE.

“And hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

THE immortality of the human soul is a doctrine, of which the Heathen, in the several ages of the world, have had some knowledge. This knowledge however, was very limited; and their belief of the doctrine was accompanied with much doubt. Indeed they rather hoped, than were thoroughly convinced, that the doctrine was true. The Jews, from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, had a clearer knowledge of this doctrine. But still, their light on this subject, and especially on the future condition of the soul, was dim, compared with that which has since shone upon the world, by the coming of Christ, and the instructions given by him and the inspired writers of the New Testament. It is “our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” He hath more fully and clearly revealed a future and immortal state of existence, and the blessedness or misery of that state, than was discovered by the dim light of reason, or than was revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The text teaches that the soul survives the body and is immortal; and the resurrection of the body, and its re-union with the soul, and the subse-

quent immortality of the whole man, are also most probably intended to be taught in this text.

To the former instruction of the text; viz. the *immortality of the soul*, will your attention be directed in the ensuing discourse.

We have considered man as created in the image of God; let us now consider him as created with an *immortal soul*. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in the system of Theology, properly belongs to the question. "How did God create man? In the answer to this question in the shorter Catechism, it is not particularly noticed. But in the answer to the same question in the Larger Catechism, it is; "Endued them with living, reasonable and *immortal souls*."

God gave to man at his creation a soul as well as a body; as we read Gen. ii. 7. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Was *immortality* a property of this soul?

This is a question of great importance. For it must be highly important for us to know, whether natural death which we must all shortly experience, puts an end to our existence, or whether our souls will survive this stroke, and exist in a future state.

Before entering upon the arguments to establish this doctrine it may be proper to remark, that when it is said the soul is immortal, a derived, dependent immortality is meant; and not a necessary, independent and absolute immortality. The latter belongs to God alone. It is in this latter sense, the Apostle uses the word, when speaking of God he says, "who only hath immortality." 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The immortality of the soul has been argued from reason, as well as Revelation. Let us first attend to the arguments which may be drawn from reason.

1. The immortality of the soul has been argued from its *simple, and immaterial nature*. The soul is an immaterial substance, entirely different in its nature from matter. The nature of substances is learned from their properties. If therefore the properties are entirely different, we conclude the substances are so also. But there is no resemblance between the known properties of the soul, such as thought, memory, volition, affection and the like;

and the properties of the body, such as extension, colour, figure, and the like. Hence we conclude that the soul and body are substances entirely different in their nature; and as the soul has none of the properties of matter, that it is an immaterial substance. And its properties, as far as we know them, also teach us, that it is a simple substance, void of parts. Hence it is argued, as death is a dissolution of parts; and as, where there are no parts, there can be no dissolution, the soul is not capable of dissolution, and therefore not of death.

This argument for the immortality of the soul, though it has been much used, and may appear plausible, is however not conclusive; for it proves no more than that the soul is not capable of death in the same way that the body is; but it does not prove that there are no ways in which the soul can be destroyed. For ought, we can, with certainty collect, from the nature of the soul, there may be many ways, in which its existence might be brought to an end.

2. The immortality of the soul has been argued from the *universal belief* of the doctrine. It is true, individuals have disbelieved and denied it; but it has been in some form or other the general sentiment of mankind; not only of civilized and refined, but also of rude and barbarous nations; and of the illiterate multitude as well as the learned philosopher. This universal sentiment must be owing to one of two causes. It is either implanted in human nature; or it was derived from revelation, before the dispersion of mankind, and was handed down by tradition. We cannot rationally account for the universality of this sentiment, in any other way, than on one of these two principles. The sentiment is either natural; or was originally derived from revelation, and was handed down by tradition. If it be a natural sentiment, it will therefore be universal. And if the universality of the belief of the doctrine be owing to this cause, the doctrine itself must be true, as a natural sentiment must be derived from the author of our nature, who is a God of truth. And if it be derived from tradition, and is not founded in the nature of man, this tradition must have originated from early revelation, so well attested as to gain universal credit, and if it was a revelation from God it must be true.

3. The truth of this doctrine has been argued from that

innate desire of immortality, which is natural to man; and the *hopes* of good men that their desires will be realized. Mankind naturally shudder at the idea of annihilation. It is true some have desired to be annihilated at death; but this is not a natural desire, but the offspring of vice. If there be a state of righteous retribution according to the actions in this life, many are sensible, it must be a state of disgrace and misery with respect to themselves; and hence annihilation is preferred to a miserable existence. But nothing can render the shocking idea of annihilation tolerable much less desirable, but the more shocking prospect of a miserable immortality. Mankind naturally desire life, and immortal life. For the truth of this assertion I confidently appeal to the feelings of every man, who has not by reason of vice, made it his interest to wish the contrary. And further the good man not only desires immortality, but he also hopes that his desires will be realized. Since then the desire of immortality is natural, it must be derived from God, the author of our nature. But God is true. He would not therefore implant such desires, and cherish such hopes, only to tantalize us. Such a conclusion is irrational. The conclusion therefore, may reasonably be drawn, that these natural desires and hopes of immortality, implanted and cherished by a God of truth, shall be realized.

4. The immortality of the soul has been argued from the *capacity* of its *faculties*, and their *improvable and progressive nature*. Our souls are endued with powers and faculties, capable of improvement to an indefinite degree; far beyond what they reach in the present life. No man has ever yet, in the present life, attained to that point of improvement, of which we are sensible, our souls are capable. Now we must suppose from the wisdom of God, he has made nothing in vain; but that all his works will answer the end for which he created them. But the faculties of the soul never, in this life, reach the end, for which in their very nature, they seem evidently to be designed by their Creator. They fall very far short of it. If then the present were the only state of human existence; if the soul were to die with the body, these faculties would never attain the end to which they seem evidently designed by the Creator; and thus his design would be defeated; which conclusion is inconsistent with

the wisdom of God. Hence it is concluded that the soul will survive the body, and act in another state of existence, where its faculties will reach that end, to which they appear evidently to be designed.

5. The immortality of the soul is argued from the *unequal distribution of good and evil in the present life*. It is an indisputable fact, that in this world, one event often happens to the righteous and the wicked; and not only so, but while the vicious are in prosperity, we often see the virtuous in distress. We believe God is holy, just, and good. And if this be his character, he will certainly render righteous retribution to his rational creatures, and will not always suffer virtue to be trampled on and afflicted, nor vice to go unpunished and to triumph. But this would in a great measure be the case, if the present were the only state of human existence. Admitting therefore the moral character of God, that he is infinitely holy, just and good, reason requires the conclusion that the soul is immortal, and that it will exist in another state, where the virtuous will be rewarded and the wicked punished.

Further if it be agreeable to the character of God, to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked, and if he does this only in the present life, then his creatures could prevent his doing that which is agreeable to him, and which he designed to do. For if rewards and punishments extend not beyond the present life, a wicked man might avoid his desert, by putting an end to his existence: and he might also prevent the reward of the virtuous man, by laying violent hands on him and terminating his life; which further shows, that there must be, a state of rewards and punishments after this life.

The foregoing are the principal arguments drawn from reason to prove the immortality of the soul; and taken together they certainly render the doctrine highly probable.

But notwithstanding the light furnished by reason on this subject, revelation is necessary to produce thorough and unwavering conviction. For although the foregoing are the arguments of reason, they are the arguments of reason enlightened by revelation. Our ideas of the moral character of God, on which the strongest arguments are founded, we derive almost solely from revelation. And

besides the wisest of the Heathen sages, though they desired that the doctrine might be true ; yet could attain only to probability, accompanied with much doubt, as the best conclusion to which their reasonings on the subject conducted them. It is to the word of God, we owe our superior and clear discoveries on this subject. Christ "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

They who believe the truth of revelation cannot doubt of the immortality of the soul. It is evident from the general tenor of Scripture ; and is taught by several particular passages.

It is proved from Ex. iii. 6. Where God said to Moses, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This was spoken long after the bodies of these patriarchs had been laid in the grave. But still God was their God. Now as our Saviour reasoned from this passage with the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Mat. xxii. 32. Therefore the patriarchs, though long before dead as to their bodies, were still alive ; which must be understood of their souls. Ecel. xii. 7. we read, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." This text teaches that the soul survives the dissolution of the body. Mat. x. 26. we are exhorted, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." This text also teaches that the soul does not die with the body. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, we find the former after death, lifting up his eyes in hell being in torment, and the latter carried by angel's into Abraham's bosom. Luke xvi. This must be meant of the soul ; for of the rich man we are particularly informed he was buried, and that he was in hell while his body was in the grave, and while he had five brethren, still living upon the earth. And Lazarus was at the same time in Abraham's bosom. Christ said to the thief on the cross, "To day shall thou be with me in Paradise." Luk. xxiii. 43. This text also clearly proves that the soul survives the body. Paul told the Philippians, "To me to die is gain." i. 21. The reason we find in a following verse, viz. that if he departed he would be with Christ, which was far better than to continue in this world. And in the Revelation, in several places, we read of the saints in glory,

evidently the souls of the saints, praising God and the Lamb. All these texts teach the immortality of the soul.

This doctrine of the immortality of the soul is also further and abundantly proved from those numerous passages, which speak of eternal rewards to the righteous, and eternal punishments to the wicked. Such are the following among many others. "God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." John 3, 36. "I give unto them eternal life." John x. 28. "Jesus said unto her. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die." John xi. 25, 26. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4, 17. "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." 2. Cor. v. 1. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Mat. xxv. 46. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark ix. 44. "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Jude. v. 13. In all these texts, and a great many others of the like kind, the immortality of the soul is taught.

Considering the doctrine as now established, let us make an application of the subject. Are our own souls immortal? Do they survive these dying bodies? And will they exist forever, in happiness or misery? Then it unquestionably follows that the concerns of our souls, and of that future world, to which we are fast hastening, are incomparably more important than those of our bodies, and of the present world, and proportionably claim our attention. And the man who acts wisely, let him neglect what else he may, will be careful not to neglect the interests of his soul; but will make an attention to these interests, his first and chief business." But, alas! many act otherwise. While they profess to believe that they have immortal souls, they act as if they had none, and as though this world were the only state in which, they expected to exist. All their powers are active to make provision for the body, which must soon die and moulder into dust, while the soul which must exist forever is neglected. Such conduct is certainly very unwise.

But who are these persons who neglect their souls? They are all those who are not making the care of their souls, their chief concern and business; and who are not seeking their salvation, in the way, which the gospel points out. They are all those who are living in the habitual indulgence of sins forbidden in the word of God; and who are making the things of the world; its riches, honours, or pleasures; the chief object of their pursuit, and their supreme delight. And they are all those, whatever their characters may be in other respects, who have never been born again by the power of the Holy Ghost, who are not united to Christ by a living faith, who have never truly repented of their sins, and who are not living in obedience to God's holy commandments.

Where are the neglecter's of their immortal souls? Let them in view of their immortality be convinced of their folly, and immediately make it their great business to attend to the care of their souls, and to secure their salvation. You are not exhorted entirely to neglect temporal things; but to give to your bodies and to your souls, to the things of time and to the things of eternity, that place in your attention, which their importance respectively demands. And most assuredly the soul is more important than the body; and our future state than the present. For our bodies must soon die; but our souls are immortal and shall survive them. In this world we shall continue at longest a very short time; but in the future world, we must live forever. "Oh that" men "were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deut. xxxii. 29.

Again. Is the soul immortal? Is there a future state? Let the righteous be comforted. The trials which you are now called to endure will all soon terminate; and be exchanged for unspeakable and eternal bliss. There remaineth a rest for you. There is a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, into which after a few more conflicts with the trials of life, you shall enter. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. There God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things will be passed away. And there you shall be perfectly and

forever happy in the vision and fruition of God. This doctrine is calculated especially to comfort you under the loss of pious friends. You will be separated from them only for a short season; and although they will not return to you, you shall soon go to them and meet them in a world of perfect bliss, where there will be no more separation. This doctrine is also calculated to strengthen you against the fears of death. For death can only dissolve the body; but at the same time he will release your soul from a state of sin and sorrow, and introduce your disembodied spirit into a state of immortal felicity.

Finally, Is the soul immortal? Is there a future state of righteous retribution? Let the wicked tremble. Immortality which so much dignifies human nature and which will be such a source of happiness to the righteous, will be a curse to you. You must live forever in a future state to suffer the punishment due to your crimes. Soon must this frail body, on which you now bestow your chief care, be laid in the dust. Soon will this world with its riches, honours and pleasures which now engross your affections and attention, recede from you. And soon must your neglected soul, surviving the dissolution of the body, appear a disembodied spirit, at the bar of a righteous God, and enter upon a state of eternal retribution according to the deeds done in the body.

Reflect I beseech you on your situation; and as you are yet prisoners of hope, without delay attend to the concerns of your souls. Repent of your sins and forsake them; flee to Christ and by faith receive him as he is offered in the gospel. And walk with God in the ways of holiness. And then to you, to die, will be gain; for, you shall inherit a glorious and blessed immortality.—AMEN.

SERMON XVII.

ANGELS.

COLOSSIANS i. 16.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

CREATION was the united work of the three persons in the Godhead. Hence we find it ascribed, sometimes to one person, and sometimes to another. In our text, it is ascribed to the Son or second person. We have attended to the subjects, of creation in general, and of the creation of man in particular. There is another order of intelligent beings, more noble in their nature than man, who were also the subjects of creation, viz. *Angels*. Their creation is spoken of in our text, under the names of “thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.” They are also called in Scripture, by other names indicative of their nature and employments, as “Mights.” Eph. i. 21. “Authorities.” 1 Pet. iii. 22. “Spirits.” Ps. civ. 4. “Watchers.” Dan. iv. 13. “Morning stars, Sons of God.” Job xxxviii. 7. “Cherubim.” Ps. xviii. 10. And “Seraphim.” Is. vi. 2. By all of which names, it is generally supposed, we are to understand the same kind of beings. Some have supposed, there are different ranks or orders among these beings; and that some are superior in office or station to others, if not in nature. This they suppose to be intimated by the different names given to them. But of this we have no certain evidence. The name by which these beings are most generally known is that of *angels*, which signifies messengers.

Angels are frequently spoken of in Scripture; and we are here taught, they have much to do, with our world and our race. The subject therefore claims our attention.

In our Shorter Catechism, nothing is said about angels. But in the Larger Catechism, which are more full, the

subject of angels is introduced under the head of creation, in answer to the 16th question.

“How did God create angels?”

God created all the angels, spirits, immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power; to execute his commandments, and to praise his name, yet subject to change.”

We have something further about angels, in the same system, in the answer to the 19th question, under the head of providence.

“What is God’s providence towards the angels?”

God by his providence permitted some of the angels, wilfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory, and established the rest in holiness and happiness; employing them all at his pleasure, in the administration of his power, mercy and justice.”

In these two answers, we have the doctrine of Scripture respecting angels.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to treat of *angels*.

Angels are, as we learn from our text, *created beings*. The general opinion is, that they were created on the *first day*, before the foundations of the earth were laid. The ground of this opinion is, a passage in Job xxxviii. 4, 7. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

The *number* of angels is very great. Gen. xxxii. 2. we read of an “host” of angels; Ps. lxxviii. 17. it is said, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” Christ spake of more than twelve legions of angels, which the Father would send to succour him if he required it. Mat. xxvi. 53. John “beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” Rev. v. 11. And Paul spake, Heb. xii. 22. of an innumerable company of angels.” All these are good angels.

Besides these the Scriptures teach us there are many which kept not their first estate. The number of the angels must therefore be very great.

As to the *nature* of angels, we may observe, they are *spirits*, without bodies or bodily parts. For we read Ps. civ. 4. "Who maketh his angels, spirits." And Heb. i. 14. "are they not all ministering spirits."

They are *immortal*, as we learn from Luk. xx. 36. where our Saviour speaking of the saints at the resurrection, says, "neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels."

They excel in *knowledge and wisdom*. Thus when the woman of Tekoah, would express the superior knowledge and wisdom of David, she compared him to an angel. 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20. "As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad. My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth." The superior knowledge of the angels is also taught by our Saviour, Mat. xxiv. 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven." The knowledge and wisdom of angels are finite; but they certainly far exceed those of man.

The angels are also *mighty in power*. They are called 2 Thes. i. 7. "Mighty angels;" and are said, Ps. ciii. 20. to "excel in strength." And we have in Scripture several instances, which show their exceeding great power. Angels were the instruments in the destruction of Sodom, and the other cities of the Plain. Gen. xix. 13. After David had displeased the Lord by numbering the people, an angel in three days slew seventy thousand of the Israelites. 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. And in the days of Hezekiah, an angel slew, in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred fourscore and five thousand; 2 Kings xix. 35.

The angels were at first, all *holy*. They were perfectly conformed to God, without the least inclination to sin in their nature. This is evident from the declaration of the Creator, respecting all his works when he had finished them. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good." Gen. i. 31.

The angels when they were created were placed in a *state of trial*. This we know from the event. Although they were created perfectly holy, yet they were mutable or liable to change. They were probably placed under a covenant of works, similar to that under which man was, when first created; in which covenant perfect obedience

was required; and confirmation in holiness and eternal blessedness were promised on condition of their standing for a limited time; and eternal misery was threatened in case of disobedience. In this covenant, if such an one existed, the angels, we have reason to believe, had no federal head, as the human race had; but each one stood for himself.

Part of the angels *fell* from their primitive state of holiness and happiness. They sinned, and in consequence were cast out of heaven, and thrust down to hell, where they are in misery, reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; when, their misery will be greatly increased. Of the sin and consequent punishment of a part of the angels we are explicitly informed in the Scriptures. For we read, 2 Pet. ii. 4. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And Jude 6. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." How long these angels kept their first estate of innocency we know not. We have however reason to believe, it was but a short time; for we know they fell before our first parents.

It has been made a question, what was the *first sin* of the fallen angels? On this subject the Scriptures are, in a great measure silent; and therefore we can say but little. Most probably their first sin was *pride*. The foundation of this opinion is a text found 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." From this text it is inferred that pride was the cause of the devil's condemnation. The same seems to be intimated also, Is. xiv. 12, 13, 14, 15. The passage is a prophecy respecting the king of Babylon, but there appears to be an allusion to the sin, and fall of Satan. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

Of these fallen angels, the Scriptures teach us, there is *one*, who is the *chief*, and *leader* of the rest, who pro-

bably was the first and principal in sin. He is called in Scripture by several names, expressive of his character and works. He is called Satan, the devil, the old serpent, the great dragon, the deceiver, the god of this world, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

The *number* of the fallen angels, we have reason to believe is considerably great. For we read Luk. viii. 30. of many devils possessing one man, and that therefore his name was called, Legion.

These evil spirits have great *influence* in our world, and have done much *mischief* in it. Though they are said to be reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; yet it is evident, they are not confined to one place, but are permitted to visit and go about in our world. "Chains of darkness" is a figurative expression. Darkness expresses their hopeless condition; and their chains are the power of God, by which they are held, so that they cannot escape the judgment which awaits them. They evidently have access to our world, and are actively engaged in tempting men to sin, and in endeavouring to injure them, both in time and through eternity; and much of the sin and misery in the world are to be ascribed to them as the first cause. Many examples in proof of these observations are found in the Scriptures. Satan tempted our first parents to sin, and thus brought ruin upon the human race. Satan inflicted upon Job, the heavy trials with which he was visited, in the loss of his possessions, his children, and his health. He moved David to sin in numbering the people, which provoked the Lord to send a pestilence, by which seventy thousand of the people died. And he tempted Judas to betray his master; and Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost. At the time when our Saviour was upon earth, devils frequently entered the bodies of men, and possessed them, and occasioned them much distress. Satan is represented as sowing tares among the wheat, in the visible church, to the injury of the cause of religion, Mat. xiii. 39. and as catching away the seed of the word preached, so as to prevent any good effect resulting from it. Mat. xiii. 19. He is called "the tempter." 1 Thes. iii. 5. And, "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 2. And it is said of him,

that he "deceiveth the whole world." Rev. xii. 9. And that "as a roaring lion" he "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8. From these examples and texts, it is evident, that fallen angels have great influence and power in our world; and that we have great reason to apprehend danger from them, and to be constantly on our guard against their wiles.

But while some of the angels sinned and fell, and have ever since been engaged in endeavouring to injure and destroy the human race, an "innumerable company" of them, Heb. xii. 22. maintained their integrity. These we have reason to believe have long since been confirmed in holiness and felicity, so that they are no more in danger of falling. Not that they have become immutable in their nature, so that if entirely left to themselves, they would be in no danger of falling; but that they will not be so left as to be liable to fall. The *confirmation* of the good angels, in holiness and felicity, seems to be intimated, 1 Tim. v. 21. where they are called "elect angels."

Let us now attend to what the Scriptures teach us respecting the *employments* of the holy angels.

One of their employments is, *praising God*. They praised him, at the laying of the foundations of the earth; for then "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job xxxviii. 7. They praised him when the Redeemer was born; for the Shepherds heard "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest." Luk. ii. 13, 14. They unite with saints in heaven, in praising God for redeeming love to guilty men; for John, as recorded Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. "beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." And that they may have new themes for praise, they "desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12. or to know more of the mysteries of redemption.

The holy angels are also employed, in *doing the com-*

mandments of God. They are the instruments, by which he carries on, at least in a considerable degree, his providential government in the universe. Of their concern with other worlds, we know but little. They probably bear messages to and from them, and are the instruments to execute the divine will in them. In this however we have but little interest. But in their employments on our earth, and about the affairs of men, we are more concerned; and here we are not left to conjecture. The Scriptures clearly teach us, that they have frequent intercourse with our world, and are much interested in its welfare.

They *ministered unto Christ* when he was upon earth. An angel foretold his birth to the virgin Mary; Luk. i. 26. informed Joseph of his conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost; Mat. i. 20. announced the joyful news of his birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem; Luk. ii. 10. warned Joseph and Mary of the design of Herod against his life, and directed them to carry him into Egypt; and afterwards informed them of the death of Herod, and directed them to return with the young child into the land of Israel. Mat. ii. 13, 19. Angels ministered unto Christ, when he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness. Mark i. 13. In his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Luk. xxii. 43. and Angels also attended him at his resurrection; Mat. xxviii. 2. and at his ascension, Acts. i. 10.

And as they ministered unto Christ, when he was upon earth, so also do they *minister to his people.* For we read Heb. i. 14. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation?" They take a deep interest in the salvation of sinners of our race, and the advancement thereby of the Redeemer's kingdom. For "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luk. xv. 10. And by examining the Scriptures, and attending to what they have done as there recorded, and what they are there said to do, we may see the interest they take in the good of the church, and of the people of God.

They have been employed in *bearing messages* from heaven to our world. They were present at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; and attended as God's ministers on that occasion; For the law is called, "the word

spoken by angels." Heb. ii. 2. And we frequently find them delivering messages and instructions to the saints; as to Abraham and Jacob, and Elijah, and Daniel, and Philip, and Paul, and John and others.

They have also been employed in *inflicting the judgments of God upon his enemies, and upon the enemies of his people*. Angels destroyed Sodom. Gen. xix. 13. An angel smote the camp of the blaspheming Assyrians, and slew one hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them. 2 Kings xix. 35. An angel smote the proud and persecuting Herod, that he died. Acts xii. 23. And an angel shall at the commencement of the millennial period of the church, bind Satan and confine him in the bottomless pit. Rev. xx. 1, 3. And as in the days when the Scriptures were written, so now, we may suppose, angels are often the instruments, in executing the vengeance of God upon his enemies.

Again, they have been and still are employed in *protecting* the people of God, when exposed to danger, or in *delivering* them from the evils into which they had been brought. Angels brought Lot out of Sodom. Gen. xix. 15. and protected Elisha from his enemies. 2 Kings vi. 17. An angel saved Shadrach, Mesheck and Abednego in the fiery furnace; Dan. iii. 28. Shut the mouths of the lions, that they could not hurt Daniel in their den; Dan. vi. 22. And opened the prison-doors and set the Apostles at liberty. Acts. v. 19. And what will apply to the people of God in every age, we are told, Ps. xxxiv. 7. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." And Ps. xci. 11, 12. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." It is, we have reason to believe, owing to the ministry of angels, that the people of God are saved from many dangers; and delivered out of many troubles.

Angels also *administer comfort* to the people of God, and *encourage* them under trials. Thus they did to Elijah in the wilderness; 1 Kings 19, 5. And to Paul in the tempest. Acts xxvii. 23, 24. And we may suppose, from what we know they have done, that invisibly, they still often comfort and encourage the people of God.

In short the Scriptures warrant the belief that angels

constantly attend upon the people of God, and minister to them; and that every child of God has one or more of them, almost continually with him, invisibly guarding, delivering, directing, strengthening and comforting him; and that to their ministry are the people of God, especially indebted for many deliverances, from the snares of wicked angels.

This ministry of angels continues until and after death. As they stood by Christ in his agony, so we have reason to believe, they hover around the bed of the dying saint; and there guard him from the assaults of evil spirits; comfort him in his despondencies; strengthen him to bear his trials; and fortify him against the fears of death. And at the moment of the separation of the soul from the body, we have reason to believe, they stand ready to receive it, and bear it with joy to heaven. For when Lazarus died, he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Luk. xvi. 22.

The angels will be further employed in serving Christ and his people, at the *resurrection and day of judgment*.

They will attend Christ when he comes to judgment. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels." Mat. xvi. 27. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." 2 Thes. i. 7. The angels will go forth with a great sound of a trumpet, which shall awake the sleeping dead, and gather together the people of God, wherever they may be scattered abroad. As we read, Mat. xxiv. 31. "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

They will also then be employed in *gathering the wicked to judgment*, and in *executing* upon them the *righteous sentence*, which will then be pronounced by the judge. As we learn from Mat. xiii. 40, 41, 42. "In the end of this world, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

This subject will now be concluded with a few practical inferences.

1. This subject teaches us, the evil nature of sin, and God's abhorrence of it. It changed angels, once perfectly

holy, into devils; and caused their Creator to cast them down from their exalted seats of perfect bliss in heaven, into hell; where they are reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Let us hence learn to hate sin, and to fear to commit it.

2. This subject teaches us that we have reason to be much on our guard, against the devices of fallen angels. We have seen that they have access to our world; and that they have great influence, and have done much mischief in it. Let us therefore be sober and vigilant. Let us watch against their temptations, and resist them. And let us as the Apostle exhorts, put on the whole armour of God, that "we may be able to stand against the evils of the devil." Eph. vi. 11.

3. From this subject we may learn much as to the spirit and conduct which we ought to maintain. The example of holy angels is worthy of our imitation. They are holy abhorring sin. They burn with supreme and unremitting love to God. With delight, and without weariness they engage in his worship; with alacrity they execute his commandments; and they are filled with benevolence towards others. In all these respects it becomes us to endeavour to imitate their example.

4. This subject teaches us that the state of christians is blessed. Angels encamp round about them, and minister unto them. They are continually with them, guarding, directing, delivering, and supporting them. Surely when we consider these things; and in connexion with them, their mighty power, their vigilance, and their benevolence, we must say that the state of the christian is blessed. Let the people of God think more on the ministry of angels. Let them be more thankful for such a benefit. And let the thought that angels are actively and constantly engaged in their behalf, comfort and strengthen them in the prospect of temptations and trials; and when enduring them. This subject addresses christians in the language of Elisha to his servant. "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." 2 Kings vi. 16.

5. Finally, this subject presents to christians a motive to watchfulness. The angels which encamp round about them, and minister unto them, are the constant witnesses of their conduct, even when no mortal eye seeth them. This

should be one motive among many others to watchfulness against sin, secret as well as open. We are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, who abhor sin, and who in our most secret retirements are noticing our conduct. Let this thought be deeply impressed upon our minds, and have its proper influence upon our conduct.—AMEN.

SERMON XVIII.

PROVIDENCE.

MATTHEW X. 29, 30.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

THESE words form a part of the address, which our Saviour made to his twelve Apostles, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel. He had told them of the trials which awaited them. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Men will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.” To encourage them to be faithful, notwithstanding these trials, he spake our text.

Sparrows and the hairs of the head are very small things, and of little value; and they are selected in our text, rather than things of greater value, to give the greater support and consolation to the Apostles. This is clearly taught in the verse following our text. “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” As though he had said, if God noticeth, and taketh care of such small things, surely he doth of greater; and therefore of a man, of his people, and still more of his ministers.

The doctrine taught in our text is that God exerciseth a providence, over the smallest things; and therefore over all his works.

To explain and prove the doctrine of *divine providence*, is the object of the ensuing discourse.

This doctrine is stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 11th question.

“*What are God’s works of providence?*”

God’s works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.”

The providence of God consists of two parts, *preserving* and *governing*.

The *preserving* providence of God is, upholding his creatures in being, and doing every thing necessary to support their existence and powers of action. By the *governing* providence of God, we understand his ruling and disposing of all things, persons, and actions, according to his will.

The *subjects* of divine providence are, all the creatures, and all their actions. The providence of God extendeth to all worlds, and to this among others. It extendeth to the several kinds and species of being in this world; and not only to these, and to the great affairs of nations, but also to every individual of every species, and in every nation. It extendeth, not only to the more important, but also to the smallest concerns and actions of individuals. And it extendeth, not only to the good actions of moral agents, but also, in a manner consistent with his perfections, to sinful actions.

The providence of God may be argued from *reason*. Necessary existence is not essential to the creature; for if it were, he would have existed always. The creature must therefore exist dependant on the power of that being from whom he at first derived his existence. And if that power were withdrawn, as the creature has no independent principle of existence, he must cease to exist. Hence is inferred the preserving providence of God. Further, that the creature cannot preserve itself, but is dependant on God, appears from observation and experience; for if any creature in this world could preserve itself, most certainly it would be man, the noblest creature in it. But we know that man is not able to preserve himself; for if he were he certainly would preserve himself from sickness, and death, and in comfortable circumstances.

Reason teaches also the governing providence of God. It is derogatory to the infinite wisdom of God to suppose, that after he made the world, he left it to the direction of chance. Besides, the regularity, harmony, and manifest appearance of design, observable in the course of nature, are sufficient to convince any reasonable man, that these things do not happen by chance, but must be ascribed to the government of a wise providence.

The sentiments of a Heathen philosopher on this subject are worthy of notice here. "If one should enter a house, a school, or a forum, and see exact order and discipline observed there, he would not conclude that these things happened without a cause; but that there was some intelligent person who presided and who was obeyed here. Much more then when he observes the regularity and order in the motions and vicissitudes of so many and such great bodies in nature, must he conclude that all these things are governed by an intelligent mind."

Is it absurd to suppose that the universe took its present orderly form, from the fortuitous concourse of atoms of matter? It is equally, and if possible, more absurd, to suppose, that it should by chance continue in the same orderly form, and all its parts perform in a regular and harmonious manner their respective functions. For if the world were governed by chance, it would more readily fall into disorder, than from a disorderly state take its present regular form.

None but an Atheist who denies every principle of reason, which the rest of mankind admit, entertains such an absurd opinion, as that the world was created or took its present form by chance; and the opinion that the world is governed by chance is almost if not altogether as Atheistical. Indeed the providence and being of God appear to be inseparably connected. Of this even the Heathen philosophers were so well convinced, that they frequently used the name providence, to signify God. It is true the Epicureans among the Heathen, while they professed to acknowledge the being of a God, at the same time denied his providence. But the Heathen philosophers themselves, considered the Epicureans as Atheists in reality, though in words they acknowledged the being of a God. In the writings of Cicero we find this remark, "whatever veneration, Epicurus pretended

to have for the gods, yet he was no better than an Atheist, and brought a god into his philosophy, that he might not fall under the displeasure of the senate at Athens." And another one* charged him with being a deceiver, and hypocrite, who thought one thing, and spake another.

Having thus seen how the doctrine of divine providence is supported by reason, let us now attend to the arguments furnished by *revelation*.

The history contained in the Scriptures is a history of the providence of God towards individuals, families, churches, and nations; and the events there recorded, very frequently are ascribed expressly to the Lord.

The providence of God is also proved from certain emblematical representations found in Scripture, such as the ladder seen by Jacob in a dream, and the wheels shown to Ezekiel in vision. The foot of the ladder was upon the earth, the top reached unto heaven, the Lord stood above it, and the angels of God ascended and descended upon it. By this was evidently signified God's management of human affairs. With respect to the wheels which Ezekiel in vision saw, there was a wheel within a wheel and their rings were full of eyes, evidently denoting the watchful, complicated, and mysterious providence of God.

The numerous prophecies of Scripture furnish another proof of a divine providence. Both sacred and profane history afford abundant evidence of the exact accomplishment of many of these prophecies. But it must be plain to common sense, that if things come to pass by chance, there could be no security for the accomplishment of prophecy; and that we can account for its accomplishment, consistently, on no other principle, than that of the superintending providence of God, so arranging causes and effects, and ordering events, as to bring about the completion of the prediction in its appointed time.

The providence of God is further proved from many texts of Scripture, directly to the point. Such are the following. "Bless our God, which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved." Ps. lxvi. 8, 9. "O Lord thou preservest man and beast." Ps. xxxvi. 6. "I bear up the pillars of it" [the earth] Ps. lxxv. 3. "Who giveth

* Lactantius.

food to all flesh." Ps. cxxxvi. 25. "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meet in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Ps. cxlv. 15, 16. "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." Ps. cxlvii. 8, 9. "In him we live, and move and have our being." Acts xvii. 28. These and numerous other texts clearly prove the preserving providence of God.

The Scriptures also frequently teach his governing providence; as in the following texts. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." Ps. ciii. 19. "The Lord is a great King over all the earth." Ps. xlvii. 2. "God putteth down one, and setteth up another." Ps. lxxv. 7. He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Dan. iv. 35. And this providence our text teaches us extends to the smallest things. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." And indeed great events, in which whole nations, and many generations are concerned, so often depend on some small circumstances, in the chain of causes and effects, that if the providence of God did not extend to small things, his plans with respect to great things would be continually liable to be frustrated.

Further the Scriptures teach us that nothing is casual; but that those things which appear to us, to be the effect of chance, are ordered by divine providence. As we read, Prov. xvi. 33. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Nothing can be more casual than the lot; but even this, we are assured is disposed of by the Lord.

Again, the Scriptures teach us that this providence extends to the most free actions of moral agents.

This is taught in the following texts. Prov. xvi. 1. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Jer. x. 23. "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Prov. xxi. 1. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will." And Ezra (chap. vii. 27.) thanked God

that he had "put in the kings heart, to beautify the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem." However freely men may perform actions, yet the providence of God is concerned about them. He preserves the powers of action; he presents objects and motives to induce to action, and to one action rather than another; and he moves upon the heart by his Spirit, to influence the soul to good actions. In these and such like ways, the providence of God is concerned about the good actions of moral agents. The liberty of the creature is not hereby infringed, because the creature still acts, according to his will; and herein liberty consists.

But the Scriptures go further and teach us that the providence of God extends not only to the good, but also to the wicked actions of moral agents.

This is a difficult point to explain. But it is certain, the Scriptures do unequivocally teach, that the providence of God extends in some sense to morally evil actions; and therefore it becomes us to enquire, and to labour to understand, in what sense. God in his providence *restrains* wicked men, and prevents them from proceeding in wickedness as far as they otherwise would go. "The remainder of wrath (said the Psalmist) shalt thou restrain." Ps. lxxvi. 10. He also sometimes *overrules* wicked actions for good. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." Ps. lxxvi. 10. The brethren of Joseph wickedly sold him into Egypt; but the Lord overruled that event for good. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen. i. 20. So also the Jews wickedly put our Saviour to death; but God in his providence overruled this most wicked action, for the greatest good that ever came to our world. There is no difficulty in these two senses in which the providence of God is conversant about sinful actions.

But there are several texts of Scripture, which clearly teach that the providence of God has something more to do with sinful actions, than merely restraining and overruling them. God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, and to have said to Shimei, curse David. "Joseph said unto his brethren, God did send me before you to preserve life. It was not you that sent me hither, but God." Gen. xlv. 4, 5, 8.

With respect to Pharaoh, the Lord said unto Moses when he was commissioning him to go into Egypt and demand of the king to let the Israelites leave his land. "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." Ex. iv. 21. And in the course of the history of the plagues sent upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, it is repeated several times that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. And the Apostle Paul in reference to this case of Pharaoh said, "whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. ix. 18. The case of Shimei we have recorded, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. When David was fleeing from Absalom, Shimei came out and cursed him as he passed. One of David's officers asked permission to put him to death; but David refused permission; saying, "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David."

These passages clearly teach that the providence of God has something further to do about sinful actions, than merely restraining and overruling them. How are we to understand these passages? They must be explained consistently with the holiness of God. It is inconsistent with the perfectly holy nature of God, that he should be the efficient author of sin, or in the least degree approve of it. Besides it is contrary to his word, in which he repeatedly declares his utter abhorrence of all sin, and in which we read. Jam. i. 13, 14. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

There are three senses in which God may be said to be conversant about sinful actions, which may explain these difficult texts.

1. He *upholds* the powers of action in the commission of sin. God thus enables the sinner to act. So that what is natural in the action may be said to be from God. But he is not on this account the author of the sinfulness of the action. Thus unless God enabled the swearer to speak he could not blaspheme; but God cannot be the author of his blasphemies, because he continues to him the use of his speech; for many have the use of this faculty continued to them who do not thus employ it. This abuse of speech arises from the evil disposition of the sinner's own heart.

2. God in the course of his providence, *presents* or suffers to be presented, *objects* which give occasion to sin. If these objects had not been presented, the sinful action would not have been committed. But the presenting the object in the course of his providence, cannot make God the efficient author of sin. Because these objects may be presented and no sin ensue; and one may take occasion from them to commit sin, and not another. The spoils of Jericho were presented before all the Israelites; but none of them took occasion hence to commit sin, except Achan; and Joseph and David had similar objects placed before them. The latter sinned; but the former did not, though much more strongly tempted. The objects presented are therefore not the cause of sin; but the evil disposition of the heart of him to whom they are presented.

3. God *permits* sinful actions. He may, either in a sovereign way, or as a punishment for former sins, withhold his restraining grace, and leave persons to themselves; and in consequence of being left to themselves, they may commit sin. But God cannot on this account be justly charged as the author of sin; for permission can no more be the efficient cause of sin, than the absence of the sun is the efficient cause of darkness.

Let us now apply these remarks to the apparently difficult cases which have been cited. In the case of Pharaoh, the Lord upheld the powers of action; in judgment for former sins, he withheld from him restraining grace, and left him to himself; and he tried him with such judgments, as would have softened some hearts; but which through his pride and obstinacy were the occasion of rendering his heart harder. And thus God hardened Pharaoh's heart, not efficiently, but in a negative, permissive, and objective sense; while Pharaoh himself was the efficient hardener of his own heart. And agreeably to this, in the history of Pharaoh we frequently find it said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. The case of Shimei may be explained in the same way. God upheld his powers of action; in the course of his providence, he placed David before him, in that situation which gave him an occasion of acting out the feelings of his heart towards him; and the Lord permitted him to act out these feelings. And so also of Joseph's brethren. God upheld the powers of action, he permitted them to act out what was

in their hearts; and in the course of his providence, he placed Joseph in their power; and he eventually overruled their wickedness, to effect his designs of saving many people alive.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain and prove the doctrine of divine providence. Before closing the subject, it will be proper to say something on the properties or attributes of providence. These as stated in the answer in our Catechism, to the question on providence are, holiness, wisdom, and power. "God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving, &c."

1. The providence of God is *holy*. Of this we may be assured from the holiness of the divine nature. And his word declares, "the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Ps. cxlv. 17. Some have objected to the holiness of providence, from the cases of Joseph's brethren, Pharaoh, and Shimei, which have been cited, and the like instances found in Scripture; but these have already been explained, and the holiness of providence, in regard to such cases vindicated. It may be further objected to the holiness of providence, that we do not see good and evil always distributed in the present life, according to the characters of men; but sometimes see vice go unpunished, and triumph, while virtue is in distress. This fact has sometimes troubled the pious. The Psalmist in the 73d Psalm, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked complained and said, "verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." And Jeremiah had a similar trial when he said, "Righteous art thou O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" Jer. xii. 1. To this objection may be answered; as we cannot search the heart, those whom we esteem to be righteous, may sometimes be hypocrites, and be punished for secret sins. Besides the afflictions of the people of God are designed for their good, and are made blessings to them, while the prosperity of the wicked is cursed. And this world is a place of trial, and not of exact retribution. Retribution is reserved for another state of existence. And when through the medium of revelation, we look into the fu-

ture world, and consider the happiness of the righteous, and the miseries of the wicked, all difficulties must vanish. The Psalmist was satisfied of the righteousness of providence, when he went into the sanctuary of God and understood the end of the wicked. Ps. lxxiii. 17.

2. The providence of God is *most wise*. This is manifested in what our eyes behold of the works of providence. Will it be objected to this, that we see many disorders in the universe? To this may be answered, with our limited capacities, we are very incompetent judges, of what, in the general scale, is orderly or disorderly, in the administration of the affairs of the universe. In our present state, and with our present powers, to impeach the wisdom of providence, is like the fly in the fable, lighting on a beautiful and well-finished building, and crying out, "what disorder! what chasms are here!" If we were admitted into the secrets of providence, and could understand all the parts of the complicated plan, and see the end from the beginning, we might then be able to judge of the wisdom of providence. And we would doubtless find, what may now appear to us disorderly, to be directed by consummate wisdom.

3. The providence of God is *most powerful*. Nothing can effectually resist the operations of God, or prevent the accomplishment of his designs, in his providential dispensations. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35.

This discourse will now be concluded with a very few practical remarks.

Is God our preserver? We ought to feel and acknowledge our dependance on him. And since we are constantly dependant on his providence, for the continuance of our existence, and for all the blessings we enjoy, we, and all we have, certainly belong to him; and our chief end ought to be his glory. Let us be thankful for his preserving care, and for the comforts we enjoy, and which flow originally from him; let us fear to sin against him, on whom we are constantly dependant for the preservation of our lives, and the continuance of our blessings; and let us employ all that we are and have, which are his, in his service and to his glory.

Does God govern the world? Let us never forget that we are constantly under his all-seeing eye; and that as the subjects of his government, he will bring us to an account for all our conduct. Let us cheerfully submit to his government; for it is holy and wise; and so conduct as to meet his approbation. Let the wicked tremble, for the providence of God is holy, and most powerful, and therefore must finally issue in their ruin, unless they repent. And let the righteous rejoice that the Lord reigneth. He is your Father, reconciled in Christ, who is upon the throne of the universe. And does he take care of sparrows? "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Surely he will take care of you, and make all things work together for your good. Let his providence lead you to resignation under all the trials of life, encourage you continually to put your trust in him, and comfort you under all your sorrows.—AMEN.

SERMON XIX.

THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

GENESIS ii. 16, 17.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

OUR first parents, in their primitive state, were perfectly holy and happy. While in this state, the Lord was pleased to make a *covenant* with them. This covenant we have contained in our text. It has been called by several names. It is sometimes called the covenant of *innocency*, because it was made with man in his state of innocency. Sometimes it is denominated the covenant of *life*, because it is supposed a promise of life was therein contained. But the name, by which it is most generally known, is the covenant of *works*.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to treat of this *covenant*, which God made with man in his state of innocence.

The doctrine concerning it, we have contained in our Catechism, in the answer to the 12th question.

“What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the state wherein he was created?”

When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.”

In treating this subject the plan will be,

- I. To illustrate the nature of the covenant of works.
- II. To prove that God did make such a covenant with our first parents in their state of innocence.

I. In illustrating the nature of the covenant of works, your attention will be called to the parties contracting, the condition, the promise, the penalty, and the sacraments or seals of this covenant.

1. The *parties contracting*. These were God and man. On the one part, the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and on the other part, man perfectly holy, and though mutable, yet capable of standing, and fulfilling the required obedience, and also sustaining the character of a public person, the head and representative of his posterity. Between the contracting parties in this covenant, there was an infinite distance; and man had no right to object to the covenant; but was under natural obligations to accept of it and render obedience to it. Hence, it may be remarked, that in speaking of God's entering into covenant with man, we must keep in mind that this covenant is not in all respects, like one entered into between man and man, in which the parties are equal.

2. We proceed to consider the *condition* of the covenant of works, or what man was therein required to do. The condition expressed in our text was, that he should not eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” But we have reason to believe that the obedience required, was not confined to this positive precept, respecting the fruit of the tree of knowledge; but that it had respect to the whole law of nature. This law is substantially the same, with the moral law comprised in the ten commandments, and was originally impressed upon the

heart of man. When he was created, man was undoubtedly made subject to this law. Independent of any explicit commandment, it was his duty to love God supremely and perfectly, and his neighbour as himself; and he would have sinned and incurred guilt, if he had done any thing contrary to this love, which he owed to God and his neighbour, or had violated any of the precepts of the law of nature.

Although the only condition of the covenant made with Adam, expressed in our text was that he should abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge; yet, that the condition of this covenant was obedience to the whole law of nature as well as this positive commandment, is not only taught by the considerations already suggested, but may also be collected from other parts of Scripture. Rom. vii. 10. We read, "The commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Here, the moral law is called "the commandment which was ordained to life." This must refer to the covenant made with Adam; for in that alone could man obtain life by obedience to the law. The same is taught, Rom. x. 5. quoted by the Apostle from Lev. xviii. 5. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." The same is also taught, Gal. iii. 10, 12. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. The law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them."

From the preceding remarks and texts of Scripture, the conclusion is drawn, that the condition of the covenant of works was, obedience to the whole law of God, both the law of nature, and the positive commandment respecting the tree of knowledge.

Here it may, perhaps be asked, could Adam fall in any other way than by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge? For the threatening was, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Which seems to imply that if Adam had not eaten he would have lived. This apparent difficulty may perhaps be solved in this way; although if Adam had violated any of the precepts of the law of nature, he would have incurred the penalty of death; yet considering his natural inclination to observe the law of nature, and the difficulty of temptation to a

breach of this law, he was not liable, or would not be permitted to sin by any other transgression than that of the positive precept.

The condition of the covenant was obedience to the whole law of God. This obedience was to be perfect. For the curse was denounced against the least transgression or failure, as we learn from Gal. iii. 10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The obedience was to be perfect without the least defect, either in soul or body. The principles of action were to be right as well as the actions themselves; the thoughts, volitions, affections, and every exercise of the soul, were to be perfectly conformed to the will of God, as well as the external conduct. The obedience was to be perfect as to the extent, reaching to all the commandments of God. It was to be perfect as to the degree, extending to the utmost ability of the powers of soul and body; man was required to obey with *all* his heart, soul, strength and mind. And it was to be perfect as to its duration, continuing without intermission unto the end of his probationary season.

Obedience was also to be personal. "In the day that *thou* eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." "The *man* which doeth those things shall live by them." Rom. x. 5. The covenant admitted, with respect to Adam, of no representative or proxy obedience. Adam himself must keep the covenant, or he and his posterity be involved in ruin. Hence it may be remarked, the covenant made with Adam did not admit of a mediator. The admission of a mediator to save sinful man, must be in virtue of another, and different covenant.

3. The *promise* of the covenant, next claims our attention. In the account which we have of the transaction, no promise is expressed; but one, it is belived, is implied in the threatening. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," implied, that if he did not eat, he should not die, but live. Besides it is agreeable to the divine nature, to love holy beings, and to do them good. It is therefore improbable, that God would threaten man with eternal punishments, in case of disobedience, and yet promise him nothing as the reward of obedience.

The life implied in the threatening, it is supposed, con-

tained the continuance of the natural life which he then enjoyed; the continuance, and increase of the spiritual life which he then possessed; and also, confirmation in holiness, and eternal and celestial blessedness.

By natural life is meant, the union of the soul and body; by spiritual life, the union of the soul to God, and communion with him; and by eternal life, everlasting blessedness.

4. We proceed to the consideration of the *penalty* annexed to the covenant of works. This was death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This death, as we learn from the sentence pronounced upon man, after the fall, and from other parts of Scripture, included in it the following particulars. 1st. The natural evils, or the pains and sufferings of the present life. For in the sentence passed after the fall, was contained this clause; "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Gen. iii. 17, 19. 2nd. Natural death, or a dissolution of the union between soul and body, and a return unto the dust. Agreeably to this, a part of the sentence after the fall was "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. iii. 19. 3rd. Spiritual death, or a loss of the image of God in the soul, and of communion with him, which is denominated by the Apostle a death in trespasses and sins. Eph. ii. 1. And 4th. Eternal death, sometimes called in Scripture the second death, which consists in everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and from all happiness, into endless misery. That this was included in the penalty of the covenant, is proved by many passages of Scripture in which eternal misery is threatened as the punishment of sin.

5. The covenant of works had *sacraments*, or signs and seals. Some have supposed there were four of these; viz. Paradise, the Sabbath, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. It is however, very doubtful, whether the two former, were sacraments of this covenant. We shall therefore attend only to the two latter; viz. the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was so

called, not from any inherent virtue of begetting and increasing knowledge; but because, by partaking of it, man would know by sad experience, what good and evil were; what good he had fallen from, and what evil he had fallen into. Some have ventured to conjecture, of what species of tree this was; but of this we know nothing. It has been disputed whether this tree was a sacrament of the covenant of works. It undoubtedly was a sign to our first parents to remind them, of the death which was threatened in case they brake the covenant; and as the threatening included a promise of life, if they did not eat of this tree, it was calculated to remind them of the life promised, and to confirm the promise as well as the threatening.

As to the tree of life, it probably took its name from its sacramental designation. It was probably called the tree of life, not because it had any inherent virtue of conferring life and immortality upon man; but because it was appointed to be a sign of the life promised to him by his God; and a seal to confirm his faith in the reality of the covenant, and that he would receive from his God, the promised blessing of life on condition of his perfect obedience for the time prescribed.

To this covenant our first parents undoubtedly consented. Indeed, they could not do otherwise, without sinning. And considering the holiness of their nature, we must suppose, they would readily accept of any thing proposed to them by a good God. Besides, Eve, in the name of them both, explicitly acknowledged their obligation to observe the covenant, when she said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Gen. iii. 2, 3.

Having thus illustrated the nature of the covenant of works, I proceed,

II. To prove that God did make such a covenant with our first parents in their state of innocency. In the transaction as recorded in our text are contained all the requisites of a covenant, as far as a covenant can exist between God and man. Here are parties, a condition, a penalty including a promise, seals, and on each side voluntary obligation.

Some say that man in his state of innocency was only under a law and not under a covenant. But if it can be proved that our text contained, as the reward of obedience, the promise of anything beyond what man had a right to claim on the ground of law, it will follow that this was a covenant transaction.

On law-ground Adam could justly claim only an exemption from punishment. But in the threatening was included a promise of life; and although on law-ground, he might have been exempted from death, and therefore might have had the life continued, which he then enjoyed; yet, this is not certain. For we know not but man had in his nature the principles of mortality. And although if man had not sinned, he would have been immortal, both as to his body and his soul; yet this immortality may not have belonged to his nature. And if it did not belong to his nature, the continuance of the life which he then enjoyed, was something beyond, what he had a right to claim on the ground of the law. But it is certain, the continuance in case of his obedience, of the life which he then enjoyed was implied in the threatening. And therefore immortality was promised, which if it did not belong to his nature, was a promise of something beyond what he had a right to claim by the law. But further, this life, implied in the threatening, appears to include blessings beyond a mere continuance of those which Adam then enjoyed; and if so, this transaction included a promise of more than man was entitled to by the law, and was therefore a covenant.

Again, that Adam was under a covenant appears from the public character, which he sustained, while in his state of innocency. He was, as will be shown in another discourse, the public head and representative of his posterity, so that they would have been partakers in his reward if he had stood, and were involved in his guilt when he fell. And if he did sustain this public representative character, it must have been in virtue of a covenant transaction; for as the natural head of his posterity, they could not be involved in his guilt any more than in that of their immediate parents. And if he was only under a law and not a covenant, he could have been no more than the natural head of his posterity.

Again, it appears inconsistent with a state of trial in

which Adam then was, and the public representative character which he sustained, that his probationary state should always have continued, and the grace of confirmation never be bestowed. We have reason to believe that his trial was to be but for a limited time; and that if he had rendered obedience for this time, he would have been confirmed in holiness and happiness, beyond the danger of falling. This was the case with the angels. They were placed in a state of trial. Part of them fell; the rest, we have every reason to believe, have been confirmed beyond the danger of falling. In confirmation of this sentiment, they are called "elect angels." 1. Tim. v. 21.

The same blessing, saints in heaven, who through grace, have on earth, been faithful unto death, have received. Hence it is reasonable to conclude, that the same blessing of confirmation in holiness, was promised to man in his state of innocency. But this was a blessing which he had no right to expect by the law; and therefore if this blessing would have been extended to him, if he had stood, he was not only under a law, but also under a covenant.

Again, a probable argument, in favour of this point may be drawn from the following text. Hos. vi. 7. "They like men have transgressed the covenant." The marginal reading is *Adam* instead of *men*. And thus the original word is translated, Job xxxi. 33. "If I covered my transgressions as Adam." If the text in Hosea were thus translated, it would read, "they like Adam have transgressed the covenant." And if this rendering be correct, Adam was under a covenant which he transgressed.

Again the Apostle speaking of the law as a way of life, which could only be in man's state of innocency, says Rom. x. 5. "The man which doeth those things shall live by them." And Gal. iii. 12. "The law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them." And Rom. vii. 10. he speaks of "the commandment which was ordained to life." In these texts, life is promised as the reward of obedience to the law, and by examining the context of these passages we will find reason to conclude that eternal life and blessedness are hereby meant. But as has already been remarked, man had no right to expect this life for obedience to the law, simply considered as such. Therefore the conclusion is drawn, as this pro-

mise of life for obedience to the law was made to man in his state of innocency, he was under the law as a covenant of works.

Once more, I would observe that the scriptural character of God, as "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. renders it further probable, that he made to Adam, on condition of his obedience, the promise of blessings, beyond what he then enjoyed, and therefore again that he was under a covenant.

From these considerations, the conclusion is drawn, that God entered into covenant with our first parents.

From this subject we may infer,

1. The goodness of God. He might in perfect consistency with his justice and his goodness, have continued man subject to the law of nature, without promising him for his obedience, any blessings beyond what he then enjoyed. But delighting to do his creatures good, he condescended to make a covenant with man, and to promise him great rewards in case of his obedience.

2. We may infer from this subject, the dignity and happiness of our first parents, while they continued in their state of innocency. They were dignified by a covenant-relation to their Creator. They were already possessed of much happiness, without any alloy of misery. They were placed in a delightful garden, where they were permitted to partake of its rich and various productions, with the exception of the fruit of a single tree. They were the favourites of heaven, and enjoyed intimate communion with their God. And they had in prospect a glorious reward, and far greater blessings than they then enjoyed, in case they retained their integrity. Happy pair! and happy race! if they had stood.

3. We may infer again from this subject, that if our first parents did not stand, and retain their integrity, no blame can be justly charged on God. He not only made them upright, without any inclination to sin in their nature, and made them perfectly happy; but still more strongly to bind them to obedience, he was pleased to enter into covenant with them, explicitly to warn them of the consequences of disobedience, and to promise them in case they kept the covenant for a time, confirmation in holiness, and blessings far beyond what they then enjoyed.

Let us therefore adore the divine goodness; and ascribe righteousness unto God in his dealings with his creatures. Let us by contrasting our present state, with the primitive state of man, learn the evil of disobedience to God's commandments. Let us be thankful that although life is not now to be obtained by the covenant of works, it may still be obtained by another covenant even the covenant of grace. And let us return unto God, and seek life in this way.—AMEN.

SERMON XX.

THE FALL.

GENESIS iii. 6.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.”

IN these words we have a concise account of that sad transaction, by which sin and misery were introduced into our world. Our first parents were created upright, without the least inclination to sin in their nature. But they were not created with unchangeable natures; they were fallible or liable to fall. When created, they were put in the garden of Eden, where they were completely happy. Here God was pleased to place them in a state of trial, and to enter into covenant with them; promising them, if they kept the covenant for a limited time, confirmation in holiness, and eternal life and blessedness; and at the same time threatening them with death in case of disobedience. God having made this covenant with our first parents, left them to the freedom of their own will. They had power to choose to obey or disobey the law of their Creator; and they also had power to act agreeably to their choice. Thus left to themselves, they yielded to temptation, disobeyed the commandment of God and fell into sin and misery.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to treat of the *fall* of our first parents.

The doctrine of the Fall, we have contained in our Catechism, in the answers to the 13th and 15th questions.

“Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?”

Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.

What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.”

In treating of the doctrine of the fall, let us attend,

I. To the history of this sad transaction. And

II. To the heinousness of the particular sin, by which our first parents fell.

I. Let us attend to the *history* of the fall. Our first parents were seduced by temptation. The temptation was first addressed to the woman, most probably in the absence of her husband. The tempter is by the sacred historian called the serpent. The real tempter was Satan, who either assumed the appearance of a serpent; or else as is more probable, entered the body of a real serpent. That the real tempter was Satan appears from the following texts of Scripture. John viii. 44. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth; because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.” In this passage our Saviour evidently referred, to the deceit which Satan practised upon our first parents, and his murder of them. Rev. xii. 9. We read, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan.” And Rev. xx. 2. “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan.” In these texts, Satan is called the Serpent; and we cannot conceive why he is so called, unless it be because he once assumed the form of a serpent, when he deceived our first parents. Hence we conclude that the real tempter, was Satan.

He assumed the form of a serpent, or took possession

of a real serpent, the better to conceal and carry on his mischievous designs. If he had made his appearance in all the horrid deformity of a fallen angel, Eve most probably would have been shocked, and instead of listening to his temptations would have fled from him.

Perhaps it may here be asked, why Eve manifested no surprize at hearing the serpent speak. Some suppose the serpent, or a certain species of the serpent, was previous to the fall, endowed with the faculty of speech. This was the opinion of Josephus, and some other Jewish writers, and it has been advanced by some modern writers; but the opinion appears to be without sufficient foundation to warrant our belief. The reason why Eve manifested no surprise, probably was her inexperience. It is generally supposed, the fall took place a very short time since after the creation; and if this opinion be correct, Eve's knowledge of the animals must have been very limited. This however is a question of curiosity, and of small importance.

Satan began and carried on his temptations with great cunning. He did not, at first, directly find fault with the divine command, or deny the truth of the divine threatening. If he had at once done this, Eve might have taken the alarm, and not have continued to listen to him. But the tempter began, as though he had heard a rumour of the prohibition concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge; and as though he asked for information, that he might know the truth of it; and at the same time he seemed to intimate a doubt of the truth of the rumour which he had heard. "Yea hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Gen. iii. 1. To this question and insinuation the woman answered, ver. 2, and 3. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." The tempter having brought Eve to listen to him had gained an important point; he therefore proceeded further, and replied to her, "ye shall not surely die." ver. 4. By this expression, he intimated, either that her husband, had not truly recited to her the divine command, or that she had misunderstood it, or that if God had given such a commandment, the object was merely to keep them in fear of him; for he would

not execute the threatening. He then proceeded further, and more plainly reflected on the divine Being, charging him as a hard master; as desiring to keep his creatures from the honour and happiness within their reach; and as insincere in making threatnings which he did not intend to execute. ver. 5. "For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." In this declaration the tempter seems to have referred to the name of the tree, in confirmation of his assertion; as though he had said, as is its name, so is its nature, it has an intrinsic virtue to enlighten the mind into the knowledge of good and evil.

