

S E R M O N S

ON

V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S .

BY

JOEL PARKER, D. D.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA:
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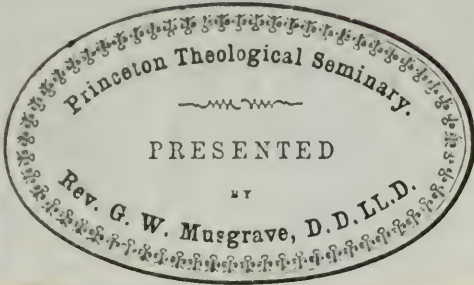
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REV. JOEL SARNWELL, D.D.

Yours Truly
Joel Parker



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TO
THE ELDERS, TRUSTEES, AND MEMBERS
OF
THE CLINTON STREET CHURCH AND CONGREGATION
IN
PHILADELPHIA,
THIS VOLUME
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR LATE PASTOR,
AND EVER-ABIDING FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E .

THE Sermons contained in this volume are given to the press, not so much for the sake of publishing them, as for the purpose of furnishing a few discourses as mementos of friendship for those who have honored me with an attendance upon my ministry. The selection has been without much reference to the finish of their composition, but more to gratify the expressed desires of various persons who have asked that sermons which they remembered, as having awakened a peculiar interest in their minds, might be included in the selection.

The occasion of the publication will be sufficiently explained by the following correspondence. The kind expressions contained in the note requesting such a publication, and the response that follows, I desire to see permanently connected with the volume, both because they furnish the best apology for allowing such a number of discourses, most of

which were written without any expectation of their seeing the light, to be published, and the sentiments of mutual friendship will, I hope, be strengthened and prolonged by such a preservation of the expressions themselves.

The first note was signed by the elders of the Clinton Street Church, and a number of the congregation, amounting to thirty-five in all. The long list of names is omitted as not necessary, and as, perhaps, not agreeing with the taste and feelings of all the subscribers.

PHILADELPHIA, *March* 19, 1852.

The REV. JOEL PARKER, D.D., *New York*.

REV. AND DEAR SIR: Desiring to retain some lasting memorial of your teachings as our Pastor, we, whose names are undersigned, take the liberty to express the desire that some of those valuable discourses, to which we have been permitted to listen, may be given to the public in a printed form.

Although we believe, if you would encourage us to hope for such a work, a subscription might be readily obtained among your friends for such a number of copies as would at least defray the expense of publication, yet we do not wish you to assume any responsibility, or to take upon yourself any labor or trouble, in respect to the work, unless a sufficient subscription shall first be obtained.

With sentiments of warm regard,

We remain yours truly,

G. W. FOBES,
C. S. WURTS, &c.

NEW YORK, *March 26, 1852.*

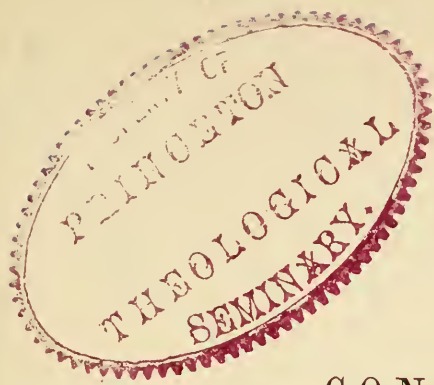
RESPECTED FRIENDS: Your kind favor, expressing the desire that some of my "Discourses may be given to the public in a printed form," is before me. If anything connected with the issue of discourses possessing no special claim to the public attention could afford me pleasure in appearing as an author, especially in a work so little sought by general readers as a volume of Sermons, it is the assurance derived from your communication that the book will be read with the partialities of the friendship which has grown up between us in the sacred and happy relationship of Pastor and People.

I should be very sorry that a few persons should be burdened with the expense of the proposed work, but should the subscription list be so extended by numbers as to render the outlay light to individuals, it will afford me great pleasure to commence immediately the preparation of the volume for the press.

With sentiments of the warmest regard, I subscribe myself your attached friend and obedient servant,

JOEL PARKER.

Messrs. G. W. FOBES, CHARLES S. WURTS, and others.



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S E R M O N S .



SERMON I.

MEN DISAPPOINTED AT THE JUDGMENT.

STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE : FOR MANY, I SAY UNTO YOU, WILL SEEK TO ENTER IN, AND SHALL NOT BE ABLE, WHEN ONCE THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE IS RISEN UP, AND HATH SHUT TO THE DOOR, AND YE BEGIN TO STAND WITHOUT, AND TO KNOCK AT THE DOOR, SAYING, LORD, LORD, OPEN UNTO US ; AND HE SHALL ANSWER AND SAY UNTO YOU, I KNOW YOU NOT WHENCE YE ARE : THEN SHALL YE BEGIN TO SAY, WE HAVE EATEN AND DRUNK IN THY PRESENCE, AND THOU HAST TAUGHT IN OUR STREETS. BUT HE SHALL SAY, I TELL YOU, I KNOW YOU NOT WHENCE YE ARE ; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YE WORKERS OF INIQUITY.—*Luke XIII. 24—27.*

“ THEN said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved ? ” This is a question of thrilling interest. The human race, in the whole of its history, may amount to a number surpassing all the calculations of our arithmetic. We read in one place of the redeemed as being a great multitude that no man can number. Yet, our Saviour treats the question as rather curious than practical. He avoids a direct answer, and calls the attention of the multitude to the fact that many will fail of heaven who confidently expect to attain to the enjoyments of that happy state. Upon this fact he founds an earnest exhortation.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” The Greek verb *agonidzesthe*, rendered *strive*, is the very term from which our word *agonize* is derived. It refers, like the word *agonize*, when applied to action, to the most strenuous kind of endeavor. The term *strait* has not here the meaning commonly attached to it, as opposed to crooked, but is analogous to the cognate term *straitened*, as opposed to broad, and easy of entrance. In the metaphorical language here employed, the gate does not represent, as has been sometimes supposed, the door of entrance upon a religious life. That is to say, an entrance through it does not signify conversion. It is a gate rather at the last end of a religious life, through which the soul is admitted into heaven. The striving enjoined, then, is a continuous life-long struggle to secure an entrance into heaven at last.

The motive by which this course of life is urged, is the fact that great numbers will seek to go in after it is too late to make any new preparations, and so will be overwhelmed with the most bitter disappointment. In our common Bible there is a period after the word *able*, so that it is ordinarily read: “Many will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.” The sense requires, however, and we have nothing else to guide us, since the punctuation of the sacred Scriptures is not inspired; the sense requires that the passage be read as in the announcement of the text: “Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye

begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." The colloquy that is here represented as taking place between the disappointed multitudes and their Lord and Saviour, is a very spirited dramatic representation of the sentiments which will characterize the parties in the last great assize. I suppose none of my hearers are in danger of being misled by it, if we frequently advert to it, as if such a conversation would literally occur between Christ and the finally unconverted. The dialogue is instinct with life not only, but it is also a most forcible and truthful representation of the expectations and the disappointment of thousands who have not the most distant idea of being rejected by their Saviour in the day of judgment.

From our text thus explained, we may justly derive the following

PROPOSITION.

GREAT NUMBERS WILL BE BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED IN
THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Of this fact no one can entertain a doubt who believes that salvation depends, in any sense, upon an earnest endeavor on the part of men to secure it.

What prospective good is there, that men are not continually losing through a want of diligent and earnest endeavor. The fairest prospects for worldly competence, for reputation, for health and long life are every day blighted by the misconduct and criminal indifference of men to their earthly interests. Is it reasonable to suppose that a different law prevails in respect to those interests that are spiritual and eternal? May not misconduct and indolence, with equal propriety, occasion spiritual bankruptcy, and blight every prospect of the immortal soul? And does not the same disease in man's nature, his misconduct and improvidence, lead him to the most pitiable delusions in regard to his everlasting well-being?

Perhaps there was no danger in regard to which our Saviour uttered more earnest warnings, than the danger of self-deception. In this respect he often addressed himself with the utmost boldness to the visible church. What a picture did he draw of the moral condition of the Pharisees, and of their future prospects. Yet they deemed themselves righteous, and despised others. To one of his early churches, that of Laodicea, he says: "*Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*" Speaking of the whole visible church, he compares them to ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five were foolish. Those that were foolish expected admittance to the marriage, and their call of Lord, Lord, open unto us,

represents, as in our text, the disappointment of a portion of the visible church, at the day of judgment. So, when he would portray the dangers of covetousness, he paints before our eyes a man so absorbed with the enlarging of his store-houses, that he exercises no care for a future world till there falls upon his ears, like a clap of thunder, the awful announcement, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" To intimate that this surprise and disappointment belonged to the whole class represented by this unhappy man, our Saviour adds: "So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

But, if there were any room for doubt in regard to the fact that many will be bitterly disappointed in the day of judgment, I think that doubt might be dispelled from every reflecting mind, by propounding a single question to all those who are here present. The question is this, and I beg of every individual to put it to himself, and to inspect his own interior convictions for an answer. Do you expect that Jesus Christ, in the last day, will say to you, "Depart from me," and that you shall bid a final farewell to hope and heaven, and sink down amid the wailings of the lost? You expect no such thing. You will be bitterly disappointed if you fail of heaven.

But, in what respect will men be disappointed in the day of judgment? Doubtless they will be disappointed in being rejected by their Judge, and in finding

themselves subject to a doom of such severity. But, as this will involve numerous mistakes in other things closely connected with their final destiny, we may say that their disappointment will extend to all these particulars. The whole ground will be covered, by considering how they will be disappointed in respect to

THE PUNISHMENT,
ITS SUBJECTS, and
THEIR OWN CONNECTION WITH IT.

The greater proportion of those who have listened to the gospel from their childhood, have reflected but little on the grounds of future punishment. They have looked upon the foretold doom of the wicked as a threat uttered for the purpose of restraint. They imagine that, in most cases, it will be withdrawn after a temporary end shall have been achieved by it. When the punishment is actually inflicted, they fancy it will be the result of a deeply excited Divine indignation. They know that God possesses infinite power, and it seems not very strange that he should be provoked, by frequent and aggravated offences, to employ it all against a certain class of incorrigible offenders. They will be vastly disappointed when they shall see that God has no passions to be gratified; that he possesses not one desire to render any of his creatures miserable to any degree, for a single moment. They will see that nothing but pure unbounded benevolence ever leads him to punish, and that he looks upon deference to his authority,

as the God of holiness, as the only possible means of securing perfect happiness for creatures. Hence the highest good of the subjects of his empire requires him to promulgate a law demanding the best possible action, and to sustain it by the most weighty possible sanctions. Hence he proposes to reward obedience with the highest gifts in his power and to punish disobedience with the deepest possible infliction of evil. When those who have only looked at the subject superficially before, shall see that God is employing the whole of his power in punishing merely to demonstrate the strength of his regard for holiness, and so to enhance the esteem for holiness throughout his universal monarchy, they will be greatly disappointed. They will be disappointed, because there will be no reasonable pretext for complaining of the severity of the punishment. If the only motive for punishing be to augment in the minds of the moral universe the dread of sin, there can be no reasonable ground for complaint that God has exerted as powerful an influence in this direction as possible. Moreover, those who have deemed the Divine judgments as expressions of personal resentment, have found it impossible to avoid the impression that the heart of the Judge must ultimately sicken at the view of inflicted torments, and his arm relax from the strange work of vengeance. But when they shall see that personal resentment has nothing to do with the judgments of God; when they shall perceive that every pang of the suffering sinner is inflicted with reluct-

ance, so far as the feelings of God towards the individual are concerned; when they shall know that all that punishment is the measure of God's disapprobation of sin, exhibited for the sole purpose of promoting the general happiness and safety of creatures by a high estimate of the worth of holiness, what possible hope will remain that the punishment will cease, or ever be relaxed? Can that love of holiness in God, which led him to punish at all, be diminished? As long as he values the happiness of the whole universe above that of the transgressor, can he cease to make an example of him? If the punishment is the measure of God's disapprobation, it will be manifest that no degree of it and no endurance can be excessive. How then will men be disappointed when they shall perceive that the grounds of punishment are a benevolent regard for the well-being of the universe, and that there can be no hope of relief as long as God's supreme regard for holiness shall continue.

But, they will be equally disappointed with the actual weight of the infliction. It is evident that this must be so when we consider the things which tend to prevent, at present, a full appreciation of the severity of future punishment. Men generally, even those that are accustomed to listen to the gospel, bestow very few of their thoughts upon a future world. In respect to the most delightful things connected with our existence in a future state, they possess very inadequate ideas compared with what might

be obtained by dwelling upon the revealed promises of God.

But there is greater difficulty in appreciating future punishment than in appreciating future blessedness. We are naturally averse to anticipating evil, just as we are fond of anticipating pleasure. In addition, then, to the mind's being drawn away from all the scenes of a future existence, by the absorbing influence of the objects that continually address our senses, they are also strongly repelled from considering a theme so unwelcome as that of future punishment. On this account, when men are in danger of great temporal suffering, we can seldom induce them to appreciate fully the impending evil. That poor inebriate who is now approaching the confines of *mania à potu*, neither believes that the danger is so imminent as it really is, or that the sufferings threatened are of such a terrific character. He is reluctant to dwell upon the magnitude of the evil. It comes upon him, therefore, as a fearful surprise, and his subsequent confession is that he had no adequate impressions of the sufferings that would be occasioned by that terrible malady. This same reluctance to dwell upon a dreadful future evil prevents men from forming such conceptions of the punishment of the lost, as they would form, if the theme were of a more agreeable nature.

There is another difficulty arising from the want of media by which to convey a full impression of the sufferings of the lost to our minds. Our Saviour and

his apostles have resorted to a selection of images of such a character as will convey the idea of the intensest possible sufferings. You know the doom of the lost is compared to being cast into a furnace of flaming fire; into a lake of fire and burning sulphur; and the expressions of suffering are marked by wailing, by gnawing the tongue for pain, and by gnashing of the teeth. If these were to be understood in a barely literal sense, as some of our old divines have maintained, it would be more tolerable and more conceivable while in our present state. But, the variety of the images employed forbids the idea that a literal description is intended, while the strength of these representations indicates that the writers employed the boldest figures afforded by human language just because no description could be adequate to impart an impression equal to what would be found to be the reality. Then, again, all our experience of suffering gives no absolute impression of unmingled misery. In all our sufferings in this world there are mitigations, and room is left for the mind to conceive how our misery might be aggravated without any enlargement of our capacity. But when God shall inflict the final judgment the cup of misery will overflow. Not the least mitigation will be granted, and men will be bitterly disappointed with the severity of the infliction.

Equally bitter will be the disappointment of men in respect to the sort of moral esteem in which the lost will be held. Very few, if any, regard them-

selves as utterly abandoned of God. The greater part, even of those that have the least reason for pretending that they serve God, indulge the fond hope that some portion of their conduct, and some traits of their character, meet the Divine approbation. How deep and bitter will be their disappointment when they shall perceive that Christ denies the least acquaintance with them as his friends. The evil of meeting God's disapprobation must seem to them a greater evil than they had ever supposed. When they shall be aroused to the contemplation of the majesty, and purity, and power of God, and of the infinite weight of his moral character, how overwhelming will be the thought that he looks upon them, and will forever look upon them with unmingled disapprobation? If they turn their attention to other holy beings, to angels and redeemed men, they will all be found to concur with their Maker in his perfect moral disapprobation. If they look to sinful beings for sympathy, alas! they, too, are so convinced by the disclosures of the judgment as to be compelled to assent to the justice of the doom of sinners. They have but one resource left. They must retire within the sanctuary of their own bosoms and call up all their inward self-respect, and sustain themselves by the reflection that they yet possess virtues of intrinsic worth. But here they are met by the law of God, which demanded supreme affection for their Maker, and a full purpose to obey and serve him. They perceive at once that their lives were spent in perfect disobedience to this rea-

sonable requirement. They reflect upon the merciful provisions of their Saviour only to see that they always slighted them. They think of their familiarity with Christian institutions, and begin to say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;" but the thought that they always slighted his calls, and neglected to sympathize with his suffering cause, fills them with shame. Self-respect is gone. And when every mouth is stopped, and the whole world has become guilty before God, they sink down under the unmingled disapprobation of God, and holy beings, and wicked men, and fallen angels, and themselves. How bitter the disappointment to those who have been accustomed to self-flattery and the approbation of friends, and the hope of the Divine favor!

Nor will there be less of disappointment in relation to the subjects of this punishment. There is scarcely anything in which men are more liable to form an erroneous judgment than in their estimate of character. Those with whom we have to do possess great facility for deceiving us because we cannot see the motives by which they are governed. Just in proportion as they are wicked, too, they are strongly tempted to deceive. But, besides these tendencies to a false estimate of character, we are liable to be misled by false standards of character and by the bias of our personal friendships. These influences alone must lay a foundation for innumerable instances of surprise and disappointment in regard to the persons

that shall be involved in the miseries of the last judgment.

But, besides all this, Christianity has introduced a new rule on which the destiny of men is decided, and one, too, to which the greater part of men give no marked attention. The foundation of a new character is laid in the soul by faith in the Redeemer. Justification, acceptance with God, is gratuitous to those who possess this faith. Hence, men will be surprised to find some, whose character during the greater part of life had been bad, entering heaven with their white robe, and golden harp, and crown of immortal glory. Who of those that found their hopes of heaven upon their own personal righteousness will not be disappointed and filled with wonder to see the dying malefactor, and others like him, who were saved by pleading, in faith, for Christ's kind regard in the last hour? On the contrary, many of those who were amiable, circumspect, and lovely, will prove at last, like the young man that Jesus saw and loved, to have had a decided preference for the world over the cross-bearing, and service, and hope of Christ. They were received in the best circles on earth, and adorned all the walks of private life; and yet, as they preferred the world and its favor to the Saviour, he will say to them, "I never knew you." Many, also, who have graced high stations, and been esteemed the benefactors of mankind, illuminating the walks of literature by the efforts of their genius, or blessing their country by their statesmanship, or their uncor-

rupt administration of justice will be found to have sought nothing higher than the praise of men. To such, as they have had their reward, Christ will say, "I never knew you, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity."

Many creditable professors of religion, too, will, all unexpectedly both to themselves and others, be weighed in the balance and found wanting in the day of trial. They were regular in their attendance upon the sanctuary. They sat down at the communion-table with the people of God. Their voices were heard in the songs of Zion and in solemn prayer. They bestowed their goods to feed the poor. They had the confidence of their pastor and their brethren. None were so uncharitable as to deny them the Christian name. They even felt a strong assurance that they were sincere disciples of the Lord Jesus. But their friends, their pastor, their brethren were all mistaken. They were only beautiful without, like the tasteful whited sepulchre. None but God saw the radical defect of their character. The bias of selfishness led them to misjudge in regard to themselves. A deceived heart had influenced them; and like many of old, they held fast deceits. But, now, what disappointment is produced when the veil is rent away, and the heart-searching Judge exposes their character and exclaims, "I know you not!" Nor will disappointment in the church be limited to its private members. Those officers that have visited the sick and conducted often the devotions of the people of

God, and distributed the emblems of the Saviour's body and blood will be found to have among their company some whose characters have been mistaken by all except him who searches the heart. No elevation of office or sacredness of function can secure men against the liability to deceive both themselves and others. The minister of Christ may fail of heaven. Not merely the manifestly proud ecclesiastic that renders God's work a sinecure, and makes a gain of his poor flock. But the earnest, orthodox, fervid, and effective preacher may disappoint not only the church, but the world and himself by being found at last among the lost. Paul, with all his fidelity, was afraid lest he should prove a castaway. It was not with him a mere profession of modesty and humility. He was afraid because there was actual danger. The minister of Christ cannot be saved by virtue of his office. He must have a higher distinction—that of a Christian. He may preach the veritable gospel. He may be plain, and pungent, and fearless in the proclamation of the truth, and yet it is clearly supposable that he may be destitute of saving trust in the Redeemer. For aught that can assure us to the contrary, in his office or in the strain of his present discourse, he that now addresses you may at last be a castaway, and illustrate the truth of his doctrine by going away in sorrow and despair from his Saviour, to take up his abode where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

But, if many will be disappointed, as spectators of

the weight of the infliction that shall fall upon the lost, and as observers of the subjects of such a doom, much more bitter will be their disappointment from finding themselves involved in it. In this, as much as in any one thing, is found the deceitfulness of sin. The perpetrator flatters himself that he shall evade the legitimate consequences. The same causes operate as in the case of offenders against human laws. Criminals know that others pursuing their career meet with the penalty of the law, and that, sooner or later, those who indulge in a course of crime will be brought to punishment, yet they flatter themselves that *they* shall escape. But a large class of transgressors of God's law flatter themselves with a double hope of salvation. They intend, in the first place, not to deserve to be cast off from Christ. They know, perhaps, that the Saviour has taught that salvation is to be attained by gratuitous pardon alone, and pardon can be secured only by such a trust in Christ as will lead the soul to consecrate all its energies to the actual service of its Redeemer. They know that Christianity makes a neglect of the Saviour perfectly fatal to their eternal interests; that if they confess Christ, and so attach themselves to him as to be willing to suffer shame for his name, then he will confess them before his Father and the holy angels, and, if they are ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of them. Still, they do not meditate deeply upon this plan of gratuitous salvation; they hope that their sins will not prove such grave offences as to require their rejection by

the Judge. When forced by their convictions of personal ill-desert to abandon all hope on this ground, they cherish a confident expectation that they shall yet submit to Christ, and accept his overtures of mercy. Because the gospel-offers continue to be made, and many have been known to accept of them in their last days, they feel certain that they shall become Christians before they die. If a painful alarm come over them, lest they should fail to comply with the invitations of Christ, they resolve that they *will* comply. They are fully determined not to be lost. But at length death comes as a thief in the night. They are borne, with surprise and astonishment, into the presence of Christ, the omniscient Judge of quick and dead. They are disappointed, bitterly disappointed to find themselves disowned, condemned, rejected, and their portion assigned them where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. They intended not to be lost. They scarcely considered what it was, just because they purposed to avoid it. They deemed it needless to harrow up their feelings with terrific images of the world of woe, since they should certainly escape it. But their fear has come suddenly, and their destruction as a whirlwind.

It seems to me that there can be scarcely anything more bitter in the doom of the lost than the disappointment that shall attend it. I know of no incident taken from life that illustrates more fully this point than one connected with our revolutionary struggle, in a scene described by a popular American writer. It

is not necessary to quote the language of the author. It was the account of an execution of one of the men called Tories. He had been arrested by a military company. It was proved clearly that he had been lending his influence to aid the enemy. The captain and the greater part of the company had been acquainted with him. Indeed, he was one of their old neighbors and personal friends. When he was condemned by a summary process, the leader of the band ordered his execution. The prisoner could not believe that his old neighbor and acquaintance would really allow him to be executed. He reminded him of their former acquaintance, and of the fact that no personal ill-will had ever existed between them. The captain and his friends alleged that it was a great aggravation of his offences, that he had jeoparded the lives and interests of those against whom he had no personal resentments to gratify. Preparations were made for the execution. Still, the prisoner would not admit, for a moment, that anything more could be intended than seriously to operate upon his fears. He remonstrated again, and made fair promises. They had no effect. The preparations still went forward. At length, he was lifted up and suspended by the neck. Still he would not believe. Seizing the rope, he raised himself and remained suspended by the strength of his arms. Again he pleaded with the officer, reminding him of their former acquaintance. The captain assured him that he was not brought to such a doom by anything connected with that acquaintance, but

only by betraying his country and his friends, and ordered the company to move and leave him to his fate. He saw them move away, and then, for the first time, flashed upon his mind his real situation. With a look of unutterable and bitter disappointment, he gave one shriek of despair, and relaxed the grasp of his hands and sunk down into the horrid struggle of strangulation. Thus, will men be disappointed in their ultimate doom, who' never plead earnestly with their Saviour till they cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," and hear the voice of their Judge, saying, "I know you not; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

To apply this subject, allow me to say that there is one class of persons, numerous in the whole Christian community, and I am afraid a good many of my present hearers belong to it, who do not feel any serious apprehension in regard to a future judgment. They neglect the whole subject, and have settled a single principle by which they are to be governed in relation to their future and eternal interests. They think they are too good to be lost. My dear friends, your neglect to ponder the subject exerts no possible influence to change the principles of God's administration. If no man can be saved on a plea of personal goodness, but only by the mercy of God through faith in Christ's offering of himself as a sacrifice for our sins, then your reliance upon your general character, and your neglect of the special provisions of Christianity, can only serve to fill you with bitter disappointment at last. If you think the interests of the

soul will be secured without attention and effort, you are not more likely to be right than those are who should expect to see the fruits of industry in their hands, and themselves prepared to enjoy them, without toil or care, or self-discipline. If you think it degrading to beg for mercy in the name of Christ when it can be obtained, you will yet see the time when you shall cry to him, with a strong and bitter cry, and meet with no other response than "I know you not; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

But, here is a band of youth of both sexes, the sons and daughters of pious parents. They fully intend to enter the kingdom of heaven. They will scarcely allow the thought to cross their minds that they may see their parents in white robes, with palms and harps and crowns following in their Saviour's train, and they themselves cast out. Yet disappointment, remember, characterizes the condition of the lost. If you should witness such a scene, and then cry to your Saviour, "Lord, Lord, open to us," you might plead all your interesting relations to the church, and your Saviour, and the means of grace, and plead in vain. You might say, "Lord, open to us. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," and the answer would be, "I know you not." You might say, "We have sat in thy sanctuary, our voices have uttered the songs of Zion." "I know you not," is still the answer. "But, Lord, we have been baptized into thy holy name. We have knelt at the family altar, when the sacrifice of prayer and praise

was offered. We were the objects of parental solicitude and prayer; our parents blessed us with their dying lips. They have entered heaven. We always intended to join them in that happy world. There they are; we see their blessed countenances, and hear the sweet voices that taught our infant lips to pray. Lord, Lord, open unto us." The declaration, "I know you not," is again reiterated, and you sink down in a disappointment, the bitterness of which is aggravated in proportion to the strength of your former anticipations.

But here is another group, who have not only been taught by pious parents and faithful pastors, but who have been often brought by the Spirit's influence to the threshold of the church invisible. You intend, by all means, not to be cast off at last. You have treasured up many a faithful warning. You have carried the message of God to your chamber, and sometimes knelt down and prayed for strength to take up your cross and follow your Saviour. But you were not quite ready. You desired your husband, your wife, or some dear friend, to accompany you. You deferred it till the next communion-season should recur. The time came; you were not ready. When you saw the emblems of your Saviour's body and blood pass, you seemed to see your wounded and slighted Redeemer cast towards you an aggrieved and reproving look. Your soul was filled with tenderness; your tears flowed, and you resolved solemnly before God, that the next communion-season should

find you confessing your Saviour before men, and saying, "If I perish, I perish—'Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do.'" The next communion-season arrived, and you had found—in your ingenuity—another plausible pretext for delay. You thought, however, that you could not fail. Such purposes and emotions must ripen into a genuine conversion. But, alas! while you are lingering, death calls. You come to the door of heaven with the cry "Lord, Lord, open unto us." You hear no answer. Can we be mistaken? You knock loudly at the door, and call with a louder voice, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Then the response falls on your ears, "I know you not." You will not receive it. You look your companions in the face, and ask, can it be possible that, while we were waiting for one another, as seeking for a more convenient time, and more favorable circumstances, it was not much the same thing as if we had taken up our cross, and followed Christ. We will call yet again: "Lord, did we not receive thy solemn admonitions, and go home from the sanctuary and pray for strength to do our duty? Did not the emblems of thy body and blood pass close by us? Did we not then say, Oh, that we might die the death of the righteous, and that our last end might be like his? Did we not solemnly promise that, ere another such season should arrive, we would take up our cross, begin thy service frankly and openly, and at the very next opportunity confess thee in thine ordi-

nances, and solemnly say in the assembly of thy people:—

‘ Here, in thy courts, I leave my vow,
And thy rich grace record ;
Witness ! ye saints that hear me now,
If I forsake the Lord ?’

“ Must we now be cast off, just because we did not give ourselves to thee, when perhaps we should have done so, if our life had been spared only a few days longer ?” The same answer is returned, “ I know you not.”

But here is a company of professed disciples, that have just learned that they resemble the foolish virgins who took their lamps, but took no oil with them. They had exhibited a glare of external piety, but they never understood what was meant by peace and joy in believing. They were unacquainted with that inward faith which enables the soul to contemplate Christ and heavenly things as such interesting and sure realities that they derive from them their chief happiness. They cannot believe that they shall be disappointed. When they are denied a ready admittance, they exclaim, “ Lord ! we have eaten and drunk in thy presence ; we have entered into solemn covenant with thy people ; we have befriended thy ministers ; we sometimes fancied that we did even more than our part, in ameliorating the condition of our sinful race. Must all this pass for nothing ? Many are saved that have not done as much good as

we have. 'Lord, Lord, open unto us!' " Still, the answer is, "I know you not; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity!"

My beloved friends, you and I, and every one of us, shall surely see that day of trial, when all the unconverted shall experience the most bitter disappointment. Let me counsel you, then, in the name of my Master, to do the only thing which can protect you from a just application of that sentence which shall fall like a clap of thunder upon the ears of all the unconverted: "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Apply, at once, to your Saviour for mercy. Say to him, "Save, Lord, or I perish." Listen to his call; "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and say, "Yes, blessed Saviour, I come to thee, now. I ask thee in the language of Saul, the subdued persecutor, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Any cross which thou wilt lay upon me I bear for thy sake. From this moment I throw away all delays. Give me thy Spirit of grace to guide me. Enstamp thine image on my soul, and, through thy grace assisting, I am and will be thine forever."

SERMON II.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN JUSTICE AND MERCY—A NEW YEAR'S DISCOURSE.

HE SPAKE ALSO THIS PARABLE: A CERTAIN MAN HAD A FIG-TREE PLANTED IN HIS VINEYARD; AND HE CAME AND SOUGHT FRUIT THEREON AND FOUND NONE. THEN SAID HE UNTO THE DRESSER OF HIS VINEYARD, BEHOLD, THESE THREE YEARS I COME SEEKING FRUIT ON THIS FIG-TREE AND FIND NONE: CUT IT DOWN: WHY CUMBERETH IT THE GROUND? AND HE ANSWERING, SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, LET IT ALONE THIS YEAR ALSO, TILL I SHALL DIG ABOUT IT AND DUNG IT: AND IF IT BEAR FRUIT, WELL: AND IF NOT, THEN, AFTER THAT THOU SHALT CUT IT DOWN.—*Luke XIII.* 6—9.

OUR Saviour's style of preaching is peculiar. He abounds in metaphor and similitude. His imagery is mainly derived from objects that are well known to the people at large, and as they are an agricultural community, he alludes freely to those things which are closely connected with fields, and vineyards, and gardens, and the arts of husbandry. These peculiarities of style render his preaching both intelligible to the mass, and highly attractive to all. There is also a peculiar pertinency in his discourses. On one occasion, when he addressed the people, it is re-

marked by the inspired historian that the Scribes and Pharisees perceived that he spake of them. It is manifest that it must have been equally clear to his auditors when he uttered the words of our text that he intended a direct application to themselves. The Jewish people were well represented by such a tree, thus planted out in a vineyard, in circumstances most favorable to the production of fruit. God has given them distinguished advantages. He has waited for a long period to see the happy results of his care and culture. No suitable fruits of holiness appear. Justice demands their destruction. Mercy interposes and pleads for delay, but pleads with an express promise to submit to the fatal stroke upon her favored people, without remonstrance, if they be not soon recovered from their sins. Such was the primary application of this parable.

It will be readily perceived, however, that principles are here involved which are perfectly applicable to a large class of individuals. Probably, many such are now before me. The parable draws our attention to a single tree. From this I take the hint to address myself to an individual. Allow me, then, my friend, to single you out by a description of your character and state, and then to call your attention to the struggle which is now going on between Justice and Mercy in relation to your present position.

God has given you distinguished privileges. Your lot has been cast in a favored nation. The highest degree of civil freedom has been secured to you.

You command your own time; you choose your own profession; and in a greater degree than the citizens of any other country in the whole world, you give shape and character to your worldly fortune. You enjoy the most perfect religious liberty. You are not subjected to a priesthood who are interested in binding you in the chains of superstition, and in claiming the power of absolution from sin, and consequently, the power of withholding it, and leaving you to perish eternally. On the contrary, your religious teachers and pastors claim only to be helpers of your faith, and urgently commend to your study the word of God, and beg of you to search the Scriptures daily, and to see whether the things which they teach are so, that your faith may stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. You are descended from a religious ancestry. The good habits engendered by the piety of your progenitors have been transmitted in some degree to yourself. These influences have imparted sentiments of respect for the Sabbath, for the gospel, for the public worship of God. They have brought your feet this morning within the precincts of the sanctuary. You have enjoyed liberal advantages for obtaining Christian instruction. It may be that the Sunday-school, or even the rich advantages of the catechismal instruction of pious parents, have exerted their influence in enlightening your understanding, and in quickening your conscience. But, whether you have enjoyed all these advantages or only a considerable

proportion of them, you are a highly favored person. You are like a fig-tree which a certain man planted in his vineyard.

Time, also, has been allowed you to make reasonable returns to God of gratitude and holy obedience. Instruction has been imparted; various and salutary providential discipline has been administered; a season, sufficiently long to warrant the most happy results, has passed. God has sought for fruit. He has found none. Another period has elapsed. The means of grace have been multiplied. Instruction has distilled like the dew. The divine Spirit has come upon you like the warm breath of summer. God comes again seeking fruit and finds none. Yet forbearance is manifested. Another year has elapsed. God has multiplied the appliances of his grace. The calls of the gospel have sounded through all the chambers of your soul. Conscience has been loud in her remonstrances. Warnings have sometimes created great apprehensions lest abused mercies should turn to vengeance. Others have been converted; you are left. Some who slighted the overtures of grace have been cut down during the past year. The year has come to its close. God approaches you, my unconverted friend, seeking fruit this morning. He finds none.

One result, which was reasonably to have been expected long since, is that you should renounce this world as your portion, and consecrate yourself entirely to God. No such fruit is discoverable. You

still cling to earthly things as your highest means of happiness. You have never declared the Lord to be your portion; you have never maintained for one day, nor one hour, nor one moment, the sentiment expressed by an apostle: "I will glory in nothing save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world." You have made no efforts to promote the spiritual interests of your fellow-men. You have made no faithful offers of the gospel to your impenitent friends. Your dearest kindred have been left by you to the same unbroken slumber in sin as if you had not possessed the means of influencing them. You have not uttered one warning, proffered one invitation of mercy, breathed one prayer for them, or evinced the least anxiety for their salvation. In this respect you have manifested none of the fruits of holiness. Nor have you done anything to cause your Saviour's name to be honored, or to promote the spiritual well-being of his church. God comes seeking fruit and finds none—absolutely none at all.

Nor are you merely destitute of fruit, but being so, you exert a baneful influence. The tree in the parable cumbered the ground; or as the original phrase means, rendered the ground sterile; did positive harm. Thus, have you diffused your sentiments of worldliness, and encouraged others in sin by your example of delay, if not even by an openly wicked conduct. Now, my friend, have I described your state? Have you enjoyed great advantages? Have you re-

ceived from the hand of your heavenly Father a thousand mercies, felt the influence of Christian institutions and Christian instruction, and been the subject of great forbearance? Has God borne long with you, and called you often, and come seeking fruit; and now when this year has just drawn to a close, must it be said that you yield absolutely no fruit; but that, on the contrary, you are exerting an influence positively hostile to piety? Be assured, then, justice demands that you should be cut down. Yet mercy pleads for delay. You are the object of a deeply interesting struggle.

I assume here, that it is of no consequence, in the application of this parable, to determine whether the certain man who said "cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground," represents God the Father, or whether the dresser of the vineyard who pleads for delay, means Christ. It is enough to say that God, as one that vindicates his holy law, demands your instant punishment, and yet, as a matter of forbearance and mercy, he finds reason for delay, in the desire that you may be brought to repentance. The struggle is in the same bosom, and is analogous to that sometimes experienced by a just and benevolent human being, who is at the same time urged by the claims of law and order to inflict deserved punishment, and yet is impelled by the desire of reforming and saving, to delay the stroke of justice. But, the thought will be clothed with a peculiar dramatic interest, if you will contemplate the struggle, which is a real one, under a *per-*

sonification of justice and mercy, and an ardent conflict between them.

Suppose, then, that your senses are locked up from all commerce with worldly objects. You lie in one of those rapt states into which the ancient prophets were wont to be thrown when God presented his truth to them, in the most vivid manner. Your attention is directed to the heavens. You perceive, descending towards the earth, two bright angelic beings, one following the other at a distance. The foremost alights and stands by your side. The form is masculine and gigantic. He is girt with brilliant steel armor, and bears in his right hand a sword of terrific brightness. An expression of mingled purity and sternness beams from his countenance. He surveys you attentively, and his very look arouses your slumbering conscience, and assures you, beyond the possibility of mistake, that it is Justice come down on purpose to cut you in sunder and appoint you your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. The sword is slowly, and calmly lifted up. The compressed lips and flashing eye declare his determined purpose. You lie helpless and speechless at his feet. At this moment, the being whom you had seen following Justice at a distance, alights by his side, and seizes the blade and draws it away from its threatening posture. Her whole action is marked by an indescribable sweetness. The pure drapery of heaven floats around her form. Her countenance is full of benevolence and compassion. Her lips quiver with emotion, and tears trickle down her

cheek. Justice exclaims, "Let me alone; I will strike; I will cut him down. Law has been outraged long enough. Blessings bought with blood have been despised. The Saviour's entreaties have been basely slighted, and you, yourself, have fallen into contempt, as if you possessed no other quality than an amiable weakness, and could not withdraw and leave the sinner to his deserved doom." "Hold, Justice! I have, in my hand, a pardon for that offender. I implore you to spare him, till he be further treated with. Perhaps he may be brought to repentance. Then a soul shall be saved from death. Then, the heavenly harps shall all be tuned anew. Then the glorious Saviour shall have another bright gem in his crown, and even you, yourself shall be satisfied. Spare him for the sake of the good that shall follow." "The good that shall follow," rejoins the stern executioner; "the good that shall follow! Evil, and only evil has been the consequence of all former delay. His example of deliberately preferring earthly things to the things that are above, has been most baneful. His deliberate slighting of the overtures of grace has emboldened hundreds in the same neglect. Many a giddy youth is this day deferring repentance because he has seemed to do it with impunity; because forbearance has been so long protracted in this instance. Others shall be brought to feel salutary apprehension by a prompt execution in this instance. It is a necessary procedure. He will neither enter the kingdom of heaven himself, nor suffer those that were entering to go in. He stands

like a barren fig-tree in a vineyard, destroying the fertility of lands that had else produced the choicest fruit; let me cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?" "Yet," says Mercy, "more culture may secure the expected fruit. Let me employ the appropriate means for securing a sincere repentance. Let truth be made to shine into that dark heart. Let his understanding be more thoroughly convinced. Let conscience be appealed to. Let apprehension be awakened. Let the love of God, and the bleeding compassion of Christ, be brought before him. Perhaps he may repent; there is, at least, a possibility that the lost soul may be recovered."

"Possibility!" cries Justice; "and do you expect me to delay execution for the hundredth time because there is a bare possibility of repentance? What are the probabilities? Have not the means of grace all been exhausted on this undeserving subject? He has been instructed till he knows all the leading truths of the gospel. For a long time he has not depended upon the presence of the living teacher to make the appeals of religion to his heart. The great truths of revelation have taken up their residence in his soul. When he is alone amid his usual avocations, in his chamber, or on his bed by night, these truths speak to his heart and awaken his conscience. He has listened to preaching till it has lost its effect. Instruction falls upon him like dew on a rock. Exhortation he regards as a weak attempt to work upon his feelings; an attempt which he has too much ex-

perience to be influenced by. Warnings he has learned to esteem as threatenings used for effect; threatenings that will not, at the most, be executed speedily. He has been chastened in vain. Sickness, and bereavement by death, have again and again clad his soul with sackcloth, and compelled him to weep over the emptiness and uncertainty of earthly good. Yet he clings to his remaining idols. Sorrows have been removed again, and prosperity, like the smile of God, has beamed upon him. Yet he has only been glad. Not one return of heartfelt thankfulness has been made, nor has he once asked, 'Where is God, my Maker, who giveth me songs in the night?'

"Christ has called him a hundred times by his Holy Spirit, and all in vain. He has come to his door and knocked. No answer. The Saviour has waited. He has stood there all night. His head has been wet with the dews, and his locks with the chilly drops. The ungrateful soul would not arise and let his Saviour in. No, his bands are made strong; his heart is growing more callous. He holds a relation to the assaults of gospel influence, such as Leviathan held to his enemies, when it was said, 'His heart is as firm as a stone, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold; the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble; he laughed at the shaking of a spear.'

And yet, you speak of the possibility that such an one will repent under an application of the same means."

"But, O," says Mercy, "spare him but a little longer; one year more, one short year; allow him one more good opportunity for making his peace with God."

"No," says Justice, "he has been spared too long already. He uses delay only to harden himself. This very method of procedure to which you would persuade me, aggravates the same difficulty in the case of others. Besides, he is only learning from forbearance to defy me, and treat you with contempt. Let me alone; my hand has taken hold on judgment." So saying, he wrenches the blade from the hand of Mercy and lifts it high in air, and the fatal stroke is just ready to descend. Mercy rushes between him and the stroke, and seizing his arm exclaims, "Yet hear but one plea more. Spare him for a single year, only one year more. Then all my importunity shall end. If repentance does not ensue during this year, then, after that thou shalt cut him down. I will interpose no obstacles. I shall consider that longer delay will impede my work in regard to more hopeful subjects. If, then, you come and lift up your sword over him, as now, I promise to be silent. I will not cast one look towards him. I will sit down veiled at your feet, and when the blow descends, and I hear his death-groan, I will say, Amen! And when I hear him shriek and wail as he shall fall down by the sides of the pit, I will calmly say, Justice is

right; God is good; the sinner has destroyed himself; he has scorned, and he alone must bear it.”

The countenance of Justice relaxes. He accepts the petition. The conference breaks up, and you are spared still to be pursued with offers of pardon and urgent motives to repentance. My unconverted friend, do you not know that such a struggle has existed for a long time in relation to you? The fact that you have not been thrown into such a state, and seen such a vision, makes no difference in regard to the reality of the conflict. The condemnatory sentence of God's law rests upon you. There are strong reasons for a prompt execution. Yet, up to the present moment, the pleadings of Divine compassion have secured delay. The spiritual privileges of another year are exhausted. Its last Sabbath is past. Fifty-two of these hallowed seasons have been secured for you by the Divine forbearance. The calls of grace have been multiplied and various. How many clear lessons of instruction have come into your understanding! How many plain admonitions have visited your conscience! How many solemn appeals have been made to your heart? Mercies have been multiplied; various chastisements have been mingled with them. The Spirit of God has called. Yet you are unconverted. You bear no fruit. Why has all this forbearance been exercised? Not that you may be profitable to God. He can fill his kingdom with joyful subjects, and his courts with eternal praise, without your aid. He has not for-

borne with you, because his church cannot go forward without your help. He can raise up converts and useful defenders of his religion from men in less favored conditions. When the Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, God turned to the Gentiles, and raised up a new class of defenders and propagators of his religion. So now he can pass you by, and call that foolish scoffer, and make him a thoughtful man and a serious Christian. He can leave you in your respectability and your pride, and take that poor vagrant, whose mind is obscured by squalid poverty and want of early culture, and make him a subject of grace, and adorn his soul with learning, and make it fragrant with piety, and honor him as the instrument of promoting his cause. He bears with you only for your good. He bears with you because he would secure your repentance and consequent happiness. He sees the fearfulness of your doom if the sword of justice be once permitted to fall. To cut off hope forever is fearful. He knows that the pangs of impenitent remorse are unutterable; that the worm that dieth not, and the level lake that burneth are terrific, and that despair eternal, is an evil far, far beyond all your most awful anticipations. He is reluctant to surrender you to such a doom; and he is saying now of you, as he said of his people of old, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim; how shall I deliver thee, Israel? My heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." He knows also the full advantages of your being re-

covered from that lost estate by a genuine conversion. He appreciates the advantages to your own happiness, of your being turned to God. He knows that there is peace and joy in believing in Christ; that a quiet conscience is worth more than heaps of gold and silver, and that gushes of grateful joy spring from a trustful reliance on a Saviour's merits. He sees the value of a triumphant Christian death; an acquittal at the judgment-seat; a robe of innocence, a palm of victory, a crown of glory, and a golden harp, and a companionship with the blest, and a seat with Christ on his throne. He cannot bear that you should lose all this; lose it, too, when it can be had for nothing but the mere willingness to accept it.

Are you not aware, my dear friend, that there is an unspeakable aggravation of guilt, in neglecting opportunities thus secured by the pleading of Divine forbearance? Men are deceived respecting degrees of guilt, by associating it with crime. Guilt, as connected with overt action, and especially with violence and bloodshed, appeals to our passions, and makes a strong impression. Yet a little reflection may convince any one, that the greater degrees of guilt are incurred when the soul is in the most calm and deliberate state.

To make clear the distinction here referred to, let me state a supposed case. A man of depraved character, in the gratification of a revengeful spirit, has wantonly destroyed the life of one of your dearest friends. He is arrested, and condemned. The day

of his execution is appointed. Before the fatal period arrives, your feelings of indignation are cooled, your heart sickens at the thought of such a punishment, with all its eternal consequences. You seek generously to secure the pardon of the offender. Suppose, now, you find that there are two difficulties in the way; one in the government, and one in the continued revengeful feelings of the condemned man. Law will be relaxed, and government will lose its restraining power, if something be not done for its protection. You devise a scheme by which the law may be honored, but it is a scheme which will cost you personal sufferings that are nearly equivalent to death itself. Your compassion and benevolence have carried you so far, however, that you have met and endured the suffering. But one thing now remains to be done, to secure the liberation of the offender. He must be willing to accept the pardon as your gift thus purchased. His cheerful, heartfelt, grateful acceptance of the pardon shall be accounted as a sentiment which involves all the principles of a thorough reformation. You go to his prison and bear the offer of pardon in your hand. He is reading a tale of fiction, and will not stop to listen to you, beyond the bare noticing of the facts, and admitting their truth. The day of execution comes, and you plead that it may be delayed for a year. Your request is granted. Now you visit him every day. You find him at different times engaged in various occupations. At one time he is engaged in lucrative labor, and shows you his gains. At an-

other time, he is making himself merry with a friend that has been permitted to visit him. He listens to your proposals with more attention than formerly, but defers compliance. The time of execution draws near. Again you plead for delay, and delay is granted. After repeated reprieves of this kind, he begins to flatter himself that the delay of justice will be indefinite. The more assiduous you become, the more does he acquire confidence to slight your offers. If you talk of justice, he smiles at the thought that you should hope to alarm his fears, after all that has passed. You speak of compassion, and kindness, and suffering on his behalf, and he wonders that you should think he possesses such a woman's heart, as to be subdued by tears. Now do you not perceive that the degree of guilt, in persisting in that revengeful feeling, unrelaxed, is greater, and implies more depravity, than the original crime. The stormy temptation of the violent passion has subsided, and yet he will not surrender the wicked principle that governed him. On the contrary, he has added to it a perpetual contempt of justice, and the deliberate insult of mercy and forbearance. He may be less addicted to crime, but his guilt has gone on gaining power, like an increasing river, flowing more smoothly and calmly, as it distances its native hills, but moving with a vastly augmented volume, and increased though quiet vigor of current.

I am aware that this representation may seem hard, but, my fellow-traveller to the bar of God, you must

allow me to be plain with you. As a transgressor of the Divine law, you are justly exposed to be cast off from the Divine favor, forever. But your guilt lies mainly in your calm neglect of the overtures of mercy. The blood of Christ is by you virtually cast contempt on. Justice is despised. Mercy is insulted; and the more so by reason of the long-protracted forbearance of God. But this course is as rash and hazardous as it is sinful. You are employing all the moral powers that God has given you in tempting Justice to cut you down. You have no assurance of another hour's delay. Mercy may have pleaded that you should be spared this year only. She may have stipulated to interpose no further. She may be turning away and veiling her face this very hour, knowing that Justice is about to strike—that you will utter one convulsive sob, and then wail among the lost. When Mercy will thus withdraw you know not. God intends that you shall feel all the influence of a total uncertainty with respect to the time. Some who were warned at the beginning of the last year have fallen in their sins. You can give no reason why Justice has not cut you down. I remember to have witnessed an instance in which this thought was overwhelming. I met a friend of about forty years of age. He was pale and trembling, and a tear glistened in his eye. "What is the matter, my friend?" I asked. "O," said he, "I have just heard of the death of a nephew of about eighteen years old. He was a dissolute and profane young man, and has been sud-

denly cut down in his sins. But what affects me most is the reflection that at his age I was like him. If I had died then thus suddenly I should have been now in hell."

Let me say in conclusion, my beloved friend, you have stood in jeopardy long enough. Beware of that uplifted sword of Justice. Trust not to coming years. "Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation." God has not promised to spare you longer. You are not certain that you shall see the end of this year. Mercy may have pleaded for forbearance in your case only for a stipulated period. This may be the last Sabbath of that period; this may be the last gospel invitation up to the point of time of which it has been said, after that thou shalt cut it down. Certain it is that I am not authorized to offer you salvation for one hour beyond the present. Remember, that now you are invited to come to your Saviour and receive a full and free pardon. You may go quietly away from this sanctuary this morning, and there shall be nothing in your conduct or appearance to attract attention. No man may be able to say, see how he stifles conviction, and resists the Holy Spirit—but, men may say of you before another warning shall fall upon your ear—

"His quivering lip hangs feebly down,
His pulse is faint and few,
Then, speechless with a doleful groan;
He bids the world adieu.

“ But, oh, the soul that never dies !
Soon as it leaves its clay,
Ye thoughts pursue it where it flies,
And track its wondrous way.

“ Up to the courts where angels dwell
It mounts and triumphs there,
Or devils plunge it down to hell,
In infinite despair.”

SERMON III.

THE IMPETRATION OF MERCY; OR, THE BLIND BEGGAR.

AND THEY CAME TO JERICHO: AND AS HE WENT OUT OF JERICHO, WITH HIS DISCIPLES, AND A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE, BLIND BARTIMEUS, THE SON OF TIMEUS, SAT BY THE HIGHWAY SIDE, BEGGING. AND WHEN HE HEARD THAT IT WAS JESUS OF NAZARETH, HE BEGAN TO CRY OUT, AND SAY, JESUS, THOU SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME. AND MANY CHARGED HIM THAT HE SHOULD HOLD HIS PEACE; BUT HE CRIED THE MORE A GREAT DEAL, THOU SON OF DAVID HAVE MERCY ON ME. AND JESUS STOOD STILL, AND COMMANDED HIM TO BE CALLED; AND THEY CALL THE BLIND MAN, SAYING UNTO HIM, BE OF GOOD COMFORT, RISE; HE CALLETH THEE. AND HE, CASTING AWAY HIS GARMENT, ROSE, AND CAME TO JESUS. AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHAT WILT THOU THAT I SHOULD DO UNTO THEE? THE BLIND MAN SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, THAT I MIGHT RECEIVE MY SIGHT. AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, GO THY WAY; THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE. AND IMMEDIATELY HE RECEIVED HIS SIGHT AND FOLLOWED JESUS IN THE WAY.—*Mark* x. 46—52.

THE wisdom of our Saviour is strikingly exemplified in his accomplishing a great variety of momentous results by a single act. The miracle recorded in our text subserves a highly useful end in evincing the Divine authority of the mission of Christ. . Besides this main design, however, it accomplished several other important objects. It relieved extreme suffering, and

elicited gratitude and praise to God. Not less important to us is the influence of the recorded narrative, in encouraging all the needy to make application to Christ for relief; and in illustrating the principles according to which God bestows his gifts upon suppliants.

I SHALL LIMIT MYSELF TO THIS ONE DESIGN OF THE PASSAGE, AND ASK YOUR ATTENTION TO SEVERAL FEATURES IN THE STORY, BY WHICH I HOPE TO SHOW YOU IN AN INTELLIGIBLE LIGHT HOW TO OBTAIN THE FAVOR OF GOD.

It can scarcely be doubted by any reflecting mind, that one object in restoring this blind man to the use of his eyesight, and in preserving a record of the deed, and of the circumstances attending it, was to set forth clearly the principles according to which God bestows gifts upon men. I shall assume, therefore, in this discourse, that all who now hear me need favors from God; that your condition by nature is not less necessitous than that of Bar-Timeus, and that the principles brought to view in this narrative are of universal application. Let it be observed:—

1. *First of all, then, that a view of his necessities as being very great, moved this blind man to his earnest and successful endeavors to obtain relief from the Saviour.* Perhaps there are no sufferers among our unhappy race that can awaken deeper sympathy and a more tender pity in our bosoms than the blind. They are cut off from so many innocent delights, so incapacitated for useful employments, and exposed to so

many dangers, where others walk in safety; that we can scarcely look upon a blind man without an involuntary yearning for his restoration to the light of day. This poor beggar betokens, by the earnestness and irrepressible importunity of his cry, that he has pondered deeply the gloomy necessities of his case. He was each morning awaked by the hum of human voices, and the songs of birds, and the stir of business; but the same darkness ever remained to him. He knew from others that the light silently climbed up the sky every day, and threw its golden robes over the mountains, and spread green carpets upon the lawns, and rich embroideries upon the fields and gardens; yet, to him, over all this was thrown a black pall, wrapping alike universal nature and his own soul in impenetrable gloom. His desires were mocked by the suggestions of one sense and the stern denials of another. If he heard the notes of music, and those most musical of all sounds the tones of affection and friendship, yet he saw not the more interesting play of the gentler sentiments as they come and go with smiles and tears, with pensive marches, and jubilant dances, upon the human countenance. He might feel the sun's heat only to be reminded that its light availed naught for him, and thus address it, as Milton did, in his blindness.

“But thou revisitest not these eyes, that roll in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veiled;—thus with the year

Seasons return, but not to me returns,
 Day, or the sweet approach of e'en or morn,
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;
 But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
 Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
 Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair,
 Presented with a universal blank ;
 Of Nature's works to me expunged and rased,
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

But, besides being deprived of these pure pleasures, he was incapacitated for the ordinary avocations of life. Destitute of worldly possessions, he had no hope of acquiring wealth, nor even of securing a comfortable competency. On the contrary, he depended on the charities of a cold world. The self-respect that belongs to ordinary independence was denied him. If he went abroad, every step was attended with danger. He sat, therefore, by the way-side and begged.

Is it wonderful that "the darkness of his dull abode, fell on him as a heavy load?" Is it wonderful that he was aroused when he heard the footsteps of a passing multitude, and that, on learning that Jesus of Nazareth, who had relieved so many of the wretched, was going by, he cried aloud and said, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" Here was the spring of his desires, his first motive to exertion. He had contemplated his real condition. He felt that it was wretched. There was light enough. The world was full of it. But it was of no avail to him. The earth was adorned with beauties, and the heavens were

ever and anon hung all about with a gorgeous tapestry; but, to him, it was all a dark and naked waste. The world was a storehouse of food and raiment; but he was in beggary and rags, because he could not descry the paths of successful industry. He had eyes to see, but their vision was veiled, and he saw not. These views prepared him to make strenuous exertions for relief.

Precisely in the same manner, my friends, must the work begin with you if you ever find relief for your spiritual necessities. Contemplate your religious state. If unconverted, you are blind alike to the beauty of heavenly things, to the means of supplying your spiritual wants, and to the dangers which beset your path. There are other objects for the mind to look upon besides those of the senses; and these objects are as much above material things as man's intellectual and spiritual nature is above his physical organs. There are high orders of pure intelligences rising in successive grades of excellence from redeemed saints to angels, and archangels, and thrones, and dominions, and powers. Among all these there is one law of impartial benevolence, one universal sympathy. Infinitely above the highest rank of created beings is God, the maker and monarch of all. His government possesses overpowering attractions. Its end is high, involving the well-being of the universe; the glory of his own character. Its laws are simple, imposing the obligations of universal love and good-will. The penalty is as satisfactory as possible, and as terrific

as it is satisfactory, giving to the transgressor the very position which he has himself chosen, separation from his God; and rendering that separation eternal. His system of grace and mercy is amazing. Its first revealment in heaven filled that blessed world with astonishment and delight. Its most sensible commencement, in the incarnation of the Son of God, drew the angelic choirs down to earth, and every sinner that has been converted since, has caused a new thrill of joy among the angels of God. All the saints in heaven and on earth, and all the heavenly hosts unite with God himself in contemplating these glorious objects.

These are the visions of those who have been brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Like Moses, they endure as seeing him who is invisible. Like Paul, they say, amid the sharpest trials, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." To the beauties of these high objects, as an unconverted sinner, you are blind. God's character does not attract your delighted gaze. The principles of his government do not win your attention. If you turn your thoughts towards your Maker you do not catch the right view of his character. Your position is wrong for beholding the object aright. If you stood before him as his people did when in

obedience to his command they left the house of bondage, you should, like them, recognize his presence like the cloud of mercy that embosomed them by day, and was as a wall of fire for their defence at night. But, you are on the Egyptian side of it; you see only frowns and darkness. If your attention be directed towards Christ, he is as a root out of dry ground, and there is no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty to your eye, that you should desire him. Did it never occur to you, my impenitent friend, that what Paul said of a large class of sinners might apply most exactly to your own case? "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." Did you ever reflect upon what is contained in the fourth chapter and eighteenth verse of his Epistle to the Ephesians? If you will think carefully of what he there says, you will perceive that he could not have drawn the picture more accurately if you had yourself sat for the portrait. His language is, "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." And, certain it is that you do not view aright the means of supplying your spiritual necessities. You endeavor, by some slight amendment in morals, to meet the wants of your spiritual nature. Experience is against your success, and ought to cut off all hope from this source at once. You look for light, and behold darkness. You seek to keep

the law as a ground of justification. It cannot be done ; poor, blinded soul, desist from the vain attempt. The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart, and thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways.

Equally blind are you to the real dangers of your state. You know neither the number nor the power of the temptations that may assail you, nor the strength of your own corruptions. But God has taught us that the way of the wicked is as darkness ; they know not at what they stumble. Their way, says the Psalmist, is dark and slippery ; and Jeremiah says : “ Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness.” No, you will never seek and find the blessing of God till you will fully contemplate your blind, and guilty, and needy state. Say not that you are not, and cannot be sensible of your spiritual necessities. Only ponder the character of God, and the methods of his grace, and you shall soon be conscious of your blindness. Bring yourself to the study of the Divine word, and you shall learn that your soul is full of midnight. Carry yourself forward to death and the judgment, and you shall perceive that you are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things. Especially will this be so if you will dwell upon these truths with

fervent prayer for the illuminating influence of the Divine Spirit.

II. *Another thing which marked the course of the blind mendicant, and was essential to his relief, was his application to Christ alone.* He may have tried all prescribed remedies. He may have listened to a hundred advisers, and found them "physicians of no value." But now Jesus, the anointed son of David, is passing. Others have been healed by him. The dead have been awaked by his power. Hope springs up in his heart. A power is present that can unbar the dungeon windows of his imprisoned soul. Casting away all other hopes, and all delay, he seizes the opportunity and cries to the Saviour: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." He made his application to the right source and at the right time. No other power in the universe can relieve him. No other power is so ready to interpose in behalf of the wretched.

But you must take the same course if you will find relief for your spiritual necessities. No other means can avail for you but the intervention of the Son of God. No forms of devotion can cause you to see the light of your Father's countenance. No priestly absolution can save you; Christ alone hath power to forgive sins. No sacrifice of innocent animals can meet your necessities.

" Not all the blood of beasts
 On Jewish altars slain,
 Could give the guilty conscience peace,
 Or wash away the stain.

“But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away ;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.”

No intercession of your Christian friends or your pastor can by themselves avail for you ; but you have an High-Priest that can be touched with the feeling of your infirmity. He ever liveth to make prevailing intercession for all who come to him. Go, then, to your mere forms of devotion, and you shall be sent away unhealed and unblest. Go to your solemn ritual, with reliance upon it for peace, and your sins shall still lie heavy on your soul. Rest upon the correctness of your doings, your external morality, and you lean upon a spear that shall pierce your own soul. Go to the law of God, and attempt by keeping it to find the light of life, and you shall find that you have come to blackness, and darkness, and tempest ; and the thunders and lightnings of Sinai shall serve only to fill your soul with terror and tenfold night. But come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant ; come to the blood of sprinkling ; come to him who healed every applicant that approached him in the days of his flesh ; to him who hath said : “ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Come to him, in your darkness, and blindness, and guilt, and say : “ Lord, that I may receive my sight,” and, like this poor blind mendicant, you shall rejoice in your recovered vision, and gratefully follow your Deliverer.

III. *Another thing worthy of notice in the conduct of Bartimeus, as intimately connected with his success, was his perseverance.* It is according to a general arrangement of Divine providence that perseverance is necessary to the accomplishment of desirable objects. God will not violate this general law in the methods of his grace. How shall it be known to the multitude that the blind man really confides in Christ for healing? How shall his own faith be invigorated and proved but by his being left to utter earnest and repeated and importunate cries for relief? This he did at the first; for we read: "He began to cry out," implying that his cries were reiterated. Such was his earnestness, too, that the multitude were disturbed by it, and many charged him to hold his peace. Here was a powerful influence to cool his ardor, and repress his exertions. If he had not been in a most determined state of mind, and possessed a deep sense of his necessities, and a firm confidence in the Saviour, he had desisted under such discouragement. But no, his need is great; he is blind; none but Christ can restore him, and he can; but he is passing. Shall he heed the opposition of the unpitying multitude? "He cried the more a great deal—Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

On the same principle, if you will find mercy with your Saviour, you must persevere. You must count the cost. You must ask: "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" If temptations assail, and worldly influences and avo-

cations seem to charge you to hold your peace, you must cry the more a great deal: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." If you find the subject of your eternal interests easily sliding away from your mind, every day displaced by worldly things, you must rush away from them to your retirement and read the word of God, and ponder the darkness and guilt and wretchedness of your lost estate, and beg of your Saviour to deliver you from such insensibility. You must think of Christ as passing by, in these precious moments of trial, moments which will decide your eternal state. You must resist all diverting influences, as the voice of a senseless throng charging you to hold your peace, and you must so much the more a great deal cry to Christ for help on account of the power of such temptations.

Believe me, my friends, there is no other way for you to enter the kingdom than by very great earnestness and perseverance. Bunyan, in his divine allegory, represents the man that would enter into the spiritual kingdom of Christ, as stopping his ears, and running, that he might not be diverted from his course. And our Saviour says: "Strive to enter into the difficult gate." In the original it is *αγωνιξασθε*, *agonize* to enter the strait gate. The difficulty is set forth by two expressions. The word strait here is used in the sense of narrow, or straitness, as when it is said by the sons of the Prophets to Elisha, "the place where we dwell is too strait for us;" and the word agonize is borrowed from the struggle of contending armies,

and the contest of the Grecian games. You must agonize, then, for an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Not one lost sinner shall find favor with Christ, who does not evince, by his earnest importunity and perseverance, that he prizes that favor above all things. "Except a man forsake all that he hath (saith the Saviour) he cannot be my disciple."

IV. *Finally, the kind of plea with which the subject of this narrative approached the Saviour was such as became a guilty and helpless sinner.* He asked for mercy. He complained not of his sufferings, as if undeserved. He pretended not to the least claim upon the Saviour. He pleaded no services rendered to God; no good intentions in the past, no promises of amendment for the future, as reasons for granting his request. On the contrary, his sad condition and the compassion of Christ were his only plea. This is the only plea by which any soul of our lost race can successfully approach the Saviour. "God be merciful to me a sinner," is substantially the only prayer that can avail for the relief of your necessities. "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me," becomes every sinner of our lost race, as well as it became the poor blind man that sat by the way-side and begged.

This short period of trial may be regarded as the period in which Christ is passing by. If you do not

see clearly your own state, and the passing Saviour and his train, yet, do you not perceive, as if with the less vivid sense of hearing, the passing of a multitude? Listen; it is the tramp of a thousand millions passing on to the judgment. There is a confused murmur of voices. Some are conversing and laughing in thoughtless mirth. Some are bewailing the loss of their first-born and their loved companions. Some are murmuring against God's providential dealings in taking away their estates. One group is scoffing at the religion of Christ, and profaning his name; another large company are chanting impure songs to heathen deities. Here are Christian worshippers singing the praises of God; there is a band of youthful converts praying, and asking, with the converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Here are preachers of the everlasting gospel, endeavoring to make their message heard amid the noisy throng by lifting up their voices like a trumpet: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." The Saviour is moving on with his people. The Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them. Ask you, poor blind sinner, what meaneth this? I tell you, Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Now call upon him. Sit not idly there begging a poor pittance of comfort from this cold world. If you are wretched, your very miseries will move him. If you are guilty, that guilt is the foundation of a

plea for mercy. He has saved others. He has power to save you. He has never been known to refuse an earnest and persevering suppliant for his mercy. Cry to him alone for help. Look not to your works, to your amiable feelings, to your good intentions. Look to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Go not to your Christian friends merely. Rest not on the intention to visit your pastor, and seek his instruction. Go to your Saviour himself, the friend of sinners. Tell him of your blindness; tell him of your guilt; tell him of that strange insensibility which has fallen like a palsy upon your spiritual being.

If temptations assail; if like an insolent mob they charge you to hold your peace, then cry so much the more a great deal, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Rush away from temptations. Go into your closet and shut the door; yes, bolt it, bar out secular cares, and pray in secret. Be earnest. Be importunate. Be persevering. Take the kingdom of heaven by violence. Beg for mercy alone. That is the plea which is never ineffectual. But, oh! be determined, lest you lose your precious soul. Cast yourself, in your helplessness and guilt, at your Saviour's feet, and say in the language of the hymn: "And if I perish, I will pray, and perish only there." But then you shall not perish. Then the people of God shall have reason to say: "Be of good comfort; rise, he calleth thee." Put yourself in the place of that poor blind beggar. Ask, may I not be

as happy as he? Yes, you may. You may apply the whole narrative to yourself, by adopting as your own the divine hymn of Newton, founded on this interesting and instructive story.

“ Mercy, oh, thou son of David,
Thus blind Bartimeus prayed ;
Others by thy grace are savéd,
Now to me afford thine aid.

“ Many for his crying chid him,
But he called the louder still ;
Till his gracious Saviour bid him,
Come, and ask me what you will.

“ Money was not what he wanted,
Though by begging used to live ;
But he asked, and Jesus granted,
Alms which none but he could give.

“ ‘ Lord, remove this grievous blindness,
Turn this darkness into day ;’
Straight he saw, and, won by kindness,
Followed Jesus in the way.

“ Now, methinks, I hear him praying,
Publishing to all around,
‘ Friends, is not my case amazing,
What a Saviour I have found.’

“ O, that all the blind but knew him,
And would be advised by me ;
Surely they would hasten to him,
He would cause them all to see.”

SERMON IV.*

THE CHRISTIAN FALLING ASLEEP.

AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.—*Acts* vii. 60.

THE history of our race is so ordered by an all-wise Providence, as to awaken a perpetual interest. We live amid changes. We have scarcely a day of unvarying experience. Those changes possess the more power over us because they are replete with contrast. If the morning beams brightly, and soft airs breathe around—ere one brief day is past, this scene of quiet beauty is often changed to a raging tempest. If the rising sun be veiled in sackcloth, and fierce winds howl along the sky, a few hours may suffice to paint the bow upon the pile of sleeping vapor and to cheer us with a fair day.

The organized substances around us suggest continually contrasts of an equally striking character. By the side of playful infancy, we meet decrepid age.

* Preached on the occasion of the death of Mr. Bennington Gill.

The flexible sapling grows near the sturdy oak. The smooth pebble lies close by the granite cliff. The tiniest animals walk beside the huge elephant, and the little minnows surround the monsters of the deep. There is a similar contrast among the mental and moral qualities of men. Pure taste is found in immediate proximity with vulgar coarseness. Ethereal genius appears beside a plodding dulness. So, also, are kindly sentiments contrasted with savage ferocity, and the violence of sin with the attractive gentleness of virtue. Such a contrast lends a peculiar sweetness to the closing scene in the life of Stephen.

When you have contemplated the violence and rage of his enemies, when you have seen them stopping their ears, shouting with a loud voice and rushing on him with one accord, hurling their missiles and imprecations upon his innocent head, you are prepared to appreciate the vivid contrast in the spirit and behavior of the first Christian martyr. While they fasten their eyes upon the object of their hate with fierce aspect, he is calmly looking up to heaven, beholding the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. While they are rushing forward, with murderous purpose, he is meekly kneeling and worshipping his Maker. While they are breaking forth in violent invective, he is praying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In short, while the restlessness and violence of a sinful temper waken our abhorrence, we are prepared to discover an inimitable

beauty in the inspired description of the martyr when it is said, "He fell asleep."

I am led to invite your attention to this text, by the most solemn and afflicting event which has occurred in relation to this church since its organization. One of its original twenty-six members has been removed by death. I do not consider myself called upon to deliver funeral discourses whenever members of the church shall de cease. Such a practice is adapted to create the impression that a service of this nature is demanded by the respect due to the dead, and that a want of sympathy with bereaved mourners would always be implied in neglecting it. An unreasonable restraint, therefore, would be placed upon a pastor in instructing his charge, if it should come to be considered an indispensable duty to deliver a funeral discourse whenever an esteemed Christian might be called away to his final rest. But, in this instance, there are, in my view, peculiar reasons for endeavoring to make a practical use of the providence of God.

Mr. Gill was one of the founders of this church, a member of the respected Board of Trustees, a teacher in the Sabbath-school, and a man whose presence and voice in the devotional meetings of the church continually aided in supplying with oil the lamp upon our altars. He was at the head of a numerous family, and exercised a paternal influence over an interesting circle of youthful females during the most important period of their education. In addition to these circumstances, his years and maturity of Christian

character, and his peaceful and sudden exit, render this a highly favorable period for contemplating

THE CHRISTIAN FALLING ASLEEP.

From the obvious analogies that exist between these two states, it has been common, wherever the doctrine of immortality has been received, to speak of death as a sleep. The ancient patriarchs are represented, in sacred history, as having successively fallen asleep and been gathered to their fathers.

The death of a good man is analogous to sleep in the willingness with which he yields to it. We do not mean to say that a Christian mind in the warm pursuit of those objects which awaken holy enterprise ever really courts death. It is only when depressed and weary, or when sinking under diseased sensibilities, or when he has received an intimation from God that he will call him hence, that the Christian looks forward to death as an object of immediate desire. Yet, the Christian is willing to depart and to be with Christ. That is to say, he is willing in the sense in which an industrious man is willing to sink down in natural sleep. The man of enterprise, in the earnest prosecution of his proper calling, does not desire in the early morning, or even late in the afternoon, abruptly to desist from his unfinished labor, and to be overcome with slumber. But he looks forward to the hour of retirement and repose, and feels not a little cheered in his toil by the hope of rest. As the labors of the

day draw near to a close, and as the purposes of watchful care have been mainly accomplished, the approach of drowsy feelings is not unwelcome. So we have seen an aged servant of God, after having "accomplished," according to the language of the patriarch, "as an hireling his day" retiring to his final rest with a calm satisfaction. He has educated his children. He has blest his generation. He has prepared the account of his stewardship. He has finished his work. To him the approach of death, with its benumbing slumbers, is not unwelcome. It is pleasant to fall asleep.

The willingness of the Christian to enter on his final rest, extends further than we have now described. He is willing to retire before all the labor which he had sought to accomplish could be achieved. One who is in the most earnest pursuit of a secular end may strongly desire to be able to hold out through the whole day in the severest toil, but if he find a weariness coming over him, and if a heavy lethargy pervade his frame, he will yield to the necessities of tired nature, and give himself up willingly to sleep. So a Christian, when he finds in himself the indications of the approach of his final rest, when, in an unexpected hour, the intimation is given from his Master that the period of rest is approaching, though it may require a short interval to detach his thoughts from the objects and employments that immediately surround him, though some reflection may be needful to compose his mind, he is ready.

He may say to his friends, it is sudden, it is unexpected. I had thought it probable that I might spend a few more years with you, but it is all right. All you can do is to pray for me. I have not neglected a preparation for this hour. Jesus Christ is my only trust. I rest on the mercy of God, in the atoning sacrifice of my Saviour. Then, he may turn his regards for a moment to the interests and the friends whom he is about to leave, and in few words make all needful arrangements, and leave farewell messages of love and spiritual counsel. This work finished, he can surrender his mind more completely to the things of another world. He now anticipates meeting dear relations and friends that have long since fallen asleep. The sweet "fields of living green," and the pure river of the water of life present themselves to his quickened faith. The bright forms of angels and saints pass before him. He sees, as did the dying martyr, heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. He is more than willing to depart; he begins to feel the sentiments that glowed in the breast of John, when he said, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." He peacefully falls asleep.

One of the things which prepares the Christian to depart with such readiness, is an acquaintance with the fact that he is about to escape from great evils. The contrast between earth and heaven must be very great and truly delightful. A languid and diseased body is laid aside for a purely spiritual and health-

ful state. Degrading propensities and sin are exchanged for pure desires, and unwearied and uninterrupted holiness. The conflict with temptation gives place to the sweet constraints of heavenly influences. Death is the very last conflict that a Christian shall be called on to endure, in the whole eternity of his being.

How delightful must have been the escape of Stephen from the power of all his foes. His persecutors fancied that they were effecting his ruin, yet they were only the instruments of translating him at once into the New Jerusalem. Before, he was like the helpless mariner, when cast from his bark upon the angry ocean. His enemies were as mighty billows, rolling on with tempestuous rage. Their mountain height, and dark forms and menacing roar portend destruction, but the excess of their anger only contributes to his safety. He is buoyed up by their swell, and carried clear over the rocky cliffs and left in a beautiful garden. He is safe forever from their assaults. Though Christians, generally, at the present time, are not called on to endure such a conflict in the last hour, yet their sins, the temptations of worldly cares, and the assaults of their great adversary can do much to break their peace. But death completes all their warfare. This one conflict ends in eternal peace. Though the last appeal made to your senses as a spectator might be a distorted visage and a deep groan, yet, to the vision and the hearing of faith, a bright immortal spirit is disclosed, and an as-

ending shout is heard of victory, victory, victory! Long before the arrival of such a crisis the mature Christian has often reflected on the deliverances which death shall bring, and this has prepared him to welcome the hour of final discharge.

But the positive anticipations of his future state have created real yearnings for another world. Whatever the sensual and worldly mind may think of it, the spiritual believer in Christ has thought much of the nature of his heavenly inheritance. While it seemed distant, while he did not regard the time of his departure as likely to arrive till several more years should elapse, he was scarcely aware himself of the strength to which his cherished interest had arisen. As one residing in a foreign country may feel quite content, and may be subject to very little comparative excitement in respect to his return, yet, when the day of embarkation for his native land has come, all his former reflections crowd into his mind, and he is himself surprised at the strength of attachment which he feels for the place of his destination. The institutions of his country never seemed so beneficent. Its mountains and valleys and streams never appeared so beautiful. The family mansion, and the dear familiar faces, never before awakened such a home affection. So, I say, the Christian, who has long regarded himself as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, and who has been looking for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God, feels a fresh and greatly augmented delight in

contemplating his heavenly inheritance in such a near prospect. He is ready to say in the poetic language of Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* :—

“ My trust is strong to dwell in many worlds, and cull of many brethren there, sweet knowledge ever new. I yearn for realms where fancy shall be filled and the ecstasies of freedom shall be felt. And the soul reign gloriously, risen to its royal destinies. I look to recognize again, through the beautiful mask of their perfection, the dear familiar faces I have somewhile loved on earth. I long to talk with grateful tongue of storms and perils past, and praise the mighty *Pilot* that hath steered us through the rapids. He shall be the focus of it all, the very heart of gladness. My soul is athirst for God, the God who dwelt in man. Prophet, Priest, and King; the Sacrifice, the Substitute, the Saviour. Rapture of the blessed in the hunted one of earth, the pardoner in the victim. How many centuries of joy concentrate in that theme. How often a Methusalem might count his thousand years, and leave it unexhausted. And lo! the heavenly Jerusalem, with all its gates, one pearl, that pearl of countless price, the door by which we entered. Come, tread the golden streets, and join that glorious throng, the happy ones of heaven and earth, ten thousand times ten thousand. Hark, they sing that song, and cast their crown before him. Their souls alight with love, glory, and praise and immortality! Veil thine eyes; no son of time may

see that holy vision. And even the seraph at thy side hath covered his face with his wings."

If these anticipations are interrupted by looking back upon the church, and upon dear Christian friends, it is but for a moment. The thought again recurs that the time is short, that very soon dear friends will follow, and that they will be reunited in a happier sphere, never more to be separated. Why should not the Christian die calmly? Why should not his decease be analogous to his sinking sweetly into sleep?

"How blest the righteous when they die;
When holy souls retire to rest,
How mildly beams the closing eye,
How gently heaves the expiring breast.

"So fades a summer cloud away,
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er,
So gently shuts the eye of day,
So dies a wave along the shore."

How inestimable the privilege of meeting death in such a state. I am sure that any one of you that should seriously reflect on it, would give more to be sure of such a death-bed than you would give for all the treasures and honors and worldly enjoyments that earth can bestow. What would be the richest diadem ever worn in this world compared with beholding by a strong faith a crown of glory laid up in heaven for you? What would be the company of princes and their courts, all proffering you their highest regards, compared with a discovery, from the death-bed, of the

angels that bore Lazarus to Abraham's bosom? What are the robes and costly decorations that gold and silver can procure, compared with the pure white robe of holiness, the wedding garment? What are the music and festive conversations of the most brilliant circles in the saloons of pleasure, compared with the death-bed praises and triumphs of a dying believer? Tell me, gay and thoughtless one, could you deliberately prefer all earthly good to one happy last hour? If you could make it sure, by a formal written contract with Christ, that you should have all the riches and honors and pleasures of earth for a hundred years, on condition that you should not have a happy Christian death-bed, would you put your name to such a contract? But just such a happy death, such a falling asleep in Christ, can be secured. I do not deny, indeed, that, if you are a Christian, you may die in an unconscious state. Possibly in an hour of mental derangement, or by a sudden stroke, you may be removed so unconsciously that you shall enter upon the heavenly state by a surprise as great as it would have been if you had found yourself among the blest when you awoke in your chamber this morning. Still, I say, such a quiet, happy death-bed, or what may be even better, a translation into the kingdom of heaven without any conscious struggle with the king of terrors, may be secured to you.

Christianity has often come with its comforts in the last hour, where the most fearful apprehensions had

been previously entertained. It has promised much. "I am the resurrection and the life," said its divine Founder: "if a man believe in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live again." But Christianity has not barely made rich promises, it has performed even more than its promises. It has sustained those who by diligence have acquired a strong faith not only, but it has also opened the portals of immortality to the dying eyes of those who have just embraced its provisions. Old King Manassah, laden with crimes, found pardon and sanctification, and went to dwell with God. The dying thief turned his regards to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and received assurance that he should that day enter the heavenly Paradise. Many a poor sinner has found the grace of Christ to transcend, by far, all the conceptions which he had entertained of his promises. But in no case has he fallen short of them. Every confiding disciple that has heeded the warning to watch and pray lest he fall into temptation, has neither watched nor prayed in vain. Every one that has given all diligence to make his calling and election sure, has been able to say, with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

Yet a peaceful death ought not to be expected without a prompt and diligent and long-continued attention to the subject. The grace of the gospel is not so dispensed as to encourage delay and foster an

indolent spirit. It is by constant culture that piety grows to a mature state, and maturity of Christian character is the only means of securing for every one a perfectly satisfactory assurance. If you begin to-day, then, to act with decision and persevering industry, you will find the labor sufficiently difficult, to acquire that symmetry of character which shall be demonstrably the legitimate fruit of the gospel. It is only by a toilsome and long-continued effort that a selfish habit can be made to give place to one of philanthropy and benevolence. It is no small labor to displace all irascible tempers by the spirit of meekness. Much discipline is demanded to induce the soul to wear as its every-day dress the garment of humility. Time is required to store the mind with those thoughts, and to inspire the heart with those sentiments, which shall lead the soul to have its conversation in heaven. You need many calls and admonitions, and much spiritual instruction in the sanctuary, connected with a serious purpose on your part to improve them. You require the sympathy and counsel and prayers of experienced Christians. You need the influence of solemn and tender sacramental seasons; the discipline of the Divine providence in chastisement and mercy, and the plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit. All these privileges, long enjoyed and properly improved, may render it comparatively certain that you shall enjoy a peaceful and happy death.

Among the means for inducing you to aim at such

a result, and for aiding you in securing it, no one is more effective than the example of one who has successfully sought this very end. When such a living example has been removed, therefore, an irreparable loss is experienced. Those that sustain peculiar relations to such a removed example, as in the case which we contemplate to-day, are suffering a bereavement more sad than they themselves can imagine. A mourning family, though wounded so deeply, and suffering such a sudden interruption in a large part of their enjoyment, even they can scarcely appreciate the extent of their loss. How, then, shall those young females in the family and in the Sunday-school class appreciate it. Their minds are less mature. Their conceptions of the worth of a moral influence which they have susceptibility enough to feel, are limited. They will feel it keenly. The youthful circle will pour forth showers of tears when they see the vacant place at the table, and are reminded that those simple strains and gentle tones shall never greet their ears again in the room where the family devotions were offered up.

The orphan class in the Sabbath-school, where shall they find another such a teacher? a teacher who shall unite to such a degree the wisdom of a father with the familiarity of a companion? I am not concerned lest they should not feel sufficiently; but their sobs and tears are no indication of their having appreciated their real loss. And who shall supply the place in the church, or estimate our loss? You will

pardon me, my brethren, if I say to you, I am afraid that not one of you will do it. I am afraid I do not myself appreciate it. Many of the best religious influences are quiet in proportion as they are powerful, so that they are but slightly observed. When a Christian's influence is not connected with official station, when he is not visibly leading others in some great moral enterprise, he may be exerting the most benign influence, in such a way that it will scarcely attract attention till it ceases. Such a Christian's usefulness is like a quiet stream that swells and overflows its banks. Its refreshing irrigations steal away to a great distance, secretly imparting verdure and bloom to a thousand plants that had else never swelled from their germs. Multitudes who admire the beauty of the cascade, and are astonished at the power of the useless or even harmful torrent, never discover the utility of that quiet stream till its waters are dried up and the fertility of its banks is disappearing. Would God, my brethren, that we might all see enough of our loss to lead us to emulate the example of doing good always in a blameless way. I am aware that variety in gifts and in the cast of Christian character is demanded by the interests of the church. But no character is more useful, though by that means it may elicit more attention, for its moral obliquities. The headlong rashness of a Peter may impart a sort of pungent interest to his character as a vigorous reformer. The irascibility of Paul and Barnabas when they quarrelled about taking John and

Mark as the companion of their travels, did not it is true destroy their usefulness, but it marred it. The unoffending, blameless John was a better character. Oh, that God would impart to his church grace to honor and emulate those who are meek and gentle, and long-suffering and blameless. He has commended such in his word: "Blessed are the peacemakers." "God will beautify the meek with salvation."

This solemn and unexpected bereavement makes a most affecting appeal to us all. Let me say to all those young female members of the family of our friend who heard his voice daily in prayer, and those who were under his teaching in the Sunday-school, God has spoken to you, in this act of his providence, with an earnestness and solemnity that is quite uncommon. I know how quickly most impressions pass from your young and susceptible hearts. But an impression has now been made that will, I trust, never be wholly effaced. You will remember not merely that a great shock was produced by such a sudden removal of one you so dearly loved, but, you will remember (whatever effect subsequent defective examples of Christians may produce on your mind), that you once knew one in whom the Christian religion was exemplified as everything that is lovely and amiable. You will remember that you have seen piety united with such native qualities as did not prevent a clear disclosure of its beauties. You will not forget the nature of true religion, as you

could not forget the verdure and bloom and fragrance of a plant that should really excel every other plant in the vegetable world, if you had seen one specimen of it growing in a genial soil and developing itself in full proportions. What use will you make of this impression? I charge you, as you fear God, and would hope to meet that friend in heaven, now commence, this very hour, seeking the grace of Christ. Go to your Christian parents, to your pious teachers, to your pastor, for that counsel of which you have been suddenly and forever deprived. Go to your Saviour, as he has counselled you, whose lips are sealed, whose voice is hushed, whose tongue is fettered in death. Go now, too. Take up a course of earnest inquiry and fervent prayer, lest you never have from God another call of such tender solemnity and power.

Sabbath-school teachers, this event speaks a peculiar language to you. One of your fellow-laborers has fallen asleep. He was the oldest of your number, yet he was obedient to your arrangements as any child. There were none among you that he did not love, and none that did not love him, that knew him. His heart was with you in this work. His influence was of such a quiet and gentle kind, that you never could appreciate it till it was removed. The vacant seat in that room, I think I may say without any apprehension of your thinking otherwise, created a deeper sensation than any other vacancy created by an absent teacher could have done. The voice of that beloved fellow-teacher you will hear no

more. His sudden departure bids you to work while the day lasts. This is the second bereavement of the kind since the organization of this church. Both were remarkably intelligent, remarkably blameless, and remarkably beloved; both possessed the appearance of remarkable health, and both were taken away with a suddenness which created the most surprising shock to your feelings. What, my beloved friends, do these providences teach you? Do they not bid you to do what you have to do quickly? Do they not admonish those who have the best prospect of continuance in life to be always ready for their departure?

A vacancy is created in our board of trustees. The record of the manner in which that vacancy occurred will not be made without deep emotion. Will it not also be thought upon with a solemn self-application, by every one of them, that God is admonishing the associates of this removed member to be also ready? Will not that part of the church which may be emphatically termed the praying band, those who aim to be always in their place in the meeting for prayer, will not they especially endeavor to improve by this solemn providence? Will none of those who have comparatively neglected this duty, come forward and fill the vacant place? Would God that many new voices might be heard in our social devotions on account of this bereavement. In fine, let all be admonished to act with promptness in regard to their spiritual interests. Two weeks ago, this

morning, there sat in yonder gallery, one of the stated worshippers in this sanctuary, in the care of the Sabbath-school children. Probably not one person within the sound of my voice has a more remarkable glow of health. His countenance beamed with that peculiar brightness which is produced by the union of fine physical health, and intelligence and an habitual cheerfulness. On the last Monday morning, even though indisposed, not the least apprehension existed, either in his own mind or that of his physician and friends. Yet early in the evening of the same day he resigned his spirit to God who gave it. The call is as distinct as though a voice from heaven had uttered it: "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Yes, the Son of Man cometh; he is on his way to arrest your earthly career, and bring you to his bar. If your ears were a little more opened, you might perhaps hear his chariot wheels. If your vision were cleared you might see his bright train, and hear the distinct utterance: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me." If you are now unprepared for the change, let me implore you to make no delay. Look at your sins, your worldliness, your unbelief, your cold rejections, and your perpetual neglects of your Saviour. Let conscience do its office, and its upbraiding voice be heard, "What meanest thou, O sinful soul, to slumber in sin?"—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

If you are now unprepared, and the ordinary minis-

trations of the gospel have to this hour failed to rouse you, let the vacant seat in the sanctuary make its appeal. Let the quiet death-bed scene of one whose face so lately beamed with health lead you to contemplate the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Catch the vision of one who said: "I saw the dwellings of the blest. They glided on, hushing as they went. Yet further under the sun, at the roots of purple mountains, I noted a blaze of glory as night-fires on northern skies; and I heard the hum of joy as it were a sea of melody; and far as the eye could reach were millions of happy creatures basking in the golden light; and I knew that land was heaven. When the hill whereon I stood split asunder, and a crater yawned at my feet, black, and deep, and dreadful, fenced round with ragged rocks; dimly was the darkness lit up by spires of distant flame: And I saw below, a moving mass of life, like reptiles bred in corruption, where all was terrible unrest, and shrieks, and groans, and thunder!"

Alas! poor sinner, when wilt *thou* be wise? Death calls. He will soon call for *thee*, either as an angel of peace, or as a grim executioner:—

"His time there's none can tell;
He'll in a moment call thee hence,
To heaven or to hell."

SERMON V.

CONCEALED RELIGION.

BUT PETER FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF, UNTO THE HIGH-PRIEST'S PALACE, AND WENT IN, AND SAT WITH THE SERVANTS, TO SEE THE END.—*Matthew* XXVI. 58.

IT is not an easy thing for any person to occupy, for a considerable time together, a position between two contending parties. If both parties be in the wrong, on a subject in which you feel a deep interest, and you desire to maintain a strict neutrality, you will find it difficult to do so, because there will commonly be such appeals made to your feelings as will destroy the balance of impartiality. If, however, moral principles be clearly involved, moral principles that are diametrically opposite to one another, it is impossible to maintain neutral ground, with respect to them, for a single moment. The reason is obvious. There is no neutral ground between right and wrong. A moral being always occupies either a right or a wrong position in regard to a moral question which has been pressed upon the attention. Yet there are times and

crises in our history when almost every one is tempted to make the vain endeavor to be neutral.

Amid the tragic scenes of our Saviour's arrest and trial, and execution, occurred many and various developments of character. In the first alarm, all the disciples forsook their Master, and fled. The pious females who had been warmly attached to our Saviour's ministry, with a fortitude characteristic of their sex in times of trial, followed him, everywhere, as open, undisguised friends, and stood by his cross bewailing his mortal agonies. Two of the disciples, Peter and John, recovered from their first paroxysm of alarm, and followed with anxious solicitude their captive Master. But though they acted together, in this respect, they were in widely different states of mind, states tending to very different results. John was a man of a calm and sweet spirit. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved. A tender affection for Christ led him to follow him to the judgment-hall, and to Calvary. He attempted no concealment, and, by his urbanity and his gentleness, and his acquaintance with the high-priest, who probably knew him as an amiable man, he passed on unmolested, a pitying spectator of the whole scene. Peter, on the other hand, though a sincere friend of Christ, was a bold, rash man, and apt to engage in a course of conduct without well considering what would be the ultimate consequences. In his earnestness, he resolved that he would not, like others, utterly abandon the Saviour. Yet as he had cut off the servant's ear, and made himself prominent

on other occasions, he saw that he might be involved in trouble if his true position were understood. He determined, therefore, upon attempting to be prudent. He will not jeopard everything for Christ, by being found too near to his sacred person, so he follows him afar off. When mingling with the enemies of our Lord, he will not hazard a discovery of his relation to the prisoner, by remaining among those who are active and prominent in the awful scene; so he sits down with an air of affected indifference, with the servants, and seems to be employed in warming himself by the fire. The result of this experiment you all know. Peter is tempted to deny his Master. After the denial is once made, he is led to repeat it with base and profane imprecations. With this experiment of concealed religion before us, I invite your attention to

The influence of concealment in respect to one's religious character and relations.

That the subject may be practically and profitably applied, let me place before you as clearly as possible

I. WHAT MAY BE PROPERLY REGARDED AS CONCEALMENT IN RESPECT TO ONE'S RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AND RELATIONS.

A clear distinction may be made between concealment and a modest diffidence and unobtrusiveness. The publican, who stood afar off and smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," was modest and unobtrusive, but he was as far from

practising any concealment as was the Pharisee who gave to himself such a boastful prominence. When Zaccheus came down from the tree at the Saviour's bidding, and received him joyfully, and promised, in the presence of the multitude, to make restitution for all unjust gains, his conduct was as free as possible from everything like an indecorous and proud obtrusiveness. Indeed, his frank and beautiful behavior contrasts delightfully with the conduct of Nicodemus, that Master in Israel, who went, we must use a low word for the want of any other to convey the idea, who went sneakingly under the cover of night to hold a conversation with our Saviour. So when the beloved disciple went boldly and calmly in to the high-priest's palace, and followed his Master to Calvary, and stood by his cross, and received from his dying lips the charge to protect and sustain the bereaved mother of Christ, he was equally as unobtrusive and modest as Peter was when he was slinking away in the distance, or stealthily creeping into the palace, and retiringly sitting down with the servants before the fire.