These suggestions of the tempter were calculated to excite in the mind of Eve, the sins of unbelief, discontent, ambition, pride, and sensuality; and it is probable that most, if not all of these sins were committed in heart before she performed the overt act.

By his suggestions the tempter prevailed, and the woman yielded. Ver. 6. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." She was probably standing near or by the tree, when the tempter came to her. And some suppose that the serpent plucked of the fruit and ate, and suggested that it was owing to the virtue thereof, he had acquired his knowledge, superior to the rest of the brute creation. To this circumstance there may be reference in our text, "The woman saw that the tree was good for food," probably not only because it appeared "pleasant to the eyes," and because the serpent had said it was good, but also because she saw him eat of it, and receive no injury. And she saw that it was "a tree to be desired to make one wise," probably because the serpent alledged, that he thereby had acquired his superior knowledge. Be this however as it may, the woman "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat."

The woman was the first in the transgression. This clearly appears from the history. Whether the tempter in person assaulted Adam, or whether he was tempted only by his wife, we know not. It is certain Eve gave him the fruit, and she, most probably, used persuasions

to induce him to eat. It is also made a question, whether Adam was really deceived, or whether overcome by the persuasions of his wife, and out of complaisance to her, he ate, knowing the consequences. The Apostle asserts that Adam was not deceived. 1 Tim. ii. 14. "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." But by this may be meant only, that Adam was not first deceived, or that he was not deceived to that degree that the woman was. But though the woman was the first in the transgression, it is doubtful whether her conduct was the most criminal. On the contrary, some suppose Adam was the most guilty, inasmuch, as he yielded, as far as we know, without those assaults from the Serpent, with which Eve was overcome.

Our first parents sinned freely. God was not the author of their sin. He neither commanded, nor persuaded them to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. On the contrary he expressly forbade it, and enforced obedience to the prohibition, by his goodness towards them, by promises of still greater blessings than they then enjoyed, and by a threatening of death in case of disobedience. Besides he created them perfectly holy, and gave them sufficient strength to stand; and he took away no strength which he had given. The temptations of Satan could not excuse them; for Satan used no force, only persuasion; and this persuasion was in direct opposition to the command of their Creator. Our first parents acted freely, according to their own choice. We proceed,

II. To consider the *heinousness* of the particular sin, by which our first parents fell.

Some are ready to imagine, that their sin in eating the forbidden fruit was a very small one; and think it strange and almost incredible, that God should have inflicted so severe a punishment, for so little a sin. Probably such thoughts are not unfrequently entertained in the minds of many persons.

The mere eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, unconnected with the divine command, had no criminality attached to it. The sinfulness of this action consisted in its being a breach of the divine precept. And whether God had fixed upon a thing, in itself small or great as the test of man's obedience, the violation of his command-

ment would have been disobedience to him, and rebellion against his lawful authority.

And here it will be proper to make a few remarks on the propriety of God's appointing such a test of man's obedience as he did. No one of the precepts of the law of nature would have been so proper a test: for our first parents had this law engraven upon their hearts, and natural feeling independent of a respect for the authority of God directed them to obedience. Had God particularly commanded them, not to kill, but on the contrary to love one another, and made this the special test of their obedience; they were the same flesh, and natural affection, without any respect to the authority of God would have secured their obedience. Had he specially commanded them, not to steal, not to bear false witness, not to covet their neighbour's goods; in their circumstances, these precepts would have been no sufficient trial of their obedience. A positive law concerning something in itself indifferent, was certainly the most proper test of their obedience; for seeing no reason for this, in the nature of things, their observance of the precept would the better prove, a respect for the authority of the Lawgiver. These remarks may show the propriety and wisdom of fixing on such a test as was appointed.

It is true, the thing forbidden was in itself small; but this did not extenuate the crime of rebellion, against God, but rather aggravated it. For surely, it is reasonable, that the easier the precept was, the less excuse could our first parents have had for violating it. How could they have shown a greater disrespect for the divine authority, than by transgressing for such a trifle! In this respect, the conduct of Esau was very similar to that of our first parents. He sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage. For this he is called, Heb. xii. 16. a profane person; and it is evidently intimated that his profaneness was the greater, on account of the little value of that for which he sold his birth-right. "Lest there be any profane person as Esau, who for one *morsel* of meat, sold his birth-right." But it must be evident to common sense, that the easier the precept, which is made the test of respect and obedience, the greater disrespect, does the breach of it show, to the authority of the Lawgiver. Therefore the smallness of the thing which was forbidden to our first parents, in-

stead of lessening their guilt in disobeying the precept, was an aggravating circumstance.

There were several other circumstances which show the heinousness of the sin of our first parents. They were holy. God had laid them under many and great obligations, to respect his authority, and obey all his commandments. He had given them their being, and they had recently come from his forming hands. He had vested them with dominion over all the creatures of the earth. He had placed them in the garden of Eden, the most delightful spot in the world. Here he had caused to grow for their use, every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food. He had given them liberty to make free use of all this variety and abundance, with the exception of the fruit of a single tree. And withal, he had expressly charged them not to eat of this fruit; and had warned them of the consequence. But in violation of the obligations arising from all these considerations, they plucked and ate the forbidden fruit.

Further, in this one sin were included a complication of sins. By this one act many of the precepts of the moral law were broken. Some have attempted to show, and with much reason, that our first parents, by eating the forbidden fruit, brake the whole moral law contained in the ten commandments. Be this as it may, it is certain many sins were included in this one. It included unbelief. The tempter said, "ye shall not surely die." By their conduct, our first parents showed that they believed Satan, but disbelieved what God had spoken. They gave more credit to the word of Satan, than to that of their Creator. This was certainly a very heinous sin. In eating the forbidden fruit, they were also guilty of a sinful ambition, and of pride. They aspired to an equality with their Creator. The suggestion, "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," seems to have had a principal influence in inducing them to disobey the divine command. They were guilty also of coveting that which was not their own, and which it was unlawful for them to possess; and of sensuality, in gratifying their sensual appetites, with that which was forbidden. Their sin also included in it great ingratitude to their Creator, thus to disobey him and deface his works, after all his goodness towards them. And further they were guilty of the sins of

self-murder, and of the murder of their posterity; for by this act they brought death upon themselves, and upon the whole human race, which was to descend from them. And they did this knowingly; for they had been explicitly apprized that death would be the consequence, if they ate of the forbidden fruit.

From this view of the subject, the conclusion is drawn, that the sin of our first parents in eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge was a very heinous sin. It was rebellion against the authority of God, in a case where his will was most clearly made known. It was rebellion for the sake of a very small gratification, and when the precept was very easy to observe. It was committed under aggravating circumstances. And it included in it a complication of sins.

This discourse will now be concluded with a few practical inferences.

1. This subject teaches us that we have much to fear from Satan, and cautions us to be on our guard against his temptations. In his first appearance to our race, he proved himself to be possessed of great subtilty, and to be a liar and murderer. And he is still, the same subtle, deceitful and murderous serpent. He still has the same nature and the enmity against God and the same human race. He still, though invisibly, "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." And he must be more dangerous now, than he was in the time of our first parents; for he must have gained much wisdom by experience. It becomes us therefore not to be ignorant of his devices, and to be always vigilant, lest we fall into his snares. We have much to fear from the temptations of Satan. This the Apostle teaches, 2. Cor. xi. 3. "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Innumerable are the artifices which Satan uses to deceive and murder souls. And, alas! like our first parents, their posterity generally are more ready to believe and obey his suggestions, than the word of God. He still endeavours to persuade the wicked that they shall not surely die, and in opposition to the declarations of the word of God, to flatter them with hopes of impunity, though they continue in sin, and in neglect of the salvation revealed and offered in the gospel.

This he does in a great many ways. Sometimes he persuades men that the Scriptures are the invention of designing men and not the word of God. Sometimes he induces them to believe, that there is no place of future torment; or if there is, that all who fall into it will finally be released from it. Sometimes he suggests to them that God is so merciful, he will not punish sin. Sometimes he persuades them that life is still to be obtained by the covenant of works, or by their own doings, while Christ is neglected. Sometimes he whispers to them, it is time enough yet to believe and repent. And sometimes he deludes them with a false hope that they have experienced the requisites of the gospel. By these, and such like suggestions, Satan still endeavours to persuade men that they shall not die, and carries on in our world, the work of deception and murder, which he first began in Paradise. But in our first parents, we have a solemn warning, not to believe him; but to believe what God hath spoken and to resist the tempter.

2. Our subject teaches us the danger of standing to parley with temptation. Our first mother did this and she yielded and fell. If she had resisted the tempter at the first onset, or had fled from him, before he had artfully insinuated himself into her favour, she probably would have retained her integrity. But she stood to listen to him, and he vanquished and ruined her. Let this be an effectual warning to us, to keep as much as practicable out of the way of temptation; and when temptations to sin are presented, to resist them at once, or to flee from them. It is a true proverb, he that is not afraid of temptation is not afraid of sin. Seldom does a person who unnecessarily runs into the way of temptation, or who stands to parley with it, escape unhurt. If it was dangerous for Eve, whose nature was perfectly holy, to parley with temptation, most assuredly it must be far more dangerous for such weak and depraved creatures as we are, who have so much within us to second temptations from without. Let us therefore keep out of the way of temptations, resist them at once when presented, and flee from them.

3. Once more, our subject teaches us the deplorable state of fallen man, when left of God to himself. If our first parents, without any propensity or inclination to sin,

in their nature, when left to themselves, fell into sin and ruin; what can we their descendants expect, if God should leave us to ourselves, seeing that naturally we are wholly indisposed to good, and inclined only to evil? Most assuredly we would inevitably go astray, and precipitate ourselves into ruin. This thought should make us afraid of provoking God, to leave us to ourselves, and cause us ever to pray that he would not take his Holy Spirit from us. It also shows the sentiment that the perseverance of christians depends upon their own circumspection and diligence, to be erroneous. And it teaches that christians, ought to depend continually on strength from above to enable them to be circumspect and diligent and faithful unto death. The best of christians, if left to themselves would assuredly fall. Let us therefore ever feel our own weakness, and continually depend on divine grace to enable us to be faithful in the service of God, and to persevere therein unto the end of life.—AMEN.

SERMON XXI.

ADAM A FEDERAL HEAD.

ROMANS V. 12.

“Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

IT is an undeniable fact, that sin and death are in the world. To account for their introduction, the Heathen philosophers formed many theories, inconsistent with the divine perfections, and probably unsatisfactory to themselves. But what human reason could never discover, the Apostle Paul, from his acquaintance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and under the influence of inspiration, has, in our text, taught us, in a few words. He informs us that sin and death entered into the world by one man.

By this “one man” the Apostle undoubtedly means

Adam, the common parent of the human race. The natural posterity of Adam were in some way, so connected with him, that sin and death have come upon them in consequence of his fall.

God, as was shown in a former discourse, entered into a covenant of works with Adam while in a state of innocence. The condition of this covenant was perfect obedience. The reward promised in case of obedience was life; and death was threatened as the punishment of disobedience. In this covenant, Adam acted, not merely as a private person; but as the public head of all his natural posterity. So that his standing or falling would affect not only himself; but all his natural posterity. And since he sinned and fell, while acting in this public character, all his posterity became chargeable with his sin, and fell in him. This doctrine, it is belived, is taught in our text.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove, that in the covenant of works, Adam was constituted by his Creator, a public person, the federal or covenant-head and representative of all his natural posterity. This being established, it will follow of course, that since he sinned and fell, all mankind were involved in his sin, and fell with him, and became liable to death in him.

This doctrine that Adam was the *federal head* of all his natural posterity, we have contained in our Catechism in the answer to the 16th question.

“Did all mankind fall in Adam’s first transgression?”

The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.”

Before proceeding to prove the doctrine deduced from our text, and contained in this answer, I would remark, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as to his human nature, was not included in the posterity, which Adam represented, in the covenant of works. For Christ was born in consequence of a promise made after the fall. Besides, Christ, though he was a real man, did not descend from Adam in the way of ordinary generation; for his human nature was miraculously formed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Having made this remark, I proceed to adduce and consider the proofs, in favour of the doctrine, that Adam in the covenant of works, was constituted the public head

of all his posterity, who were to proceed from him by ordinary generation.

1. This doctrine is argued from the manner, in which God on every occasion spake to our first parents, in the second person *thou* and *ye*; even where it cannot be doubted posterity were included. Thus when God had created our first parents, he “blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” Gen. i. 28. Here no mention was made of posterity; but they evidently were included, as they have been in all ages the subjects of this blessing. Again in the next verse “God said, behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.” Here again, no mention is made of posterity; but the decendants of Adam make use of this grant, and suppose it related to the human race generally, to them as well as to their first parents.

The threatening annexed to the prohibition, concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Gen. ii. 17. In this threatening, it is true, no mention was made of posterity. But after our first parents had fallen, and sentence was pronounced, conformably to the threatening, still no mention was made of posterity, in the sentence, any more than had been in threatening. Nevertheless the event has indubitably proved that posterity were included in the sentence. For the sentence has been executed, upon the whole human race. Let us for a moment look at the sentence in its different parts. “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.” Gen. iii. 16. Has not the posterity of Eve as well as she, experienced the execution of this sentence; “And unto Adam, he said? cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Gen. iii. 17, 19. Did this curse affect only Adam? Or has it not equally affected his posterity? Bread is still obtained by the sweat of the face; and the earth still, without culture, produces thorns and thistles; whereas labour is necessary to obtain from it things fit for the sustenance

of our nature. In the sentence pronounced upon Adam, we also find this doom, "till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. iii. 19. Was this sentence executed only upon Adam? or has not death also passed upon all his posterity? Do not all his descendants, as well as he, return unto the dust? Simply asking these questions must be sufficient to convince all, that they were included in the sentence pronounced upon our first parents after the fall. But it is evident the sentence was pronounced in pursuance of the threatening, and in conformity to it. The threatening was, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Gen. ii. 17. The sentence was, "because thou hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it, cursed, &c." Observation and experience abundantly prove that the posterity of Adam were included in the sentence. And since the sentence was pronounced in pursuance of the threatening, and in exact conformity to it; and the very words of the covenant were recited by God, as an introduction to the sentence, it is evident the posterity of Adam were included in the covenant; and therefore that he acted in that covenant as their public head and representative.

2. The doctrine is also proved by those passages of Scripture, which teach that sin and condemnation and death, have come upon all men, on account of their connexion with Adam. This is taught in our text. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" or according to the marginal reading, "in whom all have sinned." The same is taught also in several of the following verses of the chapter which contains our text. "Through the offence of one many be dead. By one man's offence death reigned by one. By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." The same truth is further taught, 1 Cor. xv. 22. "In Adam all die."

From these texts it is evident that sin and condemnation and death, have in some way passed upon all men on account of their connexion with Adam. This must have taken place, either on account of their natural relation to him, as he was the common father of his posterity.

or on account of a federal relation, as he was the public and covenant-head of his posterity. We can conceive of but these two ways in which we were connected with Adam; and if sin and condemnation and death have come upon us through him, it must be on account of one of these two relations.

The posterity of Adam were certainly connected with him as the common parent of the human race. But it cannot be by means of this relation alone, that the posterity of Adam were involved in his guilt and condemnation. For on this account, sin, and condemnation, and death could no more be said to have come upon us from Adam, than from our immediate parents, or any one, and all of the long line of ancestors which have intervened between Adam and us. But it is evident the texts quoted will not apply to our immediate parents, nor any of our ancestors except Adam. Therefore sin and condemnation and death have not come from Adam upon his posterity only on account of their natural relation to him, as their common parent; and consequently they must have come on account of a federal relation, or he was constituted in the covenant of works their public head and representative. And that this was the fact, further appears from this consideration, that the texts which have been quoted under this particular, speak of but one sin of Adam, evidently the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, in which his posterity were concerned. Thus it is said, "through the *offence*," not offences, "of one many be dead." "The judgment was by *one*," that is offence, "to condemnation." "By one man's *offence*," not offences, "death reigned." "By the *offence*, not offences "of one, judgment, &c." Now, if it was on account of their natural connexion with Adam, that sin and condemnation and death came upon his posterity; This might as well be said of all the sins which Adam committed during his whole life, as of his sin in eating the forbidden fruit. But it is evident from the texts just quoted that sin and condemnation and death have come upon all men from Adam, only on account of his offence in eating the forbidden fruit. Hence it again appears, that the consequences, which are said in the texts quoted in this particular, to have resulted from Adam's conduct to his posterity, have not resulted from their natural, but their fed-

eral relation to him; and consequently he was, in the covenant of works, the public head and representative of his posterity.

3. The same doctrine is proved from the following texts, which teach that Adam was a type of Christ. Rom. v. 14. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the *figure* of him that was to come." 1 Cor. xv. 45. "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." And vers. 47, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." In the first of these texts Adam is called the *figure* of him that was to come, that is of Christ. By which is evidently meant that there was in him some peculiar resemblance of Christ, that is that he was a type of him. In the second text, Christ is called the last Adam; we can conceive of no satisfactory reason why he is so called, but that the first Adam was a type of him. And in the last text quoted, Adam is called the first man, and Christ the second man, as though there had been no other men between them. This evidently teaches that they were peculiar men; that there were no other men like them; that Adam resembled Christ in something in which no other man resembled him; and that therefore he was a type of him. Adam therefore was a type of Christ.

Now to be a type, it is necessary there should be some peculiar circumstances, in which the person resembles the antitype, and by which he may be distinguished from all other persons, who are not types. As a man consisting of soul and body, Adam was no more a type of Christ, than any other man. The meaning of these passages must be, that as Adam was, in the covenant of works, a public person, the head of his natural posterity; so also Christ was in the covenant of grace, a public person, the head of believers, his spiritual seed. In no other respect, as far as we know, did Adam so peculiarly resemble Christ as to be a type of him. And that it was in this particular, that Adam was a figure or type of Christ, appears from the latter part of the chapter which contains our text, where the Apostle runs the parallel between Adam and Christ, and shows that as from the former came sin, condemnation and death upon his posterity; so from the latter flow righteousness, and justification,

and life to all who believe in him. Let us for a few moments attend to the parallel as drawn in the latter part of the chapter which contains our text. "If through the offence of one," viz. Adam, "many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. If by one man's," viz. Adam's "offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one," viz. Adam "judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one," that is Christ, "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's" viz. Adam's, "disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one," viz. Christ "shall many be made righteous." In these verses we see how Adam resembled Christ, and was a figure or type of him. Sin and condemnation and death flowed from Adam to his posterity; righteousness and justification and life from Christ to his spiritual seed. But sin and righteousness, condemnation and justification, and death and life, are directly opposed to each other; and therefore the resemblance did not consist in the things themselves; but in the manner of conveying them. One was the head or fountain of sin and condemnation and death; and the other the head or fountain of righteousness and justification and life. They were both public persons, the one representing his natural posterity, and the other his spiritual seed.

From the preceding arguments, the conclusion is now drawn, that in the covenant of works, Adam acted not only for himself; but also as a public person, the head and representative of all his posterity, who were to proceed from him by ordinary generation. And since he fell while acting in this capacity, his posterity fell in him, and were involved in his guilt and ruin.

To this doctrine, it has been objected, that it is inconsistent with the justice of God to suppose, that he appointed Adam the public head of his posterity, and entered into such a covenant with him, as rested upon his personal conduct, the happiness and misery of millions of unborn creatures. This objection, it will be proper here to endeavour to obviate.

The Scriptures do unequivocally teach, that, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinner's;" that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;" and that "in Adam all die." And the instructions of Scripture on this subject are confirmed by facts. We do see that the posterity of Adam are involved in the sentence which was pronounced upon him for his sin. In consequence of his sin, they are born into the world with a corrupt nature; and even infants, who have committed no actual transgression, suffer and die. Since then this is the fact, that the posterity of Adam have suffered from their connexion with him; and that God did make such a constitution, as involved them in the consequences of his fall, it becomes us to acquiesce in his sovereign disposal, believing that "the Judge of all the earth will do right," even if we cannot give any satisfactory reason for his ways.

But the divine procedure, in this respect may be satisfactorily explained. It may be shown that the appointment of Adam as a public head in the covenant of works, was, in itself considered, an instance of goodness, and therefore not inconsistent with justice. If, considering things in themselves, independent of events, such a constitution was most likely to subserve the interests of mankind, then it was an act of goodness, and consequently of justice, in God, to make such a constitution. But a little attention may convince us, that such a constitution, considered apart from the event, was most likely to subserve the interests of mankind.

Adam undoubtedly, was under obligation as a creature to render obedience to the whole law of God; and this obligation was unceasingly and perpetually binding. So that if he had failed, in the least degree, to render perfect and perpetual obedience to the whole law of God, he would have sinned, and have justly deserved punishment. Nor would the most perfect obedience have ever entitled him on the ground of the law, to any thing more than an exemption from punishment, or misery; and his posterity might justly have been, individually placed under the same constitution.

The goodness of God towards our first parents, in making a covenant with them is therefore manifest. For in this covenant he promised them life; by which we have

every reason to believe, were meant blessings far beyond what they then enjoyed; even confirmation in holiness and eternal and celestial blessedness; and this promise we have reason to believe was made on condition of obedience for a limited time. The covenant contained a promise of such blessings, which the law did not; and the violation of the covenant exposed only to the same punishment as the violation of the law. It was therefore an act of great goodness, and consequently of justice, in God, that he entered into covenant with man.

This being admitted, it may be asked, why was not the covenant made with each one of the human race separately? Why did not God appoint that each one as he came into being, should stand for himself in his own person? I answer, the goodness of God was manifested in making Adam our representative. For he was much more likely to stand than any of his posterity. When he was first created his reason was in full maturity. Whereas if the appointment had been, that each one of his posterity should stand for himself, the descendants of Adam coming into the world, according to the established laws of generation, in a state of infancy and weakness, would, when they first became capable of moral action, be weak and much more liable to yield to temptation than Adam was. Besides, temptations to sin must have become much more numerous as mankind increased; and therefore, on this account also, Adam was much more likely to stand than any of his posterity. And to these considerations may be added, that Adam as a public head, had much stronger motives to obedience than any of his posterity could have had, from the consideration, if he was acquainted with it, that on his conduct, depended, not only his own happiness, or misery, but also the happiness or misery of his posterity. But the goodness of God in making Adam the representative of his posterity, will further appear, if we attend to the promises and condition of the covenant of works. Confirmation in holiness, and eternal and heavenly blessedness, were promised to the whole human race, on condition that Adam would for a limited time observe one easy precept, viz. to abstain from the fruit of a single tree. For although he was under the law of nature, and was bound to obey all the precepts of this law, and would have sinned and fell if he had transgressed any of them: yet.

we have reason to believe, God would have extended his restraining grace to prevent him, from breaking any of the precepts of this law. If therefore he had, for the time appointed, kept this one easy precept, he would have been rewarded with the promised blessings; and the same blessings would have been extended to his posterity; and both he and they would have been confirmed in holiness and happiness, beyond the possibility of falling, and the reach of evil.

If Adam considered his natural obligations to his Creator, he must have viewed this constitution as an unmerited favour; and in case he had stood, his posterity would doubtless have viewed it in the same light; and would forever have extolled the goodness of God in making such a covenant, and appointing Adam their public head. And since he has fallen, this alters not the case as to the goodness or justice of God in making him our representative.

Instead therefore of replying against God, let us acquiesce in his ways as righteous, and adore him for the goodness manifested in them; and since a constitution good in itself, has through the fault of our representative issued in our ruin; instead of standing to quarrel with God about the plan, let us rather be employed in endeavouring to escape from the ruin. The unquestionable fact is sin and death are in the world; and we are fallen and sinful creatures; and sentence of death has passed upon us.

If we act wisely therefore, our great anxiety will be to escape from this sad state in which we are. It has pleased God in infinite mercy, to make another covenant, even the covenant of grace, on the same plan of representation. In this there is an infallible public head, Jesus Christ. He has perfectly fulfilled and satisfied the law, broken by Adam; and through him pardon and eternal life are offered to all who will believe in his name. Let us accept the offered salvation; and then though we have died in Adam. we will be made alive in Christ.—

AMEN.

SERMON XXII.

SIN.

1 JOHN iii. 4.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.”

ADAM, when acting as a public person, the head and representative of his natural posterity in the covenant of works, transgressed the commandment of God and fell. By this act, he brought himself and his posterity into an estate of sin and misery.

These sad consequences of the fall, we have stated in our Catechism in the answer to the 17th question.

“Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?”

The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

The consequences of the fall are divided into two great branches; *sin* and *misery*.

Sin first claims our attention.

The object of this discourse is, to explain the nature of sin, or to show what it is.

In our text sin is defined to be “the transgression of the law.” The original word here translated “transgression,” is “*anomia*,” which literally signifies, *being without law*. The word “transgression” therefore according to its strict meaning, comes short of fully expressing the sense of the original Greek word. This signifies every departure from the law, and all want of conformity to it in every respect. Sin, according to the force of the original in our text, and agreeably to the general instructions of Scripture is, excellently defined in our Catechism, in the answer to the 14th question.

“What is sin?”

Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God.”

An illustration of this answer will explain the nature of sin.

As sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God, to have a just knowledge of sin, we must know what the law is, and what it requires. Agreeably to this remark, the Apostle tells us. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. "I had not known sin, but by the law." Rom. vii. 7. "Where no law is, there is no transgression." Rom. iv. 15. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." Rom. v. 13.

By the law of God is meant his will declared to his creatures. When man was first created, the divine law was written or impressed upon his heart; that is, his reason, his conscience, and his feelings, in view of the relations which he bore to his Creator, and to all the creatures with which he was acquainted, taught him what was right and what was wrong. And although by the fall, this original impression of the law upon the heart of man became greatly defaced, yet it was not entirely erased. Reason and conscience still teach us something of what is right and wrong. To this purpose the Apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 14, 15. "When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." But although we may know something of the law of God from the light of nature; yet, by the fall, the mind has become so blinded, that but little, and this obscurely, can be known from this source. And especially the whole will of God, respecting that worship and service from a sinner, which will be acceptable to him, cannot be discovered by the light of nature. Hence we see the importance of an explicit revelation from God to teach men his law, and their duty.

In the Scriptures which are a revelation from God, we have his law clearly made known unto us. Whatever he has here, either directly or by consequence, made known to us, as our duty, makes a part of his law.

The commandments of God contained in the Scriptures, may be divided into moral and positive. The moral laws are those which are founded in the reason and fitness of things, and which it would be our duty to obey, even though they had never been explicitly commanded.

Of this nature are the ten commandments, except perhaps a part of the fourth. The moral laws are unchangeable, and perpetually binding. The positive laws are those, for which we can discover no reason, in the nature and fitness of things; but which depend, solely, as far as we can see, on the will of the divine Lawgiver. Of this nature were, the commandment given to our first parents, to abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the precepts generally of the ceremonial law, and the institution of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The positive laws may be abrogated; and are binding until, and only until, they are repealed by the Lawgiver. Some of these positive laws have been done away, and are not binding on us. This is the case particularly with the whole of the ceremonial law.

In short, by the law, of which sin is a transgression, or a want of conformity unto, we are to understand the whole will of God, made known unto us, as the rule of our duty, in whatever way it may be made known, whether by the light of nature or by the Scriptures; and of whatever nature the precepts may be, whether moral or positive. The law of God, of which sin is a want of conformity unto, or transgression, is spiritual. As we read, Rom. vii. 14. "The law is spiritual." And in the summary of the law given by our Saviour, he teaches, that it has respect to the soul as well as the body. Mat. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Hence it appears that the commandments of God, reach to the thoughts, volitions, desires, and every other exercise of the soul, as well as to the external actions; and also to the state or habit of the soul, requiring that the natural propensities and inclinations should be right.

Does the law of God forbid profaneness, murder, theft and lying? It forbids these things, in thought, desire, and will, as well as in external act. Profane thoughts; murderous, dishonest, or deceitful desires and designs; and all exercises of the mind, which if they were to break out into external act would be against the will of God, are forbidden, as well as the external acts themselves. And does God require that we should pray unto him, that we should worship and serve him, and that we should do good to our fellow men? He requires that we should

pour out our hearts before him, that we should worship him in spirit and truth, and that the motives of good conduct should be good, doing all that we do to his glory.

Having thus shown what the law is, the way is now prepared to have a clear understanding of what sin is. "Sin is the transgression of the law." Or according to the definition of our Catechism, which, as has been observed, more fully expresses the force of the original in the text; "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God."

Hence, agreeably to the view which has been taken of the law of God, acting contrary or not according to, the plain dictates of the light of nature, is sin; violating any of the moral precepts of the word of God, or not perfectly fulfilling them is sin; neglecting any of the positive precepts of the Scriptures which are still in force, is sin; in short, doing anything which God forbids, or leaving undone anything which he requires, is sin. And further, all thoughts, desires, volitions, affections, motives, propensities, inclinations, and all other exercises of the soul, which if they were acted out would be contrary to the law of God, or not perfectly conformed to it, are sins.

Sin in general, may be divided into *original* and *actual*.

By *original* sin is meant, the want of original righteousness, or of a disposition to do that which is right according to the law of God; and the corruption of the whole nature, or the natural bias to do only that which is evil, or contrary to the law of God. This want of original righteousness, and corruption of the whole nature are sinful; because where they are found, there is a want of conformity to the law of God. For the law, as we have seen, relates to the state or habit of the soul, and its principles of action, as well as to the actions themselves. This kind of sin is called original, because we have it from our birth or original; and because it is the origin or fountain, whence all actual transgressions proceed. I will not, in this place, dwell longer on original sin, as a separate discourse will be devoted to this subject.

By *actual* sin is meant, that which is committed by persons, who are capable of knowing, and of doing or neglecting, that which is right or wrong. Actual sins may be subdivided into sins of *omission*, and sins of *commission*.

By sins of *omission* is meant, not doing what is required. This is a want of conformity unto the law. By sins of *commission* is meant, doing what is forbidden. This is a transgression of the law. Neglect of prayer, of the public worship of God's house, of the Lord's supper, and of the poor in distress, and the like, are sins of omission. Profaning the name of God, breaking the Sabbath, disobeying parents, defrauding or in any way injuring our neighbour, and the like, are sins of commission.

Actual sin may be subdivided again into sins of the *heart*, of the *lips*, and of the *life*; or sins of thought, word, and deed. A thought, or desire, or volition, or affection, which is not conformed to the law of God, or which is contrary to it, is sin. Not having good thoughts, and not habitually desiring, choosing, and loving that which is holy, are heart-sins of omission. Having and cherishing evil thoughts; and desiring, choosing, and loving that which is evil; though we never possess, or do, that which we desire, choose and love, are heart-sins of commission. Neglecting to speak the praises, or to the honour of God, or in defence of the injured character of our neighbour, or in behalf of his rights when they are invaded, is a sin of omission with regard to our lips or our words. Speaking to the dishonour of God, profaning or blaspheming his name, lying, slandering; and such like, are sins of commission with our lips. And the neglect of any duty which ought to be performed externally is a sin of omission in deed. And the external performance, whether openly or secretly, of anything which God forbids is a sin of commission in deed.

This subject in its application is calculated to convince us of sin and ought to have this effect. Let us attentively consider what the law of God requires. His law is exceeding broad. Take a view of its numerous precepts. Consider that all these relate to the heart as well as to the outward practice; that perfect obedience in heart and life is required to all of them; and that every transgression in the least degree, and every failure perfectly to fulfil these precepts, are sins. And then look into your hearts and your practice. Review your past lives, and compare yourselves with the holy law of God, and what is the result? Must we not all acknowledge that we are sinners? that we are naturally destitute of principles of

conformity to the law of God, and have principles opposed to it? We are therefore all sinful by nature. And have we not added to original sin innumerable actual transgressions? Go into detail, and review your lives, and compare them with God's holy law. Have not some of you often taken the name of God in vain? Every oath you have sworn in conversation, every curse you have imprecated upon yourselves or your fellow creatures, and every irreverent and light use of any of the names of God are sins. And with what innumerable sins of this kind are some of you chargeable! Have not some of you profaned the Sabbath, by doing the things which God has forbidden on this day? Have not some of you, at times disobeyed your parents? Have not some of you defrauded your neighbour? and do you not now possess something, which according to right is not yours but his? Have not some of you, in some instances departed from the truth? and have not some of you been guilty of slander and detraction? These are some of the sins of commission. What does conscience say in answer to these questions? Does it not charge many with having committed some of these sins a great many times? And is there one of us who can say he is innocent of all these things? But we have seen, it is not only doing what God has forbidden that is sin; but also not doing what he has required. It is our duty to speak his praises, and to his glory. How many times, when we have had opportunities, have we neglected so to do? He has made it our duty, not only to abstain from sinful pursuits and worldly avocations on the Sabbath day; but to spend the time in publicly and privately worshipping him. How often has this been neglected, and the day been spent in idleness and sloth? He has made it our duty to pray unto him daily, both in our families and in secret. Have not some often omitted the performance of these duties? yea, have not some neglected them all their lives? He has commanded us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. How many opportunities to engage in the public worship of God, have some of you enjoyed and neglected? He has made it our duty to commemorate the dying love of Christ. How often have some of you had opportunities to do this and have neglected it? On comparing our lives with the law of God, we must all acknowledge, that in many things

we have offended, both by sins of omission and sins of commission.

But we have seen that the law of God has respect to the heart as well as to the outward conduct. And how often have we committed sins of heart? How many evil thoughts have we harboured? How many unholy desires have risen in our minds? How many wrong intentions have we formed? How often have we coveted forbidden objects? All these are sins. And further not only are these exercises of the soul which are directly opposed to the law, sins; but also all coming short of a perfect conformity of heart to the law. For the law requires that we should have good thoughts, desires, volitions, and affections. It requires that we should worship God in spirit, and in truth. We therefore sin in our very worship if our hearts are not engaged. The law requires that we should love the Lord, with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. If therefore we give God a divided heart, if we do not love and serve him with the whole heart, we come short of what the law requires, and therefore sin. The law requires a perfect heart. Therefore we sin continually. For we continually come short of the perfection which the law demands. Our sins, my hearers, are exceedingly numerous. Sins of omission and commission, and of thought, word and deed, swell the black catalogue, to a very great account.

And is it a matter of little or no consequence that we have sinned? Sin is exceedingly hateful in the sight of God. It is directly opposed to his perfections, and is rebellion against his government. He has in his word, repeatedly declared his utter abhorrence of it. He has shown its evil nature, by the sacrifice he required to make atonement for it, and open a way for its pardon. He has also shown his hatred of sin and its evil nature, by the miseries he has inflicted upon the world in consequence of it. For the Scriptures clearly teach, that all the suffering in the world is to be traced to sin as its cause. And in addition to all this, God has threatened every sinner with eternal misery. The wages of sin is death. Death is the penalty which the law of God denounces against every transgression. This death includes misery after this life, or eternal torment. Hence we may see the danger we are in as sinners. One sin of omission as well as of commis-

sion, and even of heart as well as word and deed, exposes to the penalty of the divine law. For it is written, Gal. iii. 10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." One failure therefore, perfectly to fulfil what the law requires, exposes to its curse of death, and death eternal. If then the guilt of one sin, even the least, be so great, what must be the guilt of all the sins we have committed in the course of our lives? and is not our situation very dangerous? and have we not reason to be greatly alarmed and exceedingly anxious? and ought we not with deep concern to inquire, what shall we do to be saved? whither shall we flee from the wrath that is to come? Are these inquiries made with interest by any present? Permit me before I close, to say a few words in answer to these most important questions. The law of God must be maintained. If therefore the sinner is saved, an adequate atonement must be made for sin. Such an atonement, even for but one and the least sin we cannot make. But atonement has been made. The Son of God took upon him our nature, was made under the law, perfectly obeyed its precepts, and suffered its penalty by laying down his life an offering for sin. In the obedience and death of Christ, a door of hope is set open before us; salvation is provided and offered, and we may be saved through Christ. But to be interested in his salvation, we must believe in him, receiving and resting and relying upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel. To him we are invited. Let us, convinced of sin, and of the misery to which we are thereby exposed, listen to the offers of mercy; and without delay, renouncing every other hope, flee to Christ by faith, that we may receive the forgiveness of our sins, and a title to everlasting life.—AMEN.

SERMON XXIII.

ORIGINAL SIN.

PSALM li. 5.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

THIS Psalm is a penitential prayer. It was composed and offered up by David, when he was brought to a sense of his sins in his conduct towards Bathsheba and Uriah. Having made confession of actual transgressions, he was led in our text to acknowledge and mourn over the original corruption, from which his actual transgressions proceeded.

What David here said of himself may be adopted by every descendant of Adam. “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

Original sin is the doctrine taught in this text.

To explain and prove this doctrine is the object of the ensuing discourse.

This doctrine is contained in our Catechism in the answer to the 18th question.

“Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?”

The sinfulness of that estate, whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.”

Original sin is so called, because we have it from our birth, or original; and because it is the origin of all actual transgressions, or the fountain whence they flow.

With this kind of sin, all the posterity of Adam, which proceed from him by ordinary generation, are born into the world. And here it will be proper to remark, that when the universality of original sin, over the posterity of Adam is asserted, the human nature of Christ is excepted. For the Scriptures assert, He “knew no sin.”

2 Cor. v. 21. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. vii. 26. He was "without sin." Heb. iv. 15. For although he was a descendant of Adam as to his human nature, yet he was born in consequence of a promise made after the fall; and therefore was not included with those whom Adam represented in the covenant of works, and consequently had not his sin imputed to him. Besides, he was not born in the way of ordinary generation; for his human nature was formed by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, and by the same power was preserved from original corruption.

Original sin, according to the answer which has been quoted from our Catechism, consists of three parts; viz. the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature.

I. *The guilt of Adam's first sin.* By guilt is meant an obligation to suffer the punishment due to sin. Adam's first sin, in eating the forbidden fruit is set to the account of his posterity; and hence they have become guilty by imputation. The guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to his posterity, in like manner as Christ was made sin for us, by having our sins set to his account; and as believers are made the righteousness of God in him, by having his righteousness set to their account.

The imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity follows as a natural consequence of their relation to him in the covenant of works. In a former discourse, it was shown, that God entered into covenant with Adam. And in another discourse, it was shown, that in this covenant, Adam was constituted the public head and representative of all his natural posterity. From these premises the conclusion follows, that since he sinned and fell while acting in this public character, those whom he represented, of course fell in him, and had the guilt of his sin charged to them, or were brought under obligations to suffer the punishment due to that sin, which he committed, while acting as their representative.

This doctrine is also proved by the 5th chapter of Romans, where the Apostle teaches that sin, condemnation and death have come upon all the posterity of Adam, in consequence of his one offence, doubtless in eating the forbidden fruit; and where he runs the parallel between Adam and Christ as public heads, and shows that as all

whom Adam represented were involved in his sin and punishment, so all in Christ are made partakers of his righteousness, and the eternal life which he purchased by his obedience unto death.

A further proof of the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, we have 1 Cor. xv. 22. "In Adam all die." As death is the wages of sin, it is the natural conclusion, if we died in Adam, we sinned in him, or were chargeable with his sin, as he was our representative.

Again, the disposition with which mankind are born into the world affords a conclusive argument in favour of this doctrine. As will be shown presently, the posterity of Adam, are born destitute of original righteousness, and corrupted in their whole nature. This is certainly an evil, and a punishment; for hereby mankind have a natural aversion to those courses, in which alone true happiness is to be found; and a natural inclination to such ways as necessarily lead to misery. They come into the world with such natures as render them totally unfit for the service and enjoyment of God, and which, unless the special grace of God interpose, will lead them to ruin. Now this depraved nature is evidently entailed upon the posterity of Adam from him, and in consequence of his fall. Therefore, as this corrupt nature is a punishment, the posterity of Adam are evidently punished for his sin, and consequently are involved in his guilt.

We proceed to consider the

II. Branch of original sin; viz. *the want of original righteousness*. By original righteousness is meant a disposition to do that which is right, according to the law of God. This disposition our first parents possessed before their fall. They were wholly disposed to do that which was right in the sight of God. By the fall, they lost this disposition; and their posterity are born into the world, in the same state, destitute of original righteousness. This want of original righteousness is generally called the *privative* part of original sin, as being merely a privation, or absence of a right principle of action, without containing in it any positive tendency to sin. The

III. Part of original sin is *the corruption of the whole nature*. This is called the *positive* part. This corruption of nature consists in the depravity, which is in every part

of fallen man, whereby he is rendered backward to good, and prone to evil continually. This corruption is universal, affecting the whole man, the soul with all its faculties, and the body with all its members; and it is total, no remains of that which is really holy being left.

The want of original righteousness and the corruption of the whole nature may both be proved by several arguments.

1. The universal existence of actual sin, in those capable of committing it, proves that mankind are naturally destitute of righteousness, and depraved. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John iii. 4. The law of God is contained in his word. The omission of anything which he has there required, or the commission of anything which he has there forbidden is sin; and the law of God is spiritual, and extends to the thoughts, desires, volitions, motives, and affections of the soul, as well as to the external actions.

Let us then compare the conduct of men in all ages, as far as we are acquainted with it, with the law of God; let us compare the conduct of the present generation, as far as we know it, with this law; and we must acknowledge the universality of actual sin, in all capable of committing it. And with the testimony of history and observation agrees that of experience. Every one, who has any correct knowledge of God's law, must, without hesitation, acknowledge that he is a sinner. And if we understand and admit the extent and spirituality of God's law, we must acknowledge that we sin daily, and hourly, and continually. Even the christian, who has been renewed by the grace of God, has to acknowledge, that in many things he offends, and in all things comes short of perfectly fulfilling what the law requires.

But if there should be any doubt as to the universality of actual sin, in those capable of committing it, the testimony of the word of God must remove this doubt, from every mind, which admits the truth of the Scriptures. The whole of the Scriptures is addressed to mankind as sinners. All are exhorted to turn, repent, believe in Christ, and depend on him for the pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, which prove that all are sinners. And many texts expressly assert this truth. Such are the following.

“There is no man that sinneth not.” 1 Kings viii. 46. “Man drinketh iniquity like water.” Job xv. 16. “If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” Ps. cxxx. 3. “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.” Eccl. vii. 20. “Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin.” “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Rom. iii. 9, 23. “In many things we offend all.” Jam. iii. 2. “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” 1 John i. 10. These passages indubitably prove, that all have committed actual sin, who have come to years capable of committing it. And facts prove that persons begin to sin as soon as they are capable of doing it.

Since then history, observation, experience, and the explicit declarations of the word of God, all prove, that all mankind, arrived at years capable of moral action, have been and are sinners by practice; and since sin discovers itself in the first dawns of the exercise of reason; there must be some uniform and fixed cause of this uniform and universal effect.

What then is the cause of this uniform and universal effect? What is the reason, that invariably, all mankind do commit actual sin, as soon as they become capable of it? Will the influence of example afford a solution of this question? If from example alone, we become sinners, we might naturally suppose that, from the same cause, some would become righteous. Let us then look into the families of those who are exemplarily pious; who take all possible care of their children; who keep them from vicious company, and out of the sight of vicious examples; who labour to instil into their minds pious sentiments; and who set before them a pious example; and what is the character of their children? What is the result of all this care of them? Does it prevent actual sin? They may not be guilty of such grossly wicked actions as other children; but still they manifest a forgetfulness of God, and of their duty to him, and a propensity to sin, as soon as they become capable of moral action. Pious parents will doubtless, with grief, bear witness to the truth of this remark.

And here, lest some should hence infer, that a pious education is of little or no importance, I would remark,

that example doubtless has a great influence in forming the manners of the young. Good example has a tendency to restrain, in a measure, the exercise of the corrupt principles within, and to produce external morality; and oftentimes it is blessed as a means of grace. And vicious example has a tendency to make persons more wicked than they otherwise would be. But the facts which have been stated prove that the influence of example, cannot be a sufficient reason to account for the universal prevalence of sin. Besides, we sometimes see youth very vicious, when their parents have taken great pains, both by precept and example, to prevent it. And it is an indisputable fact that children, much more readily, follow wicked than good counsels and examples.

Hence it appears that rationally to account for the universal prevalence of sin, we must find some other cause than the influence of example or education. And what sufficient cause can be assigned, but that there is a natural principle of corruption within? "Suppose (says one) a certain kind of tree planted in all countries, soils, and climates, for many ages; and in some places had been cultivated with the utmost care and attention, and yet it invariably produced bad fruit, would not all unanimously declare, that the tree was evil and bad in its very nature?" This remark forcibly applies to our subject. Since all mankind, in all ages, countries, and situations, and even when educated with the utmost care, do invariably run into the commission of sin, reason and common sense teach us that we must account for this effect, from a tendency to sin in the very nature; and that the nature is destitute of right principles, and positively corrupt.

2. The same doctrine is proved from several texts of Scripture, directly to the point. It is taught in our text, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is also explicitly taught in the following texts. Job xiv. 4. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job xv. 14. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Job xxv. 4. "How can he be clean that is born of a woman." Ps. lviii. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." John iii. 6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." By flesh here

is evidently meant carnal or corrupt, as appears from flesh being put in opposition to spirit, or the new nature produced by the operations of the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Rom. vii. 18. "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. viii. 7, 8. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And Eph. ii. 3. "and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." The foregoing texts clearly teach the total want of original righteousness, and an original and total corruption of nature.

3. The Scriptures further establish the same doctrine by all those passages which teach the necessity of regeneration in order to the admission of any of our race into the kingdom of heaven, and which ascribe every thing in man, really spiritual or holy, to the renewing grace of God. If, as the Scriptures frequently teach, no one of our race has anything spiritual or holy, or can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, until he is renewed by the Holy Spirit; then all must be without original righteousness, and are totally depraved.

4. The original corruption of human nature is further proved, by all those passages of Scripture, which support infant baptism. For the water in baptism evidently implies moral pollution and guilt, and the necessity of pardon and cleansing. Since then the water of baptism is applied to infants, it clearly teaches that they are polluted and guilty, and have need of the blood and Spirit of Christ to justify, renew, and sanctify them. This argument the celebrated Augustine, of the fifth century, used with much success against Pelagius who denied the doctrine of original sin. "Infants (said he) are by all christians acknowledged to stand in need of baptism, which must be in them for original sin, since they have no other."

5. I mention one other argument to prove the doctrine of original sin, and that is the sufferings and death of infants. It is an indisputable and mournful fact, that infants

do suffer and die. We see them sicken, languish under disease, and die. Now it is abundantly evident from the word of God, that sin is the cause of suffering and death. We know that sentence of death was pronounced after the fall, in consequence of sin; and as a punishment for sin. And the Apostle tells us Rom. v. 12. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And again, Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." Since then sin is the cause of death, and infants die, they must have some sin, but they are not capable of actual transgression, they must therefore have original sin.

From the preceding arguments, the doctrine is considered as established, that all mankind are born into the world, with original sin.

This subject presents to us a picture of human nature, which ought to humble us. We are by nature destitute of holy principles, and are defiled in every part. "We are all as an unclean thing." Is. lxiv. 6. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." Is. i. 5, 6. This depravity ought to humble us, and fill us with self-abasement before God; and we ought to mourn over it, and repent of it, as David did in our text, when he said, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," and when under a sense of this depravity, he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Ps. li. 10. If we ever exercise true repentance for sin, it will extend to this original fountain of corruption, as well as to the streams of actual transgressions, which have flowed from it.

Again, This subject teaches the absolute necessity of regeneration, or a change of the natural disposition, if we would be saved. The streams cannot be different from the fountain. If the heart be destitute of righteousness, and depraved; if the principles of action be totally corrupt, the actions themselves must be unholy, until the principles are changed. And therefore we will not render a holy obedience to God's commandments, or such an obedience as will be acceptable to him, until our hearts are changed, or we are regenerated. "They that are in

the flesh cannot please God." If we are totally corrupt, we are in a state in which a holy God cannot, consistently with his nature, take delight in us. We must appear odious in his sight, until our hearts are renewed in his image. Further, if we are naturally corrupt, we are, in our natural state, totally disqualified to relish holy enjoyments, and therefore wholly unfit to participate in the holy joys of heaven; and the nature and fitness of things forbid our admission into that holy place, until our hearts are renewed. Hence this subject of original sin, teaches us the absolute necessity of regeneration, or a change of the temper of the heart, from sinful to holy. Agreeably to this inference, our Saviour has expressly declared, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." John iii. 3, 5, 7.

It is vain to endeavour to produce good fruit from the corrupt tree. Let it be pruned and cultivated with ever so much care, the result will be the fruit may present a fairer exterior; but it will still be evil fruit. It is vain to build a religion on the foundation of nature. A new foundation must be laid. The reformation of the flesh, or our carnal principles, will not do. The flesh must be mortified, the body of sin must be cut off, the old man must be crucified; and new principles must be implanted. Let us not then rest satisfied with having reformed some wicked habits, which may be done from selfish and unholy principles, but let us rest satisfied with nothing short of evidence, that a thorough change has been wrought in the temper of our hearts, by the renewing operations of the Holy Spirit.—AMEN.

SERMON XXIV.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

ROMANS VI. 23. FIRST CLAUSE.

“For the wages of sin is death.”

WE have attended to the introduction of sin into our world; and explained its nature, in its several kinds. We come now to consider its penal consequences or punishment. These consequences are all summed up in our text, in one word, viz. *death*.

The penal consequences of sin are stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 19th question.

“What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell? All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”

In this answer we have enumerated the miseries included in that death, which is the wages of sin.

That something more than the dissolution of the union between soul and body is meant, by death in our text, is evident from the context, where death is placed in opposition to everlasting life; and the former is said to be the end of sin, and the latter the end of a life of holiness. But if merely natural death was meant here; death would be the end of a life of holiness, as well as of a life of sin, which is contrary to the Apostle's reasoning. The misery of the wicked after death, must be especially meant. But all the miseries which are the consequences of sin, are included; all the wages which sin pays its servants, or every thing which, both in this world, and the next, comes upon the human race as the punishment of sin, is here expressed by death.

All the miseries which we endure, or to which we are exposed, both in this world and the next, are the consequences of sin. This may be proved by several arguments. When the world was first made, there was no misery in

it. "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." Gen. i. 31. And this, we know continued to be the case, until sin entered into the world, by the fall of our first parents. Immediately upon this, a flood of miseries broke in upon the world and overspread it. Further that sin is the cause of the miseries which the human race endure, appears both from the threatening denounced against sin before the fall, and the sentence which was pronounced, when our first parents had sinned. The threatening was, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Gen. ii. 17. And when our first parents had eaten the forbidden fruit, and thereby sinned, sentence dooming them to punishment, because they had sinned, was pronounced upon them, and through them upon the human race, which they represented. In this sentence, the ground was cursed, and mankind were doomed in sorrow to eat of its fruits, and finally after a life of sorrow to return unto the dust, whence they were taken. And that the spiritual miseries of the present life, and the miseries of those who perish, in a future world, are the consequents and punishments of sin, is taught by texts of Scripture too numerous to quote. In addition to the above considerations, it may be observed, several passages are expressly and directly to the point. This is the case with our text, "the wages of sin is death." As also Rom. v. 12. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," and Rom. v. 21. "Sin hath reigned unto death."

The preceding considerations indubitably prove, that sin is the cause of misery.

The wages of sin, or the miseries which are the consequences of sin, may be arranged under the following heads; the miseries of this life, natural death, spiritual death, and eternal death.

1. *The miseries of this life* are the consequences of sin. National calamities, such as war, famine, pestilence, storms, earthquakes, and the like; individual calamities, such as the losses, crosses, and disappointments which we suffer in our pursuits, possessions and friends; the reproach, defamation and disgrace with which our character is often assailed; the pains and diseases of various kinds, which are laid upon our bodies; the inward anxie-

ties and fears of mind; and the remorse and horror of conscience, which we are sometimes called to experience; all these, and all other miseries of the present life, are the wages of sin.

2. *Natural death* is a consequent of sin. By natural death is meant, the dissolution of the union between soul and body. On account of sin, we are doomed to return unto the dust, whence we were taken. This doom was pronounced upon the human race, as soon as our great progenitor and representative had sinned. And we are told, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12.

3. Another of the miseries brought upon us by sin is *spiritual death*. By this is meant, the loss of the image of God, and of communion with him. This is the death meant, Eph. ii. 1. "Dead in trespasses and sins." The image of God consists in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Of this image fallen man is destitute, until renewed by divine grace. And being destitute of the divine image, he is unfit for communion with God.

Communion with their Creator was the highest source of felicity, to our first parents, in Eden. Transient and interrupted as it now is, it is the chief happiness of the saints on earth; and it will hereafter constitute their highest felicity in heaven. This communion has been lost by sin. The sinner in his natural state is a total stranger to it. And with the loss of communion with God, he has lost his favour. God is angry with him every day. And though he grants him many mercies as under a dispensation of grace, still he is angry with him; and the very mercies with which he favours him, will eventually prove curses, unless he obtains the pardon of his sins, in the way, which God in infinite mercy has opened.

4. The last and most dreadful penal consequence of sin is *eternal death*. This is that misery after this life, with which the word of God threatens the sinner. It briefly consists, according to the Scriptures, in banishment from God, from heaven, and from all happiness, into positive misery, in hell. This place of future torment is represented in the word of God, as a prison, a bottomless pit, and a lake which burneth with fire and brim-

stone. There the lost sinner shall be associated with the devil and his angels. There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. There the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. There is the blackness of darkness. There is no rest day or night; and there must be drunk the wine of the wrath of Almighty God, poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. Such are the representations, which the word of God gives, of the consequences of sin in a future state. Misery unmingled, and without any intermission, and inconceivably dreadful in degree, awaits the lost sinner as the wages of sin after this life. And what inconceivably heightens this misery is, it will be strictly without end.

The *eternal duration* of the future torments of the wicked, has been denied by many, professing to believe in the Scriptures as the word of God, and to take them as the rule of their faith. And we have reason to fear, that many are encouraging themselves to go on in sin, and neglect offered salvation, through a belief, or at least a hope, that if they should after death go to a place of torment, they will at length be delivered from it, and be finally happy. And there is great danger that they may continue under this delusion, until they lift up their eyes in hell, and find, with the rich man, that there is an impassable gulf fixed between them and the place of happiness. It is therefore important, carefully, to examine this subject. The question is, is that death which is the wages of sin, strictly eternal? Or in other words, will the future misery of the wicked in hell, be strictly without end? This question I would answer in the affirmative.

Some arguments have been drawn from reason in support of this doctrine, but I shall wave these, and confine your attention to the declarations of the word of God.

There are several texts of Scripture, in which it is expressly asserted that the future misery of the wicked will be *everlasting* and *forever*; as in the following, Dan. xii. 2. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Mat. xviii. 8. "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." Mat. xxv. 41, 46. "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire. These shall go away into everlasting punish-

ment: but the righteous into life eternal." 2 Thes. i. 9. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction." 2 Pet. ii. 17. "To whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever." Jud. 13. "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Rev. xiv. 11. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." In these texts, the strongest words, which the original languages afford, to express duration without end, even the very same that are used to set forth the duration of the happiness of the righteous, and the duration of the existence of God himself, are used to express the duration of the future misery of the wicked.

To evade the force of these texts, some have said that the words *everlasting* and *forever*, in the texts quoted, do not express an absolute eternity; and the reason they give for this opinion is, that the same words are sometimes used in Scripture to express a limited duration. In this limited sense, the word *forever* must be understood, when in a certain case the servant was said to be bound to serve his master forever, which could only mean to the end of his life; and when it was said of some of the ceremonial rites of the Jewish religion, that they were to be statutes forever, which could only mean to the end of that dispensation. But in these and similar instances, there is something in the nature of the thing itself, or in the connexion in which the passage stands, which shows that the word is to be understood in a limited sense. But when no such intimation is given; and no such intimation is in any way given, in the passages which have been quoted, in support of our doctrine, it becomes us to understand the words *everlasting* and *forever*, in their proper and obvious meaning.

Besides in some of the texts which have been quoted, the duration of the happiness of the righteous, and of the punishment of the wicked are placed together; and are expressed by the same word. This is the case, Dan. xii. 2. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And Mat. xxv. 46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." In both these texts, the same original word, that is used to express the duration of the happiness of the righteous, is also used to express the dura-

tion of the misery of the wicked. As applied to the righteous, the word is allowed to express a duration, strictly without end; and we cannot, with any propriety, avoid understanding it in the same sense, as applied to the wicked, seeing there is not the least intimation given, of limitation in the latter case, more than in the former. Scott in his comments upon the text quoted from Matthew, well observes; "He must be blinded indeed by Satan, who will risk his soul on interpreting the same word *temporary* in one clause, and *eternal* in another of the same verse."

There are many other passages, besides those already quoted, which either directly assert, or clearly imply, that the future punishments of the wicked will be strictly without end.

In the 9th chapter of Mark, it is asserted five times, that "the fire never shall be quenched," or "is not quenched;" and three times, that "their worm dieth not." The objection made to the texts quoted in which everlasting and forever are used, weak as it is, cannot with the least shadow of propriety be applied to those just mentioned. For if the punishment of the wicked is ever to come to an end, the assertions are not true, that "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." For on this supposition, the worm will die, and the fire will be quenched; though the former should live, and the latter burn ages upon ages.

Again, our Saviour warning his hearers to be quickly reconciled unto God, before they were cast into prison, (by which he evidently meant the prison of hell,) said, Mat. v. 26. "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." This text evidently excludes all mercy from the place of future misery, and teaches that sinners shall be dealt with there strictly on the ground of justice, and according to their deserts. But it is contrary to the whole of the Scriptures, that the sinner ever can, by suffering, satisfy the divine justice and make an atonement for his sins. Besides, if mercy is to be excluded from hell, the influences of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the soul must of course be excluded. But it is evident from the repeated instructions of the Scriptures, that without the influences of the Spirit, the sinner instead of

forsaking his sins, and loving God, and rendering a holy obedience to the commandments of God, will wax worse and worse, and add iniquity to iniquity. Therefore the text just quoted, which dooms the lost sinner to be confined in the prison of hell, until he has paid the uttermost farthing, excludes all hope of an end to the future misery of the wicked.

Again, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. we read of certain characters whom it is impossible to renew again unto repentance. But the word of God expressly assures us, that without repentance there can be no salvation; and therefore, here are certain characters described, whom it is impossible should ever be saved.

Another argument, we find Mat. xii. 32. "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Here certain characters are mentioned, who are never to be forgiven. But without forgiveness, there certainly cannot be salvation, consistently with the Scriptures. Therefore the persons meant in the text just quoted, never can be released from future misery; and if at any future time, though, it should be millions of ages hence, they should be forgiven and released, it would not be true, what this text asserts, that they shall not be forgiven in the world to come.