When one acts openly because his duty calls, he cannot be properly charged with a want of modesty and humility, and self-distrust. But when one shrinks from appearing openly as the friend of those good principles and persons for whom he means to cherish a secret regard, he is guilty of practising a concealment which is alike unworthy in itself and disastrous in its influence. But let us contemplate

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH SUCH A CONCEALMENT EXERTS AN UNHAPPY INFLUENCE.

1. *It takes away self-respect.* It is not to be denied that there are secrecies belonging to all subjects of a warm affection. The soul that is united to Christ, with the confidence of an affianced bride, possesses many bosom thoughts that are entrusted to no other ear save that of her Redeemer and best friend. But she does not, on that account, feel it to be allowable to conceal her attachment on those occasions when there is a public taking of sides for or against the Saviour. When the good Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms, he said to Mary, his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many, and for a sign which shall be spoken against." So it has always been. Some have openly gloried in his cross, others have scorned his claims as the Son of God.

Our Lord has established a public social ordinance, in which those who participate acknowledge their dependence upon the sacrifice of his body and blood for eternal life. If one attempt to practise concealment, and to stand afar off while some own and others deny him, he cannot but feel an impairment of his self-respect. If remorse of conscience only were produced it would be an unhappy influence. But there is mingled with the conviction of wrong a conviction of dishonor. The man that cherishes in his heart the secret hope that he is a friend of Christ, and yet does not avow it by his conversation and his open conduct, exerts a peculiar influence upon his own character.

He feels an interest in the things of Christ. He follows afar off. He retires and sits down away from those that express themselves warmly on either side, and then he bethinks himself of his position. He always knew that he was a sinner, but now, he seems to himself to be guilty of an unmanly timidity. He fears that there is a cherished hypocrisy in his character. He endeavors to resist the impression, and says, "No, I am really friendly to Christ. I love him and confide in him, but I do not avow myself and follow him openly through good report and evil report, because if I once take such a position I must maintain it." Then, again, the reflection will arise; but, if I am unwilling to maintain such a position, am I not acting a double part? No, I decline a public and open acknowledgment of attachment to my Saviour, because so many of his professed followers are inconsistent in their professions. Yet, if a great many of *my* professed friends had proved treacherous, I should desire that those who are really sincere would be the more frank and prompt in acting openly in my behalf.

Thus convicted of insincerity, a man naturally feels that he will not be materially worse if he openly deny his Saviour; and hence, he is prepared to disown him. When the act has been performed, he naturally consoles himself with the reflection that, if he is more glaringly wicked, he is less chargeable with a mean and degrading insincerity. In this manner, the love of consistency and self-respect furnishes a premium for

denying the Saviour. A man feels that he is acting consistently with himself when he lays aside all pretence of being secretly influenced by better principles than he dares openly to avow.

2. *Concealment, in respect to one's religious character and relations, takes away the influence of friends who entertain and express kindred sentiments.* We are so constituted that the approbation of our fellow-men is a powerful incitement to action. The warrior moves calmly up to the imminent deadly breach, because he fancies that his countrymen are beholding, and that a thousand applauding voices are ready to exclaim, "Well done, brave soldier, and self-sacrificing patriot." We never think, in such a case, that the patriotism is not genuine, because the sentiment is stimulated by the approbation of all the friends and admirers of that virtue. On the contrary, the man has proved himself a true lover of his country by seeking the rewards of patriotic virtue, and by purposely surrounding himself with incitements to its highest exercise. So, when a man has chosen Christ as his commander, and has openly laid aside everything inconsistent with such a purpose, that "He may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier," he purposely surrounds himself with the friends of the Redeemer, avows his design of meeting, in the open field, every assault, and of boldly endeavoring to conquer temptation in the name of Christ.

The deserved confidence of the people of God is a high and holy object of desire. And since the

strength of our attachment to a virtue is measured by the earnestness with which we bring around ourselves the motives for its practice, it is obvious that an undisguised frankness in regard to our religious character and relations brings to us this twofold advantage. *First*, the exercise of the principles of holiness by a manly and open assertion of them enhances their vigor. *Secondly*, the circle of faithful friends of holiness that are thus brought to stand around the soul with approving eyes, and cheering voices, to commend every successful struggle for the right, affords one of the most efficient motives for steadfastness in well-doing. But the moment that a man attempts to practice concealment, he loses both of these advantages. His principles are relaxed by declining such an action as the crisis demanded, and the incitements of human approbation are removed. When Peter followed afar off, and when he sat down with the servants, waiting to see the end before he should commit himself, his principles of attachment to Christ became languid. Then, too, when he more needed, than ever before, the encouragements of the avowed friends of his tried principles, he had separated himself from all such influences. If he had stood close by the calm and heroic John, and watched for an encouraging look, ever and anon, from his patient Master, he might have risen above that miserable craven fear which led to the denial. Persons, of the slightest degree of physical courage, have met a martyr's doom with firmness in preference to disowning their Sa-

viour, when the friends of Christ, with whom they have been openly associated, have bid them to remember their good confession before many witnesses. But when one places himself alone, or where he fancies himself alone, by his concealment, he takes away one of the strongest incitements to fidelity in a time of trial.

3. *Concealment in respect to one's religious character and relations increases the power of intimidation in a man's spiritual enemies.* This it does in two ways. It renders the subject more susceptible to intimidation while the cause remains the same; and it augments the amount of intimidating influence. If Peter had acted manfully—if he had followed in the crowd close by his Master, without any thought of concealment, what possible effect would have been produced by a servant-maid's saying, "Surely thou art one of them?" Had Peter been moving forward then, with an open, manly ardor, such a speech had not been heard at all when coming from such a source; or, if heard, it would have been looked on as one of those petty assaults which a roused and earnest spirit regards as of too little consequence to command the least attention. But, as it is, the attempt at concealment has unmanned a bold heart, and caused a spirit of great native energy to quail and prevaricate, and utter falsehood, to meet the scoffing inquiry of a little girl.

The susceptibility to intimidation is greatly augmented by the attitude of cowardly concealment.

Thus, have we often seen those who make private intimations of a cherished devotion to religion, when thrown into a mixed company, take special pains to make it understood that they were not open professors of godliness. A word of reproach, upon their Saviour or his disciples, is enough to lead them to deny him before men. This conduct is often shaped with a wonderful adroitness and skill. The man declares that he is a friend of Christianity, that he thinks well of its influence upon public morals, and speaks in tones of commendation of certain ministers of the gospel, and of Christian institutions, but if he see a suspicion rising that he may be a spiritual believer, he is careful to make the impression that he is not, by denying, as he can do with truth, that he is a professor of religion. But, besides this susceptibility to intimidation, concealment augments the intimidating influences. It does not appear that a word was said to John respecting his being one of the disciples. There is a commanding dignity in a courageous deportment. But cowardice always awakens contempt, and, at the same time, inspires weak antagonists with courage. If a man but evince fear of wild animals, those which have but little native fierceness will be incited to attack him, and, if a man take the attitude, in a mixed community, of one who would be the friend of Christ, and who is yet afraid to be openly so, attempts will be made to draw him aside which would not be thought of if he were an avowed disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. *Concealment prepares the mind for open denial, because it is the same thing in principle.* There are no means by which men are so effectually deceived and prepared for a wicked and dishonorable action as by allowing the governing principle of such an action first to gain strength through a passive indulgence. Let one suppress the truth, in certain portions of a relation of facts where he was plainly bound to narrate the whole, and he will easily learn to discolor actual facts, and to utter palpable falsehoods. Let a man neglect to meet his pecuniary engagements. Embarrassment is his apology, but if he do not chasten himself by making great sacrifices and securing to his creditor such remuneration for the wrong as shall make himself the chief loser, then he will inure himself to that insensibility to the rights of others which prepares him for every species of fraudulent and knavish transactions. The man that indulges himself in making those representations of facts which create a false impression by neglecting certain material parts of the truth, is prepared to utter falsehood, because he has already cherished and cultivated the habit of deceiving. Now, precisely analogous to this relation which the suppressing of truth has to the uttering of falsehood, is the relation of the concealment of one's religious principles to the actual denial of them. Peter had, in spirit, denied his Master, when he purposely slunk away in the distance, and tardily came in and sat down to see the end before he should take any open action. His concealment had just such a

relation to his denial, as a genuine faith has to a public profession of love to Christ. Here is a man who has received the gospel into a good and honest heart. When the occasion arrives which demands an open expression, that expression is made, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." He confesses Christ before men. But he only makes a more extended declaration of what he had said before by his prayers, and conversation, and changed demeanor. Behold the exact counterpart of this. Here is a man, Peter, who in his heart is shrinking from the responsibility of being the friend of Christ. The crisis arrives which demands an open profession. He makes it. He declares, "I know not the man." Thus it is that a concealment of one's religious character and relations exerts a disastrous influence by taking away self-respect, by removing the encouragement of approving friends, by augmenting the influences of intimidation, and by secretly cherishing the very sentiments which are openly professed in a disowning of Christ as a Saviour and friend. From these views we may easily discover,

1. *Why our Saviour laid so much stress on confessing him before men.* "Whosoever," says he, "shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But, whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." In another place, when speaking of suffering persecution for his sake, he says, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not

worthy of me." And then, as if the question whether a man should lose his life as a consequence of this open action were of no importance compared with the momentous interests affected by an open confession, he adds, "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Our Saviour well knew that right principles could not be maintained in the absence of all open expressions and manifestations of them; that concealment destroys the self-respect of one who secretly pretends to be his friend. He knew that it took away the salutary encouragement found in the approbation of the pious, that it increased the power of intimidation, and, that it involved the very principle expressed in an open denial of him. Hence, he desired men to count the cost of discipleship, and not to flatter themselves with the least hope that they should be owned as his disciples at last, unless they could willingly encounter all the difficulties connected with an open avowal, on all suitable occasions, of attachment to Christ; unless they could own him not only, but also glory in his cross.

You will inquire, then, if I mean to maintain that a connection with the visible church is essential to salvation. By no means. On the contrary, we make probable evidence that the soul is in a state of salvation, a prerequisite to admission to the visible church. That is to say, if we do not judge that God has received the applicant by a spiritual adoption, we do not admit him to the ordinances of the church.

Certainly, then, if a man apparently converted, suddenly decease without an opportunity to become connected with the visible church, the fact that he is not a member of the visible church furnishes no presumption against his salvation. Nor will a delay from any physical difficulties, such as sickness or distance from a community of professed Christians, create a presumption against him. We go farther, and say, if he entertain mental difficulties arising from early prejudices or nervous depression, his neglecting to unite with the church furnishes no strong presumption against his piety, unless he hesitates, by other methods, to bear an open testimony of love to Christ. I have two cases in mind, that came to my knowledge some years since, with which I will illustrate these exceptions. One was a gentleman of a highly cultivated mind and great influence in the city of his residence. He had received his early education among the society of Friends. From that source he had derived a tenacious prejudice against the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. He was hopefully converted to God. So thought his pious acquaintances, and so he himself thought. But, though he did not confess Christ in that peculiar manner, by publicly and formally covenanting with the people of God, and sitting down with them at the Lord's table, yet he practised no concealment. His reason for inaction in that method was found in scruples of conscience, arising from a defective education. But he did act in other things so undisguisedly in behalf of Christ

and his cause, that the whole community thought of him as a professor of religion. He was accustomed humbly to kneel at the family altar, and offer prayer to God. His voice was heard in supplication at the meeting for social prayer, and both Christians and unbelievers concurred in the approval of his warm and earnest exhortations addressed to his friends and fellow-citizens to persuade them to become reconciled to God. If anything was to be done by wise associated endeavor to repress vice or to advance piety, he was among the first to act, and that, too, whether such action was likely to bring upon himself honor or obloquy. Such a man cannot be said to be practising concealment, or to be guilty of doing anything which in principle involves a denial of Christ before men. The other case to which I referred, was that of a dear friend, now I trust in heaven. He had an overwhelming sense of his sinfulness. A morbid apprehension that he might become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord prevented his union with the visible church for many years. He listened to evangelical instruction with great delight. He offered the morning and evening sacrifice in his family, and often have I seen him rise up in a meeting for prayer and religious conference, and exhort the youth of the parish to make their peace with God. I recollect one occasion, in particular, on which he adverted to the apparent inconsistency of a man of his years, whom they had all known from their childhood, exhorting them to come to their Saviour, while he himself was not a member

of the visible church. "Be it so," said he; "grant that I am inconsistent in that particular, yet I beg of you, my young friends, to consider that your souls are not the less valuable on that account, nor is the blessed Saviour less worthy of your love." Now let it be admitted that such an one was a Christian, and I have no doubt of it, yet, though a Christian without literally belonging to the church, he was not a Christian practising concealment in respect to his religious character and relations. He did not refuse to own Christ before men. On the contrary, he witnessed a good confession. Thus it is doubtless a fact that there are true Christians who are not, at the present moment, professing Christ before men in one specific and important method of doing so, namely, by a visible union with the church. Yet, we have no reason to think that those are Christians who refuse to take up the cross in any way, and who do not with undisguised frankness avow themselves the friends of their Redeemer. There are persons that seem desirous of knowing to how great an extent they can avoid committing themselves before the world as spiritual Christians, and yet be in a state of acceptance with God. If I were to answer such an inquiry, I would say, just as long as Peter could sit with the enemies of his Master, virtually pretending to be an indifferent spectator, without involving himself in all the essential guilt of the denial. That is, not one moment. The slightest analysis of such a desire

shows it to be at war with that sincerity which is indispensable to the lowest degree of Christian virtue.

2. *The subject suggests the importance of an immediate entrance upon all active duties by those who think to maintain a Christian life.* Activity in the cause of Christ is the highest kind of profession. We are more anxious that our conduct should be consistent with former actions than that it should be consistent with the mere expressions of our lips. We know that "actions speak louder than words." If one of you were to perform some act that implied a denial of your Saviour, it would mortify you more deeply to know that some observer were contrasting this conduct with your having prayed in public, and with your having exhorted him to make his peace with God the day previous, than it would to reflect that it disagreed with certain engagements formally entered into. There is no pledge to future obedience to God that can operate with such power as that which is implied in a course of manly Christian action.

3. *A Christian is never in greater danger than when tempted to conceal his religious character and relations.* Let me advise you, Christians, whenever you change your residence, take your place at once among the people of God. If you stay but a few weeks even among strangers, make yourself responsible in some way to Christians, and to those with whom you associate, for your religious behavior. And, if you stay long, connect yourself visibly with the people of God.

4. In conclusion, let me say that perfect frankness and openness are indispensable to success in seeking salvation. Surely, if a Christian must suffer as Peter did for practising concealment, then an unconverted sinner can never find salvation while pursuing such a course. No, my friend, your hope of going to heaven unseen, as if by a subterranean passage, is a vain hope. You cannot, by such endeavors, rise any higher than you now are. You must be willing that your pious friends, your pastor, your enemies, even, should know that you are seeking salvation. You must be willing, if needs be, that the wicked should scoff at, and persecute you. You must be willing to take Christ for your Master, and to follow him through good report and evil report, to own him openly as your Saviour. You must assume the truth of his declaration: "Whosoever confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven."

SERMON VI.

THE GREAT SALVATION.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?

Heb. VII. 3.

THIS text suggests at once three important thoughts, each one of which may be profitably made the ground of a separate discourse. First, we may consider the greatness of the Christian salvation. Secondly, the impossibility of escaping the severest doom, except by means of this salvation. And thirdly, the reasonableness and propriety of God's leaving men to perish for the mere neglect of the gospel.

At this time your attention is solicited to the first of these themes.

I. *The greatness of the Christian salvation.*

The magnitude of an object may be indicated by a variety of means. If it be the production of an elevated mind, the length of time employed in accomplishing it, the various agencies of subordinate coadjutors, the power and influence of the prime actor in the achievement, the conservation of other great interests as subsidiary to the work, the nature of the work itself as involving great power, the struggle with

antagonist influences, the benefits of the enterprise to individuals, and the numbers that share its blessings, are all indications of its greatness, its true importance. There can be no doubt, if we acknowledge the sacred Scriptures as authority, that the scheme of salvation began to be developed immediately after the fall of man. Then it was promised that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent." That is, to divest the thought of its figurative costume, an incarnate Redeemer should come, and should gain a complete conquest over the powers of evil in our world. The coming of this Saviour, the work of his mediation, as far as it was performed between the time of his coming to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, till he ascended and sat down again upon his throne in the heavens, and the scheme of grace connected with his mission, and the result, constitute the great salvation referred to in the text.

Now, observe the labor and the time employed in preparing the way for the coming of Christ. A course of instruction was commenced with the early patriarchs. A system of family religion was established. Institutions were founded. The State arose, with its legislation and its magistracy. A church was constituted, with its order of service, its sacred liturgy, its priesthood and its symbols prefiguring the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world. This church was preserved and carried through the most astonishing changes for a period of full four thousand years. The most stupendous judgments

were inflicted on the world as a means of preserving the race, and of protecting the church and preparing mankind for the reception of the Messiah.

When the population of the globe had become numerous, many suppose far more so than it has ever since been, a single family was shielded by a Divine interposition, and the entire population of the world besides destroyed by a flood. Then, the work of advancing the race, and preparing for the advent of the Messiah was begun anew in the family of Noah. Corruption and idolatry again became ascendant. Abraham was called. This father of the faithful was begirt by a peculiar Divine protection. He and his posterity received repeated direct communications from heaven. God "rebuked kings for their sake, saying: Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." By a remarkable judgment, the cities of the plain were destroyed, and righteous Lot was delivered. This served, as we are taught in the Epistle of Jude, as a specimen of the nature of the Divine government in delivering the righteous and overthrowing the wicked. Then, by a singular train of providences, the church went into Egypt. While there, the ascendancy of Joseph, with his influence, to protect his people in the midst of a great nation, was a beautiful type of the coming of the Messiah and of the influence of his mediation in behalf of his people. The church sank into a state of civil bondage, under which it groaned for nearly four centuries. Then Moses was raised up as a deliverer. Signal miracles

were again employed to deliver the people of God and overthrow the wicked. Thence arose the song of Moses at the passage of the Red Sea, giving a still deeper tone to the sentiment of the church, in her reception of the truth that God is a God of mercy and of judgment.

Indeed, all the signal deliverances of the people of God seem to have been intended to deepen and extend this impression. The salvation of Noah, and the destruction of the old world; the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the death of the first-born; the passage of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts; the triumphs of Joshua, and the crushing of idolatrous tribes; the deliverances by the judges; the subjugation of the land by David, and the subsequent recoveries from captivity, seem to have been intended to make this one impression, that God will deliver his people and destroy his enemies.

Another grand conception, as preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, was dependence upon a single distinguished deliverer. This thought was generated in the mind of the church, and rendered familiar by a succession of individuals achieving the deliverance of the church, and thus gradually preparing the human mind for one great deliverer in the Messiah. Such were Moses and Joshua, and the Judges, and David, and the distinguished reformers that recovered Israel from the captivities.

Then, there was a system of sacrificial offerings of innocent victims, prefiguring the Lamb of God, and

an interceding high-priest, and an entrance into the most holy place, symbolizing the intercession of the Redeemer. In addition to this, there were types of the Saviour's universal conquest in the influence of the ascendancy of Joseph, and of the pacific and wide dominion of Solomon. To complete the whole of this preparatory influence, a class of prophets was raised up, the influence of whom was a sort of embryo evangelism, and synagogues were brought into existence, with their readers of the law and their elders, as embryo Christian churches. Now, let me ask you to glance at a brief summary of what was done, and the means by which it was accomplished. To prepare the way of the Lord, for announcing distinctly and clearly the great salvation, five principal ends were attained.

1. A distinct and deep impression was created, in respect to the great primary truth that lies at the basis of all government, that God was a God of mercy and judgment. This end was secured by actual deliverances, and judgments of a signal character. The deliverance of Noah, and the destruction of the old world; the deliverance of Lot, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the exodus of Israel, and the slaying of the first-born; the passage of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Pharaoh; the conquest of Joshua; the successive deliverances by the Judges, and the subjugation of the land in the reign of David; these great movements, interspersed with providences of a different character, and extending through more

than twenty centuries, acted on the human mind as a series of chemical or philosophical experiments influence us, when they place before us a single great truth, in concrete forms and interesting varieties.

2. The idea of a single great deliverer was rendered familiar. Moses, Joshua, successive judges, and David, as signal instances, created an impression so distinct and deep, that not only the Jews expected a deliverer, but even heathen philosophers were speculating upon the probability of God's sending some one great reformer that should change the moral state of mankind. Such an one was even confidently expected, waited for; Christ was the desire of all nations.

3. The idea of a sacrificial offering, and the effectual intercessions of another on our behalf, was implanted and strengthened in the minds of men. Lambs and bullocks, turtle-doves, and young pigeons, were sacrificed. Altars, smoking daily with the blood of innocent victims, burnt-offerings, and the entrance of priests into the holy place—all these imposing symbols, accompanied with the declaration that without shedding of blood there was no remission, were maintained with more or less fulness from the time of Abel's offering till "Christ our passover [was] slain for us," and our great High-Priest passed into the holy place above, to intercede for his people.

4. The completeness of our Saviour's ultimate conquest was impressed on the minds of his people by the

influence, the perfect ascendancy, of Joseph and of Solomon.

5. The evangelism of the later prophets, and the establishment of the synagogue, gave the finishing stroke in the preparation for the appearance of the Messiah. Surely, that is a great salvation which is ushered into the world with such grand preparations. If a monarch were coming to perform some great enterprise; if he had been long preparing the way for his advent; if he were preceded by a resistless force in glittering armor, extending thousands of miles; if an equal army of scholars followed them, and a still longer line of statesmen and princes succeeded, and this great procession were forty years in passing before you, though you had not yet seen the king himself, nor even his chariot, or his immediate attendants, you could not fail to regard such precursors as indications of the magnificence of the work for which all this was a mere preparation. The precursors of Christ, in his great salvation, are immeasurably more imposing and grand. They are deliverances and judgments; a train of successive conquerors; monarchs that have exercised the most pacific and happy supremacy; prophets, speaking of his kingdom as if its history were already written. This procession, extending through a period of four thousand years, and in all its length sprinkled with the blood of innocent victims, proclaims the grandeur of the Messiah's mission; the greatness of the Christian salvation.

II. The agency of subordinate coadjutors is another

striking indication of the greatness of the salvation of the gospel. I do not here refer to the instrumentality of legislators, conquerors, poets and reformers among men, nor to the subsidizing of the powers of nature in ushering in or aiding the progress of the kingdom of Christ. These have just been presented in a different connection. I refer rather to angelic agency. While we possess no minute and detailed information respecting the mode in which angels act in the work of redemption, we are distinctly informed that they take a deep and earnest interest in the salvation of the gospel. In one place, the apostle Peter intimates that the scheme surpasses their comprehension. "Which things," says he, "the angels desire to look into." These holy beings possess capacities and powers far beyond what is attributed to them by those cursory and careless readers who have not felt an interest in pondering upon those glimpses of their character which we incidentally catch in the word of God. Angels were originally superior to men. I infer this from the words of the Psalmist, where he says of man: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels." This cannot mean less than an intimation that the feeblest of the holy angels is superior to the highest of the human race. But there are superior angels, archangels, great in strength. As Milton says, in the characteristic stateliness of his prose composition: "The angels themselves, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into the celestial principdoms and sa-

trapes, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees, through the great provinces of heaven." Such being their original superiority, and the period of their existence being indefinitely long, we cannot resist the impression that they are beings of vast power. Some of them, we are sure, were in being previously to the creation of the world, and they may have existed for many thousand centuries before. The greatest works ascribed to them in the Scriptures seem to have been performed with the utmost ease.

I cite but a single instance, out of many that might be selected. It is that of the angel of the Lord, going out and slaying, in a single night, a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the camp of the Assyrians, mentioned in 2 Kings xix. 35. The particular to which I wish to call your attention, is this. His dreadful dealing out of death was not like a slaughter produced by the superiority of an antagonistic force. It was a single stroke, performing the work with such a silent power that the effect was not perceived, by survivors, till the following morning. I am aware that it may be said that the phrase, angel of the Lord, may be employed here figuratively, to represent some sudden and fatal disease. Still, the borrowing of the word angel to represent such a power is an intimation that angelic agency possesses a greatness corresponding with this effect. That I may fix upon your minds a distinct impression of the greatness of the effect, and of the ease with which it was produced, let me recite

to you a graphic description of it, from one of the most brilliant poets in the language.

“The angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed ;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still.

“And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride ;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

“And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail ;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpets unblown.

“And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal ;
And the might of the gentile unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the breath of the Lord.”

There is one other instance of angelic greatness mentioned in the apocalypse, in respect to which I make a passing remark. His appearance was one of such majesty and glory that the apostle John, who, we must believe, had elevated conceptions of the Deity, mistook him for God himself, and fell at his feet to worship him. The angel forbade him, assuring him that he was only a fellow-servant.

These glorious beings are represented as existing in vast numbers, and as exercising an important agency in ushering in and promoting the Christian salvation. The law was given through their instru-

mentality. Thus it is said, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the Jews had received the law by the disposition of angels. According to Calvin, Beza, and, indeed, all the best commentators, this means that angels were the instruments in giving the law at Mount Sinai. In Ps. lxxviii. 17, it is said: "The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as at Sinai, in the holy place." Moses, in referring to the same event says: "The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them: He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints (that is, angels); from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Angels often appeared to the patriarchs and prophets; they instructed Daniel and John in their prophetic communications. They came down in a multitude and celebrated, by an anthem of praise, the birth of the Messiah. They were with him in his temptation. An angel strengthened him in the prayer of agony preceding his crucifixion. An angel rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre and told the disciples of the resurrection of Christ. An angel brought Peter from prison, dissolving the fetters of iron and opening the prison doors. So deep and universal is their sympathy in the work of man's salvation, that it is represented by describing them as thrilled with joy when a single sinner is converted. They shall also take part in the final judgment. Christ shall then be seated on his glorious throne, and all his holy angels with him. That must

be a great salvation, which enlists the energies of such beings in such numbers, and through such a period of time.

III. The greatness of the salvation of the gospel is indicated by the character and work of Christ. Our Saviour speaks of his pre-existent state in the most extraordinary manner. He does not attempt any proof of his former existence, but he assumes it in the most familiar manner, speaking of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and of the Son of Man's ascending up where he was before, as truths of an undeniable character, and to be received on his veracity. The apostle Paul also speaks of Christ as the Creator of all things. "By him (says he) 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." This power of the Son of God has been concentrated on the work of redemption. He became incarnate to promote it. He wrought his stupendous miracles for the same end. His earnestness was manifested in his teachings, his sufferings, his death. In all the Saviour's work, of creating and governing physically the universe, there is no appearance of any struggle of earnest endeavor. The work of creation, as far as we can judge, was performed with infinite ease. The physical universe is upheld without effort. But the work of redemption costs a sacrifice on the part of the same Being; he condescended, he became

subordinate, obedient unto death. That must be a great work which called forth the energies of such a Being for its accomplishment.

IV. It is an indication of the greatness of the salvation of the gospel that the world itself is preserved for the sake of accomplishing its objects. In the second epistle of Peter, that apostle adverts to the destruction of the old world by a flood, and then informs us that the same heavens and earth which now are, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. He then intimates that the delay of this judgment is to be accounted for simply on this ground, that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That is to say, the earth itself is preserved that the great salvation may be carried out in its glorious results. Is not that a great movement, a magnificent enterprise, for which the earth itself is kept in being?

V. The greatness of the Christian salvation is further indicated by the value of the benefits which it confers on every human being who becomes the object of its saving power. These benefits are often presented to you in the preaching of the gospel. They scarcely require to be mentioned, were it not for the fact that our very familiarity with them demands of us that we pause for a moment and dwell upon their overwhelming import. The Christian salvation delivers the soul from sin—recovers it from a habit of transgression in which it must sink in eternal degradation unless it be reclaimed and sanctified by the

gospel. In the place of being left to such a degraded state, it is brought to a state of perfect and eternal purity; every power is exalted, every affection is ennobled; and the entire character restored to the perfect moral image of God. The gospel saves the soul from unutterable and eternal torment. I need not dwell upon it. You know the fearful imagery, the fire, the remorse, the prison, the companionship, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth by which the unhappy state of the lost is represented. From all this the gospel saves the soul, and places it in a condition fitly represented by a residence in a city paved with gold, by rivers of pleasure and transporting songs of praise, and an uninterrupted companionship with saints and angels and Christ himself, and immortal joys. That is a great salvation which can deliver men from such evil, and raise them to such blessedness.

VI. I mention but one more indication of the greatness of the Christian salvation. The extent of this salvation in the subjugation of the world to Christ and in the largeness of the numbers saved. Christ, we are told, was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and in many ways, we are taught, that his conquest over the world shall be complete. It will silence the clarion of war, by its pacific influence. It will melt the sword of the magistrate, and unbar the door of the prison. It will change the cottage of squalid poverty into an ample and cleanly mansion, and the rags of beggary into garments of fine linen

and scarlet. It will place the lowest stratum of society on the same platform of refinement and character which the highest now occupies. It will make holiness universal, and crowd the whole earth with teeming millions of happy population. You would think a scheme of earthly ambition a great one which should be of such a nature, planned with such wisdom and executed with such vigor as to bring every earthly monarch in chains to grace the triumph of the conqueror. You would say it was *great*, if it thus subjected all the earth to one political head. But Christ shall cause every monarch on earth to follow his triumphal chariot, and that without chains. He will subdue without degrading—subjugate to exalt: he will divest princes of their crowns only by giving richer ones, alike to them and each one of their subjects. He will rule the world by the simple power of charity. You may listen to such statements now with a smile of incredulity. Yet principles are at work which are with the utmost certainty leading to these results. The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Where darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, there the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days. Then, who can estimate the number that will be ultimately reached, blessed, and eternally saved by the gospel? It will be a great multitude which no man can number. When they shall all stand on the heavenly hills with harp and song, when the

shouts of the ransomed shall rise as the sound of many waters, and all this blessedness shall be seen as the result of the Saviour's mission, then it will be acknowledged that this is a great salvation. I close with a single reflection. How vast and solemn the responsibility of those who enjoy the institutions of the gospel. This salvation, my friends, is a magnificent system of grace, intended to promote the present and eternal well-being of each one of you. Shall four thousand years of judgment and mercy be employed to usher in the full announcement of it, and can you with impunity neglect it? Shall a succession of great deliverers be raised up to prepare the way for the great Deliverer, and will you refuse to be rescued by his grace? Shall victims bleed daily for forty centuries to familiarize the human mind to the idea of an expiation by an innocent victim, and you decline to avail yourself of an atoning sacrifice made by the Son of God? Shall myriads of holy angels manifest an interest in a scheme of redemption not intended for them, but for you, and you yourself neglect it? Shall the Son of God come down from his glorious throne, and work stupendous miracles, and teach heavenly doctrines, and bleed and die for you, and the rocks be rent, and the earth quake from sympathy with him, and you, bought with his blood, feel no sympathy, no interest in his scheme of mercy? Shall this salvation ransom men from the power of sin, rescue them from eternal death, and exalt them to heaven, and you, the very object of its regard, slight it? Shall it conflict

with the antagonist powers of darkness, and go on from conquering to conquer, till a world sits at the Saviour's feet clothed and in its right mind, and will you, in the very midst of the conflict, allow yourself to be so occupied with trifles as to be unaware of the glorious movement? Shall a great multitude of our lost race, a multitude which no man can number, enter the heavenly Jerusalem, with songs and crowns of eternal glory, and you be cast out, because you *would not* think of the things that belong to your peace? I conjure you to meditate upon the position which you occupy. If the scheme is too large for your faith, God will not belittle it, to please you. Your views must be enlarged to meet it. If its results are too glorious for your unused vision, he will not dim its brightness for your accommodation. As soon would he veil the sun, and diminish his benign influences, to suit it to the disordered organs of an individual. You must seek instruction; anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see. If you think that the plan of salvation ought to be a compulsory scheme, making its blessings to possess the nature of a necessity, and rendering misery impossible, yet God will not divest his government of the freedom and voluntariness that belongs to it, to suit himself to your metaphysical difficulties and objections. You can have no excuse for living in the neglect of this great salvation. Your position, in respect to it, is very different from those who lived during the preparatory period, before the coming of the Messiah. They saw only the morning

star, or the early dawn. You bask in the broad sunlight. Christ has been exhibited as the Lamb of God. His bleeding sacrifice has made such an appeal as was never known before his advent. His profound, wise, sweet instructions have a claim upon you, such as the law and the prophets never exhibited. His resurrection and ascension have introduced a new and wonderfully attractive interest. His Holy Spirit has been sent to speak to your heart. He will come to judgment. You shall stand before him. Beware, then, beware how you treat this great salvation.

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT SALVATION—THE ESCAPE.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?

Heb. II. 3.

IN addressing you from this text on a former occasion, I invited your attention to the greatness of the Christian salvation. Let me now offer some suggestions in relation to the impossibility of escaping a fearful doom, except by carefully availing ourselves of the advantages of this great scheme of mercy and grace.

By a system of beautiful analogies, those great principles that come into action in securing our everlasting well-being, are continually exercised in relation to our ordinary daily interests. We are familiar with the idea of danger, because we are constantly exposed to it. Our fears are addressed daily. We lose property, friends, reputation, and health. Our very life is in constant jeopardy. These dangers often exist unseen. Sometimes they are suddenly revealed because immediately impending. Sometimes they are made to appear with a fearful clearness, though lying yet far in the future. By a similar influence of sur-

rounding circumstances, we are made familiar with the idea of escape. Sometimes we see no escape from an impending evil. We are apt, however, in such a case, to look back upon the past, and to indulge in vain regrets that we had not earlier taken wise precautions, and avoided what, by our neglect, has become inevitable. How wisely has God thus prepared us to understand what is meant by the soul's being in danger; a method of escape, and the possibility of so neglecting the means of escape as to render our final doom inevitable. As preliminary to a practical consideration of this subject, let us dwell for a few moments, on the nature and reality of the danger referred to in the text. If you have fled to Christ for refuge, you are safe. He is a covert from the storm. But if you have not fled to Christ, you are in danger. You are in danger of becoming confirmed in the habit of sin, and of rejecting the gospel until you are totally insensible to its claims. You are in danger of imbibing such feelings in relation to the Christian salvation that its claims shall become more and more repulsive to you. You are in danger of being abandoned by the Holy Spirit, and of being given over to a reprobate mind. You are in danger of dying suddenly in your sins. You are in danger of going to the judgment-seat of Christ unpardoned and guilty; of standing there, like the man who had not on the wedding garment, speechless. You are in danger of losing your soul. These dangers are as real as the danger of losing property, reputation,

friends, health, and life. Some of them you have experienced. You have actually lost moral sensibility, susceptibility of being impressed by the gospel. Perhaps you have lost the habit of prayer, and of serious contemplation of your spiritual interests. You may have less solicitude for your salvation than formerly. Why may not the danger of losing the soul be *real*? Do you say you cannot make it seem so? There is a similar difficulty in making the danger of a premature death seem real. Yet, if you will reflect on it, the difficulty may be in a great measure removed. Reflect on the frailty of your body, the influence of disease on it; the fact that the great proportion of the race are dying prematurely. Think of the disease of your father or mother, of the brother whose eyes you closed. Survey the monuments of death. Let your mind take time to ponder these interesting and solemn realities, and you will feel a growing assurance of your own mortality, and that there is a reality in your exposure to death. So, if you will think of it; if you will read the teachings of Christ with respect to men's dying in their sins, with respect to the worth of the soul; and ponder his solemn inquiry, What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, you will perceive the reality of your danger. Equally familiar are we, with the idea of escape. There is scarcely one of all our earthly interests, the ruin of which has not at some time seemed inevitable. When the possessions of men are preserved to them,

there have been seasons in which many have, for a time, seen nothing but bankruptcy before them. They have been delivered from ruin by a mere escape. What hair-breadth escapes can almost every man who has a good character relate in respect to its preservation. What temptations beset you in youth! How many of your companions fell under them. It is amazing to any man of good moral character, who has arrived at the age of fifty, to look back and reckon up his acquaintances that have made shipwreck of character, and sunk in infamy and ruin. Then, you can see special temptations from which you were delivered, and many a man of good character, is overwhelmed when he thinks how he was carried round and round on the whirlpool of dissipation, and yet escaped being drawn down into the engulfing flood. There are few, of an advanced age, or even in middle life, that cannot look back to the most narrow and surprising escapes from death. The idea of escape is thus rendered familiar, and God has made use of this idea in revealing a method of deliverance from the fearful dangers to which the soul is exposed. But the text plainly intimates that the great salvation is a sure method of escape. So our Saviour has taught us elsewhere. He has represented himself as being the friend of sinners. He has evinced that friendship, by making the greatest sacrifice on their behalf. He came to our world from love to men. He befriended the most lowly and the most guilty. He forgave every sincere penitent, relieved every miserable suppliant for his favor.

He was accessible to all classes, and he assures us that whosoever comes to him, he will in nowise cast out. He invites the weary and heavy laden to come to him, and promises rest to all such. Whosoever will confide in him as their friend and Saviour, he assures us shall not perish but receive everlasting life. Now it is in full view of these assumed truths, that the inquiry of the text is pressed upon us. It is as if the apostle had said: "So much I assume." We are in danger; in danger of losing everlasting life, of sinking down into eternal death. If we are ever saved, it will be by a mere escape from this terrific jeopardy. Yet there is a system of grace provided, a system most ample and free. A system such that no man can be lost who will properly avail himself of it. But suppose you neglect it, of what possible advantage will it be to you? Is it of any use that rich stores of provisions are brought to you while in a state of starvation, if you will not eat of them? Suppose the most nutritious viands are proffered to you in a kind and even tempting manner. They are brought to you in a service of silver, presented by the hand of friendship, and accompanied with tones of love, saying: "Eat, O friends, drink, O beloved." Yet if you *will* not partake of them, their adaptation to your necessities, and the kindness with which they are proffered, will be of no avail. Now the provisions of salvation, through Christ, are made. They are ample; they are free. But what if you neglect them?

Where is any other refuge? What other ground have you for expecting that you shall escape at last?

Can you hope to escape on the ground of your good qualities? Remember that the Divine law requires perfect holiness. It is as plainly unsatisfied in its demand if one-half of your actions are holy and one-half sinful, as it would be if they were all sinful. It no more demands holiness at one moment, than it demands it for every other moment of your existence. If you sin at all, therefore, you fall under its curse. But, besides this, you ought to remember that sin cuts you off from spiritual communion with God, and without that spiritual communion your sin is perpetuated, and you are left to a sinful unspiritual state of mind. Let me ask you, then, are you not conscious of living without God in the world; of deriving your happiness from the things that are seen and temporal, rather than from communion with your heavenly Father? Do you not know, with an intuitive certainty, that you are a miserable sinner? How, then, can you expect to escape on the ground of the excellency of your character? Is your character purer and better before God, than was that of the apostle Paul? Yet he would glory only in the cross of Christ, and hoped to stand before God in peace because we have forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and counted himself totally unworthy of the Divine favor. The saints in heaven are represented as clothed in garments purified and made white in the blood of the Lamb. They sing praises to him who

redeemed them to God, and cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, as signifying that they are indebted to him for them. Do you seriously think that you can escape the doom of the lost, without wearing the same blood-washed robes, and joining in the same song, and casting down your crown in token of acknowledgment of your dependence on Christ. The most pious and devout Christians have often doubted, notwithstanding their attainments in Christian virtue, whether they should find acceptance with God; and indeed we are plainly taught that the righteous are scarcely saved. Can you hope, then, that, by the superiority of your character, you can escape the doom of the lost?

Can you hope to escape by the cultivation of the sentiments of natural religion? There is something in our nature that may be termed the religious propensity. Just as we are constituted for the exercise of domestic affections, such as parental and filial love, and as we are constituted to exercise emotions of taste, when we look out upon the beauties of the physical world, so we are constituted to venerate, to worship, a superior being. Many have been led to suppose from this circumstance that all men are religious by nature, in the only sense in which any one is religious, and that the difference that exists in religious character depends upon the development and cultivation of this propensity. Hence we often meet with the most complacent remarks made by worldly men in respect to the emotions they have

experienced when visiting ancient cathedrals and witnessing religious ceremonies performed with a grand and imposing magnificence. And hence, too, the prevailing belief that those who worship heathen gods are accepted as possessing true religious sentiments. But let us inquire—may not the religious propensity be perverted? May not a man give the glory that belongs to God to graven images? May he not bow down to vile reptiles, as did the Egyptians, and be degraded just in proportion to the degree of his worship, and the cultivation of this perverted propensity? May he not regard a wafer as containing a mysterious power, and bow before it and substitute the mutterings of a puerile superstition in the place of an intelligent and affectionate and reverent address to the true God in his revealed character through the mediation of the Lord Jesus? Or may he not, even, put a reverent behavior in the sanctuary in the place of the spirit of adoption, and endeavor to substitute this reverence for a sincere and unshaken purpose to do the will of his heavenly Father? The demand made upon us in the sacred Scriptures is a demand for a new *quality* of religion, and not an increased *quantity* of *natural* religious sentiment. God requires not merely that we should worship, but that we should worship *him*, and that we should worship him in his true character—in spirit and in truth. Let me make this point plain, if possible. There is scarcely anything, in my opinion, in which men of a worldly spirit more readily

deceive themselves, than in placing a false estimate upon what is sometimes called religious sentiment. I cite as an instance of this the opening stanza of Pope's universal prayer. Observe the language:—

“Father of all, in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.”

The prominent idea of this verse is simply this—worship is rendered to God acceptably by men of all different characters of religion. God is worshipped by saints with the most enlightened views—by savages under the forms of heathen idolatry, and by philosophers in the study of his works. It is intimated that they all mean substantially the same thing, and render to God a service which he will accept because it is characterized by devout sentiments. The mistake is an extremely gross one, and the ground of it very obvious. Virtue does not consist in the exercise of any propensity, but in its being cherished in its proper relations. There is a propensity in our nature which leads to filial affection and deference. If a child exercises that propensity in a proper manner towards a good parent, he is a dutiful child; but if he allow himself to be led away from a good father, in the bestowment of that affection upon a vicious old man who promises him sinful indulgence, his affection towards this wicked and unprincipled substitute is not filial virtue. So if the same propensity which was intended to awaken exalted sentiments of homage

towards the Supreme Being be directed towards another being, or towards God in name, with a character radically different from that which he has revealed to us, there is plainly no true piety in such an exercise. If that connubial love which hallows the matrimonial relation, be directed away from its proper object and fixed upon another, although the propensity is the same, this allowed vagrancy becomes a crime. Hence the inspired writers refer to this very idea as a means of exemplifying the sinfulness of a wrongly directed exercise of the religious sentiment. They represent God as having espoused his church, and censure her defection, her going after idols, as the grossest conjugal infidelity. And hence also the apostle James refers to this very imagery to reprove the guilt of misdirected spiritual affections. His language of rebuke is strong: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God." According to these views, the love and worship of Jove are not an acceptable service to the Father of all. On the contrary, a misdirected devotion, like a misdirected filial or connubial affection is vile in proportion to its intensity. No cultivation of the sentiments of natural religion, then, can prepare you for communion with the true God, or secure your escape from the most dreadful inflictions of his displeasure.

Can you hope to escape by some other provision of mercy if you neglect the great salvation revealed in the

gospel. The testimony of the Sacred Scriptures is very full and explicit on this point. Our Saviour says: "If ye believe not that I am he," that is, if you do not receive me as the true Messiah, "ye shall die in your sins, and whither I go ye cannot come." It is clearly taught in this passage, that those who neglect the salvation provided in the gospel shall die in a guilty and unpardoned state, and that such shall never enter heaven. There is a class of persons spoken of in another place, of whom it is said that they shall never have forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. How certainly are such cut off from the hope of heaven! In the Acts of the Apostles we are told that Peter said to the Jews, in speaking of Christ: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Here it is plainly asserted that salvation cannot be found except in Jesus Christ. If that salvation be neglected, therefore, there is left no ground of hope. There is no escape, if we neglect this great salvation. In our text, there is a comparison instituted between the effect of violating the law and neglecting the gospel. In the preceding context, it is said: "The word spoken by angels (that is the law published at Sinai) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." Then the text is introduced as an argument *à fortiori*: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed

unto us by them that heard him." The force of the argument is this: The transgressors of the law were signally punished. Escape was impossible. But this salvation imposes higher obligations than the law. The law was announced by angels, the gospel was proclaimed by the Lord from heaven. The law could be repaired, and was repaired by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But, when the remedy for deliverance from the penalty of a violated law is despised, neglected, there can be no escape. A similar argument, founded on this very comparison, is adduced in the 12th chapter of the same epistle. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." In Heb. x. 26-29, we have a still stronger and clearer expression of the same truth. Let me recite to you the whole passage. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins;" that is to say, there will be no new provision made; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Yes, my im-

penitent friend, the gospel is the one only remedy. You cannot escape an awful doom if you neglect the gospel. The goodness of your character will not protect you. It is madness to hope for it. The most pious Christians on earth have never dared rest their hopes on their personal goodness. The cultivation of the religious sentiment will not save you. There will be no other provision made. Accept the proffered grace of Christ. "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

SERMON VIII.

THE GREAT SALVATION—NEGLECT.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION.

Heb. II. 3.

IN two discourses previously delivered on this text, I have discussed the greatness of the Christian salvation, and the impossibility of escaping a fearful doom except by a careful attention to the provisions of mercy and grace in the gospel. One other topic remains, the just consequences of neglect.