Again, Christ tells us, John iii. 36. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." And to the Jews he said, John viii. 21. "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." But if the wicked are finally to be released from misery and saved, these texts are not true. For then they would finally see life, and come where Christ has gone, notwithstanding he has explicitly declared they shall not.

Another proof of the strict eternity of the future torments of the wicked, we have in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded Luk. xvi. When the rich man in hell lifted up his eyes being in torments, and begged that Lazarus might be sent to him, to cool his tongue with a drop of water, he was told: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." This text pointedly contradicts the sentiment, that the wicked may pass from hell to heaven.

Once more, we have a decided proof of our doctrine, in what our Saviour said respecting Judas. Mat. xxvi. 24. "The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born." If Judas should ever pass from his own place of torment, whither he has gone, into eternal happiness, it was not truly said: "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born." For suppose he should spend millions of millions of ages in misery, and then be released, and pass into a state of endless happiness, the duration of his misery would be short, compared with that of his happiness; since time however long, bears an inconceivably small proportion to eternity; and therefore Judas would in the course of his existence, receive incomparably more happiness than misery; and consequently it was good for that man that he was born. But this conclusion to which we are inevitably driven, on the supposition that Judas may at some future period be released from torment, directly contradicts the assertion of our Saviour: "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born;" and therefore must be false; and consequently the sufferings of Judas must be literally without end.

From the foregoing arguments the conclusion is confidently drawn, that the state of the lost sinner in the future world will be absolutely hopeless; and that his torment will be strictly without end.

When we look at the arguments on this subject, we may well be filled with astonishment, that there should be persons, having the Bible in their hands, and professing to believe its contents, who can for a moment doubt the truth of this doctrine, so frequently, plainly, and unequivocally taught. But the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and the wickedness of the heart blinds the mind, and often leads men to believe, or at least to hope, that things are true, or untrue as they wish them to be. If there is a place of future torment, or if this torment be endless, they are sensible it must be ill with them; and therefore they endeavour to persuade themselves, that these things are not so, and readily lay hold of every thing which may increase and strengthen this persuasion, until they have brought their belief, or at least their hope, to their wishes, and their

consciences are quieted, and they can give a looser rein to their vicious inclinations. This is doubtless the way in which many are led to adopt, in opposition to the plain and repeated instructions of Scripture, the scheme of universal salvation.

But because wicked men, with the aid of the great destroyer, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, have persuaded themselves that future misery will not be without end; but that even if they should go there for a time, they shall finally be happy; the word of God will not fail. The great deceiver preached this doctrine to our first parents in Paradise, saying to them "ye shall not surely die." They believed him, and found, when it was too late, that they had believed a lie. And thus will all who trust to the same lying words, and die in their sins, be disappointed, and find, when it will be forever too late to retract and repent, that they have believed a lie. If there was only a probability, or even a possibility, that the doctrine of the strict eternity of future torments might be true, it would certainly be wise to be prepared to find it true; and it would be great folly to continue for a day unprepared to find it true, as long as there is the least ground to believe or to fear that it may be true. What must we say then of the folly of those, who under such a blaze of evidence as the Scriptures afford on this subject, are living in impenitence and unbelief?

My hearers, if there are any present, who have embraced these unscriptural and dangerous sentiments, and are living in sin and neglect of Christ, hoping that it may be well with them at last, and that they shall finally be released from future misery, though they should be condemned to it for a time, they are solemnly warned to pause, and consider and carefully attend to what God says in his word, on this subject. Let not your corrupt feelings and desires lead you astray: for your immortal souls are at stake; and they are too valuable to be trifled with; or to have their interests risked on the possibility, or the probability, that the torments of hell will not be strictly eternal. Think seriously on the representations which the Scriptures give of the torments of future misery. And Oh! think of the solemn import of the words *everlasting* and *forever*, and how dreadful it will be when it is too late to repent, to find, that they were used in the

Scriptures in their literal and proper sense. And give yourselves no rest until you have escaped from the wrath to come, and obtained a sure title to everlasting life. And let us all learn from this subject the evil nature of sin, and be led to escape from its consequences to the refuge which the gospel reveals; and to hate and watch and war against it, as our greatest enemy.—AMEN.

SERMON XXV.

THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

ISAIAH lv. 3.

“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.”

WE have in a series of discourses considered the fallen, sinful, and ruined state of the human race. In the last of these discourses, the punishment due to sin was considered. This was shown to be eternal death. To this the law of God condemns the whole human race on account of sin. Hence arises a most important question.

Is there any hope for ruined man? This question, the light of nature cannot answer.

Reason may teach us that we are ruined, but it cannot discover to us a way of deliverance. But the revealed word of God answers this question in the affirmative. It teaches us that there is a way of recovery for sinners, from the ruin brought upon them, by the fall and sin.

The covenant of works being broken, God has been pleased in infinite mercy, to reveal a new covenant of grace, made in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, as mediator. In this covenant, God offers and extends mercy to sinners.

This opens to us a new, and exceedingly important branch of the system of religion; viz. the recovery of ruined man. We have seen his ruin. Let us now contemplate the way of recovery. And the first thing which na-

turally claims our attention is the *nature of the covenant of grace*.

This is the covenant meant in our text, by the everlasting covenant, which God here promises to make with those, who incline their ears, hear, and come unto him. It is called an "*everlasting covenant*," because it was made with Christ as the head of his elect people, from eternity; and because its blessings will be without end, to those interested in it. By the "*sure mercies of David*," we are to understand, all the blessings of the covenant of grace.

They are called *mercies*, because all the blessings of this covenant are gratuitous, and undeserved favours. They are called *sure mercies*, to denote that these blessings are certain and permanent, to all interested in the covenant. And they are called the *sure mercies of David*; because the covenant is made in and through Christ, who is here meant by David. David King of Israel was an eminent type of Christ; and Christ as to his human nature was the son or descendant of David. For these reasons Christ is several times in Scripture called David. And hence we are warranted to consider Christ, as meant in our text. Besides, what in our context is said of the person meant in our text, cannot be true of the literal David; but only of his great antitype Christ Jesus.

The *covenant of grace* made in and through Christ is the doctrine of our text.

This doctrine is contained in our Catechism in the answer to the 20th question.

"Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?"

"God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer."

The plan of salvation through a Redeemer, revealed in the gospel, is called the *covenant of grace*, because all the blessings therein promised are entirely gratuitous and unmerited.

The *parties* in this covenant are, God offended, man the offender, and Christ as mediator between God and man to reconcile them to each other.

The covenant of grace may be said to consist of two great branches; one of which respects what the Mediator was to do, and the consequent glory which was to accrue to himself; and the other, the blessings, which in consequence of his mediation, should be extended to believing sinners.

The former of these has been called the *covenant of redemption*. That there was such a compact between the Father and the Son, as is called the covenant of redemption, the Scriptures abundantly teach. The substance of this covenant may be found in the following passages. Is. xlii. 1, 4, 6. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Is. liii. 10, 11, 12. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death." Is. xlix. 6. "And he said, it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Ps. ii. 8. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

In the foregoing passages, the Father expressed his will, that the Son should become a mediator, and do every thing requisite, to render it consistent with the divine perfections to save sinners. He called his son to undertake this office, and expressed his will that he should bear the iniquities of those, whom he should afterwards justify; and that he should be bruised and put to grief, pour out his soul unto death, and make his soul an offering for

sin. And the Father in these passages promised to the Son, that he should not fail nor be discouraged in the undertaking; that he would uphold and keep him; and that he should see his seed, justify many, have a portion with the great, divide the spoil with the strong, raise up the tribes of Jacob, be a light to the Gentiles, and have the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

To these propositions of the Father, thus expressing his will, the Son replied, engaging to do his will, as in the 40th Psalm, quoted by the Apostle and applied to Christ in the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Agreeably to this engagement between the Father and the Son, we find the latter, after he had become incarnate, and when he drew near the end of his course of obedience, claiming, with confidence, the stipulated reward, saying to his Father. John xvii. 4, 5. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Such was the covenant between the Father and the Son about our salvation; commonly called the covenant of redemption. And on this compact is founded that branch of the covenant of grace, which more immediately respects us. In consequence of the engagement of the Son to do the will of the Father, by making his soul an offering for sin, the Father graciously engaged, to pardon, receive into favour, and crown with eternal life, all who should believe in his Son.

In the covenant of grace, each of the three persons of the Trinity, in his personal character, acts a distinct part. The Father requires and receives satisfaction for sin, that the divine perfections and law may be maintained; the Son makes the required satisfaction; and the Holy Spirit, in subserviency to the Son, brings those given to Christ, by the Father, in the covenant of redemption, to a saving knowledge of the Saviour, and union to him; and in him to the possession of the benefits of his mediation.

The next thing to be noticed, in explaining the nature of the covenant of grace, is, whether this covenant is *conditional*? or whether there be any conditions, on which the bestowing of the blessings of the covenant on sinners, depend?

To this question I answer, the bestowing of the blessings of the covenant on sinners, depended on the obedience and death of Christ; and they are bestowed on account of his obedience and death. And he having fulfilled his engagement to the Father, in obeying the law, and suffering its penalty, may claim as his right, the extension of the blessings of the covenant to those whom the Father had given him in the covenant of redemption. So that as it respects what Christ was to do, the covenant of grace was strictly conditional.

But as it respects the sinner, whether anything on his part, can be properly called a condition of the covenant, is disputed. If, by a condition, we understand that, which when performed, gives a right to the performer to claim as his due, what is promised in the covenant, it is certain that nothing on man's part can be called a condition of the covenant of grace; for nothing done by man can be, in the least degree, the meritorious and procuring cause of his salvation. The righteousness of Christ alone is the meritorious condition of a sinner's salvation. Besides, those very things, which are sometimes called conditions of the covenant, as faith and repentance, are themselves, really, the promises of the covenant; they are the gift of God, and are wrought in the elect, without any regard to their previous character, in consequence of the promises made to Christ, their head in the covenant of grace, on condition of his obedience.

But if we consider the promises of the covenant of grace, only as they relate to the final blessings, and not to the means; and consider a condition as that which according to the divine constitution, is necessarily connected with and precedes the bestowing of the final blessings; then faith is a condition of the covenant of grace. For although faith is not, in the least degree, the meritorious cause of our salvation; yet, it is essentially connected therewith, insomuch that while he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.

Let us next take a brief view of the *articles* of the co-

venant of grace, as they respect God and man; or of what is promised on the part of God, and what is engaged on the part of man.

They are all summed up in the following text of Scripture. Heb. viii. 10. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This verse includes the sum of all the blessings promised on the part of God; and the sum of all the duties required on the part of man.

"I will be to them a God," imports that God is reconciled to those to whom he makes this promise; that he has pardoned their sins and received them into favour; that he is their friend and father; that he has given them a title to eternal life, and will admit them to the heavenly kingdom hereafter, to dwell forever in his presence; that they have an interest in his attributes, in his power to protect them, his wisdom to direct them, his mercy to pity and pardon them, his grace to sanctify them, his all-sufficiency to supply all their wants, and his faithfulness to fulfil all his promises; that each person of the Trinity is theirs in his personal character, to perform for them his peculiar work in the plan of salvation; that the Father is their father, and they his adopted children, the Son their Redeemer, their prophet to enlighten and instruct them, their priest to atone and intercede for them, and their king to rule in, over, and for them, and the Holy Ghost their sanctifier and comforter; and that they have a property in those things that belong to God; and that all things are, in a certain sense theirs. And this the Apostle asserted 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

The duties obligatory upon man in this covenant are summed up in this clause, "they shall be my people." This imports faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, and a holy walk with God, in the ways of his commandments. And here it may be proper to remark, that while these duties are required of those in the covenant of grace, it is one of the precious excellencies of this covenant, that grace to enable to the performance of these duties, is a part of the promises on the part of God. While he requires faith, actually to interest in the merits of Christ, "he promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all

his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces, and to enable them unto all holy obedience."

Another point which claims our attention, in illustrating the nature of the covenant of grace, is, whether it contains any *threatenings*? On this point I would observe, it is certain threatenings are denounced against the despisers and neglecters of this covenant. As in John iii. 19. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light." And Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" There are many other similar texts. But although, there are such threatenings, which have a peculiar respect to the covenant of grace; yet, perhaps we may properly say, that the covenant of grace itself, contains no threatenings, and that these threatenings belong to the law. For the law requires men to embrace with a true faith, every truth made known by God; and therefore it requires faith in the gospel of Christ, or covenant of grace, and pronounces cursed, and dooms to an aggravated punishment, every one who does not embrace the gospel.

The covenant of grace was made in Christ from *eternity*, as we learn from 2 Tim. i. 9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." And in our text it is called, "an everlasting covenant."

In time after man was created, and had actually fallen, this grace *appeared*, this covenant was revealed. It was revealed to our first parents immediately after the fall, in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And it continued to be more and more clearly unfolded, until in the fulness of time the Saviour appeared in the flesh.

The covenant has always been *one* and the *same*; and all of our race who have been saved, have obtained salvation in and through this covenant; though it is differently dispensed under the New Testament, from what it was under the Old. In and through this covenant the saints who lived before the manifestation of the Saviour in the flesh were saved. Christ was then a surety. And although he had not yet made satisfaction for sin; yet

being an infallible surety, who had engaged in due time to make the required satisfaction, they were saved through faith in him as to come. Christ and his sacrifice were exhibited to them in the promises, prophecies, types and ordinances of the Old Testament. And through these they beheld him, believed in him, and received the remission of their sins, and eternal salvation. When in the fulness of time the Saviour appeared in the flesh, and fulfilled the work, which he had engaged to do, the old dispensation of the covenant ceased, and a new order of things was introduced. The manner of dispensing the covenant was changed; but the covenant itself still remained the same.

Before we close this general view of the nature of the covenant of grace, it may be proper to notice some points of *agreement*, and some of *difference* between this covenant and that of works.

They *agree*, in that the author of both is God, in both God and man are parties, in both are promises of eternal life, and the great end of both is the glory of God.

They *differ* in many important respects. The covenant of works did not admit of a mediator; but the covenant of grace is made in and through a mediator. The former was made with innocent man; the latter, through Christ, with sinful man. The promises of the covenant of works depended on man's own obedience; those of the covenant of grace on the obedience of Christ. The tenor of the former, in its language to man, was, "do this and live;" the tenor of the latter is, "believe and be saved." And in the first, man was left to stand in his own strength and he fell; in the last, his continuance in the covenant depends, not on himself, but on Christ, who is an almighty Saviour, and who will suffer none to be lost, that the Father hath given him. It is therefore a sure and infallible way of life. The mercies of the antitypical David are sure mercies. The covenant is an everlasting covenant. And those in it cannot perish; for it is ordered in all things and sure.

In the conclusion of this discourse we may well exclaim, how distinguishing and wonderful is the grace of God! Angels, when they broke his covenant, were passed by, and excluded from hope; but when man followed their example of rebellion, a new covenant was revealed,

in which he might be recovered from the ruin brought upon him by sin. And this covenant was made in and through the Son of God as mediator; and the way for the extension of its blessings to us, opened at the infinite expense of his incarnation, obedience and death. Let us be impressed with a lively sense of this amazing and distinguishing love and mercy. Let us be thankful and adore. And let us embrace the offered grace.

If we ever are saved, it must be in and through this covenant of grace. There is a strong propensity in fallen man, to cleave to the covenant of works, and to seek life by it. But it cannot give life; it can give nothing but death. It has been broken, and has ceased to be a way of life. Cease then, my hearers, to derive any hope of life from the first covenant, or from your own doings as meritorious. It is impossible to obtain life in this way.

Incline your ear, and come unto Christ by faith, hear him, and your souls shall live; and God will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. All those are safe, who are interested in the covenant of grace. The mercies in which they are interested are sure mercies. Their salvation is sure, as long as the atonement and righteousness of Christ continue all-sufficient, his power remains almighty, and his faithfulness abides unchanging. Blessed therefore indeed, are all those who have inclined their ear, and repaired by faith to Christ, and have become interested in the sure mercies of the covenant of grace.

SERMON XXVI.

DIFFERENCE OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

HEBREWS i. 1, 2.

“God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

THE covenant of grace was made from eternity, with Christ, as head of his chosen people. When man was created and had fallen, it was revealed. New and clearer revelations were from time to time given. God at sundry times, and in divers manners spake on this subject to the fathers who lived under the Old Testament. At length, in the fulness of time, the Saviour, in and through whom the covenant of grace was made, was revealed in the flesh; and the covenant, though it continued the same, was dispensed in a different manner.

This difference of dispensation under the Old and the New Testaments, is hinted at in our text.

The object of the ensuing discourse, is to point out the *difference between the Old and the New Testaments*.

The difference does not consist in substance. Both Testaments are substantially the same. The *substance* of both is the covenant of grace, made in and through Christ. The substance of what God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the fathers by the prophets, was the same with what, in these last days, he hath spoken to us by his Son. Both Testaments contain the same covenant of grace. That this covenant existed under the Old Testament, and that the saints, in that period, were saved in it, through Christ, as they now are, is abundantly evident from the Scriptures. Acts xv. 11. we read, “Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we,” that is they who live since the coming of Christ, “shall be saved, even as they,” that is the fathers, under the Old Testament, as appears from the preceding verse. The covenant of grace made with believers in the New Testament is the very

same with that which God formerly made with Abraham. This appears from the following texts. Peter in an address to the Jews, Acts iii. 25, said, "ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." And in the next verse, he gave this as a reason, why the gospel of Christ was first preached unto the Jews. And Paul, Gal. iii. 8. asserts, that the gospel was preached unto Abraham, in that article of the covenant made with him, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." And in the 17th verse of the same chapter, he tells us, that the covenant made with Abraham, "was confirmed of God in Christ."

Again the Old Testament contains numerous promises of the covenant of grace. We therein find promises of justification, of sanctification, of spiritual comforts in this life, and of eternal blessedness beyond the grave.

Further the Scriptures teach that saints under the Old Testament, were saved in the same way as they are under the New, viz. through faith; Gen. xv. 6. we read, "and he (that is, Abraham) believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." And the Apostle Paul in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, proposes this as an example of the way, in which we under the gospel are to be justified. And the prophet Habakkuk, taught "the just shall live by his faith." Hab. ii. 4.

Again, that the Old Testament contained the covenant of grace, is also proved from what the Apostle said respecting the law, Gal. iii. 24. "The law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ." And Rom. x. 4. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness."

Once more, the same is proved by this consideration. The New Testament teaches that there is salvation in no other but Christ; but undoubtedly, many under the Old Testament were saved. Therefore they were saved through Christ, in the covenant of grace; and consequently the covenant of grace existed under the Old Testament.

The preceding arguments clearly show that the difference between the Old and New Testaments does not consist in substance. The substance of both is the same; the covenant of grace made in and through Christ.

The difference between the Old and New Testaments, consists in the *manner* of *dispensing* the grace of the covenant. And in this respect the two Testaments differ in the following particulars. Under the Old Testament the Saviour had not yet come, the New exhibits him as manifested in the flesh; the Old was more obscure, the New is more clear; the Old was more severe, the New is more mild; the former had less, the latter has more, of liberty; in the first the grace of the covenant was more confined in its application, in the last it is more extended; the dispensation of the Old was to be antiquated, and to give place to another, the dispensation of the New is to continue until the end of time.

Let us proceed to the illustration and proof of these points of difference.

1. Under the Old Testament, the Saviour had not yet come; under the New he is come. Under the Old Testament, the saints looked forward through the promises, prophecies, types, and ordinances of that time, to the Saviour, in whose character and work, they were, by these, instructed; and who, they were hereby taught to believe, would be revealed in the fulness of time to work out salvation. And acting faith on him as about to come, and trusting to that righteousness, which they believed he would work out, they were saved. But under the New Testament, believers act faith upon a Saviour as already come, and trust in his righteousness, as already wrought out. In this respect the privileges of those, who live under the New Testament dispensation, far exceed the privileges of those who lived under the Old. This our Saviour taught his disciples, when he said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them." Luk. x. 23, 24.

2. The Old and New Testaments differed in respect of the degree of spiritual light which each contained. The Old was more obscure, the New is far more clear. The Old was comparatively a time of night, the New is a time of day. In the Old, the Sun of Righteousness had not yet risen, though his rising was expected. Believers of that day, it is true, enjoyed his light, sufficiently to

guide them to the desired rest of heaven; yet it was only a reflected light, through the medium of other bodies, such as types and ordinances, like the light which the planets and moon, receive from the Sun, in the night, and reflect to us. But in the New Testament, the Sun of Righteousness hath risen, and shines directly upon us, like the natural Sun in the day.

The Saviour, and the grace of God through him were in the Old Testament, exhibited in promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances. At first, these afforded only a gleam of light; but by degrees, the light increased, and became clearer, as the time of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness approached. In that day faith had to embrace Christ and salvation through him, through such promises as, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; Gen. iii. 15. That in the Seed of Abraham should all the nations of the earth be blessed; Gen. xxii. 18. That from Judah should Shiloh come, unto whom should be the gathering of the people; Gen. xlix. 10. That a Prophet like unto Moses would God raise up; Deut. xviii. 18. These and many other promises, as to their accomplishment, the fathers saw, as said the Apostle, Heb. xi. 13. "afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Through sacrifices also the church under the Old Testament, beheld Christ, and were led into a knowledge of the sacrifice for sin, which he was to make, as the foundation of all their hope of acceptance with God. The passover and circumcision also taught them the same thing, and were to them standing pledges of the promised grace. And numerous types of persons, places, and things, pointed them to Christ, the great antitype to come, and instructed them in the nature of salvation through him. This light concerning the grace of God through Christ, which was thus shed upon the Old Testament church, though it was sufficient for that time, to lead to faith in the promised Messiah, must nevertheless have been very obscure, compared with the light which is enjoyed under the New Testament. The fathers under the Old Testament, must have had a very imperfect knowledge of the person and offices of Christ, and the way of salvation through him, compared with what

believers have under the New Testament. Indeed, so far does the New Testament exceed the Old in point of clearness, that the Apostle has told us, 2 Tim. i. 10. "Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Life and immortality were doubtless revealed in the Old Testament; but the revelation on these points in the New, are so much clearer, that comparatively they were brought to light in the New, as though they had not been revealed in the Old.

3. The Old and New Testaments differed also in this; the manner of dispensing the grace of God under the Old was more severe, under the New, it is more mild. The difference of the two dispensations, in this respect is forcibly described by the Apostle, Heb. xii. 18-24. "ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: For they could not endure that which was commanded. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." In these verses, we have the Old Testament dispensation described.

What follows relates to the New. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

In the Old Testament, we more frequently find the law presented, requiring perfect obedience and denouncing threatenings against the transgressor, and thus exciting terror, and driving the soul to Christ; in the New we more frequently find invitations and promises, drawing the soul to Christ. They who lived under the Old Testament, were bound to the observance of a numerous round of burdensome rites and ceremonies. On their first entrance into the world, they were met with the painful rite of circumcision. Three times a year were all the males required to appear before the Lord in one place.

And they were constantly exposed to contract ceremonial uncleanness; and then they had to undergo privations, and submit to burdensome ceremonies of purification.

Religion was then so burdened with these and many other ceremonies, that Peter called that economy, a yoke. Acts xv. 10. "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." And Paul called it "the yoke of bondage." Gal. v. 1. But under the New Testament, these severe and burdensome ordinances and ceremonies are done away, and a more mild economy is introduced. The "yoke" of Christ "is easy, and" his "burden is light." Mat. xi. 30.

4. The Old and New Testaments differed in respect of liberty. This the Apostle taught and illustrated, Gal. iv. 1-7. where the two dispensations are contrasted as follows. "Now I say, that the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." This was spoken of the Old Testament dispensation; what follows relates to the New. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." The same is taught and illustrated by an allegory, in the latter part of this same chapter. "Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bond woman, was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants," (or according to the marginal reading the two *testaments*) "the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. We are not children of the bond woman, but of the free." Hence in the

first verse of the next chapter the Apostle exhorted; "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

From these passages we learn, that the state of the Old Testament church, was like that of a minor, or person under age, who is placed by his father under the care of tutors and governors, to instruct, restrain, and correct him, which is a state of bondage, exciting to fear, and in which fear is generally, the principal spring of obedience. In this situation, the son is in a condition very much resembling that of a servant. The Old Testament believers were sons, but in a state of minority, and therefore of bondage; as the Apostle taught. Gal. iv. 1. "The heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." But the state of the church under the New Testament, is like that of the son, arrived at full age, and no longer under tutors and governors. Believers have now entered upon the privileges of the son arrived at manhood. They have a clearer knowledge of the way of salvation; they are delivered from the burdensome rites of the ceremonial law; and we are warranted from the word of God to say, they have, in general freer access to God as a Father, enjoy more of communion with him, have more of the spirit of adoption, and are enabled with more confidence to say Abba, Father.

5. Another difference between the Old and New Testaments is, that under the New, the grace of God, in its application, is more extended than it was under the Old. Under the Old Testament, the church was confined to the Jewish nation; and no one could be admitted to a visible standing in the church, unless he also became a member of the Jewish community. And from the very nature of that dispensation, which required that all the males, should appear three times a year before the Lord in one place, the church was necessarily confined within very narrow limits; and that grace which was treasured in the church, was little known beyond the bounds of Judea, except among the dispersed of the Jews. Unto the Israelites pertained, as we read, Rom. ix. 4. "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises."

While the Gentiles, “at that time, were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Eph. ii. 12. Salvation was, as our Saviour told the woman of Samaria, of the Jews. But Christ when he came, brake down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and destroyed all national distinction in the church; so that now, under the New Testament, as we read, Gal. iii. 28. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” The New Testament dispensation is suited to universality, which the Old was not. No more, is it required that all the males shall repair three times a year to one place. The commission given to the Apostles, by Christ after his resurrection was, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark xvi. 15. And accordingly the church under the New Testament, has already extended over many nations; and it has the promise that it shall yet fill the whole earth.

6. Once more. The Old and New Testaments differed in this, that the manner of dispensing the grace of God under the Old was to be antiquated, and to give way for another dispensation; but the dispensation of the New is to be permanent, and to continue to the end of time. From the very nature of the Old Testament dispensation, as a shadow of good things to come, it was fit and requisite, that when these good things came, this shadowy dispensation should cease and give way for a better. And that this dispensation has ceased is abundantly evident from many passages in the New Testament, and particularly from the epistle to the Hebrews. But the New Testament dispensation is to be permanent, and is not to be superseded by another; but is to continue throughout all ages, until the final consummation of all things: for we have no intimation in the Scriptures of another dispensation, to supersede that of the New Testament. On the contrary the Apostle spake of the New Testament dispensation, Heb. xii. 27, 28. as “things which cannot be shaken,” and “a kingdom which cannot be moved.”

From what has been said, we may now infer, that the New Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace is far more excellent, than was the Old. It is our privilege

to live under this more excellent dispensation. Let us contrast our privileges, with the privileges of those who lived under the Old Testament. We have not to derive a knowledge of the Saviour from dark promises, prophecies, types and ordinances, and through these be led to act faith for salvation on him as to come; but we may look directly to him, as already manifested in the flesh. We enjoy light on the way of salvation, which compared with that of the fathers under the Old Testament, is like the light of mid-day compared with the faint glimmerings of night. We live under a mild dispensation. We have not to groan under the yoke of the ceremonial law; and are not come unto Mount Sinai, but unto Mount Sion. We live, not in the minor age of bondage; but in the adult age of liberty. We are not as our Gentile fathers were, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise;" but we live in a period, in which the grace of the covenant is extended to the Gentile world. And we live under a dispensation so perfect, that it is to be permanent, and not to be superseded by another. We ought seriously to reflect upon these privileges, and be led to make a right improvement of them.

We ought to bless God for his distinguishing goodness to us. Our privileges would have filled the hearts of the Old Testament saints with gratitude and joy. In view of this subject, our Saviour said unto his disciples, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Luk. x. 23, 24. And shall not we who see and hear these things, prize and improve them, and be filled with holy gratitude and joy on account of them?

Our account will be greater in proportion to our superior privileges. More is expected and required of us than was of those who lived under the Old Testament. This is agreeable to our natural ideas of right, and this the word of God expressly teaches: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke xii. 48. Let this truth lead us to improve our privileges aright. If we should continue impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient, and finally perish, our punishment will be the greater in

proportion to our privileges. For "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19. "Wo unto thee Chorazin! Wo unto thee Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment than for thee." Mat. xi. 21-24. "If the word spoken by angels," (that is the old dispensation,) "was seadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, (i. e. Moses,) much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," (i. e. Christ.) Heb. xii. 25.

My hearers, let us seriously attend to these solemn declarations of the word of God; for they emphatically apply to us. We live under the New Testament dispensation. Like Capernaum of old we are exalted to heaven in point of privileges. Our account will therefore be peculiarly great, and our punishment will be peculiarly aggravated if we should perish. Let those who refuse or neglect to hear the voice of God, who, in these last days, hath spoken unto us by his Son, think of this, and be induced without delay to attend to his voice. Consider your ways, repent of your sins, embrace with a true faith, the offered Saviour, and devote yourselves to the service of the Lord, and walk with him in the ways of new obedience.—AMEN.

SERMON XXVII.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

JOHN XIV. 6. FIRST CLAUSE.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the truth."

TRUTH, in Scripture, signifies veracity in opposition to falsehood, sincerity as opposed to dissimulation, faith-

fulness in fulfilling engagements, and that which is real and substantial, in opposition to types and promises, and predictions. In all these senses, Christ is the truth. And in all these senses, truth is probably to be understood in the text. In the last mentioned sense the word will be applied in the ensuing discourse. Christ is the truth, as he is the substance of the types, and promises, and prophecies, of the Old Testament.

In the last discourse, we attended to the difference between the Old and New Testaments. This difference, it was shown, consisted not in substance; but in the manner of dispensing the covenant of grace. Christ and salvation through him, in the covenant of grace, was the substance of both Testaments. But Christ was exhibited, and the grace of the covenant was dispensed under the Old Testament, in a manner different from what they are under the New.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate the Old Testament dispensation; or show how the covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament. This was, as stated in our Larger Catechism, "By promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances, which did all fore-signify Christ then to come." A particular illustration of the numerous promises, prophecies and types, of the Old Testament, relating to Christ and salvation through him, would require many discourses. It will therefore be necessary to be very brief and general, to comprise the substance of them in one discourse.

The grace of God through a Saviour to come was revealed and began to be dispensed, immediately after the fall of our first parents, in the promise included in the sentence which was pronounced upon the serpent. Gen. iii. 15. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." By the serpent, whose head according to this promise was to be bruised, was meant Satan. For he is called, Rev. xx. 2. "the dragon," and "that old serpent," evidently in allusion to his appearance in the form of a serpent to our first parents. And he is also called, John viii. 44. "A murderer from the beginning," and "a liar, and the father of it," evidently referring to his deceiving and murdering our first pa-

rents. By the Seed of the woman, who was to bruise the serpent's head, was meant Christ; for he alone of all the seed of the woman was equal to this work; and the same name of Seed, in the promise made to Abraham, is expressly interpreted of Christ. Gal. iii. 16. Besides, those texts which speak of Christ, as having come into the world, to destroy the works of the devil, and as casting him down, triumphing over him, and bruising him under the feet of his people, all appear to refer to this promise, and teach that by the Seed of the woman was meant Christ. By bruising the heel of the Seed of the woman was meant the sufferings of Christ. And by bruising the head of the serpent was meant the destruction of the power of Satan, and Christ's victory over him. In short, this text was a promise of a Saviour, who should appear in our nature, and be of the seed of the woman, who should conquer Satan, and who, in effecting the great work of man's salvation, should suffer.

In this early age, sacrifices were instituted. Of the time of their institution, we are not certainly informed. We know that they were offered by Abel and Noah. The time of their institution was probably immediately after the fall, when the promise, which has just been considered was given; for we find that at this time our first parents were clothed with coats of skins, which most probably had been taken from beasts, offered, by divine direction, in sacrifice. Sacrifices taught the necessity of atonement for sin; and they prefigured Christ who should, in the fullness of time, offer himself a sacrifice for sin.

In this age, there were also personal types of Christ, which shadowed forth his character. Adam, as a public person, the head of the covenant of works, was a figure of him who was to come, as a public person, the head of the covenant of grace, through whose obedience many were to be made righteous, and obtain life, as through the disobedience of the first Adam, many were made sinners, and became exposed to death. Noah also, whose name signified *rest* and *comfort*, and who was the temporal Saviour of the world, from the flood of waters, by the ark which he prepared, typified the Saviour, who is the true resting place, and the true Comforter, under the curse; and who was to come to save sinners, from the floods of divine wrath which threatened them with everlasting destruction.

In this way, by the promise given to our first parents, by sacrifices, by personal types, and perhaps by some revelations, which have not been handed down to us, was the covenant of grace dispensed from the fall, to the time of Abraham.

In the time of this patriarch, there was an additional measure of divine light shed upon the world. God gave the church a visible form, and separated it from the rest of the world. He called Abraham out of a land of idolaters to sojourn in a strange land. With him and his seed he entered into covenant. This covenant contained the covenant of grace. This is proved by the following considerations. In that covenant, the Lord promised Abraham a numerous seed; but the Apostle, Rom. iv. 16, 17, explained this promise, not only of the natural posterity of Abraham; but also of all believers in Christ. The Lord promised Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed;" but the Apostle tells us Gal. iii. 8. that the gospel was preached to Abraham in this promise. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." The Lord also promised Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18. "In thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." But we read, Gal. iii. 16. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." In this covenant also, God promised, Gen. xvii. 7. to be Abraham's God, and the God of his seed. This promise related not only to temporal, but also to spiritual and eternal blessings. For in the New Testament, this promise expresses the whole sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace. And our Saviour quoted this promise to prove to the Pharisees, the resurrection of the dead and a future state. Mat. xxii. 31, 32. "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Further, the Apostle has told us, Gal. iii. 29. that believers under the New Testament, are heirs of the promise made to Abraham. "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." By promise here cannot be meant, the temporal

blessings promised to Abraham; for these, christians do not inherit; but by it must be meant spiritual blessings. In the same chapter we also read, Gal. iii. 17. that the covenant made with Abraham was confirmed of God in Christ. From the preceding arguments the conclusion is drawn, that the covenant made with Abraham contained the covenant of grace. By the promises of this covenant, a new and very important degree of spiritual light was communicated. To this covenant God was pleased to annex the sensible sign and seal of circumcision. This was a standing evidence of the existence of the covenant between God, and Abraham and his seed; and encouraged the people to trust in God that he would fulfil his promises, and reminded them of their duty to him. It also was a *figure* of spiritual things. It signified to them their moral impurity, and that they had a body of sin which needed to be cut off. It signified also, that they were guilty and deserved to be cut off by death. And it figured forth that fundamental gospel truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission," and pointed to the blood of Christ, which was to be shed to take away sin.

The covenant made with Abraham, and confirmed by the sign and seal of circumcision, was repeatedly renewed to Isaac and Jacob.

And the latter patriarch, on his dying bed, delivered a prophecy, by which a further degree of light respecting the Messiah, was shed upon the church. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Gen. xlix. 10.

In this age of the church, which extends from Abraham to Moses, there were also some eminent personal types, who prefigured the Saviour to come. In Melchizedek, king of Salem, was prefigured that he should be king of righteousness and king of peace; that he should be in some sense, without father and without mother, and without beginning of days or end of life; that he should be a great high priest, more dignified than all other priests; and that as a priest he should be without predecessor or successor, and abide a priest continually. In Isaac was figured forth that the Messiah should be a child of promise, and be long desired and expected, and that he should be sacrificed and rise again from the dead. And

in Joseph was prefigured the amiableness of the Redeemer's character, the hatred which should be exercised towards him, his low estate of humiliation, and his exaltation afterwards to great power and glory.

In this way, by the promises and instructions of the covenant made with Abraham, by circumcision, by the prophecy of Jacob, and by personal types, in addition to the light previously afforded, was the grace of God dispensed from Abraham to Moses.

In the time of Moses a new order of things commenced, not superseding that which had already been in operation; but superadded thereto. As we read, Gal. iii. 17, 19. "The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come, to whom the promise was made."

The children of Israel, who formed the visible church, had, agreeably to the divine prediction, become bondslaves in Egypt. At the appointed time, the Lord appeared for their deliverance, and after executing many judgments upon their enemies, brought them out of the land of bondage. At this time, he instituted the passover, to commemorate their temporal salvation, when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain; and at the same time to be a type of Christ and of the way of salvation through him. That the passover was thus typical, we learn from 1 Cor. v. 7. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." The passover was a very expressive type of Christ, and of the way of salvation through him. The lamb in the passover was to be without blemish or spot; this taught the holiness of the expected Saviour. The lamb was to be taken from the flock, teaching that Christ was to be a man. The lamb was slain, prefiguring the death of the Messiah. The safety of the Israelites depended on the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb; this taught that it was through the spiritual application of the blood of Christ to the soul, that the sinner was to be saved from the wrath of God. The paschal lamb was to be wholly eaten, teaching that Christ was to be received and fed upon by faith as a whole Saviour. And it was to be eaten with

bitter herbs and unleavened bread, signifying that repentance was to accompany faith in the Saviour.

The Israelites having escaped from Egypt, a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, accompanied them, affording guidance, protection, light, and shade. This pointed to Christ, as the guide, guard, light, and shade or comfort, of his people.

When they had come unto the wilderness of Sin, the manna was given. This evidently typified Christ, as he himself taught, John vi. 48, 51, where, speaking of the manna which their fathers ate in the wilderness, he said, "I am that bread of life; I am the living bread which came down from heaven." The manna came down from above; it was given to the Israelites when they were ready to perish; it supported their lives while passing through the wilderness; it was unmerited, abundant, and good, and yet it was frequently despised by the multitude. In these respects the manna was a type of Christ, and taught that he was to come down from heaven, that he was the life of a perishing world, that such a blessing was unmerited, and that his salvation would be abundant and precious, and that nevertheless it would be despised by multitudes.

Directly after the manna was given, water was miraculously brought out of the rock at Rephidim. This was also a type of Christ, as we learn from 1 Cor. x. 4. "And that rock was Christ." The smiting of the rock was typical of the sufferings of Christ; and the water which flowed prefigured that salvation which was the effect of his sufferings; which salvation, like the water from the rock of Rephidim, is free, full, desirable, necessary, and perpetually flowing.

When the Israelites had come to Sinai, God made a covenant with them. That this covenant contained the covenant of grace, appears from the promise therein made, that God would be their God, as he had sworn, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and from the ceremonial law therein contained; which, as is evident from the comment of the New Testament upon it, was a shadow of good things to come, the body or substance of which was Christ.

The moral law contained in this covenant was calculated to convince them of sin, and show them their need of a Saviour; and the numerous rites of the ceremonial

law, which were at this time instituted, pointed them to the Saviour, and were intended to instruct them in the nature of the work which he was to perform, and of the salvation which he was to accomplish.

The numerous sacrifices which were now commanded, taught the guilt of the sacrificer, the necessity of atonement for sin, the doctrine of a vicarious satisfaction, the spotless character of the Saviour, and his bloody sacrifice. The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices, taught the necessity of the application of the blood of Christ to take away sin. The numerous washings which were appointed, taught the moral pollution of the soul, and the necessity of cleansing by the Holy Spirit, whose purifying influences are in virtue of the mediation of Christ. The law concerning the leper taught the odious, dangerous, and infectious nature of sin; and his cleansing, the way of justification, through the blood, and of sanctification by the spirit of Christ.

The year of jubilee pointed to the gospel day. The tabernacle prefigured Christ as mediator between God and man, in whom God meets with the sinner. The altar of burnt-offering, by sanctifying the gift, imparting a ceremonial holiness to whatever touched it, and affording protection to criminals, typified him as sanctifying, and rendering acceptable the offerings which are made to the Father through him. The table, always covered with shew-bread, typified that fulness of spiritual food, which is always treasured up in him. The golden candlestick typified him as the light of the soul. The golden altar of incense, was typical of his intercession. The ark of the covenant containing the tables of the law, and covered with the mercy-seat, represented him as preserving the law inviolate, and rendering the mercy-seat of God accessible to sinners.

The cities of refuge, typified Christ, who is the refuge to the sinner from the wrath of God. The brazen serpent, lifted up in the wilderness, and healing of the bites of the fiery serpents, all who looked upon it, typified him who was to be lifted up on the cross, that whosoever looked to him by faith, might be saved. And the land of Canaan typified the gospel rest and the future happiness of heaven.

Several eminent persons were also raised up to be

types of the Saviour. He was typified by Moses, as the deliverer of his people from Egyptian bondage; as, in a certain sense, a mediator between God and them; and as a great prophet, to whom the Lord spake face to face; by Joshua, in his name signifying Saviour, as the conductor of the chosen tribes over Jordan, as the conqueror of the enemies of God's people, and as putting the Israelites in possession of the promised land; by the high priests in their call of God, their offering of gifts and sacrifice, and their entrance within the veil, into the holy of holies of the tabernacle and temple; by David, in his afflictions, his renowned achievements, his deep humiliation, and his great exaltation; and by Solomon, in his wisdom, and in the great extent, peace, and prosperity of his kingdom.

Another way in which the grace of God was dispensed, from the time of Moses to the coming of Christ, was by prophecies. These were so numerous, that we can take only a very general view of them. Moses spake of Christ as a Prophet, whom the Lord would raise up from the midst of the Israelites, of their brethren, like unto him. Deut. xviii. 15. Balaam prophesied of him, as a star which should come out of Jacob, and a sceptre which should rise out of Israel. Num. xxiv. 17. David, in his Psalms, very frequently delivered predictions concerning him. From Samuel until after the captivity, there was a continued succession of prophets. These frequently delivered predictions concerning the Messiah, his person, the work he was to perform, and the nature of his kingdom. Micah foretold where he should be born. Mic. v. 2. Daniel predicted the time. Dan. ix. 24. And Isaiah foretold the leading incidents of his life, his character, his sufferings, the object of his mission, his death, his burial, his exaltation, the opposition to his cause, its success, the calling of the Gentiles, and the glory of his kingdom, especially in the latter days.

The preceding is a brief view of the Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace; and from what has been said we may see the manner in which the grace of God was dispensed previous to the coming of Christ. It was by promises, prophecies, and types, which taught that Christ would come, and gave instruction in his character, work and offices, the nature of salvation through him, and the way of becoming interested in it. Through

these promises, prophecies and types the Old Testament saints looked to Christ, believed in him as to come, and were saved by him. For his death in prospect, effected the salvation of those who looked to him, long before he actually died, or even appeared in the flesh; because he had engaged to die to make atonement for sin, and being an infallible Surety, there was no danger of a failure in his undertaking.

From this subject may be inferred—

1. The unity of the Scriptures. The leading object throughout the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament, is Christ and salvation through him, or the covenant of grace. To this every part refers, and with this has either an immediate or remote connexion. Viewed in this light, the Scriptures appear one glorious whole; but viewed otherwise, the parts are disjoined, and the harmony is destroyed.

And we not only observe a glorious unity as to object, but also a wise, beautiful and glorious gradation in the unfolding of the grace of God to his church. The light thereof appears shining more and more to the perfect day.

2. Our subject teaches that the church of God has been one in all ages. God had a church under the Old Testament, the same with that which now exists. In substance, the church under the New Testament differs nothing from what it was under the Old. The fathers were saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so are we. The church under the New Testament, differs from what it was under the Old, only in the manner of dispensing the grace of the covenant. But the difference in this respect does not affect the essentials of the church. These remain the same under both Testaments. Hence it may not be improper in this place to remark, that privileges enjoyed by the church under the Old Testament belong also to it under the New, unless taken away by God himself, who originally conferred them; and therefore that the same description of persons and characters, who had a right to a visible standing in the church under the Old Testament, still have the same right, unless taken away by him who conferred it.

3. Our subject teaches us, that our privileges are greatly superior to what were enjoyed by those who lived under the Old Testament dispensation. From the manner

in which, we have seen, they were instructed in the way of salvation, this inference irresistibly forces itself upon our minds; and hence we must conclude that our account will be greater, and if we should perish, our punishment will be more dreadful. This is an important truth, of which we need to be frequently reminded, and which ought to rest with solemn weight upon our minds. The Old Testament dispensation was at best but obscure. The pious in that age of the church had to collect their knowledge of a Saviour, and of the way of salvation through him, from promises, prophecies and types. But we have Christ clearly revealed to us, as already manifested in the flesh, and the way of salvation through him clearly made known. Besides, as we have seen, the Old Testament dispensation was burdened with many rites and ceremonies, which were a yoke of bondage, grievous to be borne. From these we are delivered. These things certainly teach us our superior obligations to embrace the grace offered in the gospel, and to devote ourselves to the service of God; and solemnly warn us that our guilt and punishment will be greatly aggravated if we should perish. For it is a principle of reason as well as of revelation, that "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luk. xii. 48. And we are told by our Saviour "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19. And the Apostle in view of the same subject said: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." Heb. ii. 3, This is a solemn inference. Let it have its due weight upon our minds, and lead us all duly to prize and improve our superior privileges.—AMEN.

SERMON XXVIII.

JESUS THE CHRIST.

JOHN IV. 25, 26.

.. *The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*"

DIRECTLY after the fall, a Saviour was promised. This Saviour did not immediately appear in the world. But numerous promises, prophecies, and types, pointed to him as to come; and by these, the church under the Old Testament were led, confidently to expect his coming in the fulness of time.

The expected Saviour was called in the Hebrew language *Messiah*; and in the Greek *Christos* or Christ; both of which words signify the same thing, viz. the *anointed*. Under the Old Testament, the high priests always, and in some instances, prophets and kings, were invested with their respective offices, by being anointed with oil. In reference to this custom, the promised Saviour, who was to sustain the threefold office of prophet, priest and king, was called the Messiah or Christ, that is, the anointed.

In the chapter which contains our text, we find Jesus of Nazareth, conversing with a woman of Samaria. In the course of conversation, the woman was led to make the observation in our text, in which she expressed the general belief of those who enjoyed the Scriptures of the Old Testament. "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ." To this observation, Jesus replied, "I that speak unto thee am he."

The doctrine contained in our text is, *Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.*

This doctrine we have contained in our Catechism in the answer to the twenty-first question.

"Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?"

The only Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man; and so was; and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures, and one person forever."

The former part of this answer, viz. "*The only Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ,*" contains the doctrine of our text.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove this; or in other words, to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

The question, whether the promised Messiah hath already come? is not between the christian and the infidel; for the latter totally rejects the doctrine of a Saviour, either as already come, or as yet to come; but the question is between the christian and the Jew; for the latter believes that a Saviour has been promised, but denies that he has come, and looks for him as yet to come.

Let us first enquire whether the promised Messiah hath already come, and then the way will be better prepared to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

1. That the promised Messiah hath already come is proved from a prophecy of Jacob delivered on his death bed, and recorded Gen. xlix. 10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." By Shiloh in this text was meant, the Messiah. Thus the ancient Jewish interpreters explained the word. The sceptre was a badge of authority. Hence the meaning of this prophecy was, that the tribe of Judah should have authority, until the Messiah should come. Onkelos, one of the most famous paraphrasts among the Jews, who lived just before the christian era, makes the following paraphrase on this text. "There shall not be taken away, one having the principality, from the house of Judah, nor a scribe from his children's children, until Messias come, whose is the kingdom." If then the sceptre and lawgiver have departed from Judah; according to the received opinion among the Jews prior to the christian era, the Messiah must have already come.

But it is evident the Jews have been for about eighteen hundred years without a sceptre or lawgiver. The sceptre departed, when they became tributary to the Romans, and a Roman governor was set over them. And soon after when Judea was conquered, and Jerusalem was de-

stroyed, by Titus the Roman general, they ceased to be a distinct nation, and have ever since been dispersed throughout the world, without any form of government, civil laws, or rulers of their own. Therefore, according to this prophecy, the promised Messiah, who was to come before the Jews ceased to be a distinct society, governed by their own laws and rulers, must have long since come.

2. That the promised Messiah hath already come is proved, from a prophecy which we find, Dan. ix. 24-27. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." In this prophecy, the Messiah is expressly designated by name; the length of time until he should come and accomplish the work of man's salvation, is definitely pointed out; viz. seventy weeks; and a precise period is given, from which we are to date the commencement of these seventy weeks; viz. the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, which then lay in ruins.

In the Scriptures we frequently find weeks of years, as well as weeks of days. By the weeks in this prophecy, according to the universal consent of christian writers, we are to understand weeks of years. And thus the ancient Jews interpreted the prophecy. But some of the more modern Jews have endeavoured to extend the time, by supposing these weeks to have contained each seven times seven or forty-nine years, and to have reached from one jubilee to another. But this is an explanation to which they are driven to avoid the force of this prophecy: and it is an explanation for which they have no warrant. These seventy weeks were weeks of years, amounting in all to four hundred and ninety years.

The commencement of these weeks must be dated from some decree to restore and build Jerusalem, which,

at the time of delivering the prophecy, lay in ruins. We find four decrees on this subject, issued by the Persian kings, the first in the first year of the reign of Cyrus; the second, in the early part of the reign of Darius Hystaspis; the third, in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus; and the fourth, in the twentieth year of the reign of the same king. Writers on this subject are not universally agreed from which of these decrees we are to date the commencement of Daniel's seventy weeks. It is certain we must date their commencement from one of these decrees; and the most general opinion is, that they commenced with the decree given to Ezra, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. But it is indifferent, as to our present purpose, from which of these decrees we date their commencement. For if we take the last, the period of seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, from that time, has run out above seventeen hundred years since. The necessary conclusion is, that the Messiah who was to come about the end of these seventy weeks has long since come.

3. That the promised Messiah hath already come, may be further proved from a prophecy recorded Hag. ii. 7, 9. "I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." And also from a prophecy of similar import, recorded Mal. iii. 1. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." By "the Desire of all nations, the Lord whom ye seek," and "the Messenger of the covenant" are evidently meant the Messiah. According to the prophecy in Haggai, the glory of the second temple, which was then building, was to exceed that of the first. Now the glory of the second temple did not exceed that of the first in the greater purity of the worship or worshippers, or in its external ornaments. In the former respect, the glory of the second temple certainly was not superior to the first; and in external ornaments its glory was far inferior to the first. For we read in this same chapter of Haggai, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" Besides the

second temple lacked a number of things, which were the chief glory of the first, viz. the Shekinah, the Ark of the covenant, the Urim and Thummim, the holy fire, and the holy anointing oil. The greater glory of the second temple above that of the first, consisted alone in this, that the Desire of all nations, the Messiah, was to come into it and dignify it with his presence. And that the Messiah was to come into this temple, was plainly foretold in the prophecy quoted from Malachi. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in." Hence it is evident, the Messiah was to enter into the second temple, and therefore, that he was to come while it was yet standing. But this temple has long since been destroyed, and so totally destroyed, that not one stone has been left upon another. Hence the necessary conclusion is, that the promised Messiah hath long since come.

We proceed now to show that Jesus of Nazareth is this Messiah, who, as we have seen, hath already come.

1. Jesus appeared in our world at the time, when, according to the prophecies, which have already been considered, the Messiah was to come. He was born about the time the sceptre departed from Judah. The sceptre had been for some time gradually departing; and it is worthy of notice, that at the very time Jesus was born, the Jews were performing an act of national submission to the Romans, before unknown. A decree had been issued by Augustus Cæsar, the Roman emperor, commanding all the world to be taxed. At the very time of executing this decree in Judea, when Joseph and Mary went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be taxed, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. When Jesus was about twelve years old, Judea was reduced into a Roman province, and a Roman governor was set over it. And in a few years after the death of Jesus, every vestige of the sceptre entirely departed from the Jews, when they ceased to be a distinct society, and were scattered abroad over the face of the earth. Jesus also appeared about the close of Daniel's seventy prophetic weeks, or four hundred and ninety years from the decrees of the Persian kings to restore and build Jerusalem. And, dating the commencement of these weeks from the decree given to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. (the words of which decree best answer to

the prophecy) it was just four hundred and ninety years from this time to the death of Jesus.

2. The prophecies, that the Messiah should enter the second temple, were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Some suppose that Herod the Great entirely pulled down the second temple, and built a new one; and that therefore the temple into which Jesus entered was the third rather than the second. It is true, Herod greatly repaired and adorned the temple; but the Jews themselves considered it still as the second temple, until it was destroyed by the Romans.

3. Jesus of Nazareth descended from the persons from whom, according to the prophecies, the Messiah was to descend. He was a descendant of Abraham, in whose Seed, according to Gen. xxii. 18, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. He was a Star out of Jacob, according to the prophecy. Num. xxiv. 17. He was of the tribe of Judah, of which, according to Gen. xlix. 10, Shiloh was to come. He was of the family of David, according to the prophecy. Is. xi. 1, 2. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." And the prophecy, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch. And this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." And he was born of a virgin, according to the prophecy, Isai. vii. 14. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel." All these prophecies were accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The place where the Messiah should be born was predicted, Micah v. 2. "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This prophecy also was fulfilled in Jesus; for he was born at Bethlehem. And it is worthy of notice, that this was not the place of his mother's residence, but she was, in the providence of God, brought thither, at the very time of the birth of Jesus.

5. The Messiah was to have a fore-runner, according to the prophecy, Isa. xl. 3. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make

straight in the desert a highway for our God." And the prophecy, Mal. iii. 1. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Jesus had a fore-runner, John the Baptist, who answered to the predictions respecting the fore-runner of the Messiah, and who professed himself to be "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." John i. 23.

6. The prophets foretold the character, works, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the consequent calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the true God. All these predictions were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; which appears from the history of the New Testament, the truth of which history is confirmed by many arguments, and especially by the testimony of many credible witnesses, who testified at the expense of the loss of almost every temporal comfort, and many of whom finally sealed their testimony with their blood and lives. Isaiah prophesied concerning him. Chap. liii. 9. "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He challenged his enemies to convict him of sin. And even Judas, who betrayed him, confessed that he had betrayed the innocent blood; and Pilate, who condemned him, acknowledged that he found no fault in him. Isaiah foretold that the Messiah should work miracles. Is. xxxv. 5, 6. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." The history of the life of Jesus teaches us that this prophecy also was fulfilled in him. For he wrought numerous miracles. The Messiah, according to David, Ps. xl. 9, was to preach righteousness; and, according to Isaiah lxi. 1, good tidings. Jesus preached righteousness. His doctrines and his precepts were all holy, and proved that he came not to destroy the law, but to maintain it. And he preached pardon, peace, and eternal life to all the believing and penitent. These were certainly good tidings. Isaiah predicted, in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy, that the Messiah should be despised and rejected of men, be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shear-

ers is dumb, should not open his mouth, and that he should be cut off out of the land of the living. All these prophecies were exactly fulfilled in Jesus. In this same chapter Isaiah prophesied, that the Messiah should be numbered with the transgressors, and make his grave with the rich. Jesus was put to death as a malefactor, and was crucified between two thieves; and he was buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and honorable counsellor.

It was foretold by David, Ps. xvi. 10, that the Messiah should rise again from the dead. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." David also prophesied of his ascension into heaven. Ps. lxxviii. 18. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And Psalm. cx. 1. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." These prophecies also were fulfilled in Jesus. For he arose on the third day, and showed himself alive for forty days to many credible witnesses, and, in the presence of many, ascended up towards heaven, until a cloud received him out of their sight. It was also predicted by the prophets, that when the Messiah came the Gentiles should be called into his kingdom, and should forsake idolatry and worship the true God. This we know was fulfilled in Jesus; for shortly after his death, numerous Gentiles forsook idolatry, acknowledged the true God, and embraced the religion of Jesus.

Thus, in Jesus of Nazareth were exactly fulfilled the numerous prophecies of the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah. Hence we conclude that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah that was to come according to the prophecies of the Old Testament.

If further confirmation of this doctrine were necessary, it might be further confirmed by several other considerations. About the time of the birth of Jesus, there was a general expectation among the Jews that the appearance of the Messiah was at hand. This general expectation doubtless arose from an examination of the prophecies, and the sense in which they were then understood. When Jesus was born, an angel appeared unto the shepherds of

Bethlehem, and informed them, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Luk. ii. 11, 13, 14. The aged and pious Simeon and Anna testified, when the infant Jesus was presented in the temple, that he was the promised Messiah. And the extraordinary star which guided the wise men from the East to Bethlehem was an evidence of the same truth.

In addition to these evidences, the wonderful establishment, success, and progress of the religion which Jesus founded, afford further proof of his divine mission, and that he was what he professed himself to be; the promised Messiah. His cause had difficulties to contend with insuperable to human power. Jesus, the author of this religion, was low in condition, and of no estimation in life, and had been put to an ignominious death. His religion was opposed to all the then existing religions, and would make no compromise with them; but demanded their extirpation. It was opposed to the passions, the prejudices, the education, and the worldly interests of the men to whom it was addressed. And it exposed those who embraced it, to losses, poverty, disgrace, persecution, torture and death. The preachers who first promulgated this religion, were few in number, and in general, obscure and illiterate, without human power, wealth, learning or friends to give them influence. And this religion had to contend, in its infancy, with the opposition and persecution of the powerful Roman empire. But notwithstanding these difficulties, the religion of Jesus triumphed, and was established, and has been continued in the world ever since. For this, we cannot consistently account, on any other principle, than that the Almighty power of God was exerted in its favour, whereby he has owned the divine mission of its author; and therefore that he was what he professed himself to be, the promised Messiah.

And we may add; this doctrine is further confirmed by the beneficial and wonderful effects, the christian religion has produced in every age, and still produces in the present day. It frequently effects great changes in men, making them new and holy creatures; and it has had great influence in meliorating the state of society. These things

evidence its heavenly origin, and therefore that its author had a divine mission, and consequently was what he professed himself to be; the Christ, or promised Messiah.

This subject teaches us,

1. The safety of the christian's foundation of hope of salvation. Jesus, as the Saviour who was to come, is the foundation of his hope. If he were not the promised Messiah, his hope in him for salvation would be vain. But he is indeed the Christ, whose coming and whose work, the prophets foretold, and the types prefigured. Of this as we have seen from the preceding discourse, we have clear and abundant evidence. If the faith of the christian in Jesus, as a sufficient and sure foundation of hope of salvation, needs strengthening, this subject is calculated to strengthen it.

2. This subject teaches us the deplorable state of the Jews, once God's peculiar people. Truly, they must be given up by God to judicial blindness, since, while they believe in the prophecies of the Old Testament, which so plainly teach that the promised Messiah must have long since come, and which have been so exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, they still persist, in disbelieving his divine mission, and in refusing to receive him as the Messiah that was to come; and still continue to look for another. Unbelief was the cause of this fearful judgment of judicial blindness, and of all the other judgments which have come upon them. Let us take warning from their example, and beware of unbelief.

How long the Jews are to continue, in their present deplorable state, we know not. We look forward with confidence, according to the promises of God, to a day of glorious deliverance from their present blindness; when the vail shall be removed from their hearts, when they read Moses and the prophets; when as natural branches, which through unbelief have been broken off, they shall again be grafted into their own olive tree, the church; when they shall look on him, whom their fathers pierced, and shall mourn and be in bitterness for him; and when they shall acknowledge, and shall rejoice in the truth, that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, to whom the prophets bare witness.