We are not called upon to prove that crime ought to be punished. Human nature is so constituted that no man can avoid the conviction that it is right to follow some kinds of action with an infliction of suffering. If one should call in question this principle, it is only necessary that prowling assassins should put his dearest friend's and his own life in jeopardy, or that the midnight robber should filch from him his estate, and he will immediately become the advocate of retributive justice. It is very natural that men should see and feel the propriety of penal inflictions in proportion as crimes are striking, and, in their immediate consequences nearly related to their indi-

vidual interests. Yet, it often happens that a less striking injury is greatest in character, and really most deserving of punishment. If a burglar enter your counting-house by false keys, and purloin a thousand dollars, you have a keen sense of his ill desert. If a gentleman corrupt the moral principles of your son by leading him into fashionable vice, you are not apt to feel that that same gentleman has inflicted upon you the deeper wrong. The injury is less striking in the manner of its visitation. In the case of this corruptor of youth, no civil law is violated, no sudden infraction of the rules of courtesy is made. The evil steals upon you by little and little. Your censures do not rest on the tempter alone, as in the case of the burglar. They are distributed among several persons. You justly blame your son for yielding to the temptation, and yourself for not having more firmly established him in the principles of virtue, or for a too negligent guardianship over him. In this distribution of blame you are likely to take lenient views of the very serpent that came into your paradise and destroyed it. Yet there is no wrong ever inflicted on a family that will compare with corrupting its members.

Some sins are also under-estimated, just because they do not appear in an overt act upon which the mind can fasten and fix its censure. Such is that whole class of moral delinquencies which consists in omissions of duty. If a man neglect to arouse the energies of his being and employ them in a useful occupation, he

may seem to do nothing wrong, yet God has treated such conduct as highly criminal, and has ordained that he that dealeth with a slack hand shall be punished with the ills of poverty, and that he that sleepeth in harvest shall be accounted as a son that causeth shame.

All real good is the product of labor. In creation, and in the operation of what are termed the laws of nature, God is continually putting forth his energies. Our Saviour came to earth to perform a work; a great work of suffering and toil; a work in which his holy energies wrought vigorously, till it was accomplished. "My Father," says he, "worketh hitherto, and I work." All things are full of labor. The productions of the earth are by the throes and throbbings of nature. Redemption is wrought out by the energies of one travailing in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save. The regeneration of the soul, is by the inenergizing work of the Holy Spirit, and the means of grace are produced by the sympathies of the church with her Head, by which her members are workers together with him. All the beneficence in the universe is by action, and hence God has established a universal law that activity must be encouraged, and that any interest may be lost by simple neglect. Thus, in our text, the Apostle has intimated that the salvation of the soul may be lost by mere negligence.

MY OBJECT SHALL BE TO EVINCE THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS ARRANGEMENT, TO SHOW YOU THAT IT IS RIGHT, THAT IT IS ACCORDING TO OBVIOUS AND ADMIT-

TED PRINCIPLES, THAT MEN SHOULD BE LOST IF THEY NEGLECT THE GREAT SALVATION OF THE GOSPEL.

No blessing can be of great value unless it be highly estimated. It must be looked upon by the mind as a treasure, or cherished with a fond affection ere it can minister enjoyment. But the estimate of a blessing depends greatly on a perception of the necessity of exertion to attain it. The first thing to be done for achieving any practical end is the securing of attention to its real importance. Earnest endeavor is always preceded by a perception of the real or supposed reason for exertion. The incipency of every important undertaking, therefore, is attention to the subject. Hence, if you would secure any great effort on the part of others you always begin with soliciting their attention. If the interest be truly important you are confident of success only in proportion as you can awaken thought. On the other hand, if you would thwart any great movement, no other means are so effectual as the diversion of the minds of the principal agents from the subject, the lulling of the powers of attention to indolent repose.

This law of our nature, by which attention is necessary to success, and according to which neglect secures defeat, is universal. No interest is too great to be governed by it, none too minute to be subject to it. If you will but have a honeysuckle twine itself over your window, and display its graces to your eye, and breathe into your chamber its fragrance, you must think of it. You must dwell upon the degree

of pleasure which it will afford, and upon the means of securing it. If you will accumulate an ample estate, your mind must be awakened in some degree to the advantages of affluence. You must see your comfortable mansion rising in prospect, your abundant supplies for coming want, your elegant gratifications of taste, your lavish hospitalities, or generous acts of beneficence, or your enjoyment of the consequence which wealth will give you in the estimation of the world. Some, or all of these desired advantages must be looked upon, and then you must perceive how it is that eating the bread of carefulness and employing the hand of diligence will secure worldly fortune. Thoughtfulness in this larger interest has precisely the same relation to success as it has in securing the lesser advantage referred to in the vine to be trained up to your window, and neglect will be in each case alike fatal to the interest in question.

The most important and the smallest self-culture are subject to the same law. If you will attain the comparatively small accomplishment of an elegant chirography, you must think of the advantages that accrue from it. You must feel the gratification of taste or perceive its influence in awakening the admiration of others, or its connection with general improvement. So, also, if you will fill your mind with ancient lore, and make it opulent in stores of science and various learning, your powers must be summoned to attend to the subject, and in both cases alike, in

the smaller and the larger interest, a negligent inattention is the sure precursor of failure.

This arrangement operates as a constant encouragement to mental activity. Why should it not bear upon the highest possible interest? Why should not thought and attention be as needful to the largest, as to the minutest desirable objects? Add another, then, to the physical objects just presented. The fragrant vine can afford you real pleasure; the affluent estate with its elegant mansion, and full supplies, and means of hospitality and beneficence, can afford more rich and varied and permanent gratification; the heavenly mansions in the midst of a city with golden pavements and trees of unfading verdure, a mansion in which you shall entertain angelic companions, and through the halls of which entrancing song shall flow, can afford still higher and purer, and more enduring enjoyment. Can any good reason be shown why these should not all alike demand attention—why they should not all alike be liable to be lost by neglect? If each of the first two is a premium to mental activity, why should not the latter be so too? The fact that an ample fortune affords greater and more lasting good than the fragrant vine is no reason why the larger and more enduring blessing should not depend on thought and attention, and be equally liable to be lost by neglect. The greater superiority and endurance of the heavenly treasures suggest no reason why they too should not demand thought and be exposed to loss from the same cause, from neglect.

We can see no reason why man's moral agency should not be commensurate with his being, and have respect to all conceivable blessings, great and small, temporary and eternal.

By parity of reasoning it is manifest that the mind's attention is alike necessary to the attainment of subjective good, whether it be of higher or lower degree, of briefer or more enduring continuance. You must give some thought to attain the smallest personal accomplishment. You cannot acquire a graceful penmanship without first giving it importance in your mind's estimate. You cannot become an accomplished artist, and place the productions of your pencil, or your chisel, by the side of those of the great masters, without first securing, in your own mind, a high estimation of the value of the attainment. You cannot, without attention, ever be led to dive into profound authors and bring up the pearls of literature, or to make bold incursions upon the realms of nature, and come back like a successful warrior laden with the spoils of ravished provinces. You must first summon your powers to think of the importance of such achievements. Indeed, the greater the mental accomplishment which you seek the more earnest is the attention which it demands. Now, what reason drawn from earth or heaven can be shown, why those higher qualities of our spiritual being, such as love to God and hearts attuned to his praise, and affections that ally one to holy beings forever, should not, also, demand attention, and be liable to be lost by neglect? Let these interests, rising one above another in im-

portance, be arranged in order, as we just now presented them as objects of desire. Here is a small personal accomplishment, an elegant chirography; a larger one, extraordinary attainment in the higher walks of art, and in liberal learning; a still larger, the acquisition of those qualities and relations which may be attained through a mediator, and which clothe the soul in robes of eternal honor. Can any reason be shown why attention should not be demanded alike for all three of these interests? Why they should not all alike be liable to be lost by neglect? The larger interests of general learning do not less require attention than the attainment of an inferior art. Neglect of the greater is as sure a precursor of failure as neglect of the less. The same principle is only carried out when men lose their eternal well-being by neglecting to secure the spiritual qualities that are inseparable from it.

But if the attainment of good is justly made to depend on the arousing of the attention, on a quickening of the mental energies, to perceive its value, not less does it depend on continuous endeavor. You must think of that fragrant vine not only, you must also exercise a care about its planting, its nutriment, and its training.

Continuous labor is necessary both to the well developing of the object and the fitting of your own mind to derive pleasure from it. It is true, that all agreeable objects afford some degree of delight, as affording the first stimulus of endeavor either in their

production or in augmenting by culture our own susceptibilities for enjoying them. But, there is a peculiar relish belonging to an object which you have yourself had an agency in producing. That vine possesses a peculiar interest because your own right hand planted it. Its curvatures and twinings seem more graceful because you trained them. Its flowers look out from among the green leaves with smiles, and seem to bid you good-morrow as their patron, because your fingers placed them in such tasteful collocations, and your quickened fancy can easily think of the dew-drops upon their petals as tears of gratitude for your affectionate care. The fragrance seems sweeter because without your agency it had never existed.

It is not less evident that continuous labor is necessary to the production of wealth, nor that industry and frugality, in its acquisition, are the means of enhancing its enjoyment. That house has richer associations of sweet home connected with it if it be the purchase of your industry, and more still if you contrived its architectural arrangements and labored personally in the superintendence of its erection. That furniture is more pleasing to a family if it bear the marks of the taste and skilful arrangement of its female members, and especially if every apartment be embellished with the products of their industry. The enjoyment of these objects, and their possession, depend on protracted endeavor. They are the rewards of industry, premiums for the encouragement of labor

We never think of these as hard conditions. Yet they are indispensable. If they be pretermitted the rewards are lost. Now place in the same range with these as before the heavenly mansion, and it is obvious that the same law ought to belong to the higher object, as to the two inferior ones. You have again (the vine) the earthly estate, and the heavenly riches. We can see no reason why the greater should not depend on strenuous endeavor as well as the two lesser interests. The enjoyments of the heavenly state though in the most important sense a gratuity, as purchased by the sacrifice of our Redeemer, are nevertheless enhanced by the strenuousness of the effort made necessary for their attainment.

You know that the apostle Paul has represented the securing of salvation by the achievement of the successful competitor in the Olympic games. The Christian is represented as contending for a heavenly crown. He must practise a self-denial analogous to the severe discipline of one preparing for the race, when he keeps his body under by restraining all enervating passions by taking a simple diet, and by those athletic exercises which turn all his corporeal energies into one direction. He must circumspectly survey the dangers of his career, and stimulate his energies by a salutary apprehension, and contend with manly vigor till the crown is attained. The competitor for the earthly crown summoned all his powers, divested himself of entangling garments, and united caution with earnestness lest he should fall, and then contended

with such competition that he could barely throw himself past the goal covered with sweat and dust and ready to faint for joy, if he escaped being made a cast-away, if he received the crown. Such earnestness, such strenuousness and protraction of endeavor are made necessary to the attainment of a crown of glory.

The impression made by this representation might be deepened by dwelling upon another class of images adduced by the same apostle to evince the necessity of earnest endeavor to secure the bliss of heaven. The life of the Christian is compared to a warfare. He is presented to us as covered with a complete coat of mail. His antagonists are principalities and powers. He is surrounded with the strategy of infernal cunning, and assailed with darts of fire. When, however, the terrible missiles come thick and fast, the shield of faith is interposed, and quenched are all the fiery darts of the adversary. When the battle-axe of Apollyon is uplifted, so that the head of his victim seems about to be cloven at a stroke, its edge is turned by that impenetrable helmet, the hope of salvation. Yet the conflict continues. The Christian warrior is sometimes seen with waving plume and drawn sword charging the foe, and causing whole columns to fall back in confusion. Sometimes he is seen retreating. Sometimes he is down, covered with dust and blood, and groaning under the wounds he has received; anon he is up, following the Captain of his salvation, uttering shouts of defiance, and easily hewing out for himself

a passage through the thickest ranks of the enemy. There is no discharge in this war while life lasts, but when the warfare is accomplished he bears a victor's palm. But his triumph is sweet, because his conflict has been severe. The palm of victory is valuable because obtained with difficulty. The righteous are scarcely saved, and the crown, the harp, the repose, the purity, and the songs of heaven are all enhanced in value by the strenuousness of the endeavor by which they were obtained.

And why should it not be so. The smallest of the three objects mentioned, is rendered the more a blessing because depending on labor, and because the mind can think of it as a good which had not been obtained but by exertion. The ample estate and its comforts are proffered in such a manner as to demand exertion, and attended with such conditions that they may be lost by neglect. Why should not all possible blessings be a means of similar discipline? Why should not the value of heaven be forever enhanced in the mind's estimate by its being the reward of strenuous exertion, by a keen and never-ceasing remembrance of the fact, that it might have been lost by neglect?

But there is yet another great end to be achieved by those arrangements, according to which blessings may be secured through thoughtfulness and exertion, and may be lost by neglect. I mean a training of man to the habit of forecast, and to a disciplined energy in forming and executing lofty purposes. Such is the constitution with which God has gifted us, that

we find the chief stimulus to exertion in the prospective consequences of present action. You would never lend either thought or muscle to the planting and training of that vine, if you did not see it flourishing in prospect, and anticipate its fragrance and beauty. You would not toil with patient industry and husband your gains with care if you did not see that accumulated wealth would confer advantages, nor even then would you make exertion if you did not believe that these advantages would be lost by neglect. A forecasting faith is essential to the very nature of the principle motives to human action. Moses had respect to the recompense of reward, when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. That is, he saw the alternative before him. If he preferred the reproach of Christ to the treasures in Egypt, he foresaw a bright career of honor, a crown of eternal glory. If he should prefer the earthly kingdom, and refuse to suffer affliction with the people of God, he saw that heaven would be lost. He felt the power of this alternative. He was swayed by it. To suppose him acting without it, is to suppose he is swayed without the action of any great motive.

Now we find in fact, that God leaves men to the action of this faith in all the great interests of life, and their chief discipline depends on it. Here is a man just commencing the navigation of a ship between two distant ports. His object is gain. The means by which he expects success are, skill in trafficking, and a cheap transportation of his merchandise.

He can pursue a circuitous and comparatively safe navigation, and secure small pecuniary advantage; he can make a more hazardous voyage with the prospect of larger profits. God will not interpose to inform him which course he must take, much less will he compel him to choose that which is best. He intends that these circumstances shall discipline the powers and draw out the energies of the man. He must make his own estimate of the value of his life, and of the degree of jeopardy to which it is to be exposed. He must calculate the value of his skill in making the more hazardous passage. He must balance the difference of his prospective gains against the difference of dangers. In this estimate of alternatives, and this decision of a great practical question, and the enterprise of pursuing the more difficult course there is a vast amount of discipline. If he is wise, and does not undertake more than a man of his powers may hope to achieve, he is a gainer for himself, he improves his art for succeeding navigators, he augments the advantages of that species of commerce. If on the other hand he has made a rash decision, and is not equal to the task which he has undertaken; if he finds himself on a lee shore and loses his ship, his cargo, and the lives of all on board, God will not interpose by miracle to save him. If he should do this in the case of every rash and foolish enterprise, he would be, in effect, offering a premium for rashness and folly. He would take away the incentive to independent thinking, to caution, to enterprise.

This kind of discipline pervades the entire providential and moral government of God. It is not limited to objects of slight importance. It belongs to the greatest. It is intended to qualify man for acting in relation to high objects. It is not limited by the shortness of the period in which an enterprise is to be accomplished. It belongs to the whole of life, the whole of eternity. God would form human character for the greatest undertakings, for a career of honor, glory, and immortality. He has pointed out a course of perfect safety. He has left us free to hazard everything by our rashness and our untractable temper.

Let me now proceed to a practical application of this reasoning. It is not to prove to you that men will be lost, if they neglect the gospel. Our text teaches this doctrine clearly; the fact that God has so taught, I consider ample proof of the justice of the arrangement. I have aimed rather to counteract that easy credulity by which men hope to escape the operations of those principles in another world, which act on them continually in this. Did you never hope, my unconverted friend, that God would, by some means, render your eternal interests secure? Did you never fancy that, because this interest was so large and so enduring, God would not intrust it to your choice? That he would not stake its attainment on exertion, nor make it liable to be lost by neglect? Now let me suggest some friendly cautions by asking you to look well to the evidence before you trust to

such a belief. What proof can you adduce to show that God does not intend to awaken thought, to rouse the mental energies of men, by making his highest and most enduring blessings to depend on attention. What evidence have you that he does not design to employ such vast alternatives to give consequence to your intellectual being? How know you that he does not consider negligence so great an evil in moral government as to make it worth while that eternal death should be its consequence? He certainly has not revealed to you that eternal happiness, like eternal existence, is secure without exertion on your part. The fact that all his other gifts, small and great, are liable to be lost by neglect, certainly does not prove that it will not be so with this. What assurance have you that God does not intend to encourage exertion by making heavenly treasure depend on it as well as by connecting such conditions with inferior blessings? What evidence have you to show that God does not appoint this high discipline for immortal minds? that he is not training men for enterprises so lofty, and that anything short of forming a decision and acting on questions involving eternal bliss and woe, are adequate means of discipline? I think you have no evidence on these points to sustain you. Your only rational hope is in an immediate and earnest attention to the gospel. Do not let this indefinite hoping that something else will answer the desired end deceive you. Neglect is easy. It is like slumber; the more profound it is the less is it observed. Yet,

when you are borne on a gentle current, you may be near the engulfing cataract. If you will be saved, you must be aroused, you must awake to righteousness. You must make a strenuous endeavor, you must flee from the wrath to come; you must lay hold on eternal life; you must strive; you must agonize to enter in at the strait gate, for many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, when once the master of the house hath risen up and shut to the door. Speak not of your dependence on Divine grace as a ground for delay. That dependence furnishes a reason for instant and earnest effort. Now Divine assistance may be afforded. Neglect that grace now, and another opportunity of availing yourself of its proffers may not be granted. Another admonition of the Spirit may never reach you. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. God will not depart from those great universal laws by which he governs the universe, to meet your peculiarities. You may lose any interest by neglect. Your gold and silver may canker. Your garments may be moth-eaten. Your health may fail through negligence. Your mental powers may grow dim, through inaction; your spiritual faculties may be covered all over with mould, and penetrated with a hopeless decay. Still, the gospel can recover you now. It is adapted to your necessities. But this gospel can be rejected. Its gracious proffers may be treated as a nullity. Then, when the storm of

the final judgment shall gather, you may hear, in its inarticulate roar, a voice of terror: "How can ye escape who have neglected so great salvation?"

SERMON IX.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

A CERTAIN MAN WENT DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO, AND FELL AMONG THIEVES, WHICH STRIPPED HIM OF HIS RAIMENT, AND WOUNDED HIM, AND DEPARTED, LEAVING HIM HALF DEAD. AND BY CHANCE THERE CAME DOWN A CERTAIN PRIEST THAT WAY; AND WHEN HE SAW HIM, HE PASSED BY ON THE OTHER SIDE. AND LIKEWISE A LEVITE, WHEN HE WAS AT THE PLACE, CAME AND LOOKED ON HIM, AND PASSED BY ON THE OTHER SIDE. BUT A CERTAIN SAMARITAN, AS HE JOURNEYED, CAME WHERE HE WAS: AND WHEN HE SAW HIM, HE HAD COMPASSION ON HIM, AND WENT TO HIM AND BOUND UP HIS WOUNDS, POURING IN OIL AND WINE, AND SET HIM ON HIS OWN BEAST, AND BROUGHT HIM TO AN INN, AND TOOK CARE OF HIM.

AND ON THE MORROW WHEN HE DEPARTED, HE TOOK OUT TWO PENCE, AND GAVE THEM TO THE HOST, AND SAID UNTO HIM, TAKE CARE OF HIM; AND WHATSOEVER THOU SPENDEST MORE, WHEN I COME AGAIN, I WILL REPAY THEE.

WHICH NOW OF THESE THREE, THINKEST THOU, WAS NEIGHBOR UNTO HIM THAT FELL AMONG THE THIEVES? AND HE SAID, HE THAT SHOWED MERCY ON HIM. THEN SAID JESUS UNTO HIM, GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE.—*Luke x. 30—37.*

AN interesting conversation once occurred between several clergymen respecting the quality of a distinguished preacher. It was agreed by all present that he was not remarkable for profound thought, or nice discrimination, or logical force; yet he had great success,

and that too with many minds of a highly respectable order. One gave it as his opinion that men were captivated with the grace of his manner, and that the influence of his ministry was an indication of the superficial character of the public mind. Another alleged that an unusual manifestation of religious feeling was the secret of his influence, and maintained this position by alluding to the admitted fact that the female mind, and indeed, all persons who were remarkable for fine sensibilities, most readily yielded to the power of his eloquence. Upon this, another observed that he differed with them all. He allowed that it was true that the preacher in question did not possess any remarkable depth and force of mind, "but," said he, "he always presents a fair amount of good instruction, and exhibits it in a pleasing and attractive manner. Still, there is another quality, which, added to those just mentioned, exerts an influence on every class of minds in a popular assembly." "And what is that?" inquired several voices, at once. "I will tell you," rejoined my friend. "He is what I should call, in one word, a *pictorial* preacher. He presents truth in the concrete. He makes bold sketches, and draws a succession of scenes which serve to interest one, and to hold the mind upon the truth long enough to secure its legitimate influence."

This quality, by whatever name you may choose to call it, belonged pre-eminently to the preaching of our Saviour. While he was always profound and discriminating, and in these respects spake as never man

spake, yet he was, in the sense just referred to, a pictorial preacher. Our text is one of his scenes. It is a picture true to nature, remarkable for a striking individuality, and full of tender pathos. You can almost hear the heavy breathing of the wounded man, and the soft tones of the compassionate Samaritan, as his story proceeds. Yet the profoundest principles are involved in the incidents and characters presented to us in this thrilling narrative.

That you may perceive the truth and the importance of these principles, let me call your attention to the occasion of our Lord's uttering this parable. A certain lawyer—that is, a learned professor of biblical exegesis; a man of scholarship, and devoted to the interpretation of the Divine law—put to him a question, the object of which was to involve our Saviour in difficulty. A certain lawyer, it is said, stood up, and tempted him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ replies by asking another question, a question directly in the line of his own profession. "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer responded by reciting a concise epitome of the decalogue: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." Here the conversation might naturally have terminated, and the learned professor might have retired with the conviction rankling in his bosom that he

had not kept the law, and that consequently he must fail of eternal life. But he could not rest thus. He wished to justify himself. He desired to protract the conversation and perplex the subject in some way, so that it might not be so perfectly apparent that he was involved in guilt and condemnation. Willing to justify himself, he said unto Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Upon this, our Saviour adduced the narrative which I have read as my text. His object was plainly threefold.

I. *To show the bearings of the second table of the law, in rendering the claims of humanity universal, extensive as the wants and woes of men.*

II. *To depict the character of those who decline responding to these claims, and*

III. *To exhibit, in a striking instance, the truth that obedience to these claims is both practicable and obligatory.*

There is a question arising from this narrative to which I wish to call your attention for one moment. It is this. Why did this conversation terminate on the second table of the law? The learned antagonist of our Lord had plainly stated that there were two departments in the Divine law. The one demanded supreme love to God, the other required a love to our neighbor, measured, as to its degree, by the regard which we cherish for ourselves. The captious debater led the discussion off into the second table, because there was no room for a question in respect to the first. That all men ought to love God supremely, no

person can doubt. But when it is said thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, a broad field for debate is open. Who is my neighbor? Is the term to be restricted to my own kindred—my near family relations? Does it embrace no more than those residing in my own immediate locality? Is it circumscribed, at least, by the boundaries of my country? The answer to all these inquiries was fully met by the story of the Good Samaritan.

From the starting-point, and the destination of the traveller as going from Jerusalem down to Jericho, it is evident that he was a Jewish merchant. The story is so constructed that you cannot avoid the conviction that the Good Samaritan responded to the veritable claims of the second table of the law, when he paused in his journey, and, at great inconvenience, and delay, and expense, ministered to the necessity of this unfortunate traveller. But why did these claims rest on him? Was the man one of his near kindred? No. They were not bound together by those strong ties which are created by domestic affections. They were not linked to each other by the intermarriage of their families. They were mutually strangers. Nor were they of the same nation. The one traced his pedigree with national pride back to Abraham, the other was of that mongrel stock that sprung from a remnant of the ten tribes that had long since mingled and lost themselves by intermarriages with their idolatrous conquerors. Their interest in each other was not that national attachment which springs up between

those of the same country, though personally strangers, as when two Americans meet in Egypt or in China. Their respective nations were not allied by bonds of confederation, or by similar institutions and religions. On the contrary, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. A bitter and ancient grudge subsisted between the two people. The English and French never cherished a deeper political hate. Protestants and Roman Catholics were never more unrelenting in religious animosities. In short, there were but two things on which the claims of the unfortunate traveller rested. 1. He was a needy, suffering man. 2. The Samaritan had an opportunity to relieve him. The claim of the sufferer was the claim of want. It was not based on his character as a good man, on his relationship to the Samaritan as a near kinsman, on his being of the same stock, on any political confederation between the nations to which they respectively belonged. It rested not on any similarity of institutions and religions. He was a man, and was hence entitled to the sympathy and brotherly affection of his fellow-man. He was a sufferer, and had a claim to compassion. His lifeblood was ebbing away from unstanch'd wounds. The Samaritan was passing. He had garments that could be torn up for bandages, and oil and wine that could be used to sustain and heal him. The helplessness of the unfortunate stranger demanded aid. His bleeding wounds had a claim for the bandages. His fainting frame demanded the wine. He could not walk, and his weakness,

in this regard, created a claim for the use of the Samaritan's beast; and, inasmuch as he was unable to mount, his inability demanded the requisite assistance to remove him to more comfortable quarters. He needed attention still, and that need made it the duty of the Samaritan to stay and take care of him. The next day the exigencies of business, or the claims of others may require that this humane stranger should pursue his journey. The unfortunate man, however, must still be in want, and this creates an obligation to pay his bill, and then to pledge his own credit for such care as may be still necessary for his recovery. The claim, according to the law of God, was a perfect one. Plausible things might be said to set it aside. But nothing that could be said could invalidate it. If the Samaritan had intended, by some means, to escape from the interruption, the labor, the expense of all this charity, he could have said: This man is no kindred of mine. I have more poor relations to care for than my means will well allow? Besides, this Jew will, perhaps, order me to go out of the inclosure of his sacred temple, and call me a dog, the next time I am in Jerusalem. Why did not the priest and Levite that just passed this way assist him? He was of their own kindred. Moreover, they are the very rulers of the church, professors of an extraordinary charity. But, if I do help him, I will only take him to the inn. That will be my share. The innkeeper ought to do something, and the people of the neighborhood ought to make a contribution.—I say these and many such

like things might be said with a degree of plausibility, but they would not have met the demands of the law as expounded by Christ, its original author. The meaning of that law is plainly this. You are to regard the interests of any man, and every man as if they were your own. Suffering and want, wherever they may exist, and in whomsoever found, have a claim upon you, just in proportion as the opportunity is presented for affording relief. This, of course, does not imply that you are to neglect a paramount claim that presses itself upon you in your family, and among those with whom you are socially and closely connected; nor, that you shall distribute your charity so widely that no individual can receive enough to be materially benefited; nor, that you shall disburse all your stores at once, and so direct your attention away from your proper vocation, as to deprive yourself of the means of a future liberality. The exercise of what we call good sense is needful to a right distribution of labors of love. But still, if parsimony, if the love of accumulating wealth be permitted to come in, and to plead against one object, because it is not of your own household, and another because it is not of your immediate locality, and another because you have a personal dislike to the object of distress or want;—if you are disposed always to find a reason against making sacrifices, and practising self-denials for the good of others, then I say, are you living in open and wilful disobedience to the second table of the law.

Nor is it necessary that the demand should present

itself in immediate proximity with your person, to render it a valid claim. True, the good Samaritan found the unfortunate traveller bleeding in the very path along which he was passing. He must either track through the blood in which the stranger lies weltering, or he must sheer around by the other side of the way, or he must stop and render assistance. But his obligation does not depend on his being so hemmed in, and compelled to contemplate that object of charity. If the same sufferer had been an hundred yards distant, out of sight in a thicket, and he had heard his cries for help; or if a trustworthy messenger had informed him of a similar case at half a mile's distance, the claim to assistance would have been substantially the same. Nor is it necessary that the suffering should have been created by marauding robbers. It would have presented an equal claim on human sympathy, if it had been caused by a fall from his own horse, or any other casualty. Neither is it necessary that the injury should appeal to the senses by blood or groans, or indeed that it should possess any physical character. It may be pale famine sending report of its miseries from a distant land; it may be degrading superstition and spiritual dearth and ruin transmitting their claims through the avenues of commerce, or along the electric wire, or speaking as the man in the vision spoke to Paul, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." If the evils be real and great; if the knowledge of them be conveyed to those who possess the means of furnish-

ing relief, then is the obligation perfect. There are a hundred ways in which men can push it aside. But it is God's claim, and it cannot be invalidated. It can be resisted—resisted plausibly. But no plea of indolence can justify inaction. No cunning manœuvre of debate about who should be reckoned a neighbor can furnish a shield for selfishness; no shuffling trick of avarice can evade obligation by a reference to the delinquencies of others. If the sufferer is a man, he is your neighbor, your brother. If intelligence of his wants has come to you, or been brought within your reach, and a reasonable channel of relief has been opened between you, the claim on your sympathy is a good one. If you have the power to aid him, without injustice to yourself or others, and do it not, you place yourself in company with the priest and Levite that saw the wounded man and passed by on the other side.

And this leads me to the second part of the three-fold object which our Saviour had in view in this interesting narrative. That was, as I have before intimated,

To depict the character of those who decline responding to the claims of the second table of the law. And here, I cannot help marking the hand of the Master in describing this class of persons by a single stroke. By chance there came down a certain priest that way. Yes, it was by chance, for if he had known of this case of bleeding humanity, he would have taken another road, and not allowed his nerves to be shocked

by such a painful spectacle. However, he obtained a quick relief. No sooner did he see the wounded man than he passed by on the other side, and went on his journey as if nothing had happened. Likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side.

These, you will say, were hardened men. Yet there is a slight difference observable. The priest did not so much as pause; perhaps, he did not even slacken his pace, but barely sheered around to the opposite side of the road, and passed on his course. The Levite stopped, and looked on the spectacle, but offered no relief, and also passed on. Which was the worse man? They both violated the same claim. Yet I think there was a difference. The priest was a more practised transgressor. He had learned that the best way to avoid being overcome by the power of a moral claim was to turn instantly away from the motive to action. It is in accordance with the laws of the human mind that the priest should be represented as excelling in depravity if both are wicked. The reason is obvious. A man that occupies a sacred office, surrounded with everything that is solemn and tender in the motives for doing right, must be a more hardened man to violate all these influences, than one who commits the same transgression under a less degree of moral influence. There are few persons that can contemplate fully a case of suffering and want, and be conscious of a perfect ability to afford assistance, and then deliberately withhold their aid.

The principal thing, then, that characterizes the habitual violators of the second table of the law is *their determined avoidance of the motives to compassion.*

Behold, then, this priest and this Levite. They are not mere individuals. They represent all habitual transgressors of the second table of the law. Let us take these as a nucleus around which we may gather in a homogeneous cluster all who possess the same general character. Here is a man whom we would persuade to take some interest in improving the condition of the poor in our city. We spread before you their state. We show you that what they need is not so much an almshouse and public hospital. They need a friend of intelligence and character that will go and take them by the hand—some one that will lay hold of a family as if they were his own poor relations, whom he meant to do his utmost to raise to respectability and usefulness. Such a family presents itself. The parents are improvident, partly through the want of early instruction, and partly through a moral delinquency and indolence. Yet it really seems to them that they are unfortunate, and that they are constantly in such straits just because society is badly constituted—so constituted as to make it difficult for poor people to acquire a subsistence.—Their children, naturally bright and promising, will form similar habits, and acquire similar modes of thinking, if something be not done to prevent it. The condition of this family appeals to you, as their

prosperous neighbor, and awakes reflection. It says you may do a world of good, and prevent a world of evil, by forming and prosecuting a judicious plan for the improving the character and state of this poor family. You can, at least for a time, visit them once a week, and manifest your concern for them. You can suggest or furnish employment. You can teach and aid them in their little affairs to make the income of a time of plenty lap over into seasons of scarcity. You can help them to prosecute some plan for permanently improving their state. If it costs you twenty dollars in a year, and as many hours of thoughtful endeavor, it is a most profitable outlay of charity. Your influence is established in that whole household. Self-respect is awakened on their part, by the consciousness of enjoying your friendship. They are prepared to be influenced by your advice. You may place them in the sanctuary that they had neglected; you may become the instrument of moulding their characters. I grant that you may neglect that family through being engrossed in a more important work of charity. But, if you neglect it on the usual pretences—the urgency of your own affairs—the fact that such a family holds no special relations to you—that others may do the work as well as yourself, then I say you are joined to the company of the priest and Levite. You have passed by on the other side. You belong to the class that deliberately neglect obedience to the second table of the law.

But here is another appealed to, to send the gospel

to the heathen. Missions to the heathen are one of the first and most natural fruits of Christianity. Our religion travelled westward, from its birthplace, only by means of missions to the heathen. Hence our own ancestors received it, and hence we enjoy to-day these sanctuaries and these Christian institutions. When Christianity had nearly pervaded the civilized world, it received itself an impress from the paganism with which it held so much commerce, and the church sank into a dark and semi-idolatrous state. Since the Reformation, the missionary work has received a fresh impetus. The gospel has gone forth to heathen nations. Hundreds of churches have been gathered. Schools have been established, and printing presses have been set in operation among barbarous tribes, to impart a Christian tone to their nascent civilization. But the cause labors. A Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," is borne on every breeze. You are asked to compassionate six hundred millions of benighted men. You are invited to come once each month to the sanctuary and unite with the people of God in prayer on their behalf. You are solicited, it may be, to contribute of your funds to sustain laborers in the field, or possibly to give up one of your dear children to the work, or to go yourself. It may not be your duty to go, or to send your son, or to devote large amounts of property to this work. But, if your heart never bleeds for the six hundred millions, if you do *nothing*—if you meet every appeal with a captious objection; if you oppose present plans of opera-

tion without devising those that are better; if you leave this great movement wholly to others, and do not pause to look upon the heathen and weep, and to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" then you too belong to the same company with the priest and Levite. You pass by on the other side.

You, again, are solicited to aid a poor church to erect a sanctuary in one of our sparsely populated and destitute counties. You are opposed to aiding anybody in building churches. You think they ought to erect such a one as their means will allow. But the soliciting clergyman tells you that there are only four or five families that feel any great interest in the enterprise; that a sanctuary is indispensable as a means of bringing the people together to teach them that they need one. All will not do. You have made up your mind beforehand, and you will not so much as pause and look at the distress, as the Levite did—you pass right on with the priest, sheering around to the other side, and thinking as little as possible of the justness of the claim. Now observe, I have not maintained that all persons belong to this class who reject any claim that may be presented. I only say that those who are annoyed by calls of charity—those who desire to avoid looking at them, and who set up such pretences as were just referred to, that they swell the company that are homogeneous with the priest and Levite.

And this leads me to the third principal point brought to view in the narrative. The truth, that

obedience to the second table of the law, is both practicable and obligatory, is clearly exhibited in the conduct of the good Samaritan. This point I deem one of great importance, because it is one in respect to which multitudes deceive themselves. There is perhaps no man that has not, at some time, performed an act of generosity. Such a one is apt to think that the only difference that subsists between himself and the good Samaritan, or a man like John Howard the philanthropist, or the missionary Martyn, or Paul, or Christ, in respect to acts of kindness and compassion is, that they more abounded in acts of generosity than himself; that these great philanthropists differed from him not radically, but only in degree.

I humbly conceive it can be demonstrated to you that this is a grand mistake. This good Samaritan relieved distress where others refused their assistance. There was something in the case of that wounded man which failed to awaken the compassion and call forth the friendly interposition of the priest and Levite, although they were his countrymen, and probably his fellow-citizens. Perhaps the pausing in that wild place where the outrage had been committed was dangerous. Perhaps the difficulty of removing him to more comfortable quarters was great on account of the distance and the state of the roads. Perhaps his condition was such as to render the necessary attention disagreeable and sickening in its nature. Whatever the cause might have been, there were certain repellencies connected with the case, of such a char-

acter as to prevent any kind endeavor on his behalf by these two selfish men. The Samaritan, with slighter grounds of appeal, took up the matter as if the man had been his brother, and that too though not of the same nation or religion; though he belonged, even, to a people that despised the Samaritans. A man that would do such a work, in such circumstances, was a philanthropist in his whole character. He would have responded to any call of suffering humanity. If he were now alive and here, he would be one of the men to whom every person engaged in works of charity and mercy would go for sympathy and aid. Such a man was John Howard. The most noisome dungeon could not repel him. The dangers of contagion could not slacken his zeal. His whole estate and whole time were not too much to contribute to the wants of suffering humanity. Such a man was the missionary Martyn, and such are hundreds now, like him, that have taken their all in their hands and gone forth to raise a degraded people. Such a person was Elizabeth Fry, the self-sacrificing prisoner's friend.

Nor is this spirit confined to those whose ample estate or learning, or social position, or official station have made them eminent. Thousands of poor men and women—persons devoted earnestly to a secular vocation, breathe the same spirit. It has been my happiness to know many here, and elsewhere, that are philanthropists in character; persons that will respond to a claim, not merely when

it happens to meet their generosity in a peculiar vein, but to any claim of charity.

The difference between such, and those represented by the priest and Levite, is not that one class is more generous than the other. It is rather this: the one *avoids* the objects of compassion, the other *seeks* them. The one inquires: "Who is my neighbor? Is there any special claim on me here? Ought not others to do this work? Am I not asked to do more than my part? The calls are too frequent, too many; I am worn out by the number and the urgency of the demands of charity." The other says: "The case is important, truly. I wish there were more time at my command. I must save an hour from my recreations or my business. It demands expense. True. I see it. If the whole church would co-operate liberally what a good work could be done. Well, since they will not, we must do the more. Here is my contribution. This cause must not suffer. If you are not likely to succeed call again, and I will double my gifts." Thus you can see in the one party a determination to avoid self-denial, to evade the appeal, to pass by on the other side of the calls of humanity, to as great a degree as possible. In the other, you can just as clearly discover a spontaneous yearning over suffering and needy men; an appetency towards the scenes of want; a reluctance to leave the work of doing good to others.

We have a still higher example than that of the good Samaritan. When Christ passed in the direc-

tion of our world, he saw our ruined race. He found us in our blood, more than half dead, robbed by sin and sinking into death eternal. He did not pass by like the priest on the other side. He did not pause merely like the Levite and then pass on. He compassionated our state, though it cost him humiliation, pain, and death. No mere man ever manifested a love like his, or copied perfectly his compassion. Yet every true disciple of the Lord Jesus does aim, deliberately, to imitate his philanthropy.

And now let me ask you, my hearers, in conclusion, have you this evidence of being genuine disciples of Christ. Do you aim to keep this second table of the law? I do not ask whether you keep it perfectly. I know you do not. There is an imperfection in the endeavors of the most devout and philanthropic. But do you listen to every call of bleeding humanity as a call to *you*—a call in which you *ought* to have and *really* have an interest? These claims are universal. Every man is your neighbor. Every sufferer is your poor relation, your brother. He may have nearer relations; that makes no difference. It may be that some one else is more immediately bound to assist him, and yet will not. It may be that you are asked to do more than your share. I cannot help that. If he is in want, and you can assist him without injustice to others or yourself, the case is a clear one. No matter whether his wants be physical or moral—whether he suffers from a bleeding body or “a wounded spirit.” If your brother man have need,

and you shut up your bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in you?

How do you meet these claims. Do you pass around them? Do you ask who is my neighbor? Do you hesitate to look at the wants of your race? Do you banish the calls of charity from your mind, and complain of the frequency with which they are brought before you by associated endeavor? Do you pass by the scenes of distress on the other side? Do not deceive yourself. You may be a reputable professor of religion; you may fill a sacred office, and not possess the philanthropic spirit of our Master, and so be none of his. I trust I shall not be misunderstood; that none of you will think that I am maintaining that you must yield to every solicitation which any one may choose to present—or, that you must bestow liberal gifts on every mendicant, irrespective of the influence whether it foster vice or encourage virtue and relieve distress. I advocate no such weak facility in yielding to the cries of falsehood and imposture. But I do say that you live in a suffering, needy world. That the calls of real necessity are numerous and urgent. The poor ye have always with you. In that alley, your Saviour is sick and in want in the person of an indigent disciple. In yonder penitentiary, he is in prison in the suffering of sinful men for whom he died. In that neglected portion of our population, where no sanctuary invites the people to worship, he is represented by those whom he came to save. In those heathen

tribes over which a portion of the visible church yearns with tender compassion, he that died for them invokes your pity. You shall be confronted, one day, by all these neglected poor, at the bar of God. If you meet them as one who was in full sympathy with your and their Redeemer, you shall hear the welcome announcement: "Come, ye blessed of my Father—inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto me." But, if you were not a hearty philanthropist—if you did not walk with Christ up and down in this dying world; if when this good Samaritan, this heavenly stranger was binding up the wounds of men, you did not count it a privilege to be near him—to hold his dossils and bandages, and pour out freely your own oil and wine, then I say it will be found that you have not that sympathy with him which will secure your entering into his joy. Deceive not yourself. The Omniscient God cannot be deceived and will not be mocked. "If any man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

SERMON X.

SINNERS EMBOLDENED BY FORBEARANCE.

BECAUSE SENTENCE AGAINST AN EVIL WORK IS NOT EXECUTED SPEEDILY, THEREFORE THE HEART OF THE SONS OF MEN IS FULLY SET IN THEM TO DO EVIL.—*Eccles.* VIII. 11.

WHATEVER this portion of Sacred Writ teaches is applicable to the human family at large. It belongs not to any class of persons, but to “the sons of men.” Three important truths are suggested by the text.

I. IT IS IMPLIED THAT THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION IS ALREADY PASSED UPON MEN.

II. IT IS DIRECTLY TAUGHT BY THE LANGUAGE USED, THAT THE EXECUTION OF THE SENTENCE IS DELAYED ; and—

III. THAT MEN TAKE OCCASION TO HARDEN THEMSELVES IN SIN ON ACCOUNT OF THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD.

Your attention is invited to these topics in the order just stated.

I. *It is implied that the sentence of condemnation from God is already passed upon men.* “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed.” This language plainly implies that the sentence has been

past, and that the delay of justice has occurred precisely between the sentence and the execution. Otherwise the writer would have intimated that the result which he deplored had arisen either from the fact that no law had been promulgated—or from a neglect to arraign and pass sentence upon its transgressor. Instead of this, however, he assumes that the law has been known, but its sacred influence has not restrained from evil doing. He assumes, also, that the sentence of condemnation has been pronounced. This has failed to interpose a salutary check to sin. There is but one more step in the process of justice. This step is delayed, “sentence is not executed speedily.” It is not improbable, my friends, that many of you may have inferred from your views of a future judgment, and from the nature of a probation for the formation of character, that you are not yet condemned; and that your condition in relation to the Divine government is analogous to the state of those who have rendered themselves, in some respects, liable to the law of the state, but who, on account of the lenity of the government, have never yet been arraigned, and who never will be if their character as citizens should be improved. If this be your view, let me assure you that it is a total mistake. The law of God has been published not only, but you have also been arraigned before your Lawgiver and Judge, and your eternal doom has been pronounced.

This truth is very clearly substantiated by our Saviour’s reasoning to prove that he did not come into

the world to condemn men, but to save them. In the gospel according to St. John, in the third chapter and 17th and 18th verses, he says: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Here are two reasons given to prove that our Saviour did not come into the world to condemn men. The first is the declaration that his work was of an opposite character: it was to confer eternal life upon all that should put their trust in him, so that his influence was to remove the condemnatory sentence. The second reason was found in the fact that they were condemned already. In the 36th verse of the same chapter he also represents the unbeliever as lying at the present time under the sentence of the Divine law. "He that believeth not the Son (says he) shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." The sentence of condemnation has gone forth against the unconverted; and justice cries: "Cut him down; the wrath of God abideth on him."

In accordance with this view, the apostle Paul speaks of himself and his Ephesian brethren as having once been "children of wrath, even as others." That is, they had once been in a state of condemnation, momentarily exposed to the infliction of the Divine displeasure. The universally declared design of the provisions of grace substantiate the same truth.

Christ died to redeem us from the curse of the law, that is, to deliver us from its condemnatory sentence. We are also said to have forgiveness through his blood. But forgiveness always presupposes condemnation. You cannot easily conceive of a grosser insult than would be conveyed by offering forgiveness to one who was not condemned. Indeed, the whole burden of the gospel, as a scheme of mercy, assumes that men are condemned already. Every soul that implores the Divine grace admits it. Every believer gives his testimony to the same truth when he exultingly exclaims in the language of the apostle: "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Every saint who lifts his imploring eyes to Christ on the bed of death and cries, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," admits that he has been condemned, and that he looks for mercy only through a pardoning Saviour. Every sinner that dies in his sins, if he be sensible of his condition, confesses that he "is condemned already," and that "the wrath of God abideth on him."

II. *The execution is delayed.* The sentence of the Divine law, though passed, is not executed speedily. The only reason that can be given to show why any unconverted sinner is not this moment among the lost, is found in the forbearance of God. The only question, then, that can be raised respecting the

treatment of one who is accused, must refer to his condemnation. If that point be once settled, and the condemnatory sentence be passed, the criminal can set up no claim for the delay of the execution. The very moment in which it becomes right to pronounce sentence, that moment it is right to let fall the axe of justice. This thought is set forth in a beautifully simple and perspicuous light by one of our Saviour's brief parables. "A certain man (said he) had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well; if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Here the barren tree represents the unconverted sinner. The husbandman sparing it, and coming year after year and finding no fruit, is God, preferring his claims. The sentence pronounced, "cut it down," is the demand of justice for an immediate execution of the sentence upon the ungodly. The plea, "Lord, let it alone this year also," is the forbearance of God, or the interposition of Christ to delay the execution of justice. To that plea, my impenitent friend, are you indebted for every day's continuance of your life. On that account, alone, are you permitted to visit the sanctuary instead of tenanting the prison of despair; to listen to the calls of Divine grace rather

than the wailings of the lost and your own groans of undying agony.