Let christians not forget this unhappy people in their

prayers; and let their heart's desire and earnest prayer to God be, that Israel may be saved. What glory will redound to the Saviour, when Jew and Gentile shall be one in Christ Jesus! What new and glorious evidence of their divine authority will then be shed upon the Scriptures! And what a season of joy will it be to the Gentile believers, to see the Jews gathered in to the christian fold!

To accomplish this glorious event, may the Lord come quickly. May the whole earth be speedily filled with the glory of the Saviour Jesus. And may we all believe in him as the promised Messiah, with that saving faith, which receives him as the Lord our Righteousness.—
AMEN.

SERMON XXIX.

TWO NATURES AND ONE PERSON IN CHRIST.

ROMANS ix. 5.

“Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.”

WE have seen who is the Messiah or Christ, that was promised under the Old Testament. It follows that we next enquire, what he is? Our text teaches us that he is “God blessed forever;” and at the same time, that he is a man of the nation of Israel, “Of whom,” that is, of the Israelites, mentioned in the preceding verse, “Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.” The text contains the following doctrine.

There are two natures, the divine and human, united in the person of Christ.

This doctrine we have contained in our Catechism, in the answer to the 21st Question.

“Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?”

The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man;

and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person forever."

That the Son is a distinct person from the Father, though the same in essence; and that he is a divine person, God equal with the Father, have already been proved in the discourses on the Trinity. The proofs on this article of christain faith, need not here be repeated.

This Son of God, co-equal with the Father, became incarnate, or assumed human nature into union with his divine nature. This is evident from numerous passages of Scripture. It will be sufficient to quote a few of them.

The doctrine is taught in our text, "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." It is also taught in the following passages. John i. 1, 14. "The Word was God; and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Phil. ii. 5-8. "Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man." 1 Tim. iii. 16. "God was manifest in the flesh." Rom. i. 3, 4. "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." And in Heb. ii. 14, 16, 17, it is said of him, who in the context is called the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, the Son of God, and God, and Lord." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. He took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren."

These and many other texts clearly teach, that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, assumed human nature into union with his divine nature.

This union was so made as to constitute but one person, the God-man, Christ Jesus; and at the same time it was so made, that the two natures are not confounded, but remain distinct.

That the divine and human nature are so united as to form but one person, the Scriptures abundantly teach. Thus, in our text, it is the same person, Christ, who came

of the Israelites, as concerning the flesh, and who is over all God blessed forever. And in the other passages which have just been quoted, it is the same person, Christ Jesus, who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and who made himself of no reputation, took the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man. And it is the same person, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness. And in Acts xx. 28, we read of the "blood of God." And in 1 Cor. ii. 8, of the crucifixion of "the Lord of glory." In these last two passages, the name is taken from the divine nature, and the properties and actions from the human nature; which properties and actions could not be ascribed to God, and the Lord of glory, but as these names expressed the one person of the God-man, Christ Jesus.

This mysterious union of two natures in one person is so made, that the two natures are not confounded; but remain distinct. This also is the doctrine of the Scriptures, as appears from the frequent opposition of two natures in the same text. He is in the form of God, and of a servant. He is of the seed of David, and the Son of God. And even contrary things are attributed to him; as that he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and yet that the Father was greater than he; that he was about to depart from the world, and yet would continue with us forever; and that he was ignorant of the day of judgment, and yet knew all things. These and such like expressions plainly teach that there are, in the person of Christ, two distinct natures; and they must be thus explained to be understood.

The following is therefore the doctrine of Scripture on this subject. The eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, assumed the human nature into union with his divine nature; which union was so formed that the two natures are not confounded, but remain distinct; and yet constitute but one person, God-man, so that the proper works of each nature may be attributed to the whole person.

And here it may be asked, why was it requisite that the Mediator should be such a person as we have seen the Scriptures teach us he is?

A few remarks in answer to this question may be proper in this place.

In view of what has been said, the question is naturally divided into three parts.

1. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God? In our Larger Catechism this question is answered as follows:—

“It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God’s justice, procure his favour, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.”

In this answer, we have stated the reasons why it was requisite that the Mediator should be God. It was necessary to our salvation, that the law of God should be perfectly fulfilled, and its curse on account of transgression be borne by him who would effect our deliverance. A mere man, or a mere creature, however dignified, was not capable of rendering such an active obedience to the divine law, that the merit thereof could be imputed to us; for it is the duty of every creature to render perfect obedience to the utmost of his powers for himself; and therefore none of his perfect obedience could have been set to our account for our acceptance. Besides, a mere creature would not have been able to satisfy divine justice, by bearing the curse. For should he have died for us, his death would not have been of sufficient efficacy to have satisfied divine justice for sin, and remove the curse. For sin is an infinite evil, as it is committed against an infinite being, and is the violation of infinite obligations; and therefore it deserves an infinite punishment. And the Scriptures abundantly teach us that the curse of the law is eternal death, which is a punishment infinite in duration. And therefore it was impossible that the death of any mere man, or mere creature, though ever so dignified, should make an adequate atonement for sin, and thus satisfy divine justice, and redeem the sinner from the curse of the divine law. Hence it was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that his active obedience might be meritorious, and that he might give such an infinite efficacy

to his sufferings, as would make an adequate atonement for sin.

Further, as it was necessary that the Mediator should bear the curse of the law due to sin, or the infinite wrath of God; a mere man or creature could not have borne up under this wrath, so as to have made satisfaction to divine justice; it was therefore necessary that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God.

And further, it was requisite that the Spirit should be sent to apply salvation; that the wicked heart should be subdued; that the enemies of his church should be restrained and conquered; and that his people should be brought safe to glory, and crowned with everlasting life. None but a divine person was competent to these things. It was therefore also requisite that the Mediator should be God.

2. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be man?

This question is also answered in our Larger Catechism, as follows:—

“It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.”

It was requisite that the Mediator should become subject to the divine law, and render obedience thereunto. For the divine law immutably requires perfect obedience; and if sinners are saved, this obedience must be rendered by their surety. But it is inconsistent that the divine nature should be obedient to the law. It was therefore requisite that the Mediator should be man. Besides it was meet that the law which was given to man, should be obeyed by man; and therefore also it was requisite that the Mediator should be man.

But a further obedience to the divine law, than merely active, was necessary. Man had by sin incurred the curse of the law; and the holiness, justice and truth of God required the execution of this curse. This curse was death. Therefore if man be saved, the Mediator, his surety, must die. It was therefore necessary that the Mediator

should be man; for the divine nature cannot suffer or die. Besides, it was requisite that the same nature which had sinned, should suffer and bear the penalty of the law, and therefore also that the Mediator should be man. It was necessary also that the Mediator should be man to make intercession for his people, as this is a work of obedience. And further, it was fit that he should be man, that he might have a fellow-feeling for our infirmities, and that we might with boldness approach unto God through him. This reason of the humanity of Christ is given. Heb. ii. 17, 18. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." And Heb. iv. 15, 16. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

3. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God and man in one person?

Again, we give the answer of the Larger Catechism. "It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should himself be both God and man, and this in one person; that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole person."

If there had been two persons, the actions of one nature could not have derived efficacy from the other. The obedience, sufferings, and death of the human nature, could not have derived efficacy from the divine nature to render them infinitely meritorious, and therefore would have been ineffectual. But united in one person, the proper works of each nature belong to the one person, the God-man Christ Jesus; and thus become efficient to the redemption of fallen man.

From this subject we may draw several important instructions.

1. It teaches us the wonderful condescension and love of God. What infinite love was it in the Father, that he should, for our salvation, give his only begotten Son, to be humbled to a union with our nature! And what infi-

nite love and condescension was it in the Son of God, that he should stoop to be made flesh, and take the nature of us his creatures, and this nature too degraded by sin, into such a close union with his divine nature! The incarnation of the Son of God filled angels with praise, when at Bethlehem, they celebrated his birth, saying, "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Luk. 2. 14. And with adoring wonder, they still desire to look into this mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. And shall not we, when we contemplate this subject, praise, and wonder, and adore, and love? For the incarnation of Christ imposes on us far greater obligations to these duties, than it does on the angels. For he took on him, not the nature of angels, but our nature; and he became incarnate, not for angels, but for us.

2. In view of this subject, human nature appears dignified. Our nature has been greatly degraded by sin. But by the incarnation of Christ, it has been raised to a dignity, may we not say, superior even to angelic nature; for the Son of God "took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Let us be thankful for the honor, which has hereby been put upon human nature. And let us endeavour, by a holy walk, to live in some measure agreeably to this dignity conferred upon our nature.

3. We learn from our subject the glory and safety of the gospel plan of salvation. Here is a Mediator capable of maintaining the divine glory in the salvation of sinners. And here is a Mediator every way suited to the miseries and necessities of man. Very God, and very man, united in one person. Not a mere man, whose obedience could not have been meritorious, so as to be imputed to sinners; who could not have endured the infinite weight of the wrath of God due to sin; and whose sufferings and death could not have been sufficient to make atonement for sin. Nor merely God, who, as such, could not have obeyed and suffered and died, and therefore could not have made the necessary satisfaction to justice. But true and eternal God, and real man, in one person, so that the proper works of each nature belong to the whole person; and therefore fitted to obey and suffer and die, and at the same time able to bear up under his sufferings, until he

had made a complete satisfaction, and to give an infinite efficacy to his sufferings, equal to the utmost demands of the divine law; and able also to subdue the stubborn heart, to keep his people by his mighty power, and finally bring them safe to glory and crown them with everlasting life. In such a Saviour; we need not be afraid to trust for the salvation of our immortal souls.

To this Saviour, the awakened soul, who, sensible of the desert of sin and of his own helplessness, is enquiring, what shall I do to be saved? is directed for salvation. Here is just such a Saviour as you need. One able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and one every way suited to your case. Flee to him by faith, and you shall be saved. And let christians dwell more upon the character of the Saviour, as God and man in one person, that they may have a more impressive sense of the glory and safety of the way of salvation through him; and have stronger consolation in him, as the refuge to which they have fled for safety.

4. Finally, our subject is calculated to encourage the christian to feel a humble boldness in his approaches to God, since he has at the right hand of God, exalted as Mediator to the highest honor, power and favour, an advocate in human nature. "Let us therefore," as the Apostle exhorts, Heb. iv. 16, "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."—AMEN.

SERMON XXX.

THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

Acts iii. 22.

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you."

¹THIS is a quotation from Deut. xviii. 15. Under the Old Testament, the high-priests always, and sometimes prophets and kings, were anointed with oil. This signi-

fied the setting apart of the person thus anointed to office; and was a sign of the communication of qualifications for the performance of the duties of his office. This anointing was typical of the Saviour, and, in allusion to this, he was called the anointed or Christ; signifying his separation to the work of mediator, and his qualifications for this work. His anointing was with the Holy Ghost, above measure. The offices which Christ, as mediator, performs are three, prophet, priest, and king. This is taught in many texts of Scripture.

The doctrine of the offices which Christ, as mediator, performs, we have contained in our Catechism, in the answer to the 23rd Question.

“What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?”

Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.”

To treat of these offices, will require several discourses. The *prophetical* office first claims our attention. This office of Christ is the subject of our text. That Christ sustains and performs the office of a prophet, we learn from numerous passages of Scripture, besides our text. He spake of himself as a prophet. Luke xiii. 33. “I must walk to day and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” He was called a prophet, by the multitude, when, at Nain, he raised the widow’s son to life. Luke vii. 16. “They glorified God saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us.” He was so called, also, by the five thousand who were miraculously fed by him. John vi. 14. “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.”

The woman of Samaria had the same opinion of his character, when she said, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” John iv. 19. The same testimony to his prophetical office was borne, by the people in the temple, at the time of the feast of tabernacles, when they said, “Of a truth this is the Prophet.” John vii. 40. And also, by the two disciples, journeying to Emmaus, after his resurrection. Luke xxiv. 19. “Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet, mighty in deed and word, before God, and all the people.” His prophetical office is also proved by all

those numerous passages, in which he is spoken of as a teacher, a counsellor, the Angel of the covenant, the Wisdom of God, the light of Men, the opener of blind eyes, and the Anointed to preach the gospel.

A prophet, in Scripture, signifies one who foretells future events; and also a teacher in divine things. In both these senses Christ was a prophet. He personally predicted future events, many of which have been fulfilled, and some remain yet to be accomplished; and he inspired all other prophets to foretell the events which they predicted. And he revealed the will of God unto men for their salvation.

The manner in which Christ executes the prophetic office, we have stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 24th Question.

“How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?”

Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.”

According to this answer, there are two ways in which Christ executes his prophetic office; viz. by his word, and by the Spirit.

Christ hath executed his prophetic office in all ages, since the fall, and will continue to execute it until the end of the world. He revealed the will of God for salvation before his incarnation. He entered upon his prophetic office immediately after the fall, though the more perfect execution of it was reserved until his actual appearance in the flesh.

In most, if not all the appearances of God, recorded in the Old Testament, it is generally supposed, and with good reason, that God the Son, the second person of the Trinity is meant. Therefore the instructions, which, under the Old Testament, were immediately communicated by God, are to be ascribed to God the Son, who afterwards became incarnate. And all the instructions which were communicated to the Old Testament church, by holy men, under the influence of inspiration, may be ascribed to Christ as the author. For we read, 2 Pet. i. 21. “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Now the Scriptures teach us that the Holy Ghost, in the work of redemption, acts in subserviency to

Christ as mediator, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto men. And therefore the teachings of men inspired by the Holy Ghost, under the Old Testament, may properly be ascribed to Christ, in the execution of his prophetic office. Agreeably, to this we are informed, 1 Pet. iii. 19, that "Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached unto the spirits in prison." That is, to the wicked generation who lived before the flood, and who, when the Apostle wrote, were spirits in prison. And, 1 Pet. i. 11, it is recorded of the prophets who prophesied of the grace that should come; "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

Christ also executed this office, by his own personal ministry, when he was upon earth. He then preached glad tidings, and revealed the will of God, and pointed out the way of salvation, far more clearly than ever before had been done. And after his ascension he sent the Holy Spirit into the Evangelists and Apostles, and inspired them to make known still further the will of God for salvation. Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. "When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And in the instructions, which the inspired writers of the New Testament communicated, and have left on record, making a part of the canon of Scripture, they were but the servants of Christ, through whom he was executing his prophetic office.

And he still executes this office by the whole of his word. In this, he reveals unto men the way of salvation; and every time we read the word of God, or hear it read, we are reading or hearing the instructions of Christ as a prophet. When, in any way, we attend to the Scriptures, Christ is to be considered as in the execution of his prophetic office, teaching us the will of God. And the ministers of the gospel, whose business it is to study and explain the Scriptures, are the servants of Christ, in the execution of his prophetic office.

But Christ executes the office of a prophet, in revealing to men the will of God for salvation, not only by his

word, but also by his Spirit. It is infinite mercy that he instructs us by his word; and if he were to leave us with this instruction, and not grant the teachings of his Spirit, and we were never to come to a saving knowledge of the truth, but should perish in our sins, we would be without excuse. For we should not perish for want of light shining around us, if we would only come to it, and receive it. The Scriptures contain all the information necessary on the subject of the way of salvation; and they address numerous motives to us, as rational creatures, to influence us to embrace the salvation of the gospel.

But the human heart is depraved. It is enmity against God. It is opposed to holiness, and has no spiritual relish for divine truth. The disposition of man, in his natural state, is so opposed to the truths of God's word, that the great body of the unregenerate remain ignorant of even a speculative knowledge of the Scriptures. They have such an aversion to them that they will not even read them. Many others who do read them, perform this duty as a task to which they are compelled by habits of education, or by conscience, or from fashion, or some such unholy motive; but they read them in such a careless manner, and with so little interest, perceiving no beauty or attraction in them, that they remain almost, if not quite as ignorant, of even a speculative knowledge of their contents, as those who never open them. Of this general ignorance of even a speculative knowledge of the great truths of religion, as taught in the word of God, there are numerous examples; as those well know, who converse much with mankind on the subject of religion.

It is true there are some unregenerate persons, who have a considerable speculative knowledge of the Scriptures. But even these remain ignorant of the beauty and glory of these truths; and some of the most important of them are foolishness to them.

The great reason of this ignorance of divine truth, is the disrelish and opposition of the heart. The sinner is therefore inexcusable for his ignorance of a spiritual knowledge of the truths of the Scriptures. For opposition to God, and disrelish of his holy truths, can never release from obligations to know and love the truth. This opposition and disrelish are in themselves unreasonable and wrong; and therefore cannot form a just excuse for

that ignorance, which is their fruit. But nevertheless they will invariably keep the mind in willing ignorance of the truths of God's word, or at least of their spirituality and excellency. And if the sinner were left to the word alone, he would ever, willingly, remain ignorant of a saving knowledge of divine truth, and justly perish in his ignorance. The influences of the divine Spirit are therefore necessary. Without these, the sinner will never have a saving knowledge of divine truth. The word of itself will never savingly enlighten him.

The necessity of the operations of the Holy Spirit, to lead to a saving knowledge of divine truth, is abundantly evident from the testimony of the word of God. Take the following texts: 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 14. "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And 2 Cor. iv. 6. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This teaching of the Spirit, by which Christ executes his prophetic office, does not consist in imparting any new revelation to the soul. For, as has already been observed, every thing necessary to salvation is already revealed in the Scriptures. No new revelation is needed. Nor does it consist in creating any new faculty in the soul. But it consists, radically, in changing the temper of the heart; taking away the dislike to divine truth, and imparting a taste or relish for holiness, and fixing the attention upon divine things. The importance, beauty, and glory of the truths contained in the Scriptures will then be perceived. The word of God will be considered a different book from what it before appeared to be. There will be a divine excellency in its instructions, which the soul will cordially approve and delight in. If the person thus changed, before neglected to read the Bible, he will peruse it now. If he before read it with carelessness, he will now peruse it with lively interest. If he before had a speculative knowledge of the Scriptures, his knowledge of them will now be very different. Before he might have had a rational conviction, that God was such a being as

the Scriptures represent him to be; but now he appears glorious in being such. He might before have had a speculative knowledge of the character of Jesus Christ as a Saviour; but now he sees the necessity of such a Saviour, and a suitableness and loveliness in his character, to which he was before a stranger. He might before have been doctrinally acquainted with the gospel plan of salvation; but now he beholds a glory in it, of which, until now, he was ignorant. He might before have had a general knowledge of what the law of God required; but now he sees what he saw not before, that the law is holy, just, and good; and that sin, which is a transgression of the law, is odious. These instances may serve to show the difference between that knowledge of the things of religion, which the word may impart without the operations of the Spirit, and that which is the effect of the influences of the Spirit upon the heart.

And here it will be proper to remark, although the word of itself will never lead depraved man to a spiritual and saving knowledge of divine truth, but the influences of the Spirit are essentially necessary to effect this; yet the necessity of the word is by no means hereby taken away. The Scriptures contain the truths to be known; the Spirit opens the heart, as he did that of Lydia, to attend to, to understand, and to receive these truths in love. And for the Spirit to operate upon our hearts, changing their carnal disposition, and giving a relish for divine truth, if at the same time we speculatively knew nothing of the truths of God's word, and could have no access to them, would be like giving us eyes to see, in order to obtain a certain kind of knowledge, when, at the same time, the objects from which alone this knowledge could be obtained were not within the reach of our sight. As to knowledge in this case, we should remain just as ignorant as we were before we received sight. The case would be similar, if the Spirit were to operate upon our hearts, and we were entirely unacquainted with the word, and could have no access to it; unless at the same time he changed our hearts, he were to reveal in us the truths of religion, which is not, as far as we know, the manner of the divine procedure. This would do away the use of the word. But that God has given us his word, is an argument in favour of its necessity, at least where access to it can be had.

And we have, in the Scriptures, examples in point. The Spirit prepared the heart of Cornelius to receive instruction in the truths of the gospel, and he might have immediately communicated the truths to his mind, or he might have commissioned the angel sent to him, to impart this instruction; but neither of these was done. An angel was sent, not to reveal the gospel to him, but to direct him to send for Peter, that he might, in the ordinary way, be instructed in the truth necessary to be known. The case of Lydia was similar. The Spirit of the Lord opened her heart, and he might, at the same time, have revealed the truths of religion to her; but he did not do this: Paul must be directed by a vision into Macedonia, and he must preach in the hearing of Lydia. Another case in point was that of the Ethiopian eunuch; and we read, Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

A few inferences will now close this subject. And

1. We may infer from what has been said, that mankind are by nature in a deplorable state. They are spiritually blind, and while they continue in this condition, though the light of divine truth shines around them, "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;" John i. 5, and they will continue strangers to the light. This spiritual blindness is a necessary inference from the doctrine of this discourse. For if mankind were not spiritually blind, there would be no need of the influences of the Spirit, savingly to enlighten the mind. And what adds to the misery of unregenerate sinners is, they are willingly blind. They love their blindness, and hate the light, and will not come to it lest their deeds should be reprov'd. And this willing blindness is so invincible, that nothing less than the power of the divine Spirit will ever avail to remove it. And unless it is removed, the sinner must perish. How deplorable the condition of those who are yet in their natural state! Let them consider it; for they must become sensible of their blindness and ignorance, if they ever are savingly enlightened.

2. Our subject teaches us who can take away our blindness, and consequent ignorance. Christ is a teacher, come from God. And he is a teacher exactly suited to our misery. For he not only perfectly knows the will of God,

and hath imparted all the instruction necessary to make us wise unto salvation; but he is able also, by his Spirit, to take away our blindness, and give us spiritual sight. Let us be thankful for such a prophet. Let us, with the blind men by the way side, cry unto him, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us, and open our eyes. Let us attend to his instructions, and believe and obey them. In our text, we are commanded to hear this Prophet in all that he has said. And, as we learn from the verse following our text, it is at our peril, if we do not attend to his instructions. "And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." How dreadful, my hearers, the situation of those of you who are inattentive and disobedient to the instructions of Christ, contained in his word! If you continue thus to act, everlasting destruction awaits you. Think of this, ye who refuse him that speaketh from heaven, and now listen to his counsels and obey them.

3. We may infer from our subject the importance of searching the Scriptures, and becoming acquainted with their contents. An acquaintance with the Scriptures is of importance, not only to the regenerate, but also to the unregenerate. As we learn from our subject, the truths of God's word must be in the mind before they can be savingly known or relished, and their beauty and glory discovered. Therefore when the mind is already stored with a speculative knowledge of divine truth, when the spiritual discernment imparted by the Holy Spirit in regeneration is given, it has something upon which immediately to act. And there is much greater probability that one who, before conversion, was doctrinally acquainted with the Scriptures, will, after conversion, speedily become a rational, comfortable, enlightened, and steady christian, than one who, until his conversion, remained almost entirely ignorant of a speculative knowledge of the Scriptures. And hence we may see the importance of a religious education, and of teaching the Scriptures to children and youth.

But especially to the regenerate, is a knowledge of the Scriptures highly important. They contain the truths which they are to believe; and which are to be the rule of their practice. Just as important as is a saving knowledge of divine truth, is an acquaintance with the Scrip-

tures; and we have no ground to expect the former without the latter. Indeed they who are habitually neglectful of the Scriptures must be strangers to true religion; for when the heart is changed, divine truth will be loved, and with that which we love we naturally desire to become acquainted. Let those who name the name of Christ therefore, obey his command, "Search the Scriptures."

Finally, let this discourse be improved for self-examination. Have we ever become savingly acquainted with the instructions of Christ as a prophet? Have we been taught by the Spirit? Have our hearts been changed, so that the truth appears glorious and lovely? Let us examine ourselves. For unless we are taught of Christ, and are habitually learning of him, we are none of his. And without an interest in him, we must perish. And peculiarly dreadful will be our destruction, if we should perish, amidst such light as Christ has shed around us. May we all give diligent heed to the instructions of Christ, that our souls may live.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXI.

THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

I JOHN ii. 2. FIRST CLAUSE.

"And he is the propitiation for our sins."

WE have considered the prophetic office of Christ. The doctrine of his priestly office next claims our attention. This is stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 25th Question, as follows:—

"How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?"

Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us."

According to this answer, the parts of Christ's priestly office are two; viz. offering sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and making intercession. He did the former, when

on earth, he offered himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; he began to do the latter, while he was yet on earth, and has been more especially engaged in it since his ascension to heaven.

The object of the sacrifice which Christ made of himself was to satisfy divine justice, and thus to open the way for our reconciliation to God, or rather the reconciliation of God with us.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove, that *Christ, by his death, made himself a sacrifice for sin, to satisfy divine justice, in the room of sinners.* This is the doctrine of our text. "And he is the propitiation for our sins."

The person spoken of in this text is the Lord Jesus Christ, as we learn from the preceding verse. "And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins." There is an allusion in our text to the mercy-seat, which covered the ark in the tabernacle and temple. The meaning of mercy-seat is, the propitiatory. It was an eminent type of Christ, as propitiating the divine justice in our behalf. By "propitiation," in our text, we are to understand the rendering of God propitious, or appeasing his anger against sinners on account of sin, so as to be willing to be reconciled to them, and to pardon and receive them to his favor. Christ thus appeased the divine anger, and opened a way for the sinner's pardon and acceptance. Hence he is called the propitiation. By his death, he made satisfaction to divine justice for sin, and thus rendered God propitious.

There are some who professedly deny that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, holding that he was sent of the Father, and came into the world, only to teach the way of salvation, and set an example of holy living; and that he died to confirm his doctrine.

It is true, all these ends were answered by what Christ did and suffered. He clearly revealed the will of God, and taught the way of salvation. He set a perfect example for our imitation. And his death was a confirmation of the truth of the doctrines which he preached. But he did more. He purchased salvation, by making satisfaction for sin, to divine justice, in the sinner's stead; and to do this was his leading object in becoming a Saviour.

This doctrine is proved—

1. By the *object of sacrifices under the Levitical law*. Their object evidently was to make an expiation or atonement for sin, and appease the wrath of God. This was professedly the object of even the Heathen, in the sacrifices which they offered. And that this was the professed object of the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests, is proved by a great number of texts in the Old Testament. In the book of Leviticus, it is repeated a great many times, that the object of the sacrifices which were offered was to make atonement for sin, that it might be forgiven the sinner who made the offering. Thus, with respect to the burnt offering, it is said of the offerer, Lev. i. 4, “It shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” So also with respect to the sin-offering made for the whole congregation, when they had sinned through ignorance, it is said, Lev. iv. 20, “And the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.” So also when a ruler had sinned through ignorance, he was directed to bring an offering which was to be slain; and it is added, Lev. iv. 26, “And the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.” The same observation is made with respect to the offering of one of the common people in the case of a sin of ignorance.” Lev. iv. 31. So also with respect to the trespass-offering, we read, Lev. v. 6, “And he shall bring his trespass-offering unto the Lord, for his sin which he hath sinned. And the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin.” But it is unnecessary to quote any more texts to show that the professed object of sacrifices, as commanded by God, was to make atonement for sin, that the wrath of God due to the offerer might be appeased and turned away. This is repeatedly declared in Leviticus, and also in other books of the Old Testament.

Atonement signifies the appeasing of the wrath of God due to sin. This is evident from the texts already quoted, and is also most plainly taught in the following passage, Num. xvi. 46–48, “And Moses said unto Aaron, take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Mo-

ses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague was begun among the people: And he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.”

The professed object of sacrifices therefore was to make atonement for sin, and appease the wrath of God due to sin. Hence it is evident that the sacrifice which Christ made of himself was expiatory, or, in other words, that it was made to satisfy divine justice, and thus appease the wrath of God, and procure the pardon of the sinner, who should look for pardon through faith in this sacrifice. For the Levitical sacrifices were unquestionably typical of Christ. This is abundantly taught in the New Testament, and especially in the epistle to the Hebrews. They were instituted for this purpose, and derived all their efficacy from Christ, and were accepted as atonements for sin, only, as the offerer acted faith upon their antitype Christ Jesus. For it is absurd, that the life of a beast should of itself make atonement for the sins of a man. Besides, in both the Old and the New Testaments is expressly taught, the entire insufficiency of the legal sacrifices, of themselves, to take away sin, and procure the favour of God. Ps. xl. 6, we read, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.” Mic. vi. 6, 7, we are informed, that burnt-offerings, calves of a year old, thousands of rams, ten thousands of rivers of oil, a first-born for transgression, and the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, were insufficient to procure the favour of God. And Heb. x. 4, we read, “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” Hence it is evident, the legal sacrifices were only typical atonements, intended to instruct in the way of salvation through Christ, and to lead the offerer to act faith upon him. And hence the conclusion follows, that Christ, who was the truth, or the substance of these shadows, did, by the sacrifice of himself, make atonement for sin to satisfy divine justice.

2. The doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, is proved by all those passages, in which he is said to have *bought*, *redeemed*, and *ransomed* us. Such are the following. 1 Cor. vi. 20, and vii. 23. “Ye are bought with a price.” Acts xx. 28. The church of God, which he hath

purchased with his own blood. Mat. xx. 28. "The son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." 1 Tim. ii. 6. "Who gave himself a ransom for all." Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Tit. ii. 14. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." Heb. ix. 12. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ." Rev. v. 9. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." These texts consider mankind as captives. They are under the curse of a broken law; under the dominion of sin; and subjected to the bondage of Satan. From this captivity, Christ hath redeemed his chosen people. Redemption sometimes takes place by a gratuitous manumission, as when a master manumits his servant, without requiring the payment of any price for his freedom. Sometimes redemption is effected by power alone, as when a captive is wrested from the hands of an enemy by superior force. But the proper meaning of redemption is deliverance by the payment of a price. In this sense, must we understand the redemption of Christ. This is evident from the passages just quoted, in which it is expressly said, that we are bought with a price; and we are informed that this price of our redemption was Christ himself, his being made a curse, his precious blood, and his life. Hence again, the conclusion is drawn, that he died to make satisfaction to divine justice for sin.

3. This doctrine may be proved from those texts of Scripture, in which Christ is said to have died *for us*. Such are the following. Rom. v. 6, 8. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." 1 Pet. ii. 21. "Christ suffered for us." 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." And Mat. xx. 28. "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many."

From these passages, we learn that Christ died *for us*. By which we are to understand, not that he died merely for our good, by confirming his doctrine, and strengthen-

ing our faith therein by his death; but in our place, to bear the divine wrath in our stead. This is frequently the meaning of the original word, translated *for* in these passages. Besides that this is the meaning of *for*, in these and similar passages, appears probable, from this consideration, that in one of them Christ is said to have given his life, not only *for*, but a *ransom* for many; which is, at least, a presumptive proof that *for*, when used to express the object of Christ's death, signifies *substitution* or *instead of*. And further, this sense of *for*, in these and similar passages, is confirmed from this consideration, that Christ is said to have died *for* us in a peculiar sense, or in a sense in which no other person can be said to have died for us. Thus we read, 2 Cor. v. 14, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." *One*, here, is evidently used in a peculiar sense, to the exclusion of all others; and his death is here mentioned as a proof of his peculiar love. Again, we read, 1 Cor. i. 13, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you?" From these passages, it is argued, that Christ died for sinners, in a sense peculiar to himself, in which neither Paul nor any other person, ever did or could die for them. But Paul and many other men could and did suffer death for the good of others. Their deaths were, and still are a confirmation of the doctrines they taught; and have strengthened, and still do strengthen the faith of the church. If therefore Christ only died to confirm his doctrine, there was nothing in his death peculiar or pre-eminent above that of the martyrs. But his death evidently was pre-eminent and peculiar; and therefore when it is said he died *for* us, it must signify something more than simply for our good. From all these considerations, we are warranted to interpret *for*, in the passages quoted, as signifying *instead of*; and therefore these passages prove that Christ suffered, in our place, the wrath of God due to sin, to satisfy divine justice.

4. The doctrine, that Christ, by his death, made satisfaction to divine justice for sin, is further proved from those passages in which he is spoken of, as *having our sins laid upon him, bearing our sins, being made sin, and a curse for us*, and the like. Such are the following. Is. liii. 4, &c. 12. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and

carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. He shall bear their iniquities. He bare the sin of many." 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." These texts teach us that our sins were imputed to Christ, in consequence of which he was treated as a sinner, and suffered the wrath of God due to sin; and therefore made atonement for it, and satisfied divine justice.

5. The unparalleled *agonies* that Christ suffered in his death, prove that he bare the wrath of God due to sin, to make atonement for sin, and satisfy the divine justice. These agonies could answer no purpose, if his death were merely to confirm his doctrine; nor were they, if unnecessary, consistent with the love of the Father towards him. We can consistently account for these extreme sufferings on no other principle, than that he bare the wrath of God due to sin. Why that agony in the garden, which caused him almost to shrink back from his undertaking, before a single stroke to occasion pain had been laid upon his body? And why that outcry upon the cross? Why these manifestations of exceeding distress, if he died merely to confirm his doctrine, especially considering that he had divine nature, the consciousness of personal innocence, and the prospect of a speedy deliverance, and a glorious crown to support him under his trials? Many of the martyrs were as cruelly tortured in their bodies, and underwent as lingering deaths as Christ, and yet endured their pains without a single groan or complaint. Was Christ inferior to the martyrs? Certainly not. And if not, his distress must have been far greater. And what made it greater? Not the stripes which his murderers inflicted, nor the nails which they drove through his hands and feet, nor the suspension of his body upon the cross. For all these sufferings many of the martyrs endured without a groan. It must have been the infinite weight of the wrath of God due to sin. The sword of divine justice was awakened against him, and was smiting him as the sinner's substitute and surety. We cannot, upon any other principle,

consistently account for the amazing sense of suffering which the Saviour manifested. It was the prospect of bearing this infinite wrath, and a foretaste of it, that caused him, before his apprehension, and while he was yet surrounded with his friends, "to be sorrowful and very heavy;" and to say unto his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Mat. xxvi. 37, 38. It was the prospect and foretaste of this wrath that caused the awful distress which he experienced in the garden of Gethsemane, when he "kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke xxii. 41, 42, 44. And it was the weight of this wrath, increased to its highest degree, when deserted of the Father, while hanging on the cross, that caused that outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mat. xxvii. 46. Surely in these extreme sufferings of the Saviour, and his groans and complaints under them, we have a convincing proof that he bore the infinite wrath of God due to sin, to make atonement for it, and satisfy the divine justice.

From this subject we learn—

1. The exceeding sinfulness of sin. To make atonement for sin, the Son of God, equal with the Father, appeared in our nature, became obedient unto death, and, in extreme sufferings, offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and open a way in which God might, consistently with his glorious perfections, pardon sin, and be reconciled unto the sinner. Can sin then be a small evil, when such an infinite sacrifice was necessary, to open a way for its pardon? Truly, as the wise man said, "fools make a mock at sin." Prov. xiv. 9. The sacrifice of Christ teaches us the extreme folly of those who can either mock at sin, or esteem it a small evil, or be unconcerned about it. O sinner! the least sin which you commit, can only be expiated and pardoned through the infinite sufferings of the Saviour. Every sin, therefore, must be an infinite evil. Let these truths be deeply impressed on every heart. And let each of us, when tempted to sin, look at the cross of Christ, and recollect what it cost him to make atonement for sin.

2. We learn from our subject, that the wrath which

awaits the finally impenitent will be dreadful indeed. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry." Luke xxiii. 31. If Christ thus suffered; if the wrath of God did thus burn against his own innocent and beloved Son, when he only stood in the place of sinners; if he spared not his own Son, can they expect to escape, who are sinners, and reject him? Surely not. The wrath of God will burn against them, and with a still fiercer flame. For Christ was the beloved Son of the Father; they are his enemies. He was personally innocent; they are personally guilty. And they have added to all their other sins, the sin of rejecting a Saviour, and the mercy offered through him. O think of the unspeakably awful wrath that awaits you, ye who forget God, and reject the Saviour, and without delay flee from the wrath that is to come.

3. Our subject presents the true and only foundation of a sinner's hope, the atonement of Christ, or the satisfaction which, by his death, he made to divine justice for sin. This is a sure foundation. To this enquiring souls are directed. All who build on this foundation are safe. By this test, my hearers, let all of you, whether you profess religion or not, who entertain a hope that you are in a state of safety, try your hope. If you are built on this foundation, you are safe. But if you are not, whatever your character otherwise be, you are yet in your sins, under the wrath of God, and condemned to eternal misery. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 12. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. iii. 11. There is no other sacrifice for sins, than that which Christ made by the sacrifice of himself, that will be acceptable to God. Let the presumptuous, who are building their hope on the unpromised mercy of God, without respect to the atonement of Christ; let the legalist, who is making his own righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ the foundation of his hope, and who supposes that he has merited the favour of God by his own doings; let the formalist, who is building his hope on an attention to the outward forms of religion; and let every person who is resting his hope of salvation on any thing else than the sacrifice of Christ,

reflect seriously on this subject. It teaches them that their hopes are fallacious.

Many, we have reason to fear, are fatally deceiving themselves, through ignorance, or a neglect of the great and fundamental doctrine of religion, which has been the subject of this discourse. They neglect and practically reject the atonement of Christ, and are trusting to something else for pardon and acceptance with God. Brethren, none but Christ can save the sinner; none but a crucified Christ, who, by his obedience unto death, made satisfaction to divine justice for sin. On the merits of his death, you must rely, and in his merits you must be interested if you ever are saved. If you are trusting to any thing else, whatever it may be, whether the mercy of God without a Saviour, your own sobriety and moral deportment in the sight of the world, your profession of religion, and external attention to its duties, your convictions, distress, prayers, tears, repentance, or any thing else, but the sacrifice of Christ, you are solemnly warned, on the authority of God's word, that you are in a fundamental error. These are all refuges of lies, and hiding places of deceit. As you value your immortal souls, and would escape the tremendous and eternal wrath of the sin-hating God, and would dwell forever in his presence, in the happiness of heaven, renounce these false hopes. Flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, sacrificed to make atonement for sin. Come to him by faith, believe in him as the propitiation for sin, receive him cordially, as he is offered in the gospel, and build your hope of pardon and acceptance with God on the satisfaction he has made to divine justice; and you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXII.

THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

ROMANS viii. 34. LAST CLAUSE.

“ *Who also maketh intercession for us.*”

OFFERING sacrifice and making intercession, were the two great duties of the high-priest under the Levitical law. The latter he performed especially on the great day of atonement; when, after having offered sacrifice without, he entered within the vail, carrying with him the blood of the sacrifice which he had offered, and there presented it before the Lord. In like manner, our great High-Priest, Jesus Christ, whom the high-priests under the law typified, having in this world offered sacrifice, which he did by laying down his own life to make atonement for sin, entered within the vail of a better and more perfect tabernacle, even into heaven itself, there to present himself before the Father, in our behalf, in the merit of the sacrifice, which he made on earth.

The *intercession* of Christ is the subject of our text. The Saviour began this work while he was yet upon earth; and especially just before his death, he performed this work, when he offered to his Father, in behalf of his people, the prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. But more especially has he been engaged in the performance of this work, since his ascension to glory.

The doctrine of Christ's intercession is proved by the following passages of Scripture besides our text. Is. liii. 12. “He made intercession for the transgressors.” Heb. ix. 24. “Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” 1 John ii. 1. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And Heb. vii. 25. “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

In treating this subject, the following points will be considered, viz. the nature, reasons, objects, properties, and benefits of Christ's intercession.

I. The *Nature* of Christ's intercession. By the inter-

cession of Christ, we are to understand his continual appearance in heaven, before the Father in our behalf, pleading the application of his purchase to his people, that their sins may be pardoned, and their persons accepted as righteous; that the Holy Ghost may be given unto them, to dwell in, sanctify, and preserve them; that their prayers may be heard and answered; and that they may have eternal life, and be with him where he is to behold the glory which the Father hath given him; and also answering all accusations, which the law of God, Satan, or their own consciences, may bring against his people.

The argument by which Christ urges his plea in behalf of his people, is the sacrifice of himself on earth, by which he made full satisfaction to divine justice for sin; and in consideration of which a certain number were given him of the Father, and the promise was made that they should receive everlasting life, together with every thing necessary to fit them for it.

In what manner Christ intercedes is doubtful. It has been made a question, whether he does this orally, that is, whether he uses words? The question is of small importance. It is sufficient for us to know, that he does intercede. However, he probably does this more by actions than by words; viz. by his continual presence, as Mediator, before his Father, as he is said to *appear* in the presence of God for us; and also, perhaps, by exhibiting continually those wounds, or at least the scars of those wounds, which he received when working out salvation. For when John, in vision, Rev. v. 6, saw the Saviour in the midst of the throne, he saw him as a Lamb that had been slain. And it is certain Christ ascended with the same body, with which he arose from the dead; but this had upon it the scars, if not the open wounds, which he received upon the cross; as is evident from what Christ said to Thomas. John xx. 27. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side."

II. We were to attend to the *reasons* why Christ intercedes. One reason is, as it became him to fulfil all righteousness, that he might fulfil the typical intercession of the Levitical high-priest on the great day of atonement. But this alone is not a sufficient reason. For since the intercession of the Levitical high-priest was ordained,

that it might prefigure the intercession of Christ, there must have been reasons of his intercession prior to the institution of the Levitical priesthood, and on account of which this function was made a part of the duty of the Levitical high-priest.

The following reasons may be given why Christ intercedes.

1. It was necessary not only that salvation should be acquired, which he did by the sacrifice of himself, but also that its efficacy should be continually preserved, and applied, which he does in his intercession.

2. Our unworthiness. God is a consuming fire, and we are sinners. We cannot therefore approach him, but through a Mediator. It is therefore necessary that Christ should appear in heaven for us, as an intercessor, through whom we may have access to God.

3. Satan is represented as the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before God day and night. Rev. xii. 10. Hence we learn another reason why Christ appears in heaven in the character of Intercessor; viz. that he may advocate the cause of his people against the accusations of Satan.

III. The next thing proposed was to enquire as to the *objects*, or for whom Christ intercedes? The answer to this enquiry is, he intercedes for his people, and for them alone. From our context we learn, that the persons for whom Christ is said, in our text, to make intercession, are the elect." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" From Heb. vii. 25, we learn, they are those who come unto God by him, for whom Christ intercedes. And in the intercessory prayer of Christ, recorded John seventeenth chapter, the objects of his intercession are stated to be, his disciples, those whom the Father had given him, those who had kept his word, those who had believed on him, and those who were not of the world, but were hated by it. And it is further stated, that the objects of his intercession were, not only those who then sustained these characters; but also those who should afterwards believe on him through their word. And our Saviour expressly declared in this chapter, that his intercession was for his people, and his people alone. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; they have kept thy word. I pray for

them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." Hence it is evident, the people of Christ, and they alone, are the persons for whom he intercedes.

IV. We proceed to point out the *properties* of Christ's intercession. It is glorious, compassionate, prevalent, and unceasing.

1. The intercession of Christ is *glorious*. We are not to suppose that he prostrates himself before the Father, and intercedes as an humble suppliant. For he has ascended to his glory. He intercedes in his state of exaltation. And his intercession must be suited to that exceedingly high state of glory to which, as Mediator, he is exalted, and therefore must be glorious.

2. His intercession is *full of compassion*. He is a most tender advocate. When on earth he took a deep interest in the distresses of his people, and ever manifested a heart full of the tenderest compassion towards them; and since his ascension to heaven, he has still the same tender compassion. Thus Heb. ii. 17, he is represented as "a merciful and faithful High-Priest." And Heb. iv. 14, 15, we read: "Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are."

3. Another property of the intercession of Christ is, it is *prevalent*. Christ never intercedes in vain. When he was upon earth, addressing his Father he said, "I knew that thou hearest me always." John xi. 42. And if, in his state of humiliation, the Father always heard him, he certainly will always hear him now, when in his state of exaltation in glory. Besides, he is his beloved Son, in whom he is ever well pleased, and therefore his intercession with the Father must be most prevalent. Further, he intercedes for those things which are his right according to covenant. The Father engaged in the covenant of redemption, that when he should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; and he gave to him a certain number, on whom he engaged to bestow all needed grace, and finally everlasting life. When Christ therefore intercedes for his people, presenting himself before his Father, as having agreeably to covenant fulfilled his will, in giving himself

a sacrifice for sins, the justice and the truth of the Father will both secure the prevalency of his intercession. Again, the prevalency of Christ's intercession is proved from this consideration, that the Father himself loveth those for whom Christ intercedes. Christ did not purchase the good will of the Father for sinners. He only removed the difficulties which lay in the way of the exercise of this good will. It was the love of the Father that influenced him to give the Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. And in Christ's intercessory prayer, John xvii. 9, 10, he enforced what he asked for his people, by the consideration, that they belonged to the Father as well as to him. "I pray for them, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." From all these considerations the conclusion is drawn that the intercession of Christ must be prevalent. And that whatever he asks from his Father will assuredly be bestowed upon his people.

4. Another property of Christ's intercession is, it is *unceasing*. This is taught Heb. vii. 17, 24, 25. "Thou art a priest forever. This man, because he continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood. He ever liveth to make intercession." Christ will always be present as an advocate in the court of heaven to make intercession for his people, until he hath fully accomplished the purposes for which he undertook this office, in having brought all his chosen people safe to everlasting glory.

V. The last branch of our subject, to which we now proceed, is the *benefits* resulting to the people of God from the intercession of Christ. These are many and very precious.

1. One benefit is the *gift of the Holy Ghost*. As he taught his disciples, John xiv. 16, 17, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." It is in consequence of the intercession of Christ that the Holy Ghost dwells in believers. All the blessed effects resulting from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost may therefore be ascribed to the intercession of Christ. By the sacrifice of himself, he purchased the gift of the Holy Ghost; and by

his intercession he secures the application of this purchase.

The effects of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are many and precious. The following are some of them. A *saving knowledge* of divine truth. This Christ taught his disciples, when he said, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." John xiv. 26. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John xvi. 13, 14. *Comfort*. He is frequently called "the Comforter" in Christ's farewell discourse to his disciples. And we read, Acts ix. 31, of the "comfort of the Holy Ghost."

The *witness of adoption*. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. viii. 16. *Sealing* unto the day of redemption, whereby the people of God are preserved from apostacy and ruin. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. iv. 30. *Assistance in prayer*. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26. And the *bringing forth* of holy fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. v. 22, 23. These are some of the benefits which result to believers from the indwelling of the Spirit; and as the gift of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's intercession, all these are benefits of his intercession.

2. Another benefit of Christ's intercession is a *filial boldness* in approaching the throne of grace. This we are taught in the following passages. Heb. iv. 14, 16. "Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." And Heb. x. 19, 21, 22. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. And having an high-priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." When the christian by faith views Christ in human nature, and filled with compassions towards his people, sitting at the right hand of the Father, in the character of intercessor, ready to

receive the imperfect, though sincere prayers of his people, and present them in the merit of his own perfect righteousness, and intercede for their acceptance, it must have a tendency to inspire him with boldness, in his approaches to the throne of grace.

3. Another benefit of Christ's intercession is *protection* from evil. This we learn from John xvii. 11, 15. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." By evil here, appears to be specially meant, moral evil or sin, let temptations to it arise from what quarter they may. Through the intercession of Christ, believers are preserved from so yielding to the temptations with which they are assaulted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, as would destroy their souls. On the contrary, on account of the intercession of Christ, they are sanctified through the truth of God. As the Saviour prayed in the same connexion, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

4. Another benefit of Christ's intercession is, the *daily pardon* of the *daily sins* of believers. Believers are sanctified but in part while in this world, and therefore they still commit sin. It is in virtue of Christ's intercession, asking the application of the merits of his sacrifice on earth, that these sins are pardoned. This benefit of the intercession of Christ we are taught, 1 John ii. 1. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

5. Another benefit of Christ's intercession, is the *perseverance* of his people in faith unto final salvation. A proof of this we have in what Christ said to Peter. Luke xxii. 31, 32. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This is a specimen of Christ's intercession for all his people. He prays for them all, that they may persevere. This is also implied, John xvii. 11, 24. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Thus Christ intercedes; and since his intercession is always prevalent, perseverance in faith

unto final salvation and eternal glory, must be one of the blessed effects resulting from it to all his people.

In the application of this subject, let us examine ourselves, whether we are the persons for whom Christ intercedes. Remember he has said, John xvii. 9, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." And John vi. 37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." It is for his people, and for them alone, that Christ intercedes. And all his people have come to him, or exercised faith in him. The great question with respect to ourselves, in enquiring whether we have an interest in the intercession of Christ, therefore ought to be, have we come to him by a true faith? Faith works by love, purifies the heart, and leads to a life of holy obedience. Have we such a faith? If we have, we are interested in the intercession of Christ. If we have not, Christ intercedes not for us. And how deplorable the state of those for whom the Saviour intercedes not! They have no part in the benefits which are the fruits of his intercession. They have no part in the enlightening, comforting, witnessing, sealing, helping, and sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit. They are strangers to the filial boldness with which the people of God are enabled sometimes to come to the throne of grace. They are constantly exposed to the evil that is in the world, without any protector to keep them from it. When they sin, as they do continually, they have no Advocate with the Father. And the blood of Christ, instead of pleading for them, cries to the Father against them for slighting, neglecting, or despising the salvation thereby purchased. Think of these things, ye who are strangers to Christ, and be persuaded to come to him, that you may be delivered from these evils, have an interest in his intercession, and be made partakers of its precious benefits.

To the people of God, our subject affords instruction and consolation.

It instructs them that their faith ought to behold Christ as intercessor, as well as propitiation. We have reason to believe that many christians too much neglect to consider the intercession of Christ; and while they often reflect on what Christ has done, or on his sufferings and death, to make atonement for sin, they neglect to consider what he is now doing at the right hand of the Father,

where he is making intercession for his people. Your own comfort is intimately connected with a steady eyeing of Christ in this part of his priestly office. View him as continually interceding for all his people. And consider the properties of his intercession; that it is full of compassion, all prevalent, and unceasing.

These considerations are calculated to fill the real christian with encouragement and comfort. Does he, notwithstanding all his resolutions, watchfulness, repentance, and exertions to live conformed to the will of God, daily come short of his duty and commit sin? He may derive consolation from the consideration that Christ is an advocate with the Father, continually appearing before him, in the merit of his own perfect righteousness, and presenting it in behalf of his people. But let none hence take license to sin. The christian in the exercise of grace will not. And if any person does, it is an evidence that he is destitute of grace, and therefore has no interest in Christ's intercession. Does the christian, sensible of the imperfection of his prayers, of his own vileness, and of the holiness and majesty of God, sometimes shrink back from the throne of grace? Let him view Christ as his intercessor, in human nature, at the right hand of the Father, ready to receive his poor, imperfect prayers, if sincere, and to present them to the Father, covered with his own righteousness, and accompanied with the request, that for his sake he would hear them, and this may encourage the trembling believer to come with humble boldness to the throne of grace. Is the believer, in the midst of the temptations and dangers with which he is surrounded, in despondency, ready to say, as David said of Saul, "I shall perish one day by the hand of mine enemy?" This or that enemy will one day destroy me? I shall yield to this or that temptation? I shall become the slave of this or that corruption? I shall fail of heaven at last? Let him raise his desponding spirits, and take courage. The Saviour intercedes for him, that he may be kept from the evil that is in the world, that his faith may not fail, and that he may finally come where he is, and behold the glory which the Father hath given him. Take courage, therefore, and renew your watch, and go on your way rejoicing. As long as Christ intercedes for you, your enemies cannot prevail. And he ever liveth to

make intercession. What reason, my christian brethren, have we of praise for such a Saviour! He is every way suited to our necessities. May we have more knowledge of him and his offices; and more faith to believe, and receive the truth in love, when known.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

PSALM ii. 6.

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”

THIS is supposed to be a kind of inauguration Psalm, composed by David, on occasion of his firm establishment upon the throne of Israel, after the great opposition he had experienced. But evidently a greater than David is here. Inspired with a prophetic spirit, he almost lost sight of himself, to celebrate the regal power and triumphs of his great Antitype, the king of Zion, and Saviour of the world.

That Christ is the person principally intended in this Psalm, is evident, both from the Psalm itself, and from the New Testament. Some things are said, in the Psalm, which can properly be applied to no other; and in the New Testament several verses of this Psalm are quoted, and expressly applied to Christ.

In the first three verses, the Psalmist spake of opposition to the Messiah. Our text refers to this opposition. “Yet,” that is, notwithstanding the rage of the Heathen, the imaginations of the people, and the counsels and determinations of the kings and rulers of the earth, “have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” By the holy hill of Zion upon which Christ is here said to be set as king, we are to understand his church, which was called Zion, because on Mount Zion, stood the royal palace of David, whose kingdom was a type of the church, and was actually the church in his day; and also because on or

near this mountain stood the temple, whither the tribes repaired for the worship of God.

The doctrine of the text is, Christ is *king* in his church. That Christ sustains and executes this office, the Scriptures abundantly teach, in many other passages besides our text.

In treating the subject of Christ's kingly office, let us

I. Consider the nature of his kingdom.

II. The extent of his dominion.

III. Its duration.

IV. The manner in which he executes the office of a king.

I. Let us consider the *nature* of Christ's kingdom. His kingdom may be considered as twofold, *natural* and *mediatorial*.

The *natural* kingdom of Christ is that which belongs to him as God; in which respect he is Governor of the Universe, equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and would have reigned over all things, though man had never fallen, and there had been no need of a Mediator.

By the *mediatorial* kingdom of Christ, is meant that kingdom which belongs to him as God-man Mediator. This kingdom is his church. And when his kingly office is spoken of, his government as Mediator is meant.

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ is *spiritual*. The general opinion of the Jews, when the Saviour was upon earth, was, that the kingdom of the Messiah should be of this world, and like unto the kingdoms of the earth; and that he would hold the reins of government over the nation of the Jews, sit upon an earthly throne, reign in great power and glory, deliver the Jews out of the hands of their enemies, and advance the nation to great power, prosperity and glory. That this is the sense in which the prophecies respecting the Messiah were generally understood, is evident from the history of the New Testament. King Herod expected his kingdom would be temporal, when he considered him as a rival, and, to prevent his reigning, caused to be put to death all the children in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, under two years of age. The Pharisees also expected that his kingdom would be like the kingdoms of this world, as is evident from Luk. xvii. 20, 21. "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answer-

ed them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for lo the kingdom of God is within you." And even his apostles and disciples entertained the same expectation. For we find them disputing among themselves, who should be the greatest in his kingdom, and asking him who was the greatest, and some of them petitioning for such and such stations in his kingdom. And after his death, we find the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, expressing their great disappointment, saying, "We trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel." Luke xxiv. 21. And after his resurrection, and appearance to his disciples, just before his ascension to glory, notwithstanding all that he had said to them on former occasions, to rectify their error on this subject, they still entertained the same opinion of his kingdom, and said unto him, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel." Acts i. 6.

But these sentiments respecting the nature of Christ's mediatorial kingdom were erroneous. "My kingdom (said he to Pilate) is not of this world: If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." John xviii. 36. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world; but a spiritual and heavenly kingdom. The king himself, when on earth, instead of appearing in the splendor of an earthly monarch, was meek and lowly. His throne is celestial, at the right hand of the Father in heaven. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Ps. cx. 1. His sceptre is spiritual. It is the gospel, called the rod of his strength, out of Zion. Ps. cx. 2. And which is the power of God unto salvation. The subjects of his kingdom are spiritual men, who are "born, not of blood; nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. They are a willing and holy people. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness." Ps. cx. 3. The manner of administering his government over his subjects is spiritual. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. iv. 6. His arms are spiritual. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong

holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The arms of his soldiers are spiritual. Their girdle is truth; their breastplate, righteousness; their military shoes, the preparation of the gospel of peace; their shield, faith; their helmet, the hope of salvation; and their sword, the word of God. Eph. vi. 14, &c. His laws are spiritual, reaching not only to the external actions, but also to the thoughts, desires, motives, and other exercises of the soul. The worship or homage to be paid to him as a king is spiritual; "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24. And the blessings which he bestows as a king, upon his obedient subjects, are not temporal, but spiritual and heavenly. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. And "there remaineth a rest to the people of God." Heb. iv. 9. But this rest is beyond the grave.

We proceed—

II. To show the *extent* of Christ's dominion, as mediator. This extends over all things for the good of his church. As God-man Mediator, he governs in heaven, upon earth, and in hell. And this dominion he exercises with a particular reference to his church, and for its good. The following texts clearly prove this sentiment. Mat. xi. 27. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." Mat. xxviii. 18. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." John iii. 35. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." 1 Cor. xv. 27. "He hath put all things under his feet." Ephes. i. 22. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." Phil. ii. 9, 10. "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." And Heb. ii. 8. "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him."

From these texts we learn the extent of Christ's mediatorial dominion. Power is delegated unto him, over all

things, that all things may be rendered subservient to the good of his church, and the advancement of his mediatorial glory. All the beings with which we are acquainted, are under the dominion of Christ as king in Zion. Heaven, earth, and hell, with the things which are in them, are under his dominion as mediator, and are governed by him, with a reference to the redemption of his church.

The holy angels are subject to his authority as mediator, and are engaged in executing his designs respecting the redemption of his church. For, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. Evil angels are subject to his dominion as Mediator, and under his control. He manifested his power over them, when he was upon earth; he restrains them and sets bounds to their malice towards his people; and he overrules their wicked devices for the good of his people. The earth also is subject to his dominion as Mediator. On it is his church placed in its militant state, and for his people is it preserved from destruction; for they are the salt of the earth. Mat. v. 13. The reins of Providence, by which this earth and all things in it are governed, are in his hands as Mediator; and the affairs of Providence are all ordered with a particular reference to his church. The revolutions of different ages, and the rise and fall of kingdoms, have subserved the interests of his church. Wicked men are under his dominion, and are made to subserve his cause. He makes the wrath of man to praise him as king of Zion, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. In short, all the movements of Providence, with regard to all things, whether great or small, are under his dominion as Mediator, and are made to subserve the interests of his church, and to advance his mediatorial glory. Hence it is "that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28. And that all things are said to belong to the people of Christ. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." 1 Cor. iii. 22. All things are in the hands of Christ, and are so directed and overruled by him, as to promote the best good of his people, and advance that cause for which he became Mediator. The

III. Thing proposed, to which we now proceed, was to enquire into the *duration* of Christ's dominion as Medi-

ator. Its duration will be forever. This is frequently and explicitly declared in the Scriptures. The Psalmist, prophesying of the Redeemer as a king, said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Ps. xlv. 6. Isaiah foretold, "of the increase of his government there shall be no end." Is. ix. 7. Daniel, prophesying of him, said, "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Dan. vii. 14. The angel Gabriel, in his address to Mary, respecting the Messiah to be born of her, informed her, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke i. 33. And Rev. xi. 15, we read, that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, "there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." From these texts, it is evident that Christ's mediatorial kingdom will be eternal, and that, as Mediator, he will reign forever. But it is probable, that when he hath fully redeemed his church, and brought all his chosen people to glory, the manner of administering his government as king in Zion will be different from what it now is.

And here, while treating of the duration of Christ's kingly office, a passage found 1 Cor. xv. 24-28, claims our attention. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

This is a difficult passage, and has been variously expounded. The great difficulties are two; one respecting the duration of Christ's kingly office, the other respecting his divinity. The first difficulty only, properly belongs to our subject. The question is, does not this text militate against the doctrine, that Christ, as mediator, will reign

as king in his church forever? By the *end* here we are to understand the day of judgment, when Christ shall have fully redeemed all his people out of the hands of all their enemies, and brought them safe to glory; when he shall have completely subdued all his enemies, and brought off his people conquerors over them all, even over the last enemy death, by the resurrection of their bodies, to die no more. At this time he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. By this, I suppose to be meant, that Christ will then deliver up that power over all things, which was delegated to him as Mediator, for the redemption of his church out of the hands of all its enemies, and bringing it to glory. He will then deliver up this delegated power over universal nature, as having fully accomplished the ends for which he received it; and therefore having, as Mediator, no further use for it. But still he will continue to be as God-man Mediator, the Head of his church, and reign over the house of Jacob, or his church forever. This explanation renders the passage perfectly consistent with the texts quoted, which assert the eternal duration of Christ's mediatorial kingdom.

By the Son's becoming subject to the Father, we may understand, that then it shall appear he acted as Mediator, by a delegated authority from the Father, and in subserviency to his glory. And having delivered up this delegated authority over universal nature, as having answered the purposes for which he received it, it will appear that he acted as mediator in subjection to the Father, and by authority derived from him. And then the government of the universe will be conducted, exclusively, by God essentially considered, that is, by the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and no longer by the Mediator, as God-man. But still Christ, as God-man, will continue the head of his church triumphant, and govern it in a way suited to its glorified state. This explication is consistent with the eternal duration of the reign of Christ as Mediator, in and over his church; and also with his divinity, which is expressly, unequivocally, and repeatedly taught in other parts of Scripture.

The consideration of the last head proposed; viz. the manner in which Christ executes the office of a king, must be deferred to another opportunity.

A few inferences will conclude the present discourse.

1. From what has been said, may be inferred the great importance of the work of redemption. We have seen that all power is delivered unto Christ for the promotion and final completion of this work. With a reference to this, the wheels of Providence continually roll on; and all things in heaven, upon earth, and under the earth, are made subservient to it. And what is the ultimate end in view in all this? Not merely the bringing a few of the guilty children of men to glory; but the manifestation of the divine glory. To this will the salvation of men and the mediatorial glory of the Redeemer be made subservient. God has intended in this way to manifest his perfections to his creatures. And in this way will they be most gloriously manifested to angels, men, and devils, and for aught we know, to the rational creatures of all worlds throughout the vast extent of universal creation. How vastly great and important, therefore, is the work of redemption! And of what great importance in the universe of God is the church of Christ, though now it may by many be slighted and despised! The church militant on earth, and the church triumphant in heaven, united in one, form that kingdom, in which the divine glory is to be exhibited, through Christ its head and king; and all things are directed, and act with a special reference to the church. Yea, it appears, that they were created for the good of the church. For we are told, Col. i. 16, that all things were made by Christ, and for him. And to the church, and to Christ the Mediator, as its head and king, will most probably all eyes be directed, from the remotest parts of the creation of God, to behold the manifestation of the divine glory; and holy beings of all worlds hence derive subjects of praise, and sources of felicity.

2. From this subject may be inferred the criminality and folly of indifference to the interests of this kingdom, and still more of opposition to them. If the government of all things is committed to Christ for the good of his church, that hereby the divine glory may be manifested; and if therefore the work of redemption be so important as we have seen it is; surely the criminality and folly of those who neglect or oppose this kingdom must be very great. The tendency of such conduct is to defeat the great end of our being, the advancement of the mediatorial glory of the Redeemer, and hereby, of the divine glory. But

in this work of advancing the divine glory through Christ as Mediator, we must all be engaged, whether willing or not. If we refuse heartily to engage in the service of the Redeemer, and actively to advance his glory, still he will advance his glory by us; even the glory of his power and of his righteous judgments against his enemies. For he is set as king upon the holy hill of Zion; and he must and will reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Let us therefore, as we are exhorted in the Psalm which contains our text, "Kiss (that is, be reconciled unto) the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." This is our duty, our interest, and our glory.

May we all be the willing subjects of the kingdom of Christ, that we may actively glorify him, and be at last glorified with him.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

JOHN xviii. 37. FIRST CLAUSE.

*"Pilate therefore said unto him, art thou a king then?
Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a king."*

ONE of the accusations brought by the Jews, against Jesus, was, that he said he was a king, and the king of the Jews. This, if it had been true in a temporal sense would have been treason against the Roman government. Therefore the jealousy of Pilate, the Roman governor was excited; and he particularly questioned the prisoner at his bar, on this subject. He asked him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" To this question, Jesus gave no direct answer. Pilate enquired again, "what hast thou done?" Jesus then confessed that he was a king; but at the same time declared his regal authority to be of such a nature, as not to interfere with the governments of this world, and as could afford no just cause of jealousy to human

rulers. "My kingdom (said he) is not of this world. If my kingdom were, of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." In reply to this, in our text, "Pilate therefore said unto him, art thou a king then? Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a king." This was an affirmative answer, the same with, I am king, as appears from several places, where this same mode of expression is used; and as also appears from what immediately precedes and follows the text.

The doctrine of the text is, *Christ is a king.*

In a former discourse on the kingly office of Christ, we attended to the nature, extent, and duration of his mediatorial kingdom. It remains on this subject to consider the *manner* in which he executes his kingly office. This doctrine is stated in our Shorter Catechism, in the answer to the 26th question, as follows:

"How doth Christ execute the office of a king?"

Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies."

From this answer we learn, that the subjects of Christ's kingly power are his *people* and his *enemies*. Over the former he executes the office of a king, in subduing them to himself, ruling, and defending them; and over the latter, he executes this office, in restraining and conquering them.

This subject is so copious and important, that two discourses will be necessary sufficiently to illustrate it.

The object of this discourse is to illustrate the manner in which Christ executes the office of a king over his *people*. He does this by subduing them to himself, ruling, and defending them.

1. Christ executeth the office of a king over his people in *subduing* them to himself. In the covenant of redemption, between the Father and the Son, respecting the Salvation of men, who it was foreseen would, when created, fall, the Father gave to the Son, a certain number of this sinful race, to be his spiritual seed, his peculiar people, and the citizens of his heavenly kingdom.

But these, though given to Christ of the Father, in the counsels of eternity, are, by nature, in the same ruined state, with the rest of mankind. They are as the Scrip-

tures represent them to be, in their natural state, "Children of wrath, even as others," Eph. ii. 3, in "darkness." Eph. v. 8. 1 Pet. ii. 9. "Dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. "Without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 12. "Alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works." Col. i. 21. And walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 2. Such is the state, in which the people who were given to Christ in the covenant of redemption are by nature. And in this state they will continue until they are subdued by his Almighty grace. They are Christ's by the covenant-engagement of the Father; but they are in the possession of his enemy, the prince of darkness, cordially obedient to his will and subject to his authority; and Christ must gain his own by conquest. Satan, who is meant by "the strong man armed," Luke xi. 21, keepeth possession of the souls of the elect, until Christ, who is "the stronger than he," come upon him, and overcome and dispossess him.

The conquest of the soul is effected by the word and Spirit of Christ. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. x. 17. But the word becomes effectual only through the influences of the Spirit. The word is the "sword of the Spirit;" and in his hands, it becometh quick and powerful, and sharper than a two edged sword. The word, and especially the word preached, is the great means of subduing the hearts of sinners.

Christ herein teaches them their rebellion, points out their duty to submit to his dominion, shows the way of salvation, and presents numerous motives to engage them to a compliance with their duty. By his word, he summons sinners to submit, to renounce the service of Satan, lay down the weapons of their rebellion, and surrender their hearts to him; and by his word he reasons with them, and exhorts, entreats, commands, promises, and threatens them. To the aid of his word in besieging the soul, he sometimes calls in afflictive providences, to excite to serious consideration on the instructions of his word. But still the sinner continues in his rebellion against Christ. Though the word may sometimes pro-

duce alarms about the result of this opposition to the king of Zion, and disobedience to his commands; yet of itself it will never subdue the soul. For the heart is, by nature, totally opposed to Christ, and his government. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. The language of the unrenewed heart is, we will not have this man to reign over us. But Christ will have none but willing subjects, who cordially renounce the service of Satan, and willingly submit to the Saviour's dominion.

Hence a change of heart is absolutely necessary, before the sinner will willingly submit to the government of Christ, or can become a true member of his kingdom. Agreeably to this, the Saviour taught, John iii. 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is a supernatural work, and can be effected only by a divine power." As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 12, 13. In this supernatural work of changing the heart, the Holy Spirit is the agent. For "that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit." John iii. 6.

But notwithstanding the necessity of the influences of the Spirit, in subduing the heart, the sinner would be inexcusable for rejecting the overtures of Christ in his word, though the special operations of the Spirit should never be extended to him. For the rejection of Christ arises from opposition to him and aversion to his government. But common sense teaches that indisposition to duty, can form no just excuse for the neglect of it. No one would, on this account, excuse a servant for neglecting the just commands of his master.

But notwithstanding the sinner is inexcusable, in not submitting to the government of Christ; yet his disinclination is so strong that means, of themselves, will ever prove insufficient to produce a cordial submission. The sinner will willingly and obstinately persist in his rebellion, until in infinite mercy, and most rich and free grace, the Spirit of God, in a way which we cannot explain, changes the disposition of the heart.

But although, owing to the wickedness of the heart, the word of itself will never subdue the sinner to the obe-

dience of Christ; yet the Spirit operates by the instrumentality of the word. Hence we are said to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." 1 Pet. i. 23. The Spirit accompanies the word with power, and fastens it upon the mind, to the awakening and conviction of the sinner.

All this time, while Christ is laying siege to the soul by his word and Spirit, Satan, as the strong man armed, endeavours to keep possession. And for this purpose, his devices are numerous and subtil. He endeavours to keep persons out of the way of the instructions of the gospel, that through ignorance, they may continue in sin. He, in various ways, excites prejudices against the gospel; or he fills persons with wrong notions of the nature of true religion, that they may imagine themselves to be spiritually alive, while they are yet dead in trespasses and sins. He is the god of this world, and he makes use of the things of it to blind the mind, and keep the thoughts off from the things of religion; and the sinner's own heart being corrupt, readily seconds and falls in with the devices of Satan.

And when, through the convincing influences of the Spirit, the attention is arrested, and the fears of the soul are awakened, Satan still endeavours to maintain possession, either by lulling the person to sleep again, or by driving him to despair of God's mercy, or by inducing him to take up with a false hope. And the sinner himself often resists with all his might, and endeavours either to stop his ears against the threatenings of God's word, or to take refuge from them in some refuge of lies and hiding place of deceit, in which he fortifies himself against the arms of Christ.

But the souls which Christ intends to subdue to himself will not be left in quietness here; but by the word, rendered powerful and irresistible by the Spirit, these strong holds will be assaulted, and the sinner will be driven from them, and harassed in every hiding place, until he is brought to think seriously of submitting, and deeply feels that he must submit or must perish. Now he prays and cries for mercy. And his great fear not unfrequently is, that he has persisted in his rebellion so long that there is now no mercy for him; but that he must suffer eternal death for his rebellion. Under this impression, he fears

to surrender himself to Christ, and often attempts to do something to recommend himself to his favour. All this time he is destitute of real love to God. His actions flow from a slavish fear, and willingly would he again return to his sinful courses if he dare. At length he is convinced that his best righteousness is but as filthy rags. He gives himself up as lost in himself; and by the law becomes dead to the law. At this period it is that the Spirit of God infuses a principle of spiritual life. And now he is sensible of the excellence of the Saviour, and of the reasonableness of submission to his government. He now mourns over his past sins with true godly sorrow. He feels his heart drawn out in love towards Christ, and in desires to be united to him, to hold communion with him, and enjoy the smiles of his countenance. He looks upon his people as truly blessed, and feels willing to surrender to him on his own terms. But ah! he fears that he will not be accepted. He is too vile and unworthy. And from this cause, not unfrequently, we have reason to believe, persons continue for a time in great darkness and distress, even after they have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, until they hear from the gospel, and the truths are fastened with power upon their souls by the Spirit of God, that Christ is infinitely merciful; that he came to save sinners; that he invites such to come unto him; and that he will not cast out any, whatever may have been their previous character, who do come unto him. He now believes these precious invitations and promises. On examining himself he discovers evidences that he is the character to which they are made. He trusts the word of God, and hopes in his mercy and rejoices in hope. Thus the people of Christ, whom the Father hath given him, are made willing in the day of his power. This conquest of the soul we have briefly described, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

2. Christ executeth the office of a king over his people, by *ruling* them. Christ having subdued his people to himself, and translated them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his grace, he next rules them as the

subjects of his kingdom. He gives them laws for the government of their hearts and lives. These laws are contained in his word; and they are like the Lawgiver, holy. They require that they should "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God." Mic. vi. 8. And, "that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Tit. ii. 12. The laws of Christ must be obeyed by his people. His object is to "save his people," not in their sins; but "from their sins." Mat. i. 21. He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 14. "To present them holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight." Col. i. 22. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 25-27.

Further, Christ rules his people, not only by giving them laws, which are contained in his word; but also by writing his laws upon their hearts, as is said, Heb. ix. 10. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." By this we are to understand, the forming by the Holy Spirit, in the soul, a temper of obedience congenial with the law of Christ, which influences the soul to desire to be acquainted with the will of Christ, to love his law, to render obedience thereunto, and to grieve and be humbled on account of the imperfect observance thereof.

To enforce obedience to his laws, Christ sometimes uses the rod of afflictions. "As many as I love (says he) I rebuke and chasten." Rev. iii. 19. As David bare witness with respect to himself; Ps. cxix. 75, in faithfulness he afflicts them. And many have testified with him. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

We proceed to illustrate the

3d Act of Christ in the execution of his kingly office with regard to his people, which is *defending* them. This supposes enemies. The world, the flesh, the devil and death are all inimical to the christian. Over all these

Christ has power; and he will defend his people from them all. By this is not meant that they shall not be harassed by their enemies. The contrary of this is the fact. And though Christ has power to subdue them at once, yet for wise and holy ends, he does not; but permits them sometimes greatly to trouble his people. The things of the world allure, distract, and stupify; the men of the world mock and persecute; the flesh, or remains of corrupt nature within, lusts against the Spirit, pleads for indulgence, and struggles for the dominion; Satan smiles to deceive and draw into his snares, and roars to drive into them; and death terrifies and subjects to bondage. In some one or other, or in all these ways, is the christian frequently harassed.

Neither does Christ's defending his people imply that their enemies shall do them no present injury, nor for a season prevail against them. They frequently distress them much, destroy many of their present comforts, cast them down wounded, and even lead them into captivity. The things of the world sometimes turn them from the path of duty, and occasion them much distress before they find their way back. The men of the world have sometimes taken from them worldly comforts, and even tortured and killed their bodies. Inward corruptions have often struggled so hard for the dominion, as to make them cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." Rom. vii. 24. And sometimes, these corruptions are so powerful as to lead them into captivity, as they did the same Apostle. Satan sometimes prevails to afflict them in their estates, their friends, and their bodies, as he did Job; and sometimes most severely, and for a long time together, he tempts and buffets them. And death will at last bring down their bodies to the dust, and retain them for a time under his dominion.

But notwithstanding these things, still it is true, that Christ defends his people. By his restraining grace, he prevents the native enmity of the hearts of the wicked, from breaking out against his people, and destroying them. And when it has broken out and threatened destruction, he has often defeated the designs of the wicked; sometimes by diverting their attention to other things, as he did that of king Saul, when pursuing David and

seeking his life; sometimes by changing their hearts, as he did the heart of Saul of Tarsus, when on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against his disciples; and sometimes by miraculously interposing, as he did in the cases of Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego, and Daniel. He defends them from temptation, sometimes by removing the object, and sometimes by giving more grace, and thus strengthening them effectually to resist. He defends them from the devices of Satan, by setting bounds to his power, beyond which he will not suffer him to pass. And even when the enemies of his people appear to prevail against them, he defends them in the final event from real injury, by causing all things to work together for their good. Even death itself he makes gain.

Let this subject be improved for self-examination. Are we the subjects of Christ's kingdom of grace in the world? Not whether we belong to his visible kingdom, or church on earth? This we may do, and yet be aliens from the commonwealth of the true Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, and subjects of the kingdom of Satan. The question is, have we the kingdom of Christ within us? Have we ever been truly sensible of the native opposition of our hearts to Christ, and that we loved darkness rather than light? Have our hearts been subdued by his grace? Have our thoughts been brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? And do we willingly and with delight render obedience to his commands? For, "know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" Rom. vi. 16.

If, my brethren, on examination you find that you are Christ's, adore that grace which waited long upon you, followed you in your wanderings, continued to call after you, and would not give you up; and which finally subdued your stubborn hearts, and made you willing subjects of the kingdom of the Redeemer. Ever remember this grace with adoring wonder, gratitude, and love. And if you are the citizens of Zion, live worthy of your high vocation. Live in such'a manner as to please and glorify your king. Be deeply interested for his honour, and the advancement of his kingdom. And let the consideration, that Christ defends his people, support and comfort you

under all your trials. If Christ be for you, who can harm you; for all power is given unto him in heaven and upon earth.

Let this subject be also improved by those who have never yet submitted to the government of Christ as king in Zion. Christ is calling you, by his Gospel, to lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and submit to his authority. It is unreasonable to turn a deaf ear to his calls, to rebel against him, and refuse to have him to reign over you; for he is infinitely glorious, and every way fitted to reign. He is your rightful sovereign; he made and preserves you; he blesses you from day to day; for the bounties of Providence flow through his mediation; and he gave his life a ransom for sinners, to save them from going down to the pit of eternal destruction. If you submit to his government, he will crown you with everlasting life; but if you do not, he will one day say with respect to you, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Luke xix. 27. You belong to the kingdom of Satan, and are willing subjects. Compare the king whom you serve with Jesus Christ, the King of Zion. The former is moral deformity, the enemy of all good, your greatest enemy, an usurper, who is seeking your eternal destruction; the latter is infinite excellence, your best friend, your rightful sovereign, and who is seeking your best good, and will, if you obey him, make you unspeakably and eternally happy. Why then will you choose and love the service of Satan, and reject the government of Christ? Consider your ways, think of the unreasonableness and danger of your rebellion, and without delay lay down the arms which you have taken up against the King of Zion.

Finally, are there any here, who are convinced of their rebellion, and willing to submit to the government of Christ; but who are fearful that he will not pardon and accept them? The King of Zion is infinitely merciful. Fear not to cast yourselves upon his mercy. He hath promised, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Believe his word, come and trust him; and he will receive, pardon, and bless you, and make you eternally happy. May we all bow to his sceptre, and be the willing and obedient subjects of his kingdom.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXV.

THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

PSALM CX. 2. LAST CLAUSE.

“*Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*”

THIS Psalm is a prophecy of Christ. This is evident from the strength of the expressions used, which can properly be applied to no other person. Besides, several verses of this Psalm are quoted in the New Testament, and applied to Christ. He therefore is the person meant in our text.

Christ and his church in the world, have enemies, over which he rules as king in Zion. This is the doctrine of the text.

The manner in which Christ executes the office of a king over his people, has already been shown. We come now to consider the manner in which he executes this office over his and his people's enemies. This he does by *restraining* and *conquering* them.

The enemies of Christ and his people are many, powerful, and subtil. They may be classed under the names of the world, the flesh, the devil, and death. By the world, are meant wicked men, and the things of earth; by the flesh, the remaining corruptions of the christian's own heart; and by the devil, the host of fallen angels. Over all these enemies, Christ exercises a restraining power, and will finally conquer them.

I. He *restrains* them.

He restrains the wicked men of the world. They once murdered the Lord of life and glory; and they have put to death thousands of his people, for their attachment to him. Among men possessing the same natural dispositions, the people of Christ dwell. And these enemies, we have reason to believe, are far more numerous, and in themselves far more powerful, than the followers of the Saviour. Considering these things, it is cause of wonder that the situation of christians is as tolerable in the world as it is; and that they are not always persecuted by wick-

ed men. Their safety is owing to the restraining power of Christ. If it were not for this, his people would constantly be in jeopardy of their lives.

There are a great many ways, in which Christ lays restraints upon carnal men, and keeps the native enmity of their hearts from breaking out into action against his cause and people. A religious education, the preaching of the gospel, and other religious means, have a great influence in imposing a restraint upon the corrupt principles of the human heart. So also have the natural relations of life, which so much subsist between the people of Christ and of the world. Civil laws for the protection of religion and natural conscience have also their restraining influence. And even the false hopes of the wicked have sometimes a powerful influence in imposing a restraint. There are many other means by which the wicked are restrained. In some one or other, or all of these ways, Christ often prevents the enmity of the carnal mind from breaking out, even so far as to form designs against his people, or perhaps even to desire to injure them.

But not unfrequently the native enmity of the carnal mind has exerted itself, and produced evil designs against the people of Christ. When this has been the case, he has often restrained the wicked from the execution of their designs. Sometimes he has done this by the fear of civil authority; sometimes by the remonstrances of conscience; and sometimes by the fear of future punishment. In these, and other ways, Christ often prevents wicked men, who may in their hearts desire and plot evil against his people, from even *attempting* to perform any thing. And when wicked men have been filled with malice against his people, and have attempted to do them injury, Christ has often restrained them, and defeated their purposes. Sometimes he has done this, by unaccountably changing their purpose, as he did that of Esau, when he came with four hundred men, to meet his defenceless brother Jacob. Sometimes he diverts their attention to other objects, as he did that of Saul, when pursuing David, and when it appeared humanly impossible he should escape. Just at that critical moment, "there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines." 1 Sam. xxiii. 27, 28.

He has also sometimes defeated their purposes, by changing their hearts, and from enemies, making them friends. This was the case with Saul of Tarsus, when on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. Again, he has sometimes defeated the attempts of wicked men against his people, by miraculous interposition. This was the case with respect to the army of Sennacherib, which came against Jerusalem in the days of king Hezekiah. In one night, the flower of the Assyrian army was destroyed by an angel of the Lord. In the same way, by miraculous interposition, were the purposes of the enemies of Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego and Daniel defeated. Thus, sometimes in one way, and sometimes in another, does Christ often restrain the wrath of man, and prevent it from injuring his people. But, notwithstanding this, he has at times withheld his restraints, and permitted the enmity of wicked men to act itself out; and to persecute even unto death, multitudes of his people. In this case, he does not restrain the wrath of man; but, as we shall show presently, makes it to praise him.

Another class of enemies with which the christian has to contend, is the things of this world; its riches, honors, enjoyments, and business. These tend to draw off the mind from heavenly things, to retard the christian in his course heavenwards, and to lead him astray, to the dishonor of religion, and the impairing of his own religious comforts. These enemies also Christ restrains; or rather, he restrains his people, so as to prevent a great measure of evil which would otherwise arise to them from this source. This he does, by the new nature implanted within them; by all the means of grace; and by his providential dispensations towards them. Not unfrequently, when the christian has formed certain plans of pursuit in life, which, if executed, might be detrimental to his spiritual interests; or has resolved to go into certain places and situations, where he would be much exposed, either from greater temptations to sin, or from fewer helps to promote his sanctification, Christ has prevented him, by placing, in the course of his providence, insuperable obstacles in his way. Again, not unfrequently, Christ withholds from his people many things of this world, when he sees that, considering their natural temper, or situation and

relations in life, they would be dangerous to them. And sometimes he takes away from them, things, which he sees are leading them astray, and removes the idols which are injuring them.

Another, and a numerous and dangerous host of enemies, are the remaining corruptions of the christian's own heart. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit. The christian has a law in his members which wars against the law of his mind. These corruptions he could not withstand, were it not for the restraining power of Christ. He restrains them by that new nature, which he has implanted, and which he cherishes in the soul by the Holy Spirit. And he restrains them also by all those means which he has instituted for the strengthening of grace, and weakening of corruptions. And when, as is frequently the case, these corruptions make powerful assaults, through the influence of external temptations, he sometimes gives more grace, or removes the temptation, or else lays upon the tempted believer, afflictions of such a nature as will mortify the corruption. In such ways does Christ restrain the remaining corruptions of his people's hearts.

Another host of enemies, is evil spirits. The Scriptures teach us, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8. And "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Eph. vi. 12. These enemies are filled with evil designs against the people of Christ. But he restrains them from doing the mischief they would. They are under his control, and he fixes their bounds, beyond which they cannot pass. And although evil spirits distress the people of Christ much, yet it is owing to the restraining power he exercises over them, that they do not distress them much more, and even destroy them soul and body. We proceed

II. To show how Christ further executes the office of a king, over his and his people's enemies, by *conquering* them. Christ will finally conquer every foe; for he must reign until his foes are made his footstool, or all enemies are put under his feet.

He will conquer the wicked men of the world, who oppose his cause and people. He doth this in part in this

world, by making the wrath of man to praise him; or by frequently so overruling the very enmity and opposition of the wicked, as to make them advance the interests of his church generally, and promote the spiritual interests of the particular individuals oppressed. In the primitive ages, persecution, which was intended by its authors to destroy the church of Christ, so much promoted its growth, that the church came to be compared to the palm tree, which is said to flourish in proportion as it is oppressed; and it became a proverb, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. And especially the oppression of the church has always tended to its purity. With respect to individuals, eventually it has often clearly appeared, that the oppositions they met with from wicked men were overruled by Christ for their good. And if we could see the end from the beginning, we would, most probably, find that Christ always makes the wrath of man to praise him, in promoting the spiritual good of those against whom it is directed. For we read, "all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28. And even when the enemies of the people of Christ have so far prevailed as to put them to death, although they had the appearance of a triumph, yet really the best interests of christians were hereby promoted; for their souls were hereby the sooner released from a world of sin and sorrow, and introduced to a state of perfect holiness and happiness.

The same observations may be made in general with respect to the other enemies of the christian. Christ doth in part, in this life, while the christian is contending with them, obtain a conquest over them, by frequently overruling their temptations, or devices for his good.

But Christ will finally obtain a complete conquest over all his, and his people's enemies. By death, he delivers the souls of his people, one after another, out of the hands of all their other enemies. And though death shall for a time retain a dominion over their bodies; yet their souls shall immediately be placed beyond the reach of all enemies. The men of the world shall no more oppose, scoff at, or persecute them; the things of the world shall no more tempt or distract them; the flesh shall no more lust against the Spirit, and hinder the good they would; and Satan shall no more tempt or buffet them.

But the day of judgment will be the day of complete conquest and triumph. On this day, death itself, the last enemy, which had so long retained a dominion over the bodies of the saints, shall be conquered and swallowed up in victory. In the morning of the resurrection, at the sound of the trumpet, the dust of the saints, wherever deposited, shall rise. It is true the bodies of the wicked will also be raised; but they will be raised only to grace the triumphs of the Redeemer over his enemies, and to experience the second, even eternal death. Then, when the bodies of the saints are raised, and their souls are reunited to them, shall be sung that song of victory. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57. On this great day, will Christ, as Mediator, appear in triumph before the assembled universe, with all his redeemed at his right hand, arrayed in glory. His enemies shall adorn this triumph. Devils and wicked men, completely reduced under his power, shall stand as criminals before him, be judged by him, and be sentenced from his mouth to depart from him accursed into everlasting fire; whither, at his command, they must go. Christ having thus, as a king, made all his foes his footstool, will also, as a king, welcome his people to glory, and bestow upon them everlasting life.

From what has been said, we may now infer—

1. Christians have very great cause of thankfulness to Christ, for the restraints which, as king, he imposes on their enemies. If it were not for these restraints, their enemies would soon destroy them, soul and body. Wicked men would soon act out the enmity of their hearts, and persecute either unto death or apostacy. The things of the world would soon prove too powerful a snare. Inward lusts would soon govern, and sin regain its dominion. And Satan would soon tempt too strongly to be resisted, or buffet so as to render life insupportable. Christians, be thankful to Christ your king for his restraining grace. Compare your condition with that of the followers of Christ in many ages. Why are you permitted to meet, and sit here, and peaceably worship God, according to the dictates of your own consciences, without disturbance or fear? The time has often been, that christians have had to assemble together by stealth, under the covert of

night, and in the most retired places; and then they risked the loss of every temporal good thing. The time has often been that christians had to prove their loyalty to their heavenly king, at the stake and on the rack. Why is not this now and always the case? It is not, because carnal men are now by nature better than they were in the days of persecution. Human nature, derived in all from the same corrupt stock, is in all radically the same. But it is owing to the restraining grace of Christ, which keeps the natural enmity of the heart from acting itself out; and in some almost from discovering itself. Surely, in view of these truths, thankfulness becomes christians.

2. From this subject may be inferred, that christians have cause, not only of thankfulness, but also of trust in Christ, consolation, and boldness under difficulties. Christ the Mediator is king, and reigns in Zion. All the enemies of his people are under his dominion. He is stronger than they, and has them all under his control. And he is engaged for the salvation of his people, and loves them with a most tender and unchanging love. What, O christian! have you then to fear? Surely you may trust the Saviour, in the most trying and perilous situations. Distrust is a sin of which christians are frequently guilty, and they hereby much dishonor Christ. Have any of you, my christian brethren, under trials, been guilty of this sin? If so, be humbled for it, and cease thus to act towards Christ. Numerous motives urge you to trust in him with implicit confidence, and forbid distrust. Christ has promised to take care of you, and he is faithful; all power in heaven and upon earth, and over all things for his church is given to him; in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and he loves you with a most tender and unchanging love. What better security for your safety could you possibly desire? Better you could not possibly have. Fear not, therefore, to put your trust unreservedly in the king of Zion. And let the consideration, that your enemies are in the hands of Christ, comfort you under trials, and fill you with courage to proceed in the path of duty, whatever difficulties may arise in your way. If the path of duty be plain, fear not the trials which may attend duty; for Christ reigns, and though you may be weak and your enemies strong, he is stronger than all your foes, and will bring you off conquerors over them all.

3. We learn from our subject the dangerous state of the wicked, who are the enemies of Christ, and in a state of rebellion against him. Such are engaged in a desperate cause; for Christ will conquer all his enemies. We read in the Psalm from which our text is taken, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." And Ps. ii. 5, 9, we read, "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." How dreadful is the condition of those who are the enemies of Christ! And this is the character of all who are not cordially his friends. For there is no neutral ground between the friends and the enemies of Christ; for he himself has declared, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Mat. xii. 30. If therefore you are not heartily on the side of Christ; if you have not cordially bowed to his sceptre, you are among his enemies.

But you are yet prisoners of hope. Christ has not yet cut you off, and driven you from the place of hope. The sceptre of mercy is still extended to you. In the gospel it is held forth, and you are invited to lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and submit willingly to the government of the Saviour, with the assurance that you shall receive the pardon of your sins, and be admitted into his favor. Lay down, then, the weapons of your rebellion, and without delay submit to Christ, and cordially receive him as your king. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." Therefore, "to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Reject not his counsel against your own souls. But cordially bow with submission to him, who is set as king upon the holy hill of Zion; and who will reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 8.

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

THESE words were spoken of the Lord Jesus Christ, as is evident from the context; and they teach us his wonderful *humiliation*.

The doctrine of Christ's humiliation is stated in our Catechism, in answer to the 27th question as follows:

“Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?”

Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross, in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.”

The object of the ensuing discourse is to show, *wherein the humiliation of Christ consisted*. For the sake of method, we shall consider his humiliation, under the four following particulars, viz. his birth, life, death, and after his death until his resurrection.

1. Christ was humbled in his *birth*. He was the Son of God, “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Phil. ii. 6. He was the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God. John i. 1. He was the second person of the Trinity, true and eternal God, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. This divine person became incarnate. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” Phil. ii. 7. “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” John i. 14. “God was manifest in the flesh.” 1 Tim. iii. 16. This was infinite humiliation. It was far greater humiliation, than if the highest angel in heaven had become the meanest insect that crawls. For

the distance between an angel and an insect, however great, is still finite; but the distance between a divine person and the highest creature, is infinite.

And what increased the humiliation of Christ, in taking upon him the nature of a creature, was, that he assumed the nature of a creature of an inferior order. He stooped beneath the angelic, to the human nature. "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii. 16. "And thus he was made a little lower than the angels." Heb. ii. 7.

There were other circumstances which increased the humiliation of Christ in his incarnation. He assumed our nature, not while it was in its primitive innocence, rendered beautiful and glorious by the image of God; but after it had become degraded by sin; after Satan had effaced the divine image, and had drawn his own upon the human soul. The Son of God assumed human nature when thus degraded. Not that the individual body which he took was defiled with sin. That which was born of the virgin, as declared by the angel, was a holy thing, being preserved from original pollution by the power of the Holy Ghost. But notwithstanding that individual body which the Son of God assumed was free from pollution; yet the nature was degraded and sunk very low by sin.

Another circumstance which increased the humiliation of Christ in his incarnation, was, that he assumed our nature in its most helpless state, even a state of infancy. The first man, Adam, began his existence in the full vigor of the powers of his body and mind; but when the Son of God became incarnate, he commenced his existence as a man, in the helpless stage of infancy.

And further to increase his humiliation in his incarnation, he was born in circumstances of more than ordinary abasement. He was born, not of a princess, nor of a mother, whose family, wealth, and standing in society, promised to secure him respect in the world; but his mother was poor and obscure. He was born, not in a palace, but in an inn; and not in any apartment in the inn, designed for the accommodation of travellers. There was no room in the inn for the mother of our Lord. Its apartments were, most probably, occupied by the richer visitors. And the blessed virgin had to take up her lodgings in the stable of the inn. Here the divine Saviour was born, and

was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. Thus Christ was humbled in his birth, in that he emptied himself of his glory, and assumed the nature of his creature; a nature of an inferior order of creatures, and degraded by sin; which nature he assumed in its most helpless state, and in circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.

2. Christ was humbled in his *life*. He was humbled by becoming subject to the law. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. Gal. iv. 4. He was made under the ceremonial law, and rendered obedience to it; for he was circumcised on the eighth day, and he observed the Jewish feasts. He became subject to the civil law, and gave tribute to Cæsar. And he especially came under the moral law, and in all points strictly fulfilled it. This was great humiliation. The sovereign Lord of all became a subject, and the great Lawgiver was made under the law.

Christ was also humbled in his life, by being subjected to the infirmities of human nature. We read that he was hungry, and thirsty, and wearied. And he was poor. "The foxes (said he) have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Mat. viii. 20.

Again, he was humbled in his life, by the temptations of Satan. In the commencement of his public ministry, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Here he was assailed, repeatedly, with the most artful and trying temptations. This was great humiliation for him who was the Son of God, to submit to be thus beset and tried by a creature, and a sinful creature, and this too the greatest fiend in creation.

Further, Christ was humbled in his life, by the indignities and persecutions of the world. While an infant, his life was sought by the jealous and cruel tyrant Herod; and to secure his safety he had to be carried into Egypt. When he made his appearance publicly, as the Saviour of the world, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." John i. 11. He was, as was foretold of him, as a root out of a dry ground; without form or comeliness; when the world saw him, there was no beauty, that they should desire him; he was despised and reject-

ed of men; and they hid as it were their faces from him. Is. liii.

Christ was rejected by the world. Notwithstanding all the convincing evidences he gave of his divine mission, they would not believe in him, acknowledge, or receive him as the Son of God, and Saviour that was to come. And he was not only rejected, but he was hated. "If the world hate you (said he to his disciples) ye know that it hated me before it hated you." John xv. 18. And this hatred manifested itself in reproaches and persecutions. They called him the carpenter, and the carpenter's son, a Gallilean, a Samaritan, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, a sinner, a sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, and this fellow; and they charged him with being possessed of a devil, in league with Satan, and casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils; and even called him Bcelzebub himself. At one time they led him to the brow of an hill, to cast him down headlong; again and again they sent officers to apprehend him; and frequently they took up stones to cast at him. Such were the indignities offered to Christ by the men of the world. Such treatment would have been humiliating to a good man; how infinitely humiliating therefore must it have been to the Son of God!

Thus Christ was humbled in his life, by being made, under the law, subjected to the sinless infirmities of human nature, and having to conflict with the temptations of Satan, and to endure base and cruel treatment from the men of the world.

3. Christ was humbled in his *death*. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That the Lord of life should yield up his life, and that he who was life itself, and had death under his power, should come under the power of death, was truly infinite humiliation. And he not only died, but there were peculiarly humiliating circumstances attending his death.

The conduct of his professed disciples towards him, at the time he most needed their sympathy and help, was a humiliating circumstance. Judas, one of his twelve chosen apostles, betrayed him into the hands of those who put him to death. This was foretold by the Psalmist, as a humiliating circumstance. "Mine own familiar friend,

in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Ps. xli. 9. And he betrayed him for the sum of thirty pieces of silver. Peter, another of his apostles, after his apprehension, thrice denied that he knew him. And all the rest of his disciples forsook him, and left him alone, without one kind friend to stand by him, to sympathize with him, to comfort or defend him, in the time of his trouble.

The crimes with which he was charged, and for which he was condemned to die, added to the humiliation of his death. He was charged with sedition against the government, and blasphemy against God, and professedly for these he was condemned and put to death. He died as a very great malefactor. It is true he was innocent; but it was humbling to be thus charged, and to be put to death for such things, however innocent.

Again, he was further humbled in his death, by the cruel manner in which he was treated, from the time of his apprehension until he expired. The worst of criminals, generally, receive pity from those who feel themselves compelled to execute upon them the sentence of the law for their crimes. But it was otherwise with Christ. Instead of pity, he was treated with unrelenting cruelty from the time of his apprehension until he yielded up the ghost. When he was brought before the elders, chief priests, and scribes, they sought false witness against him. The soldiers bound him, mocked him, spit in his face, buffeted him, blindfolded him, and then smiting him, in contempt of his prophetic office, demanded of him to prophecy who smote him, and spake many things blasphemously against him. He was then hurried before Pilate, the Roman governor, where he was vehemently accused by the elders, the chief priests, and scribes. From Pilate he was hurried to Herod, and again grievously accused. Here Herod and his men of war set him at nought, mocked him, arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back again to Pilate. Pilate, convinced of his innocence, and that he had been delivered through envy, sought to release him; and as it was a custom at the feast of the passover for the Roman governor to release to the Jews one of the prisoners, whom the people might ask, he proposed to them that he should release Jesus. But they refused, and asked, in preference to the innocent

Saviour, a certain Barabbas, who had been committed for sedition and murder. They preferred Barabbas, and cried out with respect to Jesus, "crucify him, crucify him!" until their clamour constrained Pilate to condemn him, and having scourged him, to deliver him to them to be crucified. Then the soldiers stripped him of his own apparel, and in contempt and derision of his kingly office, put on him a scarlet robe, plaited a crown of thorns, and placed it upon his head, put a reed in his hand, bowed the knee before him, and in mockery cried, "hail king of the Jews." Then they did spit upon him, and took the reed out of his hand, and smote him upon the head. And when he hung upon the cross, the rulers derided him; they that passed by reviled him, and wagged their heads; the soldiers mocked him, and when he was athirst tantalized him, by offering him vinegar mingled with gall to drink; and even one of the thieves, which were crucified with him, railed upon him.

The kind of death he died was peculiarly humbling. This circumstance is particularly noticed in our text. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The death of the cross was most painful. The extended hands and feet were fastened to the wood, by nails violently driven through them, and the whole weight of the body hung upon these nails, and greatly added to the pain of the wounds made by them. It was a very lingering death, which greatly added to its torment. And it was a most shameful death. It was a death accounted accursed among the Jews, as is written in their law, Deut. xxi. 23. "He that is hanged is accursed of God." And among the Romans, it was accounted a punishment fit only for slaves. It was esteemed too disgraceful for a Roman citizen, though condemned to die, to be put to the death of the cross. This death was selected for Christ. And a still further humbling circumstance was, he was not only crucified; but he was crucified between two thieves, as though he had been the chief malefactor.

Again, another very humbling circumstance in the death of Christ was, the sufferings he endured from the wrath of God. He stood in the place of sinners, and the Father executed upon him the wrath due to sin. He caused the sword of divine justice to awake against him and smite

him. It was a foretaste of this wrath that caused the dreadful sufferings he endured in Gethsemane, when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Mat. xxvi. 38. And when "he kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." Luke xxii. 41, 42, 44. And it was the weight of this wrath which caused him, when, while hanging on the cross, the Father deserted him, to cry out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mat. xxvii. 46. The sufferings he endured from this cause were infinitely the severest of his sufferings.

4. Christ was humbled *after his death* until his resurrection, in that he descended into the grave, and continued under the power of death until the third day. What humiliation was this! that he who was the life of the world, should lie a lifeless corpse in the cold tomb! And that he who had the keys of death and the grave, should himself be locked up in the grave, under the dominion of death!

Having thus briefly illustrated the humiliation of Christ in his birth, life, death, and after his death until his resurrection, let us now attend to some inferences which flow from this subject.

1. We may infer from what has been said, that sin must be a very great, even an infinite evil. From the wisdom of God we may conclude, that the humiliation to which Christ submitted, was necessary to make atonement for sin, and open a way for its pardon. And if such an infinite atonement was necessary, sin must be an infinite evil. Hence we conclude, in the language of the wise man, "Fools make a mock at sin." Prov. xiv. 9. They must be fools who can mock at that, to open a way for the pardon of which, the Son of God humbled himself, as we have seen he did. Let us learn from this subject, which shows us the infinite evil of sin, to fear, hate, forsake, and watch against it. And since we are all guilty of this abominable thing which the Lord infinitely hates, let his hatred of sin, and his wrath which he has revealed against it, influence us to flee for pardon to the merits of the humiliation and obedience unto death, of the Redeemer.

2. From our subject, we infer, that the love of Christ

towards us was amazing and infinite love. Surely it was infinite love, which influenced the infinite Son of God, in order to save such guilty worms of the dust as we are, to stoop to a union with our nature; and being found in fashion as a man, to humble himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Truly this love has a breadth, and length, and depth, and height, which pass knowledge. Even angels, while they desire and endeavor to look into this wonderful love, cannot comprehend it.

3. From our subject, we may infer, that we are under infinite obligations to love Christ supremely, and with all our hearts, souls, strength, and mind. It becomes us to be deeply humbled, that we have ever acted with indifference, carelessness, or negligence towards him; or that we still continue in any measure so to act. It becomes us deeply to repent of our sins, which were the cause of Christ's humiliation, and which are very offensive to him. It becomes us to mourn over our sins, to loathe ourselves on account of them, and to forsake them. And if we have not already done it, it becomes us without delay, to receive Christ as he is offered in the gospel, to put our trust in him, to give him all our hearts, to love him sincerely and ardently, to devote ourselves to him as our Lord and Master, to profess him before the world, and to glorify him by keeping all his commandments. To this course of conduct, we are unquestionably and imperiously urged by the love of Christ manifested in his humiliation; and to do otherwise is the blackest ingratitude. And alas! when we reflect on this subject, what are we to think of the conduct and situation of many in our world, and of many among us who acknowledge not the Saviour before the world; who, with indifference, or a worse feeling, turn their backs upon that ordinance which he has commanded them to observe as a memorial of his love; who feel no true love to him for such matchless and infinite love; who hear of this love with indifference, and who return neglect and hatred for such love? This is ingratitude, the turpitude of which is inexpressible. And what must be the state of those who love not Christ? Their state must be dreadful indeed. Their rejection of a Saviour from the supreme place in their affections is a very great sin. And the word of God thunders its awful curses against such. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be

Anathema, Maran-atha." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Let him be accursed from the presence of the Lord, when he shall come. This is an awful denunciation. And are there not some in this assembly who love not the Lord Jesus Christ? Attend to these words, and if a sense of gratitude will not awake you from your criminal indifference, and constrain you to love him, whose love for sinners was infinite, let the terrors of the Lord arouse you to a sense of your duty. The counsel of God will stand. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" If you continue to neglect and reject Christ, the wrath of God will soon fall upon you, and crush you beneath its weight to the lowest hell. Be wise, therefore, and flee from the wrath that threatens. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Ps. ii. 12.

Finally, in the humiliation of Christ, christians have a pattern for their imitation. As he was humbled, it becomes them to be humble; and as he was filled with love to others, so their hearts ought to be expanded with benevolence towards their fellow men; and they ought to seek to promote their best good. It was particularly with a view to enforce these duties, that the Apostle, in this place, introduced the humiliation of Christ: "Let this mind (christians) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He denied himself for your sakes; and will not you, for his sake, deny yourselves whatever he forbids? For your sakes he submitted to infinite humiliation and suffering; and will not you for his sake cheerfully take up your cross, whatever it may be, and despise the shame attached to it? and even glory in the cross, and rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer and bear reproach for him? He has set us an example, let it be our endeavour to follow in his steps.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxviii. 6.

“He is not here; for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

THE doctrine of the *exaltation* of the Redeemer follows, in order that of his humiliation. This doctrine we have stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 28th question.

“Wherein consisteth Christ’s exaltation?”

Christ’s exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.”

According to this answer, the exaltation of Christ consists of four parts, viz. his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, his session at the right hand of the Father, and his coming again to judge the world at the last day.

His exaltation commenced with his *resurrection* from the dead. To this part of Christ’s exaltation, is your attention invited in the ensuing discourse. This is the doctrine of our text.

The object of the ensuing discourse, after making some observations on the time and manner of Christ’s resurrection, is, to prove the doctrine.

I. The *time* of his resurrection. This the Scriptures inform us was on the third day after his crucifixion. He was crucified on the day before the Jewish Sabbath; that is, on our Friday. He expired according to the Jewish manner of reckoning time, about the ninth hour of the day, or three o’clock in the afternoon, and was buried about the eleventh hour of the day, answering to our five o’clock in the afternoon. He lay in the grave from this time, until very early in the morning of the first day of the week. So that he lay in the grave part of three days.

On this subject a difficulty has been suggested, which it will be proper here to endeavour to obviate. Mat. xii. 40. Our Saviour predicted concerning his resurrection. "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The difficulty suggested is, that according to this prediction, Christ was to be in the grave three full days and nights, and that therefore the account of his resurrection on the third day does not agree with this prediction. This apparent difficulty may be easily obviated to the satisfaction of the candid enquirer after truth. If we attend to other passages, in which Christ foretold the time of his resurrection, we shall find that he frequently mentioned the *third* day as the time. As in Mat. xvii. 22, 23. "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men; and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." There are several other texts, in which Christ predicted his resurrection on the third day. These texts explain the other, and prove that by three days and three nights was meant the same, as on the third day. Besides, they who are acquainted with the customs of the Jews, know that this was agreeable to their manner of speaking and computing time. For they reckoned the day on which any period commenced, as a whole day including the night, though the commencement were near the close of the day; and the whole day, on which the period terminated, including the night, though the termination was early in the day, was taken into the account. A number of instances to prove this might be brought from the history of the Jews. I mention only the instance of circumcision." The law was, "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised. Gen. xvii. 12. But the rite of circumcision was performed, not after the child had been born full eight days and nights; but on the eighth day, counting the day of the birth as one full day, though the birth might have been towards the close of the day; and at any time on the eighth day, the rite might be performed. Thus with respect to the circumcision of Isaac we read, Gen. xxi. 4, "Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old." But Acts vii. 8, we read, "Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day." Hence it is evident, that according to the Jewish manner of speaking, eight days,

and the eighth day, signify the same thing; and therefore we are warranted to interpret the expressions *three days*, and the *third day*, in reference to the resurrection of Christ, as synonymous. And it is evident the Jews thus understood them. For we read, Mat. xxvii. 62, 63, 64, "The chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day." In this passage the Jews interpreted "after three days," to signify the same as "until the third day." I proceed—

II. To say something on the *manner* of Christ's resurrection. He arose by his own power, as we learn from John ii. 19, 21. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. But he spake of the temple of his body." And John x. 17, 18, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Christ arose with an earthquake, with angels ministering unto him, and accompanied by many of the saints. "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." Mat. xxviii. 2. And when Mary came to the sepulchre, she saw "two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." John xx. 12. And in the account we have of his death, we are informed; "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." Mat. xxvii. 52, 53.

Christ arose with a real body, and with the same body which was crucified and laid in the grave. "Behold (said he to his unbelieving disciples, Luke xxiv. 39) my hands and my feet that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

He arose with an incorruptible and immortal body. Rom. vi. 9. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." And he arose with a glorious body. Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." This glory, the Saviour, in a great

measure concealed from his disciples, while he continued on earth. But after his ascension, when he appeared to John, in the island of Patmos, Rev. i. 14–16, “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”

III. We proceed to *prove the doctrine*. The resurrection of Christ is one of the most important doctrines of revelation. For with it must stand or fall, the whole system of salvation, as taught in the Scriptures. “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” 1 Cor. xv. 14. If Christ hath not risen, it necessarily follows, he was an impostor; and of course, the whole system of salvation, which he taught is false. Of the peculiar importance of this doctrine, the enemies of christianity appear to have been fully aware; for they have laboured to invalidate it, perhaps more than any other article of the christian creed.

That there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived in the land of Judea, about eighteen hundred years since, professed himself to be the Messiah, was much hated and persecuted by the Jews, and was finally crucified by them and buried, every one must admit, who will allow any credit to be due to historical testimony. Of the truth of these things, we have as unquestionable proofs, as of any events recorded in the history of those times. And indeed, we may say, we have better proofs; for, in addition to the most credible historical testimony, we have the standing evidence of the religion he founded, with all its institutions.

The question is, did this person, after he had been put to death, and was buried, rise again? That he did may be proved—

1. From the inconsistent manner in which the Jews accounted for the absence of his body from the sepulchre, on the third day. After the burial of Christ, we are informed, “The chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen

from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." Mat. xxvii. 62-66. But notwithstanding all this precaution; on the third day, early in the morning, the seal was broken, the great stone rolled away, and the body gone. Of this the guard informed the chief priests. And how did they account to the people for the absence of the body of Jesus from the sepulchre? The guard reported, that his disciples came by night, and stole away his body while they slept. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The great inconsistencies in this account must be evident to every candid person, who will for a moment consider it. If the guards had really been asleep, it is utterly improbable they would have been so forward to report and spread abroad their own neglect of duty, and thereby have exposed themselves to disgrace as soldiers, and even to death. And is it not strange they were not punished according to military law? And the more strange, as their neglect of duty was in a case in which the feelings of the Jewish rulers were so deeply interested? Considering this circumstance especially, the most natural conclusion is, that the report of the guards was a contrivance of the rulers; and that they dared not exact the penalty of the law of the guards, lest they should declare the truth, and expose them.

Besides, it is not the least probable, that a few weak, disheartened disciples, who at the time of their Master's apprehension had fled, and who had endeavoured to conceal themselves, lest they should share the same fate with him, would form the design of stealing away his body from an armed guard, and attempt to execute it. They could not know, if they made the attempt, they would find the guard asleep. This was so improbable they could not reasonably have entertained a hope of it. But supposing they had made the attempt, and had found the guard asleep, is it in the least probable that a sufficient number of them to effect their purpose could have come into the midst of the guard, broken the seal, rolled away the great stone, entered the sepulchre, and taken out, and borne away the body of Jesus, without awaking one of the

guards? All this could not be done without considerable noise. How astonishing then that not one of the guards should awake!

Further, supposing the guards were asleep as they reported, how could they know that the disciples came and stole away the body of Jesus? They could not know this and be asleep at the same time. The whole report made by the guard carries, in the face of it, its own refutation; and confirms the truth of the account given by the Evangelist, that the guard, terrified at the resurrection of Christ, and the circumstances attending it, "came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught." Mat. xxviii. 11-15.

2. The resurrection of Christ is proved by the number and credibility of the witnesses. The writers of the New Testament, who give us an account of it, testify, that he appeared to several of his disciples individually; to the apostles collectively, when Thomas was absent; to them again, when Thomas was present; again to a number of disciples at the sea of Tiberias; again to more than five hundred brethren at once; and lastly, that he was seen by the apostles and disciples, when he led them from Jerusalem to Bethany, where, in the presence of them all, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Such was their testimony. Let us examine its credibility.

If their evidence, which they have left on record, was not true, it was, either because they were intentionally deceivers, and related that which they knew to be false; or else they were themselves deceived.

They were not intentional deceivers. Their writings and their lives, as far as we are acquainted with them, show that they were honest men. Besides, deceivers generally intend to answer some end by their deception. But what end could the witnesses of the resurrection have intended to answer, if their testimony was a falsehood? Their object could not have been, by calumniating those

who put their Master to death, to gratify a revengeful passion; for such a report, instead of avenging their own injury, was calculated to bring down upon them the vengeance of their enemies. And at the time of the apprehension of their Master, they did not discover the least disposition to involve themselves in his calamity; for they all forsook him and fled. Nor could their object have been to advance their own interest or reputation, or to gain the favour of either Jews or Gentiles.

For the Jews, exasperated against Jesus, had just procured his crucifixion; and Pilate, the Roman governor, had condemned him to death. His resurrection from the dead, would be an abiding stigma upon their characters, as notoriously wicked persons; and the propagaters of such a report could reasonably expect nothing less than their hatred and persecution, if not death at their hands. And they were hated and persecuted. But still they boldly maintained the truth of the resurrection of Christ, in opposition to popular prejudice and civil mandates, and at the expense of their worldly reputation and interest. Many of them were scourged, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death, for testifying to the doctrine of the resurrection, when, by recanting their testimony, or even by ceasing to publish it, they might have saved their lives; and yet even in the pangs of death, not one of them renounced their testimony to the truth of the resurrection of Christ. Considering these circumstances, it cannot be possible that the witnesses to the resurrection of Christ were intentional deceivers. We must conclude that they themselves believed in the truth of his resurrection and appearances to them.

If therefore their testimony was not true, it must have been because they were themselves deceived. But this could not have been the case, if any certain dependance can be placed on the testimony of our senses. The witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, had been long and intimately acquainted with him, and perfectly knew his person. They tell us that he appeared to them at several different times for the space of forty days, conversed and ate with them, offered himself to be handled by them to convince them that he was not a spirit or apparition, showed them the mark of the wound in his side, and the prints of the nails in his hands and his feet, and finally,

after giving them his parting instructions and benediction, ascended up towards heaven, until a cloud received him out of their sight. Considering all these circumstances, it is impossible they should have been deceived. And a circumstance which tends to strengthen their evidence is, they were very cautious in believing the resurrection of Christ. They did not in the least discover themselves to be credulous persons, but, in this case, of quite the contrary disposition. Mary Magdalene first saw him, and reported it to his disciples; but they "believed not." Mark xvi. 11. Several women were together at the sepulchre, early in the morning, and were told by two heavenly messengers, that their Lord had risen. They went and "told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." Luke xxiv. 10, 11. He again "appeared unto two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them." Mark xvi. 12, 13. Afterwards he appeared unto the apostles, when Thomas was absent. "They were terrified, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Luke xxiv. 37. And after, on this occasion, he had offered them his hands and feet to be handled by them, to convince them that he was not a spirit, "they yet believed not for joy and wondered." Verse 41. At length they were convinced, and afterwards informed Thomas, that they had seen Jesus. "But he said unto them, except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." John xx. 25. They universally discovered great caution in admitting the belief of Christ's resurrection. All these considerations show that they could not have been deceived. Therefore since they were neither deceivers, nor deceived, their testimony must be true.

And here, while examining the credibility of the witnesses of the resurrection, it will be proper to attend to the evidence of Paul. He was a bitter enemy to the doctrine, and an active persecutor, unto death, of those who embraced it. While on his way to Damascus, expressly for the purpose of persecution, he was suddenly changed in his views and conduct. The cause of this change, as he frequently and publicly declared, was, that while on the way, and in sight of the city of Damascus, he was sud-

denly struck down to the ground by a light from heaven, "and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Acts ix. 4, 5.

What, after this, was the conduct of Paul? Notwithstanding the prejudices of education, and his former decided opposition to the christian religion, he became one of its boldest defenders. He boldly asserted and defended the resurrection of Christ, before Jews and Gentiles, kings, governors, and tribunals of justice; suffered stoning, stripes, and imprisonment; and finally sealed the truth of his testimony with his life.

Writing to the church of Corinth on the subject of Christ's resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. he asserted that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom he declared were then alive. Paul had resided for some time at Corinth, and had many enemies in that city, especially among the Jews; and therefore this Epistle would be closely examined, and false assertions in it would, if possible, be refuted and exposed. And yet he asserted the resurrection of Christ, and appealed to a great many living witnesses. If he had made a false assertion, he might easily have been detected; and considering the temper of his enemies, if it had been practicable, they doubtless would have detected and exposed him; but they did not. The testimony of Paul, especially under the circumstances in which he was placed, affords strong additional evidence of the truth of the resurrection of Christ.

In addition to the testimony of the New Testament writers, might be mentioned that of enemies, viz. the testimony contained in a letter, said to be written by Pilate to Tiberius, the Roman Emperor; and also the testimony which we find in Josephus. But as the genuineness of these passages is questioned by some, we shall pass over these testimonies.

3. The resurrection of Christ is further proved, by the wonderful establishment, and progress of the christian religion. The obstacles which opposed its establishment and progress were many and great. The author of this religion, Jesus Christ, was of a low condition, and no estimation in his life, and was put to an ignominious death.

The nature of this religion was contrary to all the religions of the Heathen nations, and demanded their extirpation; and it also required that the rites and forms of the Jewish religion, in which the Jews of that period made the substance to consist, and of which they were exceedingly tenacious, should be done away. The christian religion was also opposed to the passions, the prejudices, and the education of the men to whom it was addressed; and held up to those who embraced it, losses, persecution and death. The persons who undertook to promulgate and establish it, were few, and generally obscure, and without human learning, power, wealth or friends to give them influence. And the sword of the civil power was raised to prevent its establishment, and stop its progress. But notwithstanding all these obstacles, the christian religion was established, and soon spread through the then known world. For this establishment and progress under such circumstances, we cannot account, but from the power of God accompanying the means which were used. And if so, its author was what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, and was raised from the dead.

In the application of this subject, three classes of persons may be addressed.

1. Are there any present who doubt the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and consequently the truth of the christian religion; for they stand or fall together? Let me earnestly call upon such, impartially and attentively to consider this subject, and weigh the arguments which have been adduced in support of the doctrine. The subject is of the greatest importance. For if Christ be risen, the christian religion is true; and if it be true, all unbelievers are in a dreadful condition. And if Christ be not risen, how gloomy our situation, and our prospects! As said the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 17, "Ye are yet in your sins." We have no Saviour; and no atonement has been made for sin. And how shall we, unholy and guilty creatures, without a Mediator, approach a holy God? And how dreary is the prospect of descending into the grave! We have no security of a resurrection. And did we bid the bodies of our friends an eternal farewell, when we saw the tomb close upon them? And must we resign our bodies to the grave without hope? Think of these consequences of disbelieving the doctrine of Christ's resurrec-

tion! and be led to a careful and unprejudiced examination of this subject. And may the Lord enlighten your minds into the knowledge of the truth.