III. Let us notice the influence of this forbearance. *Men take occasion to harden themselves in sin on account of God's forbearance.* "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The expression of the thought contained in this part of the text, is extremely forcible. Their heart is not said to be the more inclined to evil, merely on account of the delay of punishment, but their heart is set in them; yes, "fully set in them to do evil."

This mournful truth is abundantly evinced by history, and by daily observation. It is the nature of the human heart, when indulged in its own career, to lead the soul on in greater boldness in sin. Thus, the wise man says, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Pharaoh had serious thoughts of repentance and reformation, when the rod of chastisement was lifted up, and the prospect was clear that he could no longer be allowed to pass unpunished. But, as soon as judgments were removed, and he had the prospect of present impunity, he hardened his heart. Indeed, through all that interesting series of providences towards him, he inclined towards reformation, in every instance, when his doom seemed to be hastening on, and hardened his heart, in view of the delay of punishment. Thus, he waxed worse and worse, till sudden destruction came upon him. How often, too, have we seen men in sickness, when present calamities were

resting upon them, and when future judgment seemed impending, serious, and even anxiously inquiring what they must do to be saved; but no sooner is health restored, than they manifestly begin to grow hardened. They take occasion from the prospect of long life, to indulge in sin against God, and their heart becomes "fully set in them to do evil." Let me ask, have you not been conscious of the same influence, in your own case? Has the world never appeared dark to you? Have not calamities sometimes beclouded your earthly prospects? Has not disease sometimes led you to think of the grave, and to conclude that you might soon stand before God in judgment. In such seasons have you not been inclined to form good resolutions and mend your ways? But what did you do when your prospects brightened again, and you began to feel that you might have many years of impunity, even though you did spend them in sin? You became more thoughtless, and your heart was fully set in you to do evil.

Your secret promises of repentance at the last, all imply the same thing. Perhaps there are few persons within the sound of my voice that do not sometimes look forward to their death-bed, and meditate upon that solemn hour. Most of you, too, probably indulge the hope that, if you do not repent of your sins previously to that period, you will then, at least, confess your guilt and seek for pardon through a crucified Redeemer. Now why do you think of it as a work to be performed then, instead of a duty which must

receive your attention at the present hour? For no other reason, plainly, except that the apparent distance from the hour of doom diminishes the motives that act upon you. You now hope for long delay. You hope that sentence will not be executed speedily. You take occasion to think less of sin, and less of your need of repentance, because you know that God is kind and forbearing, and you hope for impunity in sin.

Our subject suggests several important lessons of instruction.

1. *Men only delude themselves when they resolve to give due attention to their spiritual interests after they shall have secured some important worldly objects.* Among the good resolutions of unconverted men, perhaps there are none more common than the class now referred to. They fancy that vital religion will impede their endeavors to achieve some important secular end. The scholar is afraid that the gospel, since it is a check upon the ambitious spirit that now incites him to action, will be unfavorable to his attainments. The man of business firmly resolves that, as soon as he can secure a competency, and divest himself of the perplexities and temptations of business, he will give due attention to his spiritual interests. The young flatter themselves that, when they shall be settled in the domestic state, surrounded with the happy and yet grave and balancing influence of a family, they will then regard the salvation of the gospel as the one thing needful.

Now here is nothing but delusion in whatever light

you contemplate the subject. If you do not succeed in securing these secular interests according to your expectations, as you probably will not, you have strengthened the habit of the delay of conversion by long indulgence. If you gain your object, you will probably not be satisfied with it, and so will delay your attention to your soul's eternal well-being till you shall have made a still greater achievement. But suppose the best, suppose you have acquired as much fame for your learning, as much renown in political life, or as much wealth as satisfies you. Then you have also worldly prosperity, and with it the hope of a present impunity in sin. Now you are in the most dangerous position of all. You resemble those of whom David speaks in the 73d Psalm. "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw," said he, "the prosperity of the wicked; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men, therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart can wish." As surely as you succeed in placing yourself in a state of prosperity, you place yourself in a condition in which you will be more likely to exemplify the truth of our text: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

2. *Our subject suggests a peculiar view of the guilt which attaches to the delay of repentance.* - You delay because God is forbearing. Because your Saviour

has shed his blood for you, you feel safe in neglecting his salvation. You rightly infer that one who would make such a sacrifice to save his enemies will bear long with them. If you knew that you should have one offer of salvation at this hour, and never have another opportunity of making your peace with God, you would regard it as a most solemn and awful crisis.

But you hope that if you now make light of Christ, yet, he is so gracious towards sinners that he will preserve you, and will say to Justice, Spare him this year also. You are aware that sin provokes his displeasure, and that a refusal to accept overtures of mercy, bought with his precious blood, is sin of the most aggravated character; but you reflect that that same Saviour was smitten in the face and spit upon, and bore it with meekness; and then, when he was crucified by the malignity of his enemies, he prayed for them with his dying breath; you hope, therefore, that he will bear with you. You are aware that you are called upon to consecrate your youth to his service; but you reflect that many have made light of Christ in all their early days, and yet, through his great forbearance and grace, they have been brought late in life to taste the joys of his salvation. You trifle with him—you grieve him—you insult him, because you know there is good reason to believe that he will bear all this and still be willing to save you. What ingratitude! what a peculiar aggravation of guilt. How would all your feelings be shocked, to see one man treat another in such a way on the same principles.

There is an instance in modern history that approximates nearer to it than anything else in my recollection. It is the treatment which the celebrated James Crichton received from his pupil. Crichton was one of the most extraordinary men which the world ever produced. He was a Scotchman by birth, born about the middle of the sixteenth century, and his extraordinary adventures and endowments procured for him the name of "The admirable Crichton." At twenty years of age he had run through the whole circle of the sciences, and could write and speak ten languages in perfection. He visited the universities on the continent, and foiled all of the learned professors in debate, on theses of their own choosing. He was as remarkable for his bodily agility, and his power in athletic exercises, as he was for the endowments of his mind. Nor was he less distinguished for elegance of manners and a singular amenity of temper. While travelling in Italy, the Duke of Mantua was so well pleased with him that he appointed him tutor to his son, who was a youth of dissolute manners and unprincipled heart. One day subsequent to this appointment, while walking in the streets of Mantua, Crichton was suddenly attacked by six men in masks. Their number proved no defence against his dexterity and strength. They were all disarmed. The leader then threw off his mask, and, falling on his knees, begged for his life. It was Crichton's pupil. The astonished master, overwhelmed with the discovery, presented his own weapon to his pupil, and, baring his

bosom, told him to take his life if he desired it. The ungrateful wretch plunged the weapon to the heart of Crichton. He first assailed his best friend for envy of his great popularity. When the prospect was in favor of summary vengeance upon himself, he could beg for life, and reveal himself as his pupil, to secure forbearance; when that forbearance was manifested, in a most unparalleled manner, he took occasion to use it against his friend.

Impenitent sinner, behold in this scene embodied the very principles which actuate you in your treatment of your Saviour. You are opposed to him at first, it is true, not for envy, but it is for no more worthy reason. You are opposed to Christ, because his pure and holy character reproves and restrains you. If you think of him at any time as about to enter into judgment with you, you are ready to implore his forbearance, and to ask for length of days, that you may be prepared to meet your God. But if you are in prosperity, and are thinking of that innocent one as buffeted and insulted, without resenting it; if you view him as bleeding and praying, at the same moment, for those who inflicted his wounds; if you reflect that his gracious nature will probably lead him to bear long with you, then are you comforted, and encouraged to treat him, if not with scorn, at least with cold neglect. But there is another element in this delay from the hope of impunity. You would not readily allow your heart to be fully set in you to do evil, if it were not for the cherished hope that you

shall apply to that very mercy which you now slight, and find salvation. You coldly neglect your Saviour, because he is holy and his laws will restrain you if you yield to them. You tread under foot his precious blood, because you are assured that sentence is not executed speedily. You are encouraged farther in that delay, from the confident expectation that mercy may be found after the highest possible provocation.

3. *The condition of impenitent sinners is not less distinguished for its pitiableness, than their character is for its guilt.* They are condemned already. They are in the custody of the executioner. Why are you so deeply moved with seeing a condemned criminal in his cell? The darkness of his abode tells of the dreadfulness of his doom. The massive walls and clanking chains speak of the impossibility of escape. But, if you see him under a strong escort, fettered and handcuffed, on his way to the fatal gallows, your feelings of pity are more deeply moved. It is true, the condemned and unconverted sinner is not surrounded with such *visible* tokens of his approaching doom. But he is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believes the gospel sees him already in custody. He is on his way to execution. If he passes by a route ever so long and circuitous, an Almighty keeper attends him. If he turns aside to the amusements of the world, the officer of justice is by his side. If he laugh in the theatre, or dance in the gay assembly, and you ask his keeper

whither he is conducting his charge, his answer is—to execution, he is condemned already. If he engage in his ordinary avocations, that same Almighty hand is upon him, bringing him every hour nearer to the execution. Does he repose upon his bed, his keeper sleeps not, but remains by his charge. Does he visit the sanctuary of God, he is still in custody. The preacher of the gospel assures him that he is condemned already—speaks to him of terms of mercy and forgiveness, and solemnly warns him: “Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him, lest he deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.” His keeper whispers to his inmost soul, “condemned already.” The offers of mercy affect his heart; yet he rises to depart from the sanctuary, saying to the Saviour, “at a more convenient season I will call for thee.” Then conscience, aroused, utters the solemn warning: “Thus it ever is with thee, made confident by impunity; because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, thy heart is fully set in thee to do evil.” Follow him in all the changes of his earthly condition, yet in this, there is no change; he is still on his way to execution. O! dying sinner, that you would now turn to Christ! You should exult in his delivering grace, and exclaim: “There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

4. *Finally, observe that while God delays execution, it is done in such a way as to leave the impenitent*

sinner continually in a crisis of the most awful kind. Forbearance is exercised, but the subject of it is warned, both by the word of God and by the action of Divine providence, that there is not the least degree of *certainty* with regard to the period of its continuance. The Psalmist, speaking to God of the state of the wicked in this world, says: "Thou didst set them in slippery places." The interpretation of this passage, according to Pres. Edwards, is this. Sinners are represented as walking upon a sloping verge, which overhangs a gulf of fire. The path slopes not only, but is slippery. God sets them there; that is, it is as if he passed along with them, and with his hand against their foot in every step kept them from sliding and falling into hell. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. You may seem to yourself to be in a very safe position, merely because you have not fallen; and yet, if God remove his hand, you sink by your own weight—sink never to rise again. Think of it, dying man; I conjure you to think of it; forbearance will not last forever.

SERMON XI.

THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD.

THE PROPHET THAT HATH A DREAM, LET HIM TELL A DREAM; AND HE THAT HATH MY WORD, LET HIM SPEAK MY WORD FAITHFULLY. WHAT IS THE CHAFF TO THE WHEAT? SAITH THE LORD. IS NOT MY WORD LIKE AS A FIRE? SAITH THE LORD; AND LIKE A HAMMER THAT BREAKETH THE ROCK IN PIECES?—*Jeremiah* XXIII. 28, 29.

POWER is often mightiest where there is the least appearance of it. We witness daily the most stupendous results, without the least thought of the amazing energy by which they were achieved. We see the excavated channel of a great river, and the up-piled masses of a huge mountain, without reflecting at all that—

“The Rhone
Hath spread itself a couch,
The Alps have reared a throne.”

We think not of the vast power that wrought in scooping out the one, and upheaving the other.

On the other hand, it is very common to fancy the presence and action of some vast energy, where there is comparatively little else than a delusive appearance. When the prophet Elijah witnessed a great tempest,

and an earthquake followed with burning fire, he remained unmoved; but when he heard the still, small voice that betokened the Divine presence, he was awestruck, and hid his face in his mantle.

To a mind unaccustomed to commune with God, those visible movements of the great agencies of nature would have been overwhelming, and the still, small voice would have been disregarded. That which creates an immediate, and visible, and palpable change in the things around us, is regarded as powerful; while that which operates with a silent energy, is apt to be unseen except by wise and contemplative minds. In our text, the false estimate of the deluded and unfaithful prophets is sought to be corrected. They could tell a dream, and affix their own interpretation, and thus fancy that they gained a great influence over the people. But they did not perceive that the word of God, faithfully proclaimed, would be vastly more influential, and of far greater value to all their true interests. "The prophet that hath a dream," says God, "let him tell a dream;" that is, let him employ the suggestions thence derived, according to their real importance; but do not let him compare them with the clear and settled truths of revelation. On the contrary, "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

The force of the whole appeal rests on the assump-

tion that there is vast power in the revealed word of God.

LET ME SHOW YOU THE NATURE OF THIS POWER, AND SUGGEST SOME OF THE METHODS BY WHICH ITS GREATNESS IS EVINCED.

Every well-informed man will admit that the sacred Scriptures have exercised a very great and widely-extended influence. The nature of that influence is not so generally appreciated. It is wholly spiritual. That is to say, it is an influence on mind. Remotely, indeed, it changes the physical condition of things. As far as it favors mental culture, and creates refined sentiments, and gives birth to pure human charities and heavenly devotion, it indirectly improves civilization, and its external advantages. It erects temples of justice, and sanctuaries of religion, and gives prominence to the arts of peace, turning "swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks." Still, it achieves these results only by acting on the human mind—moulding its character and directing its energies. But, while the influence of the Bible is limited in respect to the subjects of its influence—while it acts directly only on the human mind—it is unlimited in two important respects. It acts on *all classes* of mind; and it influences *all* our mental faculties. It enlightens the understanding. It presents to the contemplation objects that are at once elevated, pure, and endlessly diversified. It furnishes a vast amount of information in regard to the character of God, the

nature of man, the origin and destiny of the race, and the best methods of securing the well-being of communities and individuals. It develops and rectifies the human conscience, furnishing a moral code that commends itself to our nature, and enforcing it by adequate motives. It solicits the affections of the human heart, by presenting objects of the purest moral beauty. It aims to control the will, by revealing the authority of God, the sanctions of his law, and the methods of his grace. In short, the word of God asserts an absolute supremacy over all the powers and faculties of the human mind.

Nor is the Bible, like most other books, limited to a particular class and order of minds. A book that should set forth the exact sciences in the most clear and beautiful light, would be utterly inefficacious in its influence on a large class of minds. A philosophical treatise of superior excellence and fine adaptation to persons of a cultivated intellect, would exercise no influence on multitudes that possess less compass of understanding. But the Bible is adapted to all classes. It has simple narrative and infant biographies, and lofty sentiments, and profound doctrines, wrapped up in the tragical story of the cross, to interest childhood and untaught adults. It has sublime and beautiful poetry for the imaginative. It has pointed and weighty apothegms to awaken reflection. It has deep logical discussions, and an immense field for critical and philosophical study for the learned. Its sixty-six books, written by at least thirty-five different

authors, and extending through a period of fifteen centuries, have secured a vast variety of style. There is also a remarkable variety in the characters, employments, and circumstances of the writers. Among them we have one educated as a statesman in the court of a great monarch; another brought up as an ecclesiastic from his infancy, and possessing such capacity as caused him, in his youth, to be regarded as the guiding mind for the whole Hebrew commonwealth. Two royal poets, a gifted father, and a more learned, and wise, and cultivated son, arrayed the truth of God in kingly robes. Herdsmen set it forth in rustic simplicity. Unlearned fishermen told the story of the birth and life, the miracles, and death, and resurrection of the Son of God, and recorded the parables and conversations of him who "spake as never man spake." An accomplished scholar and beloved physician penned the narrative of the first dissemination of Christianity by the apostles, while a profound dialectician drew out in his homiletic epistles the great principles of systematic theology, and the transcendental deep-thinking John set forth the life-principles of Christianity, in a manner that will always give plenty of employment to those who love to contemplate truth in a mystic garb.

These varieties in revelation, like the varieties in nature, have adaptation to all classes and orders of mind. Hence there is no book so popular in its character as the Bible. It is relished and comprehended by the feeblest minds. It furnishes exhaustless

themes for the profoundest geniuses. In its limpid waters, a lamb may safely wade and seek refreshment; in its depth, an elephant may swim.

The kind of power claimed for the sacred Scriptures, then, be it remembered, is a spiritual power, an influence on mind. The domain over which this influence extends itself is unlimited in two respects. *First*, it asserts its supremacy over all the faculties of the human soul. *Second*, it adapts itself to minds of all classes.

Let me solicit your attention, now, to some of the indications of the greatness of this power. I will speak first of the general influence of the word of God, and then of its power over individuals. Divine revelation has exerted an influence to impress upon a vast mass of minds common sentiments, and, also, to secure the growth and perpetuation of such sentiments.

This power is the more remarkable, in proportion to the resistance which it was necessary to overcome. When the first books of holy Scripture, the Pentateuch, were issued, it is manifest that their primary aim was to oppose idolatry. Idol-worship had entrenched itself in every great city. A grovelling sensuality loved licentious gods and goddesses. The refinements of art endeared it to one class; the charms of poetry commended it to another; and a grovelling superstition pervaded all nations. The propensities that led to idolatry were powerful to perpetuate it. The priests and learned men maintained their ascendancy by pandering to the super-

stitution of the people; the shrine-makers had their bread by their craft.

Yet the decalogue makes an assault upon idolatry, and the whole Jewish institute is constructed to oppose it. The progress was slow. The Jewish mind itself was deeply tinged with the prevailing polytheism. But the decalogue maintained its authority. The law which made it imperative on parents to imbue the minds of their children with the ten commandments, by a perpetual inculcation, augmented its power over the people. The successive revelations of the prophets expanded and illustrated the principles contained in the earlier books of Scripture. The advance of the Hebrew state to its acme, in the splendid reign of Solomon, and the erection of the magnificent temple, imparted a public, visible honor to the pure theism of the sacred writings. The conflict of the Jewish people with their heathen neighbors, and especially their captivities, and their pensive songs by the rivers of Babylon, endeared to them the distinctive characteristics of the religion of their fathers.

When they had thus become determined in their resistance to idolatry, the great conquering power of the world, the Romans, took possession of Palestine, and the synagogue, with its book of the law and its prophetic rolls, bore a feeble, but constant testimony, in a thousand little points of radiance, all over that mighty empire. Then came Christianity, with its augmented light, completing the whole volume of revelation within a single century.

And now the word of God begins to display its mighty power. It assails idolatry where it has concentrated its force, more than it had ever done, in any place, during the whole of the world's history. Idolatry was the religion of the most cultivated people on earth. It was inwoven with a classic literature of most extraordinary character. The Romans had, just before, taken into their possession those writings of the Grecian orators, and poets, and historians, and philosophers, which have ever since defied all competition in respect to their classical beauty and finish. By the help of these they had advanced their own majestic tongue to its highest cultivation. Into all this elegant literature there was breathed as base a polytheism as ever degraded a polished mind. This same polytheism was, also, the religion of the state. It seated itself with gorgeous and solemn pomp in the senate chamber; it approached the emperor with artful flattery, and promised him a glorious apotheosis, a place among the gods, as one justly entitled to be worshipped. Idolatry was the old religion of the whole Roman people; the religion under which its victories had been achieved, and its greatness attained. It was loved by the multitude, praised by the poets, endeared by flatteries to the emperor, and defended by the conquering legions. Yet, did the word of God, as a fire and a hammer, break in pieces that mighty iron power of idolatry.

It is sufficiently obvious that it was the word of

God, and nothing else, which accomplished this result.

It is worthy of being noticed in this connection, also, that another effective force was brought to act against idolatry, which, though not so directly from the influence of the word of God, cannot be imputed to any other primary source. I mean the Mohammedan power. The Arabs were the cousins of the Jews, and partook of the characteristics of the Hebrew stock. When Ishmael was sent away, he doubtless bore with him some of those constitutional tendencies to theism, which were among the reasons for selecting and calling Abraham.

The mission of Abraham was to give a death-blow to idolatry. Isaac was the chief branch in the family for accomplishing the work. But Ishmael inherited some of his father's idol hatred. His posterity, it is true, fell into idol worship; but, then, they never lost the tendency to theism, and when Mohammed borrowed from Judaism and Christianity the doctrine of the Divine unity, he easily moulded the Ishmaelitic stock into his doctrines.

What the word of God has achieved, in this respect, it has perpetuated. The Jews and the Mohammedans are, to-day, as firm in their resistance of idolatry as they ever have been in any former period of their history. It is true, there has been a reactive force towards idolatry, on the area of the old Roman empire, as indicated in the images in Christian churches, and the worship of the mother of Jesus; but this

could only take place when the Bible was locked up in the cloister, and forbidden to the common people; but the word of God could not be bound. Wickliff, and the Monk of Erfurth, Reuklin, and Melanethon, Calvin, and Farel, and Zuingle, and Knox, read the word of God, and it kindled a fire in their souls. They gave it to the people, and, wherever it went, the altars of an idolatrous Christianity crumbled, and the images of the saints were ground to powder. As a result of this attainment, the Christian world is now assailing, in an effective manner, the idolatry of every heathen nation. No idolatrous people, now on the earth, can be called a conquering people. No system of idol-worship possesses the spirit of propagandism. The Romish church is not, strictly speaking, an idolatrous power. Its state is like that of Jacob's family, when Rachel hid the images among her travelling baggage, or like that of the children of Israel, when they danced around the golden calf, without abandoning the worship of Jehovah as the only supreme God. They were struggling with idolatrous tendencies, tendencies which were destined, one day, to be overcome. So the Romish church has always carried in her bosom a repellent force, that shall, one day, secure the putting away of all her idols. Protestantism itself, with all its active energy, grew out of these tendencies in the mother church. The reaction from the impostures respecting the holy coat of Treves, the march of science, and of political liberty, and the mixing of Romanists with enlightened people

in Protestant countries ; all these things are limiting the power of the idolatrous tendencies in the church ; and the time cannot be far distant, when the whole of Christendom shall be as free from idols as the Jewish and Mohammedan races are to-day.

The reason why the Christian church is tinged with this form of error is obvious. In the first four centuries of the Christian era, idolaters were brought into the church by such rapid conversions, that multitudes imported with them a measure of that love of image-worship, in which they had been bred and born.

There is another impression which the word of God has made upon immense masses of mind, and which it has perpetuated to the present time ; I mean the law of marriage. Polygamy and idolatry have always been united ; their union is not accidental ; they possess mutual affinities. The gods and goddesses of the heathen are distinguished for their licentiousness. Polygamy, and a general concubinage, naturally grow up out of idolatry, while, by a reciprocal tendency, licentiousness conduces to the worship of voluptuous divinities. The word of God from the beginning, and by the very history of the first pair, repressed this tendency. The progress was slow, it is true, during the existence of the Jewish dispensation ; but still, there was progress, and our Saviour's teachings in respect to marriage and divorce, and Paul's Epistles, in settling the practice of the primordial Christian church, laid the foundation of a new public sentiment in respect to polygamy, and the proper, and

life-long connection of one man and one woman by the sacred bonds of Christian marriage; it is true, this sentiment is not so widely extended as that which has respect to idolatrous worship; for, pure as was the Mohammedan religion in respect to one object of worship, it had not sufficient moral purity and force to resist the tendencies to polygamy in the oriental mind. But, wherever the whole word of God has gone, with its accompanying Christian institutions, it has created and established the general impression, that the marriage of one man with one woman is divinely authorized, and that all other alliances of the sexes are an offence against good morals. That there are multiplied violations of this law in Christendom is not, indeed, denied; but it is, nevertheless, an indication of the mighty power of the word of God, that it has created this law of marriage and impressed it so widely, and given it such a sanctuary in social life, and armed all the governments of Christendom in its defence.

The power of the word of God is not less clearly indicated in the influence which it has infused into civil government. The decalogue, and that portion of the civil code of the Jews, under the theocracy, which grew out of the decalogue, exercise a leading influence in all constitutional Christian governments. Nor can there be any doubt that everything worthy of the name of civil liberty has its origin in the word of God. The government of the judges, during the period of the Hebrew commonwealth, was the first

experiment of which we know anything of a free government. There, all the people, except a small number of domestic servants, whose condition was very much like that of minor children in the family, all the people, with this trifling exception, were in the enjoyment of equal rights. The government was strictly elective, and qualifications rather than birth placed men in all the offices of the state. The despotisms by which that little hated Palestine was surrounded were most iron-handed governments. The Grecian republic was not much better. We are deceived by the name of a republic, till we reflect that when the population of Attica consisted of five hundred thousand, there were only twenty thousand free citizens managing and enjoying the government for themselves. That is to say, more than twenty human beings, subjects of the government, labored for the support of each free citizen. The democracy of Athens differed from a monarchy only in this: twenty thousand autocrats were to be supported by the people instead of a single royal family.

After the example of a free elective government had been exhibited in the Hebrew commonwealth for four centuries, the word of God achieved nothing directly for civil liberty till the church gradually absorbed into itself the power of the western empire. When the western empire was subverted by the incursions of the Northmen, the church softened the power of the conquerors, and lined with velvet the yoke which it could not at first break or remove. As the

church gained in power she created a despotism of her own; but it was a milder despotism than the secular powers with which it was in conflict.

Let me pause here, one moment, to remark on a general delusion which exists in respect to the despotism of the Romish church. Despotic and cruel, indeed, it is, in comparison with English monarchy and American republicanism. But Popery was a mild, and gentle, and people-loving government compared with the insolence and selfishness of the old barons, and kings, and the powers of the empire. In the old Guelph and Ghibeline controversy there was more of right, or at least less of selfish ambition in the Guelph than in the Ghibeline party; there was more regard for the popular well-being in the church than in the empire. Hence, though a haughty and imperious ambition dictated the act when the Roman pontiff placed his foot on the neck of the prostrate monarch, applying to himself the prediction found in the ninety-first Psalm, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder," still, it was true that of the two despotisms that ruled in Christendom the gentler one then had the ascendancy.

But no sooner had the Bible been brought out to the people than the cause of civil liberty began to revive.

Any one at all acquainted with history can see that the British constitution is the product of the word of God. Our own free republic sprang up most manifestly and directly from the same source. There was a remarkable analogy between our government and

that of the Hebrew commonwealth. Like that, it consisted originally of thirteen States, including twelve tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh, united in one general government. So constant were the allusions to Israelitish liberty in our colonies that a member of our Congress once remarked that, in his native New England, during the years of boyhood, he had no other idea than that we, as a people, were the real literal Israel of which he had read in the Old Testament.

It ought to be mentioned in this connection that the power of the word of God is indicated by the fact that it has passed along in the current of the most vigorous races, and swayed most perfectly those nations which possess the greatest power. The Bible began its work in a race of inconsiderable culture. But it raised the Jewish people in no inconsiderable degree. Then it seized on the Roman mind and mastered it. Thence it entered the households of the Northmen, in the garb of a conquered power, and Christianized its masters. When it made its way out of the monastery it acted not on effeminate Chinese, or indolent and unthinking Hindoos. On the contrary, it laid hold of the German, the English, and the Scottish mind. Into this vigorous mass it has infused a mighty power. It has imbued their literature, gained a sway over their universities, moulded their social and civil institutions, and given character to their worship.

Nor is the power of the Bible less conspicuous in

its influence on individuals. See its action on Saul of Tarsus. His mind certainly was no ordinary one. He was acute, educated, and firm of purpose. As a religionist he was zealous, and pledged to oppose Christianity. He was exceedingly mad against the church, and verily believed that he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. He was proud and self-sufficient, and fancied that he could justify himself before God by his shining virtues. Yet all this opposition was subdued. He was made to glory in nothing but the cross, and to count not even his life dear to him if he might successfully publish the gospel.

Augustine was another instance illustrating the power of the word of God. He was famous already for his learning, and equally famous for his pride and self-consequence, till the word of God, accompanied by a mother's prayers, constrained him to bring all his high mental endowments, and learning, and influence, and lay them on the altar of Christianity. Place beside these such minds as those of Grotius, and Melancthon, and Luther, and Calvin, and Boyle, and Bacon, and Locke, and Cuvier, and Brougham, and Chalmers; and who can doubt that there is a mighty power in the word of God? These great minds did not embrace Christianity as a matter of policy, as many ambitious ecclesiastics have done. On the contrary, the Bible commanded their faith, and controlled their mental powers. By a similar power, the sacred Scriptures have met the most stub-

born and gifted unbelievers; and even many who united vicious propensities with their scepticism, and changed them into humble and teachable disciples of Christ.

To all this might be added the wonderful influence of the word of God in sustaining men in suffering, and in death. But I hasten to conclude, with briefly remarking on the power of the Bible to multiply and spread itself. There are plants in our botany that possess a remarkable power of self-semination. Some are inclosed in a pericarp that bursts with an elastic spring, and throws the seed in every direction, and to a great distance. Other seeds are mounted on wings, by which they are borne on the winds to distant localities. The Divine providence has an analogous contrivance in the power of the Bible to secure its dissemination. Its truths spring up and ripen in individual minds. They generate dispositions to spread the word of God. The Bible has made Bible Societies. The Bible has called forth Bible distributors. The Bible has awakened a liberal spirit and unclasped a thousand hands of avarice, to furnish means for translating, printing, and disseminating the word of God. The Bible is ordained to give itself to all nations, to plant itself in every family, to take possession of every mind. Its power is ultimately to achieve a conquest over the human race. Who of you will help it, by your contributions, your prayers, your inculcations of its holy doctrines? Take courage in your work. The word of God is not bound.

It goes forth from conquering to conquer. Its progress, in some respects, is slow. It has enemies still to contend with. The powers of darkness will not yield merely because idolatry has received a death-blow, and social life is becoming sweetened by the prevalence of a just law in relation to marriage; nor because civil liberty has received its life from the Bible. Pseudo-philanthropists and smatterers in science will assail it as a good book that has lived long and done well; but as a book which has had its day. They will propose an eclectic system of morality and religion. They will allow Christian precepts to be its basis, because these have acquired too much honor to be openly despised. The battle with this mongrel system of religion and philosophy is the last conflict. The best way to meet it is to spread the word of God. Put it into the hands of all the people. It will work its own way. It is as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Meantime let us see to it, as individuals, that we receive the Divine word in its simplicity into our hearts. It will mould our characters. It will sanctify our souls. It will be in us a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. The Bible contains a full supply for all your wants, as a moral, an accountable, and an immortal being. It can break up the slumbers of a self-complacent spirit, by the power of its holy and heart-searching law. It reveals a bleeding Saviour, and leads you to his cross for pardon. It directs you to plead for the illuminations of the Divine Spirit. Yet, with all its power,

it has created no necessity for your salvation. It can enlighten benighted minds; and you, as an individual, may grope in spiritual midnight. It may inspire others with hopes of glory, and you may be wrapped in eternal despair. You may behold, and wonder, and perish.

SERMON XII.

A FATHER'S INFLUENCE.

BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.—
Joshua XXIV. 15.

WHAT a noble resolution! At any time such a purpose would do honor to the heart that should adopt it. But at the time, and in the circumstances, in which this purpose was announced, it was a delightful instance of godliness and manly zeal.

The people of Israel had just passed through a series of peculiar trials and temptations, and were now about to enter upon a condition which, above all others, is apt to become a snare to the careless. They were entering upon their goodly land, and confidently anticipating the utmost prosperity. Under these circumstances, Joshua recounted to them the Divine mercies, in delivering them from their enemies, and in bringing them to the peaceful possession of their promised inheritance. "Now, therefore," said he, "fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you

to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The propriety of one's resolving, in humble reliance on Divine grace, to serve the Lord, will scarcely be questioned by any that have been instructed in the doctrines and precepts of Christianity. But the wisdom of associating one's family with himself, and pledging himself alike for his own future character, and that of his household, will appear to many as a more doubtful matter; yet, I hope, when the influences for securing such a result shall have been fully set forth, the Christian father will be enabled to speak confidently, both for himself and for his children, and to say, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Our subject is,

THE POWER OF A FATHER TO BLESS HIS FAMILY.

In the prosecution of my design, I shall be led to speak of the structure of family government: the securities that exist against the abuses of its powers and privileges: the identity of household interests: the advantages of a father for forming the character of his children by instruction, and the promised aids of the Holy Spirit. The father of a family occupies a station full of dignity and honor. To his household he is, in a more important sense than Moses was to the people of Israel, in the place of God. Though in

the elevation of his being and character, infinitely below his Maker, he holds relations to his offspring strikingly analogous to those of Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. They depend on him, implicitly, to supply their daily wants; and regard him as the source of all authority, and all right instruction. These analogies impart a solemnity to paternal authority, and give to it a sway which thousands feel, without ever having analyzed the influence that thus binds them as with a secret and mysterious spell.

As the head of a little kingdom, the father commences the exercise of his government over an empire of very limited extent. His authority is commonly exerted, in the first instance, over a solitary child. While the affairs of his realm are in this nascent and simple state, he has the advantage of leisure for a calm self-discipline, and for deliberately settling great first principles. As his subjects become more numerous, and some of them are advancing into the regions of independent thought and action, his work becomes more complicated and difficult. It would now afford scope for the wisdom and accomplishments of Solomon; and really demands the lofty purpose and uncompromising firmness of Joshua, when he exclaimed, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Paternal government, according to the constitution which God has given it, is a wonderful instrument. It brings together and holds in harmonious action principles, which, under every other kind of earthly dominion, are destructive of one another. It is at

once absolute and flexible, invested with awful power, and yet breathing a spirit of gentleness. Its peculiarities, however, may be most happily portrayed by comparing it with the modes of government that have obtained in other relations.

For the exercise of civil rule God has not ordained any specific form. It may be a monarchy, absolute or mixed. It may be an oligarchy, in which the few of a privileged class govern the many. It may be a representative popular government, like our own: or, it may be a pure democracy, originating all laws, and framing all important decisions in the primary assemblies of the people. Some of these forms, it is true, are less liable to abuse than others. But they are all begirt with dangers. A vigorous sustentation of authority may be easily hardened into an iron despotism. The love of freedom may with equal facility degenerate into licentious misrule, terminating in the horrors of anarchy. Civil government, then, is not a single divinely constituted mode of exerting good influences. It is rather an ever-varying result of the various feelings, and principles, and characters of the nations.

In contrast with this, household government stands forth as a Divine institute. Like a machine constituted independently of the material upon which it is destined to act, it is prepared before its subjects are in being, and then they are created, and brought and placed under its dominion successively, one by one, to be controlled and moulded by its influence.

If the government of the family be compared with that of the church, the result is not dissimilar.

No exact and divinely authorized form of ecclesiastical polity has been given to mankind. General principles only, in relation to this subject, are set forth in the sacred Scriptures. The parity of the clergy is maintained. Ministers of the word are required to be faithful as the bishops of their own congregations, and if they obtain any distinction among their brethren, they are at liberty to seek it only by becoming more manifestly the servants of all, and by surpassing others in works of humility, benevolence, and self-denial. The right of acting by representation, also, is clearly recognized in the appointments made by the first Christian churches, both of officers to act for them in discipline, and also of spiritual teachers to given fields of missionary labor, and to special commissions of almsgiving to destitute and distant churches. But in the Scriptures there are no enactments laying down a detailed form of ecclesiastical government. Indeed, it is quite manifest that God intended no such thing, from the undeniable fact that the principal portion of the church, in every Christian country, has taken on a form analogous to the civil organization under which it exists. In despotic countries, it is mainly papal; in the monarchy of England, prelatical; and, in this country, the tendency is nearly as strong towards some modification of presbytery. It is true, the character of civil government, in various parts of Christendom, may have been formed, in a considerable

degree, by the previously existing ecclesiastical governments. It is equally obvious, however, that the ecclesiastical has been modified by the civil. They act reciprocally upon each other. In this interaction, sometimes one predominates, and sometimes the other; but, after all the experience and investigations of men, for centuries, there seems to be no tendency even towards a uniform system of church government, as sustained in all its peculiarities by the authority of God; on the contrary, in every church where freedom of thought prevails to any considerable extent, there is a portion, and that the more intelligent and liberal portion, which maintains that even its own chosen system of ecclesiastical polity cannot be sustained as divinely authorized in all its details.

But there is a broad and palpable distinction between both of these kinds of government, civil and ecclesiastical on the one hand, and family government on the other.

Family government is by a Divine right. Its form is that of an absolute monarchy. The father is a sovereign. His will is law, and from his decisions there is no appeal. The entire interests of the household are under his control. The subjects are all peers. Among them there are no inequalities of rights; no offices. The superiority of influence which belongs to some members, arises only from seniority, and a consequently superior advancement in experience, and in wisdom, and virtue. There can be no question that such a government is divinely consti-

tuted. The monarch, by the vast superiority of his age and physical vigor, as well as by the maturity of his intellectual powers, and his heartfelt interest in the well-being of the household, is best fitted to govern. Obligated by marriage vows, and solemnly installed in the headship of his government, he goes forth from the matrimonial altar as Abraham did from his kindred, trusting to a Divine promise that subjects shall be given him over whom he may exercise his kingly power. Nor are the indications of Divine providence less clear in regard to the relative position of the governed. They are under the absolute necessity of being directed by a mind superior to their own; and hence their circumstances necessarily create a sense of dependence.

The government thus constituted, though it secures the highest possible degree of human authority, and is perfectly despotic in its form, is yet wonderfully protected against the tyrannical exercise of power, and the abuse of privileges. To protect the subjects, there is associated with this absolute control of the monarch a peculiar and bland medium of governmental influence; a power equally absolute over the governed, and yet more gentle in its action. The mother softens the exercise of authority, and enhances all the motives to obedience by the place which she holds in the confidence and affection of both parties. The mother, more than the father, leads the children to the fountains of instruction, and is in closer companionship with them in early life. She is to the house-

hold what Joseph was to the realm of Pharaoh, the direct administrator of the government, the dispenser of its chief blessings, and the conservator of its interests during the earlier and most important crisis of its history. The occasional immediate exercise of paternal authority augments the dignity of her rule, while she sustains the father's supremacy by her own perpetual sway, in connection with her example of submission to the same authority. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands," says an inspired apostle, adding as a motive for so doing, "as it is fit in the Lord." Can it be doubted that a principal ground of that fitness is found in these two considerations, viz.: first, such a submission renders the highest governmental authority one; and, therefore, absolutely incapable of divided counsels; and, secondly, the government is thus sustained by the peculiar and mighty influence of an example of submission to its authority in a high place.

A still stronger security against the abuse of power is laid in the affections of the ruler. Although clothed with an authority which, if perverted, might render him the most merciless of all tyrants, yet, such is the influence of parental affection, that children are quite as liable to be injured by an over-fond indulgence, as by an undue severity.

The abuse of privileges is equally guarded against in the relative position of the governed. The feebleness and dependence of the subjects, not less than the power of the ruler secure a non-revolutionary state.

During a period of nearly six thousand years, embracing the history of millions of these little dynasties, not a solitary case has arisen, in which internal peace has been marred by the tumults and strifes of a popular election. God has appointed and defined the governing power in a manner so marked, that none are able to call it in question, much less to meditate its overthrow. Nor has an instance occurred in which the weakest and worst has by low cunning and sly demagogical arts placed himself at the head of the government in its incipiency, and henceforth controlled it and moulded its character. The unity of the governing power, and its strength, surpassing as it does the combined power of all the subjects, discourage, at once, every idea of revolt. Moreover, if tempted to such an act, obligations of gratitude and love towards the powers that be, forbid it. Instances of filial ingratitude when approaching the period of manhood, and just merging from domestic to civil government, are not inconsistent with the foregoing statements. They are only mournful proofs that the powers of the government were not properly wielded when they had the advantage of their own early vigor, and of the infantile feebleness of the governed.

The family is the most perfect government on earth. It is the nursery in which the immortal being receives its first impressions of obligations and authority, of law and its sanctions. It is the arena where it is first trained before it is allowed to go forth under ecclesiastical and civil dominion; where God leaves the

human mind to a severer probation, to wrestle with peculiar temptations and to enjoy greater freedom by being subjected to greater hazards. Family government, far more than any other, is analogous to the government of God. Like his, it has one monarch, one lawgiver, and one judge, and all united in the same person. Like his, it has one mediatorial influence, at the same time wielding the authority of the government, and yet feeling the tenderest sympathy by a peculiarly close union with the subjects. Like his, the principal element of its power is love. Indeed, family government is the government of God epitomized. It is the government of God adapted to childhood, by its objects addressing themselves to the senses, and by the nearness and visibility of its influences. The principles to which it is intended to give birth in the bosoms of the subjects are eternal. The habits which it engenders are immortal as the nature that imbibes them. What limit, then, can be set to the power for good which is intrusted to the hands of a father?

Yet we may be more deeply impressed with the extent of this power by contemplating the identity of the interests of a household. Like the members of the human body, the members of a family are closely united. Their characters, their interests, their sympathies, are so interlinked that one cannot suffer without the others suffering with it. If the father himself exert his high authority to conduct his elder children along with himself in a right direction, a current will

be created and a channel worn, along which all the household will be drawn towards the same quiet desirable haven. Thus paternal power wisely exerted, will be continually augmented by its exercise, till it yields up its individual subjects to become respectively the heads of similar governments, which in their turn shall multiply the numbers of useful and happy families.

Distinct from the influence of supreme authority, the father possesses another power of inestimable value; the power to instruct his offspring. The influence of authority and the influence of instruction are clearly distinguishable; yet each implies some degree of the other. "Authority is that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey." Some instruction, with reference to law and its sanctions, and the nature of the governing power, is indispensable to a proper susceptibility of being influenced by authority; and yet the sway of authority differs from the direct influence of instruction. Authority may compel the mind to pause and receive moral enlightenment, and authority is that, in direct view of which the mind always acts, when it goes forth in the way of obedience. But instruction is the liberalizing power that renders the reverence for authority more profound, and suggests a thousand incidental motives for the performance of noble deeds, and the cultivation of excellent and lofty principles. Indeed, character cannot be well formed, and adorned with its deeper and richer shades, but by the light of

various and extended instruction. Childhood, it is true, may be restrained by authority in its strongest and simplest exercise, with the least possible instruction; and a degree of control may be maintained through life by the same influence. This is done by the papal priesthood. But it is done by a protraction of mental childhood all through life to old age. Nothing can secure the living green, the verdant thrifty growth of good character, but the clear sunshine of truth—the power of moral teaching.

The father holds in his hands the highest conceivable advantages for achieving this end. He has an authority which is supreme, and by which he may exert the highest influence, in its kind, that the mind of childhood can receive. He has the best possible means of instruction at his disposal, and has access to the mind in the most favored period. Whoever else may be denied the access, a father cannot be prevented from approaching the mind of his child. Clothed with supreme authority, armed with “the rod and reproof,” and yet breathing the spirit of parental affection, he brings with him all the appliances which may be found between the extremes of a stern severity and the most loving tenderness.

The means of instruction are as good as God can give, or he employ. He holds in his hands the sacred Scriptures; their principles are simple and far-reaching, and easily communicated. Their history is entertaining, and blended with the sweetest fountains of secular learning. Their poetry possesses all the ad-

vantages of a splendid imagery, and an ornate style and simple truth. Their doctrines are heavenly and sublime. Scenes of the most pathetic interest glow upon their pages, while they exhibit at once the gentleness and benignity of infinite love, and the awfulness of God's authority. What an instrument of moral power is here placed at the disposal of a father, and given to him too for the express purpose of inculcating its sacred lessons upon the minds of his children! It is illuminating as the sun, winning as the smile of God; subduing as the death-groans and tearful importunity of Jesus; and more terrific in its restraints than were the thunders and lightnings and trumpet voices of Sinai. This is the very instrument which God employs in subduing and ruling, and sanctifying and elevating human minds, after they have been thrown into stubborn rebellion and degraded by sin. The Holy Spirit uses no other truths than those found in the sacred volume, in the conversion and sanctification of men. By these "He raiseth up the poor from the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." As a means of influence, therefore, instruction, the very best possible in kind, and that in an inexhaustible quantity, is placed at the disposal of a father. He has this means of instruction, also, under the most favorable circumstances for rendering it effectual. He has the entire preoccupation of the mind of the child. When he first approaches it, there is not one position defined

and fortified, in that mind, to conflict with the principles which he would introduce. Not a cavil is uttered against the truth. There is no ability in the infant mind for such a work. God has placed it in the father's hand empty, and bidden him to furnish it. It is not so much as required to be first "swept and garnished," for it is new. Its inner chambers are walled all about with mirrors of reflection. Its active powers are running out on nature's sympathies as on a railway, to bring in whatever is new and strange in this world of wonders. The parent must seize this golden opportunity, and stand by and load down the trains with gospel truth, and direct the now nimble and docile faculties in assorting and packing them. Truth will now be received with gladness. For though the mind is entirely depraved, like the stock whence it is derived, yet it feels no active opposition to the truths of the gospel till it is so far developed as to perceive their moral bearing.

This thought is deemed of the greater consequence, because that philosophy which would be wiser than the teachings of the simplest facts in nature, in their full agreement with revelation, has maintained that a depraved mind rejects religious truth instinctively, and with the same spontaneousness as we reject food for which we have a native disrelish, or a nauseous medicine. This is certainly a mistake. It is true that "men love darkness rather than light," but it is for a reason. It is "because their deeds are evil." That is, they hate the light of truth, because they see that

it exposes their wickedness, and will prove to them an unwelcome restraint. But, whenever truth is taught in such a way, or is inculcated upon a mind in such a state, that the reproving influence is not for the present seen, it meets with no repugnance in the most sinful mind. Thus Nathan went to David with a parable, and gained a ready assent to certain principles before he disclosed their application to his delinquent sovereign. He then unfolded their bearings by fixing upon the monarch his reproving look, and exclaiming, with emphasis, "Thou art the man." While the truth was not seen as bearing upon his own selfishness and guilt, it was not unwelcome. And thus it is universally. There are other things in the mind of man, by nature, besides depravity. As Milton has finely said: "The wisdom of God created understanding fit and proportionable to truth, the object and end of it, as the eye to the thing visible." Thus, in the early religious instruction of children, the great and glorious truths of the gospel may be introduced while the mind is in such a state, from the limited development of its powers, that it feels no more objection to truths that will one day pierce it as a two-edged sword, than David felt to the principle which was so beautifully wrapped up in the parable of the prophet, while the applicableness of that truth to himself was undiscovered.