2. This subject addresses those, who profess to believe the doctrine; but who have not cordially embraced the christian religion. The resurrection of Christ will avail you nothing, as long as you continue strangers to a vital union to him by faith. On the contrary, it will be a terrible doctrine to you, if you continue practical unbelievers. If Christ has risen from the dead, he lives to execute his word, and punish his enemies. He has risen as a pledge of the general resurrection; but he will raise all who reject him, to suffer everlasting misery. Therefore see to it, that you not only speculatively, but cordially believe the resurrection of Christ, and by faith receive a risen Saviour, as he is offered in the gospel.

3. To christians indeed, who not only speculatively believe the doctrine of Christ's resurrection; but who also through a living faith in him, are risen from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, this subject is full of comfort. Your faith and hope are not vain. Jesus Christ, in whom you believe as your Saviour, and on whom you build your hope of eternal life, is indeed risen from the dead. This is proved by the most ample and satisfactory evidence. By his resurrection, he has proved himself to be the Son of God, and Saviour of lost sinners; and the Father has hereby declared his acceptance of the work which he performed in behalf of sinners. You may therefore safely believe in him, and with unreserved confidence rest and rely upon him for salvation. He "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Rom. iv. 25. The Father hereby justified him from all false aspersions upon his character; and declared his acceptance of his obedience and death, for the justification of all who believe in his name.

He has also risen the first fruits of those who sleep in him; and has hereby given a pledge and assurance to all his followers, that they also shall finally triumph over death and the grave. And believing in him, his people may commit their bodies to the dust, with the joyful hope of a resurrection from the dead to die no more, saying with Job, xix. 25-27, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." Blessed, glorious hope! Oh, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Num. xxiii. 10.—
AMEN.

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE ASCENSION AND SESSION OF CHRIST.

MARK xvi. 19.

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

CHRIST, after his resurrection, continued on earth for the space of forty days. During this period, he was frequently with his apostles and disciples, confirming their faith in his resurrection, and instructing them in the things pertaining to his kingdom. This we are taught, Acts i. 3. "To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Of what he spake to them at this time, we have but little recorded. But it is probable he gave, during this period, many instructions to his apostles, which they afterwards communicated, and which are recorded in their addresses, and epistles. At the end of forty days, he led his disciples from Jerusalem to Bethany, at the foot or on the side of Mount Olivet, about a mile distant from Jerusalem; and from this place ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Our text will lead us to treat of both the *ascension* and *session* of Christ.

I. His ascension.

In treating the doctrine of the ascension of Christ, let us first attend to the manner, and then to the reasons of his ascension.

1. The *manner*.

1. He ascended *visibly*. Acts i. 9. "While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." The apostles and disciples beheld him ascend, and were witnesses of his ascension; and this most probably, was the reason, why he ascended visibly, that they might be witnesses of his ascension; and thereby their faith and the faith of others in him, be strengthened.

2. He ascended, *blessing* his disciples. This we learn from Luke xxiv. 50, 51. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." This was the last thing Christ did on earth. He ended his personal ministry in our world blessing his people. Hence we may be encouraged to believe, that now he has ascended on high, he is still deeply interested in the welfare of his disciples, and will bless them with all needed spiritual blessings. And as it becomes the christian as far as in him lies to imitate the Saviour, he is hereby taught, how he ought to be employed, when about to leave the world to ascend after his Saviour into glory; viz. in such a way as to leave a blessing behind him. And this he may do, by giving a dying testimony to the excellence of the christian religion, by praying for the advancement of the cause of Christ, and by exhorting and encouraging those around him to put their trust in the Redeemer.

3. Christ ascended *triumphantly* and *gloriously*. He went up in a cloud, which was prepared for him as his chariot; as we read, Acts i. 9. "While they beheld, he was taken up: and a cloud received him out of their sight." Angels ministered unto him; for while the eyes of the disciples were fixed upon the spot in the clouds, where they lost sight of their Master, two men or angels, in white apparel, appeared unto them and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts i. 11. Angels also accompanied him, as we are taught, Dan. vii. 13. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they [that is, the angels his attendants] brought him near be-

fore him." He ascended in triumph as a conqueror, as we learn from Ps. lxxviii. 18, which is quoted by the Apostle, Eph. iv. 8, and applied to Christ. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive." By captivity here, we are to understand a multitude of captives, who had led others captive. It was a custom for conquerors, when they returned home, to lead in their train, as marks of triumph, the captives which they had taken in war. To this custom there appears to be an allusion in this text. Christ, when he ascended, is represented as leading his enemies as captives in his train, to express his triumph over them. In his ascension, he triumphed over the world, sin, Satan, and death. These were exhibited as vanquished enemies. He ascended also amidst the acclamations of the celestial host. For if, when he was born, all the angels of God were commanded to worship him, Heb. i. 6; and if, at his birth, a multitude of the heavenly host visited Bethlehem, and there celebrated his incarnation, Luke ii. 13, we may confidently conclude, that the celestial inhabitants were not silent, when, having finished his work on earth, he ascended on high. And to this is referred Ps. xlvii. 5, 6. "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises."

2. Several *reasons* may be given why Christ ascended.

1. He ascended, that he might fulfil the prophecies and types. His ascension had been foretold by the Psalmist and others of the prophets; and it had been long and constantly prefigured, by the entrance of the high-priest, once a year, on the great day of atonement, within the vail of the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and temple, carrying with him, and presenting before the Lord, the blood of the sacrifice which he had offered without. Therefore it became Christ, in the character of high-priest, after having offered sacrifice without, in this world, to enter into the most holy place of the heavenly tabernacle, there to present before the Father, in our behalf, the sacrifice which he had offered for us in this world.

2. Christ ascended, that he might enter upon his glory. It was fit and proper that the Saviour, having been humbled, should be exalted; and that, having finished the work which his Father gave him to do, he should enter

upon the glory which he had with him before he descended from heaven and became incarnate. 'This glory, we have reason to believe, was promised him in the covenant of redemption. Accordingly he prayed, John xvii. 4, 5, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And in confirmation of the same sentiment was what he said, after his resurrection, to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory." Luke xxiv. 26.

3. Christ ascended, that he might receive gifts and bestow them upon rebellious men. This the Psalmist predicted of him. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Ps. lxxviii. 18. This prophecy is applied to Christ, Eph. iv. 8. Christ ascended, that he might exhibit before the Father, that he had finished the work he gave him to do on earth, and receive from him gifts to bestow on sinners for whom he died. The chief of these gifts was the Holy Ghost, both in his miraculous and gracious influences. Of this gift he informed his disciples before he ascended; and told them, it was expedient for him to ascend to heaven, that he might bestow this gift upon them. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John xvi. 7. This gift was bestowed on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost rested upon the apostles and disciples, and qualified them for the work to which they were called. And then he gave to the church, for its edification, men duly qualified for their work, through the Holy Ghost, which rested upon them. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv. 11, 12. These, especially, were the ascension gifts, which Christ gave to men. By the Holy Ghost shed down upon his ministers, he qualified them for their work, and through their labours, he communicated to his church other spiritual blessings.

4. Another reason why Christ ascended, was, that he might make intercession for his people. "Christ entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb. ix. 24. Christ ascended, that he might present his own blood before the Father, in behalf of his people, as the ground of their acquittal from condemnation, and their acceptance with him; and that he might be always present in the court of heaven, as an advocate with the Father, in behalf of his people, to plead their cause, to offer up their prayers, rendered acceptable through his merits, and to answer all accusations against them.

5. He ascended, as the Forerunner of his people. "Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." Heb. vi. 20. He entered into heaven to show that the way into the holiest of all was opened, through him, for sinners. He entered as a public person, and took possession for himself, and in behalf of all his followers. He ascended, that he might prepare a place for them. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." John xiv. 2.

II. We proceed to the consideration of the other doctrine contained in our text, viz. the *Session* of Christ at the right hand of the Father. This doctrine is frequently taught in the Scriptures. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Ps. cx. 1. "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." Rom. viii. 34. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Col. iii. 1. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. i. 3. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." 1 Pet. iii. 22. In these and other passages, we are taught the session of Christ at the right hand of the Father.

This cannot denote the particular local seat of Christ as Mediator. For God being a Spirit, without body or bodily parts, and being every where, no particular place can literally be said to be at his right hand. The expression is figurative, and denotes the great honour, power, and favour, to which Christ, as God-man mediator, is exalted. It was a custom among earthly monarchs to seat at their right hands those whom they delighted to honour,

who were in great favour, and on whom they bestowed great authority. Thus king Solomon, when, at a certain time, his mother came into his palace, caused a seat to be set for her, and she sat on his right hand. 1 Kings ii. 19. And Ps. xlv. 9, there is an allusion to this custom, where the Psalmist, speaking of Christ as a king, and the church as his queen, said, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." To this custom there is evidently an allusion in those texts, which speak of Christ as sitting at the right hand of the Father. As earthly kings placed those on their right hands whom they advanced to honour, power, and favour; so Christ is said to sit at the right hand of God, to denote the great dignity, power, and favour to which, as God-man Mediator, he is advanced by the Father.

1. It denotes his *dignity*. This we learn from Eph. i. 19-22. "His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

2. The session of Christ at the right hand of the Father imports his great *power*. This is taught in the passage just quoted, which teaches his power as well as his dignity. He is above all things in power. The Father hath put all things under his feet or his authority. Angels, authorities, and powers are made subject unto him. "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." Mat. xxviii. 18. The Father hath said unto him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." Ps. cx. 1, 2.

3. The session of Christ, denotes the great *favour* with the Father, to which, as Mediator, he is advanced. This is fully implied in what hath already been said. For surely, he on whom the Father hath bestowed so great honour and power, must be in great, and chief favour. And, agreeably to this, he hath expressed his will, John v. 23. "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

On the subject of the session of Christ, an inquiry is sometimes made, which it will be proper here to answer. The question is, to which nature of Christ does this session agree? It agrees to neither the divine nor human nature, considered separately; but to both united in one person. It is Christ, as God-man, that has sitten down at the right hand of God the Father; or that is exalted to such dignity, power, and favour, as have been described. For this session agreeth to him only as Mediator, and is every where attributed to him as such. But he is Mediator, neither as God, nor as man separately considered; but he is Mediator only in both natures, united in one person. It is the God-man Christ Jesus, who, having ascended on high, is sitten down at the right hand of the Father, or is exalted to the highest honour, power, and favour with him.

Let us now improve the subject. And,

1. It teaches us the duty to which the Apostle exhorts, Col. iii. 1, 2. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." If we are christians, we love Christ above every created object; and therefore since Christ has ascended to heaven, our affections ought to ascend thither too, and be placed supremely on heavenly things where Christ is. Let your love, christians, be placed supremely on Christ in heaven. Let your chief desires be after those spiritual and heavenly blessings, which are treasured up in Christ, and communicated from him. Let your greatest delight be in these things. Let your hopes be fixed in heaven on Christ. Let Christ in heaven be your portion. And let your chief joy be, that your names are written in heaven, and that you expect an inheritance there, to dwell forever with Christ. And if you set your affections on things above, and thereby become conformed to Christ in his ascension and session, you must, of course, as the Apostle exhorted in the same connexion, Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Watch and war against the remaining corruptions of your hearts, which would fix your affections upon earth, and prevent them from rising to Christ in heaven. Endeavour to lessen the influence of these corruptions, and avoid every thing which may have a tendency to strengthen them. or to draw off your affections from heavenly things.

And let us all examine ourselves, where our affections supremely centre, whether in heaven or upon earth. For where our affections are supremely placed, there is our portion. If on earthly things, we have our portion here, and have no just hope of happiness hereafter; but if on heavenly things, heaven will be our portion hereafter, when we are done with this life. "For where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also." Mat. vi. 21.

2. Our subject is calculated to administer consolation to the real christian. Christ, by his ascension, hath given additional evidence that he is the Saviour of sinners; and that his work on earth was complete, and is accepted of the Father for the salvation of all who believe in his name; and hence we have additional ground of confidence in him. When he ascended, he led captivity captive, and triumphed over his enemies. He did this as a public person, the Head of his church. He conquered and triumphed, not merely for himself, but also for his people. Let them therefore not fear; but be encouraged to faithfulness; for, through his strength, they also shall overcome. He ascended as the Forerunner of his people; and this implies that they shall follow after. He has taken possession of heaven as a public person, and this implies that all his followers shall also obtain possession. He has gone to prepare a place for them, and no mansion prepared by him shall be left unoccupied by the disciple for whom it was prepared. These reflections are full of consolation to real christians. Christ is also now in heaven, as an advocate, to intercede for his people. And he is advanced, as mediator, to the highest honour, power, and favour. In his hands, the cause of his people must prevail. And another consoling and encouraging thought is, that the human nature united to the divine is in heaven, and advanced to such great honour, power, and favour. We may therefore come with the greater boldness and confidence to the throne of grace. Let us follow the direction of the Apostle; "Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly

unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 14-16.

3. Finally, this subject reproveth, and is calculated to alarm those who have not placed their affections supremely on Christ. He is exalted, as Mediator, to the right hand of God; and to him there is a name given above every name. How irrationally therefore do they act, who esteem the transitory things of this world preferable to him who is thus glorious, and who, before he was exalted, laid down his life for the salvation of sinners! And such conduct is dangerous as well as unreasonable. For if Jesus be thus highly exalted, his enemies have reason to tremble. He has power to punish them; and they who despise, disregard, or neglect him, must expect to be punished. His enemies must and will be made his footstool. Let those who love not the ascended Saviour receive instruction and be wise. Let them draw off their affections from sinful objects. And let them set them supremely on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, lest they be made to feel his Almighty power, when it will be too late to escape.—AMEN.

SERMON XXXIX.

UNION OF BELIEVERS WITH CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 20.

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

THE Son of God provided salvation for sinners of our race. By his obedience unto death, he opened the way for our pardon and acceptance. But something more is necessary to effect our individual salvation. The salvation purchased by the Saviour must be *applied* to our souls. A medicine prepared, if not applied, can do no good in removing bodily maladies; and a garment made, if not worn, cannot warm the body; so redemption, though provided, if not applied, can never save the soul. “As

many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John i. 12. All others are still under the condemnation of the divine law. For "he that believeth not is condemned already." John iii. 18. And the provision of salvation, so far from doing those who continue in unbelief any good, will aggravate their final misery; for "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19. The redemption purchased by Christ must be applied, or it will do us no good; but on the contrary, increase our condemnation.

The application of the redemption purchased by Christ is the work, especially of the third person in the Godhead, or the Holy Ghost. This is evident from the Scriptures. He strives with sinners. "The Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man." Gen. vi. 3. He is the author of conviction. "And when he is come, he will reprove [or convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment." John xvi. 8. He renews the soul. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. He is the author of saving knowledge. "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. He will show you things to come. He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John xvi. 13, 14. He sanctifies the soul. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit." 2 Thes. ii. 13. He is the author of every christian grace. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. v. 22, 23. And he is the author of all spiritual consolation. He is therefore called the Comforter; and we read of the "comfort of the Holy Ghost." Acts ix. 31.

This doctrine, that the Holy Spirit applies redemption to the soul, is stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the twenty-ninth question.

"How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?"

We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit."

The manner in which the Holy Spirit makes this application, we have pointed out in the answer to the next question.

“How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?”

The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.”

The great work of the Spirit in the application of redemption is, uniting the soul to Christ. From this union, every other spiritual blessing flows.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove and illustrate this *union*, and show its blessed effects.

This union is taught in our text. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

By “that day,” we are to understand, either, after the ascension of Christ, when the Comforter which he had before promised, should be sent down; or in a future world. When Christ had ascended to heaven, and the Holy Ghost was shed down upon his disciples, these mysteries of the union of Christ to the Father, and of the mutual union between Christ and believers, were more clearly understood by the disciples, than they had before been. But the complete understanding of them is reserved for a future world.

The union of Christ with the Father, and the union between Christ and believers, are both spoken of in our text. The latter only will claim your attention at this time.

The doctrine of the union between Christ and believers is explicitly and frequently taught in the Scriptures, in other passages besides our text, as in the following. John xv. 4-7. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” John xvii. 23. “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Rom. viii. 1. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” 1 Cor. i.

30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." Eph. v. 30. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Col. i. 27. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." From these texts, it is evident there is a union of some kind between Christ and believers.

This union is set forth in Scripture by several figures. It is represented by the union between the vine and the branches. John xv. 5. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." It is set forth by the union of the stones in a building with the corner-stone. Christ is the corner-stone; and the other stones which are united to it, and rest upon it, and are supported by it, are believers. 1 Pet. ii, 4, 5, 6. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious." And Eph. ii. 20-22. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

This union is further represented by that which exists between the body and the head. Eph. iv. 15, 16. "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

This union is further explained by that which exists between the husband and the wife in the marriage covenant. Rom. vii. 4. "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." And Eph. v. 23-32. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 'This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.'" Such are the figures used in Scripture to represent to us the nature of the union between Christ and believers.

The union of believers to Christ is not an essential union, by which the believer becomes one in essence with the divine Saviour. To assert this would be blasphemous, as it would be making the creature a partaker of the divine nature and perfections.

Neither is this a personal union. The believer is not so united to Christ as to make but one person with him.

Nor is it a local union; that is, it does not imply contact, like union among material things. Though believers are united to Christ, he is in heaven, and they are upon earth.

Neither is it a mere union of affection. Such a union, it is true, subsists between Christ and believers; but the union we are considering implies something more.

It is, according to the Scriptures, a mystical and spiritual union, and a union of relation and interests.

1. It is a *mystical* or mysterious union. This the Apostle teaches, Eph. v. 32, where, after having spoken of the union between Christ and the believer under the figure of the marriage relation, he observes, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Although its reality is clearly revealed in the word of God, and its blessed effects are experienced by all true christians; yet it is a highly mysterious union, the nature of which we are not able fully to explain or comprehend.

2. It is a *spiritual* union, as we read, 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." By the *Lord*, in this text, as appears from the connexion, we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ; and the passage imports, that the same Spirit dwells in Christ and in believers. The same Holy Spirit dwells in both; so that whatever influences and operations of the Holy Spirit,

Christ as mediator partakes of, believers partake of the same; only with this difference, that Christ has a greater degree of the Holy Spirit. To him the Spirit is not given by measure; but to believers it is. In him the Spirit dwells in infinite fulness, as an infinite fountain of grace, whence believers united to him, by the indwelling of the same Spirit, receive supplies of every needed grace. This text further imports that believers have the same mind in them that is in Christ. They are actuated by the same principles, and they endeavour to walk as he walked.

3. The union of believers with Christ is a union of *relation*. He is called in Scripture their father, their husband, their brother, and their friend; and they are called his children, his spouse, his brethren and sisters, and his friends.

4. It is a union of *interests*, or such a union as constitutes a common interest. The interest of Christ is the interest of the believer, and the interest of the believer is the interest of Christ. The believer is deeply interested in the advancement of the cause and glory of Christ; and Christ is deeply interested in the advancement of the believer's happiness. When believers suffer, Christ is represented as suffering. Is. lxiii. 9. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Of the same import appears to be the saying of the Apostle, Col. i. 24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church." So also when Paul persecuted the church, Christ considered himself as persecuted. Acts. ix. 4, 5. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." And kindness done to the believer is represented as done to Christ. For in the day of judgment, as he himself told his disciples, he will say unto the righteous, Mat. xxv. 35, 36, 40, "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. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And in the same chapter he has told us, that kindness withheld from his people is considered as withheld from him.

Such is the union between Christ and believers. It is a

mystical and spiritual union, and it is a union of relation, and of interests. It is not an imaginary, but a real union. At the same time, it is acknowledged to be a highly mysterious union, the nature of which perhaps cannot be fully explained by any unions with which we are acquainted; and which, in our present state we cannot fully comprehend. But its effects are experienced by all the members of Christ's mystical body, or all his real people. And it is a highly important union; for it lies at the foundation of all experimental religion; and from it flows every spiritual blessing.

The bonds of this union are the Holy Spirit and faith. Christ dwells in the believer by the Holy Spirit; and the believer dwells in Christ by faith.

I proceed to point out some of the blessed *effects* of this union. Every grace and every spiritual comfort flow from it.

Our justification, or the pardon of sin and acceptance with God, is in consequence of this union. For it is only through the righteousness of Christ that the sinner can be justified; but it is in virtue of union to Christ by faith that we become interested in his righteousness.

Our sanctification also depends on this union. Through union to Christ, the believer becomes interested in that fulness of grace, which is treasured up in him; and by faith he derives it from him. This is taught John xv. 4, 5, 6. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." As well might the branch continue to live and grow, and bring forth fruit, cut off from the vine; or the members of the body to live and act, cut off and severed from the head, as the soul to live spiritually, and bring forth holy fruit, separated from Christ.

This union is also the foundation of all true hope of future glory. As we learn from Col. i. 27, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Further, it is in virtue of this union that our prayers are heard by the Father. For Christ told his disciples, John xv. 7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Again, it is in virtue of this union, that the believer perseveres in faith and holiness unto the end. Gal. ii. 20. "I live; (said the Apostle) yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "Because I live (said Christ, John xiv. 19,) ye shall live also." As long as the union between Christ and the believer continues, the latter shall have spiritual life in virtue of the living head to which he is united. And this union will never be dissolved. For, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Again, it is in virtue of this union, that the bodies of the saints shall be raised in glory at the last day. For Christ said, John xi. 25, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And, 1 Cor. xv. 20, we read, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." Christ has risen as the head of his people; and all his people who are members of his mystical body, are interested in his resurrection, and shall be raised at the last day, in virtue of their union to him, their risen head.

Once more, it is in virtue of their union to Christ that believers shall be put in possession of the heavenly inheritance. Their title to it arises from their union to Christ. "All things (said the Apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23,) are yours." And the reason he gave was, "Ye are Christ's." All things are Christ's, and therefore all things are the believer's, because he is united to Christ.

Let us now make an application of this subject. It intimately concerns us all. For if we be strangers to this union, we are none of Christ's; and are therefore yet in our sins, under the wrath of God, and condemned to everlasting misery; and, dying in this state, we must inevitably perish. For, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. viii. 9. And "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 12. If therefore the salvation of our immor-

tal souls be important, it is also important, that we should carefully examine ourselves, whether we are united to Christ. We may not be able fully to understand the nature of this union; but the evidences of it are plainly pointed out in the Scriptures. I refer you to one plain text. It is found, 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." If therefore we are united to Christ, we are new creatures. We have new views, new dispositions, new choices, new delights, new aversions, new joys, new sorrows, and new actions. Try yourselves brethren by this scriptural mark. A number of other marks which the Scriptures lay down may be mentioned. They who are united to Christ, "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 1. They "mind the things of the Spirit," (verse 5). "The body is dead because of sin," (10). They "through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body," (13). They "are led by the Spirit," (14). They "bring forth much fruit." John xv. 5. And "they keep his commandments." 1 John iii. 24. Such are the marks of union to Christ, which are laid down in the Scriptures. Let us carefully examine ourselves by them, whether or not we are united to him.

And must any, on examination, confess that they have not these marks, and are therefore strangers to a union to Christ? The state of such is deplorable; and still more so, if they are not concerned about it. The wrath of God certainly abideth upon them, and they have no just ground of hope; but are yet in their sins, under sentence of condemnation. Are any such present? You are exhorted to consider your state, until you become deeply sensible of it, and are constrained to inquire, with the jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. And, making this inquiry in earnest, you are directed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, believing in him with a true faith, you will become united to him, and shall be saved.

To those who are truly united to Christ, our subject affords consolation and instruction. Believers are highly dignified, by having such an intimate union with Christ. Though they may be despised by the world, they are more dignified than man can be by earthly honours. And they are not only honoured, but they must also be blessed and safe. United to Christ, they derive their spiritual life from

him, and have an interest in his fulness. They cannot die spiritually or eternally, while they have such a living head, and one who has pledged his truth to them, that because he lives, they shall live also. And they cannot want any needed blessing, while they have an interest in such fulness. Let these thoughts comfort the believer.

And let this subject lead him to admire the condescension of Christ, in receiving such an unworthy creature into such a near union to himself. And let him be humbled that he feels no more admiration and gratitude; and that he has so often acted unworthy of this union. And let him be excited to live more as becometh the dignified relation he sustains to Christ; to feel more his dependance on him for every spiritual blessing; and, by a lively faith in him, continually to look to him for every needed grace.—
AMEN.

SERMON XL.

VOCATION.

ROMANS viii. 30. FIRST CLAUSE.

“*Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called.*”

VOCATION or effectual calling is an important and essential link in that precious chain of christian blessings which reaches from eternity to eternity. The plan of man's salvation was laid in eternity. God then foreknew some of our race, which he foresaw would fall; and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son. Whom he thus predestinated, the way being opened by the mediation of Christ, he effectually calls; and whom he calls, them he also justifies; and whom he justifies, them he also will glorify.

Our text teaches us the doctrine of *effectual calling*.

This doctrine is stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the thirty-first question.

“What is effectual calling?”

Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”

To prove and illustrate this doctrine, is the object of the ensuing discourse.

That God effectually calls sinners to salvation, is frequently taught in the Scriptures. It is taught in our text; and also in the following passages. Rom. i. 6, 7. “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. Beloved of God, called to be saints.” Rom. viii. 28. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” 1 Cor. i. 2, 9. “To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Thes. ii. 12. “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” 2 Thes. ii. 14. “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Tim. i. 9. “Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling.” 1 Pet. ii. 9. “Ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” 1 Pet. v. 10. “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” The foregoing are some of the passages of Scripture in which the doctrine of effectual calling is taught.

The person who calls is God, and especially God the Holy Ghost.

Many are called by God, who do not hearken to his voice or obey his call. Of this we have abundant proof in the Scriptures; as in the following texts, Prov. i. 24, “I have called, and ye refused.” Is. lxvi. 4. “I will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear.” The same is taught by our Saviour, in the parable of the marriage feast. Mat. xxii. The king “sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all

things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways." And the parable is concluded with the observation, "Many are called, but few are chosen." From these texts it is evident that many are called, who never hearken to the call, or are made partakers of the salvation of the gospel.

Hence we may divide calling into *ineffectual* and *effectual*.

That calling is *ineffectual* which does not bring sinners savingly home to Christ; and that *effectual* which does bring sinners truly to receive Christ. The ineffectual call is made by the word; the effectual, by the Spirit accompanying the word, with his almighty and irresistible influence. The former call, all have who hear the gospel, which proclaims unto them that all things are ready, and invites them to come and receive salvation. And with the call that is made by the word, the providence of God, and reason and conscience often unite their voice, and urge obedience to the call of the word.

But this call is, of itself, insufficient to bring sinners to embrace Christ and salvation; though it leaves them altogether inexcusable, and justly condemned for their neglect and disobedience. For the reason why this external call, by the word, proves insufficient to bring men to embrace the salvation offered in the gospel, is not any want of necessary information on the subject of the way of salvation; for the word contains every instruction necessary to make wise unto salvation: nor is the reason a want of natural powers in the sinner to believe and obey the gospel; but it is an aversion of heart to the salvation of Christ, which aversion blinds the mind, and causes sinners, willingly and perseveringly, to reject the call of God made in his word. These remarks are confirmed, by what our Saviour said, Mat. xiii. 14, 15, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

That the external call by the word, is of itself insufficient to bring men to embrace the salvation of the gos-

pel; and that there is a necessity that the internal call of the Spirit, powerfully operating upon the heart, should accompany the external call of the word to render it effectual to the salvation of the soul, are evident from the word of God.

The Scriptures represent mankind as by nature totally depraved. They are in darkness, and are darkness itself. Eph. iv. 18. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph. v. 8. "Ye were sometimes darkness." 1 Pet. ii. 9. "Who hath called you out of darkness into marvellous light." 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They are the enemies of God, and enmity against him. Col. i. 21. "And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." Rom. viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They are spiritually dead. Eph. ii. 1, 5. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ." They are altogether indisposed to think or to do any thing good. 2 Cor. iii. 5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." John xv. 5. "Without me ye can do nothing." This Scriptural representation of the natural state of man, clearly teaches the insufficiency of the external call by the word alone, to bring men to embrace Christ and love holiness; and the necessity of the internal call of the Holy Spirit.

And this is further proved by numerous texts of Scripture, which ascribe the work of grace in the heart to God. Let the following suffice, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iv. 7. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. ii, 10, 11. "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. For, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

Eph. ii. i, 8, 10. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Tit. iii. 5. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." From these and many other texts, it is abundantly evident, that effectual calling is not by the word alone; but also by the operations of the Spirit; and that unless the Spirit does operate upon the heart, the external call by the word will prove ineffectual and be rejected.

The internal call by the Spirit, accompanies the external call by the word. "The Lord opened" the heart of Lydia, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Acts xvi. 14. Although the word of itself will not effectually call sinners home to Christ, yet in effectual calling, the Spirit operates by and with the word.

The internal call of the Spirit is *irresistible*. It is made by almighty power, and with almighty energy, and infallibly awakens the attention of the soul and brings it to bow in obedience to the divine will. "Thy people (said the Psalmist, Ps. cx. 3) shall be willing in the day of thy power." And Christ said, John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." And in the same chapter, verse 44, having declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;" in which he taught the necessity of divine grace to bring the sinner to him, immediately added in the next verse: "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me;" in which he taught the irresistible nature of the internal call of the sinner, by the Holy Spirit.

But from this doctrine of irresistible grace in conversion, the conclusion is by no means to be drawn, that man is compelled to obey the internal call of the Spirit, against his will. For the chief part of the operations of the Spirit consists in making the sinner willing, or in renewing his will, so that he most freely chooses to obey the call of the word, and embrace Christ as he is offered in the gospel. For we read, Ps. cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." And Phil. ii. 13. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The manner in which the Spirit of God operates upon the soul in effectual calling, we cannot fully explain. For we read, John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The first work of the Spirit in effectual calling is to convince of sin and misery. The person by the operations of the Spirit is awakened to feel that he is a sinner, and as such is exposed to the wrath of God, and in danger of eternal misery. The soul thus awakened, is filled with anxiety, and often with deep anxiety and distress; and with great solitude inquires, "what must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. Now he can no longer treat the things of religion with lightness, or continue careless and secure, or look upon a concern for the salvation of the soul as unnecessary or enthusiastic. The person in this situation, most generally, for a time, endeavours to silence his conscience, and procure the favour of God by his own doings. But the Spirit, by his operations, convinces him of his misery in this respect also, or that he is unable to keep the law, or to make atonement for his past sins; and that he is weak and empty in himself, and must have a better righteousness than his own, or must perish. Then it is, when he is cut off from all hope in himself, that he begins to look for help from some other quarter.

The convinced sinner being brought into this state, the next work of the Spirit is, by accompanying the word with his influences, to enlighten the mind in the knowledge of Christ, as a Saviour, and as an able, willing, suitable, and the only Saviour; and to renew the will, imparting to the soul, a new and holy disposition. The sinner is then enabled to act faith on Christ; and cordially embraces him for the purposes of salvation, as he is offered in the gospel.

If it should be asked why God thus effectually calls some, while he only externally calls others, and leaves them without the internal operations of the Spirit? I must answer in the words of our Saviour, spoken in relation to this very subject. Mat. xi. 26. "Even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." We must find the reason for such a procedure in the sovereign will of God, who, although proud man quarrels with the saying, has declar-

ed, Rom. ix. 15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Nothing in the creature influences him to give the effectual call to one, and not to another: for he is no respecter of persons; and he often hides these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes; as said our Saviour, Mat. xi. 25. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It is nothing in the called, that influences God effectually to call them. This, the Scriptures teach; and of this we may also be convinced from our own observation. For we have seen among persons of the same character, and privileged with the same means, one taken and another left. We have seen the same thing in the same family. And we have sometimes seen even profligates effectually called, while others, decent and regular in their deportment, have been left. These are undeniable facts; and they force upon us conviction of the soul humbling truth, that God is a sovereign in the dispensation of his grace, as well as of his other gifts. Our hearts may rise in opposition to this doctrine; but this will not alter truth. God will nevertheless maintain the throne, and continue to act according to his good pleasure.

But notwithstanding, God acts as a sovereign in the dispensation of his grace; yet he acts righteously. The Judge of all the earth will do right; and they who perish, will perish justly. It is very important to know and feel this. Though none are saved without the special grace of God; yet they are guilty and perish justly who do not embrace salvation. This the Scriptures abundantly teach. For they make it the duty of all men to repent of their sins and believe in Christ; and if repentance and faith be their duty, they are necessarily criminal for being impenitent and unbelieving. And accordingly God in his word denounces punishment against the wicked, and casts the blame of their destruction upon themselves.

Thus, with respect to the unbelieving Jews, our Saviour declared, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John v. 40. "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 her chickens under her

wings, and ye would not." And therefore, because they would not, he told them; "Behold your house is left unto you desolate. "Mat. xxiii. 37, 38. And in the parable of the marriage feast, they who were bidden are charged with wilfully refusing to come; and, for their wilful rejection of the gospel offer, they were punished. Mat. xxii. But it is unnecessary to quote particular passages; for the word of God every where teaches that man is guilty, and deserves to be punished, and will be punished, for not obeying the gospel call. And however under the blinding influence of sin, we may reason on this subject, and abuse the preceding doctrine by inferring from it that we are not accountable creatures, the word of God is every where against such an inference. And our consciences unite with the Scriptures; for they reprove and condemn us for our disobedience. They who continue in unbelief freely reject the offered salvation, and freely choose the ways of disobedience, and therefore deserve to be punished.

For, as has already been observed, it is not through any defect of information in the revelation of truth, which the gospel contains, that men do not embrace salvation. Every thing necessary to make us wise unto salvation is therein revealed; nor does God, when he effectually calls, give any new revelation. Neither is it for want of natural powers to know and love, and obey the truth, that men do not embrace the offers of the gospel; for they have all the natural faculties of mind, such as understanding, will, and affections, which Adam had before the fall; and no new natural faculty is given to those who are effectually called. But their rejection of salvation arises from opposition to God, and disrelish of gospel truth. They will not come to Christ that they might have life, because their hearts are opposed to him, and to the way of salvation through him. But both reason and common sense, as well as the word of God, teach that this dislike and opposition can form no just excuse for disobedience. And our own daily conduct, in not admitting a dislike of duty in regard to temporal things, as an excuse for neglect, continually condemns us, when we undertake to conclude differently with regard to the things of religion.

But still this opposition to God, and disrelish of gospel truth are so great, in every natural heart, that they will,

invariably, lead men most freely to reject the gospel call; unless the divine Spirit takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh; or subdues the perverse disposition, and gives a different bias to the will and affections. And God might justly leave the whole human race, without the internal call of the Spirit, and punish them for their wilful rejection of the external call by the gospel. So that while they, who have been effectually called by the Spirit of God, into union and communion with his Son Jesus Christ, have reason ever to admire and adore the riches of free and sovereign grace, and ascribe all the glory of their salvation to God; they who have been left, without the internal call of the Spirit, and who are still destitute of an interest in the salvation of the gospel, have no just reason to charge injustice upon God, or to find fault with any one but themselves. For salvation has been offered to them, and they have most freely rejected it. They have taken the course which they have chosen, and they still continue in it willingly, and with all their hearts, though God warns them that the end thereof is death.

A few very brief reflections will now close this subject.

How wretched is the state of man by nature! He is dead in trespasses and sins. He is an enemy of God. He is under his wrath, and condemned to eternal misery. Salvation is provided and offered to him, and he is unwilling to accept of it. He freely and perseveringly chooses the ways of sin, though the end thereof is eternal death. And he is so invincibly opposed to God, and the salvation offered in the gospel, that nothing less than almighty power will avail to subdue his opposition, and influence him to do his duty, and embrace his true glory and felicity.

Let those who are in this sad state, as all are who have not been effectually called by the Holy Spirit, consider their condition, until, through the blessing of God upon their consideration, they become deeply affected with a sense of their state, and realize their great guilt and danger, in neglecting and rejecting the salvation offered in the gospel. And may the divine Spirit, without whose influence to make application of truth, Paul plants and Apollos waters in vain, accompany his word with almighty power, and convince you of your sins and misery, enlighten and renew you, and persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel.

Again, from our subject we may be led to reflect on the mercy, long-suffering, and grace of God. How astonishing is it that he should provide salvation for such creatures! And that he should bear with us while we neglect this great salvation, and reject his calls of mercy made in the gospel! And still more astonishing, that after all our neglect of the gospel call, and the resistance we make to it, he should, by his Spirit, effectually call any of us out of darkness into his marvellous light, and make us heirs of immortal glory!

Surely his grace is infinite. Let the subjects of it be humble; for who made them to differ? And what have they that they did not receive? Let them glory only in the Lord, and ascribe their salvation entirely to his rich, free, and sovereign grace, by which they are what they are. And let them, by holy lives, “show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light;” and, “walk worthy of God who hath called them unto his kingdom and glory.”—AMEN.

SERMON XLI.

CONVICTIONS.

Acts ii. 37.

“Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?”

THE Apostles, agreeably to the instructions of their Lord, continued together, after his ascension, in one place, in Jerusalem, waiting for the accomplishment of his promise to shed down the Holy Ghost upon them. On the day of Pentecost the promise was fulfilled. “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with

other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts ii. 2, 3, 4. The news of these wonders soon drew together a great multitude of people to the place where the Apostles were. Peter embraced the opportunity to preach to them. The effect which his preaching produced, we have contained in our text, and some following verses. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered the inquiry. "And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Our text teaches us the doctrine of *convictions*.

This is one branch of the operations of the Spirit of God in effectual calling, and claims a more particular attention than we could give it in the discourse on that subject. Your attention is therefore invited in the ensuing discourse to the subject of *convictions*. In speaking on this subject, we shall,

I. Illustrate the nature of convictions.

II. Confirm the doctrine, and

III. Show the use of convictions.

I. Let us attend to an illustration of the *nature* of convictions.

By convictions we understand in general, such a sense of sin and misery, as begets an anxious concern about the salvation of the soul.

Mankind, naturally, have not this sense, or this anxious concern. While alive, and active, in the things of this world, they are, in a spiritual sense, dead. They do not feel that they are sinners. However they may acknowledge the truth, they have no feeling sense of its import, nor do they feel its weight. They have no realizing sense of the desert of sin, and of the dreadful danger to which they are exposed; and hence they are not anxious to escape from the wrath which is to come. In this situation, sinners in general are. This is proved both by the word of God, and by facts continually before our eyes. And in this situation they will continue until the Spirit of God operates upon them. All nature around them, proclaims duty; but they are insensible to the voice. In vain the law of God, shows them what they ought to be, and exhibits to them as in a glass their moral deformity. In vain, it condemns them for their sins, and thun-

ders in their ears its dreadful curses. In vain are they told of the transcendant love of Christ towards sinners. His humiliation, his sufferings, and his death plead with them without effect. In vain does the gospel, in sweet and heavenly accents, invite them to Christ. "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear: which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Ps. lviii. 4, 5. In vain is the bottomless pit uncovered before them; and in vain, is heaven with its unspeakable glories unveiled. Still they continue careless. Sometimes conscience smites them, and they are a little disturbed. But a faint resolution of amendment, either now or at some future time; and recourse to the business, company or amusements of the world; and various excuses which they have at hand to justify their conduct, at least for the present, calm again the troubled mind. Thus the sinner continues in a general course of carelessness, and no permanent impression is made, until the Spirit of God accompanies the means used, with his power.

The Scriptures ascribe genuine convictions to the Holy Spirit as the author. John xvi. 8. "And when he (that is, the Spirit) is come, he will reprove (or convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." And when the Holy Spirit undertakes the work, the weakest means are made effectual to bring a person under convictions. Truths which he had often before heard without concern, now arrest his attention, and prick him in the heart. He is brought to pause in his career of carelessness and sin, and to consider his ways. He now begins to see his situation, and to behold it in some measure as it is. He feels that he is a sinner, and that sin is wrong. He feels the force of those truths, which he had heard a thousand times without concern; and assents to them as of weighty import. Sins long forgotten, or which had long ceased to disturb his conscience, are called to his remembrance. The number swells before him. He sees that they are greatly aggravated, for circumstances under which he committed sin, and which he had never before considered, now present themselves. He sees that there is an intimate connexion between sin and death; that sin deserves and exposes to misery; that he is the character against which the law of God denounces its curses; and that therefore he is under the wrath of God;

and he feels it to be a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, as an incensed Judge, and that he is in imminent danger of it. In this situation a person must be filled with anxiety and distress. He can no longer continue careless and secure, or enjoy the pleasures of sin. Like the hand-writing on the wall, which destroyed the enjoyment of king Belshazzar, though engaged in feasting and revelling; so a sense of the wrath of God under which he lies, and of his danger which his eyes are opened to behold, mar all the enjoyments of the awakened sinner, in sinful pleasures. He can no longer, as formerly, run with eagerness into sinful excesses. He can no longer laugh or mock at serious things; but feels them to be all important. He ceases to wonder at the anxiety and distress of others, on account of the salvation of their souls; for he himself is distressed. And not unfrequently the person in this situation is deeply distressed, and nothing can comfort him while the issue, as it respects his eternal state, remains in suspense. Under this anxious concern, he inquires, in the language of the convicted in our text, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" To have this inquiry answered, he frequently applies to the people and ministers of God. He is now seen stately at the house of God, and with attention listening to the instructions of the sanctuary. Excuses, which before were deemed sufficient to justify his absence, now appear insufficient and trifling. He now reads his Bible, and attentively examines it to find an answer to the important inquiry, what shall I do? Behold, also, he prayeth; he cries unto God to have mercy on him, and direct him in the right way. He endeavours to reform his life, and not unfrequently labours with all his might to work out a righteousness of his own, by which he may appease the wrath of God, and recommend himself to his favour. But where the Spirit of God designs to carry on the work of convictions, until it terminates in conversion, he will not suffer the awakened person to rest in dependance on his own righteousness as a sufficient ground of hope; but he will convince him of righteousness, even of the necessity of a better righteousness than his own. He now thinks of Christ, and is convinced of his need of an interest in him as a Saviour, and that without it he must perish. He now endeavours to give himself away to Christ, and to believe

in him. But he tries this in his own strength, and he must be further convinced of his weakness, and that he lies entirely at mercy. This he discovers by his exertions, by which he finds that he has a hard heart, a blind mind, a perverse will, and a soul filled with unbelief. He is at length slain by the law, and dies, as to his former hopes, and joys, and opinions of his own goodness and strength. And this is the period at which the Spirit of God, supernaturally infuses a principle of new and spiritual life, which fits him to live anew. "I was alive (saith the Apostle, Rom. vii. 9.) without the law once: but, when the commandment came sin revived and I died." And Gal. ii. 19. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

And here I would remark, that although the general nature of convictions is the same in all convinced persons, who are, in the end, savingly converted; nevertheless the exercises of convinced persons differ much, both in the degree of feeling excited, and in the time of their continuance. God in this, as in every thing else manifests his sovereignty. Some are filled with a much more lively sense of their sin, guilt and danger, than others. Some are much more deeply distressed, and manifest a more deep anxiety than others. Some continue much longer under convictions than others. And some we have reason to believe are regenerated in their infancy, and grow up in the fear and love of God and divine things. With respect to such, it is not to be expected, that they should, ordinarily, when their attention is more specially turned to the subject of religion, have the same anxiety and distress, as those adults, who have been called while in a course of rebellion against God.

II. We proceed to *confirm* the *doctrine* which has been illustrated. The doctrine of convictions of sin and misery accompanied with anxiety and distress of mind, is clearly taught in the word of God. The multitude spoken of in our text is an example in proof of this. "They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?" In Paul we have another example: "He, trembling and astonished, said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. The case of the Philippian jailer furnishes us with another example. "He called for a light, and sprang

in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out and said, sirs what must I do to be saved." Acts xvi. 29, 30. In proof also of this doctrine, is what our Saviour declared respecting the work of the Holy Ghost. John xvi. 8. "And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The same is further confirmed by the following passage, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. "If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." These passages confirm the doctrine of convictions, and of distress and anxiety under them.

The reasonableness and necessity of convictions are further confirmed from the consideration, that we must repent, believe, and be pardoned, to be saved. Repentance is essentially necessary to salvation. Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But repentance is the exercise of a sinner, and supposes a sense of sin; for we certainly cannot be sorry for sin, without being convinced of it, and having a realizing sense of its evil nature. It is also essential to our salvation, that we receive the pardon of our sins; but unless we are convinced that we are sinners, and guilty, and have need of pardon, we never will apply for it, nor accept it when offered. Again, Christ is the only way to the Father, and his righteousness received by faith is the only ground of a sinner's justification; but we evidently must be convinced, that we are lost sinners, that we are helpless in ourselves, and that we have need of Christ, before we will renounce every other ground of hope, and by faith come to him, and receive him for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel. And agreeably to this, our Saviour has told us, Mat. ix. 12, 13, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

And, that a person under convictions should be distressed and anxious, and this in proportion as he is more or less sensible of his situation, is not strange. We often see persons in such distress, and many are prejudiced against it, and some even deride it. But that such dis-

tress and anxiety are not novel, is evident from the examples which have already been adduced, of the multitude in our text, and of Paul, and the jailer. And reason itself teaches us, that such anxiety and distress are just. If it be natural and just for a man to be anxious when important interests are at stake, and the issue is in suspense; and if it be natural and just for a man to be distressed when he is in great danger of misery, and is sensible of it; then anxiety and distress are highly proper as religious exercises. For the word of God teaches, that the unregenerate cannot see the kingdom of God, that the impenitent must perish, that the unbelieving are condemned already, that the unholy shall not see him, and that the hour is not known when he will come to execute his wrath in its full extent, and consign those against whom it is threatened to the abodes of remediless despair. When a person has his mind enlightened to see his state as it is, and to see that this is really his situation; and when he feels that it is doubtful whether he shall escape this dreadful wrath with which he is threatened; when he finds that his eternal interests are at stake, and the issue hanging in dreadful suspense; that the point is very soon, and perhaps in a few days, to be decided, whether he shall be an heir of glory, or an inhabitant of the regions of eternal wo; and that there is not only a possibility, but great danger, that the latter will be the issue; is it not natural and just that such a person, under such views, should be anxious and distressed? To deny the propriety of such anxiety and distress, we must either deny the plain representation of our state, as given in the word of God, or else we must hold, that while it is agreeable to the constitution of our nature to be anxious when temporal interests are at stake, and distressed when temporal danger threatens, it is improper to exercise similar feelings, when infinitely greater interests are at stake, and infinitely greater danger threatens. If the word of God gives a just description of the state of unregenerate man, sober reason teaches us that instead of being surprized at the anxiety and distress of the convicted sinner, awakened to a sense of his real situation, we ought rather to be surprized that he is not more anxious and distressed.

We pass on to the

III. Head of our discourse, which was to show the *use*

of convictions. They do not recommend us to the divine acceptance; they have no righteousness in them; they do not work in us any holy dispositions; we may have all the exercises which have been described in speaking of the nature of convictions, and yet be entirely destitute of holiness; they have no spiritual life in them. But the use of convictions is to make the sinner sensible of his wretchedness and his necessities; to divest him of himself, and to bring him down to death as to the life of sin which he lived while in the flesh, which life Paul speaks of Rom. vii. 9. "I was *alive* without the law once." Convictions take from the sinner his carnal security, his vain excuses, his false hopes, and his delusive joys; they show him the insufficiency of his own righteousness; they teach him that he has no goodness in the sight of God; they discover to him his own weakness, and that he lies at mercy; and they stain his pride and glory, and lay them in the dust. They are effected by the law in the hands of the Spirit. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. iii. 20, and the law kills; but gives no life. In short, convictions bring the sinner down to death. As saith Paul, Rom. vii. 9. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And, Gal. ii. 19. "I, through the law, am dead to the law." And he adds, in the same verse, as though this death prepared the way for life, "that I might live unto God." So that although convictions do not render the sinner more worthy of the grace of God, and in fact make him no holier; yet, in some sense, they prepare the way for his renovation and reception of the grace of God. For until emptied of himself, the sinner will not be disposed to receive the grace of God, and ascribe all the glory of his salvation to him.

From what has been said, we may infer the reason why sinners are secure in their sin. It is not because they have no cause of alarm; but because they are insensible to their real condition. They shut their eyes against their danger; and hence they are secure, though the wrath of God abideth upon them; and though the bottomless pit lies open before them, and they walk on the brink on slippery places, and death continually lurks in ambush to thrust them in. Let careless sinners awake to a sense of their sins, and the danger to which they are exposed. And may that same Spirit who accompanied the preach-

ing of Peter, and caused the truth to fasten upon the hearts of his hearers, cause his word at this time to fasten upon your hearts, and bring you to inquire, "Men and brethren what shall we do?"

Are there any present making this inquiry? we infer from what has been said, that their state is hopeful; not because they are now safe, or have real religion; nor because there is any certainty that they ever will have it; for there is no necessary connexion between convictions and conversion. But their state is hopeful, because convictions precede conversion. And although all convictions do not terminate in conversion; yet true conversion is preceded by convictions; and convicted persons are now in the way, in which the Spirit of God leads those whom he designs to bring savingly home to Christ. Let therefore such souls be encouraged to seek the Lord. Your state is far more hopeful than it was before you were awakened. But still, from the examples of others, who have been in your state, and whose goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew, which has soon passed away, you have great reason to fear. Let your danger lead you to strive, and agonize to enter in at the strait gate. If you should now relapse into carelessness, you will have contracted an additional weight of guilt; and your last state will be worse than your first. Flee to the Saviour, and in him you will be safe. May the Almighty Spirit apply the law, until he brings down every high thing that in your hearts exalteth itself against God, and until you, through the law, become dead to the law; and then may he, by his life-giving power, create your hearts anew, and fill them with the consolations of the gospel.—AMEN.

SERMON XLII.

REGENERATION.

JOHN iii. 3.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

THESE words were spoken by Christ to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. From the miracles performed by the Saviour, Nicodemus was convinced that he was a teacher come from God; and therefore came to him for instruction. Jesus immediately proceeded to give him instruction, and commenced his discourse to him with our text.

The affirmation “*verily*” with which this text was introduced, teaches us the great importance of the instruction it contains; and this affirmation is doubled to increase a sense of its importance, and the more to fix the attention. By the “*kingdom of God*” in the text we are to understand the grace of God applied to the soul, and the spiritual blessings thence resulting in this world, and the happiness of heaven hereafter, and especially the latter. By *seeing* the kingdom of God, we are to understand possessing and enjoying its blessings. The text, though spoken to Nicodemus, has a universal application, “*except a man.*” Not merely this or that particular man, but every *man*. No man can see the kingdom of God, or can be made a partaker of the saving grace of God here, and the glory of heaven hereafter, unless he is born again.

This doctrine of being *born again*; or, as it may be called, of *regeneration*, belongs to the subject of effectual calling. In the answer to the question in our Catechism, “*What is effectual calling?*” we have the doctrine of regeneration stated, in the sentence, “*enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills.*”

Let us, in the ensuing discourse, attend

I. To the nature, and

II. To the necessity of regeneration.

I. Its *nature*. The word *regeneration* is seldom used in the Scriptures; but the doctrine is abundantly taught by other terms of similar import; such as “renewed, born again, born of the Spirit, born of God, begotten by the word of truth, God shining into the heart, quickening the dead,” and others. All of these expressions have the same meaning, and establish the doctrine, by whatever name we choose to call it, that in passing from a state of nature into a state of grace, we must have wrought within us a great change.

Regeneration and baptism are not the same. The latter is only a sign of the former; and we may be the subjects of the one and not of the other. Regeneration is also something very different from the reformations, which sometimes take place from mere natural principles. It is, in short, a change of the temper of the heart from sinful to holy.

The design of regeneration is to repair the ruins made in the soul by sin, and thus to fit the person for holy exercises and enjoyments. God made man upright. He was made in the likeness or image of his Creator. This image consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. By this he was fitted for the service and enjoyment of God. It was in him a principle of holy obedience and holy enjoyment. But by the fall, man lost this image, and became indisposed to the service of God, and incapable of enjoying him. The posterity of Adam, in him, both as their natural parent, and their federal head, are born in his moral likeness, and destitute of the image of God; and therefore indisposed to the service of God, and incapable of enjoying him. That this is the natural state of man, the Scriptures fully teach.

Regeneration consists in restoring the image of God to the soul. And here, observe, no new faculties are given in regeneration. By the fall, the soul lost none of its faculties; they only became morally disordered, and lost their holy qualities. So in regeneration, the soul receives no new faculties; the original faculties are rectified, and receive new qualities. After the fall, the soul still possessed an understanding, but it was darkened in spiritual things; it had lost its spiritual discernment; it still had a will, but without its original disposition to righteousness;

and it still had affections, but they were alienated from God. So, when regenerated, the soul has the same faculties it had before, and no others. The change consists in the imparting of new qualities to these faculties. A spiritual discernment is communicated to the understanding, a righteous disposition is imparted to the will, and a holy direction is given to the affections. These new qualities, imparted to the faculties of the soul, constitute the image of God therein, and form, what is called in Scripture, "the new man." As we read, Col. iii. 10. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." And, Eph. iv. 24. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This image of God formed within the soul constitutes the man a new creature. It abideth within him a principle of new and spiritual life. He is born again, and fitted to live anew.

The manner in which this change is effected, we cannot explain or comprehend. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 8.

Regeneration, in its strict meaning, is only the birth of the new man, or the implantation of the principle from which holy actions proceed, without including these actions. Holy actions strictly belong to the new life, and not to the new birth. The principle of holiness being implanted in regeneration, the man will act agreeably thereto. New and holy views, volitions, affections, and actions characterize the new man. Saving knowledge, conversion, faith, repentance unto life, humility, love, joy, new obedience, and all other graces and holy acts which belong to the real christian, flow from the exercise of this principle of holiness implanted in regeneration.

Regeneration is an act of almighty power, and particularly of the third person of the Trinity, or the Holy Spirit. This we learn from our context. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. The wind bloweth where it listeth, &c. so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And Tit. iii. 5, we read, "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and re-

newing of the Holy Ghost." In these texts, regeneration is expressly ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In several other texts, it is ascribed to a divine power; as in the following: "A new heart will I [the Lord] give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. "God, who is rich in mercy; even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us." Eph. ii. 4, 5. "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. These and many other texts make God the author of regeneration. And that it is produced by divine power, is further evident from those passages of Scripture which represent regeneration as a creation, and a resurrection from the dead, both of which are works of almighty power. And the apostle Paul, Eph. i. 19, 20, speaking of the power of God towards them that believe, makes use of unusually strong expressions, calling it "the exceeding greatness of his power," and "the working of his mighty power:" and represents the power exerted in bringing a sinner into a state of grace, as according to that "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."

In regeneration, the soul is *passive*, or acted upon, and does not, in the least, co-operate with the divine agent, or Spirit of God. And here you will keep in mind, that I have confined regeneration to the implantation of a principle of holiness. This is an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit. In the moment of this act, the soul is passive; but in all the exercises which flow from this principle, and are manifested in the new life, the soul is active. In proof of the passiveness of the soul, in the moment of regeneration, are all those texts which ascribe regeneration to a divine power. And the following text, John i. 12, 13, not only ascribes this work to God, but also expressly denies the co-operation of the creature. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The passiveness of

the soul in regeneration is further proved by all those texts, in which regeneration is represented as a creation and a resurrection from the dead. For in both these, in a literal sense, the subject is passive. The thing created must be passive in the act of creation, and cannot co-operate with the Creator; and in the infusion of life into a dead body, the body itself must be passive, and cannot co-operate with the power imparting life, in the production and infusion of that life. Hence, since regeneration is frequently represented in Scripture as a creation and a resurrection, we are warranted to conclude that the soul must be passive in the spiritual creation and resurrection, or regeneration.

From the preceding statement of the doctrine of regeneration, carnal men sometimes draw inferences, which are calculated to lull their consciences to rest, and increase their inattention to the concerns of their souls.

One of these inferences is, if this doctrine be true, the sinner is excusable for not loving and serving God; for if it is necessary to be regenerated, before we will love and serve the Lord, and if the Lord alone can regenerate the soul of a sinner, then if God does not see fit to regenerate my soul, I cannot be to blame for not loving and serving him. Many, we have reason to fear, fatally quiet their consciences by such reasoning as this. But the reasoning is fallacious, and the conclusion, as an inference from the doctrine of regeneration, is not true. For the Scriptures of truth give no countenance to such an inference. But while they expressly and repeatedly teach the necessity of regeneration, and that this is the work of God alone, they at the same time every where teach that the unregenerate are without excuse. They command them to make to themselves new hearts; they enjoin upon them repentance, faith, and holy obedience, which presuppose a new and holy heart; and they denounce the wrath of God against the impenitent, the unbelieving, and the disobedient. The Scriptures therefore leave the unregenerate inexcusable. And with the decisions of Scripture on this subject, agree those of an enlightened conscience. For we do find that as soon as a sinner obtains a just view of his own character, he condemns himself, and confesses himself guilty before God, and deserving of his

wrath, for his former conduct, while in an unregenerate state.

Whence arises the necessity of regeneration to fit us to love and serve God? It arises from our depravity. We have such a dislike to the character and law of God, though they are infinitely perfect; and such a love of sin, that unless our disposition is changed, we never will love and serve the Lord. But this perversity of disposition cannot release us from obligation to the performance of these duties, any more than the perverse disposition of a froward child, leading him continually to hate and disobey a good and kind parent, can be any excuse for his conduct, or make it less his duty to love and obey him. The reason why a sinner does not forsake his sins, and love and serve God, is the same as the reason why the wicked child does not forsake his disobedience, and love and obey his parent; and the same as the reason why the drunkard does not forsake his cups, and return to habits of sobriety. And why is it necessary that God should interpose to change our hearts, if we ever are regenerated? It is because we are so depraved; so opposed to God; and so wedded to sin, that unless God does specially interpose by his almighty power, and change our hearts, we never will do our duty. So that the necessity of divine power to renew the soul, so far from excusing the unregenerate, is a circumstance that shows the exceeding greatness of their depravity and guilt.

Another inference which carnal men sometimes draw from this doctrine is, that since regeneration is necessary to a life of piety, and this is exclusively the work of God, exertions on their part to become pious must be useless. In relation to this inference, it may be observed, God hath instituted means of grace, and commanded us to use them; and where he does grant his grace, it is generally in the use of the means which he hath instituted; and we have no ground either from his word, or from what we have generally witnessed of the dispensations of his grace, to expect the saving influences of his Spirit in the neglect of the means which he hath appointed. I proceed to the

II. Branch of the subject, viz. to show the *necessity* of regeneration.

The text sufficiently proves its necessity, or that we cannot be saved without it. "Except a man be born again,

he cannot see the kingdom of God." The same necessity is taught in the fifth verse. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And again, in the seventh verse, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

But that regeneration is absolutely necessary to salvation, is a truth taught, not only by the express language of Scripture, but also by the reason and fitness of things. As God is holy, heaven, and all its exercises and enjoyments must be holy. To derive happiness from any object, there must be a relish for the happiness which the object offers; and therefore to be happy in heaven, there must be a relish for holiness, and consequently there must be a holy nature. If then man is not naturally a holy being, he must be made or become so before he can enjoy the happiness of heaven. As well might a sick man, who loathes all food, enjoy a sumptuous feast, as a person destitute of holiness enjoy the happiness of heaven. Does man then, in his present state, naturally possess a holy disposition? Are holy enjoyments his supreme happiness? or is the reverse the fact? If the former be true, regeneration is unnecessary; but if the latter, we must be born again, before we can see or enter into the kingdom of God.