The father may place in the mind of his child one of the most important doctrines of the gospel, and not an objection shall be raised against its introduction.

Then he may introduce another and another. Each one may be regarded as an object of intrinsic beauty. Every grand doctrine of Christianity may thus be brought into the mind, and, thus moved about on those polished hinges of instruction, the answers of the catechism, they may be matched together as a complete and beautiful and well-proportioned temple. Does the mind of childhood object to this edification? No; it rather claps its hands for joy when "the headstone" is brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." Suppose, now, that as the mind approaches maturity, its terrific proclivity to a course of open rebellion against God appears in the strength of its manhood to contend against the restraints of religion. There stands the soul a temple of gospel truth. The Saviour knocks at the door, and with authority demands an entrance. The Holy Spirit claims it as his proper dwelling-place. The youth, recreant to his own and his father's God, may now war with the gospel, but it is too late to deliver himself from its influence. He may hate it, but he knows it is true. His very opposition confirms his conviction. He may now run from the sanctuary, but he carries its holy instructions in his bosom. He may spurn ministers of the gospel for a time, but there is a preacher within whom he cannot despise. He may turn away his ear from those who warn him, and remind him of his father's faithfulness, but he cannot escape the whisperings of a still, small voice in his own heart, saying, in the language of those solemn declarations of holy writ

early embalmed in his memory: "Prepare to meet thy God;" "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

If, however, a judicious exercise of authority under circumstances so favorable to its sway, and the most faithful instruction at the favored period of childhood be by themselves insufficient, as they certainly are, to secure the happiest results, there is one grand augmentation of paternal power which crowns all other endeavors with success. I mean, the impetration of the covenant mercies of God. In strict truth, it is God's power and not his own. Yet it is his. Jacob had power with God; and the Christian parent, when pleading with his Maker in behalf of his children, whom he has governed and instructed for the very purpose of qualifying them to serve the Lord, "moves the hand that moves the world." "The promise is to you and your children." God is ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. The father that has consecrated his infant child at the baptismal font, and exercised aright his authority and his power of instructing, may be well assured that God will not disregard his prayer for Divine interposition. His covenant-keeping heavenly Father regards his faithful servant and his offspring as being so closely united, that he cannot well allow them to be separated. The same spirit of supplication that secures persevering grace for himself, secures also converting grace for his child; and he that has properly embraced God's covenant would as soon give up the former as the latter.

Taking into the account, then, all the various facilities committed to paternal hands, may not a Christian father be justified in speaking in the confident tone of Joshua, and saying, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord?"

From these views, it is obvious that it can never be a light matter to trifle with parental authority and influence. The very first lesson in morals and religion is to learn submission to authority. In the family, God commences with our nature in its infancy to inculcate that lesson. So sacred does he regard it, that he has nowhere prescribed any course to be taken by the child to secure its rights in case of the most despotic cruelty on the part of the parent. It cannot be denied that mental derangement, or sallies of un-governed anger, might be properly resisted by a child when resistance is the only means left for the protection of life. But the fact that no instruction is given in the Scriptures defining the circumstances in which such resistance may be justified, is a strong intimation that it is not to be thought of till the most pressing exigency compels it. Indeed, the sentiments of filial piety are of such a nature that we can scarcely conceive of any extreme of yielding which will not awaken our admiration. A case in point is related of a mother and her daughter, in which the sad evils of uncontrolled passion and the sweetness of filial piety are alike exemplified. The mother, from early habit, indulged herself in cruel outbreaks of rage and violence against her child. The spirit of the little girl

possessed an uncommon share of native gentleness, and had also been greatly softened by the heavenly influences of religion. After she had attained her fourteenth year, she was one day assaulted by her mother with brutal violence for some slight oversight of which she had been guilty. After beating her till weary and exhausted with the exercise, she observed that the child wept and sobbed aloud. It was unusual, and the mother inquired the reason of it. With the utmost simplicity, the affectionate and aggrieved child informed her that the excess of her sorrow arose from observing with how much less vigor of arm she corrected her than formerly. When such a veneration and affection for a parent leads a child to not even observe or seem to know the injustice under which it suffers, we cannot fail to be impressed with the loveliness of filial submission, and to feel that it can scarcely be carried to an extreme.

Nor does this reasoning apply to parental government merely. It has an analogous application to the exercise of authority generally. There are no instructions given in the word of God respecting the circumstances in which it may be resisted, and nothing is said of the mode in which such resistance may be made; while the subjection of children to parents, wives to husbands, church members to them that have the rule over them, and citizens to magistrates, is often and earnestly inculcated. The principle assumed by our Saviour and his apostles seems to be this. There are two evils which inhere more or less,

in all modes of government, among sinful beings—the insubordination of the governed, and the oppression of the governors. Of these two evils insubordination is immeasurably the greatest. Where there is no subordination, there is no place for God himself to set up his claims. There are no sure resisting tendencies in a state of anarchy to the evils of that state. Its very action is to perpetuate the principle that “might makes right,” and to bring back such a reign of “chaos and old night” that no security of life or property shall exist, but every man shall be subjected to suffer from the hand of his brother. But in a wide-spread despotism, however oppressive, there must be some of the blessings of order; and that quietness and continuity of the same things which prevail are favorable to a silent spread and growth of principles that will ultimately assert the rights of the oppressed. Hence our Saviour and his apostles everywhere inculcate obedience to rulers irrespective of their character, enjoining subordination to their authority and endeavoring to change the tone of the public sentiment, so as ultimately to secure the lenient exercise of the governing power. Hence, too, an apostle gave it out as one of the strongest marks of the depravity of a certain class, that they “despised dominions and spake evil of dignities.” Nor were just and praiseworthy rulers alone referred to. The dominions of the Cæsars and the dignities of the Herods were included, and men were rebuked for trifling with authority, even

when it was exercised with most unreasonable severity.

The spirit of Christianity is very peculiar in this respect. Infidelity has almost always made it a main stroke in its policy, to appear to be foremost in the defence of human rights against the undue exercise of governmental power. On the same field Christianity has aimed to cultivate respect for authority, and to promote the growth of knowledge and holiness as the remedy for its abuses. It is sufficiently obvious which has really achieved the most towards securing the rights of the people. Our puritan ancestors, among whom one might not address a disrespectful word to the lowest parish magistrate, nor approach a school-master, but as a superior being, laid the foundations of liberty broad and deep, while the French philosophers, with all their boasted attachments to human rights, and their real hatred of arbitrary power, when not exercised by themselves, have not as yet secured the state against the most fearful tendencies to revolution. Assassins even now stalk among the tombs of the philosophers of the French revolution, threatening the overthrow of existing authority without the least prospect of anything better in its place. And who has done most to elevate her sex, Mary Woolstencraft, prating about woman's rights, and urging them to wrestle with men for equality on the arena of political strife; or Hannah More, commending the domestic virtues, and assuring her sex that their highest glory

is attained in their loved and honoured subordination to their husbands?

With such views of the power of a father to bless his family, before the mind, how mightily do the motives for parental faithfulness become! It must exert a vast influence upon a parent to reflect how perfectly God has subjected the minds of his children to his forming hand. His authority is absolute. In this respect he cannot possibly have any higher advantage. As a ruler no one questions his right to entire obedience. There is no thought of displacing him by election. There are no tendencies to revolution in his little empire. His subjects are so manifestly inferior and dependent that there is no necessity for tumults within, nor is there any considerable danger of interferences from without. He has the power of completely controlling their instruction. Furnished with the richest stores of knowledge in the Divine word, he employs the same truths in the same Divine connections which God employs in the conversion and sanctification of men. He makes the authority of God himself subserve his purpose. He has the preoccupation of the mind and the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. It is, perhaps, impossible for us to appreciate the advantage of an access to the mind in precedence of all others, and the value of the opportunity of introducing the doctrines of the gospel, before depravity has had sufficient time, and acquired skill enough, to bar up the avenues of truth. It is obvious that Christianity, though in every other respect the same, would

have been placed under peculiar disadvantages, if the human family had been all created, as we suppose angels were, in the maturity of their powers. We know not that the gospel could be propagated at all in a world full of mature beings involved in a common rebellion. The power of God, it is true, is not to be limited, but we do know at least that his power and wisdom are both magnified by spreading the triumphs of his religion through the influence of instruction introduced in the happy, favored period of childhood. It is a high motive also to parental faithfulness to know that it exerts a wide influence in sustaining the blessings of civil government, and in the advancement of spiritual religion. It is highly probable that there would be no civil government on earth, if it were not for family government, and it never will be known, till the light of eternity reveals it, how much a few well-governed and well-instructed families do to prevent states and empires from rushing into the horrors of anarchy. Then the example of parental faithfulness, with the blessings that are seen to attend it, powerfully draws men to Christ. Nor does it merely attract men as individuals to a spiritual worship of God. It leads families to their Saviour. Many a parent has been won to Christ, by seeing how a Christian family is blest through the influence of family religion. And when such a one is turned to God, it is like the conversion of a king among idolatrous tribes. The whole government becomes a sanctified one, and entire households are trained up for the service of the Lord.

Besides, no mortal can estimate the influence of paternal faithfulness upon future generations. To a reflecting mind, that is a mighty scheme of influence which is indicated by the words of the prophet: "Tell ye your children of it, and let them tell their children, and their children another generation." That is to say, let holy sentiments, sound instruction, stern principles of right, pass from lip to lip, from an individual to a family; from each one of its members to their families; from all their members to a wider circle, and so on, increasing in a rapidly augmented ratio, till a multitude like a nation, shall have their minds and hearts cast in the mould of a godly ancestor.

What a weight of responsibility rests upon a Christian father! Household piety lies at the foundation of all right religious culture, and of the success of the church of God. There the influence of the gospel appears in its might, exerting itself under the most advantageous circumstances possible. There is authority absolute, yet tempered with parental affection, softened by maternal kindness, and enforced by a mother's echo of paternal authority, and by the example of a dignified Sarah-like submission. There is instruction, rich, various, and solid, introduced into the mind in the most favored period. Let parents then address themselves to their chief work on earth, the training of their children for the service of God. Let them wait upon the Lord for the aids of his grace. Let them remember that the time is short, that their influence must be exerted now; that they shall soon

meet their dear ones at the bar of God; that they shall see them there polluted with sin, scathed with thunder and crushed to hell, or they shall meet them clothed in robes of unsullied purity, with crowns of gold on their heads, and entering with songs and transports into the kingdom of Christ.

SERMON XIII.

IMPORTANCE OF GENTLE VIRTUES.

WHOSE ADORNING, LET IT NOT BE THAT OUTWARD ADORNING OF PLAINTING THE HAIR, AND OF WEARING OF GOLD, OR OF PUTTING ON OF APPAREL; BUT LET IT BE THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART, IN THAT WHICH IS NOT CORRUPTIBLE, EVEN THE ORNAMENT OF A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT, WHICH IS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD OF GREAT PRICE. —1 *Pet.* III. 3, 4.

THE apostle is here addressing himself to Christian wives in regard to the best method of exerting a good spiritual influence upon their unconverted husbands. He first recommends a dutiful subjection, so that their husbands, if not subdued by the word (that is, if not converted by means of the preaching of the gospel), may be won by the conversation of the wives. While they behold, says he, your chaste conversation coupled with fear. The word, translated conversation, has a more extensive signification than we give to the English term at the present day. It means behavior; so that the idea intended to be conveyed by the second verse is this, while they behold your pure behavior coupled with a reverent obedience to their own authority. He then proceeds to magnify the beauty and power of the inward spiritual graces of the Christ-

ian when compared with the most captivating outward ornaments.

Doubtless there is such a thing as extravagance in personal decoration; but I do not think that the apostle intended in this place to say anything upon that subject. His view may be expressed in a paraphrase like this. You may have thought that you could obtain a powerful sway over the minds of your unconverted husbands by a tasteful attire and captivating ornaments; but let me assure you that there are ornaments which far surpass the plaiting of the hair, and the wearing of gold and the putting on of apparel, however beautiful and becoming. It is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; an ornament of such high charms that even God himself esteems it of great price. Adorn yourselves, then, with the gentle and lovely graces of piety, esteem nothing else of any worth in the comparison.

By this, certainly, the apostle would not restrict these virtues to females. But as Archbishop Leighton on this passage has beautifully said: "This ornament is withal the comeliness of every Christian in every estate. It is not a woman's garment, or ornament improper for men. There is somewhat, as I may say, of a particular cut or fashion of it for wives towards their husbands and in their domestic affairs; but men, all men ought to wear of the same stuff, yea, if I may so speak, of the same piece, for it is all one and the same spirit, and fits the stoutest and greatest commanders. Moses was a great general, and yet

not less great in this virtue, *the meekest man on earth.*”

Christianity is the friend of everything that is good, but it evidently gives most consequence to those gentle, and quiet, and retiring qualities for which the world has little regard. Incidentally, a chaste and refined taste is promoted by the gospel. Public spirit, patriotism, a wide-spread philanthropy, and a high regard for honor are virtues which spring up and flourish most luxuriantly under Christian culture. But meekness, quietness of spirit, patience, penitence, humility, and indeed the whole family of gentler virtues are the peculiar glory of our religion. That the apostle should have selected from all the good qualities by which religion is commended, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; and that he should have spoken of these as jewels to adorn the soul, and that he should have represented them as high-priced in the estimation of God; these facts will more than justify me in deducing from the text the following

PROPOSITION.

THE GENTLE AND UNOBTRUSIVE VIRTUES OF CHRISTIANITY ARE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE.

It will scarcely be doubted by any attentive reader of the New Testament that our Saviour and his apostles gave great prominence to these virtues. They certainly did not discourage patriotism, and boldness, and a manly sense of honor. They did not advise

magistrates to allow their authority to fall into contempt by too much indulgence of evil-doers. On the contrary, they approved of their maintaining the majesty of the law by inflicting capital punishment. They commended magistrates for bearing the sword, the instrument by which death was inflicted, not in vain. And Paul alleged that he was ready to sustain the law against capital offences by submitting himself to death if he had done anything deserving such a punishment.

What a remarkable cluster of these gentler qualities has our blessed Saviour brought together in that beautiful strain of beatitudes in the commencement of his Sermon on the Mount. His blessing rests on the poor in spirit, the penitent mourner for sin, the meek, the merciful, the pure, the peace-makers, and those who suffer bitter persecution with patience. How earnestly does he inculcate the duty of forgiving injuries and loving our enemies. When Christ is held up to us as a pattern by the inspired writers, it is with reference to these peculiar qualities. He acted with a holy and vigorous zeal when he made a whip of small cords and drove the cattle from the court of the temple, and purged the holy inclosure by compelling the traffickers and money-changers to withdraw. But in this point of his example our imitation is not insisted on. When he rode into Jerusalem as a king, and awed the multitudes of his enemies, and commanded a deserved homage from the hearts of thousands, he asserted his proper dignity; but no care is

taken to urge upon us to assert at suitable times our dignity. But his meekness and lowliness are often placed before us for the express purpose of being copied. He exhibited these qualities almost exclusively. If his dignity and glory gleamed forth at the purgation of the temple, at the riding in kingly state into Jerusalem, and at the glorious transfiguration upon mount Tabor, yet almost the whole of his life was an exemplification of those virtues which may be exercised and evinced in the life of a poor laborer or the humblest domestic. Indeed, he took upon himself the form of a servant, and made nearly the whole of his life an exemplification of the gentle and unobtrusive virtues.

The discipline to which divine Providence has subjected the church, whenever the Lord has improved her character, evinces the same thing. Affliction has been employed to inure the soul to patience. Persecution has been permitted to cultivate the spirit of meekness, and subordination to produce quietness. The fruits of the divine Spirit are also characterized as possessing this same gentle, quiet character. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Let me suggest some reasons why Christianity gives such prominence to the gentler and unobtrusive virtues. And,

I. *There is more simplicity and purity of character secured by the exercise of the gentler virtues.*

In the manifestation of shining qualities, and the

exercise of high public virtues, the best men find in connection with their love of what is right a strong mingling of self-interest. Those actions which glare before the public as great and splendid achievements, bring after them certain secular rewards which corrupt the simplicity of the actor, or at least strongly tend to such a result. The love of gain stealthily insinuates itself. An eye to one's reputation mars the purity of his motives. Vanity is flattered by what men say of such actions. But one is less tempted to this mingling of selfish feelings, with patience and meekness, and uniform gentleness, and humility, and forbearance. Hence the truth of the language of the poet,

“The private walks, the secret acts of men,
If noble, far the noblest of their lives.”

The retired virtues of a meek and quiet spirit are less likely to be corrupted than those high qualities that come more abroad; as the fountain, that bubbles up from the deep recess of a rock, is more likely to send a pure current over its pebbly bed in that retirement, than the river is to continue pure when it has cut a channel for itself in the earth for the space of a thousand miles.

II. *The gentler and more unobtrusive virtues are of more general utility.*

There are, comparatively, few persons that occupy positions which will demand anything very striking or imposing from them. But a meek and quiet spirit becomes the king on his throne, the statesman in the senate chamber, the scholar in his closet, and the ar-

tisan in his shop. Yes, and it equally well becomes the prince and the beggar.

So the gentler virtues may be brought into profitable exercise on all occasions. You may repent, and meekly forgive injuries, and be patient every day—nay, almost every hour. While what are termed high and shining qualities are conspicuous only on the great occasions that demand them, while they are put on like the uniform of the military on days of review, and in the time of battle, a meek and quiet spirit may be worn as the perpetual ornament of the soul. They send forth a pure light, and exhibit a simple goodness, which benefits every beholder.

III. *As this class of virtues is of more general utility, so they are a far more powerful means of usefulness.*

Other virtues that manifest themselves in splendid achievements, exhibit a greater show of strength. They move with armies, and sit in cabinets, and walk in the high places of office, and show themselves in halls of legislation. They are associated with “the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the prudent and the ancient, the captain of fifty and the honorable man, and the counsellor and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.” But patience under injuries, forgiveness, and a meek and quiet spirit, possesses far greater power. The gentleness of this temper causes it not to be seen by the thoughtless and the superficial. But its unobtrusiveness prevents men from guarding themselves against

its influence, and gives it a silent power which no human mind can estimate. The apostle, in our context, places it (in respect to its power) above the preaching of the gospel. He represents it as coming in and winning an unconverted soul after the preaching of the word had failed to accomplish the end—"that if any obey not the word," says he, "they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives." The subsequent verses indicate that he means by conversation, here, the manifestation of a meek and quiet spirit.

Every unconverted sinner guards himself vigilantly against the preaching of the gospel, and all those conspicuous means which are connected with the reputation and other temporal rewards of the actors. But no man can guard himself against the influence of a meek and quiet spirit, manifested by a friend or a member of his own household—and manifested only because, unobtrusive as it is, it cannot be hid. The quiet shining of such a spirit compares with the more spirited action of high public endeavor as the influence of the sun compares with that of the wind, in the fable, when they vied with each other in efforts to take the cloak from a pedestrian traveller. The wind made the first attempt. By a sudden gust he lifted the loose garment, but the man feeling himself in danger of suffering loss, caught again his flying mantle and gathered it more closely about him. The wind blew more fiercely. The traveller only gathered more closely the folds of his cloak. The wind collected all

its force, and came in a whirling tornado. The traveller buckled his cloak tightly about his person, and rendered it easier to take cloak and traveller away together than to separate them. No effect had been produced except to stimulate the man to the most determined and successful resistance. The sun commenced his effort. The traveller perceived no effort at all. He saw only a quiet beauty and brightness in the heavens. He walked on with elastic step, and all unconscious to himself, unbuckled the closest band of his cloak. Onward he passed, the sun's beams still baptizing his entire person with its noiseless flood. The traveller loosened another fold of his mantle. The sun made no demonstration of increased effort. He only continued the same meek and quiet shining. The traveller came to the shadow of a great rock, and paused, and deliberately laid off his cloak, folded it, and sat down upon it to rest. He knew that the wind had made an unsuccessful endeavor to take from him his garment—but he scarcely knew that the sun had sought for it, and yet he had cheerfully given it to him, and was almost ready to impart his coat also. Thus is it with the influence of a meek and quiet spirit. It is gentle, and noiseless, and mighty. It achieves the most majestic results without advertising those upon whom it acts of the influence by which their hearts are won to the Saviour.

IV. *The superior excellency of these gentler virtues is also seen in the fact, that they distinguish the truly pious, the children of God, from other men.*

The fire may be taken from other altars than that of Christianity, to kindle the flame of patriotism. Human culture of some of the nobler qualities of our nature can produce honorable sentiments and many of the social virtues. But nothing less than the grace of God can subdue the soul in genuine penitence, and inspire an unresisting meekness under injuries and a forgiveness of wrongs, and clothe the whole man with the garment of humility. A meek and quiet spirit was never manifested by the legislators, the philosophers, or the people, among the heathen. It never existed among Mohammedans. A ferocious and revengeful temper is even inculcated by their religion. Infidels never pretend to be influenced by such a temper; nor do those of our great political men, who claim to have rendered the most important service to their country, but who are confessedly not spiritual Christians, pretend to possess a meek and quiet spirit. But there have been individuals in every age of the world, some in high stations, and many more in the humbler walks of life, that have always manifested this spirit. Yet in every instance, whether it were Joseph in Egypt, or Moses in the wilderness, or Stephen, kneeling with bright face before his murderers, or the publican, smiting on his breast, or the obscurest female that distributes tracts in the city, and repeats visits of kindness to those who requite them with sour looks and unkind expressions, in every instance that spirit bears the impress of God's workmanship and grace.

V. *The gentler and more unobtrusive virtues im-*

part the greatest consistency and the most enduring and extensive usefulness to that class of good actions which we have denominated shining qualities.

Moses was a wiser legislator, a more skilful general, and possessed more power in his public character, because he was meek and patient in his spirit. Joseph and Daniel were fitted to shine in courts, and to exert a mighty influence by their public virtues, because they possessed, in a pre-eminent degree, a meek and quiet spirit. When St. Paul was running a splendid career of public usefulness, God in his holy providence so ordered events that he should be continually afflicted to secure his continued humility. And when there was danger that he might be lifted up with vanity on account of his great public distinction, he informs us that a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him. This contributed to that meekness and quietness of spirit, which gave new and wonderful power to his public action.

VI. *Again, God has promised the highest rewards to the exercise of the gentler virtues.*

There is very little of anything like direct promises to those who shall deliver their country from oppression, or break the political bondage of communities or perform any other great public work. "To this man," says God, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." There are no marked promises in the

sacred Scriptures, to one who, like Lord Bacon, changes the philosophy of the world. But God will beautify the meek with salvation. Blessed are the meek. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. If a servant only suffer wrongfully with patience, God will reward it. From these views we propose to deduce very briefly several lessons of instruction. And,

1. *Christianity must be from God.*

No other system of religion has ever given prominence to a meek and quiet spirit. No other system has so much as professed to do so. Even under the teachings of Christianity, the great mass of men manifest no relish for this feature of gospel inculcation and Christian character. In no country, in no nation under heaven, have men been willing to bear with one another so much as to allow the free toleration of all religions, except where the spirit of the gospel prevails, and the people drink in gospel instruction from the Scriptures themselves, the sacred fountain of Divine truth.

Who invented a system that thus strikes primarily at pride, resistance, and intolerance. Was it the devil, or was it wicked men, or was it an emanation from the mind of a holy God?

2. *Persons in the narrowest circumstances, and in the humblest walks of life, may be greatly useful if they will.*

The secluded female, shut up to the care of her little ones, struggling with poverty to earn their daily bread, may manifest as meek and quiet a spirit as her

more wealthy fellow-disciples; and if she toil on with holy gentleness, contented with God's dealings, unenvious of those possessing more worldly fortune, she may do more good than many a disciple of less humility, whose name always stands among the foremost in great enterprises for the church of God. The gentler virtues are the highest means of usefulness. God will exhibit the result. It is in his sight of great price.

3. *It is hazardous for Christians generally to exercise themselves in high matters.*

Moses may go to Pharaoh and attempt to control the counsels of a nation. His mind was familiar with great national movements; he could aim at such an influence without endangering his meekness, and was especially safe, because he acted under an immediate Divine direction. So Daniel may exert a powerful sway at the court of Babylon, when the Lord has given him great influence, and great wisdom, and courtly manners, and the favor of the monarch. But when a passion rises in the bosom of multitudes of Christians to guide the national counsels; when our young men and females, of limited education, undertake to direct the whole popular will in regard to vexed questions—questions, with respect to which our wisest men, in church and state, have been at their wits' end, I can but tremble with apprehension, lest the meek and quiet spirit through which good influence is mainly exerted, should be lost sight of.

4. *Christian gentleness is a highly important test of*

character. In my opinion, nothing can so quickly and fatally mar our Christian comfort, as the exercise of harsh passions: and nothing so invites and cherishes all Christian graces in the heart as the possession of a meek and quiet spirit.

5. *Finally. The way of salvation is alike plain and delightful.* Be quiet, be gentle, and unresisting. If reproof comes from the word of God, take it as a favor. If a Christian friend administer a rebuke, consider it as an excellent oil. If God chasten you, kiss the rod and bless him that hath appointed it. Sit down at your Saviour's feet with the teachableness of a little child, and it shall be well. You shall possess a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

SERMON XIV.

MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SPAKE UNTO THEM AGAIN IN PARABLES, AND SAID, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO A CERTAIN KING, WHICH MADE A MARRIAGE FOR HIS SON. AND 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, ONE TO HIS FARM, AND ANOTHER TO HIS MERCHANDISE: AND THE REMNANT TOOK HIS SERVANTS, AND ENTREATED THEM SPITEFULLY, AND SLEW THEM. BUT WHEN THE KING HEARD THEREOF, HE WAS WROTH: AND HE SENT FORTH HIS ARMIES, AND DESTROYED THOSE MURDERERS, AND BURNT UP THEIR CITY. THEN SAITH HE TO HIS SERVANTS, THE WEDDING IS READY, BUT THEY WHICH WERE BIDDEN WERE NOT WORTHY. GO YE THEREFORE INTO THE HIGHWAYS; AND AS MANY AS YE SHALL FIND, BID TO THE MARRIAGE. SO THOSE SERVANTS WENT OUT INTO THE HIGHWAYS, AND GATHERED TOGETHER ALL, AS MANY AS THEY FOUND, BOTH BAD AND GOOD: AND THE WEDDING WAS FURNISHED WITH GUESTS. AND WHEN THE KING CAME IN TO SEE THE GUESTS, HE SAW THERE A MAN WHICH HAD NOT ON A WEDDING GARMENT: AND HE SAITH UNTO HIM, FRIEND, HOW CAMEST THOU IN HITHER, NOT HAVING A WEDDING GARMENT? AND HE WAS SPEECHLESS. THEN SAID THE KING TO THE SERVANTS, BIND HIM HAND AND FOOT, AND TAKE HIM AWAY, AND CAST HIM INTO OUTER DARKNESS: THERE

SHALL BE WEeping AND GNASHING OF TEETH. FOR MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN. *Mat. XXII. 1—14.*

THIS parable ought not to be confounded with that of the great supper, found in the 14th chapter of the gospel according to Luke. Though alike in the general idea of representing the provisions of the gospel by a feast, its promulgation by invitations sent out, and the sinfulness of those that reject it by the ungrateful neglect of the invited guests; still, there are several striking points of difference between the two.

They were not spoken on the same occasion. The parable of the supper was uttered at a feast to which our Lord was invited by one of the chief of the Pharisees. That of the marriage of the king's son was spoken in the temple. There are several points of difference, also, in the character of the two compositions which show conclusively that they are not different versions of the same discourse. One describes an ordinary banquet of some opulent citizen. A feast, as we may well suppose, very much like that at which our Saviour was then sitting. The other sets before us the marriage festival of the son of a great monarch. In the former, the sinfulness of declining the provisions of grace is portrayed, and the intimation is made that those distinguished and privileged classes, the Scribes and Pharisees, should be deprived of its eternal blessings, while those in the streets and lanes, persons of an inferior condition, publicans and harlots, should enter into the kingdom of God. In the latter, an exhibition is made of the more active wick-

edness of the Jewish people when that spirit of violent hate was rising which terminated in their crucifying the Son of God, and putting to death the early propagator of Christianity, and the calling of the Gentiles, is predicted. In addition to this, the parable of the marriage feast introduces a new discrimination of persons not at all alluded to in the parable of the supper. It sets forth two distinct and successive executions of judgment. In the first, our Lord speaks of the punishment of those who persecuted and put to death the messengers of salvation, by saying that the king "was wroth, that he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." In the second, he alludes to the punishment of such as nominally comply with the invitation, without possessing the qualifications requisite to be admitted to a place among the blest, under the figure of a man in the festal hall who had not on a wedding garment. In other words, he first distinguishes between those who openly despise the gospel, and those that publicly and openly receive it. When he has drawn a lively picture of the destruction of all those open despisers, he proceeds to make a closer discrimination, and to show, in the character and destiny of an individual, that some who had found a place among the righteous, would be cast out. This last separation between true and spurious Christians is a sufficient basis for a distinct discourse. I shall, therefore, at this time, limit my exposition to the first part of the parable, ending with the judgment executed on open despisers, and the sending of the gospel to others.

Contemplating this portion by itself, a complete dramatic effect is produced. The piece has three distinct acts. In the first, the king, and his servants, and their action in providing the feast, represent God, and those subordinate agents that act with him in making provision for the salvation of man. In this act, but one class of persons appears. A party is to be introduced, it is true, of a very different character—one that will appear in violent conflict with the king and his servants. But throughout the first act everything is harmonious and delightful. One great and pleasing end is before the mind. It is the honoring of the king's son, and the securing a large participation in his enjoyment on the part of favored subjects of the government. One means is proposed for achieving this object. The preparation of a banquet, the magnificence of which shall become the royal state of him that provides it, and the occasion that gives it rise, and the end to be achieved.

The servants obedient to the behests of one wise, benevolent, and glorious monarch, are all alert in action, and every endeavor concurs to produce the one happy result. The scene is laid in the metropolis of a great empire. As we approach it, we behold a kingly palace. Its lofty dome glitters in the sun. As we come nearer, we descry through the Elysian groves that encircle it, brilliant walls of marble and splendid colonnades. We enter through corridors paved with mosaics, and pass by elegant statues, and perceive the sharp sound of our footfalls muffled in the soft tones of murmuring fountains. Thence we

pass into the great festal chamber. The looms of Persia have been laid under contribution for its rich carpets and the pictured tapestry of its walls. From the vaulted ceilings depend lamps glittering with gems and gold, while magnificent mirrors multiply a hundredfold this array of sumptuous elegance. Tables curiously wrought and inlaid with ebony, and ivory, and precious stones, are extended through the long apartment, making room for a thousand guests. The active servants are seen everywhere bringing out the service of gold, and arraying it in the best manner for individual and general effect. Some are abroad making purchases of spices and various condiments that will be needed in the preparation of the feast; some are ordering ornaments and flowers for garnishing the tables, and some are practising their parts in the preparation of an orchestra of delicious music, while others are going forth with notes of invitation. The king himself comes in, and surveys the scene, and beholds with satisfaction the progress of the work. Everything in these general preparations is in perfect order. The day of the feast approaches. The interest deepens. The oxen and fatlings are killed. All things are ready. The servants are now dispatched according to custom to inform the previously invited guests that the dinner is prepared, and to bid them come now to the marriage feast.

Thus far we have placed before us the king, his benevolent provision, and the harmonious unresisted action employed in preparing for such an august and

happy occasion. The spiritual instruction intended to be conveyed by all this is exceedingly obvious. By the king is intended the infinite God. This, on many accounts, is one of the best images by which to represent the Deity. Yet it must not be forgotten that all those figurative representations are defective. God is an infinite king. His moral character is one of supreme goodness. His monarchy is commensurate with the whole universe; his resources are boundless.

The feast sets forth the provisions of the gospel. The analogies subsisting between such a festive entertainment, and the spiritual blessings adumbrated by it, must not be traced out with too much minuteness. It is enough to say that a general resemblance between the two is plainly perceptible. In both, the enjoyment is rich and various; the free intercourse of congenial minds is involved and reciprocal sentiments of goodwill are implied as existing between him that provided the feast and his favored guests.

The utmost harmony has prevailed in the progress of these preparations. The counsels of the king have imparted unity to the whole plan of the operations, while the unquestioning obedience and alacrity of the servants have rendered all their practical movements perfectly harmonious.

Precisely such has been the preparation of the provisions of grace. The disturbing element which appears in the second act of this wonderful drama is not developed—is not exhibited in the least degree in the devising and preparing the provisions of Divine mercy.

The scheme originated in the unsolicited benevolence of God. His unaided wisdom formed the plan and holy subordinate beings co-operated in its accomplishment.

This brings us to a new and extraordinary development—to what I have termed the second act of the drama. An element which has not hitherto appeared is introduced. It is an element of discord, changing this scene of love into an arena of strife. The first occasion of this conflict is the going forth of the servants of the king, in that very spirit of love which had wrought with such sweetness in preparing the feast, to inform the invited guests that the banquet was now ready and awaiting their arrival. The call is slighted. They would not come. The invitation is renewed with the same kindness, and as a second invitation, in such cases, implies, with increased urgency. This urgency becomes the occasion of the moral conflict's being exchanged for violent hostilities. The invited guests, provoked by the reiteration and urgency with which the king's claims are presented, strike the first blow. Blood flows. The innocent servants of the king, while the messages of love are on their lips, are seized and murdered. The king, incensed both by the contempt of his generous provisions, and by the atrocious murders committed, sends an overwhelming force and destroys the assailants, and burns up their city. We have here a lively picture of the first preachers of the gospel, of the opposition made to them by the Jews, and of the destruction with which they were

overwhelmed as a consequence. There are certain allusions in this part of the story which belong to the persons and circumstances then existing—but it will be seen, as we proceed, that great principles are involved in the narrative—principles that find an illustration in the conflict of Christianity with the world in every subsequent age.

The first invitation of the servants may be regarded as having reference, primarily, to the calls of the prophets, and all those previous intimations made in the Old Testament scriptures, that they should believe on him that was to come, while the early preachers of the gospel, that spoke plainly of Jesus and the resurrection, are the servants referred to when it is said of the king “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.”

There is something analogous to this double call *now*, in the manner in which the invitations of mercy are brought to bear on individual minds. Spiritual instruction is infused into the minds of sinners gradually, so that, though the provisions of grace were, in themselves, rendered complete when our blessed Saviour bowed his head and said, “It is finished,” yet they do not appear in their completeness, to an individual mind, till the elements of the Christian system have been successively received. While this process of acquiring the elementary conceptions of the gospel

scheme is going on, the individual is in a state analogous to that of the whole Jewish mind previously to the coming of Christ. The teachings of childhood, in the case of those who have a Christian education, have, at least, accomplished the object of the first call. In their maturer convictions they hear the declaration, all things are ready—they perceive that nothing is wanting for their salvation but that they should cordially comply with the invitations of the gospel. How often has this statement been verified in the experience of those who now hear me. Christian instruction, as it has fallen from the lips of parents, and teachers, and pastors, or as it has beamed into the mind from the perused chapters of the Bible, has made a distinct impression that you were invited to the gospel feast. The conviction, however, was not deep and urgent. Other objects occupied your mind, and you easily resisted the call, and “would not come.” Then came a more pressing invitation. Some special and peculiarly adapted appeal was made. The providence of God and the strivings of the Holy Spirit concurred. It was to your convictions a golden opportunity, a favorable time. It was as if new messengers had come, saying, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Then you took a course which seems as if you had intended to illustrate what follows. “But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.” This is not a mere history of the action of the Jewish

mind in certain circumstances. It is an exemplification of the workings of human depravity. Men do naturally, and as is said in another place, "with one consent," make light of the provisions of mercy by indicating a clear preference of worldly good, over the rich gifts of the heavenly grace. The force of the statement, "they made light of it," is to be estimated by what it was that they thus lightly esteemed, and the comparative value of the consideration to which they gave the preference. To make light of a small proffered favor might be a comparatively trifling offence. But when a subject, in an humble and dependent condition, makes light of an invitation to the marriage festival of the son of his king, the ingratitude and wickedness of such a contempt bears some proportion to the excellency of the provision, the design with which it was made, and the greatness and goodness—the real glory of the reigning monarch. But what is the provision which God has proffered you in the gospel? It is a provision as rich as infinite wisdom and benevolence, with boundless resources and unlimited power, could make. As a great earthly king puts in requisition all his power and skill in making a marriage feast for his son, so God is represented as sparing nothing in his provisions of grace. He proffers to you a full participation in the glory that belongs to the union of Christ and his church. He invites you into his own mansion. As Solomon showed the queen of Sheba "his wisdom, and the house he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants,

and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord"—so does God show you, in the proffers of his grace, all the glory of his realm, and then invites you to the full and free participation of it all.

This it is, of which you make light, when you decline the provisions of the gospel. In doing this you do not simply undervalue the objects. By the most obvious construction you make light of the glorious author of these provisions. You make light of the goodness that prompted the scheme, of the wisdom that contrived it, of the power that energized it, and the compassion that bled in its accomplishment. And what is the object of your preference—the consideration for which you renounce the glorious provisions of divine grace? If the consideration were a great one—if it were an ample possession of the goods of fortune, with the enjoyments of science, and literature, and refined society, and an eternal round of earthly pleasures, accompanied with perfect health, and an immortal existence, the prospect of obtaining so great an end by neglecting heaven, might *seem* to palliate the guilt and folly. But nothing of this kind is once thought of. The gospel feast is made light of, for the mere purpose of enjoying or seeking the most transient and uncertain wordly good. No other earthly advantage is referred to in the text but possessions. This is natural, because wealth stands as the representative of all the earthly good which man can attain to.

Hence mammon is called the god of this world, and an apostle has told us that the love of money is the root of all evil.

The servants that trifled with the invitation of their king, however, did not possess the apology of a needful care of their possessions. The farm and the merchandise may probably refer to an estate in the one case, and in the other to the means of acquiring one. The farm is the villa to which a wealthy man retires to enjoy his gains. The merchandise is the active business which is prosecuted for the purpose of amassing a fortune. Each alike becomes the occasion of making light of the provisions of the gospel. Hence, the rich and the poor slight the heavenly treasure for the same reason. One for the country-seat already in possession, another for the commerce by which he means to buy one. One for gold in the bank, another for gold in California. One for a large estate, another for a more limited possession. All, however, are swayed by the same spirit—a preference of worldly good over the rich and eternal provisions of God's grace.

In all this it is easy to be deceived. It is not sinful to be rich. It is not a crime to engage in commerce and to gain a standing with our merchant princes. It is not wicked to pick up gold on the placers where God has scattered it. But it is wicked to take the gifts of a bountiful Providence and to allow them a place in the mind superior to that of the treasures of the gospel. No form of wickedness is more deeply

censured in the Scriptures than this over-estimate of worldly good, when compared with heavenly treasures. The marriage feast is now easily slighted. A few paltry gains are preferred to it. But, ah! beloved friends, another estimate shall be made. The time of the dread assize comes on apace.

The heavenly treasures are revealed, in their glory; and earthly good, in its emptiness. Look, now, thou profane Esau, upon thy bright and glorious birthright, and the mess of pottage for which thou didst barter it. Look, covetous Achan, on the silver and the goodly Babylonish vest and wedge of gold which thou didst prefer to the favor of the God of Israel. Look, ye worldly Christians, Ananias and Sapphira, upon the paltry price kept back, the price for which ye sold your inheritance among the blest. Look, thou treacherous Judas, at the thirty pieces of silver told out in thy hand as that for which thy cunning trafficking spirit could deliberately sell its Saviour and all the eternal blessings of his grace. Look, thou retired man of wealth, who dost prefer thy gains to treasures laid up in heaven—look at thy grounds and buildings, held by others; at thy body, shut up in the narrow grave; and thy unforgiven spirit, barred out of the heavenly mansion. Look, thou busy merchant, at thy commerce and its uncertain profits, and contrast these with thy spiritual estate, and tell us, if thou knowest, what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Look, all ye that have made light of God's feast of love, because ye

preferred the trifles of earth to the heavenly riches; because ye chose those glittering toys in preference to the eternal favor of your Maker—look at your work of self-destruction, and tell us if it be not folly in those invited to the marriage to make light of it, and to turn one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.

In addition to this turning away from the provisions of mercy, a portion of those that received the message persecuted to the death the preachers of the gospel. “The remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.”

To those who have the least acquaintance with the history of the early church, nothing need be said to justify this prediction. The beheading of John and the stoning of Stephen, and the cruel murder of thousands of the servants of God, during the first centuries, are most exact fulfilments of what is here declared. If it be asked what we have to do with this; I answer, the passage is, at least, a standing monument of the tendencies of human depravity. As the dilapidated temples and broken statues of Egypt and Athens are proofs of human genius, and of the tendencies of the human mind to produce works of art, so these records of ancient persecution are monuments of the native tendencies of the human heart to resist with a deadly hate the claims of God. If such developments seldom appear in our happy country, at the present time, it is because Christianity has displaced cruel superstitions, and infused a portion of its

gentleness into our civil and political institutions. But human nature in its tendencies is the same. There is a depth and power in depraved principles which might fill any reflecting mind, lest, like Hazael, when the prophet predicted that he should murder his royal master, he might think himself safe, while the seeds of deepest crime were sprouting in his heart.

As a dreadful finale of this second act of the drama, we have the terrible retribution of the incensed sovereign. "When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city."

A primary reference is had here to the destruction of the Jewish state. The Roman legions were his armies. The investment of Jerusalem by Titus, the sack and burning of the city, and the slaughter of more than eleven hundred thousand of Jews, made good the prediction. Yet, we are not to suppose that this temporal judgment was all. This destruction was but the door of entrance to an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. The judgments of God, like his mercies, are on a scale of immense magnificence. When he calls Abraham, and makes a covenant with him, it is that his spiritual offspring may become more numerous than the stars. When he gives dominion to Christ, it extends over the whole earth, and his ransomed people are a great multitude which no man can number. So his judgments are a flood brought upon the world of the ungodly—fire from heaven upon the cities of the

plain, and Jerusalem sacked by the Roman armies; and, in the final day, all nations are gathered before him, and divided into two great companies, and made respectively the objects of his never-ending blessing and curse. Yet, in this broad sweep of judgment, individuals can never be neglected. Each individual sinner that has heard the invitation to the marriage feast, and would not come, is involved in the general overthrow of God's enemies, and every one of us will be either one of these objects of the Divine displeasure, or one of those that have been constrained to accept the invitation of mercy.

After this dreadful conclusion of the struggle between the king and those invited to his banquet, the story proceeds with the account of the successful part of the work of calling in the invited guests.

Here, also, as in what we called the first act of the drama, we have the description of a delightful work. "The servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." That is, the messengers of salvation turned to the Gentiles. They found some, like Cornelius the centurion, who seemed to be waiting for the kingdom of God. Others, of the most abandoned character, listened to the call, and gladly complied with the invitation. Multitudes from every class of society and every grade of moral character, embraced the gospel and became participants in all its benefits. The be-

nevolent design of God in making the provisions of grace is not frustrated. If some count themselves unworthy of eternal life, the gospel is made effectual for others. Here the Divine goodness appears again successfully working, as it did in the first part, in making the provisions. To Christ it was promised that he should have a seed to serve him. That promise is fulfilled. The word of God, though resisted, is not bound. It has free course and is glorified. A mad and persecuting Saul is subdued, and sits like the recovered demoniac, at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. A polluted idolater is washed and sanctified. A proud philosopher is made an humble disciple. Lofty princes and lowly peasants, persons of probity and honor, publicans and harlots, all, as many as the messengers find, both bad and good, are gathered, and are seen pressing into the heavenly banquet.

It is so still. You may decline the invitation, yet the gospel shall not be proclaimed in vain. While you fancy yourself too good to need the gracious provisions of the gospel, others of higher quality shall shame your pretensions by confessing humbly to God that they are among the chief of sinners and "less than the least of all the saints." While you regard yourself as being too wise to embrace a system which was to philosophic Greeks foolishness, others, from the highest walks of science, shall bring their laurels and lay them at the feet of Christ, and confess themselves only childlike learners in his school. While you shall

think of yourself as too highly elevated in your social position to embrace the Christian faith, others from higher stations shall count it their greatest honor to be permitted to come to the marriage feast. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and preferred affliction with the people of God to all the treasures of Egypt; and from that day to the present hour kings have been glad to reckon themselves among the servants of God, and to hope in the Divine mercy as displayed in the provisions of the gospel. Or, if you think of yourself as too inconsiderable to make it reasonable that you should be the object of such a provision, you may reflect that the condescension of God is as extraordinary as his greatness, that he feeds the raven and sustains the sparrow. It is equally manifest from the workings of his providence and the revelations of his word, that "he lifts up the poor from the dust, and the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes, and to cause them to inherit the throne of glory." Or, if you regard yourself as too sinful and unworthy ever to be made a partaker of his grace, you may remember that our Redeemer came to call sinners to repentance, and that many who have been sunken down into the lowest depths of depravity have been recovered by the gospel. The scheme of mercy has no respect to the previous differences existing among men. The feast is provided for all. The invitation is universal. The servants gather together all, as many as they find, both good and bad.

But let every one invited to partake of the provisions of the gospel remember this, too, that if he does not choose to come, the scheme of grace will not fail. If you make light of the provision, your poor servant may receive it. If you sit in the sanctuary and hear the gospel, and turn from it to your farm or your merchandise, distant heathens will embrace it. If you make light of it, some dying malefactor will be called in and enjoy the provisions which you scorned. You have been often called. In the name of the Master of the feast, I invite you again. "All things are ready: come unto the marriage." Yes, all things in this preparation for conferring heavenly blessings, are ready. Christ has appeared, fulfilling the types and predictions of the ancient Scriptures. The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world has been sacrificed. The offering is complete. He bowed his head and said, "It is finished." The volume of inspired instruction is completed. The messengers have gone forth. The Holy Spirit has seconded their endeavors. The call has reached your understanding, quickened your conscience, and touched your heart. I charge it on you who have been instructed in Christianity, that you know your duty. Though you may not be always alike sensible to its claims, yet often, when the calls of this gospel sound in your ears, you are fully aware of your obligations to comply with them. Through long custom, it may seem a small matter to make light of it. Yet, in making light of it, you make light of the great God that formed the scheme; of the

Saviour that died to carry it into practical operation, and of all that long-suffering, and those heavenly agencies, that are employed in it. You do this, too, for a most unworthy and paltry consideration, the mere possessions and enterprises of a few years, the farms and merchandise of a brief, uncertain existence. And yet, judgment lingers not. Mercy despised, will bring awful retribution. Deep will be your sorrow, and unavailing your regrets, when you shall see that the blessings which were provided for you, are lost, and that others entered in and enjoyed them. When you shall see white robed millions of ransomed souls standing within the battlements of heaven, and yourself cast out.