That man is naturally destitute of holiness, the Scriptures clearly and repeatedly teach. According to them, we were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. Ps. li. 5. Every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually. Gen. vi. 5. We are all as an unclean thing. Is. lxiv. 6. In us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Rom. vii. 18. We are dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. ii. 1. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. ii. 14. And the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7. Such is the testimony of the word of God respecting man in his natural state. This testimony abundantly proves, that in our natural state, we are destitute of holiness. The conclusion is obvious, and forces itself upon us, that we are by nature entirely unfit for holy enjoyments, and therefore for the happiness of heaven, and consequently must be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God.

Suppose an unregenerate person, or a person destitute of holiness were admitted into heaven, could he be happy there? Could he who now esteems the law of God an intolerable restraint, and his service a grievous burden, be happy in being entirely subjected to this law, and forever engaged in this service? Could he be happy in the presence of God, whose mind is carnal, and therefore enmity against him? How could they, who seldom or never pray to God, who esteem his worship an irksome task, and his Sabbaths a weariness, be happy in spending an eternity in his worship? How could they enjoy the holy society of heaven, or the holy conversation of the blessed, who now take no delight in the society of God's people, in religious conversation?

These questions may teach us the absolute necessity of holy tempers to fit us to be happy in heaven; and since we do not naturally possess such tempers, the absolute necessity of regeneration, in which such tempers are given. Reason unites her voice with the word of God, in declaring to a depraved world, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In improving this subject, let us learn from it—

1. Humility. What a humiliating picture of human nature does it present! We are so unholy that it is necessary we should be regenerated, before we can be fit for the service of a holy God, or the performance of any thing really good and acceptable in his sight, and for the enjoyment of a holy happiness. And we are so far from holiness, and so deep rooted and invincible is our depravity, that nothing short of almighty power will avail to renew our hearts. Surely these considerations are calculated to humble us. Let us be sensible of our native vileness, and feel deeply abased before a holy God.

2. This subject teaches us our dependance on God for salvation. We must be born again, or we cannot see his kingdom; and this necessary change must be wrought by him, or it never will be made. If God change the hearts of the unregenerate, they will be saved; but if not, they must perish forever. And he is under no obligations, on the ground of justice, to change the heart of an individual of our race; for every soul deserves to have the sentence of the law which he has violated, executed upon him, and to be forever excluded from the divine favour. We all lie

entirely at the mercy of God; and in the exercise of this mercy he acts as a sovereign; for he has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Rom. ix. 15. Let the unregenerate lay these truths seriously to heart, and renounce their imaginary goodness and self-sufficiency, and be brought to lie at the footstool of sovereign mercy. And let the regenerate who have experienced the renewing influences of the Spirit of God, be led to give all the glory of what they are, and of what holy fruit they are enabled to produce, to the rich, free, and sovereign grace of God; and to say, with the Apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. xv. 10.

3. Let this subject be improved for self-examination. Have we been born again? This is a question in which each one of us, of every age, sex, rank, and condition, is most deeply interested. For my hearers, whether you are old or young, rich or poor, high or low, male or female, bond or free, except you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. You cannot partake of his saving grace in this world, nor be admitted into heaven hereafter. That you are esteemed amiable and moral in the sight of men, or that you have been baptized, or that you come to the Lord's table, will not save you. There is not any thing which can be substituted in the place of the new birth. The sinner must be born again, or he cannot see the kingdom of God. This is the unalterable decree of heaven. Let us therefore carefully examine ourselves, whether we have experienced the new birth. By our fruits we may know. Regeneration is a living and fruitful principle of holiness. Do we then bring forth fruits of holiness? "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. v. 17. Is this our character? Do we live like new creatures? Let us examine carefully; for the interests of our immortal souls are concerned. Whether we are bound to heaven or hell, is decided by the true answer to this question, are we born again, or are we not? If we are able truly, from scriptural evidence, to give an affirmative answer to this momentous question, let us give glory to God, and rejoice in hope of the heavenly blessedness, and live as becometh those who have been begotten again to such a lively and glorious hope. But if we

have not scriptural evidence that we have been born again, let us not hope that we can be in a state of safety. Let us admit that we are now in the road to eternal death, and feel that our situation is indeed alarming. And let us seek the Lord while he is yet to be found, and call upon him while he is yet near, and rest in nothing short of scriptural evidence that we have experienced his renewing grace.—AMEN.

SERMON XLIII.

FAITH.

ACTS xvi. 31.

“And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

THESE were the words of Paul and Silas to the awakened Philippian jailer. They answer the momentous question, what a sinner must do to be saved? He must believe in Jesus Christ.

In our Shorter Catechism, the article of faith in Jesus Christ, is placed after the ten commandments. But this doctrine is so intimately connected with that of justification, which we shall, in course, be shortly called to consider, that it requires to be treated in this place. The answer to, “what is justification?” states that we are justified “only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” It is important therefore, before we treat of justification, to understand what faith is, by which we are justified. The doctrine of faith is also hinted at, in the close of the answer to “what is effectual calling?” in the sentence, “He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.” This is faith. Besides, in the Larger Catechism, faith is treated of in this place, in the system, instead of being put after the commandments. We shall therefore consider the doctrine of faith, in this place, in our system of discourses on the doctrines of religion.

A description of faith in Jesus Christ, we have in the answer to the 86th question of our Shorter Catechism.

“What is faith in Jesus Christ?”

Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.”

Faith, in the general meaning of the word, signifies credit given to testimony. In a religious sense, faith signifies the credit given to truth, on the authority of the divine testimony.

In a religious sense, there are four kinds of faith, viz. historical, temporary, faith of miracles, and justifying or saving faith.

1. A *historical* faith. By this is meant, an assent to the truths of God’s word, without a corresponding practice. This faith hath little or no influence on the conduct of men. It was this kind of faith that James meant, when he said, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Jam. ii. 17, 26. This kind of faith devils have as well as men, as we learn from the same epistle. Jam. ii. 19. “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.”

2. A *temporary* faith. By this is meant something more than the preceding. In addition to an assent to God’s word as true, a temporary faith includes some movings of affection, a certain kind of taste for the truths of religion, and a joyful frame of mind; which relish and joy arise from the benefits expected, and a false hope of an interest in them. The motives to this kind of faith are entirely of a selfish nature. It proceeds from the exercise of mere natural principles, and not from any root of grace in the heart; and therefore is generally temporary, in its duration. It cannot stand the trials of temptation and persecution; but when tried with these, having no root of grace, it withers away. Of this kind of faith, we have an example in the parable of the sower. Mat. xiii. “Behold a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root they withered

away." Of this our Saviour gave, in the same chapter, the following explanation:—"He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended;" or, as it is expressed by Luke, viii. 13, "They on the rock are they, which when they hear receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

3. A faith of *miracles*. By this is meant that persuasion or belief, which those had who wrought miracles, that God would work such miracles by them; and also that belief, which was required of those on whom, or in whose favour the miracle was wrought, that such a miracle could be performed, by the instrumentality of the person applied to, or offering to perform it. Of the former kind was the faith to remove mountains, cast out devils, heal diseases, &c. frequently spoken of in the New Testament; and of the latter kind was the faith to be healed, of which we have an instance in the person who applied to Christ in behalf of his son, who was possessed of an evil spirit. Mark ix. 23. "Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

All these three kinds of faith, persons may have, and yet not be in a state of salvation; but on the contrary remain under condemnation. The first, we have seen, devils may have, as well as men. The second has no root of grace, and therefore cannot be accepted. And the last Judas had, as well as the other apostles. And Paul said, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, (evidently meaning the faith of miracles) and have not charity, I am nothing."

We proceed to illustrate the nature of *justifying* or *saving* faith. The object of this faith is the word of God generally, and especially Jesus Christ. Saving faith is such a belief of the word of God, as influences a person to act agreeably thereto; and especially such a belief of the testimony which God has given of his Son, as leads the soul cordially to receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel.

Saving faith necessarily presupposes a knowledge of

divine truth; for it is absurd to suppose that a man can believe that of which he has not heard, or which he does not know. Whatever is necessary to be believed, must first be known, before it will or can be believed. The truths which are the objects of faith, are contained in the word of God. Faith, therefore, necessarily supposes a knowledge of the Scriptures, or at least of their fundamental truths. In confirmation of this, is the following passage. Rom. x. 14, 17. "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Faith presupposes a knowledge of sin, and guilt, and exposure to the divine wrath; of Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and of the terms on which he will save the sinner. It presupposes an assent to the fundamental doctrine of the gospel as true. Hence saving faith presupposes and includes the historical faith, which has already been spoken of. But further—

Faith presupposes not merely a cold assent to divine truth, such as we give to a truth in which we feel that we have little or no concern; but a conviction of its importance to us individually. It supposes that we feel ourselves to be sinners, and therefore guilty, under condemnation from the divine law, exposed to the wrath of God, and in danger of eternal misery. Under this conviction, the person is alarmed, and, with the jailer, anxiously inquires, "What must I do to be saved?" In this state of mind, he frequently endeavours to work out a righteousness of his own, and by his prayers, penitence, reformation, and performance of duties, to appease the divine wrath, and recommend himself to the favour of God; until by a more perfect knowledge of the divine law, of the evil nature and desert of sin, of his own weakness, and of the utter imperfection of his best obedience, he is brought to a realizing belief of the truth of the testimony of God in his word, that he is not only a condemned sinner, exposed to the wrath of God; but that he is also helpless, in himself hopeless, and that without a Saviour he must inevitably perish forever.

In the gospel, he hears of Christ, as the Saviour of sinners; that he has died to make atonement for sin; that the Father has accepted his sacrifice, and has promised

to pardon and save all that come to him through his Son; and that Christ is an able Saviour, has a fulness of every needed blessing, and is ready to bestow of this fulness upon all who are willing to receive it. The convinced soul, therefore, turns his attention to Christ. But he is so guilty and polluted, that he dare not venture to apply to him in his present state. He must first make himself better; not with a view to substitute his worthiness in the place of the merits of Christ, which he before attempted; but that he may be fitted to come to Christ and be saved by him. But this also he finds to be vain. At length, convinced that he must come to Christ as a totally ruined sinner, with all his guilt and pollution cleaving to him, and without any thing to recommend him, he endeavours thus to come. But unbelief possesses his soul. He has been such a great sinner; he has sinned so long, and under such aggravating circumstances, that he fears Christ will not receive him, and he dares not venture his soul upon him. His heart is hard, and dead, and he cannot believe. Of this exercise, we find most of those who have come to Christ deeply sensible. After they were shut up to the faith, and convinced that Christ alone could save them, they found it very difficult to exercise faith in him. Faith is the gift of God. It is a grace which is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit generally prepares the soul for it, by those previous steps which have been described, which are calculated to convince the sinner of his utter inability, of himself to do any thing that is really good and acceptable in the sight of God, and that he must be entirely a debtor to grace for salvation.

The person thus made sensible of his own utter weakness, even to embrace an offered Saviour, is brought to the foot of sovereign mercy, as a guilty and helpless sinner, crying, "Lord save me, or I perish." It is, I suppose, at this period, that the Spirit operates upon the heart and renews it. We must, by the law, become dead unto the law, before we can begin to live unto God.

The renewed soul takes a view of Jesus Christ, as he is presented in the gospel, and he appears to be an able, willing, suitable, lovely, and desirable Saviour; and his heart approves of his character, and of the way of salvation through him. He hungers and thirsts after him, and longs to receive him as his Saviour. He believes the tes-

timony that God in his word gives concerning him. He believes in the sufficiency of his atonement, in his ability and willingness to save, in the sincerity of his offers, in his faithfulness to his promises, and in his suitableness, in every respect, to his necessities. And he receives him cordially on his own terms, and for the purposes for which he is offered. This cordial reception of Christ, is properly the appropriating act of faith, by which the soul becomes united to him, and Christ and his benefits become the believer's. Accordingly we read, John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." This appropriating act of faith is well expressed by the Psalmist, "When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face Lord will I seek." Ps. xxvii. 8.

Faith is the answer of the soul in the affirmative, to the gospel offer. Christ offers himself to the sinner as a Saviour, to do for him every thing which he needs to complete his salvation; and the sinner feeling his need, believing the sincerity of the offer, and approving the terms, accepts the offer, cordially receives Christ, rests and relies on him alone for salvation, and makes a surrender of himself to him, to be saved by him in his own way, and to be used for his glory.

He receives him in all his offices. Sensible of his own blindness and ignorance, and believing in Christ as a teacher able and ready to guide him into all necessary truth; he receives him in his prophetic office, and relies upon him to enlighten and instruct him by his word and Spirit. Sensible of his guilt, and believing in the atonement and righteousness of Christ; he receives him in his priestly office, as the Lord his righteousness, and relies upon the sacrifice which he made, and the righteousness which he wrought out, for the pardon of his sins and acceptance with God. And sensible of his pollution and weakness, and believing in the efficacy of the Spirit of Christ, to cleanse his soul from the pollution of sin, and to strengthen him to the performance of his duty; and believing also in the power of the Saviour to protect him from all spiritual foes; he receives him in his kingly office, to rule in, over, and for him; and he depends upon him to dwell in him by his Spirit, to subdue and mortify sin, preserve and quicken grace, and strengthen him to

the performance of every duty; to protect him from his spiritual foes, to bring him off conqueror over them, and to fulfil all the promises he has made to his people. He makes an unconditional surrender of himself to Christ, to be saved by him, in his own way. He is willing that his pride should be humbled, that he should be saved by free and sovereign grace, and that Christ should have all the glory. He is heartily willing to forsake sin, and that Christ should save him from sin, as well as from ruin. He receives Christ's law, and devotes himself to his service, to live in obedience to his commands; and he cheerfully receives the cross of Christ, resolved to take it up and follow him.

This is a brief view of saving faith. The acts which have been described, are generally called the direct acts of faith. There is another called the reflex act, so denominated from the soul, in this act, looking back upon itself, reflecting upon its own exercises, and discovering within itself the evidences of saving faith. From this act results hope, confidence, peace, joy, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. This reflex act is not of the essence of faith. For a person must have true faith, and be truly united to Christ, and interested in his salvation, before he can produce this act.

In the application of this subject, my brethren, be exhorted to consider and feel its importance. Our salvation depends on an experimental acquaintance with the doctrine of saving faith. As the Scriptures reveal no way of salvation, but through Jesus Christ, so they also teach that faith is absolutely necessary to an interest in him. For "God gave his Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish; but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. The salvation of Christ is only for those who embrace it by faith. For while the Scriptures declare, "He that believeth shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16, they also explicitly declare, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John iii. 18. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. And, "he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. What then is to become of those who reject the gospel of Christ? and refuse to give even a historical belief to its truth? They must inevita-

bly perish. There can be no hope for them, while they continue to sustain this character.

But there are some, and we have reason to fear, many, who profess to believe the gospel with a historical faith, who nevertheless are hoping to be saved in some other way than through faith in Christ. Let such carefully read this gospel, to which they profess to give their assent, and they will soon find, that a sinner can be justified before God, only through faith; and that every hope which does not arise from faith in Christ is false. My hearers, guard against deception. There is salvation in no other but Christ: "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 12. And there is no way of becoming interested in him, except by faith.

And as you have heard, it is not every kind of faith, that is saving. Let those, therefore, who are expecting salvation through faith in Christ, carefully examine themselves, whether their faith is of that character to which the promise of salvation is made; or whether it be a mere historical, or a temporary faith. Of the latter kind, we have reason to fear, is the faith of many, even among professing christians. Such are yet strangers to Christ, and under condemnation.

If, my brethren, you have true faith, you have been convinced of sin, and have seen yourselves to be guilty, lost, and helpless sinners; and as such you have come to Christ, and have cordially received him in all his offices, and are resting and relying on him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel; and you have made a surrender and hearty dedication of yourselves to him, to be entirely his.

To inquiring souls, our subject affords direction. The text is addressed to all in your situation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Give up every other hope, and flee directly to Christ, just as you are. Do not continue to dream of fitness, as necessary to recommend you to him. All the fitness he requires is to feel your need of him. You cannot make yourselves better, but if you ever are made better, he must do it; and he will do it, if you go to him and look to him for it. He invites you to come, and he promises, if you do come, that you shall in no wise be cast out. Accept his invita-

tion. Open your hearts to receive him, as he is offered in the gospel; and he will come into you, and make you a partaker of all the blessings of salvation.

Finally, let true believers, who have received Christ by faith, abide in him, and walk in him, and live upon him by faith. It is by faith that you are daily to derive from him fresh supplies of every needed grace. As said the Apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. May we all have "like precious faith."—AMEN.

SERMON XLIV.

JUSTIFICATION.

GALATIANS ii. 16.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

THE doctrine of this text is *justification*. This doctrine we have stated in our Catechism in the answer to the thirty-third question.

"What is justification?"

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

In treating this subject, I shall show

I. What is meant by justification.

II. The way in which a sinner is justified.

I. What are we to understand by justification?

To justify in an evangelical sense, does not signify to make inherently just or righteous. This belongs to sanctification. But it signifies to declare a person just or right-

teous. It is a forensic term, or a term derived from courts of judicature; and is opposed to condemnation. In this sense the word is used in the judicial law of Moses. Deut. xxv. 1. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." In this text, to justify, signifies to acquit those who appear to be righteous; whereas those who were found to be guilty, were to be condemned to suffer the penalty of the law. In the same sense is justification to be understood when used evangelically. It signifies to acquit, and to declare to be just or righteous, and is opposed to condemnation.

In a civil sense, justification supposes a law, forbidding an action under a certain penalty. It further supposes a person charged with a breach of this law. If the charge is not made good, and he is acquitted, he is said to be justified; or if found guilty, if he satisfies the law, by suffering its penalty, and obtains a discharge by the law, he is justified or becomes righteous in the eye of the law. So in an evangelical sense, justification, supposes a divine law, forbidding certain actions, under a certain penalty. It supposes men to be charged, with a transgression of this law; and it is an acquittal from the guilt, or obligation to punishment connected with transgression; and a declaration that the person is righteous in the sight of the law.

Justification consists of two parts, viz. the forgiveness of sin, and acceptance as righteous, including a title to eternal life. We are all sinners, guilty before God, and are by the divine law, condemned to eternal misery. We are not only charged with sin; but are convicted of the charge. God is our Judge; and he knows our hearts and conduct; and he needs no proof, but his own infallible knowledge. We have his judgment concerning us, in his word, in which he declares that all have sinned, and come short of his glory. And our own consciences assent to the truth of the declaration. And being convicted, the sinner is of course condemned by a righteous judge.

In justification, God pardons the sinner, and declares him delivered from condemnation; and not only this, but accepts him as having a positive righteousness, and on this account graciously gives him a title to eternal life.

That both these benefits, forgiveness of sin, and a title to eternal life, belong to justification, is evident from the Scriptures. Besides those texts in which these blessings are mentioned separately, in the following they are mentioned together as joint benefits of justification. Rom. v. 1, 2. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here having peace with God, refers to pardon of sin; and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, implies a title to eternal life. Acts xxvi. 18. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." In this text, both these benefits are mentioned as obtained by faith in Christ, through which we are justified. Again, both these benefits are included in the following passage. John v. 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." We proceed—

II. To show the way in which a sinner is justified.

The meritorious ground, of justification before God, is the righteousness of Christ, in which the sinner becomes interested by faith in him. Accordingly, in our text, we are said to be justified "by the faith of Jesus Christ," that is, by faith in Christ. Justification is an act of God's free grace. Our justification is entirely of grace; and not on account of our own righteousness, or any thing we have done or can do. This may be proved.

1. From the demands of the divine law. If we are justified on account of our own righteousness, it is evident from the perfection of the divine law that this righteousness must be such as fully to answer its demands. Now the law demands perfect obedience, and condemns to suffer its penalty, every one that fails, in the least degree, to fulfil what it requires. In proof of this, we read, "the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them, shall live in them." Gal. iii. 12. And, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10. From these texts, it is evident that the person who hath once transgressed, or once failed to fulfil the whole law, hath forfeited life, and

incurred the curse. This curse is eternal death. This is evident from the whole tenor of Scripture. It is impossible, therefore, for the sinner ever to be justified on account of his own merits, since he cannot himself satisfy the law, otherwise than by his eternal punishment, which forever excludes him from justification on the ground of his own merits. In addition to this, the most sinless life of perfect obedience, provided it could be rendered by one who had once been a sinner, could have no merit in it to satisfy the law for past offences; for the law of God requires perfect obedience, to the utmost of our powers, in each moment for that moment; and when this is done, we have only done our duty; and therefore there could be no merit in this after perfect obedience, to satisfy the law, for past offences. And if to all this we add, that there are none of the fallen children of men, who do, at any period of their lives, render a sinless obedience; "for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Eccl. vii. 20. And, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" 1 John i. 8, the impossibility of obtaining justification, by the works of the law, or our own righteousness, must still more clearly and forcibly appear. And can it be possible, that we can atone for past offences, and be justified on account of our own righteousness, when we are continually sinning, and our best works continually come short of what a holy, just, and good law requires, and what therefore they ought to be? No! it is evident, that instead of laying up a fund of merit by our own works, to form a righteousness which will justify us in the sight of the law, we must necessarily be daily running more and more in arrears, and our guilt be daily increasing. From these remarks, it must be plain, that it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that the sinner should be justified on account of his own righteousness.

2. The same truth is clearly and unequivocally taught by the express declarations of the word of God. Our text is plain and unequivocal. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Equally plain and unequivocal are several other texts. Such are the following: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith." Gal. iii. 11.

“By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rom. iii. 20, 28. From these and other texts, it is evident, we are not justified by or on account of our own works. No doctrine in the word of God is more clearly and unequivocally expressed than this.

And we are further taught in the Scriptures, that we are not only not justified by our works as the principal ground, but that they have not the least influence in our justification before God. There are some who, though they allow their works of themselves to be insufficient, yet are unwilling to give them up, as entirely without merit; and therefore they trust in part to their works; and where they are deficient, they pretend to trust to the grace of God to make up the deficiency. But the Apostle has something very explicit on this head also. “Christ (he tells us) is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Gal. v. 4. In this passage he teaches, that works and grace are altogether incompatible as foundations of justification; and that they who seek justification by the works of the law can have no part in the grace of Christ. The same is also taught in the following text, Rom. xi. 6. “If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

From what has been said, we conclude that our own righteousness is not and cannot be, either in whole or in part, the ground of a sinner’s justification before God. What then is the meritorious foundation of this justification? We must have a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, otherwise that God, whose judgments are always according to the truth, will not justify us. Such a righteousness, we have seen, we cannot work out ourselves. If therefore we are justified, it must be in virtue of a righteousness, wrought out for us by another, adequate to the undertaking, fulfilling the law for us in our stead, by rendering a perfect obedience thereunto and suffering its penalty. Such a righteousness has been wrought out by one every way fitted to do it. This person is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person in the Godhead, co-equal with the Father. He took upon him our nature, rendered a perfect obedience

to the whole law, and suffered its penalty, by making his soul an offering for sin. By his obedience and death, he made a full satisfaction to divine justice for sin, magnified the divine law, and wrought out a righteousness, on account of which God can be just, and yet the justifier of sinners. It is on account of this righteousness that the sinner is justified. This is clearly evident from the following passages of Scripture. "This is his name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." Jer. xxiii. 6. "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. v. 9, 18, 19. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, righteousness." 1 Cor. i. 30.

In this righteousness we become interested by faith. And hence we are said to be justified by faith, and through faith. This is very frequently taught in the Scriptures. It is twice asserted in our text, "Knowing that a man is justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ." We find the same very frequently taught in other parts of Scripture, and especially in the Epistle to the Romans. It must be unnecessary to quote particular passages.

Faith does not justify a sinner in the sight of God, on account of any merit in it. It is true the Apostle, speaking of the manner in which Abraham was justified, says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Rom. iv. 3. But this must be explained in consistency with what he was at the same time teaching, that we are not justified by our own works; that we are justified so entirely by grace that all boasting is excluded; and that the righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious ground of justification. By faith, therefore, being counted for righteousness, cannot be meant that faith itself is that righteousness which is accepted for our justification. But that the believer is accounted righteous, because, by faith he becomes interested in the righteousness of Christ. Faith receives the offered righteousness

of the Redeemer; and therefore can have no merit in it deserving justification, any more than the act of a beggar receiving offered charity, has merit in it, rendering him deserving of that charity. And further, this very faith is the gift of God; and therefore cannot be meritorious. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8.

But faith justifies the sinner, as it is that act of the soul by which, according to the appointment of God, the soul becomes united to Christ. In consequence of this union, Christ and all his benefits become the believers. He obtains a property in all that belong to Christ as mediator, and consequently in his righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer, that is, it is set to his account; and he is treated as though this righteousness were his own. And in virtue of this righteousness, his sins are forgiven him, he is delivered from condemnation, he is accepted as righteous in the sight of God, and a title is given him to eternal life.

This is the way in which, according to the Scriptures, a sinner, condemned by the law of God to eternal misery, is justified, or receives the pardon of his sins, and a title to eternal life. He is justified solely on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, in which he becomes interested by faith, and which is imputed to him, or set to his account.

The sinner, thus justified before God, will be careful to maintain good works. For faith, through which he is instrumentally justified, proceeds from a heart renewed by the Holy Ghost, and in which he will preserve and carry on in sanctification the work of holiness which he has commenced. And from the holy principles within, will proceed habitual holiness or good works in the practice. And, by his good works, the believer will be justified before men; that is, his justification before God, or the reality of his religion, will be declared or made manifest. It is in this sense, we are to understand the apostle James, in the passage, "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James ii. 24.

This subject of justification should lead us all to diligent and careful self-examination; for it is exceedingly important; our eternal welfare is intimately involved in it. We all have been in a state of condemnation, unless

there is among us an instance of sanctification from the birth. And we are all now, either in a state of justification, or of condemnation. If in a state of justification, our sins are all forgiven, and we have a title to eternal life; but if in a state of condemnation, the wrath of God abideth upon us, God is angry with us every day, and we are continually in danger of eternal misery. Is it not therefore important to inquire, whether or not we have ever been justified? There is but one way of justification before God; and this way we have pointed out to us in the Bible. Reason can discover to us no way, in which a sinner can be just with God. It is revelation alone that can instruct us in this highly important subject; and revelation discovers but one way of justification, and expressly discards all others. This way you have had pointed out in this discourse. The righteousness of Christ is the only ground of a sinner's justification; and in this an interest can be obtained only by faith. We are therefore shut up to faith in Christ, as the only way of escape from ruin, and of acceptance with God. Have we then sought justification in this way, and have we obtained it? Have we, as lost sinners, renouncing all dependance on our own righteousness, cordially received Christ by faith, as the Lord our Righteousness?

Alas! my hearers, have we not reason to fear that many of you, after all the instructions you have had on this subject, are strangers to an experimental acquaintance with this grand fundamental doctrine of justification by faith in Christ? This way of justification is humbling; the sinner, to submit to it, must be stripped of his pride; it excludes boasting; and it gives all the glory to the free and sovereign grace of God. It is therefore hard to be received. Justification by the works of the law, is more congenial to the pride of human nature. Therefore we are apt to seek it in this way. And even when sinners are convinced that their own works are, of themselves, insufficient, still there is often in them a disposition to trust in part to their own righteousness, though they admit a little grace to make up the deficiency.

But brethren, be assured, such are deceiving themselves. And if this be the character of any of you, you are yet in your sins, and under the sentence of condemnation which the divine law pronounces against the sin-

ner. Christ will be a whole Saviour, or he will have nothing to do with you. And if he is not your Saviour, you must perish. My hearers, I fear that many who are amiable and lovely in their disposition and deportment in the sight of men, are ship-wrecking their souls on this rock. They are endeavouring to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God, which is through faith in Christ. Whatever amiable qualities you may have, in the sight of men; in the sight of a holy God, you are sinners, and will be treated as such; and there is but one way of justification for sinners of every grade and description; and this is through faith in Christ. Be convinced therefore of sin, be humbled before a holy God, renounce your self-dependance, and seek the favour of God, in the way that he has appointed.

And let this subject be improved to rejoice the hearts of true believers in Christ; and to give them an increased sense of their obligations to holiness of life. You are interested in a righteousness of infinite value, equal to the utmost demands of the divine law. And this righteousness God has assured you he will accept. Your sins, therefore, must all be forgiven; and you must be in favour with God. Surely you have cause to rejoice. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. This blessedness, believers, is yours: your sins are all forgiven; you are in favour with God; you are delivered from condemnation; you have a title to eternal life, and you shall inherit the heavenly blessedness. Rejoice, therefore, in hope of the glory of God.

And, while you rejoice, be deeply sensible of your great obligations to holiness of life. Justification by free grace, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, does not lead the subjects of it to licentiousness. Surely the less we deserve, and the more the Lord, notwithstanding our ill deserts has done for us, the greater the obligation to glorify him, and therefore to be holy. The doctrine of justification by faith, solely on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, leads the subjects of it practically to adopt the language; not, let us "continue in sin, that grace may abound;" but, "God forbid! How shall we, that are

dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Prove, therefore, my brethren, that your justification is genuine, by holiness of life. And let all who hope that they are justified, ever remember, that although we are not justified before God on account of our works, nevertheless that faith, by which we are justified, will produce good works; and that faith without works is dead.—AMEN.

SERMON XLV.

ADOPTION.

GALATIANS IV. 5. LAST CLAUSE.

"That we might receive the adoption of sons."

THE Galatians, after their conversion to christianity, were troubled with Judaizing teachers, who taught that they must observe the ceremonial law. The great object of the Apostle, in this epistle, was, to oppose the errors of these teachers. With this view, our text was introduced. The church, under the Old Testament dispensation, is represented, in our context, as a child under age, which though the heir, yet being under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father, differed nothing from a servant. But under the gospel dispensation, the church is compared to a child arrived at full age, and therefore delivered from the bondage of minors, and admitted into a greater state of liberty. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Hence the Apostle concludes, that christians should not be in subjection to the ceremonial law. For it was inconsistent with the liberty attached to the adult state of the church, upon which they had then entered.

We are not, however, to understand by our text, that the privilege of adoption is peculiar to the gospel dispensation. Saints, under the Old Testament, were the adopted children of God; but they did not enjoy this privilege

in such perfection as the saints under the new dispensation. They were sons in a state of minority under the ceremonial law, as under tutors and governors. But believers are now sons, arrived at full age, and enjoy more freedom. This freedom consists, not in a license to sin; but in an exemption from the bondage of the ceremonial law; a clearer revelation of the Father's will; and more of the spirit of adoption, or a filial spirit.

Our text will lead us to treat of the doctrine of *adoption*.

This doctrine we have stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 34th question.

“*What is adoption?*”

Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.”

In treating this subject, the plan will be—

I. To explain the nature of adoption.

II. To point out the privileges of the adopted.

I. Let us attend to the *nature* of adoption.

By adoption, persons become the sons or children of God, and obtain a title to all the privileges connected with such a relation.

The names, *sons* and *children* of God, are variously used in the Scriptures. *Angels* are called the sons of God, Job xxxviii. 7. “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” God is called the Father of *all mankind*, and they are his children, as he is their Creator, and they are his creatures. Mal. ii. 10. “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?” *Magistrates* are called the children of God, because they bear his image of authority. Ps. lxxxii. 6. “I have said ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High.” And *the members of the visible church* are also called the sons, and children of God, as in Gen. vi. 2. “The sons of God saw the daughters of men.” Ex. iv. 22, 23. “Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me.” Deut. xiv. 1. “Ye are the children of the Lord your God.”

But that sonship which is constituted by adoption, is different from any of the foregoing. Men may sustain the relation of sonship in all the foregoing senses, which are

applicable to mankind, and yet be destitute of the grace of God, and fail of salvation. And however excellent the relation of sonship in the foregoing senses, as applicable to men, may be; yet it is far inferior in dignity and blessedness to that relation of sonship, which is formed by adoption.

This relation is frequently taught in the Scriptures in other passages besides our text, as the following, John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the *sons of God*, even to them that believe on his name." Rom. viii. 14, 16, 17. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the *sons of God*. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the *children of God*; and if *children*, then heirs." Eph. i. 5. "Having predestinated us unto the *adoption of children* by Jesus Christ to himself." Gal. iii. 26. "Ye are all the *children of God*, by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. iv. 7. "Thou art no more a servant, but a son." 1 John iii. 1, 2. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God*. Beloved, now are we the *sons of God*." In these, and several other passages, persons are called the sons and children of God, in the sense of our text.

Adoption, is a term borrowed from the civil law. The custom of adopting was much in use among the Romans in the Apostle's days; and from this custom he appears to have borrowed the term. Adoption was the act of a person, generally of one who had an estate, and no children of his own to preserve his name and inherit his property, selecting a child from another family, and introducing it into his own, with a design to treat it as his own child, educate it, provide for it, require filial respect and obedience from it, confer his name upon it, make it heir to his estate, and, in short, to treat it as though it were his own child.

This term is borrowed by the Apostle, as most suitable, from its use among men, to express that gracious act of God, by which he receives believers into his family, in the relation of children. God does thus receive believers, calls himself their Father, and them his children, and bestows upon them many blessings similar to those which a good earthly parent bestows upon his children. The act

by which he receives them into his family, and gives them a right to the privileges thereof, is called adoption.

There are several particulars in which divine and human adoptions agree. In human adoptions, the adopter is not bound to perform such an act, but it is of mere favour; so God is under no obligations to adopt any of our guilty race; but might justly have passed all by. It is in him an act altogether of free grace. In human adoptions, a stranger is received into the family, in the relation of a child; so God brings those into his family, in the relation of children, who before were strangers and aliens. In human adoptions among the ancients, the adopted took the name of the adopter; so those whom God adopts are called by his name, the sons and children of God. In human adoptions, the adopted becomes an heir; so God makes his adopted children the heirs of his inheritance, as saith the Apostle, Rom. viii. 17. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." This agreement shows the propriety of calling by the name of adoption, that act of God, by which he receives believers into his family, in the relation of children, and gives them a title to the privileges of sons and daughters.

But notwithstanding this agreement between divine and human adoptions, yet in many points there is a wide difference. Men generally adopt persons, because they are destitute of children of their own. It is therefore, in a certain sense, an act of necessity, to gratify a desire to keep up their names, and have heirs to their estates; but no such reason can be attributed to God. Men adopt persons on account of some amiableness, which they suppose in them, and which has prepossessed them in their favour; or because they are peculiar objects of pity; or on account of some near relation. But no such motive can properly be attributed to God. For all mankind are by nature equally related to him, as his creatures; and all are by nature in the same sinful, guilty, and ruined state. Men who adopt, can bestow on the adopted, their name, titles, and estate; but they cannot give them a filial disposition; but the Lord is able to impart, and does give a filial temper to all whom he adopts into his family. He changes their hearts, and forms his image within them. In human adoptions, many unforeseen circumstances may occur to

disappoint the expectations of the adopted, with regard to inheritance. The adopter may change his mind, and cast off the adopted; or natural heirs may arise to take their place; or the inheritance may fail; but no such disappointment can occur to the adopted children of God. "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Jam. i. 17. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Rom. xi. 29. To those whom the Lord adopts, the inheritance is sure. In human adoptions, the adopted, for the most part, must wait for the death of the adopter, before he can receive the inheritance; but this is not the case in the divine adoption.

We proceed to the

II. Branch of our subject, which was to point out the *privileges* of the adopted children of God.

These privileges may be included under the following particulars, viz. instruction, provision, protection, the spirit of adoption, and heirship.

1. *Instruction.* This is one of the privileges of a child who has a good Father. This privilege the children of God enjoy in consequence of their relation to him as their Father. The Lord will give them the means of instruction in divine things; he will excite within them desires to improve these means; and he will enlighten their minds by his Spirit, to receive the knowledge of spiritual and eternal things. The near relation of Father, which God sustains to believers, secures to them the blessing of spiritual instruction, and he has also promised this blessing. Is. liv. 13. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Mic. iv. 2. "He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Heb. x. 16. "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." John vi. 45. "They shall be all taught of God." And John xvi. 13. "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

2. Another privilege of the adopted children of God, is *provision.* This is a privilege which the children of good earthly parents enjoy. And as the kind earthly parent provides for his child, so will the Lord make ample provision for his adopted children. He will provide for them a temporal support; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. It is true, the Lord does not, for the most part, bestow upon his children a great abundance of

what are called the good things of this life; but it is because what he does bestow, is more conducive to their happiness than a greater abundance would be. He gives that which is best for them; and this is for the most part a competency. And he also makes provision for their spiritual necessities. By his word, ordinances, providences, and Spirit, he feeds their souls, and supplies their spiritual wants. For we read in his word, Ps. xxxiv. 10, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Ps. lxxxiv. 11. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Ps. cvii. 9. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Mat. v. 6. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

3. Another privilege of the adopted children of God is *protection*. This is a privilege which a child receives from a good earthly parent. The tender parent watches over his beloved child with solicitous care; and when danger threatens, his arm is extended for its protection and defence. And will not God grant this blessedness to his adopted children? He certainly will. In a watchful care over believers, and a readiness to protect and defend them when in danger, he far exceeds the best of earthly parents. He exercises the most tender care, suited to their state, over his weaker children. Is. xl. 11. "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." Is. xlii. 3. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."

To all his children, he says, Is. xliii. 1, 2, "Fear not. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Is. liv. 17. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." In his word, he points out to his children the dangers to which they are exposed, and warns them to guard against them. He gives his Spirit to dwell in them, to weaken those corruptions which would excite them to sin; and to strengthen their graces to enable them to war against, and subdue their corruptions. When they wander from the path of duty into forbidden and dange-

rous paths, he tenderly expostulates with them; and if this is not effectual, he will in kindness chastise them, and thus reclaim them from their dangerous ways. He will restore their souls, and lead them in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Ps. xci. 11, 12. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Ps. xxxiv. 7. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. i. 14. He overrules the machinations of their enemies for their good. For "all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my keeper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Heb. xiii. 5, 6. And even when his children are called to encounter the last enemy death, he still, with a paternal care, watches over and protects them.

4. Another privilege of the children of God, is the *Spirit of adoption*. This privilege we are taught, Rom. viii. 15. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." And also Gal. iv. 6. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." By the Spirit of adoption, as opposed to the spirit of bondage, we may understand a filial spirit, which God gives to his adopted children. The spirit of bondage is that of a servant, who looks upon God as an austere and hard master, and who is moved to his actions from a principle of fear; but the spirit of adoption is that of a son who looks upon God as a kind parent, and who, with a filial affection, obeys from the principle of love; and, with a child-like disposition, approaches God as a Father, and cries, Abba, Father, or Father, Father. In the children of God, the Holy Spirit dwells, and enlightens them into a knowledge of the character of God, forms his graces within them, bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, helps their infirmities in prayer, and excites within them a liberty, whereby with a humble, child-like boldness and confidence, they draw nigh into the presence of God, as

a Father. The good child has the liberty of nearness of access to his kind Father. He may use familiarity with him, address him as an unfeigned friend in whom he can put confidence, and tell him his wants and distresses with a confident expectation of his sympathy, and also of his assistance, if it be in his power to afford it. This is a privilege which the people of God may eminently enjoy. They may have nearness of access to God as a Father; they may come with humble boldness to the throne of his grace; they may approach him as a friend in whom they can place unbounded confidence; and they may freely tell him their wants and distresses, with confident expectation that he will hear them, and do what is best for them.

5. We mention one other privilege of adoption, and that is *heirship*. As the children of earthly parents inherit their fathers' estates; so the children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance. As we read, Rom. viii. 17, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And Gal. iv. 7. "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ." The children of God are heirs of an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; of a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; of a crown of righteousness; and of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Such is the description which the Scriptures give of the inheritance, which awaits the children of God. But all these descriptions are insufficient to convey to us a full idea of the reality. For the apostle John says, 1 John iii. 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

We proceed to make a practical improvement of this subject. And,

1. In view of it let us inquire, are we the adopted children of God? And have we a title to those blessed privileges, which as we have seen, belong to his children? To answer this question let us go to the word of God, and examine ourselves by the marks of his children, which are there laid down. In the Scriptures we learn that they who are adopted, have been born of God, have received Christ by faith, are led by the Spirit. John i. 12, 13. "As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name: which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,

nor of the will of man, but of *God*." Gal. iii. 26. "Ye are all the children of God by *faith* in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 14. "As many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, they are the sons of God." If then we would decide the question, whether we are the adopted children of God or not, we must examine ourselves, whether we have been born of God, by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit; whether we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ by a true faith; and whether we are led by the Spirit of God, or in other words, keep the commandments of God in his word. Such and such only are the adopted children of God.

2. Let this subject excite in each of us a holy admiration of the condescension and love of God, that he should receive such sinful, guilty creatures as we are, into his family, in the relation of children; and bestow upon us such glorious blessings as have been mentioned. Surely such condescension and love ought to awaken the highest admiration, in every intelligent being. Angels undoubtedly are filled with wonder, at these things; and every child of God on earth must in the view of this subject feel emotions similar to those which the apostle John felt, when in holy wonder he exclaimed, 1 John iii. 1. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

3. From this subject we may learn something of the great dignity of the saints. Though they may be in low circumstances, and even despised in the world; yet they are the truly excellent of the earth, and the most noble and dignified among men. What earthly relation can so ennoble and dignify men as the relation of sons to the most high God. Some boast of their relation to great men, and consider themselves, and are considered by the world as ennobled hereby; but saints are the children of a King, even of the King of kings. And as the relation which christians bear to God as their Father, is incomparably more dignified than any earthly relation can be; so also no earthly inheritance will bear a comparison with that heavenly inheritance, to which they have a sure title. In view of this subject, we need not hesitate to assert, that a true saint though he may be looked down upon, by the great men of the world with contempt, is more dignified and noble, than even those who sit on thrones, sway scept-

tres, and have the wealth of kingdoms at their command, if they be not at the same time the sons of God. But as the Apostle saith, "the world knoweth them not."

4. This subject teaches us, how those who profess to be the children of God ought to demean themselves. It is the duty of a child to love his parent, so the children of God ought to love their heavenly Father, and must love him, and this too with a supreme love. It is the duty of a child to obey his parents, so the children of God ought to, and must obey their heavenly Father. They should study his will and make it the rule of their conduct. The child who has a proper temper, obeys, not from a principle of slavish fear; but of love; so ought and must the children of God. The child looks up to his parent for direction, provision, and protection; so the children of God, sensible of their dependance, and feeling a confidence in their heavenly Father, ought to look up to him, make known their desires, and ask his assistance. It becomes a child to conduct himself in a manner worthy of the family with which he is connected; so it becomes the children of God to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the relation which they sustain to him, and not degrade, in the eyes of the world, the dignity of their heavenly Father. Let them prove to the world, by their conduct, that they are the children of a King: even of the King of kings; and that they look for, and as heirs expect, a better inheritance than this world can afford.—AMEN.

SERMON XLVI.

SANCTIFICATION.

1 THESSALONIANS IV. 3. FIRST CLAUSE.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

THE Saviour is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. He came into our world, not to be the minister of sin; or to encourage men to go on in sin,

that grace might abound; for this would have been dishonourable to the divine character. But he came, and “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. ii. 14. He came, not only to procure the pardon of sin, and free men from condemnation; but also to deliver them from the love, the reigning power, and the practice of sin; to conform them to the image of God, and make them obedient subjects of his government; and to fit them for the enjoyment of the happiness of heaven. This he does in the work of *sanctification*, which is the doctrine of our text.

The doctrine of sanctification is stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 35th question.

“*What is sanctification?*”

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate this doctrine.

Man, by the fall, though he lost none of his natural faculties, nevertheless lost the holy qualities with which these faculties were endued; and which constituted the image of God, in which he was created. Before the fall, his understanding was spiritually illuminated; his will was righteous, and wholly inclined to choose the right, and refuse the wrong; his affections were holy; and the members of his body were yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God. But by the fall, the image of God was destroyed. The understanding of man became darkened; his will became wholly inclined to disobedience; his affections were alienated from God; and the members of his body were yielded as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. Sanctification consists in restoring the whole man, soul and body, from these ruins of the fall, and renewing him after the image of God.

This work is begun in regeneration, which is called initial sanctification. In regeneration, the principle of spiritual life is implanted. The image of God is formed within the soul. The man “is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him,” and “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Thus he is fit-

ted to live a new life. In sanctification, this work, which was begun in regeneration, is carried on.

Sanctification consists of two parts; viz. *mortification* and *vivification*. The former is dying unto sin, the latter is living unto righteousness.

1. *Mortification*. This has for its object, the corrupt propensities of human nature. These unitedly are, in Scripture, called the old man, of which, particular corruptions are the members. And as mortification, in a literal sense, impairs and destroys a natural body, so the term is used in religion, to express the weakening and destruction of the sinful propensities of the christian.

Mortification is a duty, frequently enjoined upon christians, in the Scriptures. "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. viii. 13. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Col. iii. 5. The same duty is frequently taught and enjoined under other figures, such as crucifixion, renouncing the service of a master, and cutting off and plucking out an offending member, as in the following passages. "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Rom. vi. 6, 12, 13. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." Mark ix. 43, &c. In proof and illustration of the same doctrine, is that declaration of our Saviour, Mat. xvi. 24. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

Many individuals, and even whole religious societies, have entertained very erroneous sentiments on the sub-

ject of christian mortification, supposing that it consisted in torturing the body, performing long and expensive pilgrimages, and abstaining from lawful gratifications, and the like. But christian mortification is something very different from any of these, and to the carnal mind far more difficult. For such is the nature of mankind, their love of sin, and their aversion to holiness, that it would be far easier to persuade them to part with their property to purchase a seat in heaven; or to go on a pilgrimage to the holy land; or, in various ways, to torture their bodies to do penance for their sins, than to persuade them to submit to christian mortification. For men have persuaded thousands to do the former; but to the latter no man ever yet persuaded another, without the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit.

Christian mortification consists in denying ourselves sinful gratifications, or indulgence in those things which are displeasing to God, and which are forbidden in his word. The christian, though he has grace implanted in his heart, has still within him the principles of sin. These are denominated in Scripture the flesh that lusteth against the spirit, a law in the members warring against the law of the mind, the old man, and members of a body. These remaining corruptions prompt the christian to sin. Christian mortification, is denying these corrupt propensities, refusing to obey them, watching against their motions, and endeavouring to weaken their influence, get the complete mastery over them, and exclude them from the soul.

This is a difficult work, as the figures employed to represent it clearly teach. Inward corruptions are strong, and numerous temptations are presented from without, to call them into exercise. Effectually to resist, and not only to resist, but also to weaken, and finally overcome our corruptions, is a difficult work, and is, in Scripture, aptly called a warfare.

Christian mortification, has for its object all the sinful propensities of human nature. It is not merely a disallowance of this or that particular sin; but it respects every sin, even those that are as dear to us as a right eye, or a right hand. And they, whose warfare against their corruptions is partial, and not universal; and who, while they reform themselves in some particulars, and deny themselves some smaller sinful gratifications, nevertheless in-

dulge themselves in those sins, on which their hearts are naturally more set, cannot be the people of God. For God's people hate all sin, and have respect unto all God's commandments.

Christian mortification, is esteemed, by the wicked, a gloomy exercise. And so it would be to the unregenerate, if it were possible for them to practice it. The reason is obvious. An unrenewed person, supremely loves sin, and dislikes holiness. But the case is different with the christian. His heart has been changed, and grace reigns therein; and this leads him to hate sin, and to love and delight in holiness. His opinion of the nature of true happiness, and of what courses afford it, is changed. And hence a life of mortification of sin is only denying himself those things, which, though prompted to them by his remaining depravity, he habitually disapproves of and hates. And therefore, difficult as is the duty of self-denial, the christian derives happiness from the performance of it; and this too exceeding that which carnal men derive from the indulgence of their sinful propensities.

2. The other branch of sanctification, to the consideration of which we now proceed, is called *vivification*, or living unto righteousness. This is taught by all those numerous passages of Scripture, which inculcate upon the christian practical holiness, and growth in grace. As mortification has for its object all that God forbids, so vivification has for its object all that God requires; and consists in living in obedience to his commands. Conformity in the life to the will of God, or practical holiness, is essential to the character of the true christian. It is not enough to abstain from what God forbids. This is important and necessary; but it is equally necessary to do what he requires. And the obedience of the true christian must be universal; that is, it must extend unto all God's commandments. The language of the truly sanctified heart is, all that the Lord hath spoken, I will do. As mortification has respect to all sin, so vivification has respect to all duty. And he who selects those commandments which he esteems easy, and performs them; while he neglects others more difficult, which cross his selfish interests, humble his pride, and expose him to the sneers of the world, acts inconsistently with the christian character. Such a person endeavours to serve two masters, God and

Mammon; but Christ will disown him. The truly sanctified person renders a universal obedience to God's commandments. He has respect, not merely to some, but to them all. His desire is to know his duty; and when he knows it, if grace is in exercise, he will not excuse himself because the duty is difficult, or because it might, perhaps, retard his temporal prosperity, or because it might render him singular in the eyes of others, and expose him to their remarks; but it will be enough for him to know that it is duty. He will leave the event with God, and set himself to the performance of the duty. And his imperfections will grieve him.

And here it will be proper to remark, that sanctification is not perfect in the present life. Believers are not, in this life, perfectly delivered from sin; neither do they perfectly keep God's commandments. Although they may be, and are sanctified more and more, yet their sanctification will not be complete until death separates the soul from the body. The imperfection of sanctification, in the present life, is proved by several arguments. The Scriptures unequivocally declare it in such passages as the following: "There is no man that sinneth not." 1 Kings viii. 46. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Eccl. vii. 20. "If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John i. 8. The same is proved by what the Scriptures frequently teach concerning two contrary principles of flesh and spirit, dwelling in believers, and causing a continual conflict in their souls. Also by what they record concerning the most eminent saints that ever lived. And further, by instructing all believers to pray daily for the forgiveness of their sins. But notwithstanding, sanctification is not perfect in the present life, believers will desire to be perfectly sanctified, or perfectly freed from sin, and conformed to the image of God; and their transgressions and imperfections, will cause them to grieve, and will frequently lead them to feel, as the apostle Paul felt, when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24.

Sanctification, in both its branches, is a work of God's free grace. We are as much dependant on divine power to sanctify us, as to call and regenerate us; and there is nothing in the creature deserving the performance of this

work within him. In proof of this, the Scriptures frequently ascribe the work of sanctification to God, and especially to God the Holy Ghost. As in the following passages. Rom. viii. 13. "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." 1 Cor. vi. 11. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Gal. v. 22. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. 2 Thess. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit." And 1 Pet. i. 2. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.

If the christian, after regeneration, were left to himself, no grace already received would be sufficient to enable him to maintain an effectual warfare against his corruptions, or to live in the holy performance of required duties. His lusts would soon reign, and he would soon become their willing slave; and duty would soon be relinquished, or be performed in a formal manner, without flowing from those principles which are necessary to constitute holy obedience. Without Christ, we can do nothing. He is the head, believers are the members; he is the vine, they are the branches. As well might the members live, cut off from all communication with the head, or the branches severed from the vine, as the soul of the christian continue spiritually alive, separated from Christ, and without continued supplies of nourishment and strength from him. Christ is the source, whence constant supplies must be drawn. And it is by the Holy Spirit dwelling in believers, and acting in subserviency to Christ, that they receive from him constant supplies of grace.

In carrying on the work of sanctification, the Spirit uses means, to which it is important we should carefully attend. And, indeed, we have not the least ground to expect, that this work will progress, in the neglect of the means which God hath appointed for this end.

The word of God, read and preached, is an important, and the principal means of sanctification. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. In the word of God, we have pointed out what he forbids, and what we therefore ought to avoid; and what he requires, and what we therefore ought to do; and we have

numerous motives presented, to strengthen us against sin, and influence us to the performance of our duty.

The sacraments, and especially the Lord's supper, are also means of sanctification. And so is self-examination; and it is scarcely possible that the work of sanctification can progress, if we are remiss in the performance of this duty. Prayer and watchfulness are also important means; for we are exhorted to pray without ceasing, to be instant in prayer, to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, and to ask that we may receive. And I may add, the Spirit of God often uses afflictions, to carry on the work of sanctification in the soul. For we read, Rom. v. 3, 4, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope." And Heb. xii. 11. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby."

Sanctification has sometimes been confounded with justification; but though they are inseparably joined together, and all who are justified will be sanctified, yet there is an important difference; and it may be useful briefly to point out this difference. Justification is an act completed at once, sanctification is a work which is gradually progressive. Justification is a change of relation or state, from that of condemnation to that of pardon and acceptance, but confers no real change of nature; sanctification is a real change of nature from sinful to holy. The former refers to guilt, the latter to pollution. In the former sin is pardoned, in the latter it is subdued. And the first is equal in all, and perfect at once, the last is in different degrees in different persons, and perfect in none in this life.

In the application of this subject, let us all be led to self-examination. Do we know any thing experimentally of the doctrine of sanctification? Are we mortifying our sinful propensities, refusing to indulge them, endeavouring to subdue their influence, and continually watching and warring against them? And are we thus acting, not only with respect to some, but all of our sinful propensities? Are we living unto righteousness? Have we respect unto all God's commandments, and are we living in obedience to them? These are very important questions; for

we are chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit.

They who are strangers to this work have reason to be alarmed. They have no title to the blessings of salvation; and they are totally unfit for the enjoyment of the happiness of heaven. Let them awake to a sense of their condition, and seek the sanctifying grace of God, and not indulge a hope that they have a title to eternal life, until they have evidence that a work of sanctification has been begun, and is progressing in their souls.

And let true christians, who have evidence that this work has been begun in their souls, seek after increasing degrees of sanctification. Your sanctification is the will of God. It is therefore your duty to seek after it; and that it is the will of God, should encourage you to the performance of the duty. For you will not seek in vain for that which is agreeable to the will of God. And if you expect to have this work carried on in your souls, diligently attend to those means which God hath appointed to promote your sanctification. Search the Scriptures. Diligently attend upon the word preached. Frequently meditate upon divine truth. Neglect not opportunities of renewing your covenant with God at his table. Often examine yourselves whether you are in the faith, and whether you grow or decline. Let prayer be your daily employment. Be continually watchful; and endeavour to make all your afflictions subservient to this work. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thes. v. 23.—AMEN.

SERMON XLVII.

REPENTANCE.

MARK vi. 12.

“ And they went out, and preached that men should repent.”

OUR Saviour, shortly after the commencement of his public ministry, selected twelve apostles, and sent them forth to preach. Having received their commission and instructions, “they went out, and preached that men should repent.” *Repentance* was the great theme of their discourses. This is a very important doctrine of the Bible, and an essential christian grace.

In our Shorter Catechism, this doctrine is placed after the ten commandments. But in the Larger Catechism, it immediately follows sanctification, with which it has an intimate connexion, and of which, as it is habitually exercised by the christian, it is properly a branch. It is therefore introduced in this place, in this system of discourses.

The word in the original, which we render repentance, literally signifies a change of mind.

Repentance is sometimes attributed to God, as in the following texts. Gen. vi. 6. “It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” 1 Sam. xv. 11. “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.” 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. “And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil.” And Jon. iii. 10. “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, [the Ninevites] and he did it not.”

These and similar texts must be understood in a sense consistent with the foreknowledge and immutability of God; for “he knoweth all things.” 1 John iii. 20. “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.” Is. xlvi. 10. And he changeth not; with him “is no variableness, neither

shadow of turning." James i. 17. "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of a man that he should repent." Num. xxiii. 19. Repentance therefore, in the literal meaning of the word, or in the sense in which it belongs to men, cannot be applied to God.

In the texts quoted, God is to be considered as speaking after the manner of men, and adapting his language to our finite understandings. No change of mind is meant, only a change of that course of conduct, which he appeared to us to be pursuing, and which we expected he would continue to pursue. When men change their conduct in any particular pursuit, it is supposed they have changed their minds, or repented of their former course. And we become so accustomed to connect a change of mind with a change of external conduct, that when God changes the aspects of his providential dispensations towards his creatures, the word repentance is used to express it; although no change has actually taken place in the divine mind, and the Lord pursues the same course he had purposed from the beginning.

Repentance, as applied to men, is the exercise of a sinner, and always supposes sin. "I am not come (said the Saviour) to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Mat. ix. 13.

In the Scriptures, we find two kinds of repentance spoken of. One has been named *legal*, and the other *evangelical*.

Legal repentance is so called, because it arises from the law threatening the sinner with punishment. The cause of this kind of repentance is a fear of misery. Legal penitents may feel a sorrow for sin; but it is only because it leads to misery. They are afraid of being punished for their sins, and therefore they are distressed, reform, and do many things. The reformation connected with this repentance is generally transient. For as soon as the clamours of conscience are silenced, and the lively impressions of fear of punishment are worn away, such penitents generally return again to their former evil courses, and to the willing service of sin, which was always their supreme delight.

And many, we have reason to believe, who are now in eternal misery, were once the subjects of this kind of repentance. Cain was filled with anguish, and no doubt

with sorrow, for what he had done; because it brought down the vengeance of God upon his head. Pharaoh often relented, when the judgments of God lay heavily upon him, and promised obedience, should they be removed; but as soon as they were taken away, he hardened his heart, and returned again to his sins. Ahab, when threatened with the divine judgments, “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly;” 1 Kings xxi. 27, and yet returned again to his sins. And Judas repented himself, and confessed that he had sinned; and yet immediately hanged himself, and went to his own place; and his end was such, that “it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.” Mat. xxvi. 24. And many persons, to this day, when their consciences are awaked, and the terrors of the law against sin, are powerfully impressed upon their minds, are filled with a dread of future misery, and consequently feel a sorrow for their past actions, and in some measure, for a time, reform their external conduct; and yet, as soon as their convictions and impressions of terror subside, lose their repentance, and return again to their former evil courses.

This remark is often exemplified in the sick. When they consider their lives in danger, and view death and eternity as near, they are filled with dread, they mourn over their past conduct, and they promise to amend their lives, and in future to devote themselves to the service of God, provided he will spare them a little longer, and restore them again to health; but frequently the event shows that persons may have all these exercises, and yet continue strangers to true repentance. For true repentance is abiding; but we frequently see persons, notwithstanding their apparently deep remorse for their sins, and earnest promises of amendment, as soon as they are out of immediate danger, and their health is again restored, forget their remorse and their promises, and return again to their thoughtlessness, and eager service of sin.

We proceed to an illustration of the other kind of repentance, which is called *evangelical* and *unto life*.

This repentance is defined in our Catechism, in the answer to the eighty-seventh question.

“*What is repentance unto life?*”

Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sin-

ner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience."