SERMON XV.

THE SPEECHLESS GUEST.

AND HE WAS SPEECHLESS. *Matthew xxii. 12.*

THIS text is a part of that beautiful parable upon which the preceding discourse is founded. The provisions of the gospel, the publishing of its invitations, and the results, are set forth, as before stated, in the story of a king making a wedding feast for his son. The explanation is briefly this. The king preparing the feast, represents God making the provisions of the gospel. The sending forth of the servants to call the invited guests, refers to the commissioning of the living preachers as the messengers of Divine grace. By those first invited making light of the invitation, and persecuting the servants till the king was wroth, and sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city, are intended the Jewish people rejecting the gospel, and the consequent destruction of themselves and of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. The servants thence going into the highways, and gathering together all as many as they found, both bad and good, represents the gathering of the Gentile nations to a participation of the

blessings and institutions of the true religion. Observe, then, that this gathered multitude is not assorted by any discriminations of character. The servants gathered all, both bad and good. The character of the assembly is represented by the whole of Gentile Christendom, or by any Christian community, be it large or small, where merely nominal and real believers are mingled together. The result, then, of the call has been seen. The Jews have been rejected, and made the subjects of overwhelming judgments, and the Gentiles have been called in and gathered around the great festal board.

But another division is to be made, on the basis of a difference of individual character. The king will come in to see the guests. The last judgment is obviously referred to. Instead of dwelling upon the separation of the two great companies, the righteous and the wicked, and their opposite destiny, he directs our attention to an individual as being unfitted for the blessings of his spiritual kingdom. This individual is set before us, not as a remarkably sinful man, not as stained with crime, or even as chargeable with any immorality. He is simply unprepared. He has not on a wedding garment. Force is added to this feature of the parable, by adverting to the fact that it was customary for the kings of the East to furnish, gratuitously, all the guests on such occasions with changes of raiment. This is the specific reason why the unhappy person referred to was speechless when

the king only said to him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?"

It is strictly accordant with the spirit of this part of the parable to say, that if God should propose such a question to you, my unconverted hearer, this hour, you would be speechless. How came you in this Christian community, in the midst of these religious privileges, in this sanctuary of God, without a preparation to enter into a spiritual participation of the gospel feast? You can give no reason that will satisfy yourself. But a period will arrive when this identical question will be propounded. You will not be passed by in a crowd. God will ask you as an individual, if you remain unconverted: "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?"

YOU WILL BE SPEECHLESS.

A very little reflection will serve to convince you that you cannot claim deliverance on any ground according to law. You have been for a long time placed under the dominion of the law of God. You have seen that its precept is exceeding broad. It has demanded of you a supreme love to your Creator, and a love to your fellow-men, equal to the love you bear to yourself. It has perfectly commended itself to your conscience, so that you have never in one instance felt yourself bound to violate it from a sense of duty. The authority from which this law has emanated has been revealed to you as being as high

and sacred as the law is holy. The rewards and punishments by which that authority is sustained are as influential as possible, rich as everlasting life, terrific as eternal burnings.

If God, then, ask you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" you will surely be speechless rather than attempt to set up a plea of *not guilty*. You have the most distinct consciousness of having lived long in the habitual transgression of the law of God. There will, *then*, be no lack of testimony encouraging such a plea. You will know that the omniscient Judge sees at a glance every purpose of your heart. You cannot, even now, retire to your chamber, and kneel down alone before your Maker, and plead not guilty. You cannot look up to him and say, O Lord, thou knowest that I have never violated thy holy law; that I have, like the angels that are about thy throne, lived in innocency, and now I come to present my nature to thee all unsoiled and pure, and I expect to be received and admitted to thy kingdom, because I am not guilty of any transgressions against thee. If you can make no such plea on your bended knees, alone in your chamber, can you make it now when God asks you in the judgment, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?" No. You are speechless.

Nor can you with any better success attempt to plead a justification before your Maker. A man may be charged before a human tribunal with having violated

the law, and yet, when the deeds which he was alleged to have done are proved, and not denied, he may sometimes set up a plea of justification and fully sustain it, and demand and obtain a verdict in his own favor. To illustrate this point let us contemplate an instance, which is not unusual before our criminal courts. A man is charged with deliberately taking the life of a fellow-man. The facts alleged in the indictment are proved, and not denied. But now, if the counsel for the prisoner can show that the accused was threatened by his victim with instant death, that he was pushed to the very last extremity, and yet that he forbore violent resistance, and that, when no other alternative was left him but to suffer himself to be basely murdered, or to strike at the life of his adversary, he first warned his victim, and begged of him not to compel him to spill his blood, and that only when not another moment was left to protect himself he struck the fatal blow: I say in such a case the counsel will sustain the plea of justification, and demand and obtain from an impartial jury the verdict of justifiable homicide and the release of the prisoner.

So, also, if it can be made out clearly that the perpetrator of the deed was *deranged*, and fully believed himself to be doing an act of kindness to his victim, the plea of justification would be sustained, and the release of the prisoner would be successfully sought. In short, as our laws justly regard the guilt or innocence of an accused party to depend upon the "*quo animo*," or the state of mind in which an act was

performed, any plea which fairly makes out that the act of killing did not arise from malice aforethought, or something equivalent thereto, is a successful plea of justification. But you can set up no such plea and defence for having transgressed the law of God.

You have not been compelled to violate the Divine law in *self-defence*. You have not turned away from your Maker, and clung with idolatrous fondness to his gifts, as a necessary means of self-protection. You never seriously thought for one moment that a filial, childlike trust in your Heavenly Father would do you any harm. You cannot plead that you have been driven on by a mad delirium to violate the Divine law. Indeed, your transgression cannot be characterized as an act, or any number of acts; it has been rather a *continuous state*—you have deliberately lived in sin, cherishing a spirit of alienation from God, refusing overtures of grace, and saying to him, in the cool deliberateness of a practical career contrary to his commandments, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. The more you inquire into the state of mind with which this course is taken, the more overwhelming will be the conviction that you can maintain no plea of justification. If you attempt it, you are speechless.

Nor can you plead any palliation in mitigation of the severity of punishment. It sometimes occurs, when an accused person has been proved to be guilty of all that has been alleged against him in the indictment, that various palliations may be suggested

in mitigation of the punishment. Thus, extreme youth and mental imbecility, or great provocation, or numerous and powerful temptations, are urged with greater or less success. But can you, my impenitent friend, bring forward any palliating circumstances in relation to your sins against God? You have known enough to feel your obligation to cherish the sincere intention of serving and pleasing your Maker. If you had but one talent, you knew better than to hide that in a napkin. Indeed, the more feeble and limited your powers, the more obvious, in some sort, are the motives for placing yourself under the wing of the Divine protection. The government of God is so constituted that those of the most limited capacities can serve him with equal acceptance to those possessing the most exalted genius. It is not the vigor and elevation of intellectual powers with which God is pleased, but the sweetness of humility and the simplicity of a teachable spirit. There can be nothing to palliate the sin of pride and self-consequence in the very feebleness that encourages humility and child-like dependence.

Nor can you plead as a palliation that you have been exasperated and provoked to sin against God. In all the providences of the Lord towards you there has been a strong preponderance of mercies over chastisement. Every morning has shed upon you a fresh baptism of sunlight, and given you new air to breathe, and new supplies of food, and instruction, and social blessings. The gospel has every day sent

new gleams of light into your mind ; or, if it has not done this, at least some of its great principles previously learned have attained to a resurrection from “ the burial-places of the memory,” and in bright garments, and with angel footsteps, have quietly moved to and fro through all the chambers of your soul, now hushing unruly passions, and now charging upon the busy attention that she keep swept and garnished every apartment for the reception of a heavenly visitor, the entertainment of the Holy Spirit.

And can you with any better grace plead a palliation from *the temptations that beset you?* To obtain just views on this point, you must set over against each other the temptations to sin and the inducements to holiness. Contrast, then, for a moment, the motives to right and wrong by which men are respectively influenced. On the side of sin, the world has set up its claims. On the side of holiness, God has exercised his authority and uttered his commands. The world proffers its wealth, and pleasures, and honors. These objects are made to glow before the minds of men with a wonderful charm. But they are known to be transient, and to fail of meeting human expectations. On the other hand, God proffers peace of conscience, the enjoyment of benevolent affections, and treasures laid up in heaven. The world offers you the applause of a crowd of stupid admirers, if you will walk in the ways of sin. God, to draw you into the paths of holiness, proposes to invest you with

bright garments, to put an immortal crown upon your head, and to lead you on past the ranks of angels and shining seraphs, and to cause you to sit down with Christ upon his throne. The world may attempt to deter you from the way of holiness, by pointing the finger of scorn at you, and threatening you with its curse. But its scorn is impotent, its curse is momentary. It can only kill the body, and after that it hath no more that it can do. But God, to deter you from sin, brings far higher motives. He threatens to abandon you forever to raging passions, and keen remorse, and black despair, and all the eternal agonies of the second death. The motives to sin are transient, feeble, human. The motives to holiness are eternal, omnipotent, divine. They are high as God's authority, pure as his character, charming as his voice of mercy, and terrible as his eternal curse. The motives to holiness vastly preponderate over the motives which exist in favor of sin.

A comparison of agencies on either side, also, shows a similar result. The agency of wicked men, though they be superior in point of numbers, is inferior in power. Sin and violence are often victorious in the onset; but holy influences are permanent, and gain a vast ultimate advantage. Pharaoh's influence was once great, kingly, and formidable; while that of Moses seemed weak and contemptible. But the influence of Pharaoh in favor of sin has been dead for thousands of years; or, rather, it has reacted against sin itself, and Pharaoh's whole character and history

have stood forth as a fiery beacon to warn men to beware of mad and impious ambition. But the influence of Moses has been increasing from that day to this. When he laid his body down in the grave, the influence of his character, example, history, and laws, was in its youth's first freshness. Now, it has arisen to a vigorous and hardy manhood. It is seen to-day moulding the legislation of all Christian states. It gives character to the domestic arrangements of millions of families. It sits on the benches of justice. It pleads for international rights in the cabinets of princes. Herod, and Julian, and Nero, have lost their influence in favor of sin. Their very flames make transgressors shudder and turn back from the way of death. But Paul and Augustin still exert a powerful and wide-spread influence. Paine, and Hume, and Voltaire, are suffering a constant diminution of influence in favor of sin; but Newton, and Locke, and Butler, and Baxter, and Edwards, have a fresh and youthful influence this very hour. The agencies of men in favor of holiness are of a higher and more permanent character than those in favor of sin. "The righteous are had in everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot."

Then, as to spiritual agencies of a higher nature, the preponderance is vast on the side of holiness. Admit that Satan is a mighty being, and that men have so easily and to such an extent yielded to his influence, as to procure for him the title of the God of this world, yet the agencies that act against him

are incomparably more powerful than his own. For there are also angels of light, strong and mighty; and besides, God the Holy Spirit is acting constantly against him, aided by a perfect knowledge of all men, and of the devices of the Tempter; and with the advantages of unbounded resources and a perfect ubiquity. Plainly, then, there is a vast preponderance of influence against sin compared with the influence in its favor. Should you attempt, therefore, to plead a palliation in mitigation of punishment, all this superior influence in favor of holiness would rise up before you to prevent it. The superior motives to holiness would again recur, and fill you with shame. The higher, and more permanent, and ever accumulating influence of good men, and the remembered power of the Holy Spirit, would cause to pass before you the beautiful robe and the heavenly eternal feast which had been so often and so winningly presented, and your utterance would be choked before you could speak a single word in palliation of your sins. *Aggravation* alone would be the thought which would fill your mind. That you would suppress, except an inarticulate wail should indicate its presence. You would be speechless.

But if you can plead nothing in your own favor on the ground of law—if you can neither plead not guilty, nor sustain a plea of justification, nor say one word in palliation of your offences, it is equally clear that *you can utter no complaint of a want of means to prepare for that day of scrutiny and trial.* Could

you complain of anything like scantiness in the provisions of Divine grace? As well might you complain of a want of means for physical cleansing, when the broad Pacific ocean laves your very feet; or lament your want of natural light, when the meridian sun beams down upon you from a cloudless sky. None have ever applied to that Saviour for cleansing or instruction, and been sent away unsatisfied. You have known this. You have been taught it in his word. You have read it in the history of his providence. The wedding garment was prepared for you; *you* declined to put it on. When God shall say: "How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" you will be speechless.

And can you complain that you enjoyed *no good opportunity* for obtaining the benefits of these provisions? What were all those sacred sabbaths which you have been permitted to spend among a Christian people? If you are now twenty-one years of age, you have had three entire years of sabbaths. If you are forty-two years old, you have had six. If you are fifty-six years of age, you have enjoyed *eight* such years: a time sufficient to acquire a public education, and qualify yourself for one of the learned professions. During all these years of sabbaths your time has been secured to you for this express object, both by the habits of the Christian community, and the authority of God. This amount of time has been much more valuable for such a purpose, too, on account of its being distributed along one day in seven,

leaving in the intervals seasons for reflection, and for the practical application to the ordinary duties of life of the lessons of the Sabbath. Nor have you been barely permitted to enjoy these opportunities. The Divine authority has solemnly forbidden you to use these years of sabbaths for any other purpose than the making a sure preparation for meeting your God in judgment. But besides this, it ought to be said that all your years and days have been one continuous good opportunity for making your peace with God. The command to labor and the necessities of toil tend to promote your spiritual good. This is manifest from the fact that the gospel does in reality act more successfully upon the industrious classes than it does upon persons of great leisure. The command to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness covers every day and every hour of your life. If you attempt to say, I have had no good opportunities, one glance at the past will render you speechless.

And can you with any better grace pretend that *you have had no generous and earnest offers of salvation?* How many faithful sermons have made their appeals to your understanding, your conscience, and your heart? How many admonitions have you been favored with from Christian parents or Christian friends? How many times has the word of God, in all the authority of its solemn commands and in all the tenderness of a Saviour's invitations, fallen upon your ears? How often have solemn, providential

warnings roused your slumbering conscience, and the Holy Spirit convinced you of sin? Will you say that you have cause for complaint because you had no generous and earnest offer of salvation? No, you will be speechless.

But can you say that *God was not forbearing?* You could certainly have no just ground of complaint if the provisions of salvation had never been made. The law is righteous that condemns you. But if provisions the most ample have been made, and numerous and golden opportunities have been granted for profiting by them, and their benefits have been generously offered, and earnestly urged but for once, and you have declined them deliberately, you must most unquestionably be speechless. But, oh, when you reflect on the forbearance of God, how must it overwhelm you? Thousands younger than yourself have been cut down in their sins. You have been spared. When your neglect of your Saviour and your deliberate refusing of his offers of mercy have demanded instant judgment, the sword has been held back, and you have been spared. When pestilence has passed over the community, and, like the destroying angel in Egypt, scarcely left a house in which there was not one dead, you have been preserved, though you performed no act of faith like the people of God, sprinkling the blood of their passover upon the lintel of their doors. When disease has brought you down to the gates of the grave, you have been spared. When a hundred offers of salva-

tion have been made, and every one of them coldly slighted, God has still waited to be gracious; and your insulted Saviour has pleaded, as in the parable of the barren fig-tree, Spare it this year also. If, after all this, you shall be found without the wedding garment, you can never say that no forbearance was manifested towards you. You will be speechless.

But, if you cannot *claim* deliverance in any way on the ground of law, nor *complain* of any want of means to prepare for the last trial, neither can you *cry for mercy* at that late period. Then there is no encouragement for hope. No declaration of "he that calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Probation is closed. The silver trumpet of the gospel has ceased to sound. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God.

And yet, here is an unconverted sinner, one of a mixed multitude of bad and good which the servants have gathered. The king has not yet come in to see the guests; and far from being speechless, he is uttering himself with the greatest readiness and self-possession. And how is he employing his lips during the brief period allotted him? Is it in crying for help from above, and in asking of those that have obtained such a blessing, how he shall become clothed with the wedding garment? O, no! he is endeavoring to justify himself. He is making complaints. He is sustaining himself in present neglect by promising a gradual improvement and a cordial reception of the wedding garment at a future day. He is

acting the part of an impudent and indolent servant, who boasts before strangers of his foresight, of the manner in which he will be prepared to meet his Master, and justify himself, when he knows that the first glance of that Master's eye will fill him with confusion, and palsy his tongue for very shame. How easily, and fluently, and even plausibly he can defend himself against all our reasoning and remonstrances. His tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. But hark! it is announced that the king has come in to see the guests. The voice of the poor, self-deluded sinner falters. His parched tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth. The king fixes his eye upon him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" He is speechless. The command is given: "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Must, then, every tie be broken that bound him to that favored community? May he not cling to a brother or sister, the loved companions of childhood? May he not hold by the hand a father or mother, and for their sakes be led along to the feast? May he not then plead the prayers of a sainted wife, and cling to her loved form, and walk close by her side? No—the command is imperative: "Bind him hand and foot." But may he not abide in their presence, though in chains? No: "Cast him out." And shall not he, the wretched sufferer, at least have the poor consolation of uttering his complaints? No, there shall

be no complaining there; no, nothing but “wailing and gnashing of teeth.” My unconverted friend, may not this be your case? Speak, then, while you can, in the only way which wisdom or propriety can dictate. Ask of your pastors and spiritual guides, “What shall I do to be saved?” Go to your Christian friends, especially to those in whom you confide, and beg of them to pray for you. Tell them that you have not asked it as a mere form, but that your eternal interests are at stake, and that you desire to secure the fervent and effectual prayers of the righteous on your behalf. Go to the throne of the heavenly grace, and implore the mercy of your God. Adopt the resolution so well expressed by the poet:—

“I’ll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose;
I know his courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

“Prostrate I’ll lie before his throne,
And there my guilt confess;
I’ll tell him, I’m a wretch undone
Without his sovereign grace.”

Yes, go, while you are not compelled to be speechless; and the Lord be with thy spirit.

SERMON XVI.

REQUITAL OF GIFTS DEMANDED.

IF THERE BE FIRST A WILLING MIND, IT IS ACCEPTED ACCORDING TO THAT A MAN HATH, AND NOT ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH NOT.—2 *Cor.* VIII. 12.

THERE is a beautifully exact correspondence between our duties and our privileges. If God demand of us a particular service, it will be found that the requirement has been always *preceded* by a corresponding *benefit*. Hence, every good act performed by man is induced by prevenient grace, inclining him thereto not only, but it is, also, a result of a prevenient, providential bestowment, rendering the duty performed a mere requital, a paying back to God what was originally and really his own.

In our text, the apostle refers to one specific gift of God, and to the obligation devolving on us from its possession. The gift is that of property, and the corresponding duty is *alms-giving*. He had just before called their attention to the example of Christ, and intimated that their Saviour had given up his possessions for the good of others, and that the largeness of his sacrifice, in this respect, corresponded

with the magnitude of his estate. "For ye know," says he, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." He then adverts to the desire which the Corinthian Christians had manifested a year before to contribute to the relief of the poor, and calls upon them to give expression to that desire now, in action. "Now, therefore," says he, "perform the doing of it; that, as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have." Immediately upon this, he takes occasion to make this general and broad statement; a statement which will apply to other gifts and corresponding obligations, as well as to the possession of property and the duty of alms-giving. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." With this explication of the text, I am prepared to state my object. It is to unfold and apply the truth contained in the following

PROPOSITION.

GOD CLAIMS FROM MEN NOTHING BUT A PROPER
REQUITAL FOR GIFTS WHICH HE HAS FIRST BE-
STOWED UPON THEM.

I do not mean to maintain that no other motives are to be urged upon us but such as are drawn immediately from the Divine beneficence. But I do not intend to show you that every claim, which God has

preferred, has come to you as the embassy of a noble prince, preceded by a royal present. These gifts intimate both the kind and the amount of the requital which ought to be rendered back, and often their silent influence is the only specific call that is made for the corresponding obligation. The refreshment which they bring insinuates the obligation to make a return; and the elastic joy which they inspire intimates the duty of grateful praise.

A few select instances will serve to set the fact which we have asserted in a perspicuous light, and prepare the way for exhibiting some of the beneficent influences of such a palpable correspondence between the gifts of God and the duties of men.

Your corporeal frame is a wonderful specimen of the Divine skill. It is adapted alike to minister to your good and to requite its Maker with a service corresponding to its nature. Creative power, and a kind and watchful providence, have compacted and trained that frame, and imparted to it powers of great vigor and elasticity. For, though your body may be feeble compared with that of some of the species, yet it is capable of such varied and useful action, and, when badly directed, possesses such a power for evil, that it may well be said of it that it is "fearfully and wonderfully made." Now, we all say of these powers that they evince an intention of providing for the preservation and protection of this tent of the soul, and also for the happiness of the interior inhabitant.

But, while it is adapted to this end, it is equally

well adapted to a corresponding service of God. If you employ those limbs in going about doing good; if your hands are occupied in relieving the necessities, or in active toil to acquire the means of serving God; and if your tongue be occupied with instructing the ignorant, pleading the cause of righteousness, and praising its Maker, you are only making a proper requital. You are but rendering back to God what was his by the highest of all rights, the right of creation. You may, then, in application to these returns, with equal propriety employ the language of David to God, when he spoke of the rich materials that he had prepared for the temple: "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

God has also given you an immortal mind. It is made capable of boundless and unending enjoyment. It is equally capable of rendering back to its Creator a glad requital, corresponding exactly to the nature of the gift. There are spread before it a vast variety of objects. It may derive benefit from them all, and yet bring back all its powers invigorated by action, and enriched by experience, and lay them down as a thankful requital on the altar of the Lord. It may enjoy the things of sense without becoming the drudge of sensual desires. It may rise and luxuriate amid the higher beauties of the physical creation, and only improve its own nature, and acquire higher and purer views of the Maker of all things. It may come to God directly with all its powers employed in

adoration, and love, and praise. And such a course of action is only a proper requital for the gifts which God has first bestowed.

It is equally manifest, also, that the measure of this return is to be proportioned exactly to the largeness of the gifts. There will be no disproportion in the service, if you make all your corporeal powers as a band of faithful laborers; and if your understanding be employed in making out their work, and your will in leading them to industrious activity. Nor will you render to God aught besides that which was previously his own, if you bring all your intellectual and moral powers to stand ever ready, like the angels by his throne, to do his bidding.

If you are intrusted with property, whether derived from your parents, or your own industry, it is a gift of the Divine providence. He intended that you should receive blessings by its means, but it is his gift, and all that he requires of you in alms for the poor, in donations for sending the gospel to the heathen, and in building up the institutions of the church, is really nothing but a requital for his mercies, a paying him back that which is his own. Here also, as in the other cases, not only the kind but the measure of the obligation is determined by the bounty of God to you. He has made you his steward. Whatever you possess is a charity fund, intrusted to you by a liberal benefactor. You are to make such appropriations to your own immediate use, as you believe, after conscientious and scrupulous inquiry,

will further the benevolent intention of the donor. To do this, is only to give to God that which is his own, to make a fair requital for his benefits.

Has he among the bounties of his Providence given you children? You cannot do less, if you would make a proper acknowledgment of the gift, than to consecrate those children to God; train them for his service, and seek to impart to their souls such a clear and brilliant polish, as shall make them reflect the image of their Maker. Such a requital is demanded by the very nature of the gift.

Has God given you learning, disciplined your mental powers, and enriched you with "the gems of wisdom and the pearls of knowledge?" You cannot do less than to use these advantages for communicating to others the same treasures. It is only a fair and proper requital, if you will use all those acquirements in diffusing instruction, and especially in making known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

All our obligations to send the gospel to the destitute, meet a similar and delightful correspondence in the gifts which we enjoy. God has imparted to us, without money and without price, the amplest provisions for our spiritual wants. He has given us the infinite sacrifice of Christ, to buy our pardon and our redemption from hell. He has given us his holy word, and a living ministry, and a visible church. Without these we had been like the heathen, that have not heard of Christ. He has also given us a holy influence from above to restrain, and enlighten, and sanctify us.

In all of these respects, we are asked only to make a suitable requital to give back to God that which is his own. In putting into our hands the provisions of his grace, God has treated us as a man would a large company for whom he had made a most hospitable and sumptuous banquet. He has spread his table. It extends around the globe. The entire human family are seated closely on either side throughout its whole length. He has put into our hands the cup of salvation, and bidden us to drink freely, and to pass it on with the charge, always accompanying its progress, to pass it on still. If we have drunk of it, can we do less than to become participants of the benevolence that placed it in our hands, and send it onwards till it come around the circle of the earth, bearing the imprint of the lips of every living human being? Can anything less than such a practical appreciation be a proper requital for God's benevolence to us?

Thus, though other reasons may be given for the performance of our duties, every act of service which we can possibly render to God may be regarded as nothing else than a grateful response for his gifts to us—a rendering back to him that which was his own.

One of the good influences of that arrangement by which God's gifts involve our obligations, is observable in the happy distribution which it makes of moral duties among men in different conditions.

The providence of God has distributed blessings

with great munificence not only, but also with astonishing variety.

The human frame possesses in different individuals the greatest inequalities of vigor and alertness, and the most wonderful differences of facility for different occupations. These diverse qualities bring along with them corresponding diversities of obligation.

So the minds of men are greatly varied both by their original structure and by the influences to which they have been subjected during the successive stages of their development.

Then again, worldly possessions are distributed with the greatest possible inequality and variety which can exist between the opulence of the wealthiest princes and the squalid poverty of the most degraded beggar.

A similar variety is dispensed in learning, and personal influence, and gospel privileges.

These varieties impart an equally various distribution of duties. They effectually preclude men from rushing in too great numbers into any particular spheres of usefulness to the neglect of others. If men become enamored with the philanthropy of Howard, and are fired with zeal to "go and do likewise," and relieve thousands of suffering prisoners by their benefactions and visits of mercy, they find that God has not given them Howard's estate. Then, having imbibed his spirit, they impart according to their small possessions; and employ their hands, their minds, and their prayers to accomplish in other

ways services equally important to the cause of God, and safer to their humility. So, if men in great numbers burn with ardor to enter the sacred office, on witnessing its untold power for good in some remarkable instance, they become convinced that God has not given them the peculiar capacities that fit men for such a work. Thence they satisfy themselves by defraying the expense of educating a suitable candidate, and turn their own minds and hands to such employments as will be a proper requital for God's peculiar gifts to them. And thus it is, that though an enthusiastic rush is ever and anon created for some great department of duty, as if all usefulness were to be found in that one form of action, the varied distribution of the Divine bounties always indicates so clearly a variety of corresponding obligations that extravagance is checked, and a fair proportion of the piety of the church is distributed in all the varied occupations of Christian usefulness.

A higher and more manifest advantage of this arrangement is observable in its influence on our sense of obligation to God, and in enhancing the power of the motives to perform our duty. And here you will allow me to call your attention to several particulars.

I. *The measure of your duty is rendered palpably exact.*

You are not asked to render anything which you have not to give. God does not attempt to reap where he has not sown, and to gather where he has

not first strewn. You would feel it to be hard, indeed, if, after giving you one talent, God had required from you ten, and the improvement of ten. But, if he has given you one, and its use, he requires of you nothing beyond. And, certainly, he can demand no less than his own. If it would be absurd and unreasonable that he should demand more, it is equally unjust that you should render any less. If what you rendered to God were analogous to dealing out gifts of charity to one who has done nothing for you, there would be no precise and well-defined measure of duty. You might impart freely, and find it a beneficial culture of your nature to exercise a large generosity, but you would have an ever-sliding scale of duty, modified by your own moral states. But, since what you render to God as service is of the nature of rendering back a trust, there can be nothing variable in your obligations. They always bear an exact proportion to what you have received. To withhold any part is as plain a dereliction of duty, as palpable rebellion, as it is to withhold the whole. Hence, our Saviour says: "Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." You act on the same principle. Suppose you have intrusted a business agent with a million of dollars. To have such an agency, with its lawful and stipulated rewards, is a great favor, and you expect a faithful return of the whole. If the business is so managed that the comparatively small sum of one thousand dollars is stealthily laid aside for your agent's own use, he has proved

himself unworthy of your confidence. And though that one thousand dollars is a trifling proportion to the nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand which he has rendered back, yet he is proved to be as clearly a dishonest man as if he had kept the whole. He may have injured you in a less degree, but he is just as plainly an unfaithful steward, as a man is just as clearly a thief and a robber who has purloined a thousand dollars as he is who has taken a million. It was on this ground that Ananias and Sapphira were smitten dead upon the spot, when they acknowledged the entireness of God's claim, and yet deliberately kept back part of the price. That selling of estates, and bringing all, and laying it down at the apostles' feet, was a meeting of the exigencies of the church, and a clear symbol of what every converted soul virtually does when he becomes a Christian. He forsakes all that he hath to be Christ's disciple. To offer to do less is an insult. But you will ask: "Is there not imperfection attending the doings of the best Christians?" Doubtless there is; and if we had time, in this place, we could show you in what it consists. It is enough to say now, that it does not consist in making false entries in your account with your Maker, and then attempting like Ananias and Sapphira, by lying to the Holy Ghost, to gain the credit of making an honest requital to God, while a portion of his gifts are hid away for yourself. The measure of your obligation is always exact.

Those frames of yours, with all their members of joints and limbs and muscles, are to be employed in doing the work of God. Those intellectual powers are to dwell in your body, as in a temple of the Lord; yea, they are to consecrate that temple, and, clad in pure priestly robes, to keep ever burning within it the fires of love, and to fill it with the incense of praise. That worldly estate which you control is God's charity fund, put into your hands to carry along with you, as you pass up and down in this world of tears and sighs, and widowhood and orphanage, and crime and irreligion. No mortal has any right to dictate to you the details of its expenditure, but God takes account of it, and will soon call to you in a voice of irresistible authority and power: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer steward." That child is committed to you as a sacred trust; God has said to you, as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Your duty is plain.

I. It is God's property intrusted to you. The proper requital is an offering of it to the giver, and a training it wholly for his service. This gospel, which God has imparted to you as a cup of salvation, intended not for you merely, but for your species, is to be drunk freely, and then to be passed on till every famishing soul has had it pressed to his lips with the kind and urgent invitation, "Drink, O beloved." In short, you have only to consider what you have, to

understand what you owe to God. You owe it all. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" The measure of your duty is exactly as the gifts of God to you.

II. That which creates an obligation in this respect, operates also in various ways as an incitement to discharge that obligation. Duty is not presented as an abstraction. The gifts of God touch our senses and affect our conscious enjoyments, and so awaken in the mind a sense of obligation to make a corresponding requital. How observable is this when, by the providence of God, men are saved from some great and imminent danger. Let a ship at sea be driven hard upon a lea shore. Let the crew strive in vain, for a day and a night, to distance the frightful breakers, and yet draw nearer every hour till the sturdy mariners grow pale, and begin to mingle their cries with more timid passengers for mercy; and now let the wind suddenly haul around and the joyful vessel dance by the jutting rocks, and bound off freely upon the deep again. In such a case men's hearts are softened, and even the wicked are ready to join in the thanksgiving of the righteous, and to say with them: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits?" This strong case fairly indicates the tendency of those gifts which precede our duties to incite us to their performance. If men are not conscious of such an influence, it is because their awful inurement to sin has induced an amazing and callous insensibility. Our lives are just as manifestly

preserved every night, and every day, and every hour by a Divine hand, as were the lives of that ship's company. If the fact were not lost sight of in the soul's habit of living without God, that preservation would every day produce a similar incitement to render a proper requital to the Lord.

We may become insensible to the call of the Divine mercy by directing our attention to other objects, and absorbing our minds with other interests. In a great city we learn to become utterly insensible for the greater part of the time to the rattling of vehicles, and the cries of those who are offering their wares and their services in the streets. The reason is because we have purposely turned away our regards from these, as matters of little practical concernment to us. Just so, men become insensible to the cry of God's claims—the voices of his thick-coming gifts.

The sounds are uttered. They fall upon the ear of the soul in gentle and persuasive accents. Preserving kindness speaks to it when the body first wakes from its nightly repose, and says: "Now begin anew. Let thy feet run in the way of the Lord's commandments. Employ those hands as day laborers for God. Let those lips speak out for righteousness, and those ears be open to the calls of the needy. Bid that understanding prepare its roomy apartments to entertain the Son of God and his train to-day." Possessions of property suggest the power of doing good. Learning tells the mind of the requital which it owes to God for so valuable a trust; and the means of grace

inspire the soul with an irrepressible desire to run like the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, and tell of the power and grace of Christ.

A great incitement to those duties, also, which consist in communicating blessings to others, is found in our own previous enjoyment of them. When God requires us to dispense blessings to our fellow-men he permits us first to partake of them ourselves. If we are required to give of our money to relieve men's temporal wants, it is after we have proved its power in the good things, the necessaries, and the comforts which it has purchased for ourselves. Are we asked to impart knowledge? It is only after we have made ourselves sensible by its enjoyment that it is better than gold or silver. Do we give spiritual instruction? We first learn by tasting that it is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. So all that class of gifts which we are required to impart to men are first given us to enjoy, so that we may feel a deep sense of their great value, and thence be incited to do good and to communicate.

But the great incitement derived from this linking of God's gifts and our duties so closely, is found in the universality of the claims made upon our gratitude. No appeal can be made to our moral nature that is so effective as the claim for gratitude. But, since our duties are preceded by corresponding blessings, this claim may be urged, and is urged, in regard to every one of our obligations to God. Nothing will more readily overwhelm a man with a sense of un-

worthiness than the conviction that he has been ungrateful. One feels himself deeply degraded by ingratitude, and no crime shocks the human mind like this. It is this that gives such a dark hue, in our estimation, to filial impiety. When you see a son treating with disrespect his father, or wantonly wounding the womanly sensibilities of his mother, you are shocked; you feel a mortifying shame for your species, and turn away from the sight as from something monstrous. Why is it? It is because such conduct is characterized by ingratitude. That father has done so much for his son in providing for his childhood—so much by paternal counsel and care; and that mother suffered for her child, and watched and wept by his sick bed; and now that all this should be requited with bitter words and an unfilial spirit, strikes us as one of the monstrous forms that iniquity puts on only in its rankest growth. And yet the view which we have taken shows all sin in the light of ingratitude toward God, the greatest and best Benefactor. Hence, in the most pointed rebukes of Scripture, men are accused of ingratitude. God says to the apostate Israelites: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.”

Laying a foundation for gratitude is the most powerful of all means for winning the affections. How well judged was it in Jacob to send a present before him to disarm his brother from an old and long-cherished resentment! Christ’s miracles of healing

had an amazing power in eliciting a thankful spirit, and causing the common people to hear him gladly. God has based all his claims, and all the invitations of his gospel, upon this principle. He assumes that "love is the only loan for love." He overcomes evil with good. When he comes to meet us with his claims of reconciliation and peace, he sends his presents before, as Jacob did to his brother Esau. We may be stubborn, and persist in the wrong, but he continues to send them still. A stream of blessings comes pouring in upon us. Their swelling tide bears us up to his very mercy-seat. Their language to us is: "Be thankful unto him, and bless his name." If at any time he withdraws his gifts, and leaves us to bereavement and mourning, it is to make us sensible of our ingratitude, and to lead us to such a new appreciation of his goodness that it may have an increased influence and lead us to repentance.

My impenitent friends, did it never occur to you that the slight manner in which you have been affected by the goodness of God evinces a great degree of sinfulness and unworthiness on your part? What have you rendered to your Maker for that curious frame? How have you requited his preserving care? What returns have you made when he has raised it from the gates of the grave, where it had been laid by sickness? How have you kept the vows which you made in the day of trouble? What have you returned to God for those mental powers; for creat-

ing them, for preserving them from idiocy and madness? How have you requited him for your education? Have you taken all these precious trusts, and made a perverted use of them by setting an example of publicly neglecting the ordinances and blessings of his grace? What use have you made of your property? Have you squandered it in your own gratification, without anything like a daily asking of wisdom to use it in such a way as will please its munificent Donor, who intrusted it to your keeping? In what light can you regard such conduct, if you seriously reflect, except in the light of what the prophet significantly terms "robbing God?" What have you done with the knowledge, and especially with the knowledge of the gospel, with which you have been intrusted? Have you taken the cup of salvation, called upon the name of the Lord, paid your vows in the presence of his people, and then passed the rich blessing to others? Or, have you requited him evil for good, and given the whole weight of your example against any such use of his mercies? And how have you repaid the love and sacrifice of Christ? I am afraid you have requited it with the ingratitude of your neglect. Can it be? Are you ungrateful for such mercy and grace? Still he waits. He seeks to subdue that unthankful soul, and to win it by kindness. Will you not open your heart to the sweet influences of his mercy?

I fancy I see you contemplating his goodness, and

in view of the spirit of these instructions you wonder, like some of old, at the gracious words that proceed out of his mouth. Yes, my impenitent friend, Christ has come to you once more with his hands full of blessings, and his heart full of love; and he means you shall have the opportunity of now giving your heart to him, or of again ungratefully slighting his proffered grace.

“ Behold the Saviour at the door !
He gently knocks, has knocked before ;
Has waited long, is waiting still ;
You treat no other friend so ill.

“ O lovely attitude ! He stands,
With melting heart and outstretched hands ;
O matchless kindness ! And he shows
This matchless kindness to his foes.

“ Admit him ere his anger burn,
His feet departed, ne'er return ;
Admit him, or the hour's at hand
You'll at his door rejected stand.”

Yes, fellow-sinner, the time is coming when the remembrance of all God's mercies, and of the calls of his grace, shall rise up before you, and ask: “ Why did you requite your Maker evil for good? Why did you rob God of his just claims? Why did you ungratefully forget your Heavenly Benefactor?” Can you make a satisfactory answer? Can you think of meeting such upbraidings without being overwhelmed

with shame and remorse? Let, then, the invitations and incitements of the Divine goodness lead you, this hour, to the decision,

“ No longer to abuse his love,
And weary out his grace.”

SERMON XVII.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

“WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.”—*Ephesians* II. 12.

THE meaning of this text will be readily perceived, when viewed in its connection with the context. The apostle, speaking to his Ephesian brethren, adverts to their state previously to their conversion. “At that time,” says he, “ye 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.” The language is descriptive of the spiritual condition of every person who has not been truly converted to Christ. To such I address myself.

My object is to unfold to you your true spiritual state. May God the Holy Spirit at the same time impart to me the faithfulness and gentleness of Christ, and open your hearts to attend to the things that belong to your everlasting peace. The text implies:—

I. *That you are destitute of all proper affection towards God.*

It is not denied that you possess sentiments of respect for the Divine character. Many of you know

too much of the majesty and glory of God to treat him with contempt. Your souls have often trembled in view of his awful justice. Your hearts have been touched by affecting instances of his mercy, and your bosoms have been filled with gladness on account of his abundant gifts. You may even have felt those warm sentiments of natural gratitude which flow unbidden from the heart, on experiencing an unexpected deliverance from some dreaded calamity. Yet are you destitute of all proper affection towards God.

Supreme love to God is required of you. When the Divine character and claims are unfolded in your presence, you feel that nothing less can reasonably be demanded. You ought to exercise and cherish a love to God which surpasses all other attachments. Your happiness ought to be mainly derived from a conscious exercise of a warm and pure affection towards your Heavenly Father, and corresponding assurances of his love towards you. But such is not your experience. You may flatter yourself that you shall, by some means, obtain the Divine favor at last; but you cannot so far deceive yourself as to think that your heart is habitually warmed by a supreme love to God. The holy Psalmist, when he contemplated the Divine character exclaimed, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh cry out for God. When shall I come and appear before God." You make no such exclamation; nor do you feel compelled to place a strong re-

straint upon your lips, lest the warm feelings of your heart should burst from them in language similar to this. You are without God in the world.

You have never returned to God, from a life of wandering and of sin. You are acquainted with that touching parable of the prodigal, by which our Saviour so beautifully represents to us the process of a sinner's return to God. That lost one thought of his guilt and shame; thought of his perishing condition; his rags, his hunger, and his dark prospects. He thought of his father's house, and its abundance. He thought of his father's kindness. He said, "I will arise, and go to my father." He went; and O what joy was there in his heart, in the bosom of his father, and in the entire household. You never thus lamented your wanderings. You never thus returned and found a joyful reconciliation with your Heavenly Father. Let me put to you, then, my impenitent friend, the solemn question. Now, conscience, do thine office, and give a true answer: Have you ever returned from the ways of sin, and said: "I will arise, and go to my father?" If God should ask you, this hour: "If I be a Father, where is mine honor?" could you answer him? You know you could not. You are "without God in the world."

But this alienation of affection is reciprocal. God is as thoroughly destitute of love to you, as you are of love to him. Do not misunderstand me, here, on account of the twofold sense of the term love. In the sense of pity and benevolence, "God so loved" you, "that he gave his well-beloved son" to die in

your stead. But in the sense of complacent affection, God is as far from loving you as you are from loving him. In the 1st book of Sam. ii. 30, God says: "Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." In the 10th Psalm, 3d verse, a particular class of sinners is referred to as objects of the Divine abhorrence. "The wicked," it is said, "boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." Yet this class, the covetous, is not more certainly abhorred, than every unconverted sinner. Hence, the Psalmist says, in the 5th Psalm, 5th verse, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Thus the alienation of affection is complete in both parties. You are alienated from God, and God is alienated from you. O how fearful for a worm of the dust to stand in such a relation to a being of infinite holiness and unbending justice! Reconciliation is demanded. You are "without God in the world."

II. *This text also implies that you are totally destitute of communion with God in prayer.*

You may be accustomed to offer in form devotion to God. This habit may be of great advantage in restraining you from vice; it may lead you to attend more seriously upon the means of grace. But you do not approach God in filial confidence. You do not feel in your devotions that you are unbosoming yourself to a kind and sympathizing friend. You do not confess with sincere and heartfelt grief in your retirement your manifold offences. You do not wait

upon God for manifestations of his love. You do not plead the blood of Christ, and through it seek earnestly for the salvation of your friends. In short, you do not really depend upon obtaining your richest blessings by asking them from God. Nor does God meet you with tokens of his love in the place of solemn prayer. Your soul is not there, subdued under a sense of the sweetness of Divine mercy and the riches of Divine grace. God does not there lift upon you the light of his countenance. You find no verification of your Saviour's promise: "If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." You are "without God in the world."

III. *It is also implied in this description of your spiritual condition that you do not contemplate the character of God as an object of paramount interest.*

The character of God is the most glorious object of contemplation in the universe. The heavenly hosts gaze upon it with unceasing astonishment and delight. Enoch kept it so constantly before his mind, that he is said to have walked with God. The Psalmist thought upon it in the night watches, and arose before the dawn to meditate upon God. He says, he set the Lord always before his face. The prophet Malachi characterizes those whom God will make up among the jewels that shall bestud his crown, by speaking of them as "those that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." The apostle Paul speaks of the Divine character as being the object of

the Christian's habitual contemplation, and as furnishing the transforming influence which imparts to men the same beautiful and holy character. In 2 Cor. iii. 18, he says: "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." But the unconverted are characterized as those that "forget God." "God is not in all their thoughts." You may, indeed, be visited by thoughts of God obtruding themselves into your mind from the perusal of the sacred Scriptures, from the preaching of the gospel, and from the influence of the Holy Spirit; but you do not apply your mind to the delightful occupation of contemplating the Divine character. Scenery can please you. Sun-gilded mountains, and verdant vales, and resplendent rivers can charm you; but their glorious Creator is not thought upon with delight. Wealth, and splendor, and fashion can captivate your heart; but the thoughts of God are unwelcome intruders, and soon expelled from your mind. Learning and genius can provoke your admiration; but the infinite stores of Divine knowledge and the depths of Divine wisdom can not withdraw you one hour in a day to your retirement to indulge in thoughts of God. A creature's love secures your attention. Your earthly benefactors and friends, your children and your parents, your husbands and your wives are thought upon when absent in the night watches; and your eyes are held awake by the action of your social sympathies.

But God, the Giver of all your mercies, is forgotten. Your Creator is neglected. If by his Holy Spirit he presents himself to you, as counselling you like a father, or as offering up his beloved Son as a victim for your sins, the thoughts are quickly repelled. You are "without God in the world." You are aware of the fact; yet you cast off fear, and restrain prayer. God sees you, poor guilty wanderer. To those who do not know him, he will say at his awful bar: "I know you not." "Consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

IV. *You have renounced God as your ruler and portion.*

You may not have literally used the language of Pharaoh, and said: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" but you have as really renounced the Divine authority. You do not so much as pretend to make it your chief object to obey and please God. If any worldly enterprise is recommended to you, you do not first ask counsel of God, and decide whether the proposed course will be pleasing to him. On the contrary, you consult your worldly interests. You inquire if it will improve your estate; if it will enhance your reputation; if it will minister to your ease or your worldly enjoyments.

You have also deliberately and habitually renounced God as your portion. Every man who has any hope of enjoyment chooses some portion for himself; something on which he relies for happiness.

David says, in the 16th Psalm: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and my cup;" and in the 73d Ps. 26th verse, the inspired author says: "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Says the prophet Jeremiah, in his Lamentations: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." You possess no such portion. You have relinquished it of choice. You are one of those of whom the Psalmist speaks under the appellation of "men of the world, which have their portion in this life." You have not been persuaded to this, and occasionally and for a short time renounced God as your ruler and your portion. On the contrary, you have deliberately, and for years together, renounced the authority of God, and renounced God as the source of your enjoyments. You are "without God in the world." This also is reciprocal. God has renounced and disowned you. He has no gracious covenant with you as with his people. He calls you "men of this world;" "the wicked and children of the wicked one." He acknowledges you not as adopted into his family. He speaks not of you as "dear children." He has never said of you, as the father of his returned prodigal: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." On the contrary, he has described you as "condemned already," with "the wrath of God abiding on you." You are "without God in the world." There is a mutual alienation of affection between you and your Creator. There is no intercourse and communion between you. You do

not make the character of God an object of paramount interest in your contemplations. You have renounced God, and he has renounced you; there is a wall of separation, heaven high, between you and your God. We conclude with a few

REFLECTIONS.

1. *It is a solemn reflection naturally arising from this subject, that you, my friends, who are yet unconverted, possess essentially the same character with those who are already in the world of woe.*

I say essentially the same character, because there are strong circumstantial differences. You are restrained by a thousand good influences which will be removed at death. But we have no reason to think that death will change the character essentially of either the righteous or the wicked. It will only introduce each into a state in which they will be under the entire and constant dominion of their chosen principles and chosen objects of regard. The righteous love God supremely, and dwell upon his character as the most delightful of all objects, and choose God as their ruler and their portion. These objects whose influence was partially counteracted in this world will then act on the character, and impart to it a perfect and enduring consistency. But you, my friends, who are yet unconverted, are restrained; you are perfectly conscious of being held back from the full and vigorous action of your sinful principles. You are just as perfectly without God, just as en-

tirely alienated in your affections, and destitute of spiritual communion with God now as is Judas, or Herod, or any of the lost. Death will not change your character; it will only give your principles new expansion, and enhanced vigor. You will then be without God. Should you be so unhappy as to make your bed in hell, you will be there alienated from your Maker in your affections, and he will be alienated from you. You will have no communion with him by prayer. You will renounce him; he will renounce you; and this mutual alienation and renouncement will be eternal. There will be an impassable gulf between you.

2. *Your condition demands sympathy not less than censure.*

We may not, indeed, conceal your guilt. A heavy curse rests upon that minister who refrains from declaring the whole truth to men concerning their guilty and lost estate. But I rejoice that God has not forbidden us to sympathize with you in regard to the sufferings of your condition. He himself has manifested the most tender pity, and I cannot help thinking that one reason why he committed the preaching of his gospel to sinful men is, because they have had experience of the bitterness of sin, and know how to compassionate those that are out of the way. It is obvious that your state exposes you constantly to great unhappiness. You are destitute of everything like adequate consolation in affliction. Your worldly prospects may be dark. You may feel

all the evils of pinching want. Your health may be seriously impaired; with a diseased body your spirits may droop; yet "you are without God in the world." Friends may forsake you; enemies may be permitted to multiply. Now, if you had an almighty Friend to sympathize with you, it would be an unspeakable blessing; but, "you are without God in the world." You may be bereaved. The messenger of death may enter your family circle, and remove a darling child, a fond and venerated parent, or a beloved husband or wife; then you have no *covenant God* to whom you may go. Yes, you may lie very soon on the bed of death yourself. Enter that gloomy place; the chamber where the unconverted sinner is closing his mortal career. Crowd among those weeping attendants. Hark! he says: "Not prepared;" he cries for mercy. He desists from prayer. His recollections of the past haunt him. He is quoting from memory a passage which has often troubled him: "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." His voice falters. His features are distorted for a moment, and death has completed his conquest. My soul draw back—seek not to lift the veil which conceals his eternal state from mortals. He was "without God in the world." He died in his sins.

But there is a gleam of brightness in this text. Your condition is not as sad as it might be. You are "without God," it is true, but you are "without God in the world." You are not "without God," in hell.

You are not necessarily shut up to a state of eternal alienation from your Maker. You are surrounded with examples of the daily recovery of lost sinners. You have the word of reconciliation in your hands. The sweet sounds of gospel grace fall upon your ear. God is lavishing upon you his gifts. The Holy Spirit has not ceased to remonstrate and to plead with you. And it is a fearfully interesting crisis. It is sad to see one in the last stage of disease. Our minds are oppressed with gloom when we perceive such an one constantly advancing towards death. But what a relief is it in such a case to witness the arrival of a skilful physician with the certain means of cure. All hearts are cheered. All are elated with hope. They only inquire if the remedy be sure. The trembling wife and weeping children listen in breathless suspense to know if it be absolutely certain that the remedy is a sure one. Is the medicine good? Is it properly prepared? Has the physician arrived in time? All these inquiries are answered in the affirmative. Then he may surely recover. But here is another difficulty. The dying man is reluctant to apply the remedy. The physician advises; friends beseech; still, all is uncertain. Ah! pitiable, indeed, is it to see one dying, with abundant means of recovery before him. Pitiable, to see a drowning man turn and struggle, and push himself away from the life-boat, and disengage the hand from him that seeks to lift him from a watery grave. Pitiable, to see one perishing with hunger, and yet refusing to take bread

when there is enough and to spare, brought to him by the hand of kindness. But far more pitiable than any of these, is the state of that lost sinner, who is "without God" in this world of probation and mercy and grace. To be without God in hell should not be strange, for there is no gospel, no calls of mercy, no Holy Spirit, no Saviour held up as crucified and slain for you, no voice from the messengers of grace saying, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins" of hell! But what mean you, my dying unconverted friend, to be "without God in the world?" You are "without God" when his gifts are poured into your lap in rich profusion: when health and abundance, and friends, and domestic comfort surround you, and solicit your gratitude to the Father of mercies. When he has just restored one of your family from dangerous illness, or has brought up your own feet from the grave's brink; from the verge of eternal death you are still "without God." You are "without God" in your afflictions. He has lifted his rod of chastisement. He has clothed your family in mourning. He has removed your lovely infant, or taken your wife, your husband, and made your house desolate as the temple of the Lord when pillaged of its sacred utensils. Yet you regard not his call; you are "without God in the world." You are "without God" in your retirement. Without him when mingling with Christian friends. You are "without God" in his holy sanctuary—without him where others are enjoying sweet communion with him. Without him, when

others are turning to him. Without him in revivals of religion, when many are turning to their Saviour, and when he is saying to them, by the gracious influence of his Spirit: "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." You are "without God" now, while I offer you salvation freely through the blood of Christ. Yes, here you are "without God in the world." Dying with the remedy before you. Sinking beside the very ark of safety. Refusing an offered pardon while on the way to execution.

Awake, sinful soul. Awake from thy guilty slumbers. Call upon thy God. Be reconciled now in the day of his gracious visitation, lest thou be found to be "without God" at the bar of Christ, and lest thy eternal history be given in a reiterated wail from thy lips: "Without God!" "without God!" "without God!" "without God," forever!

SERMON XVIII.

FREEDOM FROM SOUL-MURDER.

I AM PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN. *Acts xx. 26.*

THE office of the sacred ministry is one of solemn import. The faithful discharge of its duties secures for those who honor and appropriately receive its influence, the highest conceivable benefits. Through its instrumentality, domestic virtues and domestic peace are secured to families. By its means, multitudes are saved from vice, and the character of the young is formed to probity and honor.

But its great power is evinced in securing, through the Divine blessing, the salvation of immortal souls. If such, however, be the consequences of a faithful discharge of the functions of the sacred office, it will also follow that the delinquencies of the minister of Christ may render him responsible for failing to confer these blessings. If one family fails of domestic happiness for the want of faithfulness on the part of its pastor, that pastor must be held responsible for the misery that ensues. If one young man becomes the victim of vice, for the want of ministerial fidelity, his

pastor must answer for it to God. If a single soul sinks down into death eternal through the delinquency of a minister of Christ, that minister must be answerable for the blood of him that perishes.

The truth of these statements being fully admitted, the apostle Paul declares, by the language of our text, that he is not responsible for the death of the souls of any of those whom he addresses. The metaphorical language employed by him is exceedingly striking and impressive: "I am pure from the blood of all men."

It has been usual, in all ages, and perhaps among all nations, to represent those who are guilty of murder as being defiled by the blood of their victims. A popular impression has also prevailed, that the blood of one that has been murdered cannot be washed from the person or garments of his destroyer. In conformity with this use of language, and these conceptions, one strongly declares that he is not guilty in relation to the death of another, when he avers that he is not defiled by his blood. Such a declaration Pilate made, when he washed his hands in the presence of the crucifiers of our Lord, and exclaimed: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." Such a declaration Paul also makes in the 18th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it is said: "Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads: I am

clean." In this last instance, the death of the soul rather than the death of the body is referred to. The apostle did not mean to intimate that, if his Jewish brethren had received his testimony with respect to Jesus being the true Messiah, then they should not, on that account, be any more exposed to natural death. He meant rather to teach that, through faith in the Messiah, they should be saved from the death of their immortal souls. But they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, when he employed the best possible means to convince and save them. Hence, they would perish eternally, and it would be entirely by their own fault. Then, adapting forcible symbolic action to the words employed, he shook his raiment, and exclaimed: "Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean." So, in our text, the apostle means to say, that he cannot be charged with the eternal ruin of any of his hearers. I do not understand him as denying that he may have been the instrument of destroying souls previously to his own conversion. Nor does he mean by all men, in this passage, anything more extensive than all of those whom he had been able to reach by his ministry at Ephesus. But he does mean to say that those who then heard him could bear witness that his influence, as a minister of Christ, had been such that, if they were lost, it could not be said to have occurred through any defect of his ministry; but that the undivided blame rested on themselves.

The example of the apostle Paul is worthy of being deeply pondered and copied. This example, however,

was only the legitimate result of a simple faith in Christ. I feel justified, therefore, in deriving from it the following

PROPOSITION.

THE FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST IS CAREFUL NOT TO INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THE GUILT OF SOUL-MURDER.

I shall endeavor to illustrate this proposition, and evince its truth, by adverting to the means which the faithful minister of Christ employs to avoid the guilt of soul-murder. These means may be all included in three things:—

His cherished sentiments ;

His preaching ; and

His conduct.

I. *His cherished sentiments.*—If we wish to achieve an end that demands strenuous effort, the first thing to be done is to form an earnest purpose. This purpose is formed, and acquires its needful vigor, by cherishing those sentiments that give birth to it. Thus a skilful general, who would fire his troops with determined valor, does not merely exhort them to the performance of their duty: he leads them to consider how brilliant their conquest will be in the eyes of the world. He awakens their desire of military glory. He turns their attention to the mountains, and streams, and loved institutions of their native land, and kindles the glow of patriotic feeling. He adverts to their domestic hearths and altars, to their infirm

parents, their beloved wives and children, and calls up the lively exercise of domestic affection; and thus employs these warm sentiments, the love of glory, of country, and of kindred, to create that cool earnestness which is essential to a successful battle.

We are guided by the same law of our nature in acting upon our own minds when we would secure vigorous and successful endeavor. The military leader has called into action the same principle in preparing himself for successful effort. He has first cherished the same sentiments in his own bosom, that he might give firmness to his purpose, and vigor and perseverance to his action. In like manner, when we would achieve any difficult enterprise, we always call into action and cherish those intense sentiments which impart the needful impulse to our endeavors. In conformity with this principle, the faithful minister of Christ calls to mind the fact that the souls of his flock are in imminent danger of eternal death. He dwells upon the truth that they clearly deserve such a doom. Their sin is against an infinitely great and glorious God. It is a voluntary departure from all holiness. It is a self-exile, made without any limit, and rendered naturally enduring by the fixed law of habit. In connection with this, he remembers that they are actually condemned by the Divine law. He thus cherishes a sentiment of deep compassion. Such guilt, such a just condemnation, such a prospective doom, are held by himself before his own mind, till the desire to do something effective for their rescue becomes as a fire

shut up in his bones. He believes, further, that one man may be guilty of the eternal ruin of another; that there is such a thing as the guilt of soul-murder. He has observed that it is a general law of the Divine government that moral beings socially related act continually on one another's interests. One man may injure another in any of his interests. He may defraud him of property, he may mar his reputation, he may deprive him of civil and religious liberty, he may take away from him the key of knowledge, he may impair his health, maim his person, kill his body, corrupt his principles, and destroy his soul. Nor is there is any more doubt respecting the last-named of these interests than there is in relation to any of the rest. It is as obvious that men act upon one another's character, as that they touch one another's temporal interests in the smallest matter. If one induce his friend to turn away from a single opportunity to hear the gospel, it may prove the means of preventing that friend from ever finding salvation.

The influence of a calm, protracted, full meditation on this fact, is enough to overwhelm any one, that lives, and moves, and has his being among men, with a sense of his own responsibility. The faithful minister endeavors by these meditations to cherish, in his own mind, sentiments of the profoundest responsibility to God and man, and to do what he can for the salvation of the lost. To bring the subject home to his own heart, he dwells much upon the peculiar responsibilities, in this respect, which belong to the sacred

office. While others may be as truly guilty of soul-murder, both by their action and their neglect, as the professed minister of Christ, yet no other class of men are charged with such numerous obligations — no others can involve themselves in so much of this kind of guilt by mere neglect. It may be that there are hundreds, or perhaps a thousand souls subject to the influence of his spiritual teaching. He conceives of two widely different results as possible when he shall meet them at the judgment-seat of Christ. He may meet them with his own robes spotless. If some of his former flock shall then be seen bidding a final farewell to their pastor and their pious friends, he can say: “Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean.” On the contrary, he can conceive that he may meet many of his people, yet in their sins; that they may look up to him with accusing countenances, and that he may not be able, like Paul at Ephesus, to shake his robes and say: “I am pure from the blood of all men.” The sentiments awakened by these reflections prepare the mind of the faithful minister for acting with determination, with zeal, with energy. It was by this means that Paul was aroused to such intense desire and earnest endeavor on behalf of his Jewish brethren. “I say the truth in Christ,” exclaims he: “I lie not; my own conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” That is to say, as

I understand him, I could be willing to be made a curse after the manner of Christ, to be crucified as he was, if by such means my blinded countrymen could be led to see the truth and to find salvation. Thus does every faithful minister of the Lord Jesus endeavor to avoid involving himself in the guilt of soul-murder, by cherishing those sentiments which will impel him to earnest action. Another means which a faithful minister employs to avoid the guilt of soul-murder is

II. *His preaching.*—Under the influence of such sentiments, he endeavors to avoid this peculiar guilt by the manner in which he proclaims the gospel. He is careful not to preach for doctrines the commandments of men. Aware of the fact that the gospel is not adapted to gratify the corrupt desires of human nature, he does not inquire what will please his hearers, but only what will be most likely to confer upon them lasting benefits. He knows that the same thing is true of him which was true of the apostle Paul; if he yet pleases men, he cannot be the servant of Christ. Yet, though the offence of the cross has not ceased, he will be careful not to awaken, unnecessarily, prejudices against the gospel.

He dares not to magnify the external rites of the church, lest men shall be led to trust in a form of godliness while they deny its power. He cannot trust to human speculations, whether they be those of others or his own. The Bible he regards as his only safe guide, and, praying for the illuminations of the Divine

Spirit, that he may not be misled in its interpretation, he resolves to preach nothing but the counsel of God as there revealed.

He is also careful to preach the whole gospel. A vast variety of instruction is contained in the sacred volume. It would be easy for one to preach a whole lifetime, and exhibit in every discourse truth, and pure truth, drawn from the sacred sources, and yet leave the most prominent truths of revealed religion perfectly untouched. One might preach for fifty years on the precepts of our Saviour alone, and still his themes should be unexhausted; yet he should say not one word of the extent of the claims of the Divine law, or of the ultimate consequences of disobedience, or of the methods of God's grace in the pardon and sanctification, and eternal salvation of men. Thousands of true and highly important discourses might be framed on the social duties of men. An indefinite number of pleasing and useful themes might be found in sacred history; and while the preacher should treat these themes with great skill, and educe from them a large amount of valuable instruction, he might not be able to say, after communicating it: "I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

Nor is it enough, in his esteem, that he has not neglected any important truth. He aims to exhibit the truths of religion in their due proportions. If moral duties be exhibited with chief prominence, and the principles on which the justification, sanctifica-

tion, and salvation of the soul are secured be only cursorily brought forward, and slightly dwelt on, how manifestly is the work of preaching performed in an unfaithful manner! But the faithful minister, under the influence of those cherished sentiments, to which we have before adverted, cannot avoid giving the first place, as the Bible does, to the claims of the Divine law; the guilt and condemnation of his hearers; the pardon proffered through the blood of Christ; the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the eternal judgment. He knows that if these themes are brought to the minds and hearts of his hearers as great and solemn realities, they will produce effect. To give them effect, he is aware that there is one grand central object around which they must all be made to cluster. That object is a crucified Saviour. He knows that if his hearers can be induced to behold, with interest, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, then they will appreciate all the other great doctrines associated with his cross. If it be once heartily admitted that we have forgiveness through his blood, then it must be conceded that we are condemned by a perfect law, that there is a necessity for trusting in Christ, and for an immediate repentance. Then reconciliation with God, will be seen to be the thing first to be sought by every perishing soul.

These, then, must always be the great and prominent themes of him who means to be pure from the blood of all men. He will preach Christ to his hear-

ers. He will aim to show them that they need such a Saviour, because they are in a state of condemnation by the Divine law. He will endeavor to convince them that forgiveness and justification are entirely gratuitous. No good works, no outward morality can avail anything, either for their justification directly, or to prepare them to receive it. Good works can avail nothing for their justification directly, because their goodness is not the ground of their justification. They are to be pardoned. Men are never pardoned because they have done right: they need pardon only because they have done wrong. Christ's sacrifice is the only ground of forgiveness; we have forgiveness through his blood. Good works cannot prepare them for this. Right motives, an humble and subdued temper are indispensable to the acceptableness of any act before a holy God, and no man can possess such a temper without being willing to accept of pardon as a gratuitous bestowment through the expiation of the great sacrificial offering, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

Hence, the faithful minister glories in the cross alone, and preaches Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to every one that believeth. But besides preaching the truth in distinction from error, the whole truth in opposition to partial views, and exhibiting those things that are of chief consequence with the greatest prominence, he aims, by his manner of preaching, to secure the most favorable result. He aims especially, in all his preaching, to impart

clear instruction. He has no hope that men will be led to enter upon the way of salvation unless they understand it, and he has no expectation of exerting a powerful influence, but through a clear intelligence in respect to the things of God. In reproof, he aims to be kind and gentle, as well as plain, and endeavors to possess the character described by the Prophet, when he says: "He that winneth souls is wise." In his exhortations, he is fervent and importunate. If he does not realize immediate success, he is patient and persevering, testifying, in a great variety of ways, the gospel of the grace of God, freeing his own conscience, and declaring himself pure from the blood of all men.

III. Seeking to be thus free from the guilt of soul-murder, by his cherished sentiments and his preaching, he carries out the same design *in his conduct*. He seizes upon the opportunities for exerting a personal influence over the individuals of his flock, and endeavors by conversations and prayers, wherever he can discover a disposition to receive such services, to win men to the love of the gospel. He incites others to similar endeavors, leading each disciple of Christ, as far as possible, to abound in judicious efforts to lead their friends and fellow-men to secure their everlasting interests. In short, he manifests, by various and natural methods, that he is seeking the salvation of every individual of his flock. He leaves a conviction in the conscience of the reflecting sinner, that he has been dealt with both kindly and faithfully.

Men of different native powers and habits will doubtless vary in their modes of action. Some will be more social in their intercourse with their hearers, and will achieve great results by their personal conversations; others will rely more upon their public ministrations. But every faithful minister of Christ will so conduct himself that when he shall say, with Paul, "I am pure from the blood of all men," the hearts of the people shall respond—thou art pure from our blood; thou hast delivered thy soul.

These views seem to me to furnish the means of correcting a very common practical error; I mean the error of supposing that Christianity naturally leads to a course of conduct which almost all judicious men judge to be extravagant. The error alluded to finds its advocates in two widely different classes of persons, namely, very ardent Christians and fault-finding skeptics.

I will reply to each separately. There are some very ardent Christians, who say, in the language of humiliation and confession: "None of us act as if we believed that sinners were continually exposed to eternal death, and that their rescue depended upon our fidelity. If we fully believed this," say they, "we could not rest night or day; we should feel bound to warn men continually of their danger. We should arrest every passer by in the street, ask him if he be a Christian, and if not, tell him plainly that he is walking in the way to death, and invite him to come to Christ." It appears humble to confess that it is

nothing but our guilty unbelief that prevents our taking such a course. Christians are afraid to reply to the assertions of their ardent brother, lest they should seem to be justifying themselves and repressing the self-denial that reproved their inactivity. Now I beg to say that this whole strain of reasoning, notwithstanding it appears so pious, is founded in mistake. The conclusion does not follow at all from the premises. I show it in this way. If we fully believe that men are exposed to eternal death, and that their rescue depends upon their being persuaded to accept the terms of salvation, we shall use the best means in our power to lead them to embrace the gospel. In the reasoning just adverted to, it is assumed that the most active means is always the most powerful. This is by no means the fact. Suppose a friend of yours is dangerously ill. You know that but one remedy can heal him. This remedy is a certain cure, but in order to its efficacy you know that the patient must not only take it willingly, but that he must even ask it as a privilege. This sick friend is in a peculiar state of mind. In the first place, he does not really believe that he is dangerously ill. He wishes to hear nothing about death or danger, and the man that abruptly undertakes to convince him that he must die is almost sure to lose all influence over him. Then, he dislikes your remedy, and may probably feel a deeper dislike if his attention be not drawn to it in a very gentle manner. Then, he has expressed himself against that remedy, and a large circle of his friends

know it. His pride of opinion is arrayed against it. In addition to all this, he has a prejudice against you. He knows what you think of this remedy, and he judges you, on that account, to be an extravagant man. Have you not a very delicate as well as great work to perform, to overcome all these difficulties and induce your sick friend to beg for that remedy of his own accord? You will not run to him like one out of breath, and wake him suddenly, while in the irritations of a fever, and tell him he will certainly die, and that he must take your remedy, and then, if he replies angrily, tell him again, I thought as much; you hate the remedy, and that is a fatal symptom. It is true, that the alarm and excitement in such a case might, possibly, operate favorably in a given instance. In nine cases out of ten, however, your efforts would prove a failure not only, but they would also operate as a hindrance to the future efforts of others. Now, like the state of mind of this supposed sick friend is the state of very many unconverted men. So the Bible represents them. Such the most successful ministers have found them to be in an intercourse with hundreds, some of whom they have been instrumental in winning over to a hearty acceptance of the gospel. Do not say, this is discouraging effort. It is only demanding of you that you employ that effort which is most effective. "Wisdom is better than strength."

The fault-finding skeptic makes, substantially, the same complaint against Christians. "Why," says he,

“if I believed as you profess to do, I would go and wake my friends at midnight, and warn them to prepare to meet God. The thought that one might die unwarned and unprepared would distract me.” My reply is, then you would act a very irrational part, and the whole amount of what you say is simply this: “If I were to become a Christian I would become a fanatic, at once, and see how quickly I could destroy my influence with all calm, reasonable, reflecting men, and how quickly I could impair all of that well-poised balance of my own mind, by which mental power is both preserved and augmented.” To such a skeptic I reply, that, for myself, I would do no such thing. On the contrary, when I received the gospel, I would endeavor to imbibe a good portion of its gentleness and cool wisdom, as well as much of its ardor and earnestness. I would endeavor so to distribute my labors that in proportion as men reflected deeply they should approve them. I would act like a judicious physician who should be placed amid tens of thousands dying with epidemic disease. I would consider how I could reach the greatest number, and preserve my own energies and influence for the good of others. And I am sure I should be justified by that revelation which has said: “He that winneth souls is wise.”

2. In this connection, let me say one word in relation to the apparent neglect of ministers in speaking to individuals in relation to their spiritual interests. You may have said in your own mind, it is strange that such or such a minister of the gospel never said

anything to me personally respecting my spiritual well-being. If you have been on terms of intimacy for a long time with such a minister, and he has said nothing, it is truly strange. If not, may not a certain shyness and coldness in your behavior have led him to believe that he could not speak plainly without so disobliging you as to lose all influence over you for future good? You say you have not intended any such thing. Yet you may have done it; and you have no right to judge his motives or his wisdom till you have given some intimations, by words or by actions, that such conversation will be acceptable. Doubtless there is great neglect in this respect in many cases. Yet, if you are living in sin, and declining to approach the minister of Christ for counsel, complaint and censure come with a very ill grace from your lips.

3. If such be the responsibleness of the minister of Christ, that is not less solemn which rests on others, in their respective spherics of influence. Parents, teachers, and indeed all persons, exercise each an influence on the spiritual interests of those to whom they are socially related. As a specimen, let us contemplate the single instance of the obligation of parents, in respect to the souls of their children.

Fathers and mothers, you are ministers of God to your children. Your flock is, indeed, less numerous than that of the public preacher of the gospel. But you have, on that very account, a more perfect supervision over them. Your obligations do not respect so large a number; but you are under a weightier re-

sponsibility in regard to each one of your little flock than any minister can be in respect to each one of his more numerous charge. The principles that bind you to faithfulness are the same as those that impose obligation upon the pastor. You may become guilty of soul-murder. Nor will the fact that you are not a professor of religion diminish, in the least, the guilt of your unnatural neglect of the spiritual well-being of your offspring. Their souls are of unspeakable worth. If you discharge your duty in teaching them, and in praying for the illuminations of the Divine Spirit; if you endeavor, with pious solicitude, to win them to their Saviour, you may hope to be, under God, the instrument of their salvation. If you neglect them, they may be lost forever, and you may be unable to stand up and shake your raiment, and say, with Paul: "I am pure from the blood of all men," or even to say, "I am pure from the blood of my own dear children."

4. If such be the obligations of ministers, and, by inference, the obligations of all men in their respective spheres, each one is under still higher obligations in respect to himself. The obligation to secure the well-being of persons bears some proportion to the degree of probability with which success may be expected. If the minister of the gospel knew certainly that his efforts would be of no avail, then he could not be guilty of soul-murder, because it could not be said that any sinner ever perished as a consequence of his want of fidelity. But the probabili-

ties are great that he shall succeed in gaining some, if he is faithful and persevering in his efforts. Parents enjoy greater prospects of success. If they are faithful, earnest, and persevering in their endeavors, they are almost sure of ultimate success. Yet, neither the devout and faithful minister nor the pious parent can be absolutely certain that they shall have success in a given case. It may be that they shall be compelled, at last, to look on the object of their solicitude and say: "Your blood be upon your own head: I am clean." But there can be no such uncertainty in respect to your own case. The parent has a more complete supervision over his child than the pastor has over an individual of his public charge. If the parent fail, therefore, through his own unfaithfulness, it is a more awful delinquency. He has less exposure to failure. He has better advantages, and better prospects of success. But you have a still more complete supervision over yourself than the parent has over his child. You have greater probability of success not merely; you are certain of it, if you will do your best to insure it. You cannot, under any possible circumstances, stand up in your place among the lost, and shake your raiment and say, I am clean from my own blood. On the contrary, if you perish, though others may have contracted guilt, your blood will be pre-eminently on your own head. Let the admonitions, therefore, that are contained in this discourse come home to the bosoms of all; to ministers of the cross, to parents, to unconverted sinners. The souls

of men cannot perish without involving somebody in the guilt of soul-murder. The body may die by the operations of natural law. Its dissolution may be only a blessing—the taking down of a comparatively incommodious and even vile tabernacle, that the indwelling spirit may go to reside in heavenly mansions; but the soul cannot die but by an unnatural death; it can perish only by murder and suicide. Take heed that its blood stain not your garments. Apply to Christ for cleansing, and see to it that, through his atoning blood, you may be prepared to walk with him in white.

SERMON XIX.

THE NATURE OF FAITH.

VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME HATH
EVERLASTING LIFE.—*John VI. 47.*

TRUE piety is simple. Yet it is triform in its manifestations. It develops itself in faith, prayer, and labor. There is a remarkable beauty in the order and connection of these three things. They are striking and yet mysterious in their individual growth and their interaction. They are like physical nature. A living seed is planted. You see it. But what is it? This is a great question. We do not know what it is. But we know that it is a germ of life. Under appropriate influences it will dilate, and a stem will sprout forth from it. It will develop itself more and more. It will put forth branches, and become clothed with a beautiful verdure. The final cause of its existence, however, is not yet apparent. After a time it displays its blossoms, and fills the air with fragrance. Still, we have not arrived at the end for which it was created. It produces, at length, an abundance of nutritious fruit. We think we have now reached the final cause. That germ with its peculiar law was created to afford

sustenance to man. Perhaps so. Such, at least, was one of the ends of infinite wisdom in its production. Other objects, however, were incidentally achieved. Its foliage afforded habitations, and play-grounds, and solid food, and sips of dew for millions of rejoicing insects. Its fragrance breathed a delicious pleasure into the faces of all that passed by in the season of its bloom. Its growth called forth the fostering care of some human being, and the successive stages of its development aided an analogous unfolding of the qualities of an immortal mind.

It is even so with the germination, the growth, the fruit-bearing of true piety. Faith is the primordial principle. Prayer sprouts up out of it as the stalk from the seed, and active beneficence is the fruit. We naturally conclude that this doing good, the fruit of piety, is the end for which the germ was created. Perhaps no Christian will doubt that it is the direct end. Faith most naturally flows out in prayer as its first objective endeavor. The cry of its infancy is: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." Its next effort is to do good. Incidentally, it is true, other ends are achieved. Faith, as the conscious throb of spiritual life, is itself a good, an enjoyment. There is "peace in believing." Prayer, too, is an outflow of happy desire. Supplication is tinged with the light of hope, and mixed with transports of gratitude and praise; and both faith and prayer act delightfully on others as examples of the power and sweetness of pure religion. Still, this is the right line of progress:

FAITH, PRAYER, LABOR. These are the "three words of a believer," as far as the originating and on working of piety are concerned.

Let us begin at the beginning. Faith is power. It implies simplicity and energy; and simplicity and energy are the elements of power. The mind is undivided in its action when it is trustful. It fixes its regards steadfastly on something which is without. In exercising faith, it has nothing in it of the nature of listless and indolent musing. It thinks. It does not float unresistingly on the current which happens to be passing. On the contrary, it is in a state of exertion. It may, to the unthinking, appear passive because it is quiet. Yet it is energetic in its stillness. Like the rocky cliff which forms a barrier to the ocean it seems, sometimes, to do nothing. Yet, mind never displays more energy than in standing still. You see this in the martyr, when the powers of earth and hell conspire, in vain, to remove him from his steadfastness. Frowns and threats are nothing to him. Instruments of torture, though they rend his flesh, disturb not his spirit. While the fire riots upon his nerves, and wreaths of smoke ascend from his consuming frame, an incense that fills heaven with fragrance arises from the holy aspirings of his spiritual nature. How sublimely, too, is the same power of faith exhibited in a thousand every day instances of calm endurance; instances which, though in comparison with the martyr's sacrifice, they are as humble as the contributions of the widow's mite, are, like the giving of

that mite, manifestations of the most exalted principles. Faith takes its tone from the nature of its object. It always has an object outside of the soul itself. It ever rests on something true; something inspiring. In the patriot, that object is his country or his country's interests, represented in its institutions, its physical features, its heroes. In the man of science, it is nature in the exactness of its laws; the simplicity, the uniformity, the majesty of its movements. In the Christian, it is the perfect government of God, the glorious system of his grace, and the revealed eternal results of both in a scene of soul transforming moral beauty; or, more philosophically speaking, it is Christ, the great author and upholder of that government, the fountain of that grace, and the ever-living dispenser of immortal blessedness. There is a double action in faith. An effect is produced on one when he becomes a believer. He also exercises an influence. He receives something in believing. A door is opened on that side of his nature which looks towards the object of faith. Through that aperture, the object pours in its influence, as the sun pours its flood of light into a window opened towards it. There are openings, also, on all the other sides of his nature. Through each of these, there issues a copious, far reaching stream of influence; a stream which blesses thousands in its flow, and which goes sounding on as a hymn of praise through eternity. Faith is the life-germ, the embryo form of subjective religion. It exists prior to all those things which are reckoned

among the elements of active piety. It is not something which may exist in a dead form until it has been vitalized by prayer. It is not a cold principle that is to be warmed into energy by active labor. On the contrary, faith imparts all the value to prayer and outward acts of obedience which either of them possesses. Without faith, prayer is vain babbling; without faith, acts of obedience are, at the best, only as motions of an automaton.

With these general views of faith, it becomes of the highest consequence to understand the precise nature of that faith which the gospel demands. To render the description full and perfectly intelligible, it will be necessary to make a complete analysis, and to expand and illustrate all the parts of the subject. The following points, then, must be separately and carefully considered.

1. Faith must be distinguished as objective and subjective.

2. Faith implies belief, but includes more than belief.

3. Faith has respect to two things; to a truth believed, and a person on whose testimony it is believed.

Faith, then, has two elements, an affectionate trust in a personal being as worthy of confidence, and belief resulting from that trust. Faith may be genuine when it has respect only to an earthly friend. Faith may be genuine, and have respect to Christ, and yet be radically defective. Evangelical faith implies a trust-

ing in Christ in his true character as the glorious Messiah. Evangelical faith is faith in its highest direction; trust in Christ as worthy of supreme confidence. When these points have been separately examined, they will be better understood in their connections as leading to a single result; a just and comprehensive view of the nature of that faith which the gospel enjoins.

For the sake of clearness, let us in the first place distinguish faith as objectively and subjectively considered. The term is employed to denote the *credenda* of Christianity, or the things which the gospel requires us to believe. Felix heard Paul, concerning the faith of Christ; that is to say, he heard him discourse respecting those great Christian doctrines which must be believed in order to one's becoming a true disciple of Jesus. Thus, also, Paul is represented as preaching the faith which he had once destroyed. The meaning is sufficiently obvious. He endeavored by argument to substantiate the truth of those principles which he had formerly opposed.

The word faith is also employed to denote an affection of the mind, an interior sentiment. Such passages as the following indicate this use of the term: "O woman, great is thy faith;" the apostles said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith;" Barnabas "was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith." "Jesus said unto them (his disciples): Have faith in God." Many subdivisions may be made under this twofold designation; but they will all be found to belong to one or the other of these departments: to faith

objectively considered, or the things lying outside of the mind—the things to be believed; or to subjective belief, a peculiar mental state designated by the same word faith. In this discussion, we have to do with faith only as an interior sentiment; an exercise of the inner man. But what is faith? What is the precise form of this interior sentiment? The question can be answered. The answer can be made intelligible to such as will consent to think patiently of the separate elements of the idea. Faith implies belief. You believe that the sun will rise to-morrow. You do not know that it will. But you act on your belief with as much confidence as if you were inspired by the intuitions of perfect science. The belief that the sun will rise to-morrow is a totally different state of mind from the knowledge of the fact that the sun did rise this morning. For all practical purposes, your convictions are equally valuable; are alike certain. Yet the grounds of them are different. One is knowledge; the other is belief. This belief, this settled conviction of the mind, with regard to the truth of a given proposition, is implied in faith. But, while belief is implied in faith, and while the words faith and belief are often, in common parlance, used synonymously, faith, as a Christian grace, is the more comprehensive term. It includes belief, but it means more than belief. Repentance, as a feeling of the mind, has respect to two objects; a person and a thing. It has a relation to the sin committed, and to the person against whom the wrong was done. So faith has respect to two ob-

jects ; to the thing believed, and to the person on whose testimony and character that belief reposes. This thought may be happily elucidated by instances. When Saul and Jonathan fell in the great battle between Israel and the Philistines, the first intelligence of the sad disasters of that day reached David through a young man who had fled from the scene of carnage. This youth informed him of the entire rout of the army, and also of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Nothing was more probable to the mind of the persecuted son-in-law of the monarch than that such a discomfiture had taken place. He knew that God had withdrawn his favor from Saul. But his informant was a stranger. He proceeded, therefore, to question him. He “said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear ; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me : and I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me ; for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen : and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.” David believed this story, though

he certainly had no confidence in the man. It was, in itself, probable that the army should have been cut to pieces. God had forsaken the haughty king. If the fortune of the day had gone against Israel, it was more than likely that Saul and Jonathan were slain. As warriors, they were not accustomed to turn back in the day of battle. Their known bravery would greatly expose them to death in case of defeat. The well-known crown and bracelet lent confirmation strong to the report that the beauty of Israel had been slain upon the high places. Yet there was one circumstance in the narrative that seemed incredible. It could scarcely be believed that one of Saul's own men could have possessed the hardihood to dispatch the fallen monarch, even at his own request. Hence David distrustfully questioned the young man further, and said to him: "Whence art thou?" And he answered: "I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite." This confession removes his doubts. He believes that Saul and Jonathan are slain. Here was belief, but it did not rest upon confidence in the witness. It was not faith in the young Amalekite, though he did believe his story as being substantially true. He believed it, not from reposing confidence in the man, but from the force of the circumstances. Now contrast with this the faith of the Israelites, when it was predicted that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were about to be destroyed by the Divine judgment. Moses "spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of

theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side." Here was faith in the general sense in which the word is employed, when it is used to describe a Christian grace. The congregation believed that the threatened judgment would be inflicted. They believed this fact on account of their confidence in him who predicted it. They had faith in Moses. David believed the facts related by the young Amalekite, but he had no such faith in the man as the Israelites reposed in Moses.

This thought possesses another shade and demands further elucidation. Belief sometimes has respect both to a person and a thing; and yet derives force from the depravity, the untrustworthiness, of the witness. To render this perfectly clear, a different and somewhat extended instance is needful—let it be a supposed one: A wandering prodigal is reduced to the deepest distress; he approaches a wealthy but hardhearted man, soliciting relief; assistance is coldly refused. Pressed by his necessity, the poor beggar goes again, hoping that his miseries may excite pity and secure the needed aid. He is driven from the rich man's door, with the threat that, if he is ever seen there again, he will inflict on him summary chastisement. He now receives an affectionate invitation from his father to return to the paternal mansion, with the assurance that every possible provision is made for his comfort. He believes both. He is repelled from the miser's door by the belief that, if he

returns, he shall meet with personal chastisement. He is attracted to the home of his childhood by the belief that all his father's promises are true. He believes equally the promises of the one, and the threats of the other. His belief, also, in both cases, arises from the testimony of the parties. Is each state of mind alike properly denominated faith? By no means. When he is repelled from the rich man's door, in this instance, he cannot be said to be actuated by faith. He believes, it is true, that the man is cruel, that he will exercise that cruelty again, if an opportunity offers. Yet he has no faith in him. If the same unfeeling man should ask the prodigal to repose confidence in him, to put himself entirely in his power, with a promise that he would take care of all his interests, he would not do it. He would distrust him. If, then, he should inquire more fully into that rich man's character, and should learn that others have intrusted themselves to him, and had, of a consequence, been reduced to the most cruel bondage, he would only distrust him more and more. He would now believe, more strongly than ever, that, if he should go to him for alms, he would only meet with abuse, perhaps with perpetual slavery. Do you not see, now, that the more fully this poor prodigal believes what that man told him in his threat, the more he must distrust him? Yes, the more he believes what the cruel miser says the less faith he has in him. He does not incline to him by anything like a generous confidence. But, let this same prodigal commence his journey homeward. The

nearer he approaches the paternal mansion, and the more he reflects on his father's character, the greater does his confidence become. He reads the letter which first awakened his confidence. He marks one item of the specified benefits intended to greet his return, and then another, and another. It seems, almost, as if the promises contained in the communication were too good to be true. He can scarcely believe for joy. But he does believe that they will every one be fulfilled, because he confides in his father's power and goodness. As he dwells more on that father's character, the specific promises grow less and less important in his esteem. A general filial confidence makes him satisfied with the bare fact that he is soon to meet his father. Owned as a child by such a parent, he knows that everything will be right. A general confidence in him leads him joyfully to commit himself to his paternal counsel and care. This is faith. A belief in the truth of the specific declarations and promises is implied; but more than this is included in the whole mental state referred to. There is a confidence reposed in that father. What he has said is believed not only, but also his character, his personal being, has become to his child an object of loving trust. Faith, then, as an inner sentiment, consists of these two elements—an affectionate trust in a personal being, as worthy of confidence, and a belief of facts, as associated with it. These two elements always exist together, and act upon each other, where there is

true faith. One cannot be said to be the cause of the other. They are strictly concomitant. Yet, in the generation and growth of faith, they act unequally. Belief of facts and principles sometimes exercises a leading influence, and confidence in the personal being is sometimes ascendant. But, whenever they act upon each other reciprocally, they augment the power of the whole complex sentiment. These two elements may be termed the body and soul of faith. Trust in a worthy personal being, is the life and soul; the virtuous element. Belief is the form which this confidence inhabits. Belief may exist without one particle of this Divine life—this vital power. But, this life-element of faith cannot exist without belief. The devils believe; are persuaded of indubitable truths; but they have none of the life of faith. Christians, on the contrary, repose trust in their Divine Saviour, and this confidence in him is indissolubly connected with the most implicit belief in what he has said.

Another point demands especial attention, in order to a clear idea of faith as a Christian grace. It may be briefly denominated the *extent* of evangelical faith. But explanation is necessary. An incident in New Testament history may be employed to unfold the idea, and to render it intelligible. In the preparation for the last passover, our Lord told his disciples to go into the city, and that a man should meet them, bearing a pitcher of water. He directed them to address that man, and informed them that he would make all need-

ful preparations. They believed all this. They believed it on Christ's statement alone. He had, often before, predicted coming events. He had never once deceived them. Anybody acquainted with the history of our Saviour would have believed him. Judas would have believed him. This was faith, to a certain extent. It was genuine. But it was not sufficiently extended to meet the demand, where it is said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Such an injunction requires, not merely a trust in the Lord Jesus, such as will secure a belief that some one thing which he has stated is true; it demands confidence in him in his whole revealed character. It requires us to repose trust in him as the true Messiah; to make him the object of our supreme confidence.

This view of the nature of evangelical faith may be completed by comparing the manner in which the apostle Paul enjoined repentance and faith. He said, in his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, that his former labors among them had been characterized by "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." What was the object of the apostle in this testimony? Of course, it was to secure the exercise of faith and repentance. He spoke of each of these dispositions in their evangelical sense. Hence, he characterized each by the person towards whom it was to be exercised. The repentance, to preserve the peculiar force of the Greek text, was a "towards God" repentance. The faith was a "towards

Christ" faith. That is to say, each disposition had its most exalted direction. Repentance could not be exercised towards a higher person that had been sinned against. Repentance towards God was a higher grace than it could be when exercised towards any other being. So faith, when exercised towards Christ, can have no higher direction. There is no personal being in the universe more worthy of confidence, or worthy of a higher degree of confidence, than the Lord Jesus Christ. But why did the apostle make this distinction in the personal objects of these dispositions? Might he not have said, repentance towards God, and faith towards God? May we not exercise confidence in God as well as repentance towards God? Undoubtedly we may. Our Saviour himself said to his disciples, "Have faith in God." Might he not also have said, repentance towards our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ? May we not repent of our sins towards our blessed Redeemer, as well as put our trust in him? Doubtless we may. When Jesus turned and looked upon Peter, "he went out and wept bitterly." Those tears were tears of repentance, repentance towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, it is obvious that the style of this passage had not so well accorded with the nature of the Christian system, if the persons had been reversed. If he had said, "testifying" faith towards God, and repentance towards our Lord Jesus Christ, it had sounded strangely, and not in keeping with the whole tone of gospel teaching. It is not difficult to discover a reason for this.

God was first revealed as a Lawgiver and Judge. We were involved in guilt in this relation, previously to the revelation of a Saviour. It is from our sins against this Lawgiver and Judge that Christ came to save us. He came to lead us to repentance for our sins against God. To do this work successfully, and to secure our pardon, he must needs have our confidence. The mind more readily discovers guilt in the direct contemplation of the lawgiver, because "sin is the transgression of the law." Hence, repentance more naturally and primarily flows out towards God in this relation. On the other hand, Christ is a personal manifestation of God, in the exercise of his mercy and grace. Hence faith naturally and primarily flows forth towards Christ.

How beautiful and powerful is this faith in its inner working. It is not an external gift. God does not make something and impart it to the soul as the reward for previous obedience. He does not bring it to us as parents bring holiday gifts to their children. He does not produce the objects of faith. No new domains are created and covered with verdure, and adorned with villas and palaces, and then given to the soul as a promised possession. The effect is produced only in the mind itself. External objects become the soul's treasure, not by creation, but only by discovery. The communication of faith is analogous, in this respect, to unsealing the eyes of one born blind. To such an one, the flowery gardens, and wooded lanes, and green fields, and golden harvests, and lowing kine, and tune-

ful birds, and groups of happy children, present a new scene of beauty. But they existed before. He had even heard of them. The light too which now reveals them had been every day poured over them before his eyes were opened, just as it is at present. Yet, by a change in himself, these objects become to him as a new creation. They existed but were not seen till a change in himself brought them, in all their reality, full upon his vision. This change effects a permanent change in the believer's relations. He takes a filial attitude, and God becomes his father. He assumes a fraternal position towards Christ and his disciples; and Christ and all his disciples become his brethren. Standing on Calvary, he looks abroad with Jesus, and yearns for the well-being of universal humanity. Yet this interior work of faith is small, at first. It is only as a grain of mustard seed. But it grows. Or, to take another of our Saviour's beautiful images, it is an irrigating fountain. Christ gives the believing soul to drink. It thence becomes a living spring; a well of water in him, gushing and springing up into everlasting life. It becomes, also, more copious as it flows, and gradually extends its influence over all the domains of the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. At first, it is as if a slender rill had quickened into life a narrow strip of verdure upon its margin. Thence, as the stream swells in volume, the moisture penetrates to a greater distance, and the fertile portion is expanded. As the wideness of the verdant vale is still enlarged, the ratio of increase is augmented, till, anon,

every unreclaimed waste of the soul becomes a perfect garden of fruits and flowers. Who, then, would not participate in the faith of Christ? Its inner workings are satisfying. The principal object upon which faith rests is perfectly glorious. The soul can desire nothing purer, nothing more exalted. Christ, his holy character and work, and the principles and results of his mission, constitute a perfect scene of moral beauty. The soul that drinks in the impressions of such an object with such an environment, shall never thirst. He that feeds upon such food shall never hunger. He that believeth on Christ "hath everlasting life."

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