Repentance unto life, is a *saving grace*. It is connected with salvation. Like every other grace, it must be the exercise of a heart, renewed by the Spirit of God. Legal repentance may, and probably most generally does, precede regeneration, in those who afterwards become evangelical penitents; but repentance unto life, is a holy exercise, and the heart is naturally destitute of holiness; and therefore the heart must be renewed to pardon those holy acts which constitute repentance unto life. The heart being renewed, evangelical repentance includes—

1. A *true sense* of sin. This supposes a knowledge of the divine law; "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. Sin is the object of repentance. There must therefore necessarily be a sense of sin; and sin being a transgression of the law, there must be a knowledge of the law to have a knowledge of sin. In convincing the soul of sin, the Holy Spirit makes use of the law. He awakens the soul to an attention to the precepts and threatenings of the divine law. The person thus awakened, compares the exercises of his heart, and the actions of his life, with what the law requires, and he sees that he is a transgressor of the law, or a sinner. He hears the law denouncing curses against the sinner. Convinced that he is a sinner, he therefore justly concludes, that these curses are denounced against him; that he is in danger of eternal misery; and that he is now under condemnation to suffer the penalty of the divine law. Thus far the legal penitent may be convinced of sin. And this sense of sin is common, both to the legal and evangelical penitent. But there is a further sense of sin, which is distinguishing, and which is peculiar to the evangelical penitent.

He has a sense, not only of the danger, but also of the odiousness of his sins. Attending to the divine law with a renewed heart, he consents to it that it is good; and consequently sin, which is a transgression of a good law, must appear to him odious, and deserving of punishment. And convinced that he himself is a sinner, he feels that he is vile in the sight of God, and that he justly deserves his wrath. The true penitent views his character in some

measure as it really is, though he does not know the half. For, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it." Jer. xvii. 9. The greatest sense of the odiousness of sin, and of their own vileness, which the greatest penitents have in this life, fall far below the reality.

2. Evangelical repentance includes *apprehension* of the mercy of God in Christ. Under the sense of sin which has been described, the sinner must feel distressed; and if a door of hope of deliverance was not opened to him, if he could not lose a sense of his true character and condition, and sink back again into insensibility, he would be driven to despair. The Holy Spirit, therefore, in the work of repentance, carries home, with power to the soul, not only the law to convince of sin, but also the gospel for the encouragement of the convinced sinner. In the gospel, he hears there is mercy for the sinner, and he is enabled to believe it. He hears invitations addressed to the sinner to return unto God, and promises of pardon and acceptance, made through Christ to the chief of sinners, who truly repent of their sins; and he is hereby encouraged to return unto God. This apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, appears to be essential to true repentance. For an essential act of true repentance is turning unto God; but if the sinner had not a gleam of hope that he should find mercy, he certainly would not be disposed to turn unto God; but would rather sink into despair. And since mercy is offered to the sinner, only through Christ, he can have a just apprehension of the mercy of God, only through the Saviour.

3. Evangelical repentance includes *grief* on account of sin; and this grief is accompanied with shame, self-abasement, and confession. The true penitent grieves for sin, not only because it has exposed him to ruin, but also because it has defiled him, and unfitted him for the service and enjoyment of God; and because it is opposed to God. He grieves that he has offended and dishonoured such a great, holy, and merciful Being, whose excellence rendered him infinitely worthy of his esteem, reverence, and obedience, and whose goodness deserved his gratitude. Especially he is overwhelmed with grief, under a sense of his sins, as committed against a God, who has borne with him so long in his rebellion; who gave his

own Son to die for sinners, and who is still, after all his abuse of his mercy and patience, offering him pardon and eternal life. His grief extends not only to gross acts of impiety, but to the heart, as the fountain from which these acts have issued. He grieves at the disaffection of his heart from God.

This grief is accompanied with *shame* and *self-abasement*, under a sense of his guilt, vileness, and unworthiness.

This shame and this self-abasement are very forcibly expressed in the following passages. Ezek. xvi. 61, 63. "Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Ezra ix. 6. "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God." Dan. ix. 7, 8. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee." And Job. xlii. 6. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Filled with a sense of the evil of sin, and with grief, shame, and self-abasement on account of it, the true penitent humbly makes *confession* unto God. Formerly he neglected the throne of grace without concern; but now, like Paul, "Behold he prayeth." Acts ix. 11. And in his prayer he confesses his sins. Thus Ezra did. "Our iniquities (said he) are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Ezra ix. 6. Daniel also confessed, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts." Dan. ix. 5. The penitent prodigal also confessed, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Luke xv. 21. And the penitent Psalmist acknowledged his transgression, saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ps. li. 4. And he confessed not only his external sins, and in particular the sin which was the immediate cause of his grief; but he entered into his heart, and made confession of his original depravity. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. li. 5.

Every true penitent acts in a similar manner. With grief, shame, and self-abasement, he confesses his sins unto God; and not only his outward sins, but also those of his heart, and his natural propensity to evil. He does not justify himself before God, and arrogantly assume merit for good works, saying, with the proud and self-righteous Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." Luke xviii. 11. But he rather adopts the language of Job. "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." Job xl. 4. And of Isaiah, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Is. lxiv. 6. And of the publican, who, "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke xviii. 13. And many are ready, with Paul, to confess themselves the chief of sinners; and to suppose that there is scarcely on the earth their equal in vileness and ingratitude.

4. Evangelical repentance includes a *hatred* of sin. This will naturally result from the sense which the true penitent has of it. It could not be otherwise than that he should hate that which appears hateful to him. Agreeably to this, the Psalmist declared, "I hate every false way." Ps. cxix. 104. And Paul said, "What I hate, that do I." Rom. vii. 15. And Job, when he repented, abhorred himself, Job. xlii. 6 because he was defiled with sin, and of course abhorred sin which defiled him. And the penitents described by Ezekiel, loathed themselves in their own sight, for their iniquities and their abominations. Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

5. Once more, evangelical repentance includes, or will be followed by a *turning* unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience. Repentance signifies a change of mind, and where there is a change of mind, there will be a correspondent change of conduct. The penitent sinner, sensible of the evil of sin; filled with grief, shame, and self-abasement on account of his former conduct; and cordially disapproving of, and hating his former courses, will turn from sin. Thus penitent Ephraim is represented as saying, "What have I to do any more with idols." Hos. xiv. 8.- The true penitent forsakes his sins, even those which have been as dear to him as a right

eye or a right hand; and he turns unto the Lord, and unreservedly devotes himself, soul and body, to his service, to live in obedience to his will. Thus did the prodigal; he returned unto his Father, with a temper of submission to his will, and of obedience to the laws of his house. And John exhorted his hearers, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Mat. iii. 8. In short, where there is true repentance, there is a universal change of temper and practice.

But there are still remaining corruptions which render the best obedience of the penitent imperfect in the present life, and give him cause of daily and continual repentance. And although his distress and fear of the divine wrath may subside, by reason of the comforts of God's word which are afforded him, and his sense of an interest in the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer; yet his sense of the evil of sin, of his own vileness, and of the deceitfulness and wickedness of his own heart, and his abhorrence of sin, and self-abasement on account of it, will continue and increase; and as long as he is in the world, he will exercise repentance.

Let this subject be improved for self-examination. It is a subject in which we are all most deeply concerned. For we are all sinners, and all must repent, or perish. "Except ye repent (said our Saviour) ye shall all likewise perish." Luk. xiii. 3. No character can be saved without repentance. Have we then repented of our sins? And if we suppose we have, what is the character of our repentance? We have seen there is a false as well as a true repentance. It is therefore important carefully to examine, lest we deceive ourselves and lose our souls. Have we had a sense, not only of the danger, but also of the odiousness of sin? Have we grieved on account of it, and with shame and self-abasement, confessed our sins unto God? Do we hate every sin? And have we turned from our sins unto the love and service of God? And do we habitually exercise this repentance?

Let true penitents be encouraged and comforted. Forgiveness is promised to the penitent. Forgiveness therefore is yours. And, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. While then you mourn for sin, rejoice in the forgiving love of God.

And let the impenitent be alarmed; for they are in the way to ruin; and if they would escape eternal misery, let them without delay repent of their sins. Numerous and powerful motives urge you to repentance. God commands you to repent. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." You are the subjects of great privileges. The approach of the gospel day was presented to John's hearers as a reason, why they should repent. "Repent (said he) for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." With respect to you, the kingdom of heaven has come. God has been very good, and very patient towards you, and therefore you ought to repent; for the goodness of God leadeth, or ought to lead, to repentance. You must repent, or must perish eternally. With an impenitent heart, it is impossible in the nature of things, you should enter heaven. And he who is to be your Judge has declared, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." May these motives be carried home to your hearts with power by the Holy Spirit, and lead you to true repentance for all your sins.—AMEN.

SERMON XLVIII.

ASSURANCE.

HEBREWS vi. 11.

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end."

"GODLINESS is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." A life of true religion here, leads to perfect bliss and glory hereafter; and it also secures blessings in this life. While the true child of God has here many trials, he has also many comforts; and he is far happier in this world, than they who are destitute of religion. The spiritual blessings of which he is made a partaker are many and precious. These blessings we have summarily stated

in our Catechism, in the answer to the thirty-sixth question.

“What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?”

The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.”

The first benefit mentioned in this answer is, “*assurance of God’s love.*” This is the subject of our text. In the preceding verse the Apostle had mentioned, with commendation, the work and labour of love of the christians to whom he wrote; and then in our text, he expressed his earnest desire that every one of them might show, and continue unto the end to show, the same diligence that some of them had done, to abound in good works, that thereby having evidences of the reality of their religion, they might attain to a full assurance of hope of salvation.

By assurance of hope we are to understand a well grounded and full persuasion, which a person has, that he is in a state of salvation. It is opposed to doubting, and excludes it. When a person doubts of his good estate, although upon the whole he may have a prevailing hope and confidence, he has not the assurance of hope.

There is a difference between the assurance of hope, and the assurance of faith. The man who fully believes, without doubt, that the things revealed in the Scriptures are true, and that God will certainly fulfil the promises and threatenings of his word, has the assurance of faith. This he may have, and yet doubt of his personal interest in the salvation of the gospel; and so not have the assurance of hope.

Assurance of hope, is the doctrine of the text, and the subject of this discourse. In treating this subject, the plan will be—

I. To show that assurance is attainable.

II. Point out the way in which it is obtained.

I. I am to show that assurance of hope is attainable in the present life. This may be proved by several arguments.

1. We are exhorted, in the Scriptures, to examine ourselves. "Let a man examine himself. 1 Cor. xi. 28. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." 2 Cor. xiii. 5. The object of self-examination evidently is self-knowledge; and in one of the texts just quoted, it is explicitly stated, that the object of self-examination is to know whether we are in the faith, and, of course, whether we are the children of God, and have a title to eternal life. The exhortation evidently implies that we may certainly know whether we have faith; and if this may be known, it is equally certain we may know, whether we are heirs of salvation. And therefore assurance is attainable.

2. We are exhorted, in the Scriptures, to give diligence to obtain assurance. Our text, expressing the Apostle's desire, amounts to an exhortation. "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." And the apostle Peter exhorted, "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Pet. i. 10. Now, if assurance were not attainable, these exhortations would be useless and improper.

3. God, by express revelation, made known to many of his saints of old, their interest in his love, and their title to everlasting life. Of this we have numerous instances, in what the Lord said to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, and others of the saints, whose history is recorded in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, our Saviour spake to his disciples on this subject, in the most positive terms. Hence we learn, that it is agreeable to the divine will, that the people of God should be assured of their good estate; and therefore we may conclude that he has made ample provision for the attainment of this blessing; and that christians may attain to assurance of their good estate.

4. In a number of passages of Scripture, it is explicitly declared, that the people of God may know whether they are his children; and entitled to his favour and eternal life. Such are the following:—"Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." 1 John ii. 3. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath

given us of his Spirit. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." 1 John iv. 13, 16. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." 1 John iii. 18, 19. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." 1 John v. 13. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. viii. 16. In these texts, the doctrine, that assurance is attainable, is explicitly taught.

5. We have a number of examples in Scripture, of persons who attained to the assurance of hope, which is another proof that this assurance is attainable. Job had assurance, when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Job. xix. 25. David frequently had assurance, as is evident from a number of his Psalms. The following, are some of his expressions:—"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved." Ps. xvi. 8. "Though I walk through 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. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Ps. xxiii. 4, 6. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Ps. xvii. 15. Paul also frequently spake in an assured strain. To mention but a few, out of many, of his expressions in point. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh; I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

From the preceding arguments, it must be abundantly evident, that assurance of hope is attainable by believers in the present life.

And here I would remark, that although assurance of hope is attainable in the present life by the people of God,

and has been possessed by many; yet every real child of God is not made a partaker of this blessing. On the contrary, we have reason to believe, that many and perhaps most of God's real people live and die without it. We read in Scripture of "the bruised reed," and "the smoking flax," and of those "who walk in darkness and have no light." These were the people of God. Also in the history of the Scripture saints, we find some of them frequently in darkness, and doubting of their interest in the divine favour. And in the present day, there are many, and perhaps a majority of those, whose humble and circumspect lives, prove them to be the people of God, who, although they have a comfortable hope, and are enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; yet never get entirely delivered from their doubts and fears.

Several reasons may be given, why some obtain assurance, and others do not.

One reason is, the sovereignty of God, who dispenses his blessings as he pleases. In subordination to this, other reasons may be given. Some fail of assurance from a constitutional disposition to gloom, which leads them always to look at the dark side of things, to magnify unfavourable appearances, and to write bitter things against themselves. Some fail from manifold and frequent bodily distempers, which affect the mind, and depress the animal spirits; and this depression has an influence on spiritual exercises. Sometimes a failure arises from want of a sufficient knowledge of the gospel plan of salvation, and the character of the true christian, as drawn in the word of God. And most generally it arises from a want of due diligence in the use of the appointed means of grace.

Another remark, which it will be proper here to make, is, that they who have once attained to assurance, may afterwards lose it. This we have exemplified in the history of David. The causes already mentioned, as operating to prevent the attainment of assurance, may also operate to suspend it after it has been obtained. And in addition to these, the assured christian, through the force of temptation, may be led into sin; and this may darken evidence, and cause God to withdraw the light of his countenance.

One other remark, which it will be proper here to make, is, notwithstanding all christians do not obtain assurance,

yet it is the duty of all to seek after it. This is evident from a passage already quoted. "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Pet. i. 10. And also from our text. "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." And it is not only the duty of christians to seek after assurance, but the possession of it is their privilege; and it is a high privilege, which they might generally, and probably always, attain to in time, if they would be duly diligent in the performance of the duties enjoined upon them in the gospel, and the right use of the means appointed for their growth in grace. And brethren, it is not only our affliction that we come short of assurance, but generally it is also our sin; because we are not duly diligent.

We proceed—

II. To point out the way in which christians may attain to the assurance of hope. It is not to be obtained by immediate revelation from God. The age of extraordinary revelation has ceased. And, indeed, we are not to suppose that the saints who attained to assurance in the days of extraordinary revelation, did ordinarily attain to it by means of immediate revelation to them; but rather in the same way in which we are now to attain it.

Nor is this great blessing to be obtained by sudden impulses upon the mind, or by dreams, or visions, or supposed supernatural voices, or by any such means. Some place much dependance on these things; but such dependance is dangerous. And they who trust to these things, will most probably be deceived. The word of God warrants no such confidence. How are we to know whether these things come from the Spirit of God, or from an evil spirit, or from our own imagination? Undoubtedly there can be no other rule than the revealed word of God contained in the Scriptures. We must go "to the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Is. viii. 20. It cannot be that the Holy Spirit will contradict in dreams, visions, and impulses, the instructions of his word. Assurance, therefore, is not to be sought or received in this way.

The Holy Scriptures, and they alone, are the medium through which we are to seek and to obtain assurance. In

this book God has drawn the character of those to whom the promises of life are made. He has nowhere said that you and I, calling us by name, shall be saved; neither are we to expect him thus to say; but he has promised that persons sustaining certain characters shall be saved. He has, in his word, drawn characters, and made promises to those who sustain these characters. For instance, he has promised that the believer shall be saved; that the penitent shall find mercy; that the pure in heart shall see him, and that he loves them that love him. Therefore to be assured whether we are interested in these promises, and whether they are made to us, we must, in the first place, be assured that we possess the character to which these promises are made. And just so far as we have evidence that we possess the character to which the promises of the gospel are made, and no further, have we a right to hope that the promises are made to us. And when this evidence is so clear and satisfactory, as to leave no doubt in our minds that we possess the character of the christian; and we are not deceived in regard to our evidences, we may be assured of our interest in the promises.

Hence, if we would obtain assurance, we must diligently study the word of God, and make ourselves acquainted with it; and especially with all the traits of the christian character. We ought carefully to wait on God in the use of the appointed means of grace, that thus, if we have grace, it may be strengthened, and be maintained in increasing vigour, and be the more clearly discerned by us. And especially, we ought most carefully, and very frequently, to examine ourselves, and bring our character to the test of the gospel, and prove it by the character of God's people there drawn; and if, on a fair and impartial examination, we find our character to agree with that of the people of God, as drawn in his word, we may be assured that the promises of the gospel are made to us. And if we would obtain assurance, or preserve it after it is obtained, it becomes us habitually to act in this manner. And that assurance, which, in the present day, is obtained in any other way, than by a careful comparison of our character with the character of the christian, as drawn in the word of God, is not to be cherished. And he, who can confidently say, that he is assured of his good estate, while he habitually lives in the neglect of self-examination, we have every reason to believe is deceived.

In the application of this subject, let weak christians be encouraged. There are many humble and sincere souls, precious in the sight of Christ, who discover so much imperfection in themselves, and are so perplexed with doubts and fears, and fall so very far short of the assurance of hope, while they hear others expressing themselves with confidence, as to their interest in the divine favour, that they scarcely dare hope that they are interested in the salvation of the gospel, or take any of the comforts of religion. Our subject has taught us that all christians have not assurance, and that they may have true faith, and be interested in the promises of God, and yet have many doubts and fears. Let the humble, trembling, doubting soul therefore be encouraged to press forward; for, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." Mat. xii. 20. And, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Is. l. 10.

This discourse reproveth those professors who are living contented without assurance; and who are making no efforts to obtain it; and who vindicate their ease and indolence, by holding, that assurance is attainable by very few, if any. Although the true christian may not have assurance, yet he will desire it, and give diligence to obtain it. And of all questions, he will most desire to have answered, am I a child of God, or am I not? Let, then, the secure and indolent professor be afraid; for a wo is pronounced against them who are at ease in Zion. Let him awake from his carnal security, and act as though eternal interests were at stake, and give all diligence to assure himself of his title to eternal life.

This discourse also reproveth the bold and confident professor, who, though he does not walk humbly with God, has no doubt about his good estate. He once persuaded himself that Christ died for him, and therefore concluded that he was in favour with God; or by some sudden impulse upon his mind; or in some other way, without scriptural evidence, he came to the same conclusion; and since he has given himself no further anxiety on the subject; but lives in the constant neglect of the duty of self-examination; and perhaps also in the neglect

of many of the duties of religion. Such have no ground of assurance. Their assurance is without evidence. And how dangerous to be confident in such an important matter, without evidence, or without examining the sufficiency of the grounds of confidence! And how much folly do such persons manifest! For they act in regard to their souls as they would not in the comparatively trifling interests of temporal things. Let the deluded mortal awake from his fatal security, examine the grounds of his assurance, by the infallible rule of God's word, cast away his vain confidence, and seek after the scriptural hope and assurance which are founded on scriptural evidence.

Let christians who have not yet become assured of their good estate, be instructed and quickened by this subject to give diligence to attain to the full assurance of hope. It is attainable; and it is your duty to aim at it. And in most cases real christians are blamable that they fall short of it. It is because they are not duly diligent. Arise then, and shake off all sloth. Endeavour to abound in every good word and work, and to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. Diligently wait on the Lord in the use of the means, he has appointed for the cherishing and quickening of grace. Search the Scriptures, and make yourselves thoroughly acquainted with them; and live in the habitual performance of the duty of self-examination, that you may be acquainted with yourselves. And to prompt you to diligence unto the full assurance of hope, consider you would, by the possession of a true assurance, be better fitted to glorify God, and be useful in the world; and that your own spiritual comforts would be greatly increased: for a true confidence has a great recompense of reward.

And finally, let those who have attained to the full assurance of hope, if there are any such present, praise God for his goodness. Let them keep humble; and, as they are distinguished in the enjoyment of spiritual consolations, let them be distinguished for good works, and for holiness of life, to the glory of God. And let them ever remember, that genuine assurance does not lead to pride, or remissness in duty, or licentiousness of life; but, on the contrary, to humility, to diligence in duty, and to holiness. And if assurance has not this effect, they who profess to have it, may conclude that they are deceived.—

SERMON XLIX.

PEACE AND JOY.

ROMANS XV. 13. FIRST CLAUSE.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”

TRUE believers are justified and adopted, and have the work of sanctification begun in their souls. Many and precious benefits accompany or flow from these in this life. These benefits are summarily stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 36th question. Two of these benefits, as stated in this answer, are, “*Peace of conscience*, and “*joy in the Holy Ghost*.”

The consideration of these two benefits, is the object of the ensuing discourse.

These benefits are the subject of our text. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” This was a prayer of the Apostle for the Roman believers, which shows that joy and peace are blessings which the people of God may seek after, and which they may possess in the present life. The author of these blessings is God, and especially God the Holy Ghost, in his personal character. For it is his office, to impart consolation to the soul; and to our text is added, in the latter clause of the verse, “that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” He is called the God of hope, because he is the author of hope. The subjects of these blessings are real believers, and no others. It is in believing that the Holy Spirit gives joy and peace.

These blessings are the genuine fruits of justification, adoption, and sanctification. But they are not always enjoyed in the same degree. Some christians have more of them than others; and the same persons have doubtless more of them at one time than another; and there are christians, who sometimes are almost, if not altogether destitute of these. We proceed to an illustration of these benefits.

I. *Peace of conscience.* Peace, sometimes, in Scripture, refers to God, and signifies reconciliation between God and us. Sometimes it refers to our fellow men, and signifies a meek, amiable, and forgiving temper towards them. And sometimes it refers to the state of our own minds, and signifies the approbation of our own consciences. This appears to be the principal, if not the exclusive meaning of peace in our text.

There is a true, and there is a false peace, each of which we ought clearly to understand; and between which we ought carefully to distinguish, lest we mistake the latter for the former.

There are those who enjoy peace of conscience, if it can be called by this name, whose peace arises from insensibility or from infidelity. Such are those of whom we read, Deut. xxix. 19. "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." And Ps. x. 6, 11. "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for I shall never be in adversity. God hath forgotten: he hideth his face, he will never see it." This is the peace of a man asleep, while his house is on fire, and the flames are swiftly seizing on every avenue of escape. It is the peace of a maniac, who is insensible to his own wretchedness. And it is the peace of one afflicted with an incurable disease, while under the operation of opium.

Again, there are those, who enjoy peace of conscience, whose peace arises, not so much from insensibility, or infidelity, as from false notions about religion, and a false hope that they possess true piety. Such are they whose hurt has been healed slightly, and who say to themselves, peace, peace, when there is no peace. Such is the peace of those who are at ease in Zion, against whom a wo is pronounced. And such is the peace of the self-deceiving hypocrite, whose hope shall perish, and with it his peace. There are many ways in which persons may deceive themselves, and be led to believe that they have religion, when they have it not, and thus obtain a false peace.

False and true peace may be distinguished from each other by their foundations, and by their effects.

False peace has for its foundation, insensibility of con-

science, or infidelity, or a false hope; but true peace supposes conscience to be in vigorous exercise, and to be rightly informed.

A man's conscience acts within him as a judge, pronouncing sentence upon his actions, whether they be right or wrong; and upon his state, whether it be good or bad. When conscience performs its office in a wicked man, and is rightly informed, it condemns him, and pronounces his state bad; but in a child of God, when it is rightly informed, it approves of his conduct, and pronounces his state good. True peace arises from the judgment of conscience, pronouncing the man delivered from condemnation; because he evidences, from the temper of his heart, and the actions of his life, that he is the character to which the promises of life are made by a faithful and unchanging God. True peace of conscience necessarily supposes the soul united to Christ by faith, and therefore justified and at peace with God. But a person may be justified, and God be at peace with him, and yet he may not have peace of conscience. To have this, he must know, or be persuaded, in a greater or less degree, that he is in a justified state, and that God is at peace with him; and this is to be known only from evidence. The best evidence of justification is sanctification. Hence true peace arises from self-examination. The person examines the exercises of his heart and the actions of his life, and compares them with the character of those with whom, according to his word, God is at peace. And just so far as they agree, he has true peace of conscience. When he sees that evidence is more in his favour than against him, hope predominates over fear, and consequently peace over inquietude of conscience. And when he attains to the full assurance of hope, he then enjoys full peace of conscience.

Thus a true and a false peace differ as to their foundation. The latter is founded on insensibility, conscience being so dull as to be incapable of performing its office; or upon unbelief or ignorance, which influence conscience to a wrong judgment. But the former is founded on the judgment of conscience, in the vigorous exercise of its office, rightly informed as to the nature of true evidence, having presented before it scriptural evidence that the man is a christian; and, in view of this evidence, passing judgment, and pronouncing the man interested in the divine favour.

A true and a false peace differ also in their effects. A false peace is generally accompanied with a careless life. And not unfrequently, the greater this peace, the more careless and profligate, in their lives, are the subjects of it. For false peace naturally leads to carnal security, self-confidence, bold presumption, and sometimes daring wickedness, saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." But true peace of conscience is always accompanied with an upright life. It begets watchfulness instead of carnal security; a confidence only in the Lord, instead of self-confidence; a holy fear, instead of presumption; and diligence in duty, instead of sloth.

Further, a false peace frequently fails in the hour of trial. But external circumstances cannot destroy the peace of the true christian, as long as he keeps his conscience void of offence. But whilst the billows of affliction roll against him without, confident of an interest in the divine favour, he is tranquil within. And not unfrequently, in seasons of the greatest outward trials, the christian has the greatest peace of conscience. The blessedness of true peace of conscience is very great. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. The soul must be destitute of comfort, while conscience accuses and condemns. They who have experienced the uneasiness and torment produced by an accusing conscience, will bear testimony to the blessedness of having a mind at rest, and an approving conscience.

This peace of conscience is one of the benefits of true religion in this life. This appears from the following texts. Ps. cxix. 165. "Great peace have they which love thy law." Prov. iii. 17. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." John xiv. 27. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Rom. viii. 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. xiv. 17. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace." Gal. v. 22. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace."

We proceed—

II. To the consideration of the other benefit of true religion, mentioned in our text; viz. *joy*; or, as it is called in our Catechism, *joy in the Holy Ghost*. Spiritual

joy is called joy in the Holy Ghost, because the Spirit of God, dwelling in the heart of the believer, is the author of it; for "the fruit of the Spirit is joy."

Joy is a happy state of mind, arising from the present possession of something we esteem good; and also, we may add, from the certain prospect of blessings to come. The christian's joy, is that happy state of mind which arises from the possession of spiritual blessings; such as an interest in the divine favour, a sense of pardoned sin, peace of conscience, communion with God, and the like; and from the hope he has of more and greater blessings in reserve for him in a future state.

This joy is very different from that of the world. The latter is carnal. It is produced by the possession or the prospect of carnal things; but the former is spiritual, being produced by spiritual objects. The joy of the men of the world is without cause or reason; for the wicked have reason to mourn rather than rejoice, and would mourn, if they were sensible of their real state. But the righteous have real cause of joy, for they are already in possession of real good, and are heirs to unspeakable and eternal happiness. The joy of the wicked is transitory, and soon passeth away. An awakened conscience, or external trials will soon destroy it; and death is hastening on, completely to terminate it, and introduce, instead of it, weeping and gnashing of teeth. But the joy of the christian is permanent. A conscience, vigorous in the performance of its office, increases instead of diminishes his joy. External afflictions cannot destroy it; but in the midst of these the true christian can often adopt the language of the prophet Habakkuk. "Although 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 I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. iii. 17, 18. And death itself cannot destroy this joy. On the contrary, death will introduce the christian to the perfection of this joy, even to the fulness of joy evermore.

And as the joy of the real christian differs from the joy of the world, or that which is founded on worldly and sinful objects, so does it also differ from every false religious joy. The joy of the self-deceiving hypocrite arises from a

belief that he is safe, while he is a stranger to communion with God, and to all those spiritual enjoyments which cause the true christian to rejoice. His joy is not founded on scriptural warrant. Without evidence, or from false evidence, he fancies himself to be a child of God, and therefore rejoices; while his joy is not accompanied by a holy life. But the joy of the christian, like his assurance and his peace of conscience, arises from evidence, and is a holy joy. The christian studies the word of God. He carefully examines himself by it; and, by the witnessing of the Holy Spirit, he is enabled to discern within himself evidences that he is a christian. He therefore rejoices in the safety of his state. He is convinced that he is interested in the promises of God, and rejoices in them, as affording an ample security for his safety and felicity; and that under the government of an infinitely wise God, who is his reconciled Father, his best interests will be advanced in every circumstance and situation in life. He sees that God can be glorified in his salvation, through Christ, according to the gospel plan, and he rejoices in the manifestation of the divine glory. He rejoices in the approbation of his own conscience and in communion with God, which afford him present satisfaction. And when he looks forward, and, by faith, takes a view of the future and unspeakably glorious blessings promised him in the heavenly world, and to which he has a clear title, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God. His joy is holy, and is accompanied with a carefulness to live a life of holiness and to glorify God, and with a delight in holy obedience. This joy in the Holy Ghost is unknown to any but the real christian. This is the joy with which the stranger doth not intermeddle. And it sometimes, even in this vale of tears, rises to a degree which is unspeakable and full of glory.

That this joy is one of the blessings of true religion in the present life, is frequently taught in the Scriptures, as in the following texts. Rom. xiv. 17. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Gal. v. 22. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy." 1 Pet. i. 8. "Believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Ps. v. 11. "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy." Ps. lxxviii. 3. "Let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice

before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." Rom. v. 2. "By whom also we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." 1 Thes. v. 16. "Rejoice evermore."

Let this discourse lead us to self-examination. Are we enjoying the blessings which have been illustrated. If we suppose we are, let us examine into our peace and joy, whether they are of the right kind. Is our peace founded on a disbelief of the threatenings of God's word, or on an insensibility to our real situation, or on a hope of our good estate, not warranted by the word of God? And are we careless in our lives? If so, we are deceiving ourselves, and are destitute of true peace of conscience. But on the other hand, has conscience done its duty in us, and sat in judgment on our character, and in view of the infallible word of God pronounced as pardoned and accepted in Christ? And is the correctness of the judgment of conscience evidenced by an upright life? If so, then we have reason to conclude that we have a title to the inestimable blessing of peace of conscience. And as to our joy, has it the same evidences of a holy life and delight in obedience to prove its genuineness? Let us examine ourselves, and carefully guard against self-deception.

Again, in improving this subject, let us be impressed with a lively sense of the excellency of the christian religion. Peace and joy, in this life, are its rewards. It affords real and permanent peace and joy, with which those of the wicked, derived from the world, or from sin, are not worthy to be compared. It affords peace and joy, which the world knoweth not; which it cannot give or take away; and which trials, and even death, cannot destroy. Contrast the state of the real christian, in the enjoyment of these comforts of religion, with that of the wicked man surrounded with worldly prosperity. It certainly is not reasonable that worldly things should satisfy a rational and immortal mind, equal to the infinite God as a portion; or that the pleasures of sin, or the riches or honours of the world, should afford so much happiness, as a sense of pardon, and of an interest in the divine favour, the approbation of conscience, communion with God, and hope of glory. Besides the happiness of the wicked is transitory, and liable to be destroyed by every blast of adversity, and if not before, will certainly be destroyed at death. But the happiness of the righteous will

be eternal, and their peace here will issue in perfect peace hereafter; and their joy, in this life, is only the beginning of a fulness of joy, which will be eternal. And further, the pleasures of sin are not only transitory and momentary at best; but most generally they contain a sting, which mars this momentary bliss; and they often hurry to an untimely grave, and unless forsaken will assuredly lead to remediless woe. And if the happiness of the wicked, even in their most prosperous state, is, in the present life, far less than that of the righteous; what are we to think of the comparative condition of those who reject the blessings of religion, and cleave to sinful pursuits, while they spend their days in disquietude, from remorse of conscience; and in sorrow under the pressure of adversity?

Let the excellency of true religion operate as a motive to induce all to embrace it. Many look upon religion, as a source of unhappiness in the present life, and as rendered tolerable, only by the consideration that it leads to happiness hereafter. But what has been said refutes this erroneous opinion; for, as we have seen, peace and joy, far superior to any thing that this world or sin can afford, are the fruits of true religion in this life. This is the testimony of God's word, and of christian experience. The christian, so far from looking upon religion as only tolerable, because it leads to happiness hereafter, finds it to be its own reward in the present life. And indeed, the happiness of heaven, to which true religion leads, is of the same kind with that which the christian enjoys here, only it is more perfect.

And they are under a great mistake, who suppose that the happiness of heaven is different, in kind, from that which the christian enjoys here. The heavenly, is a holy happiness, which will ever be misery to the unsanctified sinner. And they who dislike the enjoyments of religion here, would dislike far more the enjoyments of the saints in heaven. The reason why sinners dislike the enjoyments of religion here is, their hearts are wrong. If their hearts were changed, we would no more hear from them, that religion is a gloomy and cheerless thing; but they would also add their testimony to that of the thousands of the people of God, that there are joy and peace in believing.

And finally, let christians seek after more of this peace

and joy which God has placed within their reach. The nearer you live to God, in the way of duty, the more may you expect to enjoy the comforts of religion. And it is generally, if not always, the fault of christians themselves, that they are not filled with all joy and peace in believing.—AMEN.

SERMON L.

INCREASE OF GRACE.

2 PETER iii. 18. FIRST CLAUSE.

“*But grow in grace.*”

THE word *grace*, as used in Scripture, sometimes signifies a perfection of God, viz. his goodness to the undeserving; and sometimes the benefits which he bestows on us, which are the effects of this attribute in him. In the latter sense, the word *grace* is sometimes used to express all the goodness of God to his fallen creatures; and sometimes it signifies only those spiritual principles which are implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit in conversion, such as faith, repentance, love, humility, and the like. In this latter sense, are we to understand the word in our text.

“Increase of grace” is one of the benefits which, in this life, do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification. These benefits, as has been stated before, are “assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, *increase of grace*, and perseverance therein to the end.”

Increase of grace, is the subject to which your attention is invited in the ensuing discourse.

In treating this subject, I shall,

- I. Explain the doctrine.
- II. Show that it is the duty of christians to grow in grace.
- III. Inquire whether all christians do actually grow in grace.

IV. Point out the means by which the growth of the christian may be advanced.

1. I am to *explain the doctrine*. When the christian is said to grow in grace, we are not to understand that the number of his graces are increased; or that any new graces are added; but only that the graces which he had given to him, when he first believed, are increased in degree. A child has all the parts and faculties of a man; but he has them not in that strength and perfection, to which they will by degrees attain, as he grows up to the full stature of mature age. So the new-born soul has all the parts of the new man; but he has them not in the strength and perfection of the old and established christian. To these he must attain by degrees in the work of sanctification. And this gradual strengthening of the graces, already in the soul, is what we are to understand by increase of grace. To grow in grace, is to increase in the degree of strength and vigour of all the graces which belong to the christian. To descend to particulars.

1. To grow in grace, is to increase in the *knowledge* of divine things. The christian who grows in grace is a diligent scholar in the school of Christ, and is going on from one degree of the knowledge of spiritual things to another. And perhaps rarely, if ever, does a christian grow in grace, in the least degree, faster than he grows in knowledge. The christian who grows in grace is advancing to a clearer and more perfect knowledge of the divine character, the glory of the divine perfections, and the propriety of the divine dispensations. He is obtaining clearer views of the loveliness of Christ, his suitableness as a Saviour, and the nature and excellence of the gospel plan of salvation through him. He is becoming more and more acquainted with the divine law; its spiritual nature, and its holiness, justice, and goodness. He is obtaining a clearer and clearer knowledge of himself; his propensity to sin, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his own heart, his easy besetting sin, and his weakness and dependance on the grace of God. He is becoming more and more acquainted with the odious and evil nature of sin; and he is learning more and more of the vanity and transitory nature of this world, and its insufficiency to afford him happiness; and the superior importance of eternal things.

2. To grow in grace, is to increase in *faith*. Faith unites to Christ: to grow in faith, therefore, is to have this bond of union strengthened, and to have the soul more closely knit to Christ. Faith purifies the heart; to grow in faith, therefore, is to grow in purity of heart, or in abhorrence of sin, a love of holiness, and a conformity to the image of God. Faith overcomes the world: to grow in faith, therefore, is to get more and more above the allurements and the terrors of the world, so as not to be drawn aside by the one, or driven away by the other from the path of duty. Faith is a resting, relying, and depending on Christ: to grow in faith, therefore, is to realize more and more the need of Christ, to rest more upon him, and more unreservedly and firmly to trust in him. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen: to grow in faith, therefore, is to live more as beholding him who is invisible, and to increase in a sense of the reality and excellence of future blessings. The blessings of heaven more and more unfold, and become clearer and brighter, and, as it were, draw nearer, and put on more of a present subsistence to the growing christian; and his belief in the reality of those future blessings, and in the word and promises of God, becomes more firm and unshaken.

3. To grow in grace, is to increase in evangelical *repentance*. The true christian, gradually becoming more acquainted with the plague of his own heart; gradually discovering more of the depths of iniquity therein contained, and the malignity of sin; gradually obtaining a clearer knowledge of the precepts and spirituality of the divine law; and becoming more and more sensible of his deficiencies; he gradually becomes more humble, contrite, and self-abased before God, and less in his own eyes, and hates sin more, and more earnestly longs to be delivered from it.

4. To grow in grace, is to grow in *love* to God and man. The growing christian has his affections more and more closely united to God; he more and more highly reverences and esteems him, desires after communion with him and conformity to him, delights in such communion, and grieves at the hidings of his face. He becomes more and more engaged to please him, to live to his glory, and when creature comforts fail to find a satisfying portion in

him. And where there is an increasing love to God, love to the brethren will grow in proportion. The affections of the growing christian become more and more united to his fellow christians; he delights more in their society; sympathizes more with them in their distresses; can better bear their reproofs; more readily casts a veil of charity over their infirmities; is more tender of their good name; and becomes more and more ready to forgive them when they have done any thing to offend him. And he not only grows in love to God and the brethren, but his heart becomes more enlarged towards all mankind; he grows in benevolence towards the human race; he grieves more and more over the follies of others; he longs more to see them become partakers of those spiritual blessings which he enjoys, and for this event he more earnestly prays.

5. To grow in grace, is to increase in *zeal* for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Some will here, perhaps, be ready to say, that this is contrary to their own experience, and their observations on others; for they felt more zeal for the glory of God, and the interests of religion, when they first engaged in the service of Christ than they have ever done since; and they have usually observed this in others. It is true, we frequently discover, in young converts, a considerable degree of zeal. But in this zeal, we have reason to believe there is generally much of what, in the language of Scripture, we may call wood, hay, and stubble, which needs to be burned up. Perhaps, usually, there is, in young converts, much of that zeal which is not according to knowledge. It arises, in a considerable degree, from the excitement of the animal feelings; it is not tempered by prudence and experience; and it is intermingled with a considerable portion of pride and self-righteousness. But as the christian advances, he gains experience, and with it prudence; and discovering more and more of the deceitfulness of his own heart, and his own weakness and unworthiness, he becomes more humble, and often, though he is apparently less zealous, yet genuine christian zeal has increased. From purer motives, and under a deeper sense of dependance on God, and more sincerely in earnest, he desires the advancement of the divine glory, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom; and his endeavours to effect these ends, according to his ability and opportunity, are gradually increased.

6. To grow in grace, is to grow in *patience* under afflictions. It is to grow in *resignation* to the divine will, under all the dispensations of providence, and to feel more and more reconciled to the government of God. It is to grow in *temperance, self-denial, meekness, active obedience* to all the commandments of the divine law, and, in short, in *holiness* of heart and life. We proceed—

II. To shew that *it is the duty* of christians to grow in grace. This may be proved—

1. From the consideration, that God hath appointed *means* of grace, purposely to promote its growth; and hath made it the duty of his people to use them. In appointing these means, and making it their duty to use them, he has clearly taught that it is their duty to make progress under them.

2. We are taught the same by the *desires* and the *practice* of the *saints*, whose history is recorded in the Scriptures. There we find recorded their earnest longings after greater nearness and conformity to God, and their pressing forward to obtain the desires of their hearts. The example of Paul is particularly worthy of notice. Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And Paul, with thankfulness, makes mention of the increase in grace of the Thessalonian christians in general, 2 Thes. i. 3. “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.”

3. This duty is frequently enjoined in the *word of God*. Phil. iii. 15, 17. Paul, having declared that it was his constant practice to press forward, exhorted all christians to do the same. “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded. Brethren, be followers together of me.” He also exhorted the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. iv. 1, 10. “Furthermore, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you, by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of

us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." Peter exhorted those to whom he wrote, 1 Pet. ii. 2. "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." And, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." And, in our text, he exhorted, "grow in grace." To grow in grace, is therefore clearly a duty binding on all christians. We proceed to the

III. Head of our discourse, which was to *inquire* whether all christians *do* actually *grow in grace*. Many texts of Scripture seem plainly to teach that they do. Attend to the following. Job xvii. 9. "The righteous also shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Ps. xcii. 12, 13, 14. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Prov. iv. 18. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Is. xl. 31. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." And Mal. iv. 2. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." From these texts, we may conclude, that it is essential to the character of the true christian, that he grow in grace.

And here I would remark, that when it is said, it is essential to the character of the true christian that he grow in grace, it is not meant that he at all times grows. On the contrary, he sometimes declines, backslides, and even falls into grievous sins, as was the case with David, Solomon, Peter, and others. But when it is said, that growth in grace is essential to the character of the real christian, it is meant, that, although christians may have their seasons of declension, yet they shall upon the whole increase.

And these very seasons of declension, though in themselves sinful, are often, when the christian is again renewed, made to further his growth in grace; by teaching him his weakness and dependance, embittering sin to him more, and leading him to walk more circumspectly. And that some who once appeared to have grace, have long been in a visible state of declension, and have died in this state is no sufficient argument against the sentiment advanced; for they may never have had grace; but declined, not from the reality, but from the appearance of grace, and went out from the people of God, because they were not of them.

I would further remark, on this subject, that some christians grow in grace more slowly than others. For some part of the good ground on which, according to the parable, good seed was sown, brought forth but thirty fold, while other parts brought forth sixty, and others an hundred fold. This difference may be owing, in part, to a more or less favourable situation; in part to greater or less diligence; and, in part, to the sovereignty of God.

Nor do the same christians grow equally at all times; but, from the same causes as mentioned above, they sometimes grow faster than at others.

And further, I would remark, that christians may be actually growing in grace when they think they are not; but rather suppose themselves to be declining; and are mourning that it is not with them as it was in months past. We hear many gracious souls complain of their declension, because their comforts are not as great as they were. But comfort is no part of sanctification. And as one observes,* “The Spirit of God usually giveth more of his assisting when he abateth his comforting presence, whereupon the christian travels faster towards heaven under clouds, than when he is more serene, and though it be not so cheerful, yet he gets over more ground.” If the christian feels corruption more active, he is often ready to conclude that it is because grace is languishing, and corruptions are gaining strength; when the reason may be, that grace is more lively to perceive corruptions, mourn over them, and war against them. We proceed—

IV. To point out the *means* by which the growth of the christian may be advanced.

* Willard.

1. One of the means of growth in grace is *reading* the *Scriptures*. "Search the Scriptures," John v. 39, was the command of Christ. **1** Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17, we read, "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And David frequently, in his Psalms, and especially in cxix. psalm, bare testimony, from his own experience, to the advantage to be derived from the word of God. The Holy Scriptures teach us our duty; they show us where danger lies; they exhibit the history of many of the saints, for our instruction, our caution, and our encouragement; and they address to us many powerful motives to excite us to diligence in duty. If therefore christians would grow in grace, they ought diligently to search the Scriptures, to be daily conversant with them, to treasure them up in their minds, and make them constantly the man of their counsel.

2. Another means of growth in grace, is the *public worship* of God's house. "Blessed (saith the Psalmist) are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." Ps. lxxxiv. 4. And in another place, Ps. xcii. 13, 14. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." And again, Ps. lxxxvii. 2. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." And Christ has promised, Mat. xviii. 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Attendance on the public worship of God's house is therefore an important means of grace. Here God is specially present to communicate his blessings. And here we have the word of life preached. And we are told, Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And 1 Cor. i. 21. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Therefore, if christians would grow in grace, they must not forsake the assembling of themselves together.

3. Another means of growth in grace, is a frequent *re-*

renewal of covenant with God, at his table. In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is exhibited a lively representation of the divine love; a striking display is made of the evil of sin; the mercy of God, in Christ, and his willingness to save sinners, are forcibly manifested; and the partaker explicitly binds himself anew to serve the Lord. These things are aptly calculated to call forth into lively exercise, and increase, love to God, repentance for sin, faith in Christ, hope of acceptance with God, sense of obligation to holiness, and every grace. And many christians can, from precious experience, testify, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is calculated to promote growth in grace. Therefore, if christians would grow in grace, let them not neglect opportunities to renew their covenant with God, at his table.

4. Another means of growth in grace, is *meditation* on divine things. The Psalmist, describing the godly man, Ps. i. 2, saith, "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he *meditate* day and night." And he immediately adds, as to the effect of this practice, verse 3, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither."

5. Another means of growth in grace, is *self-examination*. This duty is enjoined by the Apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Self-examination is the best antidote against the poison of self-deception. We hereby may come to the knowledge of our real character, and be kept humble. We hereby may discover where we are weakest and most need to be on our guard. And hereby corruptions, which might otherwise remain undiscovered, may be seen, and means be taken to subdue them. Let christians carefully attend to this duty; for it is impossible to grow in grace in the neglect of it.

6. Another important means of growth in grace, is *prayer*. If this duty be neglected, instead of growing, we must be declining. Yea, we have great reason to fear that while we have a name to live we are dead. We are dependant on God for the growth, as well as the beginning of grace. But his constitution is, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Mat. vii. 7. If then we do not look to God in prayer for those blessings which we need, we have no

warrant to expect that we shall receive them. And also, without prayer, none of the other means which have been mentioned can be useful to us; for God must bless them to make them useful, and for this he must be asked. Let christians, therefore, if they would grow in grace, pray without ceasing, continue instant in prayer, and in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known unto God.

7. Finally, to grow in grace, be *watchful*. To this we are frequently exhorted in Scripture. The christian is continually surrounded with enemies; and watchfulness is as necessary for him as it is for the soldier placed on guard, near the camp of the enemy. Therefore let christians walk circumspectly, and be sober and vigilant.

In short, to grow in grace, live near to God in all the ordinances and duties of religion. But be careful, and do not rest in these means.

And now let those who suppose they are christians, examine themselves. Are you growing in grace? If not, you have reason to doubt the reality of your religion. You have no present evidence that you ever had true piety. Let those who may be at present in darkness on this subject, be stirred up to diligence in the use of the means of grace, and the performance of all the duties of religion. This is your duty and your happiness. Wait on the Lord, in all the ways of his appointment, and with right tempers, and you shall renew your strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

And let those who have good evidence that they are growing in grace, continue to give diligence to go on from strength to strength; and let them never feel that they have attained, or may rest in present attainments, while they continue in this state of imperfection; but, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let them press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—AMEN.

SERMON LI.

SAINT'S PERSEVERANCE.

ROMANS viii. 38, 39.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

THE state of the real christian is safe. There is no condemnation to him. From eternity he was foreknown, and was predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. He has been effectually called, and justified. And between these and glorification there is an inseparable connexion. And Christ has died for him, risen for him, sitten down at the right hand of the Father for him, and there intercedes for him. These things are all taught in the preceding part of this chapter. And hence the Apostle, with a triumphant boldness, asks the question, “who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” And answers it, “nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In the text we are taught the doctrine of the *saint's perseverance*, or that all real christians shall persevere in the way of life unto the end, and finally be saved. This is the last mentioned of the benefits, which, according to our Catechism, do, in this life, accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove, defend, and apply the doctrine of the saint's perseverance. But Before we proceed to adduce proofs to establish the

doctrine, it will be proper to make a few preliminary remarks.

1. I would remark, that when the perseverance of the saints is asserted, it is allowed that some, who have made a profession of religion, may fall away from their profession and be lost; and further, it is allowed that some who appear to be pious may fall away from the apparent practice of piety, and be lost. For persons may make a profession of religion, and even appear to others to be pious, when they are hypocrites at heart; and they may even deceive themselves with what they suppose to be grace, when in reality it is not; and hence, having no root, they may fall away from the appearance of piety, and renounce their profession, and finally be lost. The perseverance of such is not defended, but only of those who have been truly born again, and are, by a true faith, united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. I would remark, that when we defend the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, it is allowed that true believers may fall into sin, so that for a time grace does not appear in exercise; but it is maintained that believers cannot fall finally, so as to perish; neither can they fall totally, so as to lose the seeds of grace implanted in their hearts.

3. I would remark again, that when it is said, the saints shall persevere unto salvation, it is not meant that they will be saved, let them live here as they may; but that they shall persevere in faith and every other grace, and through these unto salvation. Neither is it meant, that they will persevere by their own power; for, if left to themselves, they would doubtless fall away and be lost; but that they are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. Nor do we hold that the supporting power of God is extended to believers, in virtue of their own deserts; but only in virtue of the divine promises. This is the foundation on which their security for perseverance rests.

Having made these remarks, I proceed to prove the doctrine, that true believers cannot fall finally or totally from a state of grace; but that they shall persevere therein unto the end.

1. This doctrine may be proved from the purposes of God, which are immutable. The Scriptures teach us, in

many places, that God hath chosen some to salvation; and that the means and the end are inseparably connected in the divine purposes. Thus we read in our context, "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." So also, 2 Thes. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." From these and similar texts we learn that effectual calling, faith, conformity to the image of Christ, and the various graces of the new man, are in consequence of election to eternal life. When therefore persons are effectually called, and become true believers, it is evident they are of the number who were chosen to eternal life. Hence it follows, that the purposes of God must change, or true believers cannot finally be lost; and therefore cannot totally fall away from a state of grace, because they can be saved only in a state of grace. But the purposes of God cannot change; for they must be like his nature, immutable. And he declares, Is. xlvi. 10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Thus the perseverance of the saints stands on a foundation as stable as the purposes of God.

2. This doctrine may be argued from the exhortation which is given to christians, to make their election sure. 2 Pet. i. 10. "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." By this must be meant, to make themselves sure of it. For, as to the decree or purpose of God, it must already be sure; and nothing that we can do can make that more sure. Now christians can assure themselves of their election, only by evidences of their effectual calling, and union to Christ by faith. But if they could fall away from grace, and finally be lost, it would be impossible for them to make themselves sure of their election. For if their present evidences of union to Christ were ever so great, they could not hence safely draw the conclusion, that they should not finally fall away and be lost.

3. This doctrine may be argued from the state of peace, joy, and safety, in which, according to the Scriptures, the righteous are. Now this representation would not be just, if, after believers had become united to Christ, they might still be separated from him, and finally be forever banish-

ed from his presence. How could that christian have joy and peace, and feel his state safe, who had such a prospect before him? Could he derive joy and peace, and feel his state safe, from the prospect of diligence in duty, and that thus he would continue steadfast? Alas! the experienced christian well knows that this is a poor ground of comfort, that his strength is weakness, and that, if left to himself, he would soon destroy his peace. Could he derive joy and peace, and feel his state safe, from the prospect that God would give him grace to persevere? This, indeed, is the only true source of these blessings; but if believers may be permitted to fall away, they can derive no comfort from this source; for they have no security that God will grant them this persevering grace.

Believers cannot be in that safe state in which the Scriptures represent them to be, nor have they cause of peace and joy, if they may fall away and finally be lost.

4. This doctrine may be argued from the nature of spiritual life which believers now enjoy. This is called everlasting life. John iii. 36. "He that beliveth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." John v. 24. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life." John vi. 54. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *hath* eternal life." From these and several other texts, we learn that the spiritual life, which the believer now enjoys, is of an everlasting nature, which could not be said, if it may be only temporary in its duration.

5. The Scriptures establish an indissoluble connexion between justification and glorification. Thus, in the chapter which contains our text, we read, "whom he justified, them he also glorified." Believers are evidently in a justified state; therefore, according to this passage, they will be glorified; and consequently they cannot fall away from a state of grace; for they can be saved only in a gracious state.

6. I mention one other argument, which alone is sufficient to establish this doctrine; and that is the nature and promises of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is an everlasting and sure covenant. "He hath made with me (said David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5,) an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And Is. lxi. 8. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them."

Is. lv. 3. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Hence we learn that the covenant of grace, in which believers are, is an everlasting and sure covenant. But if this covenant may be done away, and believers perish, it can neither be everlasting nor sure.

But that it shall not be done away, and that no believer interested in it shall perish, we learn not only from the nature of the covenant, as everlasting and sure, but also, from the many promises of perseverance which are therein made. In one of the texts just quoted, we read, (Jer. xxxii. 40) "I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Similar promises are made in many other passages, as the following, Is. liv. 10. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." John v. 24. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John vi. 39. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John x. 27, 28. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John iv. 14. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John xiv. 19. "Because I live, ye shall live also." 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Phil. i. 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." 1 Thes. v. 23, 24. "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be pre-

served blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." 2 Thes. iii. 3. "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." Heb. xiii. 5. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And 1 Pet. i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." In these texts, the most positive promises of perseverance are made: for it is positively asserted, that the Lord will not turn away from his people to do them good; that they shall not depart from him; that his kindness shall not depart from them; that they shall not come into condemnation; that they shall never perish; that they shall never thirst; that because Christ lives, they shall live also; that they shall be confirmed unto the end; that the good work begun in them will be performed until the day of Jesus Christ; that their whole spirit, soul, and body shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; that a faithful God will stablish and keep them from evil; that he will never leave nor forsake them; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. And in our text, as strong expressions as could be selected, are used to set forth the final perseverance of the saints. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Will the Lord be faithful to his promises? Doubtless he will! Can it be possible then, that after all these promises have been made, believers can be left to fall away, and finally be lost? It is impossible. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the promises of God cannot fail. Therefore the believer shall persevere, and shall be kept, not by his own power, but by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

To this doctrine, several objections have been made, which it will be proper to notice, and endeavour to obviate.

1. It has been objected, that David, Solomon, Peter, and other good men have fallen into grievous sins. This has been already granted. But this does not affect the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, unless it can be shown that these men fell totally and finally from grace.

But it is certain that these men were recovered from their fall. Of the recovery of David and Peter no doubt can be entertained. And of Solomon's repentance and recovery, the whole book of Ecclesiastes, evidently written when he was advanced in life, is an evidence.

2. It is objected, that some have fallen, of whose recovery we have no account, as Judas, Demas, Hymeneus, and Alexander. But there is nothing said of these men that will lead us necessarily to conclude that they ever had saving faith; and it is readily granted that persons may fall away from a profession of the faith, and even from apparent piety. The apostle John, in his first epistle (chap. ii. 19) has given a satisfactory answer to this objection. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

3. An objection is brought against this doctrine, from those texts which speak of persons falling away from certain attainments and perishing, such as the following, Ezek. xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." Ezek. xxxiii. 18. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby." Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." Heb. x. 26. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." And 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The answer that may be given to

these and similar texts in Scripture, is, that all the characters here described come short of saving grace, and, in the language of John, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." The Scriptures must be consistent with themselves. And they do frequently, as we have seen, in the most plain and unequivocal terms, assert the perseverance of the saints, and therefore we must explain these texts, if it can be done, in consistency with those numerous passages which plainly assert the saint's perseverance. And this can be done; for there is not an expression in one of these texts that necessarily implies a justifying righteousness or saving grace. They may all be explained to mean an apparent or a moral righteousness, great knowledge, and miraculous gifts.

4. It is objected again, that, in the Scriptures, christians are frequently exhorted to be faithful, and cautioned to guard against apostacy? And that these exhortations and cautions would be unnecessary, if christians will certainly persevere? To this objection, it is answered, that while God has determined to give his people persevering grace, he has determined to give it to them, only in the way of diligence in duty; and these exhortations and cautions are a part of his plan, to secure their diligence and final perseverance.

5. It has been objected again, that this doctrine leads to licentiousness. But this objection must be founded on ignorance of the nature of true faith. For that faith, which the true christian possesses, is a faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and is evidenced by good works. If, then, a person live in sin, and is not leading a holy life, he has no scriptural evidence that he is in a state of grace, much less that he shall persevere unto salvation. Besides, the christian acts from the principle of love. He loves the Lord and his service, and he hates sin. And this will secure his obedience to the divine law. The language of the true christian is, not let "us continue in sin that grace may abound," but "how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 1, 2. It is true this doctrine, as well as all the other doctrines of grace may be abused to licentiousness, by carnal professors; but the doctrine itself gives them no countenance for this abuse. And it can be no reasonable objection to a doctrine that bad men make a bad use of it.

Let us now improve the subject.

1. This doctrine enhances the excellence of the christian religion. Take away this doctrine, and religion offers to you a good, the continuance of which depends on your own weak powers, and of which you may in a few days be deprived, and be left in a worse state than you were before. But, with this doctrine, religion offers to you a sure, stable, and permanent good, the continuance of which depends, not on your own weak powers, but on the infallible promises of God.

2. From the view which we have taken of this subject we infer, that they who are drawing motives to negligence, carnal security, and sin, from this doctrine, are strangers to that saving grace which will be abiding. For they who persevere unto salvation, persevere, through faith and holiness. They therefore, who once supposed that they had evidences of grace; but who are now in a state of carnal security, and are comforting themselves and deriving encouragement to continue in sin, from the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, have great reason rather to conclude, that they never had saving grace; but that all their former experiences were delusive. There are so many counterfeit graces in religion, and so many exercises that fall short of gracious experiences, that when persons fall away from what they supposed to be religious experiences, and live in a careless maner, they have reason rather to conclude that they never had true grace, than to draw support and comfort from the doctrine of the saint's perseverance.

3. To christians who have scriptural evidences of a real union to Christ, this doctrine affords strong consolation. If there were a possibility, that notwithstanding you are now united to Christ, you might yet be separated from him, and be forever banished from his presence; peace and joy might well be excluded, amidst the brightest evidences of your present faith, and in your hours of most intimate communion with God. But believers, this is not the case. The covenant of grace in which you are now interested is an everlasting covenant. God loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness has he drawn you. And the same love which was placed on you from eternity, will continue to eternity. Your standing is not in your own hands, if it were, you might well despair;

but it is in the hands of Christ. He is engaged to complete the work which he has begun, and he will not leave it incomplete. Your perseverance is as sure, as the power and love of Christ. It is as sure as the faithfulness of God to his promises. Let the safety of your state comfort you amidst the trials and temptations of life, and fill you with joy and peace in believing. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever.—AMEN." Jude, vers. 24, 25.

END OF VOLUME I